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**Nicola Pisano's Pisa Baptistery Pulpit: Baptism, Papal
Orthodoxy, and Joachite Heresy**

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1. See R. Wiley, *Christian Initiation: A Comparative Study of the Liturgies of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, Isaac of Iberyston, Theodore of Nopruetia, and Ambrose of Milan*, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Consortium Press, 1974), 27.

Introduction

It is the evening of Holy Saturday in the year 1260. The infant candidates have been brought to the Pisa Baptistery to receive the redemptive grace of the sacrament of baptism. Before approaching the baptismal font, each infant is anointed by a deacon and a priest with the approbation, "You are anointed as an athlete of Christ."¹ The child is held so that his face is turned to the West, the symbolic direction of Satan, and asked, "Do you renounce the devil and his works?" His godparents reply, "I do renounce."² "Do you renounce the world and its pleasures?" Again, the godparents reply, "I do renounce." Thus, having faced and rejected Satan, the child is turned to face the East.³

The infant candidates are brought towards the baptismal font in the center of the baptistery. The bishop performs a consecration of the font through an exorcism of the water, a prayer of sanctification, and a call for the presence of the Holy Trinity.⁴ The infant is held over the font where the bishop, a priest, and several deacons stand. The Bishop asks the candidate, "Do you believe in God, the Father almighty?" The

¹ Hugh M. Riley, *Christian Initiation: A Comparative Study of the Interpretation of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John of Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Ambrose of Milan*, ed. Johannes Quasten (Washington D.C.: Consortium Press, 1974), 27.

² Riley, 27.

³ Riley, 28.

⁴ Riley, 149-150.

sponsors reply, "I believe," and the infant is dipped in the water. The bishop then asks, "Do you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Cross?" Again, the godparents reply and the child is submerged. "Do you believe also in the Holy Spirit?" "I believe," and the infant is dipped for the third and last time.⁵

Several groups of individuals, after the baptismal ritual is completed, linger in the baptistery to admire the newly completed pulpit created by the artisan Nicola, from the southern region of Apulia. The parents, holding their newly baptized child, and the godparents circle the hexagonal structure, gazing at the finely carved panels depicting the birth, life, and death of their savior, Jesus Christ. Surely, the representations of the Christian history of redemption take on special meaning for the individuals, who contemplate their own relationship with Christ and the future life of the newly initiated child. The images reassure them of the efficacy of the sacrament in which they have just participated. They understand that the baptism of their children and godchildren, and, indeed, their own baptisms allow them to participate in Christ's death and resurrection. In the words of Paul, in his letter to the Romans:

You have been taught that when we were baptized in Christ Jesus we were baptized in his death;

⁵ Riley, 150.

of the to in other words, when we were baptized we went
Joachin into the tomb with him and joined him in death,
so that as Christ was raised from the dead by
the Father's glory, we, too, might live a new
life.⁶

Nicola Pisano's Pisa Baptistery Pulpit has garnered a vast amount of art historical attention. The artist's use of a classical style provides a starting point for any discussion of the Renaissance. However, the identification of the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit as primarily a proto-Renaissance work denies an accurate contextual analysis. Pisano's pulpit is a thirteenth-century Pisan monument whose primary importance is its relationship to the sacrament of baptism. Eloise Angiola in her essay "Nicola Pisano, Federigo Visconti, and the Classical Style in Pisa" provides the only comprehensive contextual analysis of the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit. This thesis seeks to clarify and expand her analysis. While Angiola offers a socio-political context for the imagery and iconography of the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit, I will place the monument within its religious context. Nicola Pisano's Pisa Pulpit can and should be understood as commentary on medieval theological understandings of the importance of baptism, as an orthodox argument supporting the Church's authority over the administration of the sacraments, and as a refutation of the heretical beliefs

⁶ Kenan B. Osborne, *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation* (New York: Paulist

of the followers of the medieval ecstatic theologian,
Joachim of Fiore. Pisa Baptistery Pulpit

The images depicted on the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit
are common on other artistic monuments, as well. Scenes
like the Nativity, the Crucifixion, and the Last Judgment
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tenuously related to the sacrament of baptism."⁷ Indeed,
other scholars like Hueck and Kozegarten argue against a
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Press, 1987) , 45-46.

Baptismal Imagery and Iconography in Nicola Pisano's

Pisa Baptistery Pulpit

The images depicted on the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit are common on other artistic monuments, as well. Scenes like the Nativity, the Crucifixion, and the Last Judgment occur as stock themes. The cause of this stems from the broad theological importance of such events in Christian belief. From this perspective, it would seem that the relief sculptures on the pulpit have little significance beyond their broader implications in Christian theology. Eloise Angiola, in her excellent essay on the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit, writes: "Furthermore, the subject matter of the extensive decorative programs of the baptisteries of Florence, Parma, and Pisa seems only tenuously related to the sacrament of baptism."⁷ Indeed, other scholars like Hueck and Kosegarten argue against a specific baptismal iconography.⁸ However, while images like the Crucifixion, for example, achieve universal representation in the Christian world, medieval theological thought donated many layers of meaning to scriptural events. A layer of meaning pertaining specifically to the Christian conception of original sin and the role of Baptism in cleansing sin directly

⁷ Eloise Angiola, "Nicola Pisano, Federigo Visconti, and the Classical Style in Pisa," *The Art Bulletin* LIX (1977): 5.

⁸ Angiola, 5.

informed the patron Archbishop Visconti's choice of images and more importantly, their reception by viewers

In reality, it is the setting of Pisano's pulpit, the Pisa Baptistery, which allows one to read the images in terms of original sin and baptism. The setting of sculpture is frequently a key in understanding meaning. The iconic Statue of Liberty provides a more contemporary example of the importance of location in determining meaning in a work of art. The Statue of Liberty's meaning is ultimately tied to the vast immigration of Europeans to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While the sculpture itself presents the viewer with iconographic symbols of freedom and liberty that can be seen on other works of art, its deeper meaning as symbol of hope and prosperity specifically to destitute immigrants is achieved through its location in New York harbor, the primary port of entrance for new Americans. In the same way, the specific and supremely important functions of the medieval baptistery inform the viewer's understanding of the significance of each relief panel. Thus, the occurrence of similar series of images in non-baptistery settings does not deny the images specific meaning tied directly to the sacrament of Christian initiation.

Before any discussion of the panels themselves can begin, the role of the medieval baptistery must be elaborated. Interestingly, the resurgence of baptistery

building and decoration in the late medieval period occurred at a time when the liturgy of baptism was becoming more and more simplified.⁹ Large adult baptismal ceremonies were becoming extremely rare and infant baptism ceremonies were less elaborate.¹⁰ In addition, the function of the baptistery in the liturgical year was extremely limited as baptism was only performed on Holy Saturday and the Eve of Pentecost, with other possible periods of usage on the feasts of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist.¹¹ However, the baptistery had great civic importance in medieval Italy. As only the bishop could baptize or authorize other clerics to baptize, the baptistery in the major Italian city was a location where all inhabitants of the city and environs would have entered with some regularity.¹² Inasmuch as baptism was understood as the initiation into the universal Christian community, baptism also symbolized initiation into the more local Catholic community in which the sacrament was performed.¹³

In emphasizing the civic importance of the baptistery, Angiola somewhat diminishes the primary religious function of such structures. Clearly, the creations of buildings specifically intended for baptism underscore the great importance of the sacrament. The baptisteries at the Lateran and at Santa Thecla in Milan

⁹ Angiola, 5.

¹⁰ Angiola, 5.

¹¹ Angiola, 5.

provide inscriptions that compare the structures to the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.¹⁴ Cramer writes, "...that the baptistery was a 'copy' of the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, makes it clear that the baptistery also bore a liturgical sense of death-and-resurrection and rebirth. The baptistery, we might say, was a reminder of the civic (Roman) past, but a performance of baptismal themes."¹⁵

In this way, the baptistery achieved an eminent position among ecclesiastical structures in medieval Italian cities because of its religious and civic importance.

The five panels on the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit depict: 1. the circumstances leading to, including, and immediately following the Nativity, 2. the Adoration of the Magi, 3. the Presentation in the Temple, 4. the Crucifixion, 5. the Last Judgment. Although these images seem to have broad theological significance which would deny a reading specific to the sacrament of baptism and the function of the baptistery, in reality, the images perfectly complement medieval understandings of the sacrament.

Nicola Pisano presents a conflation of events in the first panel (fig. 2) including the Annunciation to the

¹² Angiola, 6.

¹³ Angiola, 6.

Virgin, the birth of Christ, Christ's first bath, and the Annunciation to the shepherds. In the upper left corner of the relief stand the figures of Gabriel, to the left, and Mary to the right. Gabriel gestures with his right arm towards the Virgin who, in turn, recoils, placing her right arm over her breast. A classical pediment, as well as other architectural details, forms the backdrop to this depiction of the Annunciation. Joseph appears in the lower left corner, beneath this scene. He sits with his legs crossed, and gazes out of the picture plane. To the right of Joseph, two maidservants, one holding the Christ child, now headless, and the other holding a jug of water genuflect on either side of a chalice-shaped basin. The Christ-child is held directly above the basin by the maidservants. A group of goats and sheep occupy the space immediately to the right of the two maidservants. Several heavily damaged figures occupy the upper right corner. They are certainly depictions of the shepherds who receive the news of Christ's birth from a host of angels. An image of the reclining Virgin accompanied by Christ in the manger dominates the center of the composition. The Virgin is approximately one and a half times the size of the other figures in the composition. The size of the figures behind the reclining Virgin could be accounted for as a result of

¹⁴ Peter Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages, c.200-c.1150* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 269.

¹⁵ Cramer, 269.

spatial recession. However, as the figures in the foreground, Joseph and the maidservants, are equally diminutive, it becomes clear that the panel does not represent an attempt at accurate perspective.

Perhaps the most startling aspect of this panel is Pisano's use of classical modeling and clothing. All figures are dressed in Roman toga-like garb. In addition, the hairstyles on the female figures especially evoke antiquity. The facial features of the figures resemble Roman sculpture in their idealized, stoic expressions. Even the figure of the annunciate Virgin, who recoils in a gesture of fear, retains facial composure. Thus, Pisano, through his classical portrayal constrains overt emotion and achieves the narrative quality of the panel through gesture, though restrained at that, rather than facial expression.

Note that the Virgin seems oddly distant from her child behind her. Her back is turned away from the manger, and she gazes out of the picture plane towards her right. The gazes of all of the figures diminish the emotionality of the panel. With the exception of the Annunciation figures, who gaze at each other, and the maidservants, who appear to look towards the Christ child, the figures gaze out of the picture plane, away from the action of the scene. While the style of the panel clearly derives from classical precedents, Nicola's composition strays from a unified depiction of time and

space in his conflation of distinct images. In addition, Pisano rejects a horizontally linear continuous narrative. Instead, the story reads from the upper left corner, down across the bottom of the panel, up the right side, and back to the center, which depicts the oversized reclining Virgin and child. Thus, the Nativity panel demonstrates Pisano's attempt at presenting a Christian story in a classical aesthetic, although issues of perspective and narrative seem less classically motivated.

Scripture and Christian theologians liken the birth of Christ to the coming of the second Adam.¹⁶ Adam's disobedience to God lowered humanity to a state of inherent sinfulness. The sacrament of baptism provides the grace by which Christians are absolved of this original sin. Thus, at a general level, a depiction of the Nativity in the setting of a baptistery must be understood as a reference to the Christ's role as the new and perfect Adam. More specifically, the images on the nativity panel can be more directly linked to the concept of Adam's original sin. The Annunciation marks the event where Mary conceives Christ. The patristic writer Justin draws strong parallels between Eve, who, with Adam, brought sin to mankind and the Virgin, who helped redeem humanity through the conception of Christ. He writes:

¹⁶ G.M. Lukken, *Original Sin in the Roman Liturgy* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1973), 361.

We know that Christ became man of the virgin so that disobedience as it had originated from the serpent, might find its end in the same way. Eve was a virgin without corruption; she conceived by the word of the serpent and bore disobedience and death. Now the Virgin Mary became pregnant with faith and joy, when the Angel Gabriel told her the good news....And of the virgin Jesus was born...through whom God destroyed the serpent - together with the angels and men who resembled him."¹⁷

Thus, the Annunciation can be understood as the reversal of Eve's disobedience, which brought about original sin and which the sacrament of baptism cleanses.

The central scene of the panel, the reclining Virgin with the swaddled Christ-child behind her presents the fulfillment of the promise of the Annunciation. Christ's incarnation allows for human redemption. Lukken writes: "He received that which was heavenly as Logos from the Father, but the earthly He received as incarnate from the old Adam through the Virgin."¹⁸ Before Christ's birth, humanity's true nature was based on the sinful nature of Adam. Hillary of Poitiers argued that Christ adopted the fullest of human natures when he was born of Mary. However, because of His divine paternity, Christ was born sinless, and therefore allows individuals baptized in him

¹⁷ Lukken, 369.

to participate in a sinless form of humanity, contrary to the old inheritance of Adam. Through the grace of baptism, the individual could participate in the Nativity and be reborn again without the taint of original sin.

The depiction of the first bath of Christ is an apocryphal event. Clearly, it echoes the ritual bathing of baptism. Its inclusion in this panel seems to be a clear indication that the panel as a whole was meant to be interpreted in terms of the sacrament of baptism. In addition, the receptacle in which the Christ child is bathed is reminiscent of the communion chalice. Thus, the image links the sacrament of baptism with the sacrament of the Eucharist.¹⁹ Interestingly, during this period, first communion was frequently administered to infants immediately after baptism. The inclusion of this scene underscores the images sacramental theme.

While the conflated composition of the Nativity panel seems a product of Gothicism in the lack of a unified time and space, the style of the figures is clearly classically inspired. Much attention has been paid to the origins and reasons for this choice in style and the implications of these issues will be discussed at greater length later. However, the effect of this style supports the theological importance of the Nativity panel in the context of a baptistery setting. Moskowitz argues that the style is a combination of gothic and classical

¹⁸ Lukken, 363.

impulses. She writes of Nicola's motivation in the style of the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit:

The popularity of these embellishments was to have a profound effect on the art of the fourteenth century, but Nicola, already, was not content merely to present symbolic narratives of transcendental events. His goal, was rather, to tell a human story in a credible and empathetic manner. Not only was the biblical story enriched by the inclusion of naturalistic details (such as the hairy goats on lower right of the first relief...)²⁰

Moskowitz's interpretation seems inadequate. When compared with Nicola's son Giovanni Pisano's depiction of a similar composition on the Pistoia Pulpit (fig. 3), the Nativity panel on the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit seems, if anything, lacking empathetic humanism. Angiola comments on the Virgin's resemblance to classical depictions of Roman goddesses. In addition, the reclining Virgin gazes out of the picture plane, seemingly detached from the Christ child behind her. Her posture is formal in its rigidity. Compare this with the nativity panel on the Pistoia Pulpit, where the reclining Virgin leans towards the Christ child, straining her body expressively. This image is more clearly related to natural human experience

¹⁹ Angiola, 9.

²⁰ Anita Moskowitz, *Italian Gothic Sculpture, c.1250-c.1400* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 28-29.

and expression of emotion. Note that in the Pisa panel, one maidservant supports the Christ child above the basin echoing the Eucharistic sacrament where a priest holds the communion wafer above the chalice. In Pistoia, the maidservants are still in the process of filling the basin with water, as if the image were a snapshot of a very real event. The lack of naturalistic emotion in the Pisa panel creates a feeling of somberness and repose. The effect is transcendental. The purpose of the nativity panel in Pistoia is to allow the viewer to relate to the action of the scene, while Nicola Pisano's classical style elevates the image above the ordinary. This is not an empathetic depiction of the story of a young and loving mother; rather, it is a depiction of the cosmic role of the Annunciation and the Nativity in allowing salvation through the sacrament of baptism.

The Adoration of the Magi relief (fig. 4) represents a more adept understanding of classical artistic style and composition than the Nativity panel. While the Nativity panel conflates several scenes from the infancy narrative, Pisano presents the Adoration in a unified time and space. Three foreshortened horses dominate the upper left corner of the composition. Note that in the Nativity panel, the barn animals seem stacked upon each other. In addition, their forms seem rather repetitive and static. In contrast, the horses in this panel, while somewhat crowded, seem more naturalistic and diversified,

as one bends its head towards the ground, one looks out perpendicular to the picture plane, and one gazes towards the action of the scene. The pyramidal composition of the three magi occupies the center of the panel. The two kings in the foreground genuflect: the figure on the right offering his gift to the Christ child, the figure on the left, preparing to approach the infant. The third magus stands behind, watching Christ receive the offering. Immediately to this figure's left stands a smaller figure of an angel. As in the Nativity panel, the Virgin dominates the composition. Clearly, she is larger than the other figures in the scene; however, this size discrepancy is less acute than in the Nativity panel. Indeed, the reduced size of the angelic figure represents an accurate attempt at spatial recession. Similar to the image of the reclining Virgin, Mary seems disinterested, or perhaps, caught in her own thought, as she gazes away from Christ who sits on her lap. The Christ-child reaches with his left arm towards the magus and touches the gift which he presents. Joseph, whose body is somewhat obscured by the seated Virgin, gazes out of the picture plane, in the upper right corner.

As in the Nativity panel, Pisano dresses his figures in classical garb and classically idealizes the stoic faces of the figures. While architectural details are less pronounced, Pisano includes what appears to be a classically styled pediment over the Virgin's head.

Compositionally, the Adoration panel, in its unified time and space, presents a clearer narrative. The gestures of the figures indicate the sequence of events that is about to take place. The image seems to be more of a snapshot of a single event. For this reason, it is fair to conclude that the Adoration panel represents a more fully classicized aesthetic.

Medieval theologians linked the Adoration of the Magi with the marriage of Christ and Ecclesia, the symbol of the Church, and Christ's baptism in the Jordan. The three magi bow before Christ and the Virgin, Ecclesia. In this manner, they show their submission to Christ's divinity as well as the authority of the Church, as represented by Mary.²¹ A medieval theologian writes on the Feast of the Epiphany: "The most holy union between Christ and the Church, which was promised by Abraham the Patriarch, sworn by David the King, and completed in Mary our Mother, is today consummated, confirmed and declared. Consummated in the Adoration of the Magi, confirmed in the Baptism in the Jordan, and declared in the Miracle of the Wine."²² In addition, Church tradition maintained that Christ's baptism in the Jordan occurred on January 6th, the Epiphany.²³ Angiola quotes an antiphon which further stresses the relationship between baptism and the marriage of Christ and Ecclesia: "On this day the

²¹ Angiola, 10.

²² Angiola, 10.

²³ Angiola, 10.

heavenly bridegroom is wedded to the Church, because Christ washes away his offences in the Jordan. The magi hurry to the royal wedding with their gifts..."²⁴ In this manner, the Adoration Panel establishes the relationship between the Epiphany, Christ's own baptism in the Jordan, and the marriage of Christ and Ecclesia.

Nicola's panel depicting the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (fig. 5) demonstrates similarities to the Nativity and Adoration panels. Like the Nativity panel, Nicola conflates several biblical events. However, the way in which he conflates images approaches the Adoration in its unity of time and space. In addition, Pisano's developing sense of a more accurate perspective and spatial recession continues in this relief.

Compositionally, the panel is rather crowded. Pisano compacts fifteen figures into the rectangular picture plane. The majority of figures are unidentifiable and represent various nondescript onlookers at the scene. These include most of figures in the background. Particularly interesting are the three diminutive figures who stand beneath the tripartite arch. Clearly, these figures are meant to be seen as occupying a space distant from the foreground. The important actors of the scene inhabit the foreground. Joseph stands at the far left, with two doves perched on his arm. To his left, Mary stands, having just handed the

²⁴ Angiola, 10.

Christ child to Simeon. To his left, the prophetess Anna stands in profile. She holds a scroll in her left hand, and gazes upward in an anguished expression. Of all the figures on the pulpit, Anna's modeling seems distinctively unclassical. Pisano has taken care to include such un-ideal features as the wrinkles in her face and her gaping mouth. Behind her stands a male figure who is supported by a small child in the lower right corner. He has been identified as the high priest. These figures are modeled from a Greek vase relief located in the Campo Santo in Pisa.²⁵

The architectural setting of the Presentation panel, although somewhat confusing, is the most complex and developed. The structures seem to be a combination of French gothic as well as classical elements. Note that the classical pediment above the High Priest is pierced with a rose medallion window. In addition, the tripartite arch above the three onlookers, clearly a reference to the triumphal arches of Rome, is interspersed with gothic tracery. This might lead one to doubt Pisano's classical intentions. On the contrary, it shows an artist who is attempting a recreation of classical architecture from the limited sources that he has. To a 13th century Pisan, the classical emphasis of the architectural setting would have been clear. This

²⁵ G.H Crichton and E.R. Crichton , *Nicola Pisano and the Revival of Sculpture in Italy* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1938), 49.

classicism is further supported, as in the previous panels, by Pisano's use of Roman garb and classical facial expressions. Note that figure size has been fully resolved, as no figure is unnaturalistically larger than another. As in the Nativity panel, Pisano conflates several scriptural events into one setting. However, he portrays the events as if they were happening in a unified time and space, unlike his rather odd approach in the Nativity panel. Thus, Simeon and Anna act out their parts in tandem, while scripturally, Simeon's proclamation precedes Anna's. In addition, while the circumcision is not visually depicted, it is certainly alluded to as the event immediately precedes the Presentation and, in fact, is the very reason why Christ needs to be brought to the temple. Thus, Pisano seems to reject an obvious conflation of scenes in favor of a more coherent narrative.

The panel depicting Christ's circumcision and presentation is derived from the Gospel of Luke 2:21-40: "After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb...When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord')..." Luke continues with the story of Simeon, who

would not die until he witnessed the coming of the Messiah. Simeon recognizes the Christ child as such and exclaims:

Master, now you are dismissing
your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your
salvation,
which you have prepared in the
presence of all peoples,
a light of revelation to the
Gentiles...

In addition, Pisano depicts the prophetess Anna who also proclaims the messiah's birth. These figures symbolize the superiority of the Christian tradition over the Jewish faith. Thus, several events are portrayed and alluded to by Pisano, the circumcision, the naming of the Christ child, the Presentation and blessing in the temple, and the prophesying of Simeon and Anna.

These events can be linked theologically and thematically to the sacrament of baptism. Medieval theological belief stressed the parallelism, as well as distinctions, between the Jewish practice of circumcision and the Christian practice of baptism. Jewish interpretations of circumcision seem strikingly similar to Christian writings on baptism. The Jewish theological treatise Pesachim 91b describes the unorthodox practice of the Shammanites who permitted outsiders to be circumcised and immediately participate in the Passover celebrations. The orthodox Hillelites responded, "He that separates himself from his uncircumcision is as one

that separates himself from a grave."²⁶ Circumcision was understood as bringing new life, similarly to the Pauline conception of baptism which makes individuals "'alive with a life which looks towards God' (Rom. 6:11)."²⁷ Ambrose argues that baptism purges the mind, which is the allegorical significance of God's commandment to circumcise. Cramer expresses Ambrose's understanding of the relationship between circumcision and baptism: "But just as circumcision guards against bad habits learnt from others, above all idolatry, so too (it is implied) baptism cuts away 'bodily excesses' from the mind."²⁸ In addition, circumcision marked those of the Jewish nation and distinguished outsiders or gentiles. In a similar way, baptism is the primary sacrament of Christian initiation, which marks Christians from non-Christians. Inasmuch as baptism parallels circumcision, it is also clearly a rejection of Mosaic law in favor of the new Christian law. Acts 10:1-48 recounts the baptism of the Roman Cornelius by Peter. Cornelius, a devout but uncircumcised and unbaptized man, has a dream in which God exhorts him to seek out Peter. As a result, he sends some servants to Joppa where Peter is staying. At the same time, Peter has a vision: "He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it were

²⁶ G.R.Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1962), 28.

²⁷ Cramer, 47.

all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. Then he heard a voice saying, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.'" Peter refuses because Mosaic law prohibits the consumption of "unclean food." The voice responds, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." Because of this lesson, Peter baptizes the uncircumcised Cornelius, because the law of Christ has replaced Mosaic law. Cramer writes of this passage:

Baptism is now placed in precise relation to Christian circumcision and the law. It can no longer be seen as a mere development of circumcision, and indeed Judaism, but supercedes it. It remains a purification, but of a different kind, based not on a legal and ritual system, but on a personal, self-conscious perception.²⁹

Paul, in his letters to the Colossians, reinterprets the old (Jewish) custom of circumcision as a new Christian form which is spiritual and metaphorical, rather than actual. He writes: "In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God..." (Col, 2:11-12)

Beasley-Murray interprets the "circumcision of Christ" as a circumcision related to the Christ's death on the

²⁸ Cramer, 119.

²⁹ Cramer, 42.

cross.³⁰ Thus, a complex interrelation is set up between the scene of the Presentation, with its references to Christ's Jewish circumcision, and the sacrament of baptism, which allows the individual a Christian circumcision through association with Christ's death on the cross. Not coincidentally, the crucifixion panel immediately follows the Presentation relief.

Simeon's exclamation upon seeing the Christ child relates to this concept of baptism being a new kind of Christian circumcision. Especially revealing is the phrase "a light of revelation to the gentiles...." Clearly, this marks a distinction between old Jewish identity, which stresses exclusive membership in a specific nation and culture, and the apostolic mission of the church. Membership in the community of Christians is dependent upon baptism, rather than heredity. Indeed, as the Presentation of Christ in the Temple was Christ's "debut" in the Jewish community, baptism in the medieval period marked the individual's introduction to the Christian community at large and the local civic community.³¹ As mentioned earlier, baptism, especially in an urban center like Pisa, would have been administered exclusively by the bishop. In addition, the baptistery provided a symbol of civic unity in that all citizens, with few exceptions, of the medieval Italian city would have received the sacrament in that structure, as all

³⁰ Beasley-Murray, 157.

Jews were presented in the temple of Jerusalem after their circumcision. A 13th century Pisan, upon entering the baptistery, most likely on the occasion of a baptism, and seeing the panel depicting the Presentation would have understood the action of the image as very similar to the baptismal event which was transpiring. The architectural setting of the panel interprets the Jewish building in terms of a Christian ecclesiastical structure, fostering an identification between the temple in Jerusalem and the baptistery in Pisa. Thus, on a level more accessible than complex medieval theology, the panel asks the viewer to relate the sacrament of baptism, with its religious and civic importance, to the religious and civic importance of presenting a newly circumcised Jew in the Temple at Jerusalem.

The Crucifixion panel (fig. 6) is dominated by the beautifully proportioned and modeled depiction of the crucified Christ. The cross is mounted on a small mound of rocks with a skull, a reference to Golgotha, embedded in it. Two angels hover over the outstretched arms of Christ. Nails puncture both hands and feet. Instead of four nails, Nicola depicts three which bind Christ to the cross, in the earliest known example of this.³² Notice that the curve of the body on the cross is understated, in contrast to gothic depictions. Equally understated is the expression on Christ's face. While clearly evoking

³¹ Angiola, 6.

the pathos of the scene, Christ's countenance seems somewhat peaceful and reposed. To Christ's right is the figure of John the Evangelist, who places his left hand over his breast. In the lower left corner, two women support the Virgin who has apparently fainted with sorrow. Other female figures mourn on the left side of the cross as well. To Christ's left are the several soldiers and other onlookers. The soldier immediately to Christ's left raises his right fist, clearly expressing his approval of the Crucifixion. The next soldier to the right fingers his beard with his right hand, apparently more troubled by the event which is transpiring. In the upper left corner, an angelic figure ushers a woman who carries a jug towards the crucified Christ. She represents Ecclesia, who will collect the blood and water from Christ's side after it is pierced. Correspondingly, in the upper right hand corner, an angelic figure ushers a woman, who holds a scroll, away from the cross and out of the picture plane. She represents Synagoga.

The classical aesthetic in this panel is at once very pronounced but also somewhat diminished. Clearly, the Christ's naturalistic modeling represents a classical tour de force. In addition, many of the figures are dressed in Roman garb. There is, however, a heightened sense of emotionalism in some of the facial features and in some of the gestures. In addition, while the image

³² Angiola, 12.

presents a unified time and space, the composition is somewhat cluttered in comparison to an image like the Adoration panel. However, when contrasted with Nicola's crucifixion panel on the pulpit in Siena (fig. 7), his classicism becomes all the more apparent.

Depictions of the Crucifixion are appropriately the most common religious images in the Christian world. As mentioned earlier, the crucifixion was seen as representing a new kind of Christian circumcision. However, medieval theologians understood an even more explicit relationship between baptism and the crucifixion. Angiola quotes St. Thomas Aquinas: "Baptism derives its effectiveness from the Passion of Christ. But baptism sanctifies through its form. For this reason we can draw the conclusion that in the form of baptism mention should be made of the Passion of Christ."³³ Ambrose of Milan, in his sermons on the sacraments, writes: "You were asked: 'Do you believe in God the Father almighty?' You said: 'I do believe,' and you dipped, that is: you were buried. Again you were asked: 'Do you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His cross?' You said: 'I do believe,' and you dipped. So you were also buried together with Christ. For who is buried with Christ rises again with Christ."³⁴ Baptism

³³ Angiola, 13.

³⁴ Roy Joseph Deferrari et al., *St. Ambrose: The Mysteries, The Holy Spirit, The Sacrament of the Incarnation of Our Lord, the Sacraments*, vol. 44 of *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1967), 286.

allows the individual to participate in the Passion of Christ, to die and be buried with him, thus achieving salvation. Aquinas writes:

I reply by saying that to open the Gates of the Kingdom of Heaven is to remove the obstacle that prevents anyone from entering the heavenly kingdom. This obstacle is sin and the guilt of punishment. It has been shown above that baptism completely removes all sin and also all burden of punishment. Thus, the effect of baptism is to open the Gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, to the first objection, I reply saying that baptism indeed opens the Gates of the Kingdom of Heaven to the baptized, to the extent that it incorporates him in the Passion of Christ, applying its efficacy [virtutem] to man.³⁵

As the Adoration panel commemorates the marriage of Christ and Ecclesia, the Crucifixion panel describes the birth of Ecclesia "in the blood and water that flowed from the body of Christ on the Cross: 'From the side of Christ, blood and water came forth, and by these sacraments the Holy Church was formed.'"³⁶ Note the angelic figures pushing Ecclesia towards the cross and Synagoga away from it. Thus, the crucifixion allows for the sacrament of baptism, and the birth of the Church.

³⁵ Angiola, 13.

Nicola's work on the Last Judgement panel (fig. 8) seems very odd when compared with the other four panels. As in the Crucifixion, the composition is dominated by the figure of Christ, in this panel, enthroned in heaven. The exquisite modeling and proportions of Christ in the Crucifixion are all but abandoned. The figure's musculature seems more schematic. His head seems disproportionately large in comparison to the body. Foreshortening is lacking, as one sees the feet from above, but the body frontally. Christ's right hand is turned upwards, symbolizing salvation to those on his right side; his left hand, now destroyed, presumably gestured downwards, signifying damnation to those on his left. The enthroned Christ is surrounded by the four animal symbols of the Evangelists. The apostles including John the Evangelist and the Virgin are assembled to Christ's right. In the left foreground are the elect, some of whom support a cross directly beneath the enthroned Christ. The right foreground consists of damned figures and various demonic forms. Once again, the classical aesthetic seems abandoned in many ways. Pisano depicts the rows of individuals hieratically, rather than conforming to a naturalistic spatial recession. Perhaps this stylistic and compositional incongruity results from the assistance of Pisano's workshop. The nudes in the left foreground do show a

³⁶ Angiola, 13.

higher degree of modeling and classical influence, however.

A depiction of the Last Judgement seems logical in consideration of the baptismal focus of the other panels. Baptism cleanses sin, allowing for the individual's salvation through the experience of Christ's Incarnation and Passion. The fulfillment of the baptismal promise is a positive reception on the day of the Last Judgement. Note that images of the Last Judgement appear on the baptisteries of Pisa, Parma, and Florence, underscoring the understood relationship between the apocalypse and the sacrament.³⁷

The cycle of five relief images on the upper portion of the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit present the key events in the history of Christian salvation. While the images seem quite general in content, they are layered with meaning. Their location within a baptistery setting demands that they be read in terms of the sacrament of baptism.

³⁷ Angiola, 13.

Orthodoxy and Joachite Heresy

The thirteenth century marked a period of dynamic religious change. The increasing strength and influence of mendicant orders, like the Franciscans, challenged traditional Church doctrine and pontifical supremacy. The rise of the spiritual movements, as well as controversial "ecstatic" theologians, radically altered the ways in which thirteenth century Italians viewed their relationship to God and the Church. However, the theological implications of Pisano's cycle seem wholly traditional in the assertion of Church power and a traditional understanding of Christian history. Placing Pisano's cycle of images within the context of the religious revolution of thirteenth century Italy allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how the program might have been interpreted by a late Dugento Pisan.

The common misperception of the medieval Church is rooted in the extravagancies, corruption, and absolutism that religious reformers in the sixteenth century so persuasively attacked. Images of politically sinister popes, lecherous priests, and a worldly Church concerned more with its coffers than the spiritual well-being of its congregation result in a cynical interpretation of medieval religiosity. In reality, the 12th and 13th centuries saw a kind of religious awakening characterized by a renewed piety and fidelity to more ascetic

devotional practices. A dynamic dualism flourished in the medieval church, with orthodoxy and tradition being challenged by radical theologians whose apocalyptic visions undermined the dominance and authority of the Church over the spiritual life of the individual. Perhaps most revolutionary, and most appropriate to this discussion, were the writings and theological implications of Joachim of Fiore and his disciples, for the movement which they initiated was popular and influential in Nicola Pisano's Pisa. The structure, imagery, and iconography of the Pisa Baptistery pulpit establish a direct refutation of Joachite heresy.

Joachim was born in the region of Calabria around the year 1135. His father held a bureaucratic post in the court of Roger II of Sicily.³⁸ Working for the court of William I, Joachim was sent on a diplomatic mission to the Constantinopolitan court of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Comnenus.³⁹ For unknown reasons, Joachim left the Byzantine court around the year 1160 and traveled throughout the Holy Land, a journey which shaped his radical theological positions and shaped his future writings.⁴⁰ During his travels throughout Palestine, Joachim spent the Lenten season meditating on Mount Tabor, where according to his *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, he received "the fullness of knowledge" on the eve of

³⁸ Delano C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore, A Study in Spiritual Perception and History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), 1.

Easter.⁴¹ After leaving the Holy Land, he lived a hermetic life for a period on Mt. Etna in Sicily. Subsequently, he stayed as visitor at the Cistercian Monastery at Sambucina and traveled to the Bishop of Catanzaro, where he was ordained and entered the Benedictine monastery at Corazzo. Eventually he became the abbot of this monastery and converted the monks to a Cistercian lifestyle.⁴²

Joachim quickly became disenchanted with the abuses which he saw in his own monastery. He believed that the order's conflicting emphasis on both active and contemplative lifestyles was untenable, "like trying to hold fire and water in some type of balance so that the water doesn't put out the fire nor the fire dry up the water."⁴³ The abbot was equally disturbed by the rampant materialism of the Cistercian order which was careless in establishing monastic communities too closely tied with the secular world.⁴⁴ As a result, he began to neglect his administrative duties at the monastery. In 1183, Joachim left Corazzo and stayed at the abbey of Casamari. It was here, virtually cloistered, that the abbot began his trilogy: *Liber Concordie novi ac veteris Testamenti* (Harmony of the New and Old Testaments), *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (Exposition of the Apocalypse), and

³⁹ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 3.

⁴⁰ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 3.

⁴¹ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 3.

⁴² West and Zimdars-Swartz, 3.

⁴³ Stephen E. Wessley, *Joachim of Fiore and Monastic Reform* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 12.

Psalterium decem chordarum (Psaltery of Ten Strings). He continuously refined and added to these works throughout his lifetime.⁴⁵ In 1184, Joachim traveled to Rome to visit with Pope Lucius in an attempt to be released from his duties to the monastery at Corazzo. Greatly impressed after reading the beginnings of the *Liber Concordie*, Lucius granted the abbot his request.⁴⁶ Joachim returned to Corazzo to continue his writing. In 1189, he left the monastery for good with a close friend, Ranier, to live as hermits in the mountains of Pietralata. The two hermits were soon joined by others who also wished a more ascetic lifestyle, resulting in the foundation of the hermetic community of St. John of Fiore Abbey on Mt. Nero.⁴⁷ The order was approved in several papal bulls, by Pope Celestine III in 1196, by Innocent III in 1204, and twice by Honorius in 1216 and 1220.⁴⁸

The importance of Joachim of Fiore for this discussion lies in the interpretation of his writings by others outside his order, especially the Franciscan Spirituals who were influential in northern Italy. Joachim's ideas had special meaning for the growing mendicant orders throughout Italy; as a result, the abbot's writings gained a strong following in northern Italy, including Pisa. Joachite belief was well

⁴⁴ Wessley, 13.

⁴⁵ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 4.

⁴⁶ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 4.

established in Pisa by the mid-portion of the thirteenth century. Salimbene da Adam, in his *Cronica*, tells of a Florencian abbot who sought refuge in the Franciscan monastery at Pisa in the early 1240's. He apparently was trying to protect some Joachite writings which he possessed from destruction. Salimbene writes, "The addition of this literature to the Pisa convent caused a stir of study leading the convent's Lector, Fra Rudoph of Saxony...to leave the study of theology in order to devote his whole attention to the literature of Joachim of Fiore."⁴⁹

Joachim's writing presented little threat to established church orthodoxy. His trilogy was never censored by the papal curia in any way whatsoever, although the implications of his writing were periodically "clarified" by the Church hierarchy. However, followers of Joachim extrapolated the implications of his theology, proclaiming a spiritual/historical outlook which denied the Church's role in the history of salvation. In his major work, *Liber Concordie* Joachim links the events of the Old Testament directly with events in the New Testament, establishing a concordance between what he saw as two distinct historical eras. He attempted to move from literal-historical understanding to spiritual

⁴⁷ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 4.

⁴⁸ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 4.

⁴⁹ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 101.

understanding.⁵⁰ Joachim's linkage between the Old and New Testaments is highly dependent upon the significance of numbers. "The abbot defines harmony as a 'likeness of equal proportion between the Old and New Testaments based on number rather than worth."⁵¹ For example, he links the twelve patriarchs to the twelve apostles and the seven battles of the Jews to the seven battles of the Church.⁵²

These corresponding numerical sequences caused Joachim to divide history in general and specific scriptural events in particular into three phases, corresponding with the Trinitarian concept of God. Thus, a Joachite reading of the story of Hagar, Abraham, and Sarah is as follows. From the lens of God the Father, Abraham symbolizes the priests of the Jews. Hagar represents the Israelite people and Sarah represents the priestly Levite tribe, which lived off the work of the larger Jewish community. From the theological lens of Christ, Abraham symbolizes the bishops of the Christian church, Hagar the church of the laity, Sarah the church of the clergy. The third lens of the Holy Spirit interprets Abraham as the priests serving the monasteries, Hagar as lay people living under monastic rule, and Sarah as the church of the monks themselves. According to a theological interpretation that accounts for the Trinity as a whole, "Hagar

⁵⁰ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 41.

⁵¹ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 41.

⁵² West and Zimdars-Swartz, 41.

represents the church of the first and second epochs which lead the active life; Sarah represents the church of contemplation, peace, and rest of the seventh age."⁵³ Joachim suggests other typological levels of understanding scripture and history, but for this discussion, his division of religious understanding into three ages is most important, as it was this theory that was most appreciated and distorted by later Joachites, especially in the Franciscan Spiritual movement.

The implications of this worldview challenged the traditional understanding of the role of the Church in the history of salvation. It implies, although Joachim doubtlessly opposed this concept, that there would be a third phase of Christian history that is not embodied by the Church, but by monasticism. In the brief example of a Joachite approach to scripture above, the Church, with its divisions of bishops, clergy, and laity, representing the age of Christ, will be superseded by an age of monastic life, with the coming of the age of the Holy Spirit. Salimbene, a Franciscan with Joachite leanings who lived in the Franciscan Convent in Pisa for forty years during the middle portion of the thirteenth century writes:

He [Joachim] divides the world into a threefold state; for in the first state the Father worked in mystery through the patriarchs and sons of

⁵³ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 45.

the prophets, although the works of the Trinity are indivisible. In the second state the Son worked through the Apostles and other apostolic men; of which state He saith in John 'My Father worketh until now, and I work.' In the third state the Holy Ghost shall work through the Religious.⁵⁴

Again, it is important to note that Joachim himself did not advocate an inferior status of the Church. Clearly, though, his writing gave others the basis on which to make such claims and the possibility for this distortion seemed to be recognized by the Fourth Lateran Council, presided over by Innocent III. The council fully affirmed the coexistence and unified nature of the trinity:

We firmly believe and unfeignedly acknowledge that the very God is one only, eternal, immeasurable, unchangeable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, and ineffable, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost...the Father unbegotten, but the Son begotten by the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeding equally from both, without beginning and without end...of one substance, co-equal, co-omnipotent, and co-eternal...The Holy Trinity, individual according to its

⁵⁴ G.G. Coulton, *From St. Francis to Dante, Translations from the Chronicle of the Franciscan Salimbene* (London: David Nutt, 1907), 151.

common essence and separate as to its personal qualities, by Moses first, and in the due order of time by the holy prophets and its other servants, laid the foundation of the doctrine of salvation for the human race....And finally, Jesus Christ...incarnate by the Holy Trinity acting as one, conceived by the Virgin Mary through the operation of the Holy Ghost....There is one Universal Church of Faith outside of which none shall be saved, in which Jesus Christ, the sacrifice, is the priest....⁵⁵

Thus, the Lateran Council reaffirmed the traditional concept of religious history which stressed a time before Christ and a time after Christ. In addition, it stressed the active existence and participation of all three units of the Trinity throughout this history; any argument proposing three separate ages, distinguished by the participation of a single unit of the Trinity was deemed unorthodox. The Church was asserted as being part of the age of Christ, and importantly, the council reaffirmed the importance of the sacraments as administered through the Church, by the grace of the unified Trinity.

Nevertheless, Joachim's work was taken to its ultimate and unorthodox conclusion, particularly by the Franciscan Spirituals. Coulton writes: "The Friars, too, had every reason to welcome prophecies of a millennium to

⁵⁵ Henry Dwight Sedgewick, *Italy in the Thirteenth Century* (New

be heralded by new Orders of surpassing holiness and authority : and the spiritual Franciscans especially found in Joachim the promise of a reign of glory after their bitter persecutions of the present time."⁵⁶ This desire on the part of the Franciscans to identify their order with the third age suggested by Joachim led to, perhaps, the most egregious Joachite claim. Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, a close friend of Salimbene and a professor of theology at Paris published *Introduction to the Eternal Gospel* in 1254. In it, Gerard published Joachim's best known works with a preface and notes of his own. According to Coulton, the book was wildly popular, especially among lay Franciscans, of which there were many in Pisa during the period. He writes: "There seems no doubt that this book pressed Joachim's theories to the antisacerdotal conclusions which they would seem legitimately to bear, but which Joachim had studiously avoided."⁵⁷ Gerard de-emphasized the importance of the sacraments, viewing them as mere symbols that would be abandoned during the third age of the Holy Ghost. Gerard was also accused of equating Francis with a "new" Christ, superior to the Christ of the second age.⁵⁸ In 1255, Gerard was brought before a Papal commission, under the direction of Pope Alexander IV, in Agnani, the temporary seat of the papacy. His work was condemned. Indeed, the

York: Houghton Mifflin , 1912), 372-374.

⁵⁶ Coulton, 151.

⁵⁷ Coulton, 151.

obliteration of the heretic's work was such that we only know it through fragments quoted by his accusers. The result of this scandal was far reaching, as John of Parma, the Franciscan Minister-General was removed from office in a state of disgrace for allowing Gerard's work to be published.⁵⁹

There is every reason to believe that Pisan society was well aware of Gerard's work as well as its condemnation. Angiola identifies Archbishop Visconti as the most probable patron of the Pisa Baptistry Pulpit. In addition, it is likely that he determined the program's content.⁶⁰ Note that Visconti was elevated to his position by Alexander IV in 1254, the very year that Gerard's heretical work was published. Visconti maintained strong relations with the Papacy during his early years as archbishop. He traveled frequently to Agnani. Only a month before Alexander's condemnation of Gerard, Visconti was in Agnani participating in a canonization process.⁶¹ It is possible that the archbishop participated in the papal commission condemning Gerard's writing. It is, at the very least, certain that Visconti was well aware of the Joachite controversy. Angiola writes: "Each iconograph..."

In addition, those familiar with Joachim's writing interpreted the year 1260 as the moment when the

⁵⁸ Coulton, 153.

⁵⁹ West and Zimdars-Swartz, 103.

⁶⁰ Angiola, 1.

Antichrist would appear and a period of tribulation would occur, heralding the third age of the Holy Spirit.⁶² Clearly, apocalyptic fear was rampant throughout Italy and in Pisa, especially. Salimbene recounts a series of natural events, earthquakes and eclipses among them, which were interpreted in a Joachite fashion as signaling the coming of the apocalypse: "I have multiplied these texts [references to apocalyptic interpretations of natural events] because at one time the sun is darkened, and at another time the moon, and at times the earth will quake...I remember that I dwelt in the convent of Pisa forty years since and more, and the earth quaked on St. Stephen's day."⁶³ Note that Nicola Pisano's pulpit, signed and dated 1260, was completed at the height of Joachite prophecies of the apocalypse and the coming of the third world order. Thus, it seems entirely appropriate to read the iconographic significance of the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit in terms of the Joachite controversy.

Nicola Pisano's cycle of images in the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit, read as a unit, present the key moments of Christian scripture as a history of redemption. Angiola writes: "Each iconographic unit of the pulpit makes sense in relationship to the medieval view of this process of Redemption through Christ as

⁶¹ Angiola, 1.

⁶² West and Zimdars-Swartz, 101-102.

⁶³ Coulton, 80

embodied in the sacrament of baptism."⁶⁴ The panels have sub-theme as well which stresses the role of *Ecclesia*, the Church.

On one level, most representations of the Virgin have a reference to the supremacy of the Church.

However, the formal quality of the Virgin throughout the cycle, due in part to the classical style, emphasizes her identification with the church. For instance, in the Nativity and Adoration panels, she is larger than every other figure. In the Nativity panel, Christ himself seems to be de-emphasized relative to the dominance of the reclining Virgin. He almost seems to be an afterthought. Mary seems unattached to the events which surround her. The solidity of the figure evokes a sense of permanence and stability which corresponds to the concept of the permanence and stability of the Church.

As mentioned earlier, the Adoration of the Magi was seen as a confirmation of the supremacy of the Church. The Virgin becomes the throne on which the Christ child sits. As the magi genuflect before the Christ child, they are also implicitly genuflecting before *Ecclesia*, acknowledging the Church's authority over temporal power.

The Crucifixion Panel makes explicit reference to the birth of the church through the shedding of water and blood from Christ's side. *Ecclesia* is ushered in with a receptacle in which to hold Christ's blood and water

⁶⁴ Angiola, 9.

while *Synagoga*, holding the scroll of the Torah, is ushered out of the scene. The blood, symbolizing the sacrament of the Eucharist, and the water, symbolizing the purification of baptism, are offered to humanity from Christ, but through the auspices of the Church.

Pisano's cycle presents the story of Christian redemption, which is Christian history in its entirety and completeness, from its beginning, The Incarnation, to the Passion, and to the eschatological scene of the Last Judgement. The Church functions throughout this redemptive history and is the only qualified institution through which Christ offers sacramental salvation. This contrasts with Gerard's heretical claim that the Church would be replaced by a more holy monastic institution. In addition, the cycle reaffirms the importance of administration of the sacraments through *Ecclesia*, which also contradicts Gerard's belief that the sacraments were merely symbols that would be replaced during the age of the Holy Spirit.

I wish to discuss the support figures below the cycle of panels for they integrally relate to a dualist vision of Christian history that opposes the tripartite Jochite vision. Many scholars have argued that the figures between the arched spandrels supporting the relief panels represent Virtues. However, these Virtues would have little significance to the rich baptismal message of the panels above. For this reason, Angiola

suggests an alternative interpretation which identifies each figure as representing prefigurations of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Most of the figures represent Old Testament figures, with the exception of John the Baptist.

The figure of John the Baptist (fig. 9) makes perfect iconographic sense as the titular saint of a baptistery. However, the reference being drawn in this depiction focuses more on the Baptist's role as a prophet of Christ's crucifixion. He holds a little lamb which he himself relates to the coming of Christ in John 1:29:

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.⁶⁵

The next figure is a partially nude woman (fig. 10) who covers her head and body with a cloak. She is usually identified as Humilitas. Angiola more appropriately identifies her as Eve. Eve is seen as the cause of the sin which baptism cleanses. In addition, she foreshadows the coming of Mary. She was also understood as being representative of *Synagoga* as Mary was associated with *Ecclesia*.⁶⁶

The seated figure holding a depiction of the Crucifixion (fig. 11) has often been identified as either

⁶⁵ Angiola, 13.

a symbol of Faith, or a representation of the angel Michael. Angiola identifies the figure as the archangel Gabriel. She notes that the depiction of the Crucifixion which the figure holds shows the moment where Christ is pierced in his side with a lance.⁶⁷ As mentioned in relation to the Crucifixion panel above, the water and blood which flowed from his side was understood as representing the birth of *Ecclesia*. In contrast, the vinegar on the sponge to the right of Christ was understood as representing *Synagoga*.⁶⁸ Thus, Gabriel, who announced the Incarnation, and who holds an image of the Crucifixion foreshadows Christ's passion as well as the creation of the Church.⁶⁹

One of the most striking figures on the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit is the classically inspired nude figure standing in a contraposto position (fig. 12). Traditionally, the figure has been identified as Hercules, embodying the virtue of Fortitude. However, the figure's position among several living lions recalls more forcefully the story of Daniel.⁷⁰ Medieval theologians identified Daniel's experience in the lions' den as prefiguring the death and resurrection of Christ.⁷¹ Clearly this is a reference to the life-giving sacrament

⁶⁶ Angiola, 14.

⁶⁷ Angiola, 15.

⁶⁸ Angiola, 15.

⁶⁹ Angiola, 15.

⁷⁰ Angiola, 15.

⁷¹ Angiola, 15.

of baptism, through which the individual is granted the salvation. Christ, that is the opportunity of salvation,

The next figure (fig. 13) has been identified as Fidelity, solely because she holds a dog. However, having established that the other corner figures represent real scriptural characters, Angiola identifies her as the Old Testament heroine, Judith, the widow of Manasses. The dog represents Judith's faith in the new bridegroom, Christ. Like Eve, she prefigures Ecclesia, the bride of Christ.⁷² Again, a connection and also a separation are made between history before Christ and that after his coming.

The virtue of Caritas (fig. 14) has been associated with the final corner figure. However, she most likely represents Esther, who is often paired with Judith as an Old Testament heroine.⁷³ King Ahasuerus of the Persians selected Judith to replace Queen Vashti. This was understood as relating to the replacement of *Synagoga* by *Ecclesia*. Archbishop Visconti alludes to identification in one of his sermons:

The King so loved her more than all his women and he placed the crown of his kingdom on her head and made her reign in place of Vasthi...As an allegory, it represents our King of heaven and earth, and Eve and blessed Mary.⁷⁴

⁷² Angiola, 17.

⁷³ Angiola, 18.

⁷⁴ Angiola, 18.

Thus, each of the corner figures, while prefiguring the coming of Christ, that is the opportunity of salvation, are distinct from a specifically Christian history. They metaphorically and literally, through the construction of the pulpit, support Christian redemption.

More importantly, the structure of the pulpit reaffirms a dualistic understanding of religious history. The corner figures, which prefigure salvation through Christ and the birth of the new Church, are visually distinct from the specific Christian history above it. The structure of the pulpit presents two visually distinct programs, which correspond to the distinct, although related, eras of religious history, one before and one after Christ; one embodying *Synagoga* and one embodying *Ecclesia*; one of Mosaic Law and one of Christian sacrament. Thus, the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit presents the viewer with a very orthodox interpretation of religious history, the sacraments, and the Church's role in each at the very period when such interpretations were being challenged.

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Conclusion

Nicola Pisano's Pisa Baptistery Pulpit represents a key moment in the history of Italian art. The artist's startling use of a classical aesthetic foreshadows the supreme achievements of Italian artists working in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Pisa Baptistery Pulpit's classical style gained it much art historical attention. Ironically, this wealth of research on the artist's stylistic innovation removed the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit from the social, historical, and religious context of thirteenth-century Pisa. The Pulpit instead has been understood as a monument celebrating the development of classical style. In reality, the Pisa Baptistery Pulpit's meaning is fundamentally linked to its location and function in a medieval Italian baptistery in the late thirteenth century. Pisano employs imagery and iconography that has integral and important links to the sacrament of baptism. The cycle of five relief sculptural panels can and should be read in terms of the theological significance of the sacrament of Christian initiation. In addition, the structure and iconography of the pulpit provides a clear refutation of Joachite heresy, reasserting the importance of the sacraments and the authority and sufficiency of the Church within a dualistic framework of Christian history.

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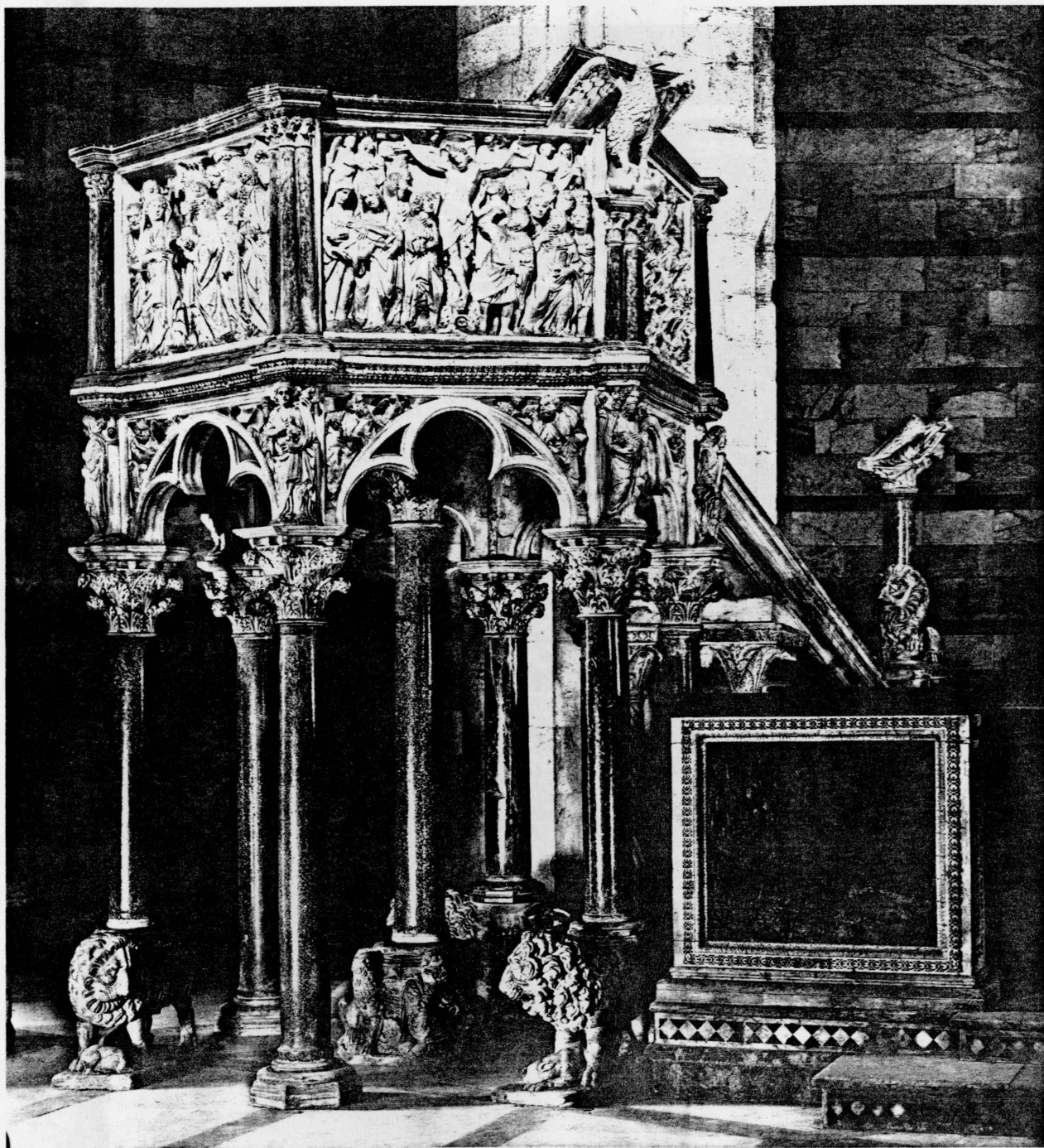
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21. Nicola Pisano. Relief, completed later: fragment of Pisa (Alinari Art Resource, New York)

solennity did not become at times a kind of "edifying diversion."

Nicola is referred to in two documents, the earliest are dated 1175 or 1176, "de Pisa" or "Pisanus," and using Pisa extensively. By 1178 he must have

worked in Pisa, though to have won the esteem of the city's authorities? If he was, in fact, an Italian and a native of Pisa from 1175, it may be that the criterion of citizenship was both an honor and a challenge to the de Pisano successfully received the honors that distinguished himself and his family, the reputation that they had. Here he was given a challenging assignment to create a public art



25. Nicola Pisano: Pulpit, completed 1260. Baptistery of Pisa [Alinari/Art Resource, New York].

solemnly didactic to become at times a kind of "edifying diversion."

Nicola is referred to in two documents, the earliest one dated 1258, as Nicola "de Pisis" or "Pisanus," indicating Pisan citizenship. By 1258 he must, then, have

worked in Pisa long enough to have won the esteem of its citizens and government.⁸ If he was, in fact, architect and/or sculptor of Siena from 1245, it may be that the conferral of citizenship was both an honor and an enticement, for the Pisans successfully recruited the master, who established himself and his workshop in this important port city. Here, he was given a most challenging commission: to create a pulpit not for a tra-



43. Pisa. Pulpit in Baptistery. The Nativity.

the cave, in
stands at the
second point
good news.
on the folds

Nicola's re
the simple na
account whi
Apocryphal
Virgin, feeli
took refuge
Bethlehem,
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Child, wors
Isaiah, lies
apart with a
combined with

This type

¹ *Protevangeli*
1876).

² Cf. *Pseudo-*

³ The date o
separated from
fig. 47. For a
graphie der Chr



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PISTOIA NATIVITY PANEL



44. Pisa. Pulpit in Baptistery. Adoration of the Magi.

45. Pisa. Pulpit in Baptistery. Presentation in the Temple.





46. Pisa. Pulpit in Baptistery. The Crucifixion.

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47. Nicola Pisano: *Crucifixion*. Siena cathedral pulpit [Ralph Lieberman].

the soft modeling of the flesh, the palpitating half-open mouths (Fig. 46), and the sensitive hands with fingers that seem to quiver slightly, seen in many figures on the Siena pulpit, contribute a new emotional resonance that departs from the more formal and solemn images on the Pisa pulpit.

In general, Nicola has enlarged his emotional repertory: Consider, for instance, the Madonna who now inclines her head toward the kneeling Magus tenderly kissing the Child's foot (Fig. 43). But the sculptor also encourages a deepened meditation on the meaning of the symbolic and narrative content. One could compare, for example, the *Crucifixions* in Pisa and Siena (cf. Figs. 32 and 47). If the Pisa Christ, with its pronounced swing of the body and the jagged forms of the drapery folds, still reveals sources in contemporary and earlier Italian painting (which in turn had its roots in the Byzantine tradition), in the cognate figure in Siena virtually all Byzantine vestiges disappear: Christ hangs with arms stretched into two great diagonals, shoulders dislocated, and abdomen no longer curving gracefully but sunken by the weight of the upper torso. The jagged drapery folds of the earlier example are replaced by softer, more naturalistic forms, and all linearism is gone from the modeling of the torso. The

head of Christ sinks into his chest, increasing the silent pathos of the dead figure. The death of the Savior has become a human tragedy, which for the Christian worshiper intensifies the meaning of Christ's transcendent sacrifice.

The Fontana Maggiore

A number of additional monuments have been attributed to Nicola and his workshop: These include the much damaged albeit moving *Deposition* on the tympanum, and the *Annunciation*, *Nativity*, and *Adoration of the Magi* on the architrave of Lucca cathedral, whose dating and attribution remain problematic. Between 1269 and 1279, he, and at some point

possibly also Giovanni, executed a group of monumental heads, busts, and full figures for the exterior of the Pisa Baptistery. (Many are still in situ but several are in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo and the Museo Nazionale in Pisa.)³⁴ The last major work securely tied to his name, however, is the monumental, polygonal, sculpturally embellished fountain in Perugia's main civic and religious square (Figs. 48-49).

The project originated not as an architectural or sculptural one but rather as an engineering and hydraulic problem with the goal of bringing an adequate water supply to the citizens of Perugia, a hillside town rather poor in freshwater springs. Documents record about eighty years of government deliberations regarding the feasibility of transporting water from a plentiful source on a nearby hill about three miles from Perugia to the piazza at the town's apex, a focal point of the town's civic life for centuries. The piazza was not only the site of the Duomo and bishop's palace, and the fulcrum of the newly built roads leading from each of the five ancient city gates, but was soon to see the construction of the town hall as part of the city's greatly expanding demographic, economic, and urban development.³⁵ The decision to erect a fountain here followed the intensive program, beginning in the 1260s, to increase the water supply to other parts of the city by building five new fountains in each district and repairing existing ones.³⁶ After many false starts, an underground aqueduct was

47. Pisa. Pulpit in Baptistery. Last Judgment.



The contents include: ...
... of Eve who is shown ...
... for the Greek wrapped around ...
... hand. She appears in the ...
... mosaic of the Florentine ...
... of Eve originally held something ...
... her finger curled around the ...

* See p. 11, ...



9 John the Baptist, Pisa Baptistery pulpit (photo: Alinari)



10 Eve, Pisa Baptistery pulpit (photo: Gabinetto Fotografico, Soprintendenza alle Gallerie, Florence)



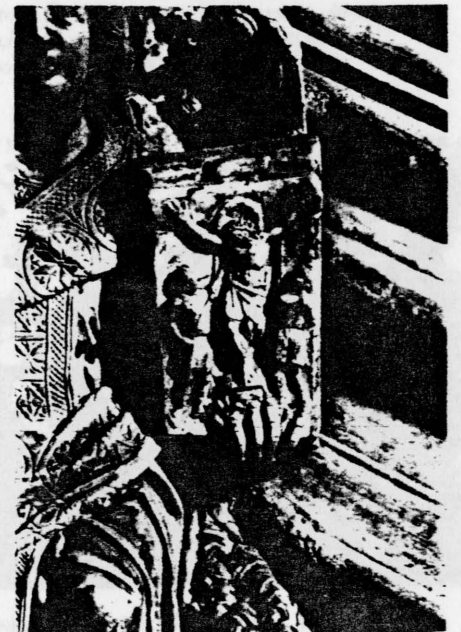
11 Eve, detail of cupola mosaics. Florence, Baptistery (photo: Gabinetto Fotografico, Soprintendenza alle Gallerie, Florence)

14 Daniel, Pisa Baptistery pulpit (photo: Alinari)

program is the single important element appears on a Fama, showing one of which draws the attention, is the capital, but finally shows on a four-yearly

12 Gabriel, Pisa Baptistery pulpit (photo: Alinari)

13 Gabriel (detail), Pisa Baptistery pulpit (photo: Alinari)



covers her body, is usually identified as *Humilitas* (Fig. 10).⁹⁸ She conforms precisely, however, to contemporary representations of Eve who is shown, in similar contexts, naked except for the cloak wrapped around her, and with her spindle in one hand. She appears in this fashion, for example, in the cupola mosaics of the Florentine Baptistery (Fig. 11). Nicola's figure of Eve originally held something spindle-like in her left hand; her fingers curl around the remaining fragment of its shaft.

As Eve, the figure plays an essential role in the pulpit's iconographical program. For it is Eve's sin that the waters of baptism wash away. She is closely related in the medieval Church to Mary, the new Eve. The paradise that was lost through Eve's disobedience to the word of God is regained through the faith of Mary at the moment of the Annunciation. Eve is often associated with *Synagoga*; her relationship to Adam is echoed in the relationship of Mary who is *Ecclesia* the bride.

⁹⁸ Salvini, 61, identifies her as hope.



14 *Daniel*, Pisa Baptistery pulpit (photo: Alinari)



15 *Daniel*, Pisa Baptistery pulpit



16 *Daniel*, interior capital. Parma, Baptistery (from G. de Francovich, *Benedetto Antelami architetto e scultore e l'arte del suo tempo*, Florence, 1952, II, fig. 287)

program is not unique in baptismal contexts. For example, he appears on a sculptured interior capital of the Baptistery of Parma, where he is shown seated and surrounded by live lions, one of which rests its paw on Daniel's knee (Fig. 16). Nicola draws the general form of Daniel not from medieval representations, in which he is fully clothed as he is on the Parma capital, but from Early Christian sarcophagi where he is usually shown standing nude among the lions as, for example, on a fourth-century sarcophagus now in the Camposanto (Fig. 17).

The standing woman holding the little dog in her arms is identified on the basis of the dog as the Virtue *Fidelitas* or even *Fides* (Fig. 18); Salvini suggests that in the Latin West in the Middle Ages fidelity and faith are one and the same.¹⁰⁹ There is no need to intrude a theological Virtue into the pulpit's scheme for the corner figures; they represent Prophets and prefigurations of the episodes of Christ's life depicted in the five relief panels above them. According to Réau, the little dog, the medieval symbol of marital fidelity, is an attribute of Judith, the Old Testament heroine and devout widow of Manasses, faithful to him even after his death (Judith 8:2-8).¹¹⁰ Judith is shown with a little dog beneath her feet on a jamb of the right portal of the north transept of Chartres (Figs. 19 and 20). The sculptural decoration of the portal dates from late in the first half of the thirteenth century. The story of the behead-



17 Early Christian sarcophagus (detail), *Daniel in the Lions' Den*. Pisa, Camposanto

ing of Holofernes appears in the voussoirs over the head of the jamb figure.

The dog as an attribute of Judith is probably not simply related to her widowhood. According to Walafrid Strabo, Manasses represents the Old Law, to which Judith was once married. With the coming of Christ, the new bridegroom, the old observance ceases.¹¹¹ Strabo cites Saint Paul's exposi-

¹⁰⁹ Salvini, 49.

¹¹⁰ L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, II, pt. 1, Paris, 1956, 330.

¹¹¹ Walafrid Strabo, "Liber Judith," *Glossa ordinaria: Pat. lat.*, CXIII, Paris, 1879, 735.



18 *Judith*. Pisa Baptistery pulpit (photo: Alinari)



19 *Judith*, north transept portal. Chartres (from R. Branner, *Chartres Cathedral*, New York, 1969, fig. 84)



20 *Judith* (detail), north transept portal. Chartres (from P. Kidson, *Sculpture at Chartres*, London, 1958, fig. 72)

tion on faith and the law (Galatians 3:23–27): “Before this faith came, we were close prisoners in the custody of law, pending the revelation of faith. Thus the law was a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ would come, when we should be justified through faith and now that faith has come, the tutor’s charge is at an end. For through faith you are all sons of God in union with Christ Jesus. Baptized into union with him, you have all put on Christ as a garment.” Through her faith, Judith becomes the bride of Christ. The little dog, then, a symbol of marital fidelity, also represents Judith’s faith in the new bridegroom.

As the bride of Christ, Judith prefigured *Ecclesia*. Rabanus Maurus states that “the tradition of the teachers makes clear that Judith is a type of the Church.”¹¹² Holofernes, the Assyrian commander, is the persecutor over whom the Church, with faith and patience, finally triumphs: “And thus Mother Church . . . liberates with the help of the grace of God and, having triumphed over the wicked enemy, returns gloriously to her citizens.”¹¹³ In his commentary on Judith’s song of thanksgiving (Judith 16:8), Rabanus Maurus interprets the widow’s clothing that Judith exchanges for fine linen before her meeting with Holofernes as the sins washed away in the waters of baptism. Her new hymn (Judith 16:13) is the New Testament.¹¹⁴

Judith is a favorite subject of Archbishop Federigo Visconti’s. She appears several times in sermons that can be attributed with certainty to the early years of his archiepiscopate. For Visconti she is a symbol of the Church. In one sermon it is

specifically the Church of Pisa that she represents. In a discourse delivered on his return from a difficult visit to the Archbishop of Torres, one of the Pisan Church’s suffragan bishops on the island of Sardinia, he comments upon the story of Judith:¹¹⁵

I will explain first how our holy [person] is indicated by Judith . . . and our city of Pisa by Bethulia. Holofernes represents Sardinia or Prosper, the Archbishop of Torres, who conspired against the honor of the city of Pisa, that is, its primacy and legation in Sardinia, and in council with certain people attempted to divert or impede [us] many times. . . . Judith, therefore, is interpreted “confessing” or “glorifying”; according to either interpretation she stands for the prelate, who must confess the articles of faith. . . . Bethulia is interpreted as the virgin of the Lord, that is to say, in the purity of her faith, for not even one heretic is to be found in the city. Thus that which the Apostle Paul says (2 Cor. 11:2) can be applied to the Pisans: “For I have espoused you”—that is, the Pisans—“that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

Judith appears sturdy and serious on the pulpit, gently holding the little dog who is her attribute; she is an Old Testament heroine who symbolizes the faithful and triumphant Church. Nicola joins together the woman and the dog so naturalistically that the dog seems an integral part of the image rather than simply an attribute.

¹¹² Rabanus Maurus, *Expositio in librum Judith*; *Pat. lat.*, cix, 559.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 571.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 585.

¹¹⁵ Sermones, fol. 139r; Barsotti, II, 517–18: “Exposito primo qualiter per sanctam nostram significatur per Judith . . . Civitas nostra Pisana per Bethuliam et per Olofernem Sardinea sive Prosper Archiepiscopus Turritanus, cui honorem Civitatis Pisane, scilicet, primatie et legationis in Sardinea, inita

conspiratione et consilio cum quibusdam, auferre vel impedire multipliciter nitebatur, quemadmodum iam dicemus. Judith enim interpretatus confitens vel glorificans, et secundum utramque interpretationem significat prelatum, qui debet articulos fidei confiteri. . . . Bectulia vero interpretatur virgo Domini vel casta Domini; et Civitas nostra Pisana vere est virgo Domini, virginitate, scilicet, fidei, quia in ea nec unus hereticus reperitur; quod competat Pisanis, quod dicit Apostolus (2 Cor. 2) ‘Despondi enim vos,’ scilicet Pisanos, ‘uni viro virginem castam exhibere Christo.’”