

Part III
VENICE



Chapter 9

STATE, NOBILITY AND CHURCH

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A STRIKING contradiction runs through the whole of Venetian history in the eighteenth century. The city was one of the greatest cosmopolitan centres of Europe, an acknowledged resort of international tourism which the government did everything possible to promote. And yet the same government systematically tried to keep Venice as isolated as possible from foreign influences and to insulate her against all those forces that were changing men's ideas of the world and that have been summed up under the general term Enlightenment. The policy was by no means altogether successful, but it was enforced with extreme rigour. Foreign ambassadors, and sometimes even ordinary travellers, were kept to themselves and refused contact with the nobility¹; censorship was strict, if fitful, and prosecutions for political unorthodoxy threatened even the most highly placed²; and a law was passed in 1709, to be revived in 1783, forbidding patricians to travel abroad without special permission of the Council of Ten.³ This contradiction affected every aspect of Venetian politics and culture, and it led to a tension that was never resolved. Complaints were made about the provincialism and ignorance of the nobility,⁴ yet every hindrance was placed in the way of those who tried to remedy this state of affairs. Indeed some French travellers suggested that the government deliberately discouraged the sciences for political reasons, though there

¹ So many foreign travellers comment on the isolation of the ambassadors that we can be sure that it was vigorously maintained throughout the century. But there is disagreement as to how far the nobles were accessible to ordinary visitors. At one extreme there is the evidence of Gibbon who, in a fit of bad temper, wrote in 1765 (*Letters*, I, p. 193) that 'all communication with the natives of the place is strictly forbid'. At the other is that of Blainville who went out of his way to deny reports that the nobles were unapproachable (I, p. 492), and Cardinal de Bernis, the French Ambassador in 1752, said that the law had little effect even in preventing 'amitiés vives et constantes' between foreigners and Venetian nobles. But he admits that contacts could only be established through secret agents and that he only spoke once with the Procurator Emo whom he looked upon as his closest ally in Venice—*Mémoires*, I, pp. 183 and 435. The measures probably varied in severity at different times, and de Brosses sounds plausible when he says (I, p. 129) that in general nobles very rarely received foreigners. For the origins of the law see Molmenti, 1919, p. 27.

² In 1772, for instance, spies sent by the Inquisitors seized a number of 'heretical' books in the house of Caterina Dolfin, mistress and later wife of Andrea Tron, at the time one of the most influential men in the Republic. It was probably owing to his intervention that no further action was taken—Damerini, 1929, p. 81.

³ Darmanno, 1872, pp. 278-300.

⁴ In 1751 Andrea Tron wrote to his cousin Andrea Querini: 'Rinchiusi nel recinto delle nostre lagune, separati da ogni commercio con le nazioni forestiere, si formano essi [the nobles] certe idee veneziane, le credono infallibili e su quelle lavorono'—Tabacco, p. 11.

is no direct evidence for this.¹ Reforms were in the air, as throughout Europe, but in Venice they were all designed to restore an earlier situation.

One preoccupation can, indeed, be felt throughout the century: a desire to preserve the *status quo* or, if movement was absolutely necessary, to move backwards. In the international sphere the motives for this state of mind were all too obvious. Throughout most of the seventeenth century Venice had been losing ground. The triumphs of Francesco Morosini in the Peloponnese, celebrated with almost hysterical enthusiasm in 1686, were short-lived. In 1716 Venice just managed to withstand the siege of Corfù, but two years later, at the peace of Passarowitz, she was forced to give up all her conquests of thirty years earlier. From then on, though still extraordinarily rich despite her declining trade and though still able to live on past capital, she confessed herself too weak to take any further part in the struggles of Europe. Neutrality was the only hope, and quite soon many people realised that her survival depended more on the forbearance of the great powers than on her own ability to resist them. To compensate for this inherent weakness and obsessive longing for immobility the State turned to dreams of the past. It is for this reason, fully as much as for any value they might have in encouraging the tourist trade, that old traditions and customs were adhered to with such relentless fidelity. Indeed it was mainly the tourists who found such ceremonies as The Betrothal of the Sea somewhat ridiculous, though more thoughtful Venetians were also beginning to have doubts.² The fiction that Venice was still one of the great powers was maintained with every artifice at the disposal of the State and naturally affected such painting as it commissioned. Tiepolo's *Neptune paying Homage to Venice* is the most perfect illustration of this frame of mind (Plate 42a). Though painted in about 1745 when Venetian trade was causing nothing but concern, the picture expresses only the most entire self-confidence.³ Veronese, the supreme personifier of triumphant Venice, provided the inspiration, as he did for so much eighteenth-century Venetian painting, but despite this harking back to past glories, the picture is in no sense nostalgic. Tiepolo was indeed outstanding in his day in that almost alone, quite wholeheartedly and without a tremor of doubt, he really believed in the Venetian *ancien régime*. It is surprising that the State failed to make more use of him beyond driving him against his will to Madrid as a gesture of appeasement towards Spain. In fact, however, State commissions to the arts which had earlier been of such enormous importance were virtually at an end, and it is to the State's component parts, the leading patrician families, that the greatest artists owed their most rewarding opportunities.⁴

¹ Richard, II, p. 474: 'Le gouvernement est encore attaché à cette vieille maxime, que les sciences sont contraires à la docilité qui doit faire le caractère dominant de tous les sujets. . . . Similarly M. S[ilhouette]: I, p. 157.

² The Abbé Coyer wrote in 1764 that many people thought that the ceremony of The Betrothal of the Sea was ridiculous—II, pp. 25–6.

³ The picture is still in the Palazzo Ducale. Unfortunately the circumstances of this rare State commission are not known.

⁴ During the period considered in this chapter the State commissioned works of art to commemorate its few remaining heroes—notably a Triumphal Arch painted by Lazzarini in honour of Francesco Morosini and a statue by Corradini of Field Marshal Schulenburg; Tiepolo's *Neptune paying Homage to*

The whole government and higher administration of the State were in the hands of the nobility, -yet here too there was cause for anxiety. The Venetian constitution, once the admiration of Europe, was by the beginning of the eighteenth century under heavy criticism from abroad.¹ Noble families, whose history and fortunes depended on trade, had long since drawn their incomes from the land. The divisions between rich and poor families became critical and soon began to endanger the stability of government. Yet despite this—or, perhaps, because of this—resistance to any change in the constitution became stronger than ever. While the wealthier nobles were increasingly monopolising all the leading positions in the administration, the poorer patrician families, alternately depending on and plotting against their more fortunate relations, agreed with them on one point only: there must be no widening of the basis of government. Yet as the resources of the State drained away during the seventeenth-century wars against the Turks, the Senate was, in fact, compelled to admit more and more new families, who were allowed to buy themselves into the nobility.² These more recent nobles, who were often treated with contempt by the older aristocracy and who were excluded from the more important spheres of the administration, had one aim: to disguise their mercantile origins and to integrate themselves into the existing order of things. They were hardly likely, therefore, to introduce any radical ideas into society, and the conservative tone of Venetian life soon became a byword: ‘à Venise il suffit qu'une coutume soit ancienne pour être toujours suivie . . .’³

The Church, as will become apparent later, was also governed entirely by the nobility and was maintained with the greatest splendour only at the price of absolute submission to the State. And although the formation of a rich bourgeoisie was the natural consequence of the nobles’ withdrawal from trade, it never acquired any political power or autonomous culture. Its natural spokesmen either left Venice like Goldoni or, like Gasparo Gozzi, his keen admirer, became no more than the hangers-on of the more intelligent members of the aristocracy. Thus the history of Venetian art patronage in the eighteenth century is largely the history of the various forces which moulded aristocratic tastes at different periods. These tastes were reflected in their choice of artists, subjects and styles.

The decline of State patronage of the arts inevitably meant that this function was assumed by the limited number of families who held financial power in their hands. It was, indeed, looked upon as a necessary appurtenance of aristocratic status, and may

Venice in the Palazzo Ducale, and allegorical frescoes alluding to its virtuous government in the Antichiesetta as well as a few scattered frescoes by other artists such as Bambini elsewhere in the palace. In 1782 it ordered four paintings by Francesco Guardi to record the Pope’s visit. It also established the Academy which is discussed in Chapter 12.

¹ See the attacks by Amelot de la Houssaye in 1677 which stirred up considerable controversy.

² For the process see Bardella, 1937, and also Conte Fulvio Miari.

³ De La Lande: VII, p. 13.

Even the more intelligent and open-minded nobles were against changes in the constitution. Thus in 1767 Paolo Renier wrote: ‘Pericoloso è introdurre dentro a corpi militari e civili cose che sentino di novità, e particolarmente in quei tali Paesi, che si trovano nel mezzo alla pace, perchè la tranquillità al di fuori, per l’ordinario, li rende inquieti al di dentro’—Marcellino, p. 30, note 78.

often have had little to do with appreciation or understanding. We hear of immensely rich families who began to amass their collections only upon their reception into the nobility¹; and throughout the century there can have been few patricians who were not at one time or another acclaimed as glorious patrons by obsequious publishers or print-sellers—a tribute rarely if ever paid to non-nobles. Whereas the most familiar of Veronese's and Tintoretto's paintings had been devoted to glorifying Venice, Tiepolo was employed far more to exalt individual families. Patronage in Venice had always been aristocratic, as was the system of government, and it was therefore logical enough that the aristocracy itself should feature more prominently in Venetian painting than in the art of any other nation; for the identification of the aristocracy and the State was absolute. This was the reason for those huge votive pictures which came into prominence in the second half of the sixteenth century and which showed noble patrons on almost equal terms with their divine protectors. Individual glorification was carried a stage further during the first part of the seventeenth century when artists like Maffei, in series of canvases which filled churches in Este, Rovigo and other provinces, portrayed Venetian governors standing somewhat awkwardly in the middle of complex allegorical trappings.² But all these are as much a homage to the State as to the individuals depicted. So too are the paintings in the Palazzo Ducale designed to commemorate the actions of great commanders after victorious wars—reaching a climax in the triumphal arch painted by Gregorio Lazzarini, the best known painter of the day, in honour of Francesco Morosini's short-lived successes in the Peloponnese.³ Yet during the seventeenth century a notable change had been occurring. More and more attention began to shift to the individual at the expense of the State or of God.

There was, for instance, the façade of S. Maria del Giglio, which was designed by Antonio Barbaro, who had fought in the war of Candia, as an apotheosis of himself and his brothers, and which was erected by Giuseppe Sardi between 1675 and 1683 (Plate 41a).⁴ Crowning the façade stands the figure of Glory, and beneath the semicircular pediment are the Barbaro arms with the cardinal virtues on each side. Below, in the very centre, stands the fully armed Antonio, in general's uniform, while at his feet is the urn containing his mortal remains. Eight magnificent columns give strength and prominence to this level, and on niches to each side of him are statues of Honour and Virtue; Fame and Wisdom stand at the base of the great volutes. On the bottom storey, separated by massive sets of double columns, are Antonio's four brothers, and on the pedestals at their feet are plans of Candia, Corfù, Spalato, Zara, Padua and Rome, where Antonio had served as ambassador. Such was Antonio Barbaro's conception—void

¹ The Grassi, for instance—see Moschini, 1806, II, p. 105.

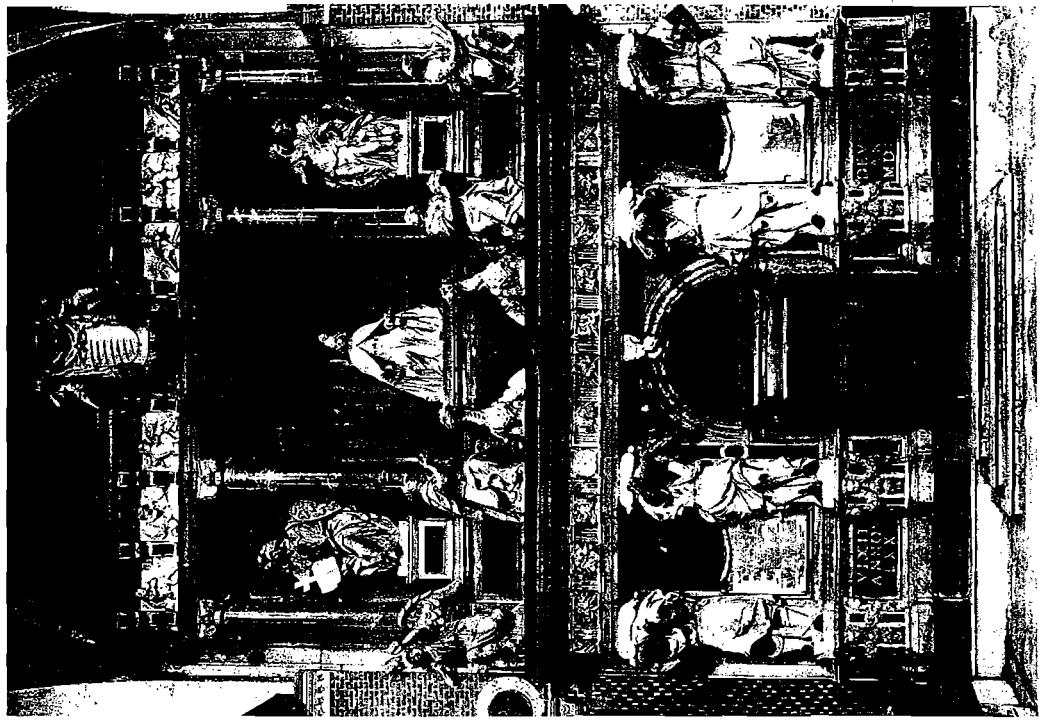
² See, in particular, Chiesa della Beata Vergine della Salute in Este, and Tempio della Beata Vergine del Soccorso in Rovigo. The pictures in this latter are almost entirely devoted to the glorification of the Venetian administrators of the city. The church indeed came under the jurisdiction of the City of Rovigo and not of the Bishop—see in the Accademia de' Concordi, Rovigo, Silvestriana MS. 431: *Memorie storiche intorno il V.e Tempio della B. Ve dl Soccorso giuspatronato della Città di Rovigo, 1768.*

³ Da Canal, p. 30.

⁴ Antonio Barbaro's will is published by M. Brunetti, 1952.

SELF GLORIFICATION OF THE VENETIAN NOBILITY (see Plates 41-44)

Plate 41



a. Façade of S. Maria del Giglio with portraits
of Barbaro family
b. Monument to Doge Giovanni Pesaro in Church of
the Frari

Plate 42



a. TIEPOLO: Neptune paying homage to Venice



b. NICCOLÒ BAMBINI: Allegory of Venice in Cà Pesaro

Plate 43



TIEPOLO: Marriage Allegory of Rezzonico family

Plate 44



TIEPOLO: Glorification of the Pisani family

of a single religious symbol. We have to go back to the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini to find such an extraordinary glorification of Man in a place usually reserved for the divine. In fact, the motives for this particular façade had immediate political origins. Antonio Barbaro's conduct in the war of Candia had been somewhat discreditable, and he had been dismissed by Francesco Morosini for incompetence. He thereupon returned to Venice and did everything possible to whip up hostility against Morosini,¹ and in his will he was careful to point out that the church was situated just opposite the Morosini palace. But Barbaro's arrogant self-justification had wider implications. Writers on the Venetian constitution and foreign observers at about this time particularly noticed the concern of the government to prevent any single noble gaining too much power and popularity²; the façade of S. Maria del Giglio shows the background against which such concern was expressed. The reasons for this extravagant behaviour are clear enough. The State was exhausted by long wars, but individual families were as rich or richer than ever. Admission to the nobility now depended purely on wealth. In such circumstances both old and new families were anxious to assert their various claims as vigorously as possible, and in the process they established a pattern which was later to be of great importance for the development of painting.

Throughout the last years of the seventeenth century the ostentation of the nobility was increasing dramatically. The new attitude was expressed most vividly by Leonardo Pesaro, nephew of the Doge. Contemporaries pointed out, with some justification, that the splendour with which he surrounded himself had never been seen on such a scale before and they came to the characteristic conclusion that the greatness of his virtue could be measured accordingly.³ In 1669 he had a monument to his uncle built in the Frari which surpassed in grandeur anything that had preceded it (Plate 41b). He continued the vast family palace, whose dramatic façade on the Grand Canal was only completed some 17 years after his death, and in 1682 he commissioned from Niccolò Bambini a ceiling painting to represent the *Triumph of Venice*—the first time the theme had made its appearance in a private palace (Plate 42b).⁴

Old families, like the Pesaro, had all the political privileges, but the new mercantile classes who were buying their way into the aristocracy were making themselves felt more and more by the splendour of their patronage. In the provinces, at least, lavish building sometimes even proved an essential step towards gaining political status.⁵ At

¹ Damerini, 1928.

² See p. 247, note 1. In 1704 the British Resident, writing of the official assumption by Soranzo of his post as Procuratore di S. Marco, described the great show of riches he made to impress the Turks and commented on the government's aversion to one man gaining too much popularity by such means—Public Record Office, State Papers, 99/57, p. 148.

³ Ivanovich, 1688, p. 127.

⁴ *La Pittura del Seicento a Venezia*, 1959, No. 221. The subject is sometimes described as *The Glorification of the Pesaro Family*, but in fact it appears to be Venice. See also Mariacher, 1951, pp. 1-6, and E. Bassi, 1959, pp. 240-64.

⁵ In Vicenza, for instance, the Montanari were at first refused patrician status, but after building one of the most spectacular palaces in the city they were admitted to the nobility in 1687 for, among other things, the 'costruzione di fabbrica che accresce il lustro di questa Patria'—Coggiola-Pittoni, 1935, p. 296.

the beginning of the eighteenth century four or five families who had been ennobled only some fifty years earlier were in the very forefront of artistic patronage in Venice. The Zenobio were said to be the richest family in the city.¹ The palace at the Carmini which they had bought from the Morosini, one of the twelve oldest families (the so-called Apostles), was completely transformed and nearing completion by 1703. Some fifteen years earlier the French artist Dorigny had been called in to paint a series of spectacular mythological frescoes contained within a heavy and elaborate painted architectural framework of the Bolognese type with cartouches and Carraccesque nudes derived from the Palazzo Farnese in Rome. These frescoes were designed to celebrate the virtues of the family and their protection of the fine arts, which was indeed notable. Luca Carlevarijs, the painter of views, was lodged in the palace and painted for it a series of romantic landscapes which were inserted into frames along the corridor leading to the Salone.² Lazzarini decorated a ceiling with Ceres and Bacchus. The young Tiepolo produced some of his earliest works for them.³

The Widmann, of Carinthian origin, had a splendid palace near S. Canciano which they too were lavishly decorating with a series of large canvases by Lazzarini showing scenes from the life of Scipio Africanus⁴; while their country house at Bagnoli di Sopra was painted by Dorigny with frescoes of Diana and Actaeon.⁵

The Labia, rich businessmen of Catalan origin, had also set about building a gigantic palace which was completed in the early eighteenth century and were engaged in displaying their great wealth in as ostentatious a manner as possible.⁶ Throughout the 1680s they were employing Lazzarini⁷; and they also owned the largest collection in Venice of pictures by Luca Giordano—presumably painted for them during his visit of 1682.⁸

¹ Coggiola-Pittoni, 1935, p. 22.

² Valcanover, 1952, pp. 193-4.

³ Da Canal, pp. 57 and 34. The main decorations survive in the palace, which is now the Armenian College, on the Fondamenta Foscari, 2593.

⁴ Da Canal, pp. 28, 42, 52.

⁵ Coggiola-Pittoni, 1935, p. 302.

⁶ Tassini, 1915, p. 335.

⁷ Da Canal, pp. 53 and 57.

⁸ *La Pittura del Seicento a Venezia*, 1959, p. 95, for the suggestion that Luca Giordano was in Venice in 1682. An inventory of some of the Labia pictures in 1749 (Archivio di Stato, Venezia—Sezione Notarile: Pietro Zuccoli 14292) includes the following pictures by him in the palace—all 4½ braccia high and 3½ braccia wide:

- (1) *La Beata Vergine in Egitto, e S. Giuseppe.*
- (2) *S. Gerolamo nel Deserto.*
- (3) *La Notte.*
- (4) *Il Giudizio di Paride.*
- (5) *Tre Animali.*
- (8) *Architettura.*
- (9) *Un trionfo d'armi.*
- (10) *Battaria di Cusina.*
- (11) *Quadi [sic], che rappresentano fatti della Sacra Scrittura.*
- (13) *4 Disegni con Cristallo.*

Cochin, who was in Venice in 1750, refers to many of these pictures: Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12 (almost certainly the ones identified by him as *Job and his Wife* and *Isaac blessing Jacob*). He also mentions a *Socrates*, a *St Peter receiving the Keys* and a picture ‘où sont des pasteurs, des bergères et des moutons’—III, pp. 138-139.

Perhaps most striking of all, the Manin from the Friuli were untiring in the decoration of palaces, country houses and churches in and around Venice¹ and they thus won a reputation for nobility of soul through the expenditure of money which was to lead eventually to the election of the futile Lodovico as the last of the Doges. More than any of the other 'new' families they indulged in megalomaniac display. Their country house at Passeriano was approached through two colonnaded wings adapted from Bernini's porticos for St Peter's.² Their palace on the Grand Canal, wrote a correspondent in 1708,³ was so majestic that it lost nothing in grandeur when compared to the famous marvel of the Rialto which adjoined it. The value and the splendour of the decoration surpassed all expectations. The walls were covered with the richest hangings; there were tapestries derived from Raphael with scenes of the Old Testament. The smaller rooms shone with glistening mirrors like the sea in the Apocalypse—a new fashion just introduced from France and ultimately springing from Persia. In the gallery were bronzes by Giambologna and Sansovino and pictures by Giovanni da Udine and Andrea del Sarto. As far as contemporary art was concerned, the Manin turned to Bologna—two pictures by Cignani, the most expensive artist in Italy, and a marble Venus by Giuseppe Mazza 'the Phidias of Bologna'. In fact their taste was more consistent as well as more extravagant than that of other families and they employed the same team of artists, the architect Domenico Rossi and the painter Luigi Dorigny, on many of their enterprises. 'The rooms within', wrote a local poet about their country house,⁴ 'are adorned with smooth, shiny marbles of fine colours and not with friezes of gold.' Coloured marble (or stucco), often cut so as to imitate great, hanging draperies, was indeed the hall-mark of the Manin style and can be found in the choir of Udine Cathedral and above all in the Jesuit church in Venice as well as in their palace and country house.

Unparalleled splendour and a love of display were of course shared by old and new families alike. 'Richness', observed the same contemporary who had described the Palazzo Manin with such enthusiasm, 'is the body of nobility, which has as its soul ancient lineage and virtue.' There was also a certain reluctance to break with the past. The artists with the greatest success—Zanchi, Lazzarini, Balestra, Dorigny, Bambini and others—were chiefly the ones most closely linked to seventeenth-century taste, and their prestige continued long after more adventurous painters had struck out in new directions. Thus Pellegrini, Amigoni and Sebastiano Ricci, all of whom were adult in the early eighteenth century, were scarcely employed in the decoration of great palaces and became far better known outside Venice. Indeed Ricci, despite the admiration

¹ See p. 268, note 5.

² After a long period of decay the villa has now been restored. The influence of St Peter's was noted by eighteenth-century poets—see Daniele Florio: *Le Grazie, Venezia 1766*, p. xli: 'Di Roma alla gran piazza area simile/Prima due mostra ali piegate in arco.'

³ See 'Lettera del Co: di N.N. A Madama la Marchesa di N.N. a Parigi, in cui si dà conto delle solenni Pompe Nuziali vedute nel Palazzo di S.E. il Signor Co: Manin in Venezia' published in *La Galleria di Minerva*, VI, Venezia 1708, p. 83.

⁴ Daniele Florio, p. xli.

with which he was surrounded, worked surprisingly little for the Venetian aristocracy once he settled in the city and was far more employed by the court of Turin, by churches and by the English business man, Joseph Smith.

When Tiepolo first began his immediately successful career in the 1720s it was his violent, tense style that appealed. Such a style matched the subjects he was particularly required to paint: battle scenes and triumphs taken largely from Roman history,¹ for many Venetian families claimed Roman ancestry—among them the Corner, for whom he is known to have worked before 1722.² In other cases the dramatic style and subject-matter clearly reflect Venice's great wars with the Turks in the 1680s and again in 1715—the last occasion when the city and her aristocracy left their mark on European history. The most notable example of these echoes is certainly comprised by the ten large and forceful scenes from Roman history, chosen from the most patriotically fervent chronicler of her republican virtues, L. Annaeus Florus, which Tiepolo painted for the Dolfin, his greatest patrons of the 1720s.³ They were a tremendous family in the old style.⁴ Daniele III, who died in 1729, served the State abroad and at home throughout his life and was considered one of the finest orators of the day. In his will he regretted that 'God has not allowed me to see fulfilled the ideas which I had feebly conceived when serving in the Treasury to restore the economy of the State in the tranquillity of peace.... I could wish that I might be allowed to shed my blood to heal its wounds. . .', and he left all his substance to the Republic on the extinction of his male line. His brother, Daniele IV, who died in the same year, was one of the most heroic commanders in the Turkish wars, both under Morosini in the Peloponnese and again in 1715.⁵

The Dolfin also enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the patriarchate of Aquileia.⁶ In 1698 Dionisio, younger brother of the two Danieles, was given the post and went to live in Udine, the seat of the bishopric. Despite the bitter opposition of Austria, he soon imposed his astute, authoritative and ambitious personality on the city and left many permanent records of his thirty-six-year residence there. In 1708 he built a sumptuous library, decorated with frescoes by Niccolò Bambini,⁷ and some eighteen years later he summoned Tiepolo who had just finished working in the family palace at Venice

¹ As is shown by many surviving sketches and drawings from his early years.

² Da Canal, p. 32.

³ *ibid.*, p. 33. The pictures are now divided between Leningrad and Vienna. The subject of one of the Vienna canvases, which has been described by Morassi (1955, fig. 11) and others as *Eteocles and Polynices* is, in fact, *Brutus killing Arruns*—also taken from L. Annaeus Florus (Loeb edition, p. 33.).

In the room where the Tiepolos once hung is a large ceiling fresco showing a dolphin amid various gods and goddesses of antiquity, representing Abundance, etc., and also attributes of the Arts and Sciences, Time, Fame and other symbolical figures. It is surrounded by a most elaborate architectural framework of the Bolognese type. Both the artist and date of this fresco are still very mysterious, but despite some suggestions to the contrary I am inclined to place it some years after Tiepolo's canvases.

⁴ Dolfin, pp. 171 ff., and also MSS in Biblioteca Correr XI, E 2/6: *Discendenze patrizie*.

⁵ The other great cycle of canvases with subjects taken from Roman history is in the Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi. These have been attributed to Niccolò Bambini—Ivanov, 1951, pp. 1-3.

⁶ Apart from the works quoted in note 4 above, see de Renaldis.

⁷ Niccolò Madrisio, 1711. See also Biasutti, 1958.

to paint frescoes in the Cathedral and his new Archiepiscopal Palace. After rather a melodramatic start on the ceiling of the staircase, the artist gradually changed his style when he came to paint scenes from the life of Abraham in the gallery and *The Justice of Solomon* in the hall of the tribunal. The dark and lumpish heaviness of his earlier work was replaced by an aristocratic incisiveness of line and a whole new range of magical colours—sparkling blues and pinks and greens—set against a light airy background. Thus, shortly before dying, Dionisio Dolfin, who ruled his petty state like some feudal bishop of the Middle Ages (the very type of patron most congenial to Tiepolo), had the privilege of seeing the first masterpieces of the greatest painter of the century.¹

Indeed for Tiepolo, as for so many Venetian artists, the final break with the heavy style of the seventeenth century did not—perhaps could not—come in his native city, so conservative in temper. In the early 1730s he was frequently summoned outside Venice and, by the time he returned, his palette had lightened still further and his subjects had changed. The heroic days of an Antonio Barbaro or a Daniele Dolfin must now have seemed almost as remote as the Roman epics with which he had commemorated them, and indeed two members of the latter family were soon in prison or in exile for breaking the most fundamental laws of the State. Venice herself was firmly neutral. But Tiepolo remained as much in demand as ever: it is hard to resist the conclusion that his marvellous gifts and brilliance of execution created a need for his art fully as much as they satisfied it. He himself deliberately aimed at a special class of patron. He used to say that ‘painters must try and succeed in large-scale works capable of pleasing the rich and the nobility because it is they who make the fortunes of artists and not the other sort of people, who cannot buy valuable pictures. And so the painter’s spirit must always be reaching out for the sublime, the heroic, the perfect.’²

Thus it was that for the next two decades Tiepolo was working incessantly for an aristocracy that was now breaking up still further into individual components than it had been at the beginning of the century. But its ambitions were no longer military—and were soon to be scarcely even political. In 1761 the British Resident, reporting the death of the Procurator Alessandro Zen, added: ‘what is very unusual, and without a precedent, no one has yet offered for a Candidate to succeed him, tho’ one of the greatest Dignities in this Republick . . .’³ This situation was to become more commonplace,⁴

¹ In 1759 Tiepolo and his son Gian Domenico were recalled to Udine by a new patriarch, Daniele Dolfin, nephew of Dionisio, to decorate the Cappella della Purità near the Cathedral.

² See the sort of statement to the press, ignored, as far as I am aware, by modern writers, made before Tiepolo left for Spain and published in the *Nuova Veneta Gazzetta* of 20 March 1762: ‘. . . Ho udito dire dal Signor Tiepolo stesso, che molti giovani, anche fra suoi allievi, quando credono di saper qualche cosa, più non vogliono studiare, ed arenano quel progresso, per cui fare hanno bastante talento. Aggiunse che li Pittori devono procurare di riuscire nelle opere grandi, cioè in quelle che possono piacere alli Signori Nobili, e ricchi, perchè questi fanno la fortuna de’ Professori, e non già l’altra gente, la quale non può comprare Quadri di molto valore. Quindi è che la mente del Pittore deve sempre tendere al Sublime, all’Eroico, alla Perfezione.’

³ Public Record Office, State Papers—Venice 99/68, p. 233.

⁴ In 1775 provincial nobles turned down the chance to acquire Venetian patrician status—Berengo, 1955, p. 14.

but for a full generation earlier the aristocracy, in the absence of great public exploits, had had to turn to the celebration of private deeds. The nobles, in fact, took refuge in a fabulous dream world, glowing with light and colour, where marriages and family histories were turned into events of supreme importance, attended by all the deities of the pagan and even Christian religions. It was a world given imperishable existence by Tiepolo, who recorded the more notable events in the aristocratic calendar in a series of eulogistic allegories. And yet it was a tense and unrelaxed world, always on show, with every muscle strained to the utmost, every expression hard and humourless, for never in history has the gap between everyday life and artistic fantasy been as great and as unbridgeable as it was in Venice during the middle decades of the eighteenth century. In 1758, for instance, Faustina Savorgnan, a young girl of the most select nobility, married Lodovico Rezzonico, second son of a family whose rise had been as spectacular as it was recent.¹ Of Genoese origin and ennobled only in 1687, their great wealth had secured them the leading positions in the State. Aurelio, Lodovico's father, was made Procuratore di S. Marco in 1751, and in that year bought one of the grandest palaces in Venice from the Bon family. Seven years later his brother Carlo was elected Pope as Clement XIII. In his marriage fresco for the Pope's nephew Tiepolo envisages a scene which puts even these successes in the shade (Plate 43). The bridal pair are being carried on the chariot of the sun drawn by four hurtling white horses and accompanied by Apollo himself, while Fame sounds the event to the world.

As the aristocracy declined in international importance, its glorification at Tiepolo's hands reached new peaks. Families could look up at the ceilings of their state rooms and see their virtues of constancy, strength and justice trumpeted to the four corners of the earth. Admiring Red Indians or black savages might help to compensate for the coldness and scorn of more uncomfortable neighbours such as France or Austria. The Grassi,² the Widmann, the Giustiniani³ and the Soderini all had apotheoses of their families painted in their palaces or country houses, and as late as 1794 when the Republic was in its final stages of decay we find the artist Pietro Novelli recording the greatness of the Collalto.⁴ In their more excessive forms these frescoes showed actual portraits of living members of the family sharing in the general exaltation. Pietro Barbarigo, the leading member of the extreme Catholic faction, had his nephews included in the fresco of *Strength protecting Wisdom* which Tiepolo painted for him in 1745.⁵ And most striking of all, appropriately enough, was the last great work painted by Tiepolo before leaving Venice for ever—the *Apotheosis of the Pisani* in their country house at Stra.⁶ The palace was acknowledged to be the grandest built near Venice in the eighteenth century⁷ and

¹ Livan, 1935, pp. 406-8, and Giussani.

² Molmenti, 1909, pp. 177-88, attributes the fresco to Fabio Canal and unravels the iconography.

³ Brunelli e Callegari, 1931, pp. 38 and 118.

⁴ Novelli, p. 62.

⁵ Muraro, in *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1960, pp. 19-34. For Pietro Barbarigo's political affiliations see Tabacco, p. 38.

⁶ Gallo, 1945.

⁷ G. A. Moschini, 1806, II, p. 105.

for it Tiepolo designed the most extraordinary family allegory he had yet painted (Plate 44). In this it is not the founding fathers or the great heroes who are celebrated, but the family's living members extending to its youngest son, Almorò, seated in his mother's lap. Actual portraits of these are shown in the ceiling while the Fatherland points out their merits to the Virgin and invokes her blessing on them. The Virgin is surrounded by the theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, and by Wisdom. On the other side of the fresco flies Fame to spread the glory of the Pisani family throughout Europe, Africa, Asia and America. The year was 1762: England had just wrested Canada and India from France, and Robespierre was aged four.

Such flattery—and there is evidence that in at least some cases the artist himself took the initiative in choosing the subject¹—was available to any noble with the money. A standard figure of *Time* could suggest that the family was old in wisdom and virtue, but the reference need not be too precise. There was, however, another kind of ancestral glorification which was necessarily confined to the older members of the Venetian aristocracy. It is easy enough to understand why the recording of specific achievements from the past should have first made an appearance when the new aristocracy was beginning to flaunt its titles and wealth, and should have proved even more attractive when refuge in that past was the only compensation for an inglorious present. Thus in 1700 the Corner commissioned Gregorio Lazzarini to paint a member of their family who had distinguished himself at the time of the League of Cambrai—Venice's finest hour.² And other old families followed suit—for subjects such as these were beyond the reach of a Widmann or a Grassi. It is true that the first elaborate reconstruction of an earlier period painted by Tiepolo was for the Sodcrini, ennobled as late as 1656, but they had a long and renowned Florentine ancestry which the artist was able to suggest in three scenes from the fifteenth century leading up to the climax of the family apotheosis on the ceiling.³ In much the same way he painted the Contarini at the moment of their greatest glory—the welcome they gave in 1574 to Henri III of France when he visited their villa at Mira.⁴ Social prestige now made a greater appeal than military prowess.

Such family allegories were not the only way in which noble patrons could be flattered. Sometimes the subject could be more allusive. The Sandi, who had been

¹ The almost complete absence of contracts for secular decorations in eighteenth-century Venice makes it difficult to decide how much choice of subject was left to the artist. There must have been a good deal of consultation between patron and painter. We can get some hints about current practice from artists' biographies. Thus Zannandreis, writing (p. 426) about the Veronese painter Francesco Lorenzi, suggests that it was he who provided Tiepolo with an allegorical scheme for glorifying the King of Spain. Though this may well be an apocryphal story designed to show off Lorenzi's culture, it does at least suggest that a good deal of freedom was left to the artist. Novelli specifically tells us in his Memoirs (p. 62) that it was he himself who chose to record the Greatness of the Collalto family. Most Venetian artists of the eighteenth century first produced *modelli* of their proposed work for inspection by the patron and there are only a very few cases of great discrepancy between these and the completed decoration. This too suggests that the painter was not tied down too rigidly by his instructions.

² Da Canal, p. 57.

³ See Battistella, 1903. The villa was destroyed in the First World War.

⁴ Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris.

ennobled only in 1685,¹ were among the first to employ Tiepolo, and as their fortunes were closely linked to the extremely lucrative profession of the law, they commissioned a ceiling in their palace which was to illustrate the *Powers of Eloquence*, as expressed in four stories from antiquity.² Goldoni tells us in his *Mémoirs* that lawyers enjoyed a status in eighteenth-century Venice second only to that of the nobility,³ and it is significant that one of the very few non-nobles who had the chance to employ Tiepolo was Carlo Cordellina, the leading advocate of the day. He was a man, we are told,⁴ who did not like useless luxury, such as loading his wife with precious stones, but who believed in splendid living. And so he built himself two houses, one in his native Vicenza and one in the country at Montecchio. To decorate the latter he summoned Tiepolo, who was much irritated by the extensive entertainment for which Cordellina was renowned,⁵ but who frescoed *The Continence of Scipio* and the *Family of Darius before Alexander the Great* on the walls—clear allusions to the magnanimity of his patron—and the *Triumph of the Arts* on the ceiling.

There was a familiar repertoire of Greek and Roman stories which had been codified in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as suitable for the display of aristocratic virtues, and all subsequent artists drew heavily on it. But it is probable that such scenes may often have had far more precise meanings than are at present understood. Not only did many patrician families claim Roman descent, as has already been pointed out, but officials in the service of the state were used to hearing themselves compared to Roman heroes on the most trivial pretexts. Thus in 1724 when Pietro Loredan left a neutral Venice for the fortress of Legnano of which he was commander, an orator alluded to the heroism of Mucius Scaevola⁶; and at about the same time another member of the Loredan family, Antonio, was, on leaving the governorship of Padua, compared to Pompey.⁷ The theme of Sacrifice was particularly popular, for it satisfied the century's love of melodrama while alluding to the responsibilities of power. But antiquity also provided a fund of more exhilarating scenes. Tiepolo and his followers frequently painted *The Banquet of Antony and Cleopatra*, which glorified a beautiful Eastern queen successfully challenging the rough Roman hero from the West by her astuteness and wealth; this was surely a veiled allusion to Venice's own policy during these years but it also symbolised a final enthusiastic fling of aristocratic extravagance in the face of new theories of political economy which were everywhere gaining ground—a 'reactionary' manifesto which found its literary equivalent in some of the writings of Carlo Gozzi. There was, however, a more straightforward background to the choice of this theme. We learn from the memoirs of Antonio Longo

¹ Biblioteca Correr, Venezia—MSS. XI, E 2/6, *Discendenze Patrizie*.

² Morassi, 1955, pp. 4-12. The subjects were *Amphion building the walls of Thebes with his song*, *Hercules with the chained Cecrops*, *Orpheus claiming Eurydice* and *Perseus on Pegasus slaying the Sea Monster*.

³ Goldoni, I, pp. 105 ff. (Chapter XXIII of the *Mémoirs*).⁴ [G. B. Fontanella].

⁵ Letter from Tiepolo to Francesco Algarotti of 26 October 1743 published by Fogolari, 1942, p. 34.

⁶ *La Rappresentanza del vero merito*—Orazione nella partenza del Glorioso Reggimento di S.E. il Signor Pietro Loredan Provveditore, e Capitano degnissimo della Fortezza di Legnano, Venezia 1724.

⁷ Orazione detta in nome della magnifica Città di Padova all' Eccellenza del Sig:r Antonio Loredan Podestà—nella partenza del suo Reggimento, In Padova (n.d.).

that nobles used to organise competitions as to who could offer the most expensive banquets¹; and the Labia, whose palace contained Tiepolo's most magnificent version of the subject, became legendary for their extravagance.² Moreover, Maria Labia, *doyenne* of the family and a 'femme sur le retour qui a été fort belle et fort galante', owned a famous collection of jewelry of which she was especially proud.³ There can be little doubt that Tiepolo intended a delicate compliment, and that Maria Labia felt no great difficulty in identifying herself with the beautiful Egyptian queen who won her wager by dissolving a priceless pearl in wine.

Unbridled dreams of power and grandeur on this scale, and the acute and genuine awareness of the Venetian nobles that (unlike their equivalents in France) they still represented the only real power in the State, kept history painting alive in Venice at a time when it was declining in expressive force and importance throughout Europe. 'There must be a great difference', wrote Paolo Renier in 1772,⁴ 'between a minister who serves his Prince as a subject and one to whom God's special grace has granted the supreme boon of living in a free Republic and of being a small but essential part of the whole.' Some of the moral fervour of the French middle classes, which was to lead to a revival of history painting and culminate in the rhetoric of David, was here expressed by the aristocracy and found its champion in Tiepolo—though, of course, the results were wholly different in elegance, colour and subject-matter. Indeed, curiously enough, those Frenchmen who in the middle of the eighteenth century were especially concerned to revive native history painting were keen admirers of Tiepolo. Thus in 1754 the Marquis de Vandières (later Marquis de Marigny) wrote to the Director of the French Academy in Rome instructing him to send students to copy the artist's frescoes at the Villa Contarini-Pisani, for 'il en naîtra un autre bien pour l'histoire de France, puisqu'on aura les usages et les habillements de ces tems-là qui sont très intéressants pour elle'.⁵ And Cochin, who had the same interests at heart, also thought very highly of Tiepolo.⁶ Present-day taste finds the artist's *bozzetti* more appealing and, attracted by the general glamour of 'rococo' art, fails to grasp the grandeur and megalomania of Tiepolo's full-scale decorations. There is reason to believe that painters like Fragonard and some connoisseurs of the time may have made the same distinction. But admiration for Tiepolo's marvellous colour and fantasy should not blind us to his moral commitment to the cause he was serving any more than it does in the case of Rubens.

It was probably the Venetian nobility's awareness of real privileges and obligations that was responsible for the exaggerated dignity of their portraiture⁷ and for the surprisingly small amount of that erotic and frivolous painting that was so typical of the French rococo. There is no Venetian equivalent to a Boucher or a Fragonard, and

¹ Antonio Longo, 1820, I, pp. 81-90.

² Tassini, 1915, p. 335.

³ De Brosses, I, p. 149.

⁴ Quoted by T. M. Marcellino, p. 18, note 32.

⁵ Byam Shaw, 1960, p. 530.

⁶ Villot, pp. 169-76.

⁷ See the relevant chapter in Levey, 1959.

it is significant that the artists who most nearly approach the French from this point of view, Pellegrini and Rosalba Carriera, appear to have had more success abroad than in Venice. Even subjects such as *Bathsheba bathing* or *Susanna and the Elders* which had been enormously popular as pretexts for eroticism towards the end of the seventeenth-century later became very much rarer; while mythologies such as *Aurora*, *Flora* and so on were less in demand than scenes from Roman and-Greek history. Similarly Gian Antonio Guardi, an artist of magical but quite unserious qualities, enjoyed a relatively insignificant career, whereas in Paris he would surely have had a triumphant success.

Only very rarely did Tiepolo stray from dreams of grandeur to the world of pure enchantment. The most striking instance is in the beautiful series of frescoes illustrating romantic scenes from Homer, Virgil, Tasso and Ariosto which he painted for the Valmarana family in Vicenza.¹ Unfortunately too little is known of the circumstances surrounding the commission and of its patrons to explain this interlude in his career, but it may just be worth pointing out that we are told of Leonardo Valmarana, who seems to have been the head of the family when the frescoes were painted in 1757, that he was of a 'sweet disposition, pleasant conversation, and the most agreeable character. He was far removed from any display, ostentation or pride . . . being aware that true nobility does not consist in boasting of ancestors which only proves oneself to be void of merits and virtue. He was always humble in his manner, almost forgetful of his birth, his blood and his greatness'.² The words come from a funeral oration—not the most reliable source for an impartial estimate of a man's character—but so insistent are they in stressing a virtue not often referred to, still less praised, in eighteenth-century Venetian orations, that they are worth bearing in mind when we try and explain the exceptional nature of Tiepolo's work at the Villa Valmarana and the rustic frescoes by his son in the *foresteria* there.

Amid the throngs of patricians who were decorating their palaces and villas with allegories of their virtues or scenes from their family histories there was one man who especially struck his contemporaries for his rectitude, intellectual authority and political stature. Marco Foscarini was descended from one of the oldest families in Venice.³ He was educated in Bologna and in his younger days he travelled to Paris, Vienna and Rome, serving as ambassador in the two latter cities. In 1734 he was appointed official historiographer of the Republic, and though he never wrote the volumes expected of him he was always passionately interested in Venetian literature and history about which he planned a number of studies only some of which were published in his lifetime. This love of the past and constant dwelling on the ancient glories of Venice deeply affected his political thinking. As Procuratore di San Marco from 1741, and later as Doge for a few months before his death in 1763, he became increasingly identified with conservative causes, and it was he who took the strongest stand against Angelo

¹ Levey, in *Journal of Warburg Institute*, 1957, pp. 298-317.

² Ne' Solenni funerali celebrati nella Cattedrale Chiesa di Parenzo il dì 27 Aprile 1765 . . . dell' Illustriss. ed Eccellentiss. Leonardo Co: Valmarana Veneto Senatore . . . In Venezia 1765.

³ There are a large number of works devoted to various aspects of Marco Foscarini's political and literary careers. The most useful general accounts are by Tommaso Gar, 1843, and Emilio Morpurgo.

Querini and his proposed 'reforms' in 1762.¹ Though the methods by which he became Doge are open to suspicion, he seemed to his contemporaries to represent the last surviving incarnation of the old virtues of integrity and learning that had made Venetian statesmen so respected. He was indeed a proud and cultivated man and his patronage shows him to have had ambitious and scholarly tastes.

The family palace was opposite the church of the Carmini,² and it was repeatedly decorated with great lavishness—'the family is the richest in Venice,' wrote one architectural painter working there in 1749,³ 'they have 130,000 ducats a year and an infinite number of palaces and jewels and a gallery worth 200,000 ducats'. Many of the pictures, which included seven Tintoretto's and other Venetian classics, had been left with the palace by its former owner, Pietro Foscarini, himself a Procuratore di San Marco, who died in 1745.⁴

Marco Foscarini was more interested in books than in pictures, and his main attention was devoted to his magnificent library of manuscripts and other works, mostly dealing with the history of Venice.⁵ The paintings he commissioned were intended primarily to illustrate his literary interests, and with one exception it is unlikely that he made use of any of the leading artists of his day. During his embassy in Rome between 1737 and 1740 he employed Pompeo Batoni, who was living, like him, in the Palazzo di S. Marco to draw his portrait and to paint a *Triumph of Venice* according to a programme clearly drawn up by himself (Plate 45).⁶ It was to represent 'the flourishing state of the Republic when, after the wars incited by the famous league of Cambrai, peace returned and the fine arts began to flourish again in Venice, summoned back and fostered by Doge Leonardo Loredano'. In its harking back to the recovery of Venice after earlier disasters, the subject typifies Marco Foscarini's desire to seek encouragement from past history. It is noteworthy too as one of the very few 'historical' pictures painted for a Venetian patron which has no reference to the triumphs of his own family but is purely devoted to exalting the State. Greek sages on the right of the picture are being shown the recorded achievements of Venice by Mercury; on the left a Roman warrior has her present grandeur pointed out to him by Neptune. In the foreground, at the feet of Minerva, are the arts; while in the centre the chariot of the Republic with Doge Loredan is surveyed by History and Fame. The figures of Minerva and the Roman warrior are extraordinarily classical for the period in which they were painted, and Batoni has made no concessions to Venetian taste.

We know much less about Foscarini's other pictures, beyond the fact that they

¹ For Angelo Querini see later, Chapter 15.

² Fontana, p. 291.

³ Pietro Visconti to Gian Pietro Ligari published by Arslan, 1952, p. 63.

⁴ Pietro Foscarini's will and the inventory of his pictures are in the Biblioteca Correr, Cod. Cicogna, MMCCCCXLV—2686.

⁵ The library was sold by Marco Foscarini's descendants to the Austrian government in 1800 and is now in the Hofbibliothek, Vienna.

⁶ For a detailed discussion of this picture, now in the Kress Foundation at New York, see A. Clark, 1959, pp. 232-6.

represented the great writers of Venice and hung in the rooms where he kept their books. Many of them seem to have been painted in Rome where Marco Foscarini, whom the Président de Brosses found to be a man 'd'un esprit et d'un feu surprenants', did everything he could to maintain the prestige of his native city. It was in Rome too that he acquired large numbers of books and manuscripts which he brought back 'quasi trionfando' to the family palace; and in both cities he employed sculptors in marble, ivory and metal to record the great figures of the past.¹ All these images are now gone and we have no indication of the artists who made them. What little we know is not very encouraging. 'He was', wrote the minor painter Pietro António Novelli,² 'an extremely learned prince and a great patron and lover of the fine arts. . . . When he saw a S. Marco I had painted for the engraver Marco Pitteri, he liked it so much that he insisted on keeping it in his room for four days, and then wanted a history picture from me. . . .' Giacomo Guarana, a follower of Tiepolo, painted frescoes in the palace³; Giuseppe Nogari his portrait.⁴

The great names of Venetian painting do not seem to have played much part in his life⁵; but his artistic patronage none the less made a striking impression on his fellow-citizens. As you walk through his rooms with the portraits and busts of great men, wrote a contemporary,⁶ 'the emotion of elation and respect experienced by lovers of virtue is indescribable. You seem to enter a venerable sanctuary in which the most famous writers, and the very Muses themselves, have made their home.'

Enough has been said to show that certain artists at least received considerable patronage during the first half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, when he came to write of painting during this period the Abate Moschini specifically claimed that the arts had suffered from no lack of support.⁷ And from other sources too we learn of families employing established artists as members of their households⁸: thus the Pisani organised a private academy with Pietro Longhi in charge, but this seems to have done little more than provide their son Almorò with drawing lessons and it came to an end with his death.⁹

Yet if we look rather more carefully we see that this patronage was more restricted in nature and scope than at first appears. Moschini was, after all, rebutting a charge that the arts owed nothing to Venetian support, and though this is clearly false, the type of art required was certainly very limited. Thus the patrician insistence on his own glorification inevitably led to a great concentration on the ceiling fresco. We know too

¹ Lodovico Arnaldi: *Orazione in lode di Marco Foscarini Doge di Venezia*. See also De Brosses, II, p. 39.

² Novelli, p. 16.

³ G. A. Moschini, 1808, p. 139.

⁴ Gradenigo, p. 91.

⁵ Though prints taken from drawings by Tiepolo of Oriental heads were dedicated to him.

⁶ Sebastiano Molino: *Orazione in lode di Marco Foscarini Procurator di S. Marco*.

⁷ G. A. Moschini, 1806, III, p. 49.

⁸ Such as the Zenobio employment of Carlevarijs (Mauroner, p. 15); the Miani of Camerata and the Baglione of Polazzo (Alessandro Longhi); and the Zambelli of Pittoni at the end of his life (G. A. Moschini, 1806, III, p. 70).

⁹ Gallo, 1945, p. 53.

from travellers that pictures were hung on walls to fulfil a purely decorative function. 'The Venetians cover their walls with pictures, and never think their apartments properly finished until they have such as shall fill all the spaces from top to bottom, so as completely to hide the hanging. This being their object, there are in all the collections many more bad pictures than good; and on entering a room, the number of paintings are such, that it is not till after some recollection you can discriminate those pictures that merit attention, from amongst a chaos of glowing colours that surround them; and which are frequently so ill classed, that a picture which requires to be hung high, is perhaps the lowest in the room, whilst another that cannot be seen too close, touches the cornice: this is occasioned by their great object of covering the walls, never considering what light etc. may suit their pictures.'¹ By the early eighteenth century this aim had been achieved for most of the older patrician families. If we examine their inventories we are again and again struck by the fact that the commissioning or buying of contemporary pictures declined very considerably after this period.² The last generation of artists to be adequately represented in Venetian collections is that dating from the very end of the seventeenth century. The Pisani, for instance, by far the most lavish family of the time and for some years during the youth of Almoro (1740-66), himself an amateur artist, the special patron of the landscape painter Giuseppe Zais,³ bought for their palace at S. Stefano only a few pictures painted after 1720, and while the number of contemporary paintings in their country house at Stra, built in the 1740s, is much larger, it is still noticeably inferior to that of the previous century.⁴

The decline of art patronage during the eighteenth century was in fact much discussed at the time—'I don't find', wrote one observer in 1745,⁵ 'that these nobles like spending money on pictures'—and various reasons were given for it, most of which amounted to little more than well-worn diatribes about the corrupt state of the age. While these can be accepted only with caution—corruption (even decadence) and the fine arts have often proved the happiest of bed-fellows—it is difficult to find more concrete reasons. New fashions in interior decoration certainly played some part in limiting the amount of wall space, and in the palaces of older families galleries were already filled with the accumulation of centuries. But these factors cannot have been decisive. The economic situation is still more difficult to assess. It is certain that many extremely important families drastically declined in wealth during the century and that money became more and more restricted to a small inner group.⁶ The Foscari, who lived opposite the Carmini, were rumoured to be the richest family in the city and to

¹ *Letters from Italy . . . in the years 1770 and 1771 to a friend residing in France by an English woman*, London 1776, III, p. 274.

² A number of Venetian inventories of the eighteenth century are included in C. A. Levi's collection of 1900. Others are still unpublished in the Venetian archives, especially those of the Seminario Patriarcale, where MSS. 788.13 contains those drawn up by Pietro Edwards at the downfall of the Republic.

³ Muraro in *Emporium*, 1960, pp. 195-218.

⁴ Gallo, 1945, pp. 140 ff.

⁵ Letter from P. E. Gherardi to L. A. Muratori of 20 February 1745 in Biblioteca Estense, Modena.

⁶ Beltrami, 1954.

have an annual income of 32,000 *zecchini* a year.¹ At the very opposite end of the scale it has been estimated that bare subsistence could just be maintained on about 15 *zecchini* a year.² If we compare some of the prices charged by different artists we can see that, in the most successful cases, foreign competition kept them very high. Thus at the very outset of his career Canaletto was charging about 22 *zecchini* a picture; within ten years he had raised his price to 120 *zecchini* and this was understandably considered to be exorbitant. A miniature by Rosalba Carriera cost 50 *zecchini* and a pastel 20 or 30 depending on whether it was to include one or both hands or flowers. Curiously enough, large history paintings and even full-scale decorations were less expensive, comparatively speaking, than the small works of fashionable artists with a cosmopolitan clientèle. Thus Piazzetta's large picture of the *Angelo Custode* was valued at about 100 *zecchini*, and Tiepolo, who was himself required to pay for the canvas and pigments, was given only the same sum in 1743 for his *Martyrdom of St John the Bishop* in Bergamo Cathedral, and only 500 *zecchini* in 1754 for his frescoes in the dome of the church of the Pietà in Venice.³

The new nobles, who had to pay nearly 30,000 *zecchini* to be enrolled, were obviously not worried by problems of space or money, and their reluctance to buy contemporary pictures is still harder to explain. For an extensive gallery was a necessary corollary of nobility, and it is striking that the only patrician family to have built up a collection of pictures in the eighteenth century were the Grassi, who had bought their way into the aristocracy in 1699. But they seem—deliberately, perhaps, so as to emphasise their ancient lineage—to have ignored contemporary artists altogether and to have turned instead to those same old masters who could be found in such numbers in the galleries of older families: Titian, Veronese, Bassano, Van Dyck, Guido Reni, Guercino, Schiavone, Fetti and Rubens.⁴ One wonders who began to paint the ancestral portraits.

The Labia were not much more adventurous in their choice of pictures: for them too art seemed to stop at the end of the seventeenth century, though they owned a portrait by Tiepolo as well as his frescoes, and employed Cignaroli for a time⁵; only the Giovanelli, ennobled in 1668, bought works by Tiepolo, Piazzetta, Canaletto and Zuccarelli as well as old masters.⁶

¹ The figures that follow are intended to give only the most approximate indication of monetary relationships: they do not take into account changes in the value of money at different times in the century. I have deliberately changed all currency into the unit of the *zecchino*, making use of the tables in De La Lande, VII, p. 81. The estimate of the Foscari income is derived from a letter of Pietro Visconti who was working there in 1749—See p. 259, note 3.

² Berengo, 1956, p. 86.

³ For the prices mentioned see p. 264, note 6, p. 273, note 1, p. 276, note 1, and p. 292, note 4.

⁴ Moschini, 1806, II, p. 105.

⁵ See the unpublished Labia inventory of 1749 referred to in note 8, p. 250. The Tiepolos in the collection were described merely as *Ritratto con cristallo* and *Una Palla*. For Cignaroli see Bevilacqua. He worked for the Labia for four years and some of the oil paintings which he inserted into ceilings in the palace are still *in situ*.

"Ad ornato dei mezzani di sopra," wrote Gio. Battista Biffi of the Palazzo Giovanelli in 1773, "vi sono à carra i quadri di Paolo, di Palma, di Tiepolo, di Farinato, Le tavole greche del quattrocento, e senza numero i bei pezzi originali di Tempesta, di Zelotti, di Canaletto, di Piazzetta, e del mio Zuccharelli...." Biblioteca Governativa, Cremona, MSS. aa.I.4. I am most grateful to Professor Franco Venturi for showing me the microfilms he had made of this correspondence.

Thus, apart from magnificent ceiling decoration, the nobility was not very imaginative in its support for the arts during the first half of the eighteenth century, and, in fact, we only find one patrician of any individuality as a patron and collector—Zaccaria Sagredo (Plate 48b).

The Sagredo were among the oldest of Venetian families and during Zaccaria's own lifetime they gave to the Republic one of its most impressive Doges, Niccolò, though he only lived for eighteen months after his election in 1675. There could have been no greater contrast between this decisive, haughty politician and his nephew the young Zaccaria, then aged 21. Though he too, like all Venetian aristocrats, was destined for public service, his ambitions clearly lay elsewhere, and he never achieved any higher post than the governorship of Bergamo in 1690.¹ He used his considerable resources to amass a large collection of paintings, drawings, sculpture, books and armour which in his later years won him the reputation of being the greatest patron of his day in Venice² and among foreign visitors that of being just about the only one. When John Breval came to the city in the late 1720s he said that he 'could hear of but one remarkable Dilettante, the noble Sagredo'.³ This reputation was not wholly to his liking. For Zaccaria Sagredo seems to have been of a quite excessively nervous temperament and to have carried his scruples about meeting foreigners to an extreme. On one occasion he was seen hurrying 'down Stairs . . . as if the House had been on fire' to avoid such a perilous contact.⁴ He never married, and he filled his palace at S. Sofia with paintings old and new, bought from previous collectors, commissioned directly from the artist or picked up at exhibitions.⁵ He made anxious though, as it proved, unavailing provision for his collection to be kept intact after his death by putting it in charge of his favourite servant Tommaso de' Santi and leaving it to his nephew Gherardo.⁶ And then in 1729 this timid, acquisitive, art-loving bachelor died. Gherardo survived him for ten years,

¹ Because of his retiring private life, information about Zaccaria Sagredo is scarce. Barbaro in the *Arbori de patritii veneti* (Archivio di Stato, MSS. VI, c. 507) says merely that he was born on 15 October 1653, the son of Steffano Sagredo and Vienna Foscarini, and that 'Fu Pod.a a Bergamo fece una Galleria di sculture, pitture, e stampe' and died in May 1729.

² Da Canal, p. 36: 'possiede per quadri, disegni, medaglie ed armi antiche una delle più ricche gallerie dell'Europa'. Moschini, 1806, III, p. 93, calls him 'grande amico della pittura'.

Keyser, who must have arrived in Venice soon after Zaccaria's death in 1729 (*Travels*, 1757, III, p. 295, and Schudt, 1959, p. 69), reported that the celebrated gallery 'consists chiefly of antiquities, natural curiosities and especially foreign arms and weapons', but he was in fact unable to get in as repairs were under way. Cochin, III, pp. 143–50, discussed many of the pictures in the collection.

An anonymous manuscript in the Biblioteca Correr—Cod. Gradenigo 185, cc. 379–86—called *Serie degli Nobili Veneti, e Cittadini Professori di Belle Arti, e deli dilettanti raccoglitori di cose antiche, e rare, e così degli scopritori, e inventori di valevoli industrie* mentions under the date 1710 'Zaccaria Sagredo con grandis.a spesa aveva per suo dilecto provveduto a miliare di stampe, e carte disegnate da primi, e valenti uomini del mondo'.

³ Breval, 1738, I, p. 230.

⁴ Edward Wright, I, p. 77.

⁵ He bought his Carracci drawings from the Bonfiglioli family in Bologna (Bottari, II, p. 186); he commissioned pictures from Crespi (Zanotti, II, p. 62); he bought Piazzetta's *Angelo Custode* at the S. Rocco exhibition (d'Argenville, I, p. 319).

⁶ Zaccaria Sagredo's will is in the Archivio di Stato, dated 22 May 1729, notaio Pietro Grigis—17:93. The relevant passage reads: 'Per ciò voglio, et Intendo primieramente, che havendo fatto una

but after his death aged 49 in 1738, plans at once began to be made for the dispersal of the collection so lovingly built up.¹ Horace Walpole, travelling in Italy between 1739 and 1741, heard of the proposed sale.² So did Francesco Algarotti two or three years later.³ In fact, the collection was broken up piecemeal over a long period. Sagredo's heirs, who were much less cautious than he had been, got in touch with anyone interested and had no scruples about selling to foreigners. Both the British Consul, Joseph Smith,⁴ and his successor, John Udney, were among those who came to buy.⁵

The importance of the collection and its contemporary prestige can be gauged from the fact that in 1743 both Tiepolo and Piazzetta were required to draw up inventories, and were followed nearly twenty years later, in 1762, by Pietro Longhi.⁶ It is from their work and from general contemporary eulogies that we have to derive most of our information about Zaccaria Sagredo as a patron and collector. Unfortunately it is very difficult to appraise the evidence, for there were already many pictures in the family collection before Zaccaria himself added his individual contribution. Thus the battle scenes by Borgognone, which were among the most highly valued pictures in the gallery, were painted for Doge Niccolò,⁷ and many of the others later recorded in the palace must date from this or earlier periods.

It was not until ten years after this that Zaccaria, on the death of his father, became head of his branch of the family, but we first begin to hear of his passion for art very much later when he was already an old man.⁸ Even in these last years of his life, however, Sagredo's sympathies extended to the younger generation of Venetian artists.

Spesa considerabile nella compreda di libri, carte, disegni, et Arme, e Quadri, perche il tutto non vada dissipato, et con il progresso del tempo l'anienti, per ciò ellego Tomaso de Santi mio cameriere, acciò ne habia del tutto una particolar custodia, e cura, non sol della sudetta roba, come pure dell'i apartamenti, ove di presente s'at trova annichiata, volendo sperare, che come con tutta pontualità, et amore, mi ha sempre servito, così sarà per fare nel presente carico, che hora gl'ingiongo, et acciò egli possa vivere honorevolmente e senza essere distratto, intendo, ordino e voglio che gli vengono corisposti del mio erede annualmente di mesi trè in mesi trè, sempre anticipatamente, ducati correnti da 76.4 l'uno numero cento. . . . Residuo poi di tutti et cadauni-nieci Beni, mobili, stabili, prnti e futuri . . . lascio al Nobil Homo M. Girardo P.o Sagredo mio Amatissimo Nipote. . . .

He left a Rubens and 'un Ritrato del Moron' to a friend, Sig. Salvator Varda.

¹ See 'Inventario del 1738 tempo della morte del Proc.r Sagredo' in Biblioteca Correr, MSS. P.D. C2193 IV.

² Horace Walpole, 1767, p. viii.

³ Posse, 1931—Letter No. 8 of July 1743 reports that the pictures were to be sold as a complete collection.

⁴ See the document from the Sagredo archives published by Blunt, 1957, p. 24, which shows that Smith was buying paintings and drawings from Zaccaria's heirs in 1751-2.

⁵ In the Sagredo archives (Biblioteca Correr—MSS. P.D.—C2193/VII) is a list of pictures dated 1762 'ricercati dal Sig. Zuane Udni Console d'Inghilterra'.

I am grateful to Sir Anthony Blunt for pointing out to me that some Sagredo pictures appear in an anonymous sale, 2 February 1764, Prestage, 1st day, lots 89 ff.

⁶ M. Brunetti, 1951, pp. 158-60. The Longhi inventory has not been lost, as Brunetti maintains, but still survives with the other Sagredo papers in the Biblioteca Correr—MSS. P.D. C2193/I.

⁷ Baldinucci, VI, 1728, p. 421.

⁸ Thus of the few pictures listed in the various eighteenth-century inventories which must have been painted between 1685 and 1729 (the only ones that it is safe to assume were directly acquired by Zaccaria

Plate 45



BATONI: Triumph of Venice

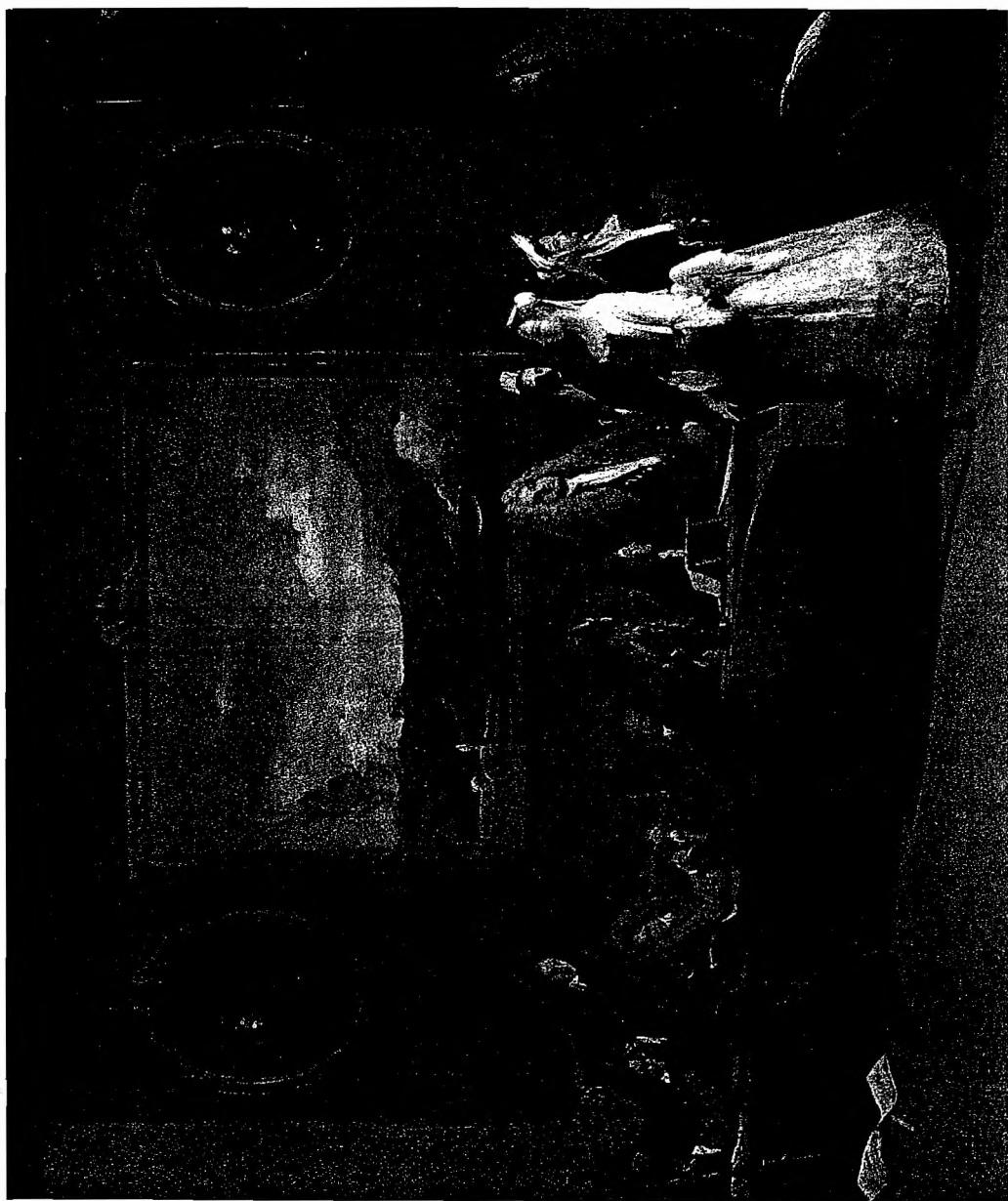
VENETIAN ARTISTS IN ENGLAND DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (see Plates 46 and 47)

Plate 46



PELLEGRINI: Pierre Motteux and his family

Plate 47



MARCO RUCCI: An operatic rehearsal

VENETIAN PATRONS DURING THE
FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



a. PITTERI: Flaminio Corner



b. FALDONI: Zaccaria Sagredo



Thus at one of the annual exhibitions at S. Rocco he bought Piazzetta's *Angelo Custode*, a huge altarpiece which the painter had been unable to dispose of elsewhere.¹ This picture was certainly the most important of his modern acquisitions. Both Tiepolo and (more obviously) Piazzetta himself agreed in valuing it very highly when they drew up an estimate of the collection; and Venetian and foreign visitors alike were aware of its fame.² Zaccaria Sagredo may well have been in touch with Tiepolo himself at an early stage in the great artist's career: an unidentified ceiling by him and several drawings were recorded in 1743, and though the former may have been commissioned after Zaccaria's death, the drawings were almost certainly acquired by him. Furthermore, sometime after 1721 Tiepolo drew for the engraver Andrea Zucchi the statue of *Virginity* by the sculptor Antonio Corradini in the church of S. Maria del Carmelo and this was dedicated to Zaccaria Sagredo 'who by means of his nobility, authority and generosity cherishes and promotes the fine arts'.³ Sagredo was also among the very first patrons of Canaletto: he owned at least one view by him before the end of 1725 and he was interested enough in his career to comment on pictures painted for other clients.⁴ It is finally just possible that Zaccaria Sagredo commissioned a work by one other artist destined to make a great name for himself later in the century, though here the results were less fortunate. Pietro Longhi put the date 1734 on the clumsy fresco of *The Fall of the Giants* which he painted on the staircase of the Palazzo Sagredo, but this must refer to the completion of the work, and there is reason to believe that he began it at the outset of his career very much earlier and consequently that the commission came from Zaccaria himself.⁵ Certainly the old man went on collecting until the very end of his life. G. M. Crespi, who painted two religious works for him, wrote from Bologna in July 1729 that his patron's death had been hastened by the tricks played on him by dealers. 'He died a few days ago after having spent between seven and eight thousand zecchini on pictures and drawings, many original, most of which were not worth a piastra.'⁶

himself) there are some religious canvases by the German Johann Karl Loth and some portraits by Niccolò Cassana—certainly nothing that can remotely justify the claims made for Zaccaria's patronage in his own day. In fact it is certain that he bought many old masters which are quite impossible to identify among the many hundreds in the collection; and equally certain that as early as 1743, the date of the first inventory, many pictures had already been disposed of.

¹ Haskell and Levey, 1958, p. 182.

² Part of the picture is now in the Detroit Institute of Arts. Cochin, III, p. 150, who in 1758 wrote an account of the pictures then in the Sagredo palace, called it a 'tableau fort beau'.

³ See print 428 in Vol. 3 of Raccolta Gherro in the Biblioteca Correr dedicated 'A Sua Ecc. il Sig. Zaccaria Sagredo, che con la nobiltà, autorità, beneficenza favorisce e promuove le belle arti...'

⁴ See letters from Alessandro Marchesini to Stefano Conti, dated 11 August and 1 December 1725 published by Haskell, 1956, p. 298. ⁵ See the arguments of V. Moschini, 1956, p. 12.

⁶ The pictures were a *Nativity* and a *Mission*—L. Crespi, p. 215. The latter may be the pictures described as a 'Jesuit Mission' now in Chicago.

Crespi's letter to Stefano Conti of 4 July 1729 is in the Biblioteca Governativa, Lucca—MSS. 3299: 'Se così fatto avesse (come più e più volte pregato) l'Ecc.mo Zachario Sagredo Nobile Véneto, la quantità degl'inganni non gli avrebbero affrettata la Morte. Morì giorni sono doppo havere Speso più di 7000, in 8000 Zecchini in tanti Quadri, e disegni molti originali, la maggior parte che non valevano una Piastra.'

Despite his probable contacts with Tiepolo, Piazzetta, Canaletto and Longhi so early in their careers and so late in his, our knowledge of Sagredo is so slight that we would scarcely pay much attention to him as patron were it not for the enthusiasm of his contemporaries. But about one aspect of his collecting we are very much better informed, and here Sagredo's supremacy over any other aristocratic rival is so evident that it is possible for us to understand the extent of his reputation. He was a passionate collector of prints and drawings. Indeed, John Breval wrote that he 'is reckoned to have the largest Collection of Prints of any man in Europe', though he added rather unfairly: 'This is the only Branch of Virtù that Gentleman is famous for.'¹ In the inventories of the Sagredo collection drawn up some years after Zaccaria's death there are many volumes of drawings which we can assume to have been assembled by him. They include works attributed to Rembrandt and the German old masters as well as to contemporaries such as Tiepolo, Piazzetta, Cimaroli, Silvestro Manaigo and others. From Moschini we learn that Sagredo commissioned 100 views in pen and ink from the Brescian artist Andrea Torresani²; other sources tell us that he bought at a high price 'all the rare and very correct drawings of Lazzarini, and also bound into a volume all the drawings of the Bellunese [Gaspare] Diziani'.³

In later years these drawings were sold by Zaccaria's heirs, and among those who bought several complete volumes was the Englishman Joseph Smith. As these still survive in the Royal Collection we can gain some measure of Sagredo's connoisseurship. Thus the Carracci drawings there come from three volumes which he bought towards the very end of his life from the famous Bonfiglioli collection in Bologna.⁴ This purchase, which included fine sheets by Raphael⁵ and 'numbers of Original Pieces by the greatest masters', attracted much attention among connoisseurs of the day.⁶ However, another of Sagredo's possessions was of very much greater importance for the future of Venetian eighteenth century taste and art: this was his magnificent set of drawings, the finest in existence, by the Genoese artist Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione.⁷ In the generation after Zaccaria's death prints and drawings by this master were to be enormously admired in Venice and throughout Europe—with good reason, for his brilliant fluency and cult of the 'picturesque' anticipate much that was most vital in rococo draughtsmanship. The connoisseur Francesco Algarotti was keen to purchase Sagredo's volumes for the King of Saxony, but they were in fact obtained by Joseph Smith, who was also given a large number of additional Castiglione drawings by Algarotti himself. Another connoisseur, Antonio Maria Zanetti the Elder, himself a friend of Sagredo, was also a lover of Castiglione and in 1759 engraved twelve of his drawings.⁸ Of greater

¹ See p. 263, note 3.

² G. A. Moschini, 1806, I, p. 84.

³ Da Canal, p. 77, and Fontana, p. 64.

⁴ See Smith's will published by Parker, 1948, p. 60.

⁵ Popham and Wilde, 1949, p. 14.

⁶ Letter from A. M. Zanetti to Francesco Gabburri of 11 January 1728 published in Bottari, II, p. 186.

⁷ See especially Blunt, 1954, p. 24.

⁸ See later, Chapter 13.

significance was the admiration that Tiepolo felt for Castiglione. We know that he himself owned a monotype by the artist, and his passionate study of his great Genoese predecessor is apparent in the subject-matter and technique of his own etchings, as Algarotti was the first to point out.¹

This admiration for Castiglione's prints and drawings only became fervent and widespread after Zaccaria Sagredo's death, but he seems to have been the first in Venice to have experienced it, and to have collected these works by the master on an extensive scale. The drawings were chosen with great care and were said to have been bought by Sagredo for 1500 *zecchini*.² We have no certain knowledge of who sold them to him, but one source seems very likely. In 1706 Ferdinando Carlo Gonzaga, the last Duke of Mantua, sought refuge in Venice from the invading Austrians.³ Two years later, 'usé par la débauche, malade de la goutte', he died in Padua at the age of 56. In the meantime, however, he had sent to him over 900 pictures from the ducal collections, which before his death he had widely distributed among his courtiers. Eventually the Duke of Lorraine successfully established his claim to be heir to the Gonzaga effects, but despite this a great number of pictures from Mantua turned up on the Venetian market. Rosalba Carriera bought two for the Elector Palatine and the German collector Field Marshall Schulenburg bought a large batch⁴ among which were several Castigliones, for this artist had been court painter at Mantua for over twenty years. Although there is no specific reference to drawings among the works of art sent to the Duke in Venice, either Ferdinando Carlo himself or someone in his immediate entourage may well have owned the large quantity from which Sagredo made up his volumes—especially as some of them specifically relate to pictures that Castiglione painted at Mantua.⁵ But whatever their origin, Zaccaria Sagredo's main title to fame as an important pioneer in taste depends on his collection of these drawings. And, on a more personal level, the thought of the old man poring over the sad, secret poetry of Castiglione gives us an insight into his character which is missing from the all too scanty records that have survived.

- ii -

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Venice maintained that independence from Rome that had long marked her policy—though financial necessity compelled her in 1657 to readmit the Jesuits in return for papal support. Within the State itself, however, the government insisted on a policy of religious orthodoxy that was as rigorous as anything that Rome could have desired—for it was a maxim, held even by the sceptical, that religious and political dissent went hand in hand.⁶ There were doubts sometimes about the depth of Venetian piety; never about the lavishness with which

¹ See later, Chapter 14.

² According to Smith's will—Parker, 1948, p. 60.

³ Fochessati, p. 278.

⁴ Malamani, 1899, p. 46, and see later, Chapter 11.

⁵ Blunt, 1954, p. 36.

⁶ See, for instance, the attitude of Casanova as described by A. Bozzola.

it was expressed.¹ Such lavishness was natural enough, for throughout the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries the Church, and in particular the religious Orders, were constantly growing in wealth, despite frequent and unsuccessful attempts by the State to stop this process. When in 1767 it was at last decided to forbid secular property passing into clerical ownership, it was discovered that although the clergy amounted to only two per cent of the population, the income from their land was almost equal to that of the rest of the Republic.²

And so the Church retained or even increased the position she had always held as the leading patron of contemporary art in Venice. Of the history painters in the city virtually all devoted well over half their work to the Church, and in many cases the proportion was considerably higher. Of Cignaroli in Verona it was claimed that like Barocci and Carlo Dolci (significant parallels) for years he painted almost nothing but saints,³ though many of these must have been for private devotional pictures. With its constant demand for altarpieces the Church provided a market for modern painting that was lacking elsewhere.

Clerics were excluded from holding political office, but in fact they were inextricably associated with the government, as all the great ecclesiastical posts were in the hands of the nobility who—as a traveller pointed out⁴—had no other outlet for their younger sons, trade being considered dishonourable. It is not therefore surprising that the decoration of churches reflected patrician ideals fully as much as that of their palaces. Thus the haughtiness of the Virgin and Saints as seen by Piazzetta and Tiepolo, so different from most seventeenth-century religious painting, clearly shows the projection of aristocratic principles into sacred history.

Many nobles were, indeed, themselves directly responsible for the commissions involved and employed their own favourite artists in palace and church alike. Thus the Manin offered in 1706 to decorate the choir, transept and High Altar of the Cathedral at Udine. They tried unsuccessfully in the face of rivalry to build the High Altar of the church of the Scalzi in Venice and later took over the decoration of one of the chapels there; finally they were responsible for building the façade and the High Altar of the Jesuit church.⁵ Whenever they could they made use of the painter Louis Dorigny, who also decorated their villa at Passeriano.

Most of the religious Orders had very rich backers and they were consequently by far the most important patrons of modern painting and architecture in early eighteenth century Venice. 'It is a disgrace', wrote one observer in 1743,⁶ 'that monks find vast

¹ Thus [Etienne de Silhouette], I, p. 156: 'Si le grand nombre et la magnificence des Eglises ne prouvent pas leur piété, ils prouvent au moins qu'ils veulent paroître en avoir. . . .'

² Tabacco, p. 123.

³ Bevilacqua, p. 32.

⁴ Burney, I, p. 140.

⁵ Coggiola-Pittoni, 1935, p. 304; L. Ferrari, 1882, p. 22, and Biblioteca Marciana, MS. Ital. Cl. VII, 1620—*Libri di Memorie di Antonio Benigno: NN.HH. S. Ant.o e S. Nicolò Fratelli Co:Co:Manini . . . a sue spese fatto erigere l'Altar Maggiore [of the Jesuit Church] tutta la Incrostradura di Verde antico à rimesso per tutta la Chiesa, con li Organi, e Oratorij, Pavimento, con il Soffitto a Stucco dorato et la Facciata di Fuori. . . .*—1729.

⁶ [Girolamo Zanetti]: 22 Maggio 1743—published, 1885, p. 129.

sums to build their magnificent and splendid churches—such as the Jesuits and Dominicans, for instance—whereas the parishes only get the smallest help and have to wait for years and years before their churches are ready for use.' The complaint was not wholly justified. Parish churches, such as S. Tomà and S. Vitale, were either rebuilt or richly decorated with remarkable speed. So too was S. Matteo di Rialto, about which we hear that after 'the priest had in 1735 collected alms from his parishioners and other pious people . . . he renovated it within a few months . . .'.¹ But it is true that for a period of about a quarter of a century after 1720 the churches of the Carmelites and Dominicans, Oratorians and Capuchins were being filled with many of the most striking paintings and frescoes of the day.

The Scalzi, for instance, a particularly strict off-shoot of the Carmelite Order, came to Venice in 1633.² After some difficulties they became closely linked with many leading nobles and won special sympathy through their missionary work in the Peloponnese and their intimate association with the Venetian troops out there. Such was their popularity that their original church became much too small, and Longhena and Sardi were employed to build a new one. Nobles quarrelled for the privilege of erecting the High Altar, and the façade, which cost 74,000 ducats, was paid for by a Conte Cavazza, who had been admitted to the patriciate in 1653.³ Though it was widely praised as 'the most magnificent frontage not just in Venice but possibly in the whole of Europe',⁴ such luxury became embarrassing for an austere Order and in 1732 an anonymous pamphleteer was called upon to justify the expense.⁵ It was not true, he commented, that the money could have been better spent on relieving poverty. What about Christ and the ointment of Mary Magdalene? And St Peter's in Rome and St Mark's in Venice? Worship of God was fully as important as looking after the poor. It was not true that such a rich church conflicted with the spirit of poverty associated with the Order. Their living-quarters were to be austere, but 'the Tabernacle of God must be built with magnificence'. It was not true that the monastery had been despoiled to decorate the church. The condition of the monks had not changed during the years that the church was being built. In any case the monastery had no capital and it had no debts. Benefactions had been considerable, and the Venetian public was too generous to withhold alms from the monks because of the luxury of their church. But the most interesting complaint that the writer had to answer concerned taste rather than morals.

¹ Corner, p. 163. Another parish church, S. Stae, was given a façade in 1709 from the proceeds of a legacy of Doge Alvise Mocenigo; while a bourgeois, Andrea Stazio, left nearly 200 ducats for further building and decoration. Some of this was spent on pictures in the choir painted by a remarkable group of artists that included Piazzetta, Sebastiano Ricci and Tiepolo. Unfortunately, Stazio's will in the Archivio di Stato (Sezione Notarile, Atti Giovanni Zon 1283:27) gives us no information about who actually commissioned these pictures.

² L. Ferrari, 1882.

³ Bianchini, 1894, p. 11.

⁴ Pöllnitz, II, p. 149.

⁵ *Risposta ad un amico sopra certi riflessi falsamente concepiti contra la Chiesa dei Carmelitani Scalzi a Venezia*—a pamphlet of 32 pages by M.A.—published by Luigi Pavini in 1734 (Marciana, Misc. 1135, n. 3) referred to by Ferrari, 1882.

So much richness, it was protested, above all so much gold, was out of keeping with the rules of good architecture. And here he could do no more than counter with the Temple of Jerusalem, and the churches and palaces of Tuscany, Rome and Bologna. The complaint certainly had force, though it was not insisted on; for the church was decorated in the full Baroque style of Roman grandeur and marked a break with the Palladian tradition which had always dominated ecclesiastical architecture in Venice and was soon to do so again. Rich families, old and new, employed Lazzarini, Bambini and Dorigny to supply pictures and frescoes. Above all Tiepolo was called in on several occasions to help with the decoration culminating in the superb ceiling fresco of 1745 which showed the Holy House of Nazareth being carried by angels to Loreto—a theme designed to celebrate a painting of the Madonna from the island of S. Maria di Nazareth which had been given to the Scalzi on their arrival in Venice.¹

The patronage of their mother Order, the Carmelites, was fully as splendid. In 1708 Sebastiano Ricci frescoed one chapel in the church of the Carmini, and nearly half a century later his pupil Gaspare Diziani painted four large pictures for the same church.² Tiepolo painted one of his earliest works, the *Madonna del Carmelo*, in about 1720 for a chapel belonging to the Order in the church of S. Aponal³; while twenty years later he produced some of his greatest masterpieces for them—the frescoes on the ceiling of the principal room in the Scuola Grande dei Carmini, the headquarters of an association of non-noble laymen and religious under the general inspiration of the Carmelites.⁴ Piazzetta painted his *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* for the same group, and many other leading painters were also employed by them.⁵ It was, incidentally, a Carmelite, Padre Jacopo Pedozzi, Secretary General of the Order and a man 'very highly thought of, especially by the Venetian nobility', who was one of the very first patrons of Canaletto.⁶

Scarcely less imposing as patrons were the Dominicans, for whom between 1725 and 1727 Piazzetta painted his only frescoes, *The Glory of St Dominic*, in a chapel in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo. At much the same time another branch of the Order, the Gesuati, were beginning to employ Giorgio Massari to build a complete new church on the Zattere, financed largely by public support, a fact that they too, like the Scalzi, were very keen to emphasise.⁷ When one visitor was taken round by one of the Gesuati fathers in 1742, he spent much time 'looking at the fine interior of the new church, decorated with beautiful paintings and chiaroscuri on its brilliantly lit vault, with

¹ Fogolari, 1931, pp. 18-32.

² Lorenzetti, 1956, p. 551.

³ *Mostra del Tiepolo*, 1951, p. 8. The picture is now in the Brera.

⁴ Documents for this commission are published by Urbani de Ghelhof, 1879, pp. 100-17.

⁵ Lorenzetti, 1956, p. 553.

⁶ Letter of Alessandro Marchesini to Stefano Conti dated 11 August 1725 in Biblioteca Governativa, Lucca, and Zarzabini, p. 19.

⁷ [Girolamo Zanetti] wrote in 1743 that the Dominicans were still collecting alms all day long for the building of their church. It had been begun in 1725, when Benigna reported (Marciana, MS. Ital. Cl. VII, 1620): 'Li RR.PP. Domenicani Osservanti sopra le Zattere hanno principiato à dirroccare portione del suo convento, et ivi fabbricare la nuova Chiesa sopra il modello di quella del Redentore.'

sumptuous altars of marble in its seven chapels, with new seats in the choir and the floor entirely in marble; of the best architecture and proportions in the interior and an equally fine façade. And he told me that until now 120,000 ducats had been spent on it. When I began to congratulate him on the extent of his funds, he told me that the whole of that vast sum had come entirely from alms.¹ The ceiling fresco of *St Dominic instituting the Rosary* was painted by Tiepolo between 1737 and 1739, during which years Piazzetta produced an altarpiece of *Three Dominican Saints: Vincent, Hyacinth and Lawrence*. It was not until 1748 that Tiepolo produced his own altarpiece of *Saints Agnes, Rosa and Catherine* for which the contract had been signed in 1740. A few years earlier Sebastiano Ricci had painted the first of these series of Dominican Saints: *Pope Pius V, Thomas Aquinas and Vincent Ferrer*—one of his last and most magnificent works.²

The note of exaltation and triumph was particularly suitable for a church that was at the centre of the most combative religious organisation in eighteenth-century Venice. It was from the Gesuati and the adjoining monastery that Padre Daniele Concina poured out a stream of invective against the Jesuits that accentuated the already bitter rivalries between the two Orders and it was he who was among the first to suggest that the Society should be suppressed.³

The Oratorians also commissioned altarpieces in 1724 and 1732 from Piazzetta and Tiepolo for their new church of the Fava, and during the middle years of the century they employed other leading artists such as Balestra, Amigoni and Cignaroli.

Another Order, the Capuchins, reached the peak of their glory in 1734 when one of their number, Fra Francesco Antonio Correr, was made Patriarch of Venice.⁴ A few years later Tiepolo painted a canvas of *St Helen finding the True Cross* for the ceiling of their church at Castello.

This extraordinary prolongation of the Counter Reformation well into the eighteenth century, with the religious communities rivalling each other in the splendour of their commissions to the principal artists,⁵ is notable for the absence of the Order that had played such a conspicuous part at an earlier stage in the movement—the Jesuits. This is not altogether surprising, for by the very nature of their absolute subjection to the papacy, the Society had never been popular in Venice.⁶ Reluctantly readmitted in 1657 after some fifty years of exile, only after another half-century did the Jesuits begin to build a vast new church. Their resources, like those of many other Orders, came mostly from the exceedingly rich, but only recently ennobled, Manin family. When, years later, the Jesuits were under bitter attack in Venice, it was specially mentioned in

¹ Letter from P. E. Gherardi to Muratori of 26 October 1742 in the Biblioteca Estense, Modena.

² Arslan, in *Rivista di Venezia*, 1932, p. 19, and Lorenzetti, 1956, p. 30.

³ For a general discussion of Concina's thought see Alberto Vecchi, 1960. There are a large number of works by him in the British Museum.

⁴ Tentori, X, p. 288.

⁵ Among patrons of the older established Orders the Benedictines were especially active. Tiepolo, Pittoni, Ricci and Trevisani were all employed by the nuns of SS. Cosma e Damiano alla Giudecca.

⁶ Though Cardinal de Bernis (I, p. 421) said that in the 1740s the Jesuits were 'dans le plus grand crédit'.

a hostile pamphlet that 'they had managed to extract from a single family the enormous expense of their magnificent church'.¹ In fact, they were merely following a general precedent, but although both the exterior and the interior with its fantastically rich coloured marbles are as splendid as any in Venice and indeed were claimed to put all others in the shade,² the church, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin, remains geographically and artistically isolated from those of the other religious Orders. None of the leading painters left work there,³ and Fontebasso, who frescoed the ceiling, depicted on it *The Three Angels visiting Abraham*, which had no specific relationship to Jesuit iconography, and *Elijah carried to Heaven in a Chariot of Fire*, a subject hitherto associated almost exclusively with the Carmelites.⁴ Though the Jesuit saints appeared in one or two of the altarpieces, they were given no prominence and the general effect of the church is one of very great wealth but absolute anonymity. The contrast with the Dominicans could scarcely be greater: in S. Maria del Rosario every painting celebrates the triumph and glory of the Order; its great saints, painted in threes by the finest contemporary artists, all lead up to the climax of the ceiling where St Dominic himself is shown instituting the Rosary. In Santa Maria Assunta we are scarcely aware of the Jesuits, whose presence is felt only through the foreignness of the style.

One other wholly new church was erected and splendidly decorated during the first half of the eighteenth century—the Pietà.⁵ The original foundation dated back to the fourteenth century when a refuge on the site had been established for exposed children and orphans, and it had soon come under the direct patronage of the Doge and Senate. The first stone was therefore laid by Doge Grimani when in 1745 it was decided to rebuild the church and by 1760 it was described in the *Gazzetta Veneta* as being nearly completed 'and one of the richest and most beautiful works of modern architecture'.

This was true enough, but the effect of grandeur was only achieved after difficulties which reveal the pitiful state into which official patronage of the arts had now sunk compared to that sponsored by private families and religious Orders. The Governors of the Pietà were in a position to draw on all the leading artists in Venice—but not to pay them. Massari was the architect and he commented rather ruefully on the conservative pressures which compelled him to work on orthodox Palladian lines.⁶ He would, no doubt, have been still more rueful had he known at the time of this complaint that the façade would not be completed for 150 years. Tiepolo painted one of his most striking works—a *Triumph of the Faith*—on the oval dome between 1754 and 1755,

¹ *Appendice alla prima parte dei Monumenti Veneti in risposta alla lettera di un'uomo onesto*, 1762.

² See Pöllnitz, II, p. 152.

³ [Count Seilern], 1959, No. 170, owns a *modello* for the *Glory of S. Luigi Gonzaga*, a Jesuit saint. Professor Wilde (*Italian Art and Britain*, 1960, p. 170) has very plausibly suggested that this was painted for the canonisation of the saint in 1726 and was probably intended as the sketch for an altarpiece which was never carried out. There is certainly no evidence that this altarpiece, if really planned, was for the Jesuit church in Venice.

⁴ Mâle, p. 448. It had, however, been one of a whole series of Old Testament scenes prefiguring the Life of Christ painted by Rubens for the Jesuit Church at Antwerp.

⁵ Bosisio.

⁶ [Andrea Memmo], 1786, pp. 4 ff.

but although he was paid 500 *zecchini* for this, two years later he himself was lending the Governors of the church 6000 ducats (about three times as much) to help with its further decoration.¹ Five altar pictures were painted by the leading artists of Piazzetta's school, but they were paid for by private donations.²

The paintings in all these churches vary in kind—the Dominicans and Carmelites concentrate more on the exaltation of their Orders, the Oratorians seem to have encouraged a mystical ecstasy and, in Tiepolo's *Education of the Virgin*, an unusual tenderness—both qualities more familiar in certain Roman paintings of the early seventeenth century. But these are matters of emphasis rather than of rigorous consistency. In all there is a dominant note of triumph and an avoidance of cruelty or morbidity. Tiepolo's *Madonna del Carmelo* does not show the purgatorial fires, in much the same way that some years later Sebastiano Ricci was asked by his patron Conte Tassis of Bergamo not to show them in a picture of the same subject; Piazzetta even removes the skull that he had included in the preliminary version of *St Philip Neri and the Virgin*.³

It is difficult to say how much control was exerted over the artist in such matters. The Scuola del Carmine, about whose patronage we know most, showed extreme determination in securing the greatest artist of the day, Tiepolo: they put moral pressure on him and suggested that he should give precedence to religious over secular commissions.⁴ They then asked his advice about the decoration of the main room and left the choice of subject to him. Tiepolo proposed two alternatives. In each case the central panel in the ceiling was to show the Virgin, with the prophets Elijah and Elisha surrounded by angels, handing the scapular to St Simeon Stock. According to the first scheme, this canvas was to be surrounded by eight others illustrating 'the privileges enjoyed by the Confraternity—that is to say the hope that the Brethren have of being saved from damnation through the intercession of the Virgin.' These canvases would therefore represent various doctrinal points such as the rescue by angels of souls in purgatory. According to the second scheme, the surrounding canvases were to depict the virtues which should inspire the Brethren—'Faith, Hope and Charity represented in the way everyone knows' and a host of others. Tiepolo took his descriptions of these from the illustrations in Ripa's standard iconographic Manual (a work he must have known by heart) and this second plan was chosen and carried out with a few modifications.

For the further decoration of the Scuola the governors organised a competition in which artists were invited to submit schemes.⁵ The painter Gaetano Zompini, whose idea was accepted, put forward an iconographical proposal of some complexity drawn,

¹ Urbani de Ghelthof, pp. 124-6.

² For instance, Pietro Foscarini left money in his will in 1745 for an 'altare di marmo fine' to be erected in the church—Biblioteca Correr, Cod. Cicogna, MMDCCCCXLV—2686.

³ The *modello* is in the Pennsylvania Museum.

⁴ See p. 270, note 4: 'gli amorosi Confratelli sudetti continuaron con destri stimoli, e gli sorti, trattandosi del servizio di Maria Vergine, farle abbandonare hora l'impegno di Milano, et accettare l'opera di questa Scola . . .'. None the less Tiepolo went to Milan first to decorate the Palazzo Clerici.

⁵ Battistella, 1930, pp. 38 ff.

so he claimed, from a reading of the Church fathers. This was to be a glorification of the Virgin, particularly as she was prefigured in the Old Testament—as Rebecca, Abigail, Esther, Judith and the Mother of the Maccabees. Like Tiepolo, Zompini must certainly have taken clerical advice, though in fact such schemes were commonplace in earlier churches, and in 1743—some five years before the commission—we know that a Jesuit had preached ‘a fine panegyric of the Blessed Virgin, ingeniously comparing her to Esther’.¹ In any case the long plans submitted by both artists show how rigorously programmes were adhered to well into the eighteenth century at a time when iconography is usually considered to be far more casual in inspiration. But they also show how much initiative was left to the artist. A similar practice seems to have been followed in the Pietà, where the governors were required ‘to seek plans from the most highly thought of painters with suitable ideas and choose the best’.²

We know of one patron of religious art in Venice who had decided views on the subject though he himself was not in fact a priest—through no fault of his own. Flaminio Corner (Plate 48a) was born in 1693.³ So rigid was he, so unbending even with his friends, that Casanova himself had to admit that ‘sa réputation était sans tache’.⁴ He had been educated by the Jesuits and as a young man had wanted to enter a monastery. But after the death of his parents and his elder brother he reluctantly agreed to marry so as to prevent the extinction of his family, one of the oldest in Venice. Most of his life was devoted to writing scholarly books in Latin about the early history of the Venetian churches; his palace, in which he assembled a prodigious quantity of relics, was frequented especially by the clergy and by the learned.⁵ He seems to have extended his patronage exclusively to religious paintings and sculpture, and he employed for these one artist especially—Giuseppe Angeli. The choice is interesting. Angeli was considered the best of Piazzetta’s pupils, and he imitated his master’s style long after the latter’s death in 1754, confining himself almost entirely to religious painting. In the process he sweetened it, gave it much more intimacy and emphasised the more sentimental elements which he developed into a pietistic mawkishness far removed from the pride and grandeur of Piazzetta’s own early paintings.⁶ In many ways he is closer to some of the Counter Reformation artists of seventeenth-century Rome than the Venetian painters of his time. Flaminio Corner thought very highly of him and employed him on altarpieces in his parish church of S. Canciano as well as in S. Basilio, where he was one of a group of nobles devoted to propagating the cult of Beato Pietro Aconato, and in the Pietà. For his own private devotions he commissioned from Angeli paintings of the Four Evangelists, a series of the Apostles and various saints.

¹ [Girolamo Zanetti]: 25 Marzo 1743 (published 1885, p. 110).

² Urbani de Ghelthof, p. 123.

³ For all the following see Don Anselmo Costadoni.

⁴ Casanova, IV, p. 246.

⁵ Biblioteca Correr—Cod. Gradenigo 185: ‘Flaminio Corner, Senatore dedito alla Pietà, raccolse una quantità prodigiosa di Reliquie autentiche di Santi in modo che poteva ogni giorno dell’Anno esporre alla Veneratione quella che nel giorno stesso si apparteneva secondo il Rito di S. Chiesa.’

⁶ Pallucchini, 1931, pp. 421–32.

Corner was also interested in the general problems of church architecture and decoration. He welcomed grandeur and is reported to have encouraged with advice, if not with money, the building of the great marble façades of S. Rocco and the Carità. Indeed, he laid especial stress on the importance of marble, being anxious that it should replace stone in the altars of all Venetian churches. But though he admired richness, he deplored 'the profane use of friezes as if in a theatre' and above all he insisted on uniformity of decoration. All the altars in a church should be made of identical marble, should be of the same shape and the same size. 'Harmony is delightful in everything' was his creed, and he tried to put it into effect wherever he extended his patronage. The most complete surviving example of the style he encouraged can be found in his parish church of S. Canciano. 'These very altars which he had built with such decorum speak to you of him', cried the priest at his funeral service in 1778,¹ and even today we can still sense the powerful personality of the man as we gaze at the richness of black and blue-veined marble columns topped with gold Corinthian capitals, which are yet designed with a symmetry and strict austerity that make no concession to the more exuberant style so prevalent in contemporary Venetian churches.²

¹ Don Giovanni Domenico Brustoloni, 1779. It is probable that the sentimental altar paintings by Bartolommeo Letterini were also commissioned by Corner.

² Other people too protested about the excessive decoration of Venetian churches. On 20 February 1746 P. E. Gherardi wrote to Muratori (letter in Biblioteca Estense, Modena): 'E cosa che ha del ridicolo il veder su gli altari davanti alle tavole o tele de'Santi dipinti, e di quà e là da i tabernacoli, statuette di Santi, fatte o di stucco o di legno, come appunto farebbe in un suo puerile altartino un tenero fanciulletto. Chiesa non c'è di Preti, ed anche di alcuni Frati, che non abbia su d'un altare la sua Madonna o di Loreto o del Rosario, o del Carmine, e su di un banco un'altra, che siccome di forma più picciola, sembra essere suo Figliuolo.' The complaint is still more valid today than it was two hundred years ago.