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Receiving the Word in Image: Federico Zuccaro's *the Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets* (1565) and the Reception History of the Bible in the Counter-Reformation

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Abstract: The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets (1565) was an altarpiece created by Federico Zuccaro (1541–1609) for the Church of the Annunciation, Rome. It was the first image commissioned by the Order of the Jesuits, a movement involved in propagating the objectives of the Counter-Reformation Church. Altarpieces were particularly effective points of communication between the Catholic Church and the lay beholder, and used visual exegesis as a means to communicate appropriated receptions of biblical texts. The intimate connection that these objects have to their theological and political context marks them as significant moments of biblical reception, that have, up to this point, been overlooked by historians in the field. This article identifies the broader lacuna in scholarship surrounding the reception history of the Bible during the Counter-Reformation. Whilst this is due to a preference for studies of the Bible in the Protestant Reformation, the lack of scholarly investment poorly reflects the relevance of the Counter-Reformation period to the reception-historical methodology. The context prioritized the interpretation of the Bible through the lens of Church tradition, or in

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other words, the history of the Bible's reception. This affinity is echoed in the reception-historical approach found in contemporary biblical scholarship, creating a hermeneutical link between the two contexts. Visual culture was a valuable expression of Counter-Reformation rhetoric and visualized the mediation of biblical texts through Church tradition. This article uses Zuccaro's altarpiece as a tool to argue this hypothesis and postulate the intimate relationship maintained between texts and their reception in Counter-Reformation Catholicism.

Keywords: counter-reformation, biblical reception history, annunciation to Mary, altarpieces

1 Introduction

Federico Zuccaro (1541–1609) painted *The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets* in 1565 for the high altarpiece in the tribune vault of the Church of the Annunciation, Rome.¹ The artist created the image two years after the closing of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), a series of sessions that codified the strategy of the Catholic Church in response to the religious turbulence of the reformations of the sixteenth century. In the last of these sessions, the Council reaffirmed the essential use of sacred images after their criticism and subsequent decline in Protestantism.² The Council declared:

[I]mages of Christ, the Virgin Mother of God and the other saints should be set up and kept, particularly in churches, and that due honour and reverence is owed to them, not because some divinity or power is believed to lie in them [...] but because the honour showed to them is referred to the original which they represent: thus, through the images which we kiss and before which we uncover our heads and go down on our knees, we give adoration to Christ and veneration to the saints, whose likeness they bear. [...]

Bishops should teach with care that the faithful are instructed and strengthened by commemorating and frequently recalling the articles of our faith through the expression in pictures or other likenesses of the stories of the mysteries of our redemption.³

1 *The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets* will be shortened to *Annunciation* for the rest of the article.

2 On the debate of sacred images in the sixteenth century, see John Dillenberger, *Images and Relics: Theological Perceptions and Visual Images in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Bryan D. Mangrum and Giuseppe Scavizzi, eds. *A Reformation Debate: Karlstadt, Emser, and Eck on Sacred Images. Three Treatises on Translation* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1998); Sergiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts* (London: Routledge, 2013).

3 Council of Trent, Session 25, "On invocation, veneration and relics of the saints, and on sacred images, 3-4 December, 1563," in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Trent to Vatican II*, vol. 2, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 774–798.

Images were to be employed with the dual purpose of teaching and inciting devotion in the beholder. Of particular importance to this reform strategy was the redecoration of altarpieces, which functioned as “barometer[s]” of the changing religious climate.⁴ Often using an appropriated visual exegesis of biblical texts, these altarpieces were used by the Church to communicate their reform objectives to the lay beholder. The intimate connection that these altarpieces have to their context marks them as fascinating instances of visual biblical reception that have, up to this point, been left unexamined by historians in the field. This article will use Zuccaro’s fresco from the Church of the Annunciation to highlight altarpieces as a valuable expression of Counter-Reformation rhetoric, and in particular, of the intimate relationship between biblical texts and their reception in sixteenth-century Catholicism.

The *Annunciation* was one of the first altarpieces in Rome created after Trent’s ruling. The image has been discursively understudied, most likely due to its destruction in 1650, but the image is preserved in an engraved copy by Flemish engraver Cornelis Cort (1533–1578) (Figure 1). The copy of the image exhibits a theologically complex exegesis of the annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26–38) by its

Figure 1: Cornelis Cort after Federico Zuccaro, *The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets*, 1571, engraving, 48.1 × 68.0 cm. Wikimedia Commons. License: Public Domain.

4 Marcia B. Hall, *Renovation and Counter-Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), ix.

visual and textual reception of six additional biblical texts. These six motifs relate to prophecies in the Old Testament that foretell the narrative of the annunciation in the New Testament, thus constructing a visual exposition of a typological form of biblical interpretation; ‘typology’ being the hermeneutical concept that Old Testament prophecies anticipated New Testament events. Zuccaro’s altarpiece, copied by Cort, used a combination of visual and textual devices to communicate this specific form of biblical interpretation. For the biblical reception historian, not only does this image constitute a significant moment in the reception history of the biblical texts it represents, but it demonstrates the ability of pictorial representations of sacred subjects to identify specific methods of biblical interpretation and posit a visual formula for such methods.

The reception history of the Bible in the period known commonly as the Counter-Reformation is curiously lacking investigation despite its importance in the history of the Catholic Church and in the landscape of the European Reformations.⁵ The use and interpretation of the Bible in the late sixteenth-century Catholic context has been repeatedly overlooked due to the intimate relationship between the Bible and the Protestant Reformation, in which the object became the sole instrument of religious authority.⁶ This contrasted with the Catholic view of the union of scripture and tradition as sources of truth. The reading and interpretation of scripture in Catholicism was executed in conjunction with the co-equal authority of “Popes, Councils, Church Fathers or ancient philosophers.”⁷ The Bible was therefore mediated by the voices of its history of interpretation. The intention

5 This article uses the phrase ‘Counter-Reformation,’ as opposed to ‘Catholic Reformation’ or ‘post-Tridentine period,’ as it establishes a contextual link to the Protestant Reformation. On the debates on terminology, see Hubert Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?,” in *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. David M. Luecke (Oxford, 1999): 19–45; Ute Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalization,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, eds. Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen and Mary Laven (London: Ashgate, 2013): 33–54; John W. O’Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

6 See Robert Kolb et al. eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and Timothy J. Wengert, *Reading the Bible with Martin Luther* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013). See Robert Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); despite using the language of ‘tradition’ with ‘reception history,’ Evans makes scant reference to the Counter-Reformation in contrast to the Protestant Reformation. See Michael Lieb, Christopher Rowland, Emma Mason and Jonathan Roberts, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); the handbook makes fleeting reference to the Counter-Reformation, and even this is only in relation to Luther’s biblical reception (Peter Matheson, “Luther on Galatians,” 621–648).

7 Liam Jerrold Fraser, *Atheism, Fundamentalism and the Protestant Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 19.

the Counter-Reformation Church to use tradition as the lens through which it views the Bible marks it as a significant moment for reception-historical analysis. The period presents the opportunity for interdisciplinary investigation of a myriad of objects touched by biblical material and that purposefully hinged its interpretations on perpetuating traditions.⁸ A suitable place to begin analysis of this period is within the vast body of material and visual objects that drove its campaigns.⁹ It is, after all, these very objects that are being encouraged to be brought to the fore in reception-historical studies.¹⁰ In the context of the Counter-Reformation, these mediums disclose how the politicized and appropriated interpretation of biblical sources were disseminated in contemporary society. The altarpiece by Zuccaro is an object that did just this, providing its beholders with a method for biblical interpretation that was inherently related to Catholic rhetoric and the Bible's history of interpretation.

2 The Context of Federico Zuccaro's *the Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets* (1565)

Whilst this article must inevitably engage with the engraving by Cornelis Cort as it provides the means to view the visual content of Zuccaro's altarpiece, the focus of this analysis remains on the history of the original fresco. It is invested in delineating the exegesis as it was designed by Zuccaro, and relating it to the specific context of the Church building for which it was created. The article does not therefore deny that there were exegetical steps involved in Cort's translation of the fresco to the engraving, which may have culminated in deviations from the original.¹¹ It does, however, identify a lacuna in scholarship on both the aforementioned macro level in Counter-Reformation biblical reception history, and also on the micro level of this specific object. The study thus intends to uncover the full

⁸ See Roman Fischer and Jourden Travis Moger, "Johannes Dietenberger and his Counter-Reformation German Bible," *Journal of the Bible and its Reception* 3 (2) (2017): 279–302.

⁹ See Mary Laven, "Introduction" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* eds. Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen and Mary Laven (London: Ashgate, 2013): 1–12.

¹⁰ John Lyons, "Some Thoughts on Defining Reception History and the Future of Biblical Studies," *Bible and Interpretation* 8 (2015): 1–11; Jonathan Roberts, "Introduction" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* eds. Michael Lieb, Christopher Rowland, Emma Mason and Jonathan Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 1–10.

¹¹ For analysis on Cornelis Cort's engraved copy of *The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets*, see Walter S. Melion, "Introduction: Scriptural Authority in Word and Image," in *The Authority of the Word: Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400–1700*, eds. Celeste Brusati, Karl A.E. Enenkel and Walter S. Melion (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 1–48.

significance of this altarpiece as it stood as one of the first visual mouthpieces for the post-Trent Church.

The artist who created the *Annunciation*, Federico Zuccaro, occupied a major role in the reformation of Rome's visual culture in the sixteenth century. His fame became so great that modern biographer Julian Brooks has argued, "Federico was probably the most famous artist in Europe, traveling widely and working for Queen Elizabeth I in England, King Philip II in Spain, and almost every significant court and city in Italy."¹² The international reputation of his work is poorly reflected by the minor role his historiography plays in the modern study of Counter-Reformation art. The artist who has overshadowed much of the literature dedicated to the area is, of course, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610). In 1962, art historian Ellis Waterhouse remarked that "the innocent reader of art-historical literature could be forgiven for supposing that [Caravaggio's] place in the history of civilization lies somewhere in importance between Aristotle and Lenin."¹³ Today, in an age of 'Caravaggiomania,' this statement holds even more weight.¹⁴ While Caravaggio has become a household name, the majority of his contemporaries are familiar only to specialists.¹⁵ Federico Zuccaro is just one of the artists whose historiography has been affected by a lack of intentional study, which misrepresents the nature of his reputation. As well as being one of the most widely used painters in Rome and beyond in the decades after Trent, he was the founder and first director of the association of artists, the Accademia di San Luca, established in 1593.¹⁶ Thus his legacy perpetuated not only in his own paintings, but in the education of a rising generation of artists.

Born in Vado in 1541 in the Marche region of Italy, Zuccaro started his career at a young age as an assistant to his brother, Taddeo Zuccaro (1529–1566). At the age of 14, Taddeo had moved to Rome to progress his career and a young Federico joined him in 1550.¹⁷ After working under Taddeo for over a decade, in the 1560s Federico started to receive his own commissions across Italy, including the scenes

¹² Julian Brooks, *Taddeo and Federico Zuccaro: Artist-brothers in Renaissance Rome* (London: Getty, 2007), x.

¹³ Ellis Waterhouse, *Italian Baroque Painting* (London: Phaidon Press, 1962), 21.

¹⁴ Richard E. Spear, "Caravaggiomania," *Art in America*, accessed November 17, 2020, <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazines/caravaggiomania/>.

¹⁵ Andrea Lepage, "Art and the Counter-Reformation," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* eds. Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen and Mary Laven (London: Ashgate, 2013): 373–394; Mina Gregori, *The Age of Caravaggio* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 9.

¹⁶ Christopher Witcombe, "Gregory XIII and the Accademia di San Luca in Rome," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 54 (2009): 107–118.

¹⁷ Brooks, *Taddeo and Federico Zuccaro*, x.

from the life of Moses in the Vatican and frescoes in the Grimani Chapel in San Francesco della Vigna, Venice (Figure 2).¹⁸ The *Annunciation* for the new Jesuit Church in Rome was another major commission for the artist in this decade. The scale and purpose of the work would have been hugely significant in this early stage of Zuccaro's career, although little has been written about the commission or its importance. The image was the first painting commissioned by the newly founded Jesuit order that was led by Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). Formally established in 1540, the Order of the Jesuits has been heralded the “finest expression” of Counter-Reformation initiatives.¹⁹ A primary example of this is in their prioritization of the utility of the visual arts in the didactic and spiritual formation of the Church and its overseas mission, a position codified in the 25th session of the Council of Trent.²⁰ The most influential of the early Jesuit art in Rome was that which decorated the Jesuit collegiate institutions.²¹ Zuccaro's painting was one such image, contained in the Church of the Annunciation, which itself was contained in the Collegio Romano. This Jesuit college was opened in 1552 for the teaching of theology and philosophy, and soon after its opening received university status.²² The Church of the Annunciation, built for the use of the college's students, was “hopelessly undersized,” and featured an apse that held the *Annunciation* and four shallow side chapels on each side, in total filling a space of 74.25 ft. by 41.5 ft.²³ The replacement, the Church of Saint Ignatius, by comparison measured 300 ft. by 160 ft. The destruction of the Church of the Annunciation and the replacement of the vast Church of Saint Ignatius with its own complex visual scheme has overlooked the contextual importance of Zuccaro's altarpiece. The following analysis reclaims some of its significance, with particular emphasis on the painting's communication of typological biblical exegesis, which was a principal method used in Jesuit education in the Counter-Reformation.

18 James Mundy, “Additions to and Observations on Federico Zuccaro's Drawings from the Critical 1560s,” *Master Drawings* 43 (2) (2005): 160–85.

19 Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of the Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), n.p.

20 Gauvin Alexander Bailey, “‘Le Style Jésuit n'existe pas': Jesuit Corporate Culture and Visual Arts,” in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences and the Arts, 1540–1773* eds. John W. O'Malley, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven J. Harris and T. Frank Kennedy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999): 38–89.

21 Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome 1565–1610* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 107.

22 John W. O'Malley, “How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education,” in *The Jesuit Ration Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives* ed. Vincent J. Duminuco (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000): 56–74; Aldo Scaglione, *The Liberal Arts and the Jesuit College System* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1986), 81.

23 Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque*, 116.

Figure 2: Federico Zuccaro, *Resurrezione di Lazzaro*, 1561, fresco. Grimani Chapel in S. Francesco della Vigna, Venice. Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY 3.0.

3 Defining a Method for Analysis

In order to extrapolate the visual and textual pericopes found in Zuccaro's *Annunciation*, an appropriate methodology needs to be defined. The progress of reception history within biblical studies has naturally increased the remit of primary sources relevant to its scholars, thus requiring a breadth of interdisciplinary methodologies. For as the boundaries relating to the Bible and its reception widen, scholars are aware that the objects they are engaging with are often not considered within current biblical studies specialism.²⁴ The current dialogue between biblical scholars and members of other disciplines, both in the humanities and beyond, is therefore imperative.²⁵ In this instance, the primary sources are the visual images created by Zuccaro and Cort, objects that were formerly confined to the domain of

²⁴ Lyons, "Some Thoughts on Defining Reception History," 10. See Brennan Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

²⁵ See, for example, the multi-volume publication *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception (EBR)*, the series *Studies of the Bible and Its Reception (SBR)*, and other issues of the *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception (JBR)* (Berlin: De Gruyter); Emma England and William John Lyons eds., *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: T&T Clark, 2015); David J. A. Clines and J. Cheryl Exum eds., *Biblical Reception*, vols. 1–5 (London: Bloomsbury, 2012–2019).

art history.²⁶ The challenge therefore lies in exploring and employing an analytical framework that is compatible with the visual language of these objects. As this article specifically deals with images relating to sixteenth-century Catholicism, the methodology of Paolo Berdini in his analysis on the paintings of Italian artist Jacopo Bassano (1510–1592) proves exceptionally instructive. Inspired by his work, this article adopts a two-step methodology based around Berdini's terms 'textual expansion' and 'visual exegesis'.²⁷

In the extended introduction to his project, Berdini establishes a context for the Lutheran and Counter-Reformation debates regarding images, and addresses the difference in the groups' visual interpretations of biblical texts. Berdini writes in relation to the movement of Martin Luther (1483–1546) that, "[l]ike the word, the image had to be secured in its literality, precluded in its expansion, and politicized in its use."²⁸ In contrast, Berdini puts forward the following statement regarding sixteenth-century Italy: "Contrary to the case for Reformation Germany, visual culture in Italy was intended to play an important role in the expansion of the [biblical] text."²⁹ While Berdini stops at this point and uses these assessments solely within a discussion of different types of image, it can be argued that these different modes reflect opposing perspectives on the interpretation of the Bible.³⁰ The Lutheran prerogative of *sola scriptura*, a consistent feature of Protestant Reformation theology, drove the desire for "literality" of biblical texts and "preclusion" of their expansion in images.³¹ In contrast, at the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church emphasized the unity of scripture and tradition, decreeing, "these truths and rules are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, come down to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand."³² In the reformation of Catholicism's sacred images, the

26 Christopher J. Nygren, "Graphic Exegesis: Reflection on the Difficulty of Talking about Biblical Images, Pictures, and Texts," in *The Art of Visual Exegesis* eds. Vernon K. Robbins, Walter S. Melion and Roy R. Jeal (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature [SBL], 2017): 271–302.

27 Paolo Berdini, *The Religious Art of Jacopo Bassano: Painting as visual exegesis* (Ann Arbor: Umi Research Press, 1994), 18.

28 Berdini, *Jacopo Bassano*, 18.

29 Berdini, *Jacopo Bassano*, 18.

30 See Chloe Church, "Modes of visual biblical interpretation in the Lutheran and Counter-Reformations." (University of Birmingham: MA Thesis, 2017) [March 22, 2021] <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/7816/1/Church17MAbyRes.pdf>.

31 Dianne Bergant, "Catholic Biblical Interpretation" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation* ed. Stephen L. McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 86; Herbert D. Rix, *Martin Luther: The Man and the Image*. (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1983), 58.

32 Council of Trent, "The Fourth Session, 8th April 1546: 'Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures,'" 18.

unity of scripture and tradition encouraged the expansion of biblical texts to incorporate elements of Church tradition. The history of the Bible's interpretation was used as an authority on the visualization of sacred subjects. Berdini's use of the language of "textual expansion" in relation to Counter-Reformation paintings therefore forms the first step in the analysis. In using this paradigm, step one forms an assessment of how the central narrative of the annunciation to Mary was expanded to not only incorporate iconographic details belonging to Catholic tradition, but also to incorporate six additional biblical texts.

The second step in the analysis centers on Berdini's phrase "visual exegesis," which summarizes his claim that "[p]ainting visualizes a reading and not a text, for the relationship between a text and its visualization has to take into account the circumstances under which that text is read."³³ Visual exegesis emphasizes the interpretative nature of a biblical image and implies the series of exegetical decisions that are involved in its creation. This has been received and incorporated in modern reception-historical scholarship.³⁴ Martin O'Kane, for example, used Berdini's concept of visual exegesis alongside Hans-Georg Gadamer's influential '*Wirkungsgeschichte*' (history of interpretation) to postulate how images represented their contextualized interpretations of biblical subjects in such a way that they could not be detached from the cultural conditions of their creation.³⁵ In a similar way, Natasha O'Hear uses the same language to explore the reception of the book of Revelation in the visual arts, writing:

[A]n intimate understanding of a work of art and its immediate context in terms of sources and artistic and exegetical inspiration, as well as its intended function and reception, are all necessary for a full understanding of both the hermeneutical strategies at work within the image, as well as how it functions as a piece of visual exegesis.³⁶

Perpetuating Berdini's trajectory, O'Hear identifies biblical images as conceptualized through an exegetical process. O'Hear situates artists as decision-makers who possess the freedom to *interpret* a biblical narrative, not merely represent it in

³³ Berdini, *Jacopo Bassano*, 5.

³⁴ See Vernon K. Robbins, Walter S. Melion and Roy R. Jeal, eds., *The Art of Visual Exegesis: Rhetoric, Texts, Images* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017).

³⁵ Martin O'Kane, "The Artist as Reader of the Bible. Visual Exegesis and the Adoration of the Magi," *Biblical Interpretation* 13 (4) (2005): 337–373; Martin O'Kane, "*Wirkungsgeschichte* and Visual Exegesis: The Contribution of Hans-Georg Gadamer" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33 (2) (2010): 147–159.

³⁶ Natasha F.H. O'Hear, *Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art: A Case Study in Visual Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8. See Natasha O'Hear and Anthony O'Hear, *Picturing the Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation in the Arts Over Two Millennia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

its pictorial form. This is particularly meaningful within the framework of this paper, which examines an object of an artistic culture that valued the expansion of biblical texts to incorporate additional details and iconographies associated with their traditions. It is in this second step of the analysis of Zuccaro's image that it will be possible to delineate the decision-making and relate it to the function of the altarpiece, its location, and its relationship to Counter-Reformation biblical exegesis.

Due to the destruction of the Church of the Annunciation in the seventeenth century, this analysis cannot rely on Zuccaro's *Annunciation* as its primary visual source. Instead, it uses an engraved copy by Cornelis Cort, created between five and 10 years after the altarpiece's completion. Cort was a Dutch engraver and etcher who moved to Italy in the late stages of his career and became highly influential in Rome, where he founded an engraving school.³⁷ By the end of the sixteenth century, this city had become the center for printmaking in Italy, and Cort supervised the production of a huge number of engraved copies of Italy's great paintings.³⁸ During his time in Italy, Cort maintained particularly close connections to Zuccaro, and to Tiziano Vecelli (Titian) (1488–1576) in Venice, for whom he created a series of engravings, including an image of Titian's *Annunciation* for the San Salvatore Church (Figures 3 and 4).³⁹ The comparison between the painting and Cort's engraving indicates the different aesthetic principles of the two modes of representation. The painting is characteristic of Titian's late Venetian manner, with its flurried, imprecise brushstrokes emphasizing color and tonality over exact form.⁴⁰ Contrastingly, Cort's engraving of Titian's *Annunciation* follows a "precise linear ductus and a more legible pictorial structure."⁴¹ When approaching Cort's engraving of Zuccaro's *Annunciation*, the same differences are anticipated and worth considering. Etched mark-making produces distinct and definite lines that

37 Ruth S. Noyes, "'One of those Lutherans we used to burn in Campo de' Fiori': Engraving Sublimated Suffering in Counter-Reformation Rome," in *Visualizing Sensuous Suffering and Affective Pain in Early Modern Europe and the Spanish Americas* eds. Heather Graham and Lauren G. Kilroy-Ewbank (Leiden: Brill, 2018): 116–165; David Rosand, "Titian's Light as Form and Symbol," *The Art Bulletin* 57 (1) (1975): 58–64; Arthur Mayger Hind, *A History of Engraving & Etching From the 15th Century to the Year 1914* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), 119–120.

38 Gert Jan van der Sman, "Dutch and Flemish Printmakers in Rome 1565–1600," *Print Quarterly* 22 (3) (2005): 251–264.

39 Richard G. Parker, "Academy of Fine Arts: Print from a copper engraving, 1578, by Cornelius Cort after a drawing by Jan Van Der Straet, 1573," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 38 (1) (1983): 76–77.

40 Stephen J. Campbell, *The Endless Periphery: Toward a Geopolitics of Art in Lorenzo Lotto's Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 265; Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), 162.

41 Campbell, *The Endless Periphery*, 265.

Figure 3: Titian, *The Annunciation*, 1564, oil on canvas, 410 × 240 cm. San Salvador, Venice. Wikimedia Commons. License: Public Domain.

are successful in defining the overall composition of the original, but simultaneously limited in their ability to convey the subtlety of painted movements.

For this analysis, the inherent limitations of engraved reproductions of paintings is not insurmountable, as the engraved copy retains the exegetical decisions relating to the biblical texts and their visual reception that are the primary stimuli forming this analysis.⁴² Additionally, Cort's engraving is corroborated by the textual description of the original image by painter, architect and writer, Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574): “[Zuccaro] made a choir of many angels and various

⁴² It is, however, worth considering that there may be details added to the composition in Cort's engraving, particularly the textual references situated on the periphery of the central image, see Melion, “Introduction: Scriptural Authority in Word and Image,” 6–22. Vasari quote cited on p.102.

Figure 4: Cornelis Cort after Titian, *The Annunciation*, 1566, engraving, 41.1 × 27.8 cm. Wikimedia Commons. License: Public Domain.

splendours, with God the Father who sends the Holy Spirit above the Madonna, while she is given the annunciation by the Angel Gabriel, and placed in the middle of six prophets, larger than life and very beautiful.”⁴³ Although but a brief description, Vasari constructs the same type of composition, thus validating Zuccaro’s image engraved by Cort.

⁴³ Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de’ Piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori e Architetti* (Florence: Sansoni, 1881), 102, trans. Gauvin A. Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome 1565–1610* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 116.

4 Step 1: Identifying Textual Expansion

Amidst the layers of visual and textual motifs contained in Cort's copy of Zuccaro's altarpiece lies the epicenter of the pictorial narrative: the annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26–38). The text of the biblical account reads:

And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth,

To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found Grace with God.

Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever.

And of his kingdom there shall be no end.

And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man?

And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren:

Because no word shall be impossible with God.

And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.⁴⁴

44 All translations use the Douay Rheims translation of the Bible, unless stated otherwise.

The event that is recorded in Luke's gospel constructs a spoken dialogue between two individuals, with limited reference to character, setting or gestural movement. Visual interpreters of the annunciation text, like Federico Zuccaro, are faced with the challenge of communicating a fundamentally verbal text within visual parameters. Any exegesis that emerges from this process therefore experiences a degree of textual expansion, in order for the narrative to make visual sense.⁴⁵ Art historian Richard Viladesau writes, "[t]he primary visual symbol of the Annunciation is a portrayed dialogue: a gesture of speech by the angel and a gesture of response by Mary."⁴⁶ Due to the absence of physical descriptions, the gestural responses are invariably a task for textual expansion. Yet in the case of Counter-Reformation images, such as Zuccaro's, it has already been identified that textual expansion was not only a necessity for these objects, but an objective. The process allowed biblical narratives to be expanded in order to incorporate elements of Catholic tradition, which was a defining feature of Counter-Reformation biblical interpretation compared to that of the Protestant Reformation. Zuccaro's interpretation is indicative of this very practice. The annunciation narrative has been expanded drastically, and in the process, has assimilated high levels of extraneous details both from scripture and tradition.

The protagonists of the focal biblical narrative, the Virgin Mary and the angel Gabriel, are located in the center of the image on the bottom tier of figures (Figure 5). To the left of these central figures is the Virgin Mary, who kneels behind a lectern with an open book. This detail in itself draws on the tradition that Mary was a reader, which originated from the fourth century in apocryphal traditions and saw considerable development in the medieval period in correlation with a growth in female readers.⁴⁷ By the late sixteenth century when Zuccaro was working, the reading Mary had become a hallmark in pictorial representations of the figure. In a similar way, Mary's posture in Zuccaro's painting, arms folded across her chest, was commonly used as a gestural representation of her humility and subservience.⁴⁸ From Cort's engraving, we can identify that Mary is dressed in flowing garments that wrap around her face and body. Above her head is a space that intimates a holy nimbus. Opposite the Virgin Mary is the angel Gabriel who kneels facing her, gesturing upwards to the source of heavenly light above them. In his left hand, Gabriel holds a large stem of lilies. This is an exceptionally common

45 Berdini, *The Religious Art of Jacopo Bassano*, 17–19.

46 Richard R. Viladesau. "The Annunciation: VI. Visual Arts." *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009) 70–76.

47 Gary Waller, *A Cultural Study of Mary and the Annunciation: From Luke to the Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2015), 81.

48 Giovanni Bonifacio, *L'Arte de' Cenni* (Vincenza: Appresso Francesco Grossi, 1616), 284.

Figure 5: Cort after Zuccaro, *The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets*, 1571. Detail of Virgin Mary and Angel Gabriel, adapted from Figure 1.

symbolic element of annunciation visualizations during the Renaissance and Baroque periods and one borne of an entirely non-canonical tradition. The lily, as a cultural representation of “purity, chastity, and innocence”, had come to be considered as the flower of the Virgin, and its frequent use in annunciation artworks meant that it also yielded an intimate connection to the Angel Gabriel who presents it.⁴⁹

Zuccaro’s interpretation of the annunciation narrative as told in this small portion of the image uses a considerable degree of textual expansion through its incorporation of a range of iconographic details built by Catholic tradition. On the high level of extraneous imagery frequently attached to this type of biblical narrative, Marina Warner writes, “[i]t requires a herculean effort of will to read Luke’s infancy Gospel and blot from the imagination all the paintings and sculptures, carols and hymns and stories that add to Luke’s spare meditation.”⁵⁰ Textual expansion has played a significant role in the reception history of Luke’s annunciation narrative, and Zuccaro’s fresco is no exception in its perpetuation of popular iconographic trends. Yet these details almost go unnoticed in the multitude of

⁴⁹ Farrin Chwalkowski, *Symbols in Arts, Religion and Culture: The Soul of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 257.

⁵⁰ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 13–14.

figures who crowd the scene. An early modern reception of Cort's engraving of Zuccaro's altarpiece is found in the writings of English artist Jonathan Richardson (1667–1745). He writes that “the Angel, and Virgin have nothing particularly remarkable; but Above is God the Father, and the Holy Dove with a Vast Heaven where there are Innumerable Angels Adoring, Rejoicing.”⁵¹ Richardson perceives that the one-on-one annunciation dialogue in the bottom tier of the image is lost in the midst of the distracting splendor contained in the upper portion (see Figure 6). The hoard of heavenly beings are turned inwards, gravitating towards the center of the upper semi-circle. A dense group of angels kneeling on clouds create a clear divide between the domed area and the rest of the image, marking the heavenly and earthly spheres. The angels in this scene are varied and independent, each initiating an individual response to the events they are witnessing; some (such as the central angel to the left of the dove) seem to look down on the narrative unfolding below, others (such as the angel on the right side playing a stringed instrument) look worshipfully towards God the Father, who is stationed at the top

Figure 6: Cort after Zuccaro, *The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets*, 1571. Detail of God the Father with angels, adapted from Figure 1.

⁵¹ Jonathan Richardson, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (London: A & C Black, 1725), 255; Lydia Hamlett, “The Longinian Sublime, Effect and Affect in ‘Baroque’ British Visual Culture” in *Translations of the Sublime: The Early Modern Reception and Dissemination of Longinus’ Peri Hupsous in Rhetoric, the Visual Arts, Architecture and the Theatre* eds. Caroline van Eck, Stijn Bussels, Maarten Delbeke and Jürgen Pieters (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 187–220.

and center of the dome. He holds an orb in his left hand, and lifts his right hand up towards the sky. The gesture he executes could be interpreted in various ways; the hand may be inviting the observer to participate in the witness of the angels who surround him. Alternatively, as Vasari suggested in his interpretation, his gesture may signal to the sending out of the Holy Spirit, which is visualized directly below him as a dove. These details in the upper space evidence a high level of textual expansion, as the appearance of additional angels, God the Father, and the dove are absent in the biblical text of the annunciation. Despite their lack of canonical justification, these details were common motifs in Counter-Reformation annunciations due to the culture's increased emphasis on cultivating spiritual experiences through visual imagery.⁵²

As Jonathan Richardson observed in his reception of Cort's engraving, the textual expansion of the upper portion of the fresco reduces the impact of the primary visualization of the annunciation beneath it. A similar effect is created by the six figures who sit alongside the Virgin Mary and the angel Gabriel in the earthly space (see Figures 7 and 8). The figures are organized into two groups: one to the left of the Virgin Mary and one to the right of the angel Gabriel. The groups consist of three men who each hold a large plaque with inscribed text. Guided by these individual texts, it is made clear that these figures represent different prophets from the Old Testament. From the left, these figures and their accompanying Latin texts are:

- (1) Moses, Deuteronomy 18:15, "The Lord your God with raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren,"
- (2) Isaiah, Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son;"
- (3) David, Psalm 131:11, "of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne;"
- (4) Solomon, Song of Solomon 5:1, "Let my beloved come into his garden;"
- (5) Jeremiah, Jeremiah 31:22, "For the Lord has created a new thing on the earth: a woman encompasses a man",

and finally, on the far right,

- (6) Haggai, Haggai 2:7–8, "Yet one little while [...] and the desired of all nations shall come forth."⁵³

Unlike the angels who look intently towards either God the Father or the annunciation event itself, all but two of the prophets gaze towards the beholder, and most indicate either towards themselves or their texts. Through their gestures, the

⁵² Richard R. Viladesau. "The Annunciation: VI. Visual Arts." *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, vol. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 70–76; James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (London: Routledge, 2018), 20; Muir Wright, *Sacred Distance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 72.

⁵³ Translation of biblical texts from Latin is from Melion, "Introduction: Scriptural Authority in Word and Image," 6–22.

Figure 7: Cort after Zuccaro, *The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets*, 1571. Detail of Moses, Isaiah and David, adapted from Figure 1.

figures function as commentators to the narrative, inviting the beholder to read and interpret the pictorial narrative through their direction.⁵⁴ The second step in the analysis will use these six prophets, or commentators, to explore the purpose of Zuccaro's visual exegesis and his method of biblical interpretation.

5 Step 2: Understanding Zuccaro's Visual Exegesis in Context

Having evaluated the major components of Zuccaro's *Annunciation* through Cort's engraving, it is clear that the image contains high levels of textual expansion. The

⁵⁴ In his formative work on paintings of *historia*, Leon Battista Alberti's (1404–1472) *On Painting* (1435) argues that a commentator-type character is helpful for encouraging the appropriate interpretation of the image from the beholder; "It seems opportune then that in the *historia* there is someone who informs the spectators of the things that unfold; or invites with the hand to show; or threatens with sever face and turbid eyes not to approach there." See Rocco Sinisgalli, ed. and trans., *Leon Battista Alberti: On Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 63.

Figure 8: Cort after Zuccaro, *The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets*, 1571. Detail of Solomon, Jeremiah and Haggai, adapted from Figure 1.

primary details that help to decipher the biblical methodology propagated in the image are the six prophets, who establish Zuccaro's textual expansion as indicative of a typological form of visual exegesis. Typology focusses on "the connections between persons, events, or objects in the Old Testament, and persons, events, or objects in the New Testament."⁵⁵ While typological exegesis was not an invention of the Counter-Reformation, nor did it mark a distinguishing feature from Protestant ideology, it certainly experienced a revival with a Catholic context.⁵⁶ It is

⁵⁵ Duncan S. Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 86.

⁵⁶ Anna C. Knaap, "Meditation, Ministry, and Visual Rhetoric in Peter Paul Ruben's Program for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* eds. John W. O'Malley, Gauvin A. Bailey, Steven J. Harris and T. Frank Kennedy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006): 157–181. On Protestant Reformation and typology, see Femke Molekamp, *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England: Religious Reading and Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Paul J. Korshin, *Typologies in England, 1650–1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

promoted by the fourth session of the Council of Trent in an address of the issue of biblical canon and interpretation:

The holy ecumenical and general council of Trent, lawfully assembled in the holy Spirit, with the same three legates of the apostolic see presiding, keeps ever before its eyes this purpose: that the purity of the gospel, purged of all errors, may be preserved in the Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first proclaimed with his own lips this gospel, which had in the past been promised by the prophets in the sacred scriptures; then he bade it be preached to every creature through his apostles as the source of the whole truth of salvation and rule of conduct.⁵⁷

The Council of Trent affirms that the gospel of Jesus Christ “had in the past been promised by the prophets in the sacred scripture,” thence underscoring the Catholic Church’s use of typological biblical exegesis. Later on in the same text, it states that the Church, “receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety, and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament – seeing that one God is the author of both.”⁵⁸ There is the understanding of unity and continuation from the Old Testament into the New Testament. Both bodies of text are rededicated as equally important, but it is clear that the Council believed the prophecies of the Old Testament looked forward to the New Testament for their fulfilment. This view set the standard for the method of Counter-Reformation biblical interpretation, and permeated into the treatment of biblical texts in the visual arts.⁵⁹ The Jesuits clung to this method with particular intensity, using the idea of “type” and “antitype” to formulate the way the Old Testament and New Testament interacted.⁶⁰ This is evidenced in Zuccaro’s fresco in the Jesuit motherhouse in Rome, where the presence of Old Testament prophecies indicated their fulfilment in New Testament narrative.

The specific event(s) that these six figures and their corresponding texts foretell is the annunciation to Mary, or to use its other name in Catholic ideology, the incarnation: the central mystery of the Catholic faith and the event in which God became man in the person of Jesus Christ.⁶¹ In continuation of Catholic tradition, the Counter-Reformers understood that these two concepts,

57 Council of Trent, Session 4, “First decree: acceptance of the sacred books and apostolic traditions, 8 April, 1546,” in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Trent to Vatican II*, vol. 2, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990): 663–665.

58 Council of Trent, “The Fourth Session,” 17.

59 Knaap, “Meditation, Ministry, and Visual Rhetoric,” 161.

60 Anna C. Knaap, “Seeing in sequence: Peter Paul Rubens’ ceiling cycle at the Jesuit Church in Antwerp,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 55 (2004): 155–195.

61 Bette Talvacchia, “The Word Made Flesh: Spiritual Subjects and Carnal Depictions in Renaissance Art,” in *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church*, eds. Marcia B. Hall and Tracy E. Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 49–73.

annunciation and incarnation, were interlocked. The annunciation to Mary in Luke 1:26–38 was the narrative expression of the incarnation doctrine formed in the language of John 1:14, “the Word was made flesh.”⁶² The *Tridentine Catechism*, a book published at the closing of the Council of Trent states, “[b]ut what surpasses the order of nature and human comprehension is, that as soon as the Blessed Virgin assented to the announcement of the Angel in these words, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word,’ the most sacred body of Christ was immediately formed.”⁶³ At the point in which the Virgin Mary proclaimed herself to be the “handmaid of the Lord” in Luke 1:38, the body of Christ was formed and the incarnation was in effect. The Old Testament prophecies cited in Zuccaro’s image are thus viewing the annunciation through the incarnational framework professed in Catholic exegesis.

Regarding the motivations behind Zuccaro’s decision to cite these six specific prophecies, it has been identified that the *Glossa Ordinaria* formed the primary source of his inspiration.⁶⁴ The *Glossa Ordinaria* was a full Latin Bible with accompanying “‘ordinary gloss,’ that is, an accepted gloss – marginal and inter-linear – on the Latin text.”⁶⁵ This text was a compilation of the biblical exegesis of Church fathers and early medieval theologians, and had been in production for several centuries before it was published at the end of the fifteenth century.⁶⁶ A central characteristic of the *Glossa* was typology, which in practice looked like the cross-referencing of New Testament texts to Old Testament texts to create a sense of fulfilment and succession in Christian narratives. The reception of this textual object in Zuccaro’s altarpiece is particularly plausible given that it had a significant afterlife during the Counter-Reformation when it was reprinted and put to use as an intentionally polemical object.⁶⁷ The nature of the text promoted the unity of Scripture and tradition, “[t]he text of scripture lay embedded in its own hermeneutical web in such a way that the words of the biblical authors were in practice not distinguished from the history of their interpretation.”⁶⁸ In the face of

⁶² Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 82.

⁶³ Article III, “Who was Conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary,” *Tridentine Catechism of the Holy Catholic Church*, trans. John A. McHugh (1923), n.p., accessed April 28, 2020, <http://www.angelfire.com/art/cactussong/TridentineCatechism.htm>.

⁶⁴ Melion, “Introduction: Scriptural Authority in Word and Image,” 13.

⁶⁵ David A. Solomon, *An Introduction to the ‘Glossa Ordinaria’ as Medieval Hypertext* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 1.

⁶⁶ Knaap, “Seeing in Sequence,” 155.

⁶⁷ Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 238; Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 4.

⁶⁸ Harrison, *The Bible*, 93.

Protestant challenge that centered on an unmediated revelation of Scripture itself, the *Glossa* maintained that the authority of interpretation lay in the tradition of the Church. The text had long been the most formative typological text in Catholicism and was used in issues of interpretation as a way of ascertaining the established exegetical opinion of the Church.⁶⁹ In Zuccaro's image, based on the exegesis found in the *Glossa*, the reader of the image enters into the annunciation narrative through the lens of the prophecies of the earlier biblical figures. Each textual and visual reference does this in its own way, through its own specific biblical reception.

Working through the prophets in the order of left to right as seen in Cort's copy of the altarpiece, Moses' prophecy – "The Lord your God with raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren" – is a reference to both himself and Christ. His self-referential indication towards his breast, whilst positioning the plaque towards the Virgin Mary who was to bear Christ, demonstrates a continuation of Moses' ministry into that of Christ.⁷⁰ The typological relationship between Moses and Christ had been a prominent theme in Rome, evidenced in the decorations of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican, from earlier in the century. In the chapel, the visual theological scheme is the mirroring of Moses' life to Christ's on the opposing north and south walls.⁷¹ These paintings demonstrate the response of the Church to the Hebrew Scriptures in the religiously turbulent years of the early sixteenth century. The idealization of the New Testament as revelation of earlier prophecies, particularly those concerned with Moses, continued to be the most prominent artistic use for these Old Testament texts in the Counter-Reformation, as demonstrated in Zuccaro's fresco.⁷² Moving to the right of the image, we find the Isaiah 7:14 text, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son." This is perhaps the most common typological interpretation of the annunciation since the time of the early Church fathers, and features in textual and visual objects of the Counter-Reformation period. A particularly significant moment in this text's reception in a painted annunciation is found in Durante Alberti's (1538–1613) *Annunciation* at the Santa Maria ai Monti in Rome (Figure 9). It was contracted by the nephew of Andrea del Monte, a radical preacher in the Counter-Reformation Church who oversaw the

⁶⁹ Frederick J. McGinness, *Right Thinking and Sacred Oratory in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 46.

⁷⁰ Melion, "Introduction," 14.

⁷¹ See Giovanni Careri, "Typology at its Limits: Visual Exegesis and Eschatology in the Sistine Chapel," in *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700*, eds. Walter Melion, James Clifton and Michel Weemans (Leiden: Brill, 2014): 73–87.

⁷² David Lyle Jeffrey, "The Hebrew Bible in art and literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, eds. Stephen B. Chapman and Marvin A. Sweeney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 426–446.

Figure 9: Durante Alberti, *The Annunciation*, 1588, oil on panel. Santa Maria ai Monti, Rome. Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY 3.0.

attempted conversion of Jews in Rome.⁷³ In these discourses, del Monte promoted the typological method of biblical interpretation. Within the image he commissioned, Alberti incorporates a book in the bottom right-hand corner that bears the text of Isaiah 7:14, “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel,” in Hebrew. The presence of this Hebrew text within a painting of the annunciation implies the continuation of the prophecy into its fulfilment in the New Testament narrative. For the first audience of the *Annunciation* at the Santa Maria ai Monti, the painting united the modes of image and text to propose typology as a key doctrine of Catholic ideology.⁷⁴ Although Zuccaro’s altarpiece manifested in a different setting, the use of the Isaiah text operated with

⁷³ Martine Boiteux, “Preaching to the Jews in Early Modern Rome: Words and Images,” in *The Jewish-Christian Encounter in Medieval Preaching*, eds. Jonathan Adams and Jussi Hanska (London: Routledge, 2015): 296–322.

⁷⁴ Carolyn H. Wood and Peter Iver Kaufman, “Tacito Predicatore”: The Annunciation Chapel at the Madonna Dei Monti in Rome,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 90,4 (2004): 634–49.

the same function to persuade the beholder that the Virgin Mary was the anticipated mother of the Emmanuel.

In front and to the right of Isaiah in Cort's copy of Zuccaro's altarpiece (see Figures 1 and 7) is David, who holds the text, "of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne" (Ps 131:11)⁷⁵ In a similar way to the Moses reference, this text alludes to the outcome of the annunciation, that being the birth of God Incarnate. The full verse of Psalm 131:11 is, "The Lord hath sworn truth to David, and he will not make it void: of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon they throne." The promise of God to David is read typologically to refer to Christ. This interpretation is stipulated by the text in Luke 1:27 that reads, "a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David." The inclusion of this text in the *Glossa*, and subsequently in Zuccaro and Cort's images, highlights the lineage of Christ through the Davidic line, which included Joseph whom Mary was betrothed to.

To the right-hand side of the Virgin Mary and the angel Gabriel are the second group of prophets. The closest to Gabriel is Solomon. The text he holds says "[l]et my beloved come into his garden," a reference from Song of Solomon. Catholic theologian Trent Pomplun refers to this book in the Bible as "a particularly fertile field for Marian cultivation;" an apt statement in relation to its use in annunciation imagery.⁷⁶ A popular iconographic trend developed in fourteenth-century art and literature that portrayed the annunciation taking place in an enclosed garden. A meticulously designed setting of walled garden, such as that in Fra Filippo Lippi's *Annunciation* (Figure 10), symbolized the emblematic device of a *hortus conclusus* [enclosed garden].⁷⁷ This term itself derives from the hermeneutic of Song of Solomon 4:12: "My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up." This is meaningful to the virginal state of Mary at the time of the annunciation event.

Song of Solomon 4:16 [DRA] goes on to read, "Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatic spices thereof flow." This is an invitation for God through Christ to enter the garden, a typological term for the womb of Mary. To the right of Solomon in Zuccaro's design sits Jeremiah, in the same position as Isaiah in the left group. His text reads, "for the Lord has created a new thing on earth: a woman encompasses a man" (Isa 31:22). This text functions as an image both for the annunciation narrative

⁷⁵ Translation from Latin by Melion, "Introduction: Scriptural Authority in Word and Image," 17.

⁷⁶ Trent Pomplun, "Mary," in *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism* eds. James J. Buckley, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt and Trent Pomplun (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2010): 314.

⁷⁷ Stephen E. Miller, *The Word made Visible in the Painted Image: Perspective, Proportion, Witness and Threshold in Italian Renaissance Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 47.

Figure 10: Fra Filippo Lippi, *The Annunciation*, 1440, tempera on panel, 68 × 152cm. National Gallery, London. Wikimedia Commons. License: Public Domain.

and the incarnation mystery. The matter of a woman encompassing a man tells the narration of Mary bearing a son – “Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son” (Luke 1:31) – and the “new thing on earth” refers to the nature of this son, a son not born through sexual encounter but by the Holy Spirit through a virgin.

The final prophet in the composition, Haggai, sits in front and to the right of Jeremiah. The conversation that is being had between Jeremiah and Haggai relates to the similarity of their respective prophecies: “the two prophets are seen to converse because both their prophecies have to do with the founding of the universal Church made possible by the longed-for advent of Christ.”⁷⁸ Like Jeremiah, Haggai anticipates the newness of the event being inaugurated at the center of the image. The full version of Haggai 2:7–8 reads, “[f]or thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet one little while, and I will move the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will move all nations: and the desired of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory: saith the Lord of hosts.” This text foresees a new occasion on earth. In corresponding with the writings of the *Glossa* and including it in proximity to the annunciation, the Haggai text demonstrates that this event projected in the Old Testament is that of God entering the world through Christ. The union of the heavenly and earthly spheres that is displayed in Zuccaro’s altarpiece and Cort’s copy reflects this last text. The event depicted at the heart of this image is one of cosmic significance, pulling prophecy and narrative together under the canopy of heavenly imagery.

⁷⁸ Melion, “Introduction,” 14.

Imagining this composition situated in the high altar of the Church of the Annunciation, the image delivered a theologically complex exposition of the typological method of biblical interpretation. As identified in both Cort's engraving and Vasari's textual account of the fresco, the prophets are larger in scale than Mary and Gabriel, functioning as the mediators between the beholder and the annunciation narrative.⁷⁹ The size of the prophets has them appear to sit right on the picture plane, facilitating the beholders' awareness of the incarnational framework through which they should read the narrative. The prophets in the image therefore function in the same way as they do in the *Glossa*, sharing the typological exegesis across the rhetoric of text and image. Typology was a key method in Catholic exegesis, not only because it effectively married together the Old and New Testaments into a unifying body of scripture, but because it perpetuated the process of reception and interpretation of these texts by the Church fathers in commentaries and glosses. The role of the Jesuit order in disseminating Counter-Reformation objectives meant typology was central to the pedagogy of the Collegio Romano. It would continue to constitute a central role in the Collegio's theological training in the seventeenth century through the teaching of Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637) and his *Commentaries on the Holy Scriptures*.⁸⁰ Like the *Glossa*, his commentary included the typology of Old and New Testament texts, in addition to the patristic texts that were as much sources of truth as their canonical counterparts.⁸¹ The essence of this typological form of interpretation communicates the transience between the testaments of scripture and the history of the Church. It fed into the ideology maintained by Catholicism that the revelation of God was progressive and did not end with the biblical sources.⁸² In relation to this form of typology for the Jesuit order, Anna C. Knaap writes:

They [Jesuits] went beyond drawing connections between the Old and New Testament to include parallels with the life of the Church and the present day. Through this method, they were able to refute Protestant criticisms and show that the current practices of the Catholic Church were a natural continuation of the earliest traditions of the Old Covenant and the life of Christ.⁸³

Thus, it can be argued that typology in Jesuit theology, also mirrored in the wider Counter-Reformation context, was not just an educational means for studying the relationship between the two biblical Testaments, but one that articulated the

⁷⁹ Melion, "Introduction," 9.

⁸⁰ Knaap, "Seeing in sequence," 155.

⁸¹ Knaap, "Seeing in sequence," 155.

⁸² Joseph A. Galdon, *Typology of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 67; Knaap, "Meditation, Ministry, and Visual Rhetoric," 161.

⁸³ Knaap, "Seeing in sequence," 167.

divine unity of Scripture in its relationship to tradition. The gap between the prophecies, the narratives, and Counter-Reformation Catholicism, was bridged by typological exegesis. In viewing biblical history in the same breath as Church history, Catholicism maintained that its identity was one “generated over time,” and subsequently that “it needed to be able to relate fragmentary experiences across temporal boundaries.”⁸⁴ Typology allowed for those borders to be crossed. The authority of scripture was not bound to its historical location, but to the ever-evolving process of the history of its interpretation in the Catholic Church. This idea underscored the theology of the Catholic Church in the late sixteenth century, and manifested itself in textual, visual and material sources, like the *Glossa*, Zuccaro’s fresco and Cort’s engraved copy. As the first altarpiece commissioned by the Jesuit order, Zuccaro’s *Annunciation* fulfilled its role as a barometer of Catholic reform by using the combined language of image and text to articulate the typological framework of the Church’s identity. The beholder of the altarpiece viewed Old Testament prophecies alongside a New Testament narrative, positioned and interpreted in such a way that reflected the typological form of interpretation engrained into Catholic exegesis since the Church fathers, and reaffirmed by Counter-Reformation rhetoric. The afterlife of this altarpiece in the engraved copy by Cort only goes further to underscore the layers of reception and interpretation that underpinned the typology of Zuccaro’s visual exegesis.

6 Conclusion

This article started with a specific object, *The Annunciation Broadcast by Prophets* by Federico Zuccaro for the first Jesuit Church in Rome, and used an engraved copy of the original to formulate an analysis that excavated the multidimensional aspects of the object’s textual expansion and visual exegesis. In doing so it uncovered the capacity of visual objects of biblical reception to communicate methods of biblical interpretation. From this article, which constitutes a fleeting moment in reception-historical analysis, a multitude of moments of reception and interpretation have surfaced, each one requiring even greater interrogation. The moment of reception visualized in Zuccaro’s altarpiece united a specific, contextualized interpretation of no less than seven biblical texts, that had each journeyed through their own history of interpretation until uniting under the visual, incarnational framework of Zuccaro’s *Annunciation*. The decisions of Zuccaro were naturally bound to his own engagement and participation in Counter-Reformation visual

⁸⁴ Jane Boyd and Philip F. Esler, *Visuality and Biblical Text: Interpreting Velázquez’ ‘Christ with Martha and Mary’ as a Test Case* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2004), 7.

exegesis, that used textual expansion as a means to elevate the combined use of scripture and tradition in Catholic formation. One particularly important source of inspiration was the *Glossa*, which itself contained extraordinary layers of reception, as the voices of Old and New Testaments blended seamlessly into the methods and paratext of Church tradition. The additional layer of reception that has mediated this entire analysis has been Cort's interpretation of Zuccaro's altarpiece. The translation of painted image and text to engraved image and text would have necessitated exegetical decisions that centered on a reinterpretation of Zuccaro's original.

While this could be considered the micro-narrative of the article, the macro-narrative is the identification of the compatibility of the Counter-Reformation with the practices of biblical reception history. Current scholarship poorly reflects the fertility of this historical landscape for our scholarly investigation. There is scope for far greater consideration into how intimately objects of all forms, whether they be textual, visual or material, were bound to the objectives of the Church. The context did not use the Bible as a subsidiary source of divine revelation, but used the history of its interpretation to form how the biblical texts and their traditions would reverberate into its society. The Counter-Reformation provides modern reception history with an opportunity to examine a period that itself projected the history of interpretation as the lens through which the Bible should be transmitted, learned, and adored. In spite of the temporal, pedagogical, religious and cultural boundaries, this is an objective that we share.

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