



# VERBUM E IUS

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Preaching and legal Frameworks in the Middle Ages

*a cura di*

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# Preaching, Law and Image in Quattrocento Florence

by Nirit Ben-Arieh Debby

Giambologna's bronze reliefs in the Salviati Chapel in Florence's church of San Marco, dating from 1581 to 1587, illustrate the life of Archbishop Antoninus (Antonino Pierozzi), who was active in Florence in the mid-fifteenth century. The first scene in the series of six bronze reliefs depicts *St. Antoninus Receiving the Dominican Habit from the Blessed Giovanni Dominici*. Antoninus appears as a young boy kneeling before his spiritual mentor, Giovanni Dominici (1356-1419), another famous Dominican preacher; two groups of spectators, lay and ecclesiastical, are observing the event. According to Antoninus' biographers, as a young boy he was much fascinated by Dominici's sermons, which led him to appeal to Dominici to let him join the Dominican order. Concerned about Antoninus' tender age, Dominici decided to test him; he gave him the task of learning Gratian's *Decretum* by heart. After a year, Antoninus was examined by Dominici and was able to convince him of his true faith. Dominici then gave the habit to Antoninus – the scene depicted on the relief. This paper shall address the interrelationships between canon law and public preaching as expressed in the activities of two celebrated Dominican preachers Giovanni Dominici and Antoninus Pierozzi in fifteenth century Florence. It will examine a variety of sources including sermons and visual images to address the close connections between canon law and preaching as expressed in literary exempla used in sermons and in images showing the spectacle of popular preaching.

Middle Ages; 15<sup>th</sup> Century; Law and Religion; Florence; Venice; Giovanni Dominici (Banchini) OP; Antoninus Pierozzi OP; Dominicans; preaching; sermon; law; *ius*.

On 15 April 1589, the body of st. Antoninus (1389-1459) was removed from its sarcophagus in San Marco and transferred to the new funerary chapel of the Salviati family in the church. The transfer of the body was incorporated in festivities marking the marriage of the Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici to Christine de Lorraine and occasioned a procession through Florence that followed the traditional route of Medici triumphal marches since the Quattrocento. Heads of state and noblemen, cardinals and archbishops, friars and monks, priests and nuns, followed by the crowds, filled the *piazza* and its surrounding streets and windows. At the end of the procession came the body of Antoninus under a baldachin. The crowds surged into San Marco, sermons were delivered, tearful lamentations, weeping, and

loud professions of faith rang out, and st. Antoninus was laid to rest in the Salviati Chapel (Fig. 1)<sup>1</sup>.

The present paper presents a case study illustrating the close connections between preaching, law and image as expressed in the cult of Dominican saints in Florence. It addresses the interrelationships between canon law and public preaching as expressed in the activities of two celebrated Dominican preachers Giovanni Dominici and Antoninus Pierozzi as reflected in images – in particular those incorporated in Giambologna's bronze reliefs in the Salviati Chapel.

### 1. *The Salviati Chapel*

The building and decoration of the chapel (1578-1588) had been commissioned by the Salviati family, relatives and supporters of the Medici. The brothers Averardo and Antonio Salviati, in accordance with the will of their father, Filippo, had donated funds for the building of a splendid chapel to contain the body of st. Antoninus and a crypt for the Salviati family<sup>2</sup>. The chapel, conceived by Giambologna, a court sculptor in the service of the grand dukes, is considered his most important architectural and sculptural commission<sup>3</sup>. The bronze reliefs discussed here were designed by Giambologna and cast by Domenico Portigiani between 1581 and 1587. They depict episodes in the life of Archbishop Antoninus, the founding prior of San Marco, who has been long known to historians of art, society, economics and politics as a preacher, writer, reformer, ecclesiastical administrator, friend to and critic of Cosimo de' Medici, and author of the forbidding four-part *Summa Theologica*<sup>4</sup>.

In the Salviati bronze reliefs, Giambologna depicted the biography of st. Antoninus; he was creating a new iconography, since there were no pictorial narrative cycles of Antoninus' life. The chapel was designed for inclusion in the left side of Michelozzo's fifteenth-century church, its white marble walls are offset by panels of coloured marble. In the centre of each of the three principal walls is a painted altarpiece made, respectively, by Alessandro Allori, *Return of Christ from Limbo*; Francesco Morandini da Poppi, *Christ Healing the Leper*; and Battista Naldini, *Christ Calling St. Matthew*. The lunette

<sup>1</sup> The translation is taken from *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Principal Saints*, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup> For an important publication relating to the documents of the Salviati family and their patronage of the chapel in San Marco see Karwacka Codini, Sbrilli, *Il Quaderno della fabbrica della Cappella di Sant'Antonino*.

<sup>3</sup> Brief references to the Salviati chapel appear in Pope-Hennessy, *Italian High Renaissance*, pp. 210-211; Holderbaum, *The Sculptor Giovanni Bologna*, pp. 247-261; Avery, *Giambologna*, pp. 270-271; Weitzel Gibbons, *Giambologna*, pp. 27-35. An excellent monograph has recently been published on the Salviati Chapel: see Cornelison, *Art and the Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Florence*. See also Cole, *Ambitious Form*, pp. 191-225.

<sup>4</sup> On Antoninus of Florence see Morcay, *Saint Antonin Archevêque de Florence (1389-1459)*; Celso Calzolari, *Frate Antonino Pierozzi dei Dominicani*; Peterson, *Archbishop Antoninus: Florence and the Church*; Howard, *Beyond the Written Word*; see most recently the volume *Antonino Pierozzi OP (1389-1459). La figura e l'opera di un santo arcivescovo*.



Fig. 1. Giambologna, Salviati Chapel (San Marco in Florence): General View (Alinari).

frescoes above include figures of seated Prophets and Sibles. The vault frescoes were painted by Alessandro Allori and depict scenes from the life of st. Antoninus. On the south vault are the episodes: *Antoninus the Child before a Crucifix in Or San Michele*; *Antoninus the Youth Reciting the Libro del Decretum to Giovanni Dominici*; *Antoninus' First Miracle: Making Whole the Broken Vessel of a Laundress*. The scenes on the north vault include: *Antoninus as the Founder of the Confraternity I Buoni di S. Martino*; *Antoninus in the Vatican*; *The Miracle of the Blessing of the Childless Dante Castiglione and His Wife*. The frescoes that decorate the interior of the octagonal dome were also painted by Alessandro Allori and are signed and dated to 1588. They include scenes of the posthumous veneration of st. Antoninus: the saint's death, funeral procession, ascension into heaven, and a nun's vision of st. Antoninus at the moment of his death. The vestibule frescoes were made by Domenico Cresti and depict the translation and adoration of the body of st. Antoninus<sup>5</sup>. The painted scenes of Antoninus' life differ in their subject matter from the sculpted reliefs that focus on the saint's participation in public life and his political functions within Florentine history. The painted scenes illustrating the saint's youth, miracles and especially his afterlife complement the sculpted cycle reproducing a full narrative of the saint's life. The aedicule in each case is flanked by statues of saints in round-headed niches<sup>6</sup>.

The most spectacular works of art in the chapel are the six bronze relief plaques above the niches that illustrate scenes from the life of st. Antoninus. I shall now examine the reliefs and their iconography. The episodes from Antoninus' life are presented in narrative form and are set in Florence's urban space, including everyday details. These artistic devices create the impression that Antoninus episodes are historical events connected with earlier Florentine history – the age of Cosimo il Vecchio and Lorenzo de' Medici, connecting these periods with the Medici dukes of the sixteenth century. I elaborate on why these specific scenes were chosen and what they tell us about the connections between preaching, canon and civil law.

The six bronze reliefs are arranged chronologically, beginning on the left side of the chapel and continuing clockwise (each relief size is 147 × 110 cm).

The first scene, *St. Antoninus Receiving the Dominican Habit from the Blessed Giovanni Dominici*, is located above the figure of st. Dominic holding a lily. The emphasis on the founder of the Dominican order was meant to symbolize Antoninus entry into the order and the juridical knowledge of both Dominic and Antoninus. Antoninus appears as a young boy kneeling before his spiritual mentor, Giovanni Dominici (1356-1419), another famous Dominican preacher; two groups of spectators, lay and ecclesiastical, are observing the event (Fig. 2)<sup>7</sup>. The scene is set within a Florentine church resembling the

<sup>5</sup> For Allori's contribution see Simone, *Alessandro Allori*, pp. 270-272.

<sup>6</sup> See Gori, *Descrizione della Cappella di S. Antonino Arcivescovo di Firenze*.

<sup>7</sup> On Dominici see Debby, *Renaissance Florence in the Rhetoric of Two Popular Preachers*.



Fig. 2. Giambologna, Salviati Chapel (San Marco in Florence): *St. Antoninus Receiving the Dominican Habit from the Blessed Giovanni Dominici* (Alinari).

interior of San Marco with a free-standing tabernacle in the background. According to Antoninus' biographers, as a young boy he was much fascinated by Dominici's sermons, which led him to appeal to Dominici to let him join the Dominican order. Concerned about Antoninus' tender age, Dominici decided to test him; he gave him the task of learning Gratian's *Decretum* by heart. After a year, Antoninus was examined by Dominici and was able to convince him of his true faith. Dominici then gave the habit to Antoninus – the scene depicted on the relief<sup>8</sup>. It is interesting to find a depiction of Dominici in this relief because he was a controversial figure in Florentine heritage and appears rarely in the iconographic tradition, perhaps the only example being Fra Angelico's small roundel depiction in the monastery of San Marco<sup>9</sup>.

The association between Antoninus, Dominici and Canon law is typical of these two preachers style of preaching based on citations from canon law and which was full of juridical material. In his Florentine sermons, Dominici told *exempla* to illustrate juridical principles. His method was to state a law and then present various cases to give concrete form to the general principle. Here I shall present two such juridical examples typical of Dominici's style of preaching and rhetorical technique of applying juridical material in his sermons.

The first example deals with the sophisticated wife who had cheated her husband. To conclude a long legal discussion on the value of wills, Dominici told the story of a priest who wrote the pope on a case revealed to him in confession. A good man who was seriously ill decided, since he was childless, to distribute his possessions according to his best judgment. His wife, who desired to inherit from him, drank a special concoction in order to appear if she were carrying a baby:

Andò al marito: «Marito mio, tu vedi in che chaso tu mi lasci! Sono grossa. Vuoi tu lasciare innanzi il tuo altrui che al tuo figliuolo?» E più fa, ch'ella, vegnendo a tempo, e lla infermità di colui dura a posta d'una povera persona grossa, che ssia per fare il fanciullo... e fa vista averlo fatto ella e mostralo al marito. Chrede sia suo<sup>10</sup>.

He prepared a new will in which he left everything to her and the child, and died shortly after. The deceitful wife did not want to return the money and did not even regret her evil deed. The problem before the priest was whether the will should be respected. The answer from the pope was that the will was valid since it was, after all, the last wish of the deceased.

<sup>8</sup> For this scene see Castiglione, *Vita S. Antonini*, XIV, 311.

<sup>9</sup> On San Marco see Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco*.

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Dominici, Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, ms Ricc. 1301, Predica 19, lines 168-174: «She then went to her husband and told him: «Husband see in what state you desert me! I am pregnant. Do you want to leave your possessions to someone other than your own son?» And she did more, when the time came and the condition of the man became worse, she took the child of a poor pregnant woman about to give birth and pretended that she gave birth to him and showed the boy to her husband making him believe that the boy was his» (English translations are mine).



Through the story, Dominici emphasized the necessity of children: had there been children, the woman would have inherited her husband's estate legally and the deception would never have taken place. But the story also epitomized the negative image of women and was meant to serve as a warning to all husbands of the potential dangers from their wives. He stressed that wills must be respected despite the circumstances in which they were drafted. The story was also used to translate the abstract question of the credibility of a will into a concrete case and to interest the listeners, bored and perhaps drowsy from the preceding theological discussion.

Another example dealt with the relations between clergy and laity in Florence:

Et ponti l'exemplo: e gli è uno che va a dare prete o cherico in tuo nome et no' ll'avendo tu saputo inprima tu, cholui è di fatto iscomunicato, ché à battuto il prete o il cherico, ma se poi tu, saputo, et se' nne contente, se' scomunicato chome lui... Un altro caso: tu ài comandato a uno tuo sudito – diciamo che ssia ufficiale o qualunque altra persona – che vada a battere o pigliare uno cherico, diciamo – al modo da Firenze – per lle prestanza o per qualcosa sia. Innazi che cholui vada, gli contradicie, che non voglia che vi vada, è si pentuto; dirà il cattivo messo: «Una volta me l' dicesti» et va e mette ad essecuzione la prima volontà di colui... rimane schumichato alla chiesa militante, ma none alla trionfante...<sup>11</sup>.

These cases were related in order to transmit doctrinal material and show the practical consequences of the law of excommunication. In the first case, not only the action, the hitting, but also the intention, the satisfaction of the listener, led to excommunication; in the second case, the deed led to excommunication in the institutional church but the remorse to absolution in the eternal church. It also highlights the tense relationships between clergy and laity in Florence and that violent confrontations were common. These conflicts between clergy and laity, canon law and civil law will now be demonstrated in the iconography of Antoninus.

The second relief, *St. Antoninus Distributing Alms to the Poor and the Lame*, is set above the figure of st. Edward the Confessor, through whose liberality Westminster Abbey was founded (Fig. 3). The reference to Edward the Confessor might also be connected with the legend concerning his ability to heal scrofulous swellings by a mere touch. Antoninus, attired as an archbishop, stands in front of a building, a crowd of friars behind him; below is a woman

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, Predica 23, lines 62-70: «I give you an example: there was a person who went to a priest or a clergyman in your name and hit him without your knowledge. He is excommunicated since he hit the priest or clergyman. But if later, when you heard this, you were content, you are excommunicated like him... Or another case: say you have ordered one of your subordinates, an officer or any other person to go and hit or rob a clergyman, let us say, in the case of Florence, because of a loan or some other reason. But before he goes you change your mind and tell him that you have repented and that you do not want him to go. Then the evil messenger says: «Once you have told me so that's it», and he goes and carries out the first command [that is «hits the clergyman»]. In that case you are excommunicated by the militant church but not by the triumphant church».



Fig. 3. Giambologna, Salviati Chapel (San Marco in Florence): *St. Antoninus Distributing Alms to the Poor and the Lame* (Alinari).

holding a child, and in the lower right corner a reclining beggar stretches his right arm toward the archbishop. The beggar and mother and child might be tropes relative to representing saintly life. The building itself is reminiscent of the former archiepiscopal palace in Florence, which preceded the building designed by Dosio in the 1580s. This relief reflects the many charitable donations made by st. Antoninus and establishes his legacy as a defender of the lower classes<sup>12</sup>. A recurrent motif in Antoninus' biographies is his personal poverty along with his concern and generosity towards the poor. At the centre, a crippled beggar is reaching out to the archbishop. He is depicted with strong muscles and even resembles the *écorché* sculptures typical of Giambologna's workshop that were used in medical contexts to study anatomy. Another important figure is the pilgrim standing in the corner holding a cane. The reference to pilgrimage might allude to the desire to make Antoninus' Chapel into a site of pilgrimage, not just locally but on an international level.

The next relief, *St. Antoninus Preaching to the Florentine People*, set above st. John the Baptist, the patron saint of the city, shows the saint delivering a sermon from a pulpit inside the Dominican church of San Marco. The scene depicts Antoninus as a young man, wearing not the outfit of an archbishop but the gown of a friar, reflecting an earlier stage in Antoninus' career as a preacher and founding prior of San Marco (Fig. 4)<sup>13</sup>. With one arm, he is leaning on the rail of the pulpit the other hand is raised in an expressive gesture. The audience consists of two groups of listeners: one male, the other female. Unlike the famous depictions of st. Bernardino preaching in Siena, no physical barrier, such as a curtain or a rope, separates them, but the two groups are distinct. Another distinction is between the first row of listeners, seated on chairs, probably reserved for the more distinguished, and the remaining spectators, seated on bare benches. The last row of listeners is combined of figures with beards. Perhaps this physical attribute might be an allusion to Jews who are usually represented in art as bearded figures as in the frescoes made by Andrea da Firenze in the Spanish Chapel in Santa Maria Novella. If these figures are indeed an allusion to Jewish listeners, there is a symbolic attempt here to highlight Antoninus' preaching abilities to the infidels as well as to Christian audiences<sup>14</sup>. The reactions of the male listeners are diverse: some evince faith, surprise, awe and pensive meditation; others, notably in the first row, are talking, raising objections, even turning away from the preacher – from either boredom or shame. The women, however, are all attentively turning their heads to listen to the preacher, in obedience

<sup>12</sup> On Antoninus as defender of the poor, see Vespasiano da Bisticci, *The Vespasiano Memoires*, pp. 158-160. On the attention to the poor in Florentine society, see Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence*.

<sup>13</sup> On the preaching culture of Florentine society, see Howard, *The Aural Space of the Sacred in Renaissance Florence*.

<sup>14</sup> On the representation of the Jews in the Spanish Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, see Ben-Arieh Debby, *Art and Sermons*.



Fig. 4. Giambologna, Salviati Chapel (San Marco in Florence): *St. Antoninus Preaching to the Florentine People* (Alinari).

and faith. There is also a differentiation of social classes: some of the women are veiled or elaborately coifed, some wearing exquisite hats and embroidered dresses, in accordance with Florentine fashion. One woman, in the forefront of the relief, is breast-feeding her baby; she probably symbolizes charity: nurturing her little one, just as the preacher, through charity and love, nourishes his listeners.

The pulpit from which Antoninus is preaching in this third relief stands on a balcony on the side of the nave. It may well be the pulpit used later by Savonarola, who also preached in San Marco, as illustrated in several woodcuts. That this pulpit no longer exists should come as no surprise, given that many were demolished or removed during church renovations, especially after the Council of Trent. Like other mendicant churches in Florence, the church of San Marco, had at its centre a rood screen dividing its space, and the pulpit was located in the nave in front of it. The existence of a pulpit at this location is further confirmed by Morselli who, citing a passage from Gianozzo Manetti's biography of Brunelleschi, describes the burial site of the artist's family in the Dominican church and explains that the pulpit was located on the east wall above the Brunelleschi family tomb, between the *tramezzo* and the entrance to the church. It can be assumed that the pulpit was built sometime after the construction of the new church in 1443, a building designed by Michelozzo, and probably dismantled during the late seventeenth century transformation of the church, when the *tramezzo* was also destroyed. The present wooden pulpit was installed in the seventeenth century; it is accessible through a small door on the left of the Brunelleschi family tomb, which leads to a steep, narrow staircase within the wall – probably the original fifteenth century entrance<sup>15</sup>.

The fourth relief, *St. Antoninus Addressing the Florentine Signoria*, is located above the statue of st. Philip the Apostle and shows Antoninus standing in the Piazza della Signoria, the political heart of Florence, here transformed into a performance site (Fig. 5). A vast crowd fills the square. The occasion might be political since there are no female listeners and several men are either riding horses or carrying swords. Antoninus is wearing his archbishop's regalia and raising his hand, so it might represent Antoninus' march into Florence after he was elected archbishop and his swearing of obedience to the Signoria. All versions in the sources stress that Antoninus did not want to take office and tried to flee to Sardinia. A papal threat of excommunication, the dispatch of two papal messengers and the intervention of family members caused him to comply with his vow of obedience and return to Florence, but he accepted the archbishopric unwillingly. He was consecrated in San Domenico, Fiesole, and from there walked barefoot to Florence<sup>16</sup>. This scene takes

<sup>15</sup> On the lost pulpit in the church of San Marco in Florence and the quotation from Manetti, see Morselli, *Corpus of Tuscan Pulpits 1400-1550*, pp. 129-132. For further information on pulpits, see Ben-Arieh Debby, *The Renaissance Pulpit*.

<sup>16</sup> For a typical description, see Vespasiano, *The Vespasiano Memoirs*, pp. 157-158. For a histo-

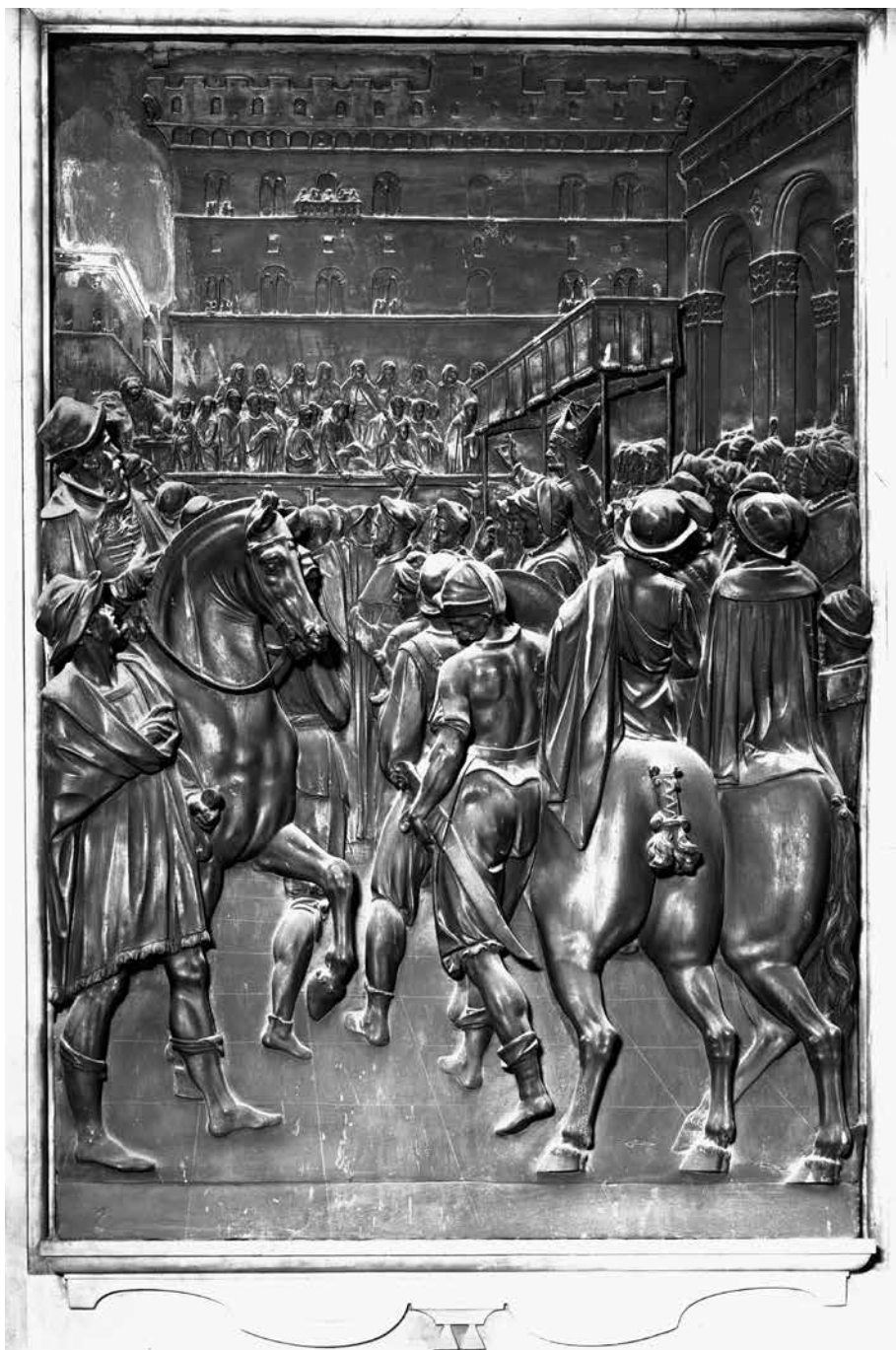


Fig. 5. Giambologna, Salviati Chapel (San Marco in Florence): *St. Antoninus Addressing the Florentine Signoria* (Alinari).

place in an urban context, in the centre of Florence. The *piazza* functioned as both a theatre for civil ceremonies and a public meeting place: the citizens gathered when summoned by the ringing of bells, and the Signoria assembled there to address the entire populace. Nearby is the Loggia dei Lanzi (1374-1382), used for non-religious ceremonial functions. Antoninus seems to be standing on some kind of raised structure, because his head rises above that of the listeners; above him is a cloth canopy to mark his location for the audience. On the *ringhiera*, the raised stone platform along the town hall's west side, the officials of the city are supervising the populace assembled below; others are looking on from the balconies and windows of the palace. Prominently displayed on the northwest corner of the *ringhiera* is the Florentine political symbol, the Marzocco, lion of Mars – one of the city's mythical founders and the symbolic guardian of Florence. Antoninus is shown beneath the Florentine Signoria and the Marzocco – an arrangement that seems to stress the supremacy of civic rule over ecclesiastical authority.

The fifth relief, *St. Antoninus Pardoning the Florentine Signoria on the Steps of the Duomo*, is located next to the figure of st. Anthony Abbot. Archbishop Antoninus appears on the front steps of the cathedral of Florence holding a stick used to discipline his audience (Fig. 6). He is removing the censure by which he had excommunicated the entire Florentine Signoria – a drastic action resulting from their attempt to override his ecclesiastical jurisdiction by calling for open balloting instead of secret voting in the political assemblies of the city. The archbishop is approaching the prelates in accordance with ecclesiastical laws, and is illustrating the ultimate power of the clergy over the secular rulers. Antoninus is shown above the Florentine Signoria, signifying the supremacy of ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the civic government. Yet the message is one of reconciliation: forgiveness on the part of Antoninus and the restoration of peace. This scene is directly connected with a conflict between civic and ecclesiastical rule with the preacher-saint in the middle.

The scene in the relief depicts the outcome of an event that took place in July 1458, when the partisans of the Medici were the priors of the Signoria and, attempting to intimidate their opposition and take control of the city's councils, they pressed for open rather than secret balloting in the councils. Antoninus in response issued an edict that he ordered to be fixed to the doors of the cathedral and other churches in Florence. In it, he declared it his pastoral duty to remind the councilmen and priors that open balloting constituted a violation of their oath of office and thus a mortal sin. Threatening excommunication without absolution, he forbade them to adopt the measure, and this strategy of the Medici partisans collapsed<sup>17</sup>. This story became an essential element in later portrayals of Antoninus as a staunch defender not only of ecclesiastical rights but also of the *bene commune*. Savonarola, for example,

ritical analysis, see Peterson, *An Episcopal Election in Quattrocento Florence*.

<sup>17</sup> See Peterson, *Archbishop Antoninus*, pp. 85-91.

praised this incident showing how careful Antoninus was in protecting the civic interest. The incident was recalled again in testimonies during the examinations held for Antoninus' canonization in 1517, as a sign of Antoninus' defense of civil liberties<sup>18</sup>.

The last relief, *St. Antoninus Healing the Son of the Filicia Family*, is located above the marble figure of st. Thomas Aquinas. It commemorates the raising from the dead of the son of the Filicia family by Archbishop Antoninus (Fig. 7). The archbishop was in San Marco when a nobleman whose son had died at home asked for his help. Antoninus sent Filicia home with the assurance that his son was alive, and when the nobleman returned home, he found that was true. The relief depicts the vision of the archbishop swooping out of the upper left corner of a room as the boy raises himself from death. The miracle exemplifies the archbishop's power to help the faithful<sup>19</sup>.

## 2. *Within the image*

It is worth taking note of the choice of subjects for the bronze reliefs. The first episode deals with Antoninus' youth: his relations with Dominici and his entry into the Dominican order; the second highlights Antoninus' commitment to charity and helping the poor; the third focuses on Antoninus' preaching and pastoral duties. The next two scenes deal with politics – the relations between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities. In the fourth scene, Antoninus is pledging obedience to the authorities upon his nomination as archbishop, while in the fifth he is graciously forgiving his political opponents, the priors. Taken together, the political scenes convey a message of equilibrium, a balance of power between the religious and the civic. The final scene illustrates Antoninus' supernatural powers and presents a miracle justifying his sanctity.

The reliefs exhibit several common features – in their narrative technique, in the composition and arrangement of the figures, and in inclusion of everyday details. Giambologna employed pictorial techniques that blurred the distinctions between sculpture and painting; he produced a clear exposition of the story, a continuously unfolding narrative and a focus on the active role of the spectator. Giambologna's task was to illustrate the life of st. Antoninus by transforming it into a historical narrative intelligible to all. This narrative emphasis was part of a long standing tradition of narrative cycles illustrating the lives of saints by presenting dramatic episodes within meaningful architectural contexts.

The iconography of the precious human relationships between the saint and the Florentine people was meant to appeal to the emotions of the believers and was very much in accord with the Baroque theory of imagery, which held

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 90-92.

<sup>19</sup> Cole, *Ambitious Form*, p. 200.





Fig. 6. Giambologna, Salviati Chapel (San Marco in Florence): *St. Antoninus Pardoning the Florentine Signoria on the Steps of the Duomo* (Alinari).



Fig. 7. Giambologna, Salviati Chapel (San Marco in Florence): *St. Antoninus Healing the Son of the Filicia Family* (Alinari).

that sacred images led to piety and devotion. Several treatises were written in defense of sacred images, in particular depictions of saints. For example, Archbishop Gabriele Paleotti of Bologna (1522-1597) was responsible for the treatise *Discorso intorno alle imagine sacri et profane* of 1582, which defined the rules for the correct use of religious images, and Molanus (1533-1585), an influential Flemish Catholic theologian from Louvain University, wrote on the proper content of religious images. Religious thinkers highlighted the importance of art as an inducement to piety; thus, according to Paleotti, visible representations appeal more vividly to minds than the spoken word. The favored art would elicit emotions, tender and affectionate or dramatic; art should not be calm and frozen but dynamic and dramatic. Paleotti argued that, «the art of making images is among the noblest art if it is directed by Christian discipline». The new style dictated an appeal to the emotions, encouraging the use of all of the senses to realize the essence of faith. The vivid scenes showing Antoninus as a benefactor of the Florentine people was meant to engender affection and appeal to the emotions of the viewer<sup>20</sup>.

The physical location of Antoninus within the reliefs, in each case, reflects the outcome of the story yet conveys hierarchy. In four episodes, Antoninus is depicted in a superior position, above the other protagonists: when he is giving alms, when he is preaching, when he is forgiving the Signoria and when he is envisioning a miracle. All these episodes illustrate his moral superiority; he is depicted as a pious and benevolent spiritual leader. Especially noteworthy is the relief showing him forgiving the Signoria, manifesting his superiority over the secular leaders. The location of the scene, on the steps of the Florentine cathedral, the seat of the archbishop, reinforces the message that Antoninus is above the secular rulers who are coming to ask for his forgiveness. In two other episodes, however, Antoninus is shown in a lower position: when receiving the Dominican habit as a young novice, he is shown kneeling before his spiritual mentor, Dominici, this location manifests his humility. More noteworthy, is his location in the Piazza della Signoria, appealing to the priors who are sitting on the *ringhiera*. Here, Antoninus is shown below the civic authorities and their symbol, the Florentine *marzocco*, transmitting the message of the archbishop's obedience to civil authority. Almost a guest of the civic authorities of Florence, being the only ecclesiastical figure in the scene, the archbishop is conveying his loyalty to the Florentine regime before the Palazzo Vecchio.

Giambologna included in his episodes figures unrelated to the main event – such as the man peeping out in the alms – giving scene that stir the curiosity of the spectators and add to their enjoyment. These extra figures reinforce the impression of historical reality and immediacy. Especially delightful are the animals and children introduced into the scene – such as the boy playing with a dog on the lower steps of the cathedral, a detail that adds a casual note

<sup>20</sup> Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1600*, pp. 130-132.

to an otherwise dramatically charged political confrontation. Another compositional device is the positioning of certain figures in the foreground of the reliefs. On the one hand, these figures deliver a symbolic message typical of the story being depicted – such as the woman breastfeeding her baby in the preaching scene, which is emblematic of love and charity. From another perspective, these figures invite the spectator to take part in the action. Typical examples are the beggar and the mother and child in the giving of alms scene; on a compositional level, they are pointing at the archbishop.

Another important feature of these reliefs is their attention to setting. Vivid representations of Florentine architecture are central, presenting the action as occurring within a Quattrocento Florentine environment. Such buildings as the Church of San Marco, built by Michelozzo as a *quattrocento* Dominican church with Medici patronage, the former archiepiscopal palace, the Florentine cathedral and, most strikingly, the accurate depiction of the Piazza della Signoria with its skilfully produced minute reproduction of individual buildings are produced with skill. Occasionally, even particular works of art or monuments appear in the scenes – such as the tabernacle in the ordination scene, or the pulpit inside the church of San Marco in the preaching scene. These realistic details reinforce the impression of Antoninus as an important historical figure, a part of the Florentine heritage, working in a particular time and place, rather than some abstract figure performing timeless miracles.

In conclusion, the reliefs depicting the biography of Antoninus discussed here point out two aspects of the interrelationships between preaching and law. First by pointing out the commitment and admiration of Dominican preachers towards using juridical sources and their method of citing canon law in their sermons, vividly expressed in the entrance exam in canon law given by Dominici to Antoninus in the first relief; and secondly by focusing on the tension between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, canon law versus civil law as expressed in the relief showing st. Antoninus forgiving the Florentine *Signoria*. These sculpted examples place the legacy of Dominici and Antoninus within the dynamic between preaching and law.

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