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Seeing Through the Turn of Sight: Jacopo Pontormo's San Lorenzo Frescoes, the Roman Liturgy, and a Visionary Style

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Abstract

For two hundred years, the frescoes Jacopo Pontormo (1494–1557) painted in the Florentine Church of San Lorenzo choir seemed to be among art history's survivors. They survived the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and the dictates on art issued by the Council of Trent, which seemed to condemn them specifically. Long after art turned to earth hues, dimmed colours, dramatic chiaroscuro, and uncompromising realism, their glowing colours must have gleamed, almost reproachfully and certainly tauntingly at worshippers in the small church, promising a heavenly vision, conveyed through luxurious colours, that only the most devout could understand as the profoundly spiritual statement Pontormo intended. Still, they eventually fell before too pedestrian a view of spirituality.

At San Lorenzo, in a moment of visionary inspiration, Pontormo sought to show the world what the mystics feel when they come into the presence of God. Guided by the texts of the Church, which mark its seasons and cycles into a liturgy of repetitive ritual knowledge and informed by the arguments of his time, Pontormo reached for the understanding that the Church gave to its true seers and mystics, who like Francis of Assisi and St. Teresa of Avila and St. Ignatius Loyola perceived without sight and knew without words what it was to be in the presence of divinity.

Kewords: Bronzino, Pontormo, Choir of San Lorenzo, Certosa di Galluzo, Carthusian iconography, Roman Liturgy

Introduction

From 1545/46 until 1556, Jacopo Pontormo decorated the choir of the Florentine church of San Lorenzo for Duke Cosimo I de' Medici (1519–1574) with a series of now-lost frescoes. The frescoes are recorded by preparatory drawings, written descriptions, an engraving (**Figure 1**), and a partial copy of the lower North wall (**Figure 2**). Pierfrancesco Riccio (1501–1564), the Duke's *majordomo*, selected Pontormo for the choir's decoration with subjects derived from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.[1] These were supplemented with representations of *The Four Evangelists*, a *Christ in Majesty* (**Figure 3**), a *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, and imagery concordant with the Last Judgement. As he painted, Pontormo kept a *Diary* recording the last two years of his work and daily life (Pontormo, 1979).[2] After Pontormo's death, on 2 January 1557, Agnolo Bronzino completed the frescoes, placing a portrait of Pontormo among the souls rising to Heaven (Vasari, 1973, vol. 7, pp. 602–603).[3] The frescoes were publicly unveiled on 23 July 1558, and Agostino Lapini, who recorded the event, noted that some people liked them very much while others did not (Lapini, 1900, pp. 121-122).[4] Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) and Raffaello Borghini (1537–1588) were critical of Pontormo's style and design (Vasari, 1973, vol. 6, pp. 286–289; Borghini, 1584, vol. 4, pp. 484-485). Anton Francesco Doni urged visitors to Florence to see them, and Francesco Bocchi highly praised them (Doni, 1549, p. 48; Cox-Rearick, 1964, vol. 1, p. 319; Bocchi, 1677, p. 254).

These survivors of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation were destroyed between 1738 and 1742 by order of the Electress Palatina, Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici, because buttresses needed to be inserted into the choir's weakening walls (Ciletti, 1979, pp. 764–770).[5] The Electress did not attempt to save any part of the frescoes. Elena Ciletti noted that opinions about their artistic value were as divided as when the frescoes were unveiled (*ivi*, p. 769).[6] Yet the Marchese Cosimo Riccardi rescued the parts that survived the structural repairs and displayed

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[1] It was Vasari, who identified Riccio as the administrator, who hired Pontormo; see Vasari, 1973, vol. 7, p. 284.

[2] This is the edition used here for the analysis of the Diary's content.

[3] At the end of his life, Pontormo was working on The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence, which he mentioned in his Diary, indicating that he had designed this part of the frescoes, with Bronzino finishing it, as Vasari recorded.

[4] "Et a dì 23 detto luglio [1558]."

[5] The dates assigned to the initiation of the frescoes has varied from 1545 to 1549.

[6] Ciletti quotes a discussion between the Electress and the then prior of S. Lorenzo. Ciletti also indicated that, at that time, as Richa (1754–1757, vol. 5, p. 29) noted their loss "… non è da piangersi …."

them in his palazzo and villa until they disappeared (ivi, pp. 769–770).[7] Ciletti suggested that the parts not removed by Riccardi were whitewashed and might still exist under layers of paint (*ivi*, pp. 769–770).

Generations of art historians have mourned this loss, and the same generations have argued about the meaning and intention of the choir's frescoes (De Tolnay, 1950, pp. 38–52).[8] What did they look like? How were they understood by those who prayed at San Lorenzo during the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation? Were they orthodox, heterodox, heretical? Here, it is argued that the frescoes were orthodox in intention and content, reflecting the Roman Liturgy performed in front of San Lorenzo's choir, with a programme characterising Duke Cosimo as a defender of the Roman Church, as the Council of Trent convened, in 1545 (O'Malley, 2013). As such, San Lorenzo's frescoes were the first monumental, Florentine, Counter-Reformation commission enacted by Duke Cosimo, which exemplified his adherence to the Church, his allegiance to Emperor Charles V and his commitment to establish renewed dynastic rule of Medicean Florence and its territories.

This interpretation of San Lorenzo's programme was first presented in a series of papers given in 2014 and 2015:[9] at RSA (Bosch, 2014a) – the Renaissance Society's Annual Conference (New York City); the SECAC (Bosch, 2015) – Southeastern College Art Association's annual meeting (Pittsburgh); and at CAA (Bosch, 2014b) – the College Art Association Annual Meeting (New York City). The well-attended sessions were organised under the aegis of Liana de Girolami Cheney and the Association for Textual Scholarship in Art History.

All three papers argued that the San Lorenzo frescoes incorporated the Roman Liturgy from Ash Wednesday through Lent's Quadragesima, Quinquagesima, Sexagesima, and Septuagesima, including Passion Week, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday's aftermath (Bosch, 2014a and 2015).[10]

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[7] Ciletti suggested that perhaps under layers of whitewash there may still be parts of the frescoes not removed by the courtier Cosimo Riccardi (1671–1751), a member of the Medici Court, who appropriated some sections.

[8] Charles de Tolnay argued that the choir's programme was based on heretical and heterodox treatises associated with the spirituality of the Spanish religioso Juan de Valdés, who settled in Naples, between 1539 and his death, in 1541. There he gathered a group of supporters who disseminated his eclectic and problematic spirituality. De Tolnay's opinion generated followers, who applied his theory to a range of sixteenth-century works of art, finding heresy in a range of programs. See Forster, 1964, vol. 2, pp. 181–185 and Firpo, 2021, 2021.

[9] Pilliod (2022) suggested concurrences between the frescoes and the Lenten Roman Liturgy. Her liturgical analysis relies on secondary sources and provides a typological interpretation of the frescoes based on the five ages of the Church, as developed by Pope Gregory. She also linked the cult of San Lorenzo to the Roman Stational Churches.

[10] See Bosch 2014a and 2015: "When the liturgy of Septuagesima Sunday, Sexagesima Sunday, Quinquagesima Sunday and Holy Saturday is compared with Pontormo's frescoes, all 17 subjects painted by Pontormo are present. Pontormo's frescoes include sequences of events from Genesis that focus attention on Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; Noah and Abraham and Isaac. Genesis is

The papers also emphasised Pope Gregory's reform of the Roman Liturgy and links between Florence and Rome through the Roman stational churches. Pontormo's devotional life and death were also discussed in relation to his observance of the Church's liturgical year and his close ties to the Carthusians at the Certosa di Galluzo (Bosch, 2014a).[11] Below, these arguments are significantly expanded.

Figure 1: Cesare Bigliona, attr. Funerary Decorations for Commemorative Mass for the Death of Philip II, 1598, engraving. Choir area of the Church of San Lorenzo, Florence. Drawings and Prints Department, Albertina Museum, Vienna. Wikimedia Commons.

sequentially read at Matins on Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima Sundays. On Septuagesima, the readings emphasize Adam and Eve's Sin, their expulsion, their travails outside Paradise, the Sacrifice of Cain and Abel and Cain's murder of Abel. Following Church tradition, Abel was the first martyr; thus, his murder corresponds to the Martyrdom of San Lorenzo found on the lower centre wall of the choir. On Sexagesima, the story of Noah before, during, and after the Flood is read to the sequence where God makes his pact with Noah and blesses his seed, corresponding exactly with the subjects depicted by Pontormo. On Quinquagesima Sunday, the readings retell Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac."

[11]The contents of Pontormo's Diary and his reference to praying at the Certosa di Galluzzo were included in Bosch 2014a and 2015: "Pope Gregory (540–604), introduced these sequences of readings into the Roman Liturgy, in the sixth century, when he inaugurated them at the Church of San Lorenzo Fuori le Mura in Rome. The Roman church of San Lorenzo is also one of the Stational Churches, at which the Lenten masses are celebrated, and the resonance between the two churches of San Lorenzo, Florentine and Roman, would have been made explicit during the preparation for Lent–as Genesis was read on the Sundays that are the prelude to the opening of Lent on Ash Wednesday."

Figure 2: Unknown Artist, Resurrection of the Dead, drawing. Partial Copy of Pontormo's Lower, North Wall, Choir of San Lorenzo. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (D. 2154–1885). Wikimedia Commons.

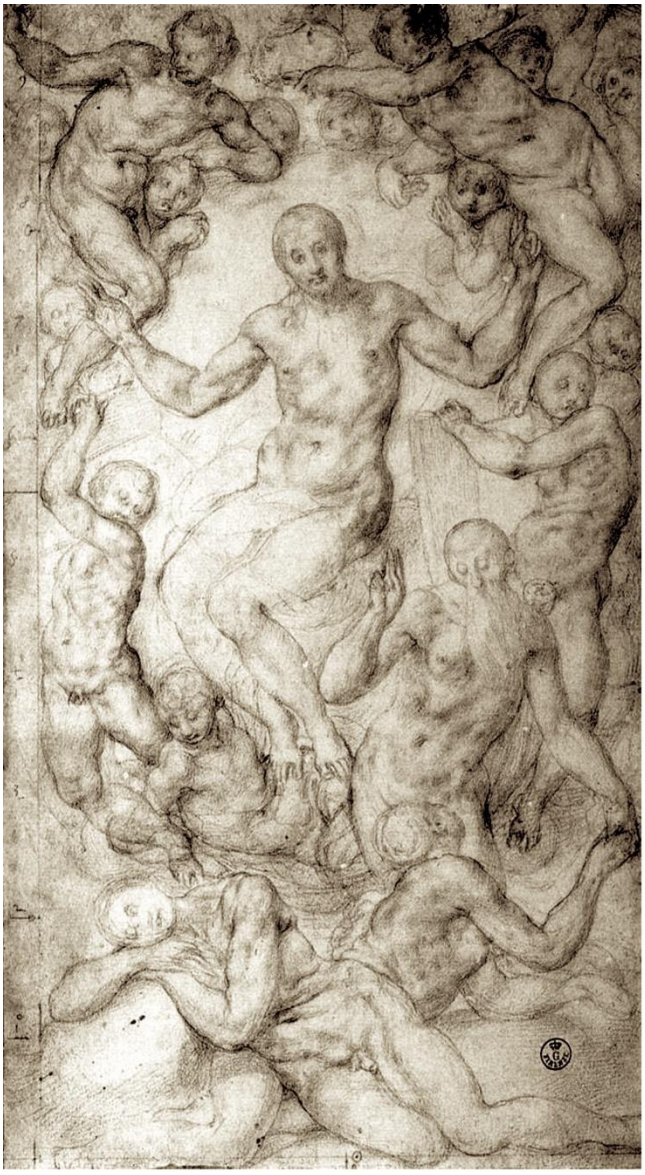

Figure 3: Jacopo Pontormo, Christ in Majesty with The Creation of Eve, c.1550, drawing. Uffizi, Department of Prints and Drawings, Uffizi, Florence. Wikimedia Commons

San Lorenzo's Choir before the Destruction

Reconstructions of the lost frescoes of San Lorenzo's choir have been proposed by various scholars, with slightly varying placement of the scenes Pontormo painted (Cox-Rearick, 1964; De Tolnay, 1950; Firpo, 2021; Pilliod, 2022). Each of the reconstructions relies on descriptions written by those who saw the frescoes, the extant drawings, the partial copy, now in the Victoria & Albert Museum of the lower part of the North wall, and the engraving, in the Albertina Museum's collection, recording the appearance of San Lorenzo's choir, in 1598. Significant for any reconstruction is de Tolnay's placement of *The Four Evangelists* on the Gospel side of the choir (spectator's left, facing the central wall) and *Moses*

with the Tablets of the Law (spectator's right) on the Epistle side, which de Tolnay placed in the middle sections of the upper walls (De Tolnay, 1950; see Cox-Rearick, 1964).[12] *Moses with the Tablets of The Law* is not described in the written sources but survives in a series of preparatory drawings (Cox-Rearick, 1964). Cox-Rearick, noting Alfredo Cirri's description of the choir, which stated that the *Evangelists* were in a corner, placed the *Evangelists* on the North Wall and *Moses* on the South Wall's corners (Cirri, 1913). The corner placement is correct, but the two scenes should be swapped. The Evangelists should be placed in the upper section's south wall corner (spectator's left and Gospel side), while Moses should be placed in the upper section's north wall corner (spectator's right and Epistle side) (Cirri, 1913; Cox-Rearick, 1964).

Sources written and visual confirm the placement of *Christ in Majesty with the Instruments of the Passion* in the upper section of the central West wall (Vasari, 1973, vol. 6, p. 286). Beneath the *Christ in Majesty*, there was a representation of the *Creation of Eve*, described by Vasari (Vasari, 1973, vol. 6, p. 286). Framing the *Christ in Majesty*, in the upper section were scenes depicting *Adam and Even committing Original Sin* and *The Expulsion from Paradise*, both visible in the Albertina engraving showing San Lorenzo's choir in 1598 (*ivi*, p. 285). Cox-Rearick (1964) placed *Original Sin* on the right and the *Expulsion* on the left, assuming the engraving showing the choir reversed the actual arrangement of the upper, central section. A *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence* above which were *Angels Holding a Crown and Chalice* occupied the middle area of the central wall, below *The Creation of Eve*. Pontormo began to work on the *Martyrdom* between August and October 1556, as recorded in his *Diary* (see Cox-Rearick, 1964, p. 325 and 356) and it was completed by Bronzino (Vasari, 1973, vol. 7).[13] Bocchi provided additional details: "E il S. Lorenzo ignudo sopra la graticola con alcuni puttini … appresso ci ha il ritratto del Puntormo" (Bocchi, 1677, p. 254). Bronzino's portrait of Pontormo, which Vasari placed to the right of the *Martyrdom*, is preserved in a drawing at Christ Church Oxford, which Cox-Rearick identified as belonging to the San Lorenzo cycle (see Cox-Rearick, 1984, p. 400, cat. A. 239). At the bottom of the central wall, on either side, stood *Two Skeletons Holding Torches*, framing *Souls Rising from the Dead Towards Heaven*, described by Vasari (Vasari, 1973, vol. 6, p. 286).

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[12] De Tolnay although his reconstruction placed the Evangelists and Moses in the centre of the upper South and North sides. Cox-Rearick, 1964, p. 318 (Diagram), placed these subjects in the corners, as indications in the drawings for the other subjects indicate that these were the only slots left for these figures. Still, she placed Moses and the Evangelists on the wrong sides for their liturgical associations.

[13] Vasari mentions the Martyrdom in Bronzino's Vita. Bocchi provided additional details: "E il S. Lorenzo ignudo sopra la graticola con alcuni puttini … appresso ci ha il ritratto del Puntormo," while Cirri (1913) mentioned that above this Martyrdom, were Two Angels, Holding a Crown and a Chalice..

On the upper sections of the South wall (spectator's left, facing the central wall), starting in the corner, as described by Cirri, in the corner were *The Four Evangelists* (*ibid.*). In the upper centre, as Cox-Rearick noted, there was *Noah Building the Ark*, (*ivi*, pp. 285-286) and to the left of this scene, nearest to the crossing, was the combined episodes of *The Sacrifice of Abel and Cain and the Murder of Abel by Cain* (see Vasari, 1973, vol. 6, p. 285; Bocchi, 1674, p. 254). In the lower section of this wall were represented *The Deluge*, *Noah Speaking with God After the Flood* (which Borghini described as the pact God made with Noah not to destroy the world with water again) (Borghini, 1584), *The Blessing of the Seed of Noah* (**Figure 4**), and *The Drunkenness of Noah/The Nakedness of Noah* (see Vasari, 1973, vol. 6; Bocchi, 1677, p. 254). The subject of the "Drunkenness of Noah" was typologically representative of the Passion of Christ, specifically referencing the Eucharistic Chalice, as was pointed out by Edgar Wind, in relation to Michelangelo's scene in the Sistine Chapel (Wind, 1950).

At San Lorenzo, the *Angels with a Crown and Chalice* above *The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence* would have resonated with the Eucharistic significance of *The Drunkenness of Noah.* Such Eucharistic references emphasised the central *Christ in Majesty with the Instruments of the Passion* and the Elevation of the Host, during the Canon of the Mass.[14] With this juxtaposition, the choir's programme resonates with the Church's central dogma of Eucharistic Transubstantiation,[15] as the *Christ in Majesty* would have appeared centrally aligned with the Eucharist at the Elevation of the Host, during the Canon of the Mass. This alignment places San Lorenzo's programme securely within the liturgy and theology of the Roman Church, as Transubstantiation was rejected by the Protestant denominations.[16]

On the North wall's upper level, *Moses Holding the Tablets of the Law* would have been placed in the corner. In the upper centre the *Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac* appeared (see Vasari, 1973, vol. 6, p. 285). To the right of this scene was *Adam and Eve Working* (*ibid.*). As recorded in the Victoria & Albert's partial copy, on the lower section of this wall there appeared: *Angels Blowing Trumpets as the Dead Were Clothed in Flesh* on one side (*ivi*, p.286). Incorporated within this scene on the side not copied was at least one scene of a *Soul Being Dragged into Hell*, recorded in one of Pontormo's preparatory drawings for the choir.

Massimo Firpo, who put forward a heretical interpretation for the choir's programme, mistakenly thought that the partial copy was the entire wall, thus interpreting the absence of Hell as confirmation of Protestant heresies that advocated universal salvation (Firpo, 2021). He was incorrect in assuming that San Lorenzo's choir lacked a Hell section, because (see Firpo 2021; Pilliod, 2022, p.

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[14] On Transubstantiation, see Michel, 1903–1940, vol. 15; Filograssi, 1962; Vollert, 1961.

[15] On Transubstantiation and the Mass, see Root and Salkeld, 2019.

[16] On the Protestant position on Transubstantiation, see Kimberly, 2014; for Luther's perspectives on Transubstantiation, see Jacobs et al. 2021.

147 and fig. 90) a reference to a Hell section survives in a drawing by Pontormo of a *Demon Dragging a Soul to Hell*, now in Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence.[17]

Figure 4: Agnolo Bronzino or Jacopo Pontormo, attr. Blessing of the Seed of Noah, 1555–1557, drawing. Drawings Department, British Museum, London (1974,0406.36). Credit Line: ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

Duke Cosimo, Orthodoxy, Dynasty, and the Roman Liturgy at San Lorenzo

San Lorenzo frescoes, begun after 1545 and coinciding with Cosimo's military and financial participation in the wars against the Protestants, should be studied within the complex religious politics of Counter-Reformation Florence, as the Ducal court became increasingly a bulwark of the Roman Church. Until the death of Pope Paul III in 1549, Cosimo had tense relations with the Papacy. However, as Gregory William Murry has demonstrated, he worked steadily to build a network of influence at the Vatican (see Murry, 2014; Eisenbichler, 2001). After Paul III's death, Cosimo developed increasingly good relations with Julius III (1550–1555), and in the early 1550s, the Roman Inquisition became increasingly powerful in Florence, as Cosimo tightened his ties to Emperor Charles V and the popes, who presided over the Council of Trent. Hence any idea that Cosimo was turning away from the Roman Church because of his problems with Paul III falters

[17] The drawing was published by Ana Forlani Tempesti (1967, p. 77); see also Cox-Rearick, 1981, 1:cat. no. 382a, pp. 357–359; and Falciani, 1996, pp. 192–193, cat. no. IX, 15.

against the evidence that Cosimo's interests were continually and actively linked to those of Spain and Rome.

In the mid-1540s, when Pontormo was chosen to paint San Lorenzo's choir, Duke Cosimo was consolidating his position as a European ruler. His marriage to Eleonora de Toledo (Doña Leonor Álvarez de Toledo y Pimentel-Osorio) on 29 June 1539 aligned his politics with those of the Spanish court through Eleonora's father, Pedro Álvarez de Toledo y Zúñiga, the Viceroy of Naples (1532–1552), a vassal of Emperor Charles V. Through this alliance, Cosimo became linked to the interests of the Spanish court and its territories, which extended to Spain's colonies in the Americas and through The Netherlands into parts of Eastern Europe and Germany, including to Naples and parts of Venice (Parker, 2019). As the leading power behind the Roman Church, Charles V had supported Pope Leo X's declaration of Martin Luther as a heretic, at the Diet of Worms (1521) and with Paul III, he initiated the Council of Trent (1545–1563). Starting in 1543, Cosimo steadily gave considerable financial and military assistance to the emperor and became an active participant in the defence of the Church (Arfaioli, 2019). Thus, as Pontormo began his work on San Lorenzo, in 1545–1546, Cosimo became part of the constellation of European rulers who supported the formation of the Council of Trent and formed part of the Counter-Reformation resistance to the advance of Protestantism. For his loyal service to the Roman Church, the emperor awarded Cosimo the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1547 (Simon, 1983). Cosimo's support for Charles V's Schmalkaldic War (1546–1547) against the Lutheran princes in Habsburg territories coincided with painting the upper sections of San Lorenzo's Choir (Baker, 2022).

Duke Cosimo was neither careless nor ignorant of contemporary religious controversies, nor would he have allowed the enactment of a programme that could have compromised his rule and care of Florence, nor was Cosimo a crypto-Lutheran, as he explicitly condemned Lutheranism, although he was open to doing business with Lutherans (Bury, 2019).[18] The Duke was not a fool, who could have had a Nicodemist programme slipped by him, as he kept up with current literature on the religious debates, even as he instituted oversight of the *Accademia degli Umidi*, where freethinkers gathered (Maratsos, 2022). Thus, while scholars who have argued for an unorthodox programme for San Lorenzo have presented valuable information about the eclecticism of Florentine spirituality among its intellectuals, their case fails before the evidence that undermines their position.

By 1546, firmly set within the political camp of Spain and Charles V's

[18] Bury noted that Chrysa Damianaki's claim (see Damianaki, 2009) that Duke Cosimo was a crypto-Lutheran, was undermined by the content of the letter she used to prove her claim, as the letter from Cosimo states that, while he would deal with Lutheran princes, he rejected their religious views. Damianaki did not cite the full content of the letter, which would have countered her claim that Cosimo was a Lutheran sympathizer. For the letter, see Spini, 1940, p. 97. See also, for additional insight into Italian spirituality, Hudon, 1996, p. 783.

support of Rome, Cosimo had secured his dynastic ambitions with the births to Eleonora of Maria (1540) of Francesco (1541), Isabella (1542), Giovanni (1543), and Lucrezia (1545). Additional births followed, with Garzia (1547), Ferdinando (1549), and Pietro (1554), accompanied by the short-lived Pietro (1546–1547), Antonio (1548), and Anna (1553). Cosimo married a woman whose Roman devotional practices were grounded in her Spanish identity. Cosimo's supervision of Florentine religious politics included the establishment of the Jesuits in Florence, starting in 1546, when they came to perform as spiritual advisers to Eleonora and the Ducal family (Loffredo, 2022; Gaston, 2006; Bosch, 2014c). From this early establishment, the Jesuits expanded, in 1551, to their mission at the Church of San Giovannino (Hurx, 2009).

Simultaneously and paradoxically, in the *Accademia Fiorentina*, which Cosimo founded in 1541, the intellectuals at court debated the confessional issues of their time, and Florence became a centre of diverse religious and spiritual interests and knowledge (see Simoncelli, 1979). Cosimo allowed the group to keep up with Protestant and heterodox spiritual tendencies for several years and incorporate them into their personal belief systems. He engaged in business relations with Protestants.[19] This accommodation phase ended once Trent moved into its more active stage, and by 1549, with the death of Paul III, Cosimo became decidedly aligned with Rome as he expanded his territories and tightened his control of Florence (Schiavone, 2022). In so doing, he echoed Don Pedro de Toledo's repression in 1539, when the Viceroy invited the Jesuits to preach in Naples to counter reform movements that threatened the Church, especially those aligned with the eclectic ideas held by Juan de Váldes (Gaston, 2006, pp. 174-175).

In 1546, when Pontormo began painting, the Duke's father-in-law, Pedro Álvarez de Toledo, Viceroy of Naples under Emperor Charles V, began to suppress Valdesianism in Naples, and his visit to Florence that year also brought the Jesuits, who became Duchess Eleonora's spiritual advisers (*ivi*, p. 175). The Florentine-based Jesuits gave sermons with the choir's frescoes as backdrops. It is doubtful that a heretical programme would have escaped the notice of the Jesuits or that they would have preached in front of such a programme.

The subjects found in San Lorenzo's choir represented Noah, Moses, and Abraham—the Hebrew Patriarchs, who defended orthodoxy and were rewarded for their virtue with generations of progeny. Their placement in the choir of the Medici Church above where the Medici patriarch, Cosimo, Il Vecchio, was buried, indicated a connection between Duke Cosimo and the generations of Medici buried in San Lorenzo (Bell, 1981). Thus, San Lorenzo's choir was Duke Cosimo's contribution to the Medici generational support, construction, and decoration of the Medici parish church, and the Duke would have been very careful, as the Council

[19] See n. 52 above.

of Trent opened, in 1545, to make sure that his religious projects were in keeping with the orthodoxy Trent would soon codify. Thus, the explicit parallels between the faithful Patriarchs in the choir who kept The Law and the Duke provide the foundation for finding San Lorenzo's programme within the Church's dogma.[20]

In *Dynasty, and Destiny,* Cox-Rearick traced how Duke Cosimo's territorial and dynastic ambitions were expressed in court festivities, artistic commissions, and written panegyrics, extolling the steady birth of the Medici children and the Duke's power, aligned with his descendants from *Cosimo Primo* (Cox-Rearick, 1984). Thus the Hebrew Patriarchs found in San Lorenzo's choir representing "the orderly transfer of power from father to son"—on one interpretive level—formed part of the Duke's dynastic propaganda, transmitted through art (Cox-Rearick, 1992, p. 246). Cox-Rearick addressed these symbolic, dynastic programmatic connections linking Duke Cosimo to the Hebrew Patriarchs and the generations of Medici buried in the Church in her identification of the preparatory drawing for the *Blessing of the Seed of Noah* (Cox-Rearick, 1992; Plaisance, 2008).

In discussing *The Blessing of the Seed of Noah*, Cox-Rearick indicated that the dynastic nature of this scene accorded with previous programmes, developed for Duke Cosimo, in the 1540s, extolling his dynastic and territorials agendas and Duchess Eleonora de Toledo's fertility.[21] Additionally, Cox-Rearick argued that Giambattista Gelli, Pierfrancesco Giambullari, and Cosimo Bartoli were likely candidates for having developed the choir's programme, as they had been responsible for designing other Ducal programmes Cox-Rearick, 1992). These programmes included Moses and Noah, who recur in San Lorenzo's choir, thus making Giambullari, Gelli, and/or Bartoli likely candidates for producing the programme the Duke approved for placement in front of Cosimo, *Il Vecchio*'s tomb.[22] While scholars have suggested Pierfrancesco Riccio as the programme's author, his duties as the Duke's *factotum* would have been concerned more with the selection of artists, payments, organisation of supplies and equipment, and coordinating such with workers and with the canons of San Lorenzo.[23]

Cox-Rearick's proposal of Giambullari and Gelli, as the programmers for San Lorenzo's choir, identified circumstantial evidence for linking Pontormo's work to Gelli and Giambullari as some of the "persone dotte et letterate" whom

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[20] For Cosimo's alignment with the papacy, despite his problems with Paul III, see Murry, 2014. On Cosimo's support for the Council and his efforts to remain informed about religious controversies, see Amato, 2023, which details how Cosimo and Riccio collected heterodox works, circulating at Trent, in the early phase of the Council and potential reconciliation with the Protestants, while continuing to side with the Papacy, as the differences became irreconcilable.

[21] For a comprehensive study of Duke Cosimo's dynastic ambitions, see Cox-Rearick, 1984.

[22] For Cosimo Primo's tomb's symbolic, dynastic, and liturgical significance, see Bell, 1981.

[23] For a parallel to Riccio's duties, see Ettlinger, 1978, where Ettlinger discusses the liturgical, symbolic, dynastic, and pragmatic arrangements coordinating the design, programme, and construction of Michelangelo's chapel for the dead Medici ilustri.

Vasari mentioned in connection with the choir's programme. This circumstantial evidence is found in Bronzino's *Descent of Christ in Limbo* (1552), painted contemporaneously with the choir's frescoes for Giovanni Zanchini's chapel at Santa Croce (Cox-Rearick, 1992, p. 248). In that work, as Robert Gaston has shown, Pontormo, Giambullari, and Gelli were portrayed together in Purgatory, respectively as Moses and Abraham, alongside a straightforward portrait of Pontormo (Gaston, 2008). This tongue-in-cheek portrayal of the three men would appear to have been a direct evocation of the choir's content linking painter to programmers.

If indeed Giambullari was the programmer or one of the programmers for the choir's frescoes, he would have been an appropriate choice. First appointed to San Lorenzo as a canon "sopranumerario" in 1515, in 1527, he became a "canonico collegiale" and remained so until his death. As a Prior of the Canons of San Lorenzo (Pignatti, 2000, vol. 54),[24] fully conversant with the Roman Liturgy and the series of rituals and feasts conducted in the Church, he would have been uniquely able to work with Pontormo on the choir's programme. Giambullari would also have been familiar with San Lorenzo's history of Medici connections and with its role as the church that provided ongoing Requiem Masses for the souls of the dead Medici. He would have been equally familiar with the Cult of San Lorenzo and with the Cult of Relics located in San Lorenzo, related to the Saint's role, as one of Christ's Saints, whose Cult included interceding for the release of souls from Purgatory, a main feature of the prominence given to St. Lawrence's martyrdom on the choir's central wall.[25]

If Giambullari had a role in providing the choir's programme, as he had with other Ducal programmes, the advent of the Council of Trent would have provided incentive to ensure that the programme's content would have passed the Church's tests for orthodoxy, as a precaution against censure. Giambullari was also the academician Cosimo placed in charge, in 1541, of enacting the reforms Cosimo oversaw for the *Academia degli Umidi*/*Accademia Fiorentina* to ensure that the spiritual eclecticism of Academicians, such as Benedetto Varchi (whose anti-Medicean stance encompassed a leaning towards Valdesianism) (De Gaetano, 1968; Bryce, 1995; Sherberg, 2004; Pignatti, 2000; Maratsos, 2022). In 1546, Giambullari was placed in charge of ensuring that the Accademia as its consul, having been its *censore* in 1541, 1543, 1544 and 1546, when Cosimo placed him in charge of reforming the Accademia, together with Gelli and Bartoli. Thus Giambullari was perfectly positioned for ensuring that Pontormo's frescoes would be safely orthodox. That the choir's programmers were orthodox is documented by the assessment of its content for orthodoxy conducted in 1575, which the choir

[24] See https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pierfrancesco-giambullari_(Dizionario-Biografico)/.

[25] For a summary of the literature on the Cult of San Lorenzo as Intercessor, see Pilliod, 2022.

passed without incident (Von Teuffel, 2017).[26] Their continued existence into the eighteenth century, when the lower wall repairs destroyed most of the frescoes, additionally indicates that their content was accepted for two centuries as dogmatically suitable for a Counter-Reformation church. Thus San Lorenzo's lost frescoes should be studied from a perspective that analyses their content within an orthodox framework and as works of art painted by an artist who was a devout and practising member of the Roman Church, as is recorded in Pontormo's *Diary*, discussed below.

Pontormo's *Diary*: A Record of Devotions to the Roman Liturgy

Pontormo's *Diary* is in Florence, at the *Biblioteca Nazionale*. In its sixteen pages, Pontormo recorded his activities from 11 March 1554 to 31 December 1556, providing a snapshot of what became most important to Pontormo during the last two years of his life (Cox-Rearick, 1981,vol. 1, p. 347).[27] The *Diary* has received scholarly attention since 1902, when Arduino Colasanti did a codicological analysis and traced its provenance.[28] Interest in the *Diary* continued with Mortimer Clapp, Rosemary Mayer, Charles de Tolnay, Janet Cox-Rearick, Philippe da Costamagna, Elizabeth Pilliod, Massimo Firpo, and others interested in studying the *Diary* for its content and context. The *Diary* contains information about Pontormo's diet, digestion, the progress of his work, visitors he had, and thoughts about health and art, all written within the context of his observance of the Roman liturgical year.

As Pontormo began the *Diary*, he noted in its *incipit* that it was Lent, Saturday, 18 March 1554, which was "la sera dell'ulivo" (the Vigil for Palm Sunday/*Diary*, 8) The following Wednesday, 21 March, was "mercoledì sancto" (Wednesday of Holy Week/*Diary*, 11) Thus, Pontormo began the *Diary* keeping time within the structure of the Church's liturgical seasons. Such time-keeping indicates a close allegiance to the Roman Church and its liturgical calendar. It also speaks to Pontormo's identification as a devout and practising member of its faithful cohort. With death approaching, Pontormo noted: his regular attendance at Church on Sundays and holy days at different Florentine churches; his observance of the fasting recommended by the Church (as a good work); and his participation in devotions at the Certosa di Galluzzo, as well as his adherence to the Church's

[26] Christa Gardner Von Teuffel discussed the visit by the Apostolic Visitor, Alfonso Binnarini, Bishop of Camerino, when he inspected San Lorenzo's decoration to check for "ecclesiastical decorum"—i.e., orthodoxy.

[27] Cox-Rearick written at the same time he was painting the Choir of San Lorenzo, Florence," Biblioteca Nazionale, Miscellanea Magliabechiana, cl. VII, no. 1490, sixteen sheets (twenty-three pages), 218 150, written in ink with forty-three marginal sketches 1 to 3 cm in size on 1–8, 10–14, and 21. The first recorded owner of the diary was Carlo di Tommaso Strozzi, who acquired it in 1625. For the critical history of the Diary, see Cox-Rearick, 1981 vol. 1, p. 347, notes 2, 3, and 4.

[28] Here, Mayer's edition of the *Diary* indicates page numbers for Pontormo's entries, placed in parentheses.

Cults of the Virgin, Saints and Relics.

On Thursday, 22 March, Holy Thursday, Pontormo recorded that Duke Cosimo I and the Duchess Eleonora de Toledo were at San Lorenzo, likely for the services, and perhaps they stopped to check on Pontormo's progress (*Diary*, 11). In 1554, Easter Sunday fell on 25 March, which was also the feast of the Annunciation ("Pascua e la Donna"/*Diary*, 11), a Marian feast duly observed by Pontormo.

The following Sunday, 1 April, Pontormo noted that he went to draw with Bronzino and that he was fasting—"e la sera non cenai." Pontormo fasted regularly, as he repeatedly recorded in his *Diary*. Fasting is recommended by the Church to purify the soul by denying the body, accompanied by donating alms—a good work that assists with salvation.

In the following month, on Thursday, 24 May, on the feast of *Corpus Christi* ("Corpus Domini"/*Diary*, 15), Pontormo went to Mass, adhering to the Church's veneration of the Body of Christ, banned by Luther and other Protestant denominations as superstition. Pontormo noted that after Mass, he went to draw with Bronzino. Later, they ate dinner together.

Starting in 1554, Pontormo's *Diary* includes his devotion to intercessory saints: Sunday, 18 June, was the day for The Vigil for St. Luke ("la sera di sancto Luca") (*Diary*, 19). On 2 January 1555, Pontormo marked the New Year (*kalendi*), which he spent dining with Bronzino (*Diary*, 16). On 14 January, Pontormo attended Mass at San Miniato, the Church built to honour Florence's first Christian martyr (*Diary*, 17). Pontormo's notations about the Saints, whose feast days he observed, attest to his devotion to the Church's Cult of Saints, as intercessors, banned by Protestant denominations.

The first day of Lent that year fell on 24 February, as Pontormo noted, "adì 24 in domenica, lunedi e martedì e mercoledì, che fu el primo dì Quaresima" (*Diary*, 21), and he added that the weather was exceptionally beautiful, as though it were April. The feast of the Annunciation, always celebrated during Lent, fell on a Monday that year (*Diary*, 22), and Palm Sunday ("fu l'ulivo"/ *Diary*, 24) occurred on 7 April. The following Friday, 12 April, was Holy Friday ("venerdì che fu el dì sancto") (*Diary*, 27) For the Holy Saturday services, Pontormo noted that Duke Cosimo came "cioè al uficio" (*Diary*, 27). This was the second year in which Pontormo records the Duke's Lenten attendance at San Lorenzo, with possibly a visit to the frescoes.

The following day, 14 April, was Easter ("Pasqua domenica"/*Diary*, 27), and Pontormo recorded that it was cold and rainy with great wind on the day of the Resurrection. Lent would have especially resonated with Pontormo's frescoes, as Lynette Bosch indicated (RSA 2014, CAA 2014, SECAC 2015), with readings that referenced Adam, Eve, and the Hebrew Patriarchs being painted on the choir's walls. For the aging Pontormo, its significant message of salvation through Christ's sacrifice and its commemoration in Eucharistic Transubstantiation was especially important as he drew nearer to his personal death and Particular Judgement.

On 25 April, Pontormo noted that it was the Vigil of St. Mark (*Diary*, 28). Later, on 3 May, he recorded "la sera di Sancta Croce"/*Diary*, 29, which celebrates St. Helena's discovery of the True Cross, with the feast of the *Inventio Sancta Crucis*. The Cross of Christ is one of the Instruments of the Passion and the Church's most important relic. Thus Pontormo's recorded participation aligns his faith with the Church's Cult of Relics, rejected by Protestants. Additionally, this feast brought attention to the central *Christ in Majesty*, above whom fly angels carrying the Instruments of the Passion, bringing attention to the Cult of Relics.

On the following Sunday, Pontormo went to the church of San Francesco for morning Mass, by praying at the Church of San Francesco, thereby venerating St. Francis (*Diary*, 33). Pontormo's apportioning of his precious time for these practices indicates that he considered such essential for his salvation.

Also in 1555, Pontormo noted that Lent ended on Wednesday, 22 May, which was the Ascension of Christ to Heaven (*Diary*, 33), from "whence he will come again to judge the living and the dead," as is stated in the Nicene Creed. One of the major Marian feasts recorded by Pontormo that year was the Vigil for Pentecost ("Spirito Sancto"/*Diary*, 33), on 2 June (Sunday)—a significant feast for the Cult of the Virgin and Saints. After Pentecost came *Corpus Christi*, in 1555, on 13 June (Thursday), which Pontormo observed (*Diary*, 34).

In 1555, Pontormo noted more saints included in his devotions: St. Peter 29 June (*Diary*, 37), San Lorenzo 9 August (*Diary*, 43), and St. Andrew 30 November. Following the feast of St. Andrew, Pontormo engaged in a discourse on digestion and health, remembering how, on 5 November 1555, which was during Ordinary Time (*Quattro Tempora*), he fasted or ate little and felt better (*Diary*, 53). Thus, spiritual practice was linked in his mind to his bodily health, with spirituality providing well-being for his ailing body.

On Sunday, 2 September, Pontormo noted (perhaps with guilt?) that he spent the day drawing with Bronzino instead of going to Mass (*Diary*, 44). Marian devotions continued with his record of The Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin (8 September, Sunday) (*Diary*, 44). He marked additional Saints' days: the Feast of St. Matthew (Saturday, 21 September) (*Diary*, 45); St. Luke's feast (18 October) (*Diary*, 46); St. Andrew's Day (30 November) (*Diary*, 50); and the feast of St Nicholas (6 December, Friday) (*Diary*, 50).On 23 December 1556, Pontormo recorded the death of his friend, Pagolo da Terra Rossa, on the Vigil for Christmas (*Diary*, 54). Christmas was a big occasion for Pontormo that year, and he dined with Bronzino on Christmas Eve (*Diary*, 54). On Christmas Day he attended Mass at San Francesco (*Diary*, 54). On 27 December, Pontormo and Bronzino heard Mass at *Monte Oliveto*, the Olivetan Church in Florence (*Diary*, 54). The next day they went to San Miniato, and Pontormo fasted that evening and on Sunday, when he and Bronzino attended Mass at San Domenico (*Diary*, 57). Pontormo continued spending the holidays with Bronzino, and they dined together again on 1 January 1556 (*Diary*, 57).

The Feast of the Epiphany ("la befania"/*Diary*, 58) was the first liturgical record of 1556, after which Pontormo recorded the feast of St. Anthony (16 January) (*Diary*, 59); and the *Catedra Petri* (18 January)—one of the five feasts of St. Peter's celebrated by the Church that honours its first pope (*Diary*, 59). The careful recording of a papal feast is a clear sign of Roman allegiance and devotional practice. Palm Sunday fell on 29 March that year (*Diary*, 66), as Pontormo recorded, with Holy Thursday on the following week (*Diary*, 66). On Sunday, 28 April 1556, the day of the post-Lenten commemoration of the Crucifixion, Pontormo noted his observance of the day ("Santa Croce"/*Diary*, 69).

Pontormo recorded The Vigil for the Ascension (Wednesday, 13 May) in 1556 (*Diary*, 70). Pontormo and Bronzino attended Mass at Santa Maria del Fiore on Sunday, 21 June (*Diary*, 71). The following Sunday, the 28th, Pontormo and Bronzino went to the Ognissanti for Mass (*Diary*, 72). On 5 July, Pontormo and Bronzino again attended Mass at Santa Maria del Fiore (*Diary*, 72).

Saints' days recorded in 1556 included: St. Matthew (Monday, 21 September) (*Diary*, 77) and St. Michael (Tuesday, 29 September) (*Diary*, 78). On Sunday, 4 October, Pontormo attended Mass at San Francesco (*Diary*, 78). On 18 December, Pontormo went to the Certosa di Galluzo for Mass, where he prayed with the Carthusians (*Diary*, 81). St. Thomas was recorded on the following Thursday (*Diary*, 81). Thus the *Diary* records that Pontormo continued to be a welcome visitor at the monastery, where he had worked and prayed since 1522, when he painted the Passion cycle in their cloister (Cox-Rearick, 1981; Maratsos, 2021).

On 24 December, Pontormo celebrated Christmas Eve ("Pasqua") with Bronzino (*Diary*, 82). The last entries in the *Diary* record the passing of Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday and Pontormo's last meal—a salad, fish, and eggs with bread—before he died on 2 January 1557 (*Diary*, 82).

Pontormo likely died from a combination of eosinophilic esophagitis, which causes difficulty swallowing, as he noted in the *Diary*, and an accelerated case of celiac disease, which would cause the white stools and digestive discomfort that Pontormo mentioned. After studying the *Diary* for diagnostic data, Dr. Arnold Matlin, MD, of Rochester, NY, diagnosed this condition. Celiac disease can be mild or acute and can become more critical with advancing age and present with the esophagitis, which may have afflicted Pontormo and brought about his death.[29]

Pontormo's notes about his observance of the Church's calendar and his participation in the Roman liturgy were not made for public display. The *Diary* was not a constructed veneer intended to draw attention away from unorthodox beliefs or a deliberate Nicodemist ruse. The *Diary* was Pontormo's private record of what was important to him, and it reflects his regular and continuing adherence to the

[29] Dr. Matlin provided the medical information presented in the papers given in 2014 and 2015.

Church of his childhood and youth in his final years. In his *Diary*, Pontormo chronicled his illness and his work along with his faith that he would find salvation in the Roman Church's liturgy, its Cult of the Saints, its Cult of the Virgin and in its Cult of Relics.

As part of his devotional life, he practised fasting and almsgiving at services—the Good Works necessary for the salvation of the soul, in accordance with the teachings of the Roman Church. Thus, at the point where Pontormo understood that he was dying and that he was racing against time to finish his last great work, he turned to the Church for comfort. Together with Bronzino, whose regular attendance at church is also recorded by Pontormo, the aged and dying artist adhered to a regular, and orthodox, devotional practice.

Given this documented and primary evidence of Pontormo's spiritual life, any interpretation considering Pontormo to have had problematic, reformist tendencies must be set aside as being contrary to the evidence found in the *Diary*. Furthermore, Pontormo was not only an observant member of the Roman Church but also a participant in the venerable and mystical Carthusian Liturgy, which hewed to the use of Rome. Hence, any attempt to argue that Pontormo injected heterodoxy or heresy into San Lorenzo's frescoes should be dismissed.

Pontormo and the Carthusians: Vision and Orthodoxy

The content of Pontormo's *Diary*, which establishes the artist as having been a devout and observant member of the Roman Church, argues for a reconsideration of Vasari's criticism of the content and style of San Lorenzo's frescoes as puzzling because they had unfamiliar doctrine, which Vasari ascribed to Pontormo's contact with individuals who were learned and scholars. De Tolnay and his followers considered Vasari's remarks to be proof that Pontormo's San Lorenzo's programme reflected heretical or heterodox ideas, given to him by Florentine intellectuals who had Valdesian sympathies. Nonetheless, Pontormo's *Diary* documents that Pontormo was not a Nicodemist. Thus Vasari's remarks need renewed consideration aligned with the *Diary*'s content, and such a reconsideration reveals that his antipathy towards San Lorenzo's frescoes was grounded in his earlier criticism of Pontormo's work for the Carthusians at the Certosa di Galluzzo. Such parallel commentary by Vasari is not surprising because, for Pontormo, San Lorenzo's choir was the culmination of a stylistic, conceptual, and spiritual development begun when he first worked at the Certosa, in 1522.[30]

The scenes Pontormo painted in the Certosa's cloister, which Vasari condemned, include renditions of *The Agony in the Garden*, *Christ before Pilate*, *The Resurrection*, the *Way to Golgotha*, and a *Pietà* as well as a painting of the *Supper at Emmaus* (see Cox-Rearick, 1981, vol. 2, pp. 228-230). The frescoes

[30] On this cycle, see Cox-Rearick, 1981; Costamagna, 1994; Falciani, 2014; Natali, 2020; Maratsos, 2021.

survive in a ruined state, with the excellent preservation of the *Supper at Emmaus* enabling an idea of how the frescoes would have appeared in their undamaged condition. At the Certosa, Pontormo developed a style defined by elongated forms, brilliant colours and abbreviated spatial dimensions, crowded with figures pressing towards the picture plane. The combined effect of these stylistic characteristics presents the spectator with a vision of reality that is other-worldly and not bound by the rules of material existence. In effect, Pontormo's Certosa frescoes engage their audience by drawing its members into a created space of transcendent Divinity, wherein the rules of perspective do not apply and neither do Classical proportions, as the realism of the minutiae of quotidian life is expunged. This impact is similar to what is seen in the surviving drawings for San Lorenzo, which partake of a visual vocabulary akin to that found in Pontormo's work at the Certosa.

In her study of Pontormo, Jessica Maratsos argued that the manner in which Pontormo delineated his figures and constructed his painted space intentionally generated an emotional connection that automatically drew the monks and their guests closer to the represented events and personages by theatrically appealing to their emotions (Maratsos, 2021, pp. 46-48). Maratsos linked Pontormo's Certosa work to the content of Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi*, as relationship first pointed out by Petra Beckers (see Maratsos, 2021; Cave, 1976; Chen, 1956). There is an assumption in the literature that it was Leonardo di Giovanni Buonafede (see Strozzi, 1996; Rosso, 1987, Maratsos, 2021), prior at the Certosa since 1496, who was responsible for selecting Pontormo for the work.

Pontormo's manner of engaging spectators at the Carthusian monastery can be related to the rhetorical trope of *Enargeia*.[31] *Enargeia*, which should not be confused with *Energia* (which denotes vigour of figural expression), was identified by Greek and Roman philosophers and rhetoricians as the ability of art to create an alternative reality that can draw an audience into emotional engagement with represented events they did not personally witness. At the Certosa, Pontormo deployed a visual style that was intrinsically enargeiac, which corresponded to Carthusian meditational prayer, with its goal of generating a direct, intimate, and visionary connection with God. At San Lorenzo, Pontormo employed a style developed from the trajectory he began at the Certosa, as is evident in the surviving drawings, thereby providing San Lorenzo's frescoes with a similar visionary representational style. And it was this visionary style, along with the emphasis given to the choir's Eucharistic Christ, which Vasari disliked, as he instinctively identified aspects of Pontormo's work at San Lorenzo that linked it with his earlier work for the Carthusians. San Lorenzo's frescoes were, therefore, visionary and grounded in Carthusian traditions of union with Christ, as the source of salvation—a not at all problematic orthodox belief, grounded in the Roman Church's theology,

[31] For a study of this rhetorical trope in the context of Mannerist Art, see Bosch, 2020.

which formed the core of Carthusian mystical devotions. These special devotions were not inclinations towards Valdesianism or crypto-Protestantism along a Nicodemist vein but were central to Carthusian devotions and to their liturgy, which was confirmed throughout their history as expressing the Church's dogma on key theological points.

Understanding this connection clarifies various aspects of San Lorenzo's frescoes by enabling an understanding of their stylistic source, within Carthusian devotional practice, as reflected by Pontormo's artistic development and his personal experience of the Carthusian goal of union with Divinity, through cloistered, meditative prayer. The ultimate, contemplative connection of becoming a mystic was not required for every Carthusian, much less of Pontormo as an artist, but it was a goal that could be approximated, through meditative prayer and separation from the world.[32] Thus, during his time at the Certosa and in his later visits to the Carthusians, Pontormo would have become familiar with the Order's emphasis on meditative, visionary prayer, and it was this aspect of Carthusian devotional practice that Pontormo expressed in the Certosa's frescoes and that Vasari disliked. It was also the foundation Pontormo used for the style he developed for San Lorenzo's frescoes.

The Carthusian Order was founded as a monastic, contemplative order, with certain connections to the world, by St. Bruno of Cologne (1030–1101), in the aftermath of a prophetic vision (see Ravier, 2017). The vision was that of Hugh of Châteauneuf, Bishop of Grenoble (see Butler, 1956, vol. 2), who "saw" the founders of the Carthusians as seven stars; and it was St. Bruno, among those stars, who officially founded the order in 1084. From this modest foundation, the Carthusian Order became a significant force in Western Europe, known for its scholarship and orthodoxy. The goal of the Order was to provide a life of contemplation and prayer, accompanied by work, a level of communication among themselves and related laity, and adherence to a straightforward observance of the Roman Liturgy. The phrase "never reformed" because "never deformed" is a testimony to the steadfastness with which the Carthusians hewed to the Roman Church since their foundation.

Guigo II (d. 1178) provided the manual for *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio* observed by the Carthusians to achieve spiritual proximity or mystical union with God (Carthusian, 1981). In the thirteenth century, Hugh of Balma (see Hopkins, 2002; Martin, 1996) and Guigo du Pont (d. 1297) began to write manuals designed to assist the monks with their contemplative prayer, with the hope of achieving what they identified as "upsurges"—states of exaltation that enabled direct connection to the Divine. Moving into the fourteenth century, Carthusian nuns, whose convents followed the Carthusian way of life, produced the mystics

[32] On mysticism, see Underhill, 2011; McGinn, 2006.

Marguerite d'Oingt (d. 1310) (see Philipon, 1877) and Beatrice d'Ornacieux (d. 1303/1309) (see Bouvier, 1982). Among the better-known fifteenth-century Carthusian mystics was Dionysus the Carthusian (Denys van Leeuwen) (1402/03–1471), who lived in Belgium (see Gurdon, 1908). This Dionysus contributed to the reformation of the Rhineland between 1451 and 1452 as a member of the group accompanying Papal Legate Nicholas of Cusa. Cardinal Nicholas Albergati (d. 1413), portrayed by Jan Van Eyck, generated a Carthusian tradition that combined Classical literature filtered through Renaissance philology with the Carthusian meditative and monastic tradition (Hunter, 1993). As the century progressed, Nikolaus of Kempf of Gaming (d. 1497) became one of the more prominent ascetics among the Carthusians, leading up to the sixteenth-century confirmation of the orthodoxy of the Carthusian Rule, in 1510, a dozen years before the Certosini commissioned Pontormo to decorate their cloister (Martin, 1992).

This was the world into which Pontormo stepped, along with Bronzino as his companion, in 1522, when he moved to the Certosa to work and avoid that year's plague outbreak.[33] It was perhaps the Northern European origins of the Carthusians that inspired Pontormo to assimilate a referential use of figures drawn from Albrecht's Dürer's *Small Passion* (1511) for the Certosa's frescoes.[34] Thus the Northern European, visionary, representational tradition in which Dürer was immersed provided an appropriately resonant model for Pontormo.

However, Pontormo's astute employment of Dürer's imagery was not appreciated by Vasari, whose commentary on the Certosa frescoes enables a view into his general disapproval for Carthusian seclusion, along with his negative assessment of the impact Carthusian spirituality had on Pontormo. In his description of the Certosa frescoes, Vasari waxed eloquent in his criticism like that with which he criticised Pontormo's San Lorenzo frescoes. Vasari condemned each cycle for their too attenuated, elongated figures, the lack of idealised proportion in a Classical manner, for Pontormo's assimilation of the style of other artists, and for quixotic compositional content.

Juxtaposing Vasari's criticism of the two cycles establishes a link between the Certosa and San Lorenzo's frescoes located in Vasari's aesthetic preferences and in what was his dislike for the Carthusian way of life. Vasari's antipathy for the isolation of the Carthusians transferred to his assessment of Pontormo, and he blamed the Carthusians for having a deleterious impact on Pontormo's earlier, promising style. Hence Vasari's criticism of San Lorenzo was not, as de Tolnay, Forster, Firpo, and others suggested, a cover-up of heterodoxy or heresy but was a continuing condemnation on Vasari's part of the spiritualised rendition of reality

[33] On the history of the Carthusians and the repeated confirmation of their orthodoxy, see King, 1955; Pansters, 2014.

[34] On the Small Passion series, see Hass, 2000.

Pontormo developed while working for the very orthodox Carthusians (Maratsos, 2021; Beckers, 1985).[35] Nor can Pontormo's style at the Certosa or his employment of Dürer be credited to a proclivity for Lutheran tenets, given historical chronologies. As Maratsos indicated, knowledge of Luther's ideas, even for Florentine intellectuals in the early 1520s, was so limited that it could not have reached Pontormo to influence his artistic choices at the Certosa (Maratsos, 2021).

Given this context, Vasari's criticism of Pontormo's work at the Certosa and San Lorenzo should be understood as an extension of Vasari's characterisation of Pontormo as an artist who started with great promise only to fail to live up to it because he was led astray by trying to assimilate the style of other artists. As Paul Barolsky demonstrated in his work on Vasari, each *Vita* composing the *Lives of the Artists* served Vasari's purpose of presenting individual artists as types, thereby creating a typology of art that reflected all of the different ways that artists could be and work (Barolsky, 1990; 1991). Within Vasari's systemic overview of artistic development, some artists were characterised as stars endowed with a Divine touch (Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael); others as forerunners of High Renaissance greatness (Cimabue, Giotto, Donatello, and Masaccio); and others as not exactly top drawer in diverse ways (Pontormo, Il Sodoma, and Mariotto Albertinelli). For Vasari, Pontormo was the artist who went astray and abandoned his early promise because he became too enamoured of foreign influence and too influenced by other artists.

Arguing against the idea that Pontormo's use of Dürer was a sign of heterodox spirituality is the historical record that places Dürer's *Small Passion* six years before Martin Luther hammered his 95 Theses for debate to the door of Castle Church in Nuremberg (Nichols, 2007). It was not until 1520/21 to 1528 that Dürer became immersed in Luther's teachings, and towards the end of his life, he can be considered a follower. However, for Pontormo to have known such and for him to have intentionally incorporated Dürer's style as a signal of his allegiance to heresy or heterodoxy, he would have needed a level of contact with the Northern European artist that did not happen. Hence Pontormo's use of the *Small Passion* for inspiration should be contextualised within Pontormo's search for a visual vocabulary that would serve his goal of developing a style concordant with Carthusian spirituality (see Smith, 2006) and mysticism and with Carthusian Northern European origins.

Nobody would argue that Pontormo's Certosa frescoes are not outstanding works of art, despite their poor state of preservation. Yet Vasari described them as inferior to Pontormo's earlier and better style because he assimilated Dürer (Vasari, 1973, vol. 6, pp. 266-267). This criticism is comparable to Vasari's comments about the San Lorenzo frescoes (*ivi*, pp.285-287). Vasari's comments about the Certosa

[35] Beckers noted the purchase of the Vita Christi on 10 July 1483 (Beckers, 1985, vol. 1, p. 84)

and the San Lorenzo works are not a veiled attempt to square the circle of Pontormo's deviance from orthodoxy but are a deliberate way of advancing his agenda for the *Lives*, by defining Pontormo's role as a cautionary tale.

Solitude was the other element Vasari blamed for Pontormo's fall from *grazia*. Vasari was hyper-critical of Pontormo's time at the Certosa and his return trips to the Carthusians to pray alongside them. Thus, two sources establish Pontormo as a regular visitor to the Certosa for personal devotion—the *Diary* and Vasari. For Vasari, Pontormo's repeated return to the contemplative atmosphere of the Certosa was evidence of the artist's imbalance and additional evidence that isolation harmed Pontormo's style. As Vasari wrote of Pontormo, even after his return to Florence: "He did not cease to frequent that place [Certosa] constantly and was always going and coming between Certosa and the city" (*ivi*, vol. 6, p. 269).

To Vasari, Pontormo's isolation at the Certosa produced a strange and fantastic new manner, for which Vasari blamed on solitude and from lack of contact with others (*ivi*, pp. 269-270.[36] Although Vasari condemned the Certosa frescoes as inferior, he liked the *Supper at Emmaus*, which he found "truly wonderful." However, there is no significant difference between the style of the *Passion* cycle and that of the *Supper at Emmaus* (Cox-Rearick, 1981; Costamagna, 1994). This equating of isolation with stylistic deterioration finds a parallel in Vasari's description of Pontormo's isolation during the time when he painted the San Lorenzo frescoes (Vasari, 1973, vol. 6, p. 285). According to Vasari, Pontormo suffered from melancholia at San Lorenzo, just as he had at the Certosa.

These remarks about Pontormo's solitude linked to Vasari's criticism of the Certosa and San Lorenzo frescoes bring to mind the remark Vasari made about how perhaps the inferior quality of Pontormo's style and arrangement of the choir's frescoes may have been due to Pontormo's association with "learned scholars" or "learned and lettered persons" (*ivi*, p. 286). This remark was construed by de Tolnay and his followers as proof that San Lorenzo's programme was devised by Benedetto Varchi and/or other members of the *Academia degli Umidi*, whose eclectic spirituality is documented. Yet it is more likely that among the "learned scholars" about whom Vasari so archly complained may have been the Carthusians at the Certosa, who would have provided the doctrine that Vasari blamed for having ruined Pontormo's early, promising style, with the solitude that promoted melancholy. In effect, Vasari's snide remarks about doctrine and learned scholars were not about the Florentine intellectuals dabbling in heterodoxy or only about Giambullari and Gelli. Vasari's remarks were about the orthodox Carthusians he disliked for decades as a bad influence on Pontormo.

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[36] After more condemnation of Pontormo's German style, Vasari concluded by saying that "For the Stranger's Apartment of the same monks he painted a large picture on canvas and oil-colours, without straining himself at all or forcing his natural powers, of Christ at the table with Cleophas and Luke … and since this work follows his genius, it proved to be truly marvelous."

Indeed, Pontormo's work at San Lorenzo responded to the religious uncertainty that prevailed in sixteenth-century Europe. San Lorenzo was an affirmation of his faith in the Roman Church, not a reaction against it. In these works, Pontormo incorporated his knowledge of the mystical and visionary path of Carthusian traditions into the subjects he was asked to paint for Duke Cosimo in the church that represented generations of Medici past and to come. Pontormo's great accomplishment at San Lorenzo was his development of an arrangement for the represented subjects that externalised the internal experience of communion with divinity, felt by mystics joined to the symbolic patterns of liturgical readings. Hence, instead of following the expected path of narrative, chronological order, which Vasari and others expected and wanted, Pontormo arranged his scenes to evoke the manner in which the Roman Liturgy unfolds, in allusive readings and ahistorical, symbolic narrative. By following the system of liturgical reference intrinsic to the selected scenes, we can understand the liturgical events emphasised at San Lorenzo in relation to the subjects Pontormo was asked to paint. Pontormo's design for the frescoes was radical and orthodox, as he created a design that mirrored and evoked the nature of the manner in which the readings that compose the Church's annual liturgy emerge during its enactment.

Considered within this context, it can be argued that Pontormo painted the frescoes as part of his spiritual exercises, as a good work that he offered to the Church and Christ. When Pontormo began the *Diary*, he understood that he would soon face his own Particular Judgement upon his personal death. That he would be thinking of his work as part of his spiritual practice fits with his knowledge of monastic observance, where work and prayer are united as good works. Thus, it is perhaps important to understand the process of the lost San Lorenzo frescoes as part of the devotions of the dying Pontormo in honour of the Roman Church, whose liturgy he so carefully recorded and observed. Vasari informed us that when Bronzino completed the unfinished frescoes at Pontormo's death, he painted the aforementioned portrait of Pontormo near the altar. In so doing, Bronzino, who had been Pontormo's companion at work and Church, painted an affirmation of Pontormo's belief in the Church. In the Roman Liturgy, he observed with friends. Thus the lost portrait was a fitting tribute to Pontormo, who had so carefully recorded his celebration of the Church's liturgical year as his life drew to its end and as he contemplated his own path to judgement and salvation.

As he lived his final years, Pontormo painted at San Lorenzo with a faith that was confirmed through his steady, spiritual practice depicted in a style analogous to the turn of sight St. John wrote about in *Revelation* 1:12, when he recorded: "*And I turned* to *see* the voice that spoke with me. And being *turned*, I *saw*. …." These words from John, which indicate the mystic state in which he witnessed the events accompanying the end of the world and its aftermath, are a foundation for the Church's history of knowledge gained in the altered and transcendent state of ecstatic vision, which coincides with Carthusian spiritual

practice. Contextualising Pontormo at San Lorenzo within this spiritual and artistic trajectory leads to a realisation that the choir's programme was derived from the Roman Liturgy, and it remains only to explore the connections so established that decode San Lorenzo's programme.

The Roman Liturgy and Pontormo's San Lorenzo Frescoes

Pontormo's San Lorenzo frescoes are Liturgical and Eucharistic, grounded in his personal participation in the daily Roman Liturgy he recorded in his *Diary*, linked to the subjects he was told to paint. As such, they are a deeply personal yet universal statement of the Roman Church's orthodox dogma as expressed in its daily services. This approach to narrative representation is intrinsically different from the more standard manner in which medieval and renaissance chapels were decorated with extensive, sequential narrative episodes that presented one or two "stories" per chapel or altarpiece, often in an orderly chronological fashion.

By following the narrative dislocation found in the patterns and rhythms of the liturgy, San Lorenzo's frescoes record the experience of attending liturgical celebrations—even as their liturgical, referential content became memorialised on the choir's walls. Spectators gazing on San Lorenzo's choir could visually experience how liturgical readings skip from Hebrew Scripture to the Gospels, to hymns, prayers, responses, and any number of sequences that compose the daily, seasonal, and annual liturgy by following the rhythm of Pontormo's design, which reified the Roman Liturgy spoken before the frescoes.

In effect, design, and plan, what Pontormo did—and it was spectacularly revolutionary to do in such a large and important space—was to take the parts of the subjects he was given and present them in a manner that evoked the experience of exaltation found in liturgical participation. He also evoked the visionary experience inherent in Carthusian meditation on salvation as found in the Roman Church. In such participation, where references address aspects of the Church's history, theology, and dogma from varying daily readings of texts that fit within an annual liturgical structure, the devout participant understands the symbolic logic of the liturgical year in an extra or supra-narrative, referential system.

Pontormo's devotion to the Roman Liturgy and his belief in universal salvation were expressed through his unique style. His approach to telling the story of Christ's life and the salvation he brought to humanity was synchronic. The Roman Church effectively reproduced his revolutionary and systemic approach. Additionally, through the specific choice of patriarchal subjects, whose merit resided in their defence of orthodoxy for which they were rewarded with progeny unto generations, the Roman Liturgy and Duke Cosimo's agendas coincided and coalesced within the referential system Pontormo created based on his personal, spiritual conviction. With these multiple elements at play, San Lorenzo's choir presented a marvellous coincidence of intention and design, unique in the differences between artist, patron, programme, and intention.

The subjects found in Pontormo's frescoes follow the Roman liturgical year, starting with the opening season of Advent through Christmas and until the Feast of the Epiphany, into Ordinary Time (*Quatuor Temporem*), until Lent (Ash Wednesday, Passion week, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter to Pentecost), followed by the second Ordinary Time.[37] Today's liturgy differs somewhat from the late fifteenth-/early sixteenth-century liturgy read at San Lorenzo, which would have been particular to the church's rituals and commemorative feasts. Yet even after the changes enacted by the Council of Trent and Vatican II (1962–1965), the Canon of the Mass remains unchanged, as do significant portions of the readings, prayers, and hymns, which remain unaltered.

Understanding the general configuration of the central Roman Liturgy read at San Lorenzo before the Council's revisions requires using a pre-Trent Missal dated before 1563, as is done here.[38] Liturgical manuscripts can vary slightly in their content and celebrations, but they must adhere to the central, orthodox content required by the Roman Church. While there may be local differences, significant divergences are not allowed. At a time when the basic tenets of the Church were being questioned, Pontormo's frescoes remarkably and with fidelity reproduce the Roman Liturgical year, as is described below.

Advent begins the Roman calendar with *Dominica de Septuagesima*, which coincides with its celebration at the Roman Church of San Lorenzo, one of the Stational Churches designated for special liturgical significance by Pope Gregory, as noted by Bosch (Bosch, 2014c).[39] The resonance with Florence's San Lorenzo and the *Martyrdom of San Lorenzo*, painted in the lower centre of the choir's walls is clear, as the Florentine church's Patron Saint was associated with the commencement of the Roman Liturgical year. The placement of San Lorenzo's martyrdom directly beneath the choir's central *Christ in Majesty with the Instruments of the Passion* visually connected the Saint to the Church's teachings on the relationship between Christ's Crucifixion and the Martyrdom of the Church's

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[37] As noted in RSA 2014, CAA 2014, and SCAC 2015. Scholars who have traced San Lorenzo's liturgy, include Victor Stoichita, "La sigla del Pontormo: il programma iconografico della decoratzione del Coro di San Lorenzo," Storia dell'Arte, 38–40 (1980), pp. 241–256, who identified correspondences between San Lorenzo's choir and the Canon of the Mass; Gaston, 1987, traced the role the Medici increasingly played in adjusting liturgical celebrations, from the fifteenth century ongoing; and Pilliod, 2021, who forwarded a typological and symbolic interpretation for Pontormo's frescoes, based on the stages of the Church's history, touching on the Lenten liturgy, using secondary sources. For studies of San Lorenzo's liturgical books, see: Stinson, 2017; Alidori-Battaglia and Battaglia, 2017.

[38] The text used here is Robert Lippe, LL.D., Missale Romanum Mediolani, 1474, 2 vols. (London: Harrison & Sons, 1899), vol. 1., pp. 206-211 for the Canon of the Mass and the annual Liturgical year, according with the use of Rome.

[39] Bosch discussed Pope Gregory's foundation of the Stational Churches. See Lippe, 1474, vol. 2, p. 40, for the Stational Church of San Lorenzo.

Saints and to the Church's Cult of Saints.[40]

As the Cult of Saints was rejected by the Protestant denominations, which denied the Intercession of Saints and the Church's Cult of the Relics, this central visual theme so explicitly placed to evoke the Church's teachings is a direct refutation of theories that the frescoes supported unorthodox alternatives. Attention would have been returned to San Lorenzo during the celebration of the Feast of San Lorenzo, on August 10, and on the Octave for his feast (Lippe, 1474).[41] The prayers offered to San Lorenzo on the Vigil and on his Feast emphasize his intercessory role, as a vehicle for the power of Christ to save souls from Purgatory and to help them avoid Hell. The Octave's prayers emphasise connection between Christ's sacrifice and St. Lawrence's martyrdom, relating the Roman Liturgy to the choir's altar wall, where Pontormo painted a visual equivalent resonant with the liturgical passage: "Sacrificium nostrum tibi quaesumus Domine beati Laurentii precatio sancta conciliet ut cuius honoure sollemniter exhibetur meritis efficatur acceptum" (Lippe, 1474, vol. 2, pp. 40-42).[42]

Next in the Roman Liturgy is the time of *Quatuor Temporem* (Ordinary Time), where Moses appears in the reading that follows the *Oratio*, which was Exodus 24:12–18 (Lippe, 1474).[43] This reading corresponds to Pontormo's *Moses with Tablets of the Law*, which God gave him. Pontormo's preparatory drawing for this scene shows Moses holding the tablets as God points towards them from his Heaven. The celestial setting indicates the "cloud," and below Moses, indistinct forms evoke the "fire" seen by the Israelites witnessing the event.

The choice of Moses as a subject for the choir was a pointed reference to orthodoxy, as Moses had two sets of tablets, one which he broke when the Israelites wandered from the orthodoxy of the Law and the other which replaced it after their return to it.[44] Thus, as with *The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, Pontormo's frescoes explicitly called for orthodoxy. The message from Duke Cosimo to the Florentines, who were experimenting with deviations from Roman orthodoxy was clear—hew to the Roman Church.[45]

On Saturday of the same liturgical season, Moses recurs in a reading of

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[40] On the Cult of the Saints, see Brown, 2014; and on the Cult of Relics, see Wisniewski, 2019. Both cults were rejected by Protestants as superstition.

[41] See Lippe 1474, 2:363-364 and p. 370 for the Octave.

[42] See Boldva (HU), Missale Boldwense, sec XII. Sacramentary Mass, manuscript, OSZK Budapest, Mny1, Mass on August 10, https://usuarium.elte.hu/conspectuses?book=10170&offset=748600, p. 228 (accessed 15 August 2023).

[43] Lippe referring to what the Lord said to Moses (see Lippe, 1474, vol. 2, p. 61)

[44] Moses smashed the first set of tablets when he saw the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:19), and he was given the second set as a replacement (Exodus 34:1).

[45] For Cosimo's repression of difference, see Murry, 2009.

Deuteronomy 26:15–19 (Lippe, 1474, vol. 2, p. 67).[46] This reading specifically addressed the Israelites, exhorting them to remain faithful to orthodoxy and God's commandments, thereby referencing the congregation to the tablets held by Moses and God's presence in the scene. The message is direct: follow the Roman Church as the true church and as it tells you to do in its liturgy on this day. Each time Moses appeared in the Roman Liturgy, the panel of Moses in the choir became newly charged with meaning.

The next reading on the same day was Deuteronomy 11:22–25, which also references Moses and his tablets (*ibid*.). While this too is an affirmation of orthodoxy that references the tablets of the Law held by Moses, it is also a statement about territory, made during a time when Duke Cosimo was looking to expand and consolidate his gains. The phrase "Every place where you set the soles of your feet shall be yours" would have carried great significance for those who knew Cosimo's plans for dynastic and territorial expansion of the Ducal family's power.

Moses recurs after the *Oratio* on the Third Sunday in *Quadragesima*, was Exodus 20:12–24, where the Ten Commandments are listed, followed by the appearance of God, who spoke with Moses, returning attention to Pontormo's representation (*ibid*.). The same message was conveyed on the Sixth Day after the Third Sunday of *Quadragesima* with Numbers 20:2–3 and 6–13 (*ibid*.). This passage describes the miracle that occurred when Moses drew water from the rock so that the Israelites would hew to the teachings of the Lord, constituting another message of orthodox observance.

Moses is next mentioned in the liturgy of the *Feria III Post Dominicam IV*, in *Quadragesima*, when Exodus xxxii. 7–14 was read, which recounts the Israelites' worship of the Golden Calf (Lippe, 1474, vol. 2, p. 103). A direct message to the unorthodox or heterodox is contained in this reading, where the Lord tells Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, the people you brought up from Egypt have done a disgraceful thing; so quickly have they turned aside from the way I commanded them." Moses exhorts the Israelites to abide by Orthodoxy on *Feria IV. Post Dominicam de Passione* with Leviticus 19:1–2 and 11–19, where Moses repeats the Ten Commandments and exhorts the Israelites, "You shall keep my rules" (*ivi*, p. 120). On Palm Sunday, Exodus 15:27–16:7 was read, the text that recounts the parting of the parting of the Red Sea (*ivi*, p. 128). For the Sixth Friday celebration, Exodus xii. 1–11 recounts the institution of Passover (*ivi*, p. 162). Throughout each of these readings, the representation of Moses in San Lorenzo's choir would have been newly charged with meaning and message from Duke Cosimo to the gathered congregation.

Moses returns to the Roman Liturgy on the Saturday after Pentecost, following the Second *Oratio*, in the reading of Leviticus xxiii. 9–11, 15–17, 20–21

[46] See Lippe, 1474, 2:67 about the Lord and His commands.

(*ivi*, p. 249). These readings remind the assembled of the Lord's commands to Moses to gather the elements needed for a sacrifice–sheafs of wheat, wine, oil and flour and a yearling ram (referencing the substitution of a ram for Isaac, which turns attention to the scene of *Abraham Sacrificing Isaac*). These preparations directly reference the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Canon of the Mass, the most orthodox part of its celebration. Moses returns in the *Prophetia* following the Third *Oratio* with Deuteronony xxvi. 1–3, 7–11 (*ivi*, p. 250) and with Leviticus xxvi. 3–12 (*ivi*, p. 251). These passages recount the blessings that the Lord gave to the Israelites who obeyed him and kept the Commandments and the Law, bringing attention again to the scene of *Moses with the Tablets of the Law*, emphasising sacrificial offerings to the Lord, while returning to the theme of obedience and fidelity to orthodoxy.

Additional references to Moses recur on the Fourth Saturday of Ordinary Time in September with Leviticus xxiii. 27–32, which is read after the First *Oratio* and which is a demand for atonement of sins (*ivi*, p. 286). Following the Second *Oratio*, Leviticus xxiii. 39–43 is read, which contains instructions for celebrating feast days (*ibid*.). Themes of sacrifice at an altar recur in the *Offertorium* of the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, with the word–"Moses consecrated an *altar* to the Lord, and presented thereupon burnt offerings and sacrificial victims; he made an evening sacrifice as a fragrant offering to the Lord in the presence of the sons of Israel."[47] The Eucharistic themes found in the readings from Leviticus reference sacrifices made at altars, thereby referencing the Eucharistic core of the Mass and the Church's dogma of Transubstantiation, rejected by most Protestant denominations.

On Holy Saturday, Genesis is read, recounting the events attending Adam and Eve's creation, their Original Sin, their expulsion, their forced labour on the Earth, and the killing of Abel by Cain (see Lippe, 1474, vol. 2, p. 177, pp. 181–182, 185, and 187). The sequence begins with Genesis 1 through 2:2 and continues to Genesis 5:31; 6:1–7 and 13–22; 7:6, 11–14 and 18–24; 8:1–3, 6–12, and 15–21. This sequence follows the choir's scenes illustrating the events of Eve's creation, located beneath the central *Christ in Majesty* and continued in the choir's upper level with the representation of *Original Sin*, the *Expulsion from Paradise*, the *Labors of Adam and Eve* and the *Death of Abel*. The message inherent in these episodes responds to the retribution that will come to those who do not obey God's command, as the sin of Adam and Eve was disobedience for which they were doomed to labour on earth.

The liturgical readings in which Adam and Eve's labour was described as the wages of sin found an associative complement in the Holy Saturday reading of Matthew 20, the "Parable of the Vineyard," which explains how all who convert, whether early or late can be saved (See Hultgreen 2022, p. 43). To undo this sin,

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[47] See https://academic.oup.com/book/33615/chapter-abstract/288116540?redirectedFrom=fulltext (accessed 15 August 2020).

God sent Jesus Christ as a sacrifice and the placement of the Creation of Eve, the original temptress, beneath the *Christ in Majesty with the Instruments of the Passion*, directly references the significance of Passion week, during which Genesis was read. Orthodoxy, sacrifice, and Christ's ongoing manifestation of presence in Eucharistic Transubstantiation is the central message of Pontormo's frescoes.

At the end of the Holy Saturday readings from Genesis, Noah emerges within the Roman Liturgy, with the reading of Genesis 6, 7, and 8, which recount how the Lord ordered Noah to prepare for the Flood that would punish errant humanity's refusal to adhere to the Law. At this point, in the celebration of Holy Saturday, the attention of the assembled would have been drawn to the scenes of the South wall, depicting *The Blessing of the Seed of Noah* (upper level) and to the representation on the lower level of the choir of the *Building of the Ark*, *The Deluge*, *The Promise of God to Noah* and the *Blessing of the Seed of Noah*, as well as the *Drunkenness of Noah.* These scenes represent how the disobedient (unorthodox) is damned and the obedient (orthodox) are saved. The saved are the souls rising to the *Christ in Majesty* around *The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, and the damned are those relegated to the opposing North wall, being awakened by the trumpeting angels, preserved in the partial copy at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Pontormo's drawings of demons pulling souls down to Hell, preserves the missing side of the copy. Those who obey the Law are saved and their progeny multiplies, as did the progeny of Moses and Noah and that of Abraham and Isaac, as will the progeny of the Duke Cosimo, whose dynasty will flourish as did those of the Hebrew Patriarchs, with the observance of orthodoxy.

In keeping with the overarching themes of obedience and its reward of multitudes of generations ensuing from adhering to the word of God, the scene representing *Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac* emerges in the Roman Liturgy on the Vigil for Pentecost with the First Response "Temptavit deus Abraam" (God tests Abraham) (Lippe, 1474, vol. 2, p. 236). The *Oratio* following the First Response details how Abraham is an exemplar for humanity, as his obedience demonstrated his virtue and trust (*ibid*.). In the Second *Oratio* and the Third, Moses is praised for his adherence to the commands of the Lord, thus again referencing the theme found in the selected scenes of obedience to the Law (Lippe, 1474, p. 236). Also, in the Second *Oratio*, a direct reference is made to the New Testament about the liberation of the Jews as they crossed the Red Sea. Within the Roman Liturgy, this invocation emphasises how obedience leads to salvation through the sacraments offered to Christians, which renew their souls (Lippe, 1474).

On the lower wall, the North wall, as referenced above, was the resurrection of the dead, as the prelude for the Last Judgement. The scene of the dead becoming clothed in flesh found on the lower, North Wall, is a multivalent scene that evokes the resurrection of the dead at the beginning of the Last Judgement (when the angels sound their trumpets, as is visible in the upper section of the Victoria & Albert copy) and it also resonates with events found in Ezekiel 37, the passage known

traditionally as "The Valley of the Bones," which was read as the Seventh Lesson for Holy Saturday (*ibid*.).[48]

Within the Holy Saturday liturgy, Ezekiel's 37 evoked a parallel scene to that of the Last Judgement, when Ezekiel recounts how God took him to see the skeletons of the dead and then commanded him to prophesy so that they might live, clothed in flesh again, because they were the chosen who would rise and be saved. Ezekiel's text is the counterpart to *Revelation*'s description of the resurrection of the dead and it complemented the dead souls, who would be saved rising to Heaven and Christ, as seen on the choir's central wall. Thus, the souls rising from Purgatory, guarded by the Two Skeletons With Torches, signifying Purgatory, would be those saved, as God had promised Ezekiel and John's *Revelation* recounted. On the lower North Wall, the dead rising are being clothed in flesh, and their fate is eternal damnation in Hell, as indicated by Pontormo's drawing of a *Demon Dragging a Soul into Hell*. Thus, the lower, West, and North Walls referenced the Last Judgement, linked to *Revelation* through Ezekiel's passage on Holy Saturday.[49] The Book of Ezekiel is topically about a return to orthodoxy in the face of heresy, an apt reference for Duke Cosimo's role as defender of the Roman Church.

The Renaissance, Roman, Lenten Liturgy did not include a specific reading about the Last Judgement, as no text from *Revelation* was read as part of the celebration of daily Masses. However, specific texts about The Last Judgement were read in the Roman Liturgy for Requiem Masses,[50] which were consistently offered at San Lorenzo daily and during which was sung the *Dies Irae*, the Day of Wrath, at which the individual's Particular Judgement becomes absorbed by the permanence of the universal, Last Judgement.[51] The hymns and prayers offered at Requiem Masses consistently refer to the Day of Judgement, as described in St. John's *Revelation*. As good works offered by the living to help the dead shorten their time in Purgatory, Requiem Masses were rejected by Protestant denominations that maintained that Good Works were not necessary for achieving salvation, as faith alone was the element that saved. Thus, the emphasis placed on Requiem Masses at San Lorenzo and their concordance with Pontormo's image of the *Christ in Majesty* explicitly asserts allegiance to the Roman Liturgy.

Direct references to the Last Judgement would have also been read in the

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[48] See Lippe 1474 vol. 2, pp. 174-197, for Holy Saturday, and pp. 185–186, for Ezekiel 37.

[49] The contents of St. John's Revelation 10, Ezekiel 34, and Matthew 22:32 echo the choir's frescoes' imagery, and the same similarities are found in Revelation 18–21 and Ezekiel 27:38 –47.

[50] On the Masses offered for the Dead, see Gibson, 1977. These Masses generally included: a Kyrie Eleison; the Lacrimosa; the Dies Irae; the Domine Iesu (at the Offertorium); the Sanctus; the Benedictus; Pie Jesu; the Agnus Dei; the Lux Aeternum; the Libera Me; and the in Paradisum. Requiem Masses were rejected by Protestants as being good works.

[51] The composition of the *Dies Irae* is credited to Thomas of Celano (1200–1225), and its text is especially relevant for Pontormo's frescoes in its mention of Christ as the judge, who will come at the sound of the trumpet, who is beseeched for mercy and preservation from Hell.

liturgy for All Saints (November 1), which was the Vigil All Souls Day (November 2) (Lippe, 1474, vol. 2, pp. 394-396). During this Vigil, Apocalypse V: 6–12 was read, which describes how John sees the Throne of God, as well as Apocalypse VII: 2–12, which recounted how the Angels sent by God called out to those who would be judged. In the *Evangelium* for this Vigil, Christ is called to descend upon the faithful "Jesus came down from the mountain and stood on a plain" and the saved souls are called upon to praise Christ and to rejoice (*ivi*, p. 394). As these texts were read, Pontormo's *Christ in Majesty* took on charged significance for the assembled, who would one day be judged.

San Lorenzo's choir presented the central *Christ in Majesty with the Instruments of the Passion*, not as the Christ, who is enacting the Last Judgement, which at San Lorenzo had ended, leaving only the saved and the damned to their respective fates. Instead, San Lorenzo's Christ is an emblematic Christ, redolent with Eucharistic connotations and more evocative of Christ the Redeemer, who continues to save humanity through his presence in the Eucharist, when Transubstantiation occurs. Understanding that the central Christ is then not the Christ actively engaged in the Judgement does away with the recurring question of why the Virgin Mary is not present in the scene of the Judgement, along with the usual Saints and the Archangel Michael. They are not there because San Lorenzo's altar wall depicted the aftermath of the Judgement in direct, visual connection with the Eucharistic elevation at the Canon of the Mass, when Transubstantiation happens, and Christ returns to the world he left behind at his Ascension to continue the work of salvation.

In the Roman Liturgy, all narrative is subsumed into the great narrative of salvation with its climactic outcome in the mystery of Transubstantiation. At this most important moment, in the sequence of the Mass, when the body of Christ becomes the Host lifted above the altar, Christ descends unto the assembled devout, as he will in the Universal Judgement "to judge the living and the dead" as the Nicene Creed recounts.[52] Thus, at the moment of the Elevation of the Host, as Transubstantiation happens, the sacrifice of Christ is reified in the Host at the moment when he returns to our world to continue his salvific mission. This reification happens in every Mass celebrated and is especially important in Requiem Masses, the purpose of which is to ensure that the souls of individuals will be released from Purgatory and freed to Heaven. At San Lorenzo, the gathered faithful would have looked up to see Pontormo's *Christ in Majesty*, appearing to them as through in a vision akin to those sought by the Carthusians with whom Pontormo had lived, worked and prayed.

Pontormo's Christ at San Lorenzo is an image of Christ that emphasised the Canon of the Mass—the part of the Mass that is unchanged and which explicitly

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[52] For the Nicene Creed, see https://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=495 (accessed 15 August 2023).

espouses the doctrine and dogma of Transubstantiation. It is not possible to more adhere to Roman orthodoxy in a liturgical programme than by emphasising Eucharistic Transubstantiation—the central debate that separated the Roman Church from the Protestant denominations that overwhelmingly rejected this teaching. Far from being a transgressive Christ, Pontormo's Christ is the Christ of the Eucharist, a devotion to whom would have been familiar to Pontormo through his years of contact with the Carthusians, the order that was "never reformed" because "never deformed" and for which the Eucharistic Christ was central to their devotions.

At San Lorenzo, in a moment of visionary inspiration Pontormo was able to paint a wondrous work that could show the world what the mystics feel when they come into the presence of God. This expression of faith was enabled by the artist's adherence to the orthodox teachings of the Church and his close ties to the Carthusian monks of the Certosa di Galluzzo, who were his patrons and his friends. In enacting the emotions and experience of connection with God so evident in the San Lorenzo frescoes, Pontormo was guided by the texts of the Church, which mark its liturgical seasons and cycles in repetitive ritual, and by the inspirational lives of the Carthusians at the Certosa. This unique combination of belief and devotion enabled Pontormo to create a style in his last works that illustrated the ineffable experience of the Church's mystics, who perceive without sight and know without words what it is to be in the presence of Divinity. Through a unique kind of spiritual *enargeia* developed by Pontormo for the frescoes of San Lorenzo's lost choir, the images there painted provided a gateway experience for the gathered participants in the church's liturgy, rituals, and ceremonies. Thus, did Pontormo enable access to God for those who came to the choir to pray for their salvation in the church where he worked prayed during his final years. For those fortunate enough to have seen these works, the certainty of salvation through the Roman Church, its liturgy, and its teachings would have been clear. At San Lorenzo, the recognition of this message, so imbued with the Church's central dogmas, resonated for two two-hundred years, during which Pontormo's frescoes inspired those perceptive enough to understand that he offered a vision of Heaven to those on Earth.

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