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St Joseph, St Peter, Jean Gerson and the Guelphs

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Keywords:	St Joseph, Holy Family, St Peter, Jean Gerson, Guelphs
Abstract:	<p>The representation of St Joseph in Renaissance art has attracted scholarly attention in recent years, but not that of St Peter. In fact Peter appears in relatively few images considering his prevalence in late antique and medieval art. This article finds that the two saints were inextricably linked, particularly after the period of councils in the first half of the fifteenth century. It examines the significance of their conflation through the writings of Jean Gerson at the Council of Constance when the role and nature of a single pope to replace the three of the Great Schism was being debated. Joseph, as protector of the Holy Family and of the infant Jesus, was paralleled with Peter who accompanied the adult Christ: Joseph's marriage to the Virgin Mary was a model for the metaphorical marriage of Christ to his Church which he delegated Peter to look after as his vicar. Therefore Joseph was a model for the successors of Peter - the popes - to follow. It concludes that the imagery was particularly relevant in a Guelph context which also ensured its prevalence until the period of the Italian Wars.</p>

St Joseph, St Peter, Jean Gerson and the Guelphs

According to Peter John Olivi (1248-98), the Franciscan follower of St Bonaventure,

Joseph represents God the Father or Christ because he is the spouse of the Church; he is also the type of the bishops, spouses of the Church... And in the Christian religion which, like Mary, conceived the evangelical Word through the spirit of Christ, Joseph is also the image of the Roman pontiffs, installed as guardians of the Church.¹

The theological association of Joseph with Peter and his successors through the Apostolic Succession, the popes, came from drawing a parallel between the marriage of Joseph and Mary and the marriage of Christ and *Ecclesia*. Joseph protected the infant Jesus in the same way that Peter accompanied the adult Christ who then commissioned Peter to protect his Church. Christ was wedded to his Church which he left in the care of St Peter and his successors, the popes, through the Apostolic Succession. The theme was an important one in the dramatic events of the fifteenth century: at the climactic point of the Council of Constance (1414-17), Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, prayed that the three competing popes of the Papal Schism would be replaced by a single pope who followed the example of Christ's earthly father, as will be discussed below.

The paralleling of Joseph and Peter is prevalent in central Italian painting from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries but nothing has so far been made of it, despite the burgeoning literature on Christ's foster father.² Conversely, having been one of the most commonly

¹ Peter John Olivi, *Postilla super Matthaeum*, chapter 1, question 1, 12 in P.A. Emmen, 'Pierre de Jean Olivi, o.f.m. Sa doctrine et son influence', *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, 15 (1966), 260-1; translated in Sheila Schwartz, 'St Joseph in Meister Bertram's Petri-Altar', *Gesta* 24 (1985), 148-51; Wilson, *St Joseph*, 152.

² Among countless scholarly and popular texts, some of them mentioned below, is a dedicated periodical, *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, published since 1953.

represented saints from the fourth up to the thirteenth century, St Peter's relative obscurity in Italian Renaissance representation seems surprising and is as yet unexplained: with the exception of the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence and relief sculpture associated with the papal court in fifteenth century Rome, he largely lost his earlier role as patron and intercessor.³ In this article I will suggest that Peter is in fact more present than has been noticed, the integration of the two saints in large part explaining the prominence given to St Joseph in representations of the Holy Family and Nativity. I will conclude by showing that the conflation of St Joseph with St Peter in central Italian Renaissance painting can be explained by its particular connotations in Guelph circles right up to the period of the Italian Wars at the end of the fifteenth century.

St Joseph and St Peter in the Renaissance

St Joseph's cultural fortunes improved dramatically in the fifteenth century. Johan Huizinga had described the medieval figure of St Joseph as 'a clown dressed in rags', his burgeoning cult an example of 'popular fancy rather than theology'.⁴ This characterization derives from the apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo Matthew in which Joseph is an elderly man who tries his best but can never quite catch up with his precocious family: 'Joseph was [often] in perplexity' it says.⁵ In a sermon of the mid 1420s, Bernardino of Siena criticised artists for making fun of Joseph: 'the most cheerful old man that there ever was in the world... [yet] the foolish artists paint him as a sad old man with his hand on his cheek as if he were in pain or

³ Carolyn Kinder Carr, 'Aspect of the Iconography of Saint Peter in Medieval Art of Western Europe to the Early Thirteenth Century', PhD Diss., Cape Western Reserve University, Cleveland, 1978.

⁴ Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Peregrine, 1965; first published 1919), 163-4.

⁵ Gospel of Pseudo Matthew, 37:3: <<http://www.gnosis.org/library/psudomat.htm>> (accessed August 2010).

depressed'.⁶ An example of this often quoted is the Master of Flémalle's *Mérode Triptych* of c.1427 (Fig. 1) in which Joseph is represented in the right hand scene, apparently oblivious to the events unfolding next door in the Annunciation, depicted in the central panel of the altarpiece. In an influential 1995 article Vasvari made much of the lewd puns and associations attached to Joseph, the carpenter and cuckold, in popular songs and plays – who 'screws', 'drills' and 'bangs' away in his workshop.⁷

That is just one side of the story. In theological circles St Joseph's status was already recognised by the fifteenth century. Bernardino of Siena counterbalanced Joseph's more negative portrayal by artists, emphasising his 'perpetual virginity' and his honour in being chosen as the Virgin Mary's husband and as the 'nursing father' of Christ and therefore the 'personal holiness presupposed by this choice'.⁸ These were themes that had been live since St John Chrysostom (c.347-407) wrote his sermons on the Gospel of Matthew in the fourth century C.E.. In the twelfth century Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) had promoted Joseph's role in the narrative of Christ's infancy in a written sermon. His ideas were then developed by

⁶ Bernardino da Siena, *Le prediche volgari (Firenze 1424)*, ed. Ciro Cannarozzi (Pistoia: Pacinotti, 1934), 278-9: 'El più allegro vecchio che fusse mai nel mondo... E gli sciocchi dipintori el dipingono vecchio maninconoso e colla mano alla gota, come s'elli avessi dolore o maninconia'. See also Catherine C. Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art. New Directions and Interpretations* (Philadelphia, PA: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2001), 7.

⁷ Louise O. Vasvari, 'Joseph on the Margin: the Mérode Tryptic and Medieval Spectacle', *Mediaevalia* 18 (1995), 163-189.

⁸ Bernardino da Siena, *Opera Omnia* (Florence: Quaracchi, 1959), 7: 16-30; translated in A.G. Ferrers-Howell, *S. Bernardino of Siena* (London: Methuen and Co, 1913), 270.

the likes of the Benedictine Rupert of Deutz (1075-1129) and Peter John Olivi.⁹ These writers argued that Joseph was necessary for the story of the Incarnation because it was through him that the Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled that a saviour would be born of the house of David because, according to Jewish law, genealogy followed the male line.¹⁰ The official cult took longer to establish. The Franciscans adopted a feast of the saint as early as 1399 and Sixtus IV (1479-83) issued two liturgies for Christ's human father.¹¹ In doing so he permitted the wider adoption of a feast, without making it compulsory, and furthered the cause through his patronage of the cult of the Virgin's wedding ring at Perugia, a relic with particular contemporary relevance for the pope as vicar of Christ, the Church's spouse.¹² Thereafter the feast was adopted by the Dominican order between 1508 and 1517, in 1621 it was established for the whole Church, and in 1870 Pius IX declared St Joseph Patron of the Universal Church, completing his revival.

⁹ St Bernard of Clairvaux, *Opera Omnia*, 'De laudibus virginis Mariae', Hom 2 (on the *Missus est*), *Patrologiae cursus completus (series Latina)*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris: Migne, 1862), 183: 55-87. On the cult of St Joseph see J. Seitz, *Die Verehrung des heiligen Joseph in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Freiburg im Bressau: Hedersche Verlagshandlung, 1908); Francis L. Filas, *Joseph: The Man Closest to Jesus. The Complete Life, Theology and Devotional History of St. Joseph* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul); Schwartz, 'Petri-Altar', 7-9.

¹⁰ This was not a new observation: John Chrysostom, 'Cur Josephi, non Mariae genealogia ducatur', *Opera Omnia, Patrologiae cursus completus (series Graeca)*, ed. Jean-Paul Migne (Paris: Migne, 1857-1866), 57: 58-60.

¹¹ Wilson, *St Joseph*, 7-8; Johann Konrad Eberlein, 'The Curtain in Raphael's Sistine Madonna', *The Art Bulletin*, 65/1 (1983), 73.

¹² See, for example, Maria Duranti, 'Il 'S. Anello' della cattedrale di Perugia tra leggenda e devozione', *Una città e la sua cattedrale: il Duomo di Perugia*, ed. Maria Luisa Cianini Pierotti (Perugia: Capitolo della Cattedrale di S. Lorenzo, 1992), 363-372.

Huizinga's medieval Joseph – and the eminently quotable generalisations which are his main strength – has proved a convenient starting point from which the improvement in his cultural fortunes in the fifteenth century can be traced. However, in literature and theology Joseph's resuscitation can be taken back to at least the twelfth century, and in art to the fourteenth century when different strands in his representation appear: Paul Payan has suggested that perhaps only 10% of images fall into the disrespectful category of the type emphasized by Vasvari.¹³ Instead, Joseph was more often depicted hard at work, trying to feed or provide for his family: the figure in the Mérode triptych can also be interpreted in this way (Fig. 1). Or he was shown asleep, not failing in his duties, but a reference to one of his few distinct roles in the story of the Nativity. According to the gospels, Joseph was told in a dream, 'do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit' and that the child should be called Jesus (Matthew 1:24). This is how Giotto depicts Joseph in the Nativity scene in the Arena Chapel in Padua for example (Fig. 2).

Giotto's Joseph sets the pattern for his subsequent, increasingly common representation in the next two centuries: he sports short hair and beard and wears a yellow cloak over a blue tunic. Notably, at the Arena Chapel Giotto groups the scenes which feature St Joseph with those that include St Peter: the *Nativity* appears above the *Last Supper* (Fig. 3), the *Adoration of the Magi* above the *Washing of the Feet*, the *Presentation in the Temple* above the *Kiss of Judas*. This kind of typology in the Arena Chapel fresco cycle has been thoroughly discussed, but not the bringing together of these saints who are important witnesses or protagonists in each scene.¹⁴ The paralleling of St Joseph who figured large in Christ's infancy and St Peter in his

¹³ Paul Payan, 'Pour retrouver un père. La promotion du culte de saint Joseph au temps de Gerson', *Cahiers de recherches médiévales*, 4 (1997): <<http://crm.revues.org//index959.html>> (accessed November 2009).

¹⁴ See for example, Michel Alpatoff, 'The Parallelism of Giotto's Paduan Frescoes', *The Art Bulletin*, 29/3 (1947), 149-154.

adult ministry offers a sub-narrative within the meta-narratives of the Incarnation and Passion. But more curious is the fact that they are given remarkably similar physiognomy and dress. It is from this point that St Peter's Renaissance dress is established, his liturgical vestments and pallium replaced by the same blue tunic and yellow cloak that distinguish St Joseph from around 1300.¹⁵

A correlation between Peter and Joseph has been detected before but not to the extent to which I want to go in this paper. Sheila Schwartz brought attention to the treatment of St Joseph in the huge altarpiece, dated 1379-83, for the church of St Peter in Hamburg. She draws attention to a tiny detail in the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* panel: hanging from Joseph's belt is a key, attribute of St Peter (Fig. 4) which could also refer to Joseph as housekeeper and therefore earthly protector of Mary and Jesus. Schwartz also proposes that Joseph is deliberately given the same bifurcated beard and hairstyle as the carved figure of St Peter in the altar's interior.¹⁶ This and other visual examples of northern European art are more subtle than the assimilated Joseph/Peter which seems to find roots in the Italian peninsula earlier in the fourteenth century, and in Giotto's painting in particular.

Catherine Wilson, who focuses on northern Italian paintings of the sixteenth century, or the 'late pre-Tridentine period', detects fairly frequent correspondence between Joseph and Peter

¹⁵ The earliest representation of St Peter in blue tunic and yellow or gold cloak I have found is at San Francesco, Assisi, in mid-13th century frescoes in the right transept: P. Gerhard Ruf, *Die Fresken der Oberkirche San Francesco in Assisi, Iconographie und Theologie* (Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2004), 74-88. The fullest account of the representation of St Peter remains Carr, 'Aspects of the Iconography of Saint Peter'.

¹⁶ Schwartz, 'Petri-Altar', 152.

and ‘Joseph’s role as protector of the Church Militant’.¹⁷ He is also a *typus apostolorum*. The presence of the key in the Hamburg altarpiece and occasionally elsewhere she explains through the words of Peter John Olivi: ‘For [Joseph] is the key to the Old Testament, in whom the dignity of the patriarchs and prophets attains its promised fruit.’ But most of the links detected by Wilson and other art historians are references through attributes such as the key, not the direct assimilation of Joseph as Peter in Renaissance art to which I now turn.

The Holy Family

Consider, for example, Pinturicchio’s tondo of the *Holy Family* (Fig. 5), now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena, an attractive but otherwise apparently unremarkable picture.¹⁸ While nothing is known about its original commission or how it came to be in the convent of San Girolamo in Campansi, further analysis will reveal that it is an important representative of a deceptively innocent and undeniably attractive devotional subject that has been overlooked for its political significance. The capacity of representations of the Holy Family to bear contemporary meaning is obscured both by the prevalence of the iconography and their multiple production in workshops such as Pinturicchio’s where art historians have found more signs of accomplished craftsmanship than canny intellectual or political relevance – one might call it the ‘Christmas card factor’.

¹⁷ Wilson, *St Joseph*, 47; Caroline C. Wilson, ‘St Joseph as *Custos* in the *Summa* of Isidoro Isolano and in Italian Renaissance Art’, *Saint Joseph Studies (Papers from the 7th and 8th International St Joseph Symposia Malta 1997 and El Salvador 2001)* (Santa Cruz: Guardian of the Redeemer Books, 2002), 89-120. I am most grateful to the author for providing me with copies of her work.

¹⁸ The painting was loaned to the exhibition *Renaissance Siena: Art for a City* at the National Gallery, London, October 2007 to January 2008. See Luke Syson et al. eds, *Renaissance Siena: Art for a City* (London: National Gallery and Yale University Press, 2007), 258-61.

Pinturicchio's painting bears the title of 'Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist' or 'Madonna and Child with St John' because it depicts the Virgin, St Joseph, the Christ Child and John the Baptist. Although he is not explicitly named in the standard title given to the painting, it is the figure of St Joseph placed centrally in the composition that I believe is the key to understanding what this painting – and indeed many others of the Holy Family – is really about. A number of features of the painting suggest that this is not a Holy Family – or at least, that is not its chief subject – but an allegory of the Church. Mary, holding a book on her lap, points towards the other figures, three of her fingers held together in the gesture of blessing. She is the most dominant figure in the picture, sitting furthest forward in the picture plane; her blue cloak takes up half of the foreground. The figure of Joseph to her left occupies the centre of the picture; he holds a barrel, presumably for wine, and two loaves of bread. The infant John the Baptist wears his customary animal skins, which refer to the time he will spend in the desert as an adult, and he carries a jug and staff surmounted by a cross. The infant Christ is dressed in a white tunic with narrow sleeves; he also holds a book. Christ's distinctive white garb is a dalmatic, the deacon's vestment, his book representing their service to the ministry of the word. John's staff and jug – from which he will pour the waters of baptism – refer to the episcopal ministry. Joseph's attributes of bread and wine represent his care for the Holy Family. They are also symbolic of the priesthood, and represent priests' main role as guardians of the Eucharist. What is more, the Joseph figure is given the same colours, facial features and beard as St Peter customarily wears in representations of him from at least the thirteenth century – the yellow cloak, sometimes including a red lining, over a blue or green tunic. On an allegorical level, complementing the tripartite ministry of deacon, priest and bishop represented by the three male figures, Mary can be read as

Ecclesia. ‘the female personification of the Church.’¹⁹ The figures are positioned so that they can follow Christ, recalling the evangelical summons in 1 Peter 2:21: ‘For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his footsteps’. This missionary theme was taken on by the apostles, led by Peter, who were authorized by Christ, when he founded the Church at Pentecost, to teach the nations.²⁰ Overall it seems clear that this is a sophisticated theological allegory which works on a number of levels, and not a simple narrative or devotional image.

Taking Pinturicchio’s painting as a starting point, the link between Peter and Joseph then becomes evident in many representations of St Joseph in the fifteenth century. Paradoxically, it is perhaps because it is so prevalent that its frequency has been overlooked – because it looks ‘normal’. Time and again, St Joseph, in nativities, flights into Egypt and elsewhere, takes on the features and garb of St Peter, who is given a prominent role as guardian of Mary. To take one of many examples, in Lorenzo Monaco’s *Flight into Egypt* (Fig. 6), the Joseph figure who leads the donkey bearing Mary and Jesus to safety is given the same short hair and beard, and wears the same yellow cloak and blue tunic as Peter and can be compared with, for example, the figure of St Peter depicted in Masaccio’s Brancacci Chapel frescoes (Fig. 7).

In paintings of the Nativity, the St Joseph figure is often depicted sitting on or leaning on or near rocks and foundations. The accepted interpretation of these details as foretelling Christ’s replacing the old order with a new edifice has perhaps obscured it as an attribute of the

¹⁹ Rosemary Muir Wright, *Sacred Distance: Representing the Virgin* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 25; Wilson, *St Joseph*, 5.

²⁰ Herbert Kessler, “Discipuli domini: Apostles, Saints, and Prophets in Medieval Churches”, in *Old St Peter’s and Church Decoration in Medieval Italy* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 2002), 188.

assimilated Joseph/Peter. It can be read as a direct appropriation of Petrine symbolism, referring to Matthew 16:18-19:

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

In Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Adoration of the Magi* (Fig. 8) for the Hospital of the Innocenti in Florence, dated 1488, for example, the three kings are brought together with other saints, including John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. Just behind Mary, to the right hand side, is the Joseph/Peter figure, dressed in yellow and blue, with short hair and beard. Behind him, two bricklayers build a wall that frames the Holy Family. If we assume that Joseph prefigures Peter then he is quite literally in at the building of the Church for which he will be both the foundation and guardian. In other paintings, Joseph leans on a rock or foundation, such as is visible in an otherwise unremarkable panel by Pinturicchio in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena: in this painting the Joseph figure, again dressed in Peter's colours, even points to the stone foundations of a building on which he is leaning (Fig. 9).

One of the most celebrated – and discussed – representations of the Holy Family is Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* (Fig. 10). In her recent book Stefaniak stresses the significance of the marriage metaphor in the *Doni Tondo* which she argues is the painting's main subject because it is a model for Republican Florence: 'the virile new guardian Joseph projected in the theology... promoted the new republican image of the militarily prepared citizen'.²¹ She proposes that Joseph's 'erotic' protection of the Virgin who is positioned between his legs

²¹ Regina Stefaniak, *Mysterium Magnum: Michelangelo's Tondo Doni* (E.J.Brill, Leiden, 2008), 10, 16.

stresses his role as protector of Mary/*Ecclesia*.²² The gesture between Mary and Joseph who pass the child between them alludes to the genealogy of Christ for which Joseph is so important, discussed above.²³ For other writers, Michelangelo's Joseph is equated with God the father; the Christ child is the 'gift' that the patron's name suggests.²⁴ Acidini Luchinat admits that the discussions about the iconography of the *Doni Tondo* will almost certainly continue indefinitely as apparently strange details continue to perplex scholars. However, if Joseph is also Peter then the enigmas of the odd background full of nude figures and the ambiguous space might be more straightforward than art historians have found it to date. In the Acts of the Apostles (2:38-40), just after Peter has explained the genealogy of Christ through David, he makes clear that the only way to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that God made possible through the incarnation of Christ is by Baptism:

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.... Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

Unknown in Medieval painting, Masaccio depicted this scene, the *Baptism of the Neophytes*, in the Brancacci Chapel (Fig. 7). In addition to these iconographical similarities, there are also purely artistic links between the two artists: Michelangelo's admiration of Masaccio's

²² Stefaniak, *Ibid.*, 51-6.

²³ There is a useful summary in Cristina Acidini Luchinat, *Michelangelo pittore* (Milan: Federico Motta, 2007), 102-3.

²⁴ Timothy Verdon, *Michelangelo teologo: fede e creatività tra Rinascimento e Controriforma* (Milan: Ancora, 2005), 170; Paul Barolsky, 'Michelangelo's Doni Tondo and the Worshipful Beholder', *Source*, 22 (2003), 8-11; Acidini Luchinat, *Ibid.*, 102.

work is well known through his drawings taken from his predecessor's paintings.²⁵ Indeed, it was in the Brancacci Chapel that the young Michelangelo's nose was broken by his rival, Pietro Torrigiano.²⁶

The spatial construction of the *Doni Tondo* and the apparent ledge on which the foreground figures of the Holy Family sit is apparently anomalous. It divides the foreground group from the background which contains the infant St John the Baptist and the muscular neophytes. The naked figures in the background lean on stone walls. These could be understood as the foundations of a building, dug down into the ground. Taken this way, the foreground figures can be understood to be sitting on top of the same foundations further round the same construction site.

The passage from Acts quoted above is important because, in it, Peter 'strikes the theme of God's control over the young church's growth' and the delegation of that authority exclusively through the apostles.²⁷ If the baptism of the neophytes is the scene depicted in the background of the *Doni Tondo*, the link of Joseph with Peter opens up the interpretation of the painting as the complete story of the incarnation fulfilled by the Church: Christ's birth of a Virgin, his genealogy foretold by the Old Testament prophets satisfied through Joseph, his baptism, his commission of Peter, and the continuation and unfolding of his legacy through the Church, protected by Peter's successor – the pope.

There are plenty more examples available which further study will show reveal different aspects of the promise of salvation ultimately through the Church (Peter) represented by the

²⁵ Acidini Luchinat, *Ibid.*, 20, 24.

²⁶ Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 19-20.

²⁷ *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds Raymond E. Brown et al. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000), 734.

incarnation (Joseph) – Fra Filippo Lippi’s altarpiece for the Chapel in the Medici-Riccardi chapel to name but one – but discussion of them here would quickly turn this article into a book.

Jean Gerson’s St Joseph

But why should Joseph and Peter be so regularly linked in fifteenth century painting, to the extent that their conflation may even have become the dominant representation in images including the Holy Family? The marriage of the pope to his Church was a particularly current and indeed controversial metaphor in the conciliar context, prompted by the crises of the exile of the papacy in Avignon and the subsequent Great Schism. At the Council of Constance (1414-17) in particular the conflation of the two saints took on special relevance.²⁸

The link of the popes with Rome was the main justification for universal papal primacy because it was the city chosen by St Peter. That link, and therefore the claim to universality, had been undermined by the removal of the papacy to Avignon from 1309 to 1377 so papal authority was divided into two separate but inextricably linked facets to explain away the problem: they were *both* Vicar of Christ *and* Bishop of Rome. Both these relationships were construed as marriages – of Christ to his Church and of the pope to Rome – which were brought together and embodied by St Peter and his successors. The proponents of the councils, on the other hand, beginning in Pisa in 1409 and ending at Basle in 1445, depended on the separation of the universal from the Roman Church. Only in this way could councils be summoned by representatives of the Church but without papal sanction. Jaroslav Pelikan

²⁸ Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Paris: Desclée, 1960-1973), no.232, 5:376-98: ‘Nuptiae factae sunt’, 17 Jan 1417; no.281, 6:190-210: ‘De nuptiis Christi et Ecclesiae’.

contends that the issue in fact defines much of the fifteenth century because ‘The schism had undermined certainty about the credentials of the Roman pontiff’.²⁹

Jean Gerson (1363-1429) was one of the celebrities at the Council of Constance. As well as becoming Chancellor of the University of Paris at the age of 32 in 1395, he was ‘adviser to kings and princes, maker of popes, renowned international preacher, devotional writer, [and] unquestionably the most recognizable intellectual figure of his age’ whose works were among the most prevalent of his day.³⁰ He put complex ideas into evocative terms that the laity would understand, encouraging bishops to make the texts of his sermons available to their clergy so that they could preach good sermons read from his texts instead of their own mediocre efforts. Gerson’s theology continued to exercise considerable influence among both laity and clergy in the century after the Council of Constance, ‘a period characterized with only slight exaggeration as ‘le siècle de Gerson’’.³¹ If, as Gilbert Ouy has pondered, printing technology had been available to him, his writings would have been even more of a sensation than they were.³² As it was, Gerson’s works circulated in manuscript copies and, as soon as the technology was available, they were quickly in print – six editions in the fifteenth century

²⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. 1 *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300–1700)* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 111, 117 (and chapter 2 *passim*).

³⁰ Brian Patrick McGuire, ed. and trans, *Jean Gerson Early Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 10-12.

³¹ Mark Burrows, ‘Jean Gerson after Constance: ‘Via Media Et Regia’ as a Revision of the Ockhamist Covenant’, *Church History*, 59/4 (1990), 467; quote from Etienne Delaruelle, *L’église au temps du Grand Schisme et de la crise conciliaire*, 14/2, *Histoire de l’église depuis les origines jusqu’à nos jours*, ed. A. Fliche and V. Martin (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1964), 837.

³² Gilbert Ouy, ‘Discovering Gerson the Humanist’, *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), 132.

alone.³³ They received renewed momentum in 1488 when they were translated into German and published at Strasburg. From there they quickly travelled to Italy where Gerson's ideas about St Joseph were incorporated into sermons of the Franciscan Bernardino de'Busi, which were in turn published in 1493.³⁴ 'Thus', explains Catherine Brown in her book on Gerson's sermons, 'an analysis of Gerson's pastoral teaching is an analysis of what a fair number of the laity, in France and Germany at least, were hearing and reading in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.'³⁵

When he arrived at Constance in 1414 Gerson was already an enthusiastic proponent of the cult of St Joseph.³⁶ At the council his campaign took on a more urgent character for the important reason that Joseph was for him a model for a new, solitary, obedient pope. Just before the Council of Constance opened, on 17 August 1413, Gerson had written an open letter addressed to 'all churches and especially those dedicated to Our Lady' on the cult of St Joseph.³⁷ In it he presented the case for a feast of the Marriage of the Virgin to celebrate her earthly spouse. Then on 26 September 1413 he made the case again in another long text.³⁸ Two months later, on 23 November, Gerson wrote to the Duke of Berry asking for a feast of

³³ Daniel Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity Before Print* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 5-6; E. Jane Dempsey Douglass, *Justification in Late Medieval Preaching: A Study of John Geiler of Keisersberg* (E.J.Brill: Leiden, 1989), 40-42.

³⁴ Stefaniak, *Doni Tondo*, 38-9; Douglass, *Ibid.*, 40-1, 199

³⁵ D. Catherine Brown, *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-2.

³⁶ Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 235-39.

³⁷ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no. 405, 8:61-66.

³⁸ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no.296, 7:11-15.

Mary and Joseph at Notre Dame in Paris.³⁹ At the end of the same year he brought his arguments together in the *Considerations on St Joseph*.⁴⁰ During the Council of Constance, between 1414 and 1417, he was composing the three thousand line poem, *Josephina*, which tells the story of Christ's infancy from Joseph's point of view.⁴¹ Gerson's campaign reached a climax on 8 September 1416, the feast of the Birth of the Virgin, when he addressed the Council of Constance in a long sermon on the day's Gospel, the genealogy of Christ – 'Jacob autem genuit Joseph...' (Matthew 1:16).⁴² He returned to the subject of Joseph again, in January 1417, this time in a more general work about the marriage of Christ to his church.⁴³ Gerson's sermon for the Birth of the Virgin, delivered 8 September 1416, took place in the midst of violent discussion about the plenitude of power in the Church and whether it resides in a council or in the pope as Bishop of Rome.⁴⁴ In a sermon preached only two days before, Peter of Pulkau, delegate of the University of Vienna, had argued that Rome no longer deserved the papacy: the clergy there would never reform their dissolute lives; they were more interested in looking after their concubines, selling justice to the highest bidder and, worst of all, wearing indecent habits which showed off their legs.⁴⁵ Gerson's sermon repeated his arguments for Joseph's significance that he has set out in France but with a new spin. He

³⁹ Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no 33, 2:155-57; Max Lieberman, 'Lettre de Gerson au duc de Berry', *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, 9/2 (1961), 202-5, 236.

⁴⁰ The chronology is Lieberman's: Max Lieberman, 'Chronologie gersonienne. IV. Gerson poète', *Romania*, 76 (1955), 327; Gerson, 'Considerations sur Saint Joseph', *Oeuvres*, no. 300, 7.1:63-94.

⁴¹ Gerson, 'Josephina', in *Oeuvres complètes*, no.138, 4:31-100.

⁴² Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no.232, 5:344-62.

⁴³ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no.281, 6:195, 196.

⁴⁴ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no.232, 5:344-62; Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles d'après Les Documents Originaux* (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1916), 7/1:415-6.

⁴⁵ Hefele, *Ibid.*, 415.

finished his sermon with an intercession focusing his audience's minds on the most pressing issue of the time – the end of the schism - using Joseph, whose same virtues he had just finished extolling, as a model for a single pope to lead the universal Church: 'Let the church be delivered to a unique man, true and firm, the Highest High Priest pledged to her in place of Christ.'⁴⁶ (Bernardino de' Busti 'faithfully transmitted' the sermon and its intercession in his *Mariale* of 1493.)⁴⁷ In January 1417 in his tract on *The marriage of Christ and Church*, Gerson restated the point: just as Joseph, and later John the Evangelist cared for Mary, his mother, so Jesus was spouse of the Church and Peter his delegated custodian.⁴⁸

When Gerson's 1416 sermon was delivered there was one dissident pope left of the original three pretenders to the papal throne – Benedict XIII who was not deposed until 26 July 1417. John XXIII had been deposed on 29 May 1415 and Gregory XII had abdicated the papacy on 4 July 1415. Progress towards achieving reform and even a process for electing a single pontiff was proving frustratingly elusive. Only once all three were out of the way could the council proceed to elect a single, new pope (Martin V) who would represent the new unity of the Church. These events are the subject of a hiatus in the middle of Gerson's long poem,

⁴⁶ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no.323, 5:362: 'Sane quatenus meritis, et intercessione tanti tamque potentis et imperiosi quodammodo patroni apud sponsam suam, de qua natus est Jesus qui vocatur Christus, reddatur Ecclesia unico viro vero et certo, Summo Pontifici sponso suo vice Christi'.

⁴⁷ Bernardino de' Busti, 'Sermon 12', in Vives y Tuto, José Calasanz eds, *Summa Josephina ex Patribus, Doctoribus, Asceticis, et Poetis qui eximia dignitate S Joseph scripserunt* (Rome: Instituto Pio IX, 1907), 173; Stefaniak, *Tondo Doni*, 47.

⁴⁸ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no.281, 6:195: 'quod sponsus Ecclesiae Jesus dum commisit eam Pedro custodiendam, illum majori quoad hoc insignivit privilegio et auctoritate quam Joseph justum aut Joannem evangelistam dum ei in custodiae cura propriam commisit matrem'.

Josephina which he was writing during the Council, probably completing it late in 1417.⁴⁹ In the middle of the fifth chapter, which is an account of the marriage of Joseph and the Virgin, Gerson stops the narrative and stresses the allegorical significance of the biblical accounts for his own day ('Litera tale canit, cui concinit Allegoria').⁵⁰ He goes on to mark 26 July 1417 as the day when the triple portent – the three schismatic popes – was at last no more: 'One legitimate man remains', he rejoiced. 'Let him be made the betrothed and shepherd to the Church and let the whole world obey him.' This man is Joseph who he prays will honour and make sacrifices to his betrothed, the Virgin. In other words, Joseph is the archetype of the new solitary pope, a patient guardian and role model who will serve and protect the Church just as Joseph nurtured the Holy Family.⁵¹

Three important themes emerge from Gerson's writing as a whole which explain his actions at Constance. First of all, Gerson believed in reform by example: when he was briefly dean of

⁴⁹ Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, no.138, 4:62-3; for a useful outline of the poem see Giovanni Matteo Roccati, 'La Josephina di Jean Gerson (1418): un poema virgiliano di contenuto biblico', *Studi Francesi*, 121 (1997), 3-19. The passage discussed here is not given any attention by Roccati.

⁵⁰ Gerson, *Ibid.*: 'Litera tale canit, cui concinit Allegoria,/Non secus Ecclesiae, tu Papa daris vice Christi/
Sponsus pro Pastore pio violare pudicam,/Crede nefas, sed eam te custodire necesse est/Divina sub Lege datam,
vel cedere Sedi,/Scandala subjectis, vel schismata si status affert./Sensimus hoc hodie, tempusque locumque
notemus/Mille semel, centumque quarter, septemque decemque/Orbis in propriis Phaebus confecerat annos/
Bisque decem, bis terque dies peragrande leonis/Julius in signo dederat, tunc schismatis altos/Pestiferi, Petrus
de Luna cedere nolens,/Ejicitur Sede Papali voce sub una./Urbs dum Concilium retinet Constantia sanctum./
Balthasar ejectus fuerat, jam cesserat alter,/Triceps hoc monstrum fuit, ut sunt Cerberus hydra/Unum nulla modo
contentio rumpit ovile./Legimus, superest sponsus, Pastorque credetur/Unus in Ecclesia, cui totus pareat Orbis./
Virgo tuis fac hoc precibus, meritoque potenti,/Ipsa tuo celebres gratissima, spero, quotannis,/Fecundo prolis
cum virginitatis honore/Conjugio sponsoque Joseph sacrabit honores/Natali ne tuo sic olim octava dicata est?/
Hoc prior inspira tali nos munere dotes'.

⁵¹ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no.138, 4:62-63. Only Morrall has noticed the significance of this passage: John B. Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960), 14.

the cathedral chapter at Bruges he wrote that ‘it should be considered what good can be done ... solely by the example of life, without any words’.⁵² Secondly, he idealized the contemplative life of the silent watcher, exemplified by mystics such as Bernard of Clairvaux, which he promoted in many of his sermons, treatises and other works, among them *The Mountain of Contemplation*.⁵³ In the *Considerations on Saint Joseph* and elsewhere, Joseph is described as contemplative man of divine mysteries, vigorous and, most of all, of the utmost discretion.⁵⁴ If only the pope were to the Church as Joseph was to Mary, he prayed – quiet, obedient and willing to follow God’s will – all would be well. Thirdly, he believed in authority and hierarchy which incorporated the popes who embodied the unity of the Church: unity was his ultimate goal.

Gerson has been accused by modern scholars of losing sight of the urgent issues and opportunities of the conciliar reform by allowing himself to be distracted by his subjective passion for the cult of St Joseph as a surrogate for the father he had lost in infancy.⁵⁵

However, it would be wrong to identify him as a conciliarist keen to see an alternative to an oligarchical papacy. Instead his constant recourse to Joseph’s cult should be understood as his solution to the crisis: Gerson considered the pope as a father-figure for the Church, as head of the Christian family, like Joseph. The papacy should be honoured because it was given to the Church by Christ, but that did not mean that any immoral behavior should be tolerated and this was where the councils had a role to play. Despite it’s conciliar fervor, In the *De*

⁵² Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no.2, 2:20, letter to an unknown correspondent, Bruges 1400; McGuire ed, *Early Works*, 164-5; also Nancy McLoughlin, ‘Gerson as Preacher in the Conflict between Mendicants and Secular Priests’, *Companion*, 269.

⁵³ McGuire, *Early Works*, xiv; Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no. 297, 7:16-55.

⁵⁴ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, no.300, 7.1:73-4.

⁵⁵ Most notably McGuire, *Last Medieval Reformation*, 237-39.

potestate ecclesiastica which Gerson presented to the council on 6 February 1415 Gerson did not deny the pope as head of the Church and the pinnacle and origins of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and again used the prevalent marriage metaphor. Without the pope, the Church ‘could not be called the Church’. ‘We should call him father, honoring him as lord and head. But... we have been told that if the vicar grows cold and becomes an evil-doer ... so that he is incompetent to the needs of the spiritual children of the Church, such a one should not be thought a worthy spouse of the church or vicar of the spouse.’⁵⁶ While a council could advise and even judge a pope, it could not supplant the relationship that Christ had bestowed between Peter and the Church.⁵⁷ To Gerson it was the whole Church that mattered of which the papacy was admittedly its most important facet.

Gerson’s method was the venerable exegetical tradition of typological analysis, a method with ancient roots. In the fifth chapter of the poem, *Josephina* Gerson explicitly refers to the allegorical connotations of Matthew’s Gospel and immediately points to their contemporary significance: ‘No differently are you, father, given to the Church as a betrothed in Christ’s place as a dutiful shepherd.’⁵⁸ St Paul used parallels with Old Testament characters to prefigure the narrative of salvation: Moses’s leading the Israelites through the Red Sea, for example, prefigures baptism. These parallels, he explains, are ‘spiritually discerned’ and clear to those who have ‘the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 10: 14,16).⁵⁹ On this basis, as an exemplar for Peter, Joseph is problematic because he does not appear in the Old Testament but in the New.

⁵⁶ Gerson’s first published treatise on the Schism, in *Oeuvres* no 281, 6:196; John J. Ryan, *The Apostolic Conciliarism of Jean Gerson* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 59

⁵⁷ Francis Oakley, ‘Gerson as Conciliarist’, *Companion*, 199-201.

⁵⁸ See above, note 50.

⁵⁹ Christopher G. Hughes, ‘Art and Exegesis’, *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph, (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 176-7.

However, Joseph was understood as a bridge between Old and New: Peter John Olivi called him ‘the key to the Old Testament, in whom the dignity of the patriarchs and prophets attains its promised fruit.’⁶⁰ Similarly Bernardino of Siena explained that the Church had not so far been given Joseph his own feast day because, ‘He went down in Limbo and belongs to the Old Testament’.⁶¹

Typological exegesis suited Gerson’s intellectual and theological context. Connections between types were aspects of the important current of fourteenth and fifteenth century mysticism in which ‘the mystic finds his own identity by identifying with another’.⁶² Inspired by the English Franciscan, William of Ockham (1288-1347), theologians such as Gerson sought to explain the world through recourse to examples – unlike Scholasticism which instead preferred the abstract ideals that derived from Platonism. Thus the incarnation and story of salvation was made explicit through recourse to real, historical figures, rather than to abstract ideas or concepts. This mode also suited Gerson’s enthusiasm for communicating to the laity, by means of his sermons and open letters, complex ideas that were usually only to be found among university professors. Mark Burrows, in his study of *On the Consolation of Theology*, the treatise Gerson wrote in 1418 immediately after the Council of Constance, characterizes it as the mature distillation of Gerson’s ‘original blend of mysticism and nominalism’.⁶³ Therefore Gerson’s use of St Joseph as an exemplar is symptomatic of his broader concerns with the recovery of ‘the sense of divine immediacy’, to make tangible

⁶⁰ Catherine C. Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art. New Directions and Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph’s University Press, 2001), 47.

⁶¹ Bernardino of Siena, *Opera omnia*, vol.7, p.28; Lina Bolzoni, *La rete delle immagini: Predicazione in volgare dalle origini a Bernardino da Siena* (Guido Einaudi Editore, 2002), 205.

⁶² Henk W. van Os, ‘St Francis of Assisi as a Second Christ in Early Italian Painting’, *Simiolus*, 7 (1974), 115-117.

⁶³ Burrows, ‘Jean Gerson after Constance’, 481.

God's plan for his creation.⁶⁴ It would be going too far to call Joseph the proto-apostle or even proto-pope however. He is an exemplar or type on which the popes might model themselves. That said, an important element of the comparison, set in the narrative of the infancy of Christ, is Christ's adult charge to Peter: it subtly implies that his commission was part of God's plan from the start, that the popes too are there at the beginning, and therefore that their role is without question - the ultimate riposte to the conciliar challenge. In his promotion of the cult of St Joseph as a model for a new kind of pope to emulate, we see Gerson's reform of the Church at its most sensible, straightforward and elemental. It required an undeniably delicate touch, the comparison clearer in pictures than in words: 'works of art actively constructed exegetical meaning, rather than passively representing it'.⁶⁵

The Guelph Dimension

Gerson was not new in his conflation of Peter and Joseph - he was picking up on ideas and imagery that had been prevalent for at least a century - but he was undoubtedly its most influential protagonist. In Italian painting the common thread that perhaps explains the phenomenon detected here and its longevity, is allegiance to the Guelph party. Giotto, as in so many things an innovator, made the motif his own at the Arena Chapel. Giotto's own Guelph credentials have been well established.⁶⁶ Anti-Ghibelline imagery has also been detected in the frescoes of the Arena Chapel: according to recent studies the figure of bad justice, for

⁶⁴ Heiko Oberman, 'Some Notes on the Theology of Nominalism with Attention to its Relation to the Renaissance', *Harvard Theological Review*, 53 (1960), 61-2.

⁶⁵ Hughes, 'Art and Exegesis', 180.

⁶⁶ Robert Smith, 'Giotto: Artistic Realism, Political Realism' *Journal of Medieval History* 4 (1978), 267-84.

example, is represented as a Ghibelline.⁶⁷ Similarly, Perugia, Pinturicchio's hometown, was a Guelph stronghold, as was Florence where the Parte Guelfa was integral in civic government from the thirteenth century.

Factional allegiance, a subject which has been sidelined in the history of early modern Italian city states, has been put back into the complex equation of Italian civic identity by a number of recent studies. It is a notoriously difficult area to investigate because 'certain political practices or institutions can have an impact on fundamental political concepts even when they leave little or no trace in political theory'.⁶⁸ Serena Ferente is one of a number of younger Italian scholars who view partisanship as a constant, deeply embedded catalyst in early modern Italian society, not a nostalgic throwback periodically revived.⁶⁹ While the 'golden age' of the factions was over by the middle of the fourteenth centuries, Ferente and others argue Guelphism continued to inform allegiances at local, and occasionally peninsular, level right up until the period of the Italian Wars in the 1490s, when its last flowering occurred as a result of the anticipation of renewed communal independence and liberty promised by the French invasion.⁷⁰ Christine Shaw, in her recent study of the Orsini who were leaders of the Guelph party, bemoans the 'relative neglect of the Papal States by historians of Renaissance Italy' that has meant as a result little recognition of 'the importance of Guelph and Ghibelline

⁶⁷ Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart: Giotto, Enrico Scrovegni, and the Arena Chapel in Padua* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 88-90.

⁶⁸ Serena Ferente, 'Guelphs! Factions, Liberty and Sovereignty: Inquiries about the Quattrocento', *History of Political Thought*, 28 (2007), 583.

⁶⁹ Ferente, *Ibid.*, 571-598; Marco Gentile ed. *Guelfi e ghibellini nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Rome: Viella, 2005).

⁷⁰ Christine Shaw, *The Political Role of the Orsini Family from Sixtus IV to Clement VII. Barons and Factions in the Papal States*, *Nuovi studi storici* 73 (Rome, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2007); Ferente, *Ibid.*, 573-4.

factions' throughout much of central Italy.⁷¹ Right up to the fifteenth century, 'the Guelph side monopolized the flourishing anti-tyrannical polemic and tied it up with the older anti-imperial polemic of the *pars Ecclesie* (party of the Church)'.⁷² Redrafting the Guelph party statutes in Florence in the second decade of the fifteenth century, Leonardo Bruni declared that, 'The university of the Guelphs is connected in divine things with the Roman Church, in human things with liberty'.⁷³ Gerson's more accommodating pope would have particularly appealed within the context of these powerful values.

Significantly in this context, Ferente points to 'political keywords' that included non-verbal signs such as 'gestures, images or colours' that 'identified and rallied members of a political faction'.⁷⁴ It is my contention that paintings of the Holy Family in which St Peter and St Joseph are paralleled should be numbered among these signals. It would explain the preponderance of this type of Joseph in Florentine painting, important among them Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* (Fig. 10), where Guelph ideology continued to underpin civic values.⁷⁵ Indeed, the imagery's prevalence may explain why its significance has not been recognised before, perhaps not unlike the wearing of a blue tie by a Conservative politician in the United Kingdom today: one has to be conversant with current political media to pick up the signal. Images of the Holy Family were suited to domestic settings, whether houses,

⁷¹ Shaw, *Ibid.*, 125.

⁷² Ferente, *Ibid.*, 575, 576.

⁷³ Quoted in Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1955), 2: 446; Ferente, *Ibid.*, 590.

⁷⁴ Ferente, *Ibid.*, 573.

⁷⁵ Alison Brown, 'The Guelph Party in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The Transition from Communal to Medicean State', in *The Medici in Florence. The Exercise and Language of Power* (Florence and Perth: Italian Medieval and Renaissance Studies 3, The University of Western Australia, 1992), 103-11.

palaces or the residential quarters of convents, where they could communicate seamless layers of religious and secular values at a glance.

Such use of saints for political and factional ends did not go unnoticed. Preaching in Siena in 1427, Bernardino of Siena criticised those who even made the saints in heaven into Guelphs or Ghibellines, explicitly mentioning St John the Baptist who was claimed by both sides, and Louis of Toulouse who was presumed to be Guelph because he was a member of the French royal house.⁷⁶ He ridiculed some of the complex signs and symbols used by the factions – including the way garlic or bread or fruit could be cut or wine poured.⁷⁷ (It is interesting to note that in Siena, a predominantly Ghibelline city, representations of the Holy Family are relatively rare.) Bernardino also mentioned the factions' banners – the Guelph lily and Ghibelline eagle.⁷⁸ It is not difficult to find such symbols in Florence where the lily was adopted as the predominant civic emblem. Of course, the lily was also a symbol of Mary's purity and linked specifically with the Annunciation which was the first day of the Florentine year.⁷⁹ So Joseph protects Mary the lily and therefore the Guelphs, which, in turn, takes us back again to Peter's protection of Christ's Church.

⁷⁶ Bernardino da Siena, *Prediche volgari sul Campo di Siena (1427)*, ed. Carlo Delcorno, Milan, Rusconi, 1989, sermon 23, 1:675-6. See also Francesco Bruni, *La città divisa. Le parti e il bene comune da Dante a Guicciardini* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2003), 288; Cynthia Polecristi, *Preaching Peace in Renaissance Italy: Bernardino of Siena and his Audience* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2000).

⁷⁷ Polecristi, *Ibid.*, 217-8; Bernardino da Siena, *Ibid.*, sermon 23, 1:659, 675-6.

⁷⁸ Bernardino da Siena, *Ibid.*, sermon 16, 1:464

⁷⁹ Stefaniak, *Tondo Doni*, 22.

Conclusion

St Joseph was a relatively hollow saint, and, before his fifteenth-century renaissance, all but invisible in art as a holy figure. He is a character in someone else's story, without his own attributes distinct from those of Mary and the baby Jesus. His correlation with Peter, however, put him in the centre of the infancy of Christ and was a neat way to codify the protection of the Church by Christ's vicar, the pope. Later in the fifteenth century, as Catherine C. Wilson has shown, Joseph acquired his own more distinctive identity as protector of Italy, particularly in the context of the Italian Wars.⁸⁰ But it is as a type of Peter that he gets to this exalted point.

St Peter was one of the most commonly represented saints in late antique and medieval art. His relatively rare appearance in fifteenth century Italian painting seems surprising in comparison. That picture changes if his representation is integrated into that of the Holy Family. The dramatic events of the beginning of the fifteenth century which brought the papal schism to an end made a new kind of St Peter and a new kind of pope more urgent. His place as Christ's agent was given unequivocal validation through allegorical incorporation into the story of the Incarnation. Joseph's guardianship of the Holy Family equated with Peter's protection of the Church therefore tempers some of the most attractive and seemingly harmless of all Italian Renaissance paintings with a vital political energy that witnesses to the paradoxes and pressures of the times in which they were painted. It is a message that is more effective and immediate when represented by pictures rather than put into words, as this article undoubtedly demonstrates.

⁸⁰ Wilson, 'St Joseph as *Custos*', 92, 103.

Figures

Fig. 1 Robert Campin, *The Mérode Triptych*. c.1425. Oil on wood, Overall (open): 25 3/8 x 46 3/8 in. (64.5 x 117.8 cm) Central panel: 25 1/4 x 24 7/8 in. (64.1 x 63.2 cm) each wing: 25 3/8 x 10 3/4 in. (64.5 x 27.3 cm), New York, The Cloisters Collection, 1956 (56.70a-c) (Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY)

Fig. 2 Giotto, *Nativity*, c.1305, fresco, 200 x 185 cm, Padua, right wall, middle register of the Scrovegni (Arena) Chapel. (The Bridgeman Art Library)

Fig. 3 Giotto, *Last Supper*, c.1305, fresco, 200 x 185 cm, Padua, right wall, middle register of the Scrovegni (Arena) Chapel. (The Bridgeman Art Library)

Fig. 4 Master Bertram of Minden, *Rest on the Flight to Egypt*, 1379-83, tempera on panel, c. 60 x 130 cm, detail from the Grabow Altarpiece, Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle (The Bridgeman Art Library)

Fig. 5 Pinturicchio, *Holy Family*, 1490s, tempera on panel, 54.5 x 41cm (with original paper Mâché frame 123cm diameter). Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale (Lensini, Siena)

Fig. 6 Lorenzo Monaco, *The Flight into Egypt*, c.1405, tempera on poplar wood, 24 x 39 cm, Altenburg, Lindenau Museum (Bildarchiv Foto Marburg/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Fig. 7 Masaccio, *Baptism of the Neophytes*, 1424-5, fresco, 255 x 162 cm, Florence, Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine (The Bridgeman Art Library)

Fig. 8 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *The Adoration of the Magi*, 1488, tempera on panel, 285 x 240 cm, Florence, Museo Dell'Ospedale Degli Innocenti (The Bridgeman Art Library)

Fig. 9 Pinturicchio, *Adoration of the Child*, 1506-15. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena (Lensini, Siena)

Fig. 10 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Holy Family*, known also as the *Doni Tondo*, 1504, tempera on wood, 120 cm diameter, Florence, Uffizi Gallery (The Bridgeman Art Library)



Figure 2

Robert Campin (ca.1375/9-1444), *The Annunciation Triptych*. ca. 1425. Oil on wood, Overall (open): 25 3/8 x 46 3/8 in. (64.5 x 117.8 cm) Central panel: 25 1/4 x 24 7/8 in. (64.1 x 63.2 cm) each wing: 25 3/8 x 10 3/4 in. (64.5 x 27.3 cm). The Cloisters Collection, 1956 (56.70a-c). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY



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