Joshua Stopping the Sun and Ignatius of Loyola at Il Gesù in Rome

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Abstract

In 1672, the Jesuit superior general Gian Paolo Oliva commissioned from Baciccio a lavish cycle of ceiling frescoes for Rome's Il Gesù after earmarking the tribune vault for Giacomo Cortese to decorate with a representation of *Joshua Stopping the Sun*. Oliva also planned to translate Ignatius of Loyola's remains to the high altar. Pope Gregory xv had explicitly likened Ignatius to the Old Testament general Joshua during the Jesuit founder's canonization in 1622, and it may be inferred that Oliva intended to promote a hagiographic connection between the two figures through the prominent juxtaposition of Cortese's fresco with the saint's relics. However, the Ignatius-Joshua connection remained uncelebrated: the plan to translate the relics did not come to fruition, Cortese passed away in 1676, and the apse vault was eventually decorated by Baciccio with the *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. Cortese's demise has heretofore been considered the decisive factor leading to the change in subject of the tribune fresco, but the clandestine correspondence of Lazzerio Sorba, S.J., indicates another important factor was at play. These documents evidence an unusually strained relationship between the Society and Pope Innocent xi Odescalchi, elected in 1676. They suggest that the Society's discomfiture vis-à-vis Innocent xi influenced its decision to replace the self-aggrandizing *Joshua Stopping the Sun* with the *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*.

Keywords

Baciccio – Giacomo Cortese – Gian Paolo Oliva – Il Gesù – hagiography – Ignatius of Loyola – Innocent xi Odescalchi – Joshua – Mystic Lamb

Introduction

The *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* in the apse vault of Il Gesù, the Jesuit mother church in Rome, was executed by Giovanni Battista Gaulli (1639–1709) between 1680 and 1683 (Fig. 1). The subject of the fresco represents a marked departure from the Jesuit superior general Gian Paolo Oliva's (general 1664–81) original plans to have the apse vault decorated with a fresco of *Joshua Stopping the Sun* by the lay Jesuit battle painter Giacomo Cortese (1621–76).¹ Cortese passed away in 1676 before the Jesuits could obtain the funds or the authorization to renovate the apse. Work on the commission only commenced three years later in November 1679, when Ranuccio II Farnese (1630–94), duke of Parma and Piacenza, whose family held the patronage rights to the tribune, authorized Gaulli, better known as Baciccio, to execute the fresco and also provided the necessary funds. Oliva's letter thanking Ranuccio makes no mention of the

FIG. 1 Giovanni Battista Gaulli, known as Baciccio (Italian, 1639–1709). *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, 1680–83, fresco. Rome, Church of the Gesù, Apse vault.

- 1 Oliva was elected vicar general because his predecessor Goswin Nickel (general 1652–64) was old and sick. On Nickel's passing in 1664, Oliva succeeded him as general, effectively governing the Society of Jesus for twenty years.

subject, and Baciccio eventually executed the *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* in the apse vault.² Drawn from the Book of Revelation (Rev. 7:11–10:7), it constituted a drastic change from the originally planned battle scene centered on Joshua. Scholars generally accept that Cortese's untimely death and the fact that Baciccio's artistic style was better suited to an allegory than to a battle scene prompted the Jesuits to abandon their plans for *Joshua Stopping the Sun*.³ While these factors surely impacted the plans for the apse vault, they do not satisfactorily explain why an Old Testament narrative was replaced by a New Testament allegory.

The precise verses relating the miracle of *Joshua Stopping the Sun* slated for the Gesù apse are Josh. 10:12–14:

On the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the LORD; and he said in the sight of Israel,

“Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.”

And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.

Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in mid-heaven, and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since when the LORD heeded a human voice; for the LORD fought for Israel.

Oliva's plans called for the remains of Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491–1556), founder of the Society of Jesus, to be translated to the high altar, which would have resulted in a direct spatial connection between the relics of the Jesuit founder and the frescoed figure of Joshua in the vault above (Fig. 2). This arrangement would have glorified Ignatius by highlighting and popularizing a hagiographic connection to Joshua that heretofore has neither been identified nor addressed in the context of the Gesù decorations. Since the name “Joshua” is the Hebrew equivalent of “Jesus,” Ignatius's association with Joshua would also have implicitly

2 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [henceforth ARSI], *Epp. NN.* 11, f. 216^r, published in Pietro Tacchi Venturi, “Le convenzioni tra Gio. Battista Gaulli e il generale dei gesuiti Gian Paolo Oliva per la pittura della cupola e della volta del tempio farnesiano,” *Roma: Rivista di studi e di vita romana* 13, no. 4 (1935): 147–56, here 155–56.

3 Most scholars follow Pio Pecchiai's reasoning that these two factors led the Jesuits to abandon plans for *Joshua Stopping the Sun*. Pio Pecchiai, *Il Gesù di Roma* (Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 1952), 142. To my knowledge, Evonne Levy is the only scholar to consider the possibility that the change in subject was not necessarily the result solely of Cortese's demise. Evonne Levy, “The Institutional Memory of the Roman Gesù,” *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 33 (1999–2000): 373–426, here 407.

FIG. 2 *View of High Altar and Apse Vault. Rome, Church of the Gesù.*

associated him with Christ, which might have been deemed indecorous. Oliva surely strove to implement his plans cautiously to avoid any semblance of impropriety on the part of the Jesuits. Based on the records of Ignatius's canonization proceedings, I propose that Oliva and the Jesuits aimed to celebrate the founder of their order by conspicuously linking him to the figure of Joshua in

their mother church. Then, following an examination of unpublished letters authored by the Jesuit Lazzero Sorba (1636–1709) and of contemporary *avvisi* (notices), I posit that the Society's uneasy relationship with Innocent XI (r. 1676–89) played a significant role in the Jesuits' decision to abandon their original plans for the apse vault and decorate it with a representation of the *Mystic Lamb* instead.

Art historical scholarship has relegated Baciccio's *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* in the apse vault to secondary importance as compared to his monumental *Triumph of the Name of Jesus* adorning the nave vault (Fig. 3). Yet, several factors strongly suggest that Oliva intended the apse fresco to function as the centerpiece of the cycle he commissioned for the Gesù. The importance of the apse vault stems from its central location, for it frames the high altar that is the focus of viewers and worshippers in the church. It was the only principal ceiling Oliva omitted from an otherwise all-encompassing contract signed on August 21, 1672, with Baciccio that required him to decorate the dome, lantern, pendentives, nave vault, and left as well as right transept chapel vaults of the Gesù, while explicitly excluding from these “only the vault of the apse.”⁴ In terms of subject matter, a generic clause mandated only that the artist was to have his compositions approved by either Oliva or his delegate.⁵ In contrast, early sources record Oliva's explicit orders for Cortese to decorate the apse vault with *Joshua Stopping the Sun*.⁶ The centrality of the apse, Oliva's intentional exclusion of the apse fresco from the contract for the rest of the cycle, and his selection of a precise subject for it are salient indicators that *Joshua Stopping the Sun* was to be the principal fresco in the Gesù.

Oliva's special interest in the subject of the apse fresco is understandable because the high altar beneath is the spatial and liturgical focus of the church. It is generally accepted that the planned representation of Joshua in the apse related to the Holy Name to which the Society and its mother church are dedicated. Already, the subject of the high altarpiece of the Gesù, Girolamo Muziano's (1532–92) *Circumcision*, evoked the dedication to the Holy Name because the ceremony of the Christ-child's circumcision was performed on the

4 Tacchi Venturi, “Convenzioni,” 149–50. The contract was published simultaneously by Karolina Lanckarowska, *Dekoracja kościoła “Il Gesù”: Na tle rozwoju baroku w Rzymie* (Lwów: Nakładem Towarzystwa Naukowego we Lwowie, 1935), 13–15.

5 Tacchi Venturi, “Convenzioni,” 149.

6 Filippo Baldinucci, “Padre Jacopo Cortesi [...]” in *Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue [...]*, vol. 5 (Florence: V. Batelli e Compagni, 1847), 204–19, here 217–18; Lione Pascoli, “Di Jacopo Cortesi” (ed. Letizia Lanzetta) in *Vite de' pittori, scultori, ed architetti moderni* (Perugia: Electa Editori Umbri, 1992), 178–86, here 182.

FIG. 3 *Baciccio. Triumph of the Name of Jesus, 1676–79, fresco and stucco. Rome, Church of the Gesù, Nave ceiling.*

FIG. 4 Giovanni Andrea Carlone (Italian, 1639–97). Joshua Stopping the Sun, 1666–67, fresco. Perugia, Church of the Gesù, Crossing vault.

same day as he was named “Jesus,” as was traditional Jewish custom. Since Joshua is interpreted as an Old Testament precursor to Christ, the planned fresco would have had an etymological as well as a theological connection to Jesus that referenced the dedications of the Society and its mother church to the Holy Name.⁷

⁷ For the interpretation of Joshua as a prefiguration of the Christ in name as well as deed, see Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, vol. 2 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), 219–27, here 219–20. Already, monumental frescoes of Joshua had appeared in the crossing of the Church of the Gesù in Perugia (Fig. 4). These frescoes, to which Cortese's works may have been related in terms of iconography and composition, were executed during the period 1666–67 by Giovanni Andrea Carlone (1639–97), who was commissioned by Monsignor Gianfrancesco Negroni (1631–1713) to execute the frescoes of the right transept chapel of the Gesù in Rome. Richard Bösel, *Jesuitenarchitektur in Italien (1540–1773): Die Baudenkmäler der Römischen und Neapolitanischen Ordenprovenzen*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985), 131, 134.

The Hagiographic Association of Ignatius with Joshua

Oliva's intentional exclusion of the apse vault from Baciccio's contract and the selection of the Joshua theme were also closely linked, I contend, to another crucial component of his plans for the apse: the translation of Ignatius's remains to the high altar. On August 12, 1672, approximately a week before Oliva and Baciccio signed their contract, the jurist Carlo Cartari (1614–97) noted in his diary that the Jesuits had resolved to have the dome and nave vault of the Gesù decorated by Baciccio and, equally importantly, that they had resolved to have Ignatius's remains translated to the high altar.⁸ Even three years later, a letter dated July 5, 1675, from Andrea Garimberti (1608–75), a Jesuit professor of rhetoric and theology in Modena, to Ludovico Bompiani (d.1679), the rector of the Collegio Romano, reveals the Jesuits still hoped to translate Ignatius's remains to the high altar and also to have the apse decorated by Cortese even as they kept entreating Ranuccio for funds.⁹ Unfortunately for the Jesuits, Cortese died on November 14, 1676, before the renovation of the apse began, reportedly leaving behind several sketches for the composition (although none have thus far been identified).¹⁰ A poignant letter to the rector of the Collegio Romano dated November 26, 1676, bemoaned the artist's demise and also the fact that the Gesù would remain forever bereft of his work, while simultaneously expressing the hope that the news would jolt Ranuccio into sponsoring the embellishment of the apse.¹¹

A previously unconsidered connection between Ignatius and Joshua may well explain Oliva's desire to place the Jesuit founder's remains beneath an apsidal fresco featuring a miracle wrought by the Old Testament general. Indeed, there appears to have been a preexistent hagiographic association between the two figures, for an image of Ignatius commissioned as the portrait page in the 1622 edition of his official illustrated biography implicitly linked the Jesuit founder to Joshua by means of its accompanying inscription. Originally published in 1609 on the occasion of Ignatius's beatification, the *Vita Beati P. Ignatii Loiolae Societatis Iesu fundatoris* had as its portrait page an

8 Archivio di Stato di Roma [hereafter ASR], *Fondo Cartari-Febei* 84, f. 100^{r-v} [modern pagination in pencil is 98^{r-v}], published in Florio Banfi (pseud. of László Holik-Barabas), "Il 'Paradiso' del Baciccio," *L'urbe* 22 (1959): 4–10, here 9.

9 ARSI, *Rom.* 143-II, f. 359^{r-v}. The letter is transcribed in Jacopo Curziotti, *La decorazione della chiesa del ss. Nome di Gesù* (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2011), 209.

10 A letter addressed to Cortese while he was working for the grand duke of Florence in 1676 refers to Oliva's desire for him to "commence work on the Battles [sic] sketched by you" in the Gesù tribune. ARSI, *Epp. NN.* 11, f. 120^r (transcribed in Curziotti, *Decorazione*, 214).

11 ARSI *Rom.* 143-II, f. 370^{r-v} (published in Pecchiai, *Il Gesù di Roma*, 123).

image of a bare-headed Ignatius accompanied by a composite inscription derived from Ecclesiasticus 47 and Isaiah 66 (Fig. 5). However, by 1622, an alternate portrait page was composed depicting Ignatius in a *berretta* (three-pointed hat) with an abbreviated inscription derived from the Book of Joshua (Fig. 6).¹² In its entirety, Josh. 22:5 reads as follows (although I have identified the phrases that were excised from the inscription of this portrait page by intentionally crossing them out here): “Take good care to observe the commandment and instruction ~~that Moses~~ the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, ~~to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments, and~~ to hold fast to him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. Josh. 22.” The excision of Moses’s name from the inscription subtly emphasized the connection between Ignatius and Joshua inherent in the juxtaposition of a verse from the Book of Joshua with the saint’s portrait.

Gregory xv’s Likening of Ignatius to Joshua at the Saint’s Canonization in 1622

A papal proclamation explicitly likening Ignatius to Joshua during the Jesuit founder’s canonization supports the theory that the selection of a verse from the Book of Joshua for the portrait page of the *Vita* was charged with hagiographic meaning. At the outset of the canonization proceedings in 1622, Pope Gregory xv (r.1621–23) explicitly likened Ignatius to Joshua, stating that “it appears to us that the eulogy the Sacred Scriptures apply to Joshua may well be applied to Blessed Ignatius: ‘He became, as his name implies, a great savior of God’s elect, to take vengeance on the enemies that

12 Ursula König-Nordhoff, who has studied the development of Ignatian iconography in the period leading up to Ignatius’s beatification and canonization, has discussed the difficulty of ascertaining precisely when this portrait page was created and where it was used. Ursula König-Nordhoff, “Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Vita Beati P. Ignatii Loiolae Societatis Iesu fundatoris*. Romae 1609 und 1622,” *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* 45 (1976): 306–17, here 306–07, 316–17, and König-Nordhoff, *Ignatius von Loyola: Studien zur Entwicklung einer neuen Heiligen-Ikonographie im Rahmen einer Kanonisationskampagne um 1600* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1982), 278–82, 293. This portrait page appears in three copies of the 1622 edition I consulted in Rome (ARSI, ARSI-Bib 18 R; Biblioteca Romana Sarti, A 387 R; and Biblioteca di Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte, Rari II 24), none of which was in the form of an originally-bound volume (ARSI has a set of loose plates, and the volumes in both other libraries are not in original binding). As in the 1609 edition, the title pages of all three sets refer to Ignatius as “Beati P. Ignatii” even though their dates are changed to 1622.

FIG. 5 Vita Beati P. Ignatii Loiolae Societatis Iesu Fundatoris Romae MDCIX, *Portrait page*. Rome, ARSI (ARSI-Bib, 18 T).
COURTESY OF ARSI, ROME.

FIG. 6 Vita Beati P. Ignatii Loiolae Societatis Iesu fundatoris Romae MDCXXII, Portrait page. Rome, ARSI (ARSI-Bib, 18 R). COURTESY OF ARSI, ROME.

rose against them, so that he might give Israel its inheritance.”¹³ Undeniably, the pope’s explicit characterization of Ignatius as an “*alter* Joshua” infused the figure of Joshua with unique significance for the Jesuits. Consequently, Oliva’s plans to translate Ignatius’s relics to the high altar of the Gesù and to commission a monumental representation of Joshua in the vault above must be evaluated in light of the papal proclamation equating the two figures.

Though it was potent, the hagiographic association between Ignatius and Joshua was not widely disseminated, and it appears that Oliva planned to popularize this connection in the Gesù tribune. The Jesuit theologians preparing for the canonization in 1671 of Francisco de Borja (general 1565–72), the third Jesuit superior general, must have consulted documentation pertaining to Ignatius’s canonization and would have been keenly aware of Gregory xv’s likening of Ignatius to Joshua. Among those aware of the connection, surely they vetted—and possibly even provided the impetus for—Oliva’s project for *Joshua Stopping the Sun*. Had Oliva’s overall plan for the apse come to fruition, a simple but prominent vertical alignment immediately visible to all entering the Gesù would have connected Ignatius’s relics with the figure of Joshua.¹⁴ This alignment would have functioned not only as a powerful visual link that exalted Ignatius as much as it celebrated Joshua, but also as a means of promoting the connection between them amongst a broader audience beyond the Jesuit sphere.

A Remnant of the Ignatius-Joshua Connection in Baciccio’s *Triumph of the Name of Jesus*

The conscious promotion of the connection between Ignatius and Joshua in the Gesù was not limited to the precincts of the apse, and the unnamed Jesuits tasked by Oliva with approving Baciccio’s designs seem to have had a hand in

13 My translation of Pope Gregory xv’s words from the Italian translation of the text in Latin. Society of Jesus (Spanish-Roman Committee for Third Centennial Honors), *La canonizzazione dei santi Ignazio di Loiola fondatore della Compagnia di Gesù e Francesco Saverio apostolo dell’Oriente* (Rome: Grafia, S.A.I. Industrie Grafiche, 1922), 35.

14 The figure of Joshua in Baciccio’s group of four *Lawgivers of Israel* (Fig. 7) adorning the northeast pendentive of the Gesù dome does not relate to the high altar as prominently and directly as would have been possible had it appeared in the apse vault.

FIG. 7 *Baciccio. Lawgivers of Israel, 1675–76, fresco. Rome, Church of the Gesù, Northeast pendentive.*

FIG. 8 Baciccio. *Triumph of the Name of Jesus*. Detail with titular banderole and gilded stucco relief panel depicting episodes from the Book of Joshua: Transport of the Ark (left), and Fall of Jericho (right).

ensuring it was also underscored in the nave vault (Fig. 3). Among these Jesuits were, I suggest, theologians recently involved in promoting the cause of Francisco de Borja's canonization. Such an involvement might explain the appearance of two episodes from the Book of Joshua in a prominently located stucco relief that surmounts the fresco field of Baciccio's *Triumph* adorning the nave vault.¹⁵ The *Transport of the Ark* and the *Fall of Jericho* appear beneath an undulating banderole inscribed with Phil. 2:10, "[In nomine] Iesu omne genu flecta[tur coel]estium, [t]errest[rium et] i[n]fer[norum]," which serves as the titulus of the overall composition (Fig. 8). While these two episodes allude to

15 The importance of the prominent central location of the relief panel is belied by its relative inconspicuousness. The enormous scale, vibrant colors, fusion of media, and sheer complexity of the *Triumph*'s overall composition overshadow the relatively small monochrome stucco relief panel, which is further obscured by the inscribed banderole undulating across it. This contradiction might well reflect an intentional desire to cloak the composition so that it would only be legible to those who expressly looked for it.

Joshua by virtue of being important events drawn from his life, the *Triumph's* titular inscription evokes Ignatius by virtue of reprising the antiphon of the votive mass in his honor, the text of which was approved in 1673 and published in 1675.¹⁶ When the episodes from the Book of Joshua and the frescoed elements of the *Triumph* are interpreted in conjunction with the antiphon of the Mass of Ignatius, they implicitly link Ignatius to Joshua.

The blazing Jesuit monogram, selected by Ignatius as the symbol of the Society, represents Jesus in the form of his Holy Name, echoing the Ark of the Covenant, which represents the Name and Presence of the Lord and which entered the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership.¹⁷ Similarly, the tormented figures of the *Damned* in the lower portion of the fresco echo the crushed inhabitants of Jericho in the stucco panel.¹⁸ These echoes subtly evoke Gregory xv's

16 Thomas J. Lucas, S.J., "Missa S. Ignatii confessoris, 1675 [Rome, Archivum Postulationis Generalis Societatis Iesu, 22]," in *Saint Site and Sacred Strategy: Ignatius Rome and Jesuit Urbanism*, ed. Thomas Lucas (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1990), 182 (Cat. No. 112). Levy first posited a connection between the Mass of Ignatius and the composition of the *Triumph*. Evonne Levy, "Giovanni Battista Gaulli, *Adoration of the Name of Jesus* [Rome, Galleria Spada]," in *Saint Site and Sacred Strategy*, 195 (Cat. No. 122).

17 Theologically, the ark's connection to the Holy Name is based on its function, which differs significantly within the various books of the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy, for instance, it is a "demythologized ark" that is no more than a container for the tablets of the Law, whereas in other books, including the Book of Joshua, it is much more than a mere receptacle. In such instances, it is considered the "Footstool of the Lord," or a throne upon which the Lord's presence is manifest, even though he is invisible. "Ark of the Covenant," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:386–93. Jean-Paul Hernández notes that the juxtaposition of the ark with the banderole celebrating the glory of the Name of Jesus is theologically significant and crucial to reading the nave fresco because the Name of Jesus is to be understood through the lens of the meaning of the Name of the Lord in the Old Testament, where the tetragram "YHWH" is understood to have been housed in the Ark of the Covenant. In this respect, Hernández has interpreted the inscription of the titular banderole of the *Triumph*, Philippians 2:10, which calls for all beings everywhere to genuflect before the Name of Jesus ("[so that] at the name of Jesus every knee shall bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth"), as an echo and fulfilment of the promise attributed to Isaiah by YHWH: "Before me every knee shall bend" (Isaiah 45:23). Jean-Paul Hernández, S.J., *Il corpo del nome: I simboli e lo spirito della Chiesa Madre dei Gesuiti* (Bologna: Pardes Edizioni, 2010), 89–91 (for the relationship between the Name of Jesus, the Name of the Lord, and the Ark of the Covenant), and 97 (for an analysis of Old and New Testament verses on genuflection before the Lord).

18 In an article in progress, I argue that like *Joshua Stopping the Sun*, the *Triumph of the Name of Jesus* was conceived and meant to function as an allegorical paean to the Jesuit founder. The figures of the *Damned* are not positioned in a manner that illustrates the titulus literally, for they cannot be conceived of as genuflecting before the Holy Name. Instead, they

proclamation likening Ignatius to Joshua. The salvific power of the Name of Christ to which the frescoed figures of the *Elect* are drawn is metaphorically related, in my opinion, to the Israelites' "inheritance," or their arrival under Joshua's leadership into the Promised Land, which is illustrated by the *Transport of the Ark*. Similarly, the damnation of those who reject Christ is related to the *Fall of Jericho*, which represents the "vengeance on the enemies" cited by Gregory xv. In this manner, the *Triumph's* allusions to Ignatius's achievements in the service of Christ echo Joshua's leadership of the Israelites under the auspices of the Lord, even though neither of the two figures appears in the composition.

In 1671, the subject of *Joshua Stopping the Sun* had appeared in a lavish *apparato*, or stage-set, created for the Devotion of the Forty Hours (in Italian, called the *Quarant'ore*) celebrated in the Gesù.¹⁹ Sponsored by the Congregation of the Assumption (*Assunta*) based in the Gesù, the *apparato* was created specifically for display in the Gesù apse, and its appearance yields, I believe, an insight into Oliva's strategy for implementing his masterplan for the apse. Even though ephemeral, the *apparato* was meant to be viewed by a throng of devout worshippers who were expected to compare it with other similar *apparati* in Rome and also remember it for years thereafter. A *relatione*, or commemorative pamphlet, records its subject, large dimensions (approximately 27.8 m high and 17.8 m wide), the name of the artist who created it ("Sig. Gio. Maria Mariani"), and its placement in the apse of the Gesù.²⁰ The *apparato* is described as a seamless bipartite composition populated in the upper portion from the apex to the cornice by a glory of beatific spirits paying homage to the Eucharist while observed by God the Father and the Holy Spirit surrounded by cherubs and seraphim. The lower portion depicted Joshua bidding the sun stand still in the foreground, while priests bore the Ark of the Covenant across the Jordan. Since the *apparato* was commissioned by an Il Gesù-based congregation, it would not be surprising if its subject had been proposed by the Jesuits. If so, the subject, timing, location, and large scale of Mariani's *Joshua Stopping the Sun apparato* presented Oliva with an extraordinary opportunity to vet, and to

are repelled by it and portrayed in a manner that reprises a widespread iconographic category of agonized writhing figures exorcised by Ignatius, who was regularly characterized in his biographies as a great exorcist.

- 19 First addressed by Marc S. Weil, the text of the *relatione* of the *apparato* has been transcribed by Jacopo Curziotti. Marc S. Weil, "The Devotion of the Forty Hours and Roman Baroque Illusions," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974), 218–48, here 239–40; and Curziotti, *Decorazione*, 246–47.
- 20 ASR, *Fondo Cartari-Febei*, 83, D[*ichiaratione*] [d]ell'*apparato* esposto nella chiesa del Giesù per le 40 hore dell'anno corrente, f. 23^r–26^r.

an extent even favorably condition, public reception of a subject which he had by then, it may reasonably be assumed, already earmarked for the apse vault.

Following a formal nod to the scriptures, the text of the commemorative pamphlet for the *apparato* for the *Quarant'ore* celebrations of 1671 opened with an explicit reference to the reigning pope's familial connection to the activities of the sponsoring congregation. Expressing elation at the recent election of Clement x Altieri (r.1670–76), it also formally articulated the close ties between the pope's father, Lorenzo Altieri, and the congregation, recalling his role as a founding member of the group, as well as the perpetual legacy he left them. The close relationship binding the congregation, and by extension also the Society, with the reigning pope's late father is especially pertinent, for it strongly suggests Clement x's approval would have been forthcoming had the theme of the *apparato* been reprised in the apse vault during his reign.

The Eschewal of Joshua Stopping the Sun in Favor of the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb

In addition to Lorenzo Altieri's ties to the Jesuits, Clement x's lavish decoration of his imposing family residence strongly suggests that he would have favored a monumental fresco of *Joshua Stopping the Sun* in the Gesù. The pope's focus in the early 1670s was on expanding and sumptuously decorating the Palazzo Altieri across the Via del Plebiscito from the Gesù.²¹ Grand decorations in the Gesù would have complemented the ongoing embellishments of his own palace and added to the overall splendor of the neighborhood. However, Ranuccio's delay in financing the project prevented the Jesuits from executing the fresco for many years, and by November 1679, when he finally agreed to provide funds, both Cortese and Clement x had passed away. No documentary evidence has come to light explaining why the fresco featuring Joshua was never executed in the Gesù; however, circumstantial evidence suggests the decision to replace it with the *Mystic Lamb* resulted from the Jesuits' unusually strained relationship with Innocent XI, who had succeeded Clement x in 1676.

²¹ For the chronology and a study of the palace's construction and ornamentation, see *Palazzo Altieri* (Rome: Editalia, 1991). For *avvisi* dating from 1670 to 1672 recording the lavish decorations, including sculpture by Bernini, commissioned by Clement x for the palace, see Ermete Rossi, "Roma ignorata," *Roma: Rivista di studi e di vita romana* 18, no. 1 (1940): 26–27, here 27.

Unlike his predecessors, who spent large amounts on art and architectural commissions, Innocent XI despised ostentation in any form. On ascending to the papacy on September 21, 1676, his immediate focus had been on curtailing unnecessary expenditure of the curia in order to balance the papal budget, which he accomplished.²² His personal austerity, opposition to the practice of nepotism, and eschewal of expensive artistic and architectural commissions differentiated his person and his papacy from those of every seventeenth-century pope before him. Innocent XI's reign was devoid of any lavish papal commissions and defined by the imposition of decorum and austerity even in private commissions. The consequent scaling down and even cancellation of artistic commissions, carnival celebrations, and theatrical performances was unprecedented in Rome, and it resulted in great unease for patrons as well as artists. On August 13, 1678, for instance, as Baciccio was half-way through executing the *Triumph*, Innocent XI censured Prince Borghese for displaying lascivious paintings in his private collection to visitors.²³ And earlier in the year, on January 29, he had charged cardinals Acciaioli and Chigi with investigating and reporting on the sumptuous decorations sponsored by Cardinal Barberini at the Chapel of the Monte della Pietà.²⁴ An anonymous *avviso* dated September 10, 1678, notes that the pope's radical efforts to curtail expenditure on extravagant artistic undertakings led to such a decrease in patronage in Rome that artists were leaving the city in droves to earn their livelihoods elsewhere.²⁵ The only two large-scale artistic commissions executed in Rome during Innocent XI's reign were the decorations in the Gesù and in San Carlo al Corso, both of which had begun before he was elected. Having been a frequent visitor to the Gesù, where he used to participate in the *buona morte* devotions every Friday in the decade prior to his election, Innocent XI had to have been fully aware of the magnitude and scope of the grand embellishments underway in the church.²⁶ An *avviso* of February 18, 1679, reveals that a sumptuous bronze high altar planned for the Gesù apse following a large Spanish bequest incited his wrath:

22 Antonio Menniti Ippolito, "Innocent XI," in *I Papi: Da Pietro a Francesco* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2014), 3:368–89, here 373–74.

23 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [hereafter BAV], Ms. *Barb. lat.* 6385 published in Rossi, "Roma ignorata," *Roma: Rivista di studi e di vita romana* 19, no. 7 (1941): 307–8, here 308.

24 BAV, Ms. *Barb. lat.* 6385, f. 32^r published in Rossi, "Roma ignorata," *Roma: Rivista di studi e di vita romana* 19, no. 3 (1941): 121–22, here 122.

25 BAV, Ms. *Barb. lat.* 6418, f. 355^r published in Rossi, "Roma ignorata," *Roma: Rivista di studi e di vita romana* 19, no. 8 (1941): 348–49, here 349.

26 For Innocent XI's participation in the devotions of the *buona morte* in the Gesù, see Ippolito, "Innocenzo XI," 371.

Rome 18 February 1679. The Jesuit fathers received a Spanish bequest of thirty thousand *scudi* to build the high altar of the Gesù [as] a tribune entirely of bronze, and because of its large scale, the project requires the involvement of the papal bronze casters, [and] so [the Jesuit fathers] went to the pope for permission [and he] replied that if they had [all] that money, they ought to keep it intact and not spend it because this is no time to indulge in vanity, [because of which] the project was stalled. *And so the people are reduced to extreme misery proclaiming to the stars, seeing that all avenues to earn a livelihood are closed [because] the pope neither wishes to spend, nor does he permit others to spend* [emphasis mine; see footnote]. One hundred artists could have lived off this commission [the high altar of the Gesù] for three years.²⁷

Innocent XI's ire was not reserved solely for the Jesuits, for he was opposed to ostentation by any Catholic community or individual. Yet, his curt and dismissive denial of the Jesuits' request concerning the high altar must have left them rattled. Another key factor leading to their decision to forego *Joshua Stopping the Sun* was likely the fear that he would deem inappropriate the implicit hagiographic likening of Ignatius to Joshua because of its equation, by extension, of their founder with Christ. Essentially, Innocent XI's papacy, with its official thrust against grand and indecorous artistic commissions, commenced at an especially inopportune moment for Oliva and the Jesuits, who were in the midst of lavishly decorating their mother church.

To add to the Jesuits' woes, Innocent XI appears not to have held Oliva in high regard. Numerous clandestine letters and a report penned by Lazzerio Sorba, himself a disgruntled Jesuit unhappy with Oliva's generalship, describe Innocent XI's dismissive attitude towards Oliva and the Jesuits.²⁸ They attest to a climate in which it would have been highly unwise for the Jesuits to embellish their mother church with a grand fresco as unabashedly self-celebratory as *Joshua Stopping the Sun*. Sorba's correspondence, examined here for the first time, reveals the extent of the Jesuits' extreme discomfort

27 BAV, Ms. Barb. lat. 6420, f. 71^v, partially transcribed in Rossi, "Roma ignorata," *Roma: Rivista di studi e di vita romana* 19, no. 4 (1941): 161–62, here 161. The text in italics was omitted from Rossi's transcription as he seems to have limited the excerpts he transcribed for publication primarily to specific events and works of art.

28 Admitted to the Society of Jesus on February 20, 1655, Sorba taught rhetoric, philosophy, and theology at the College of the Maronites, and subsequently he taught the scripture in Rome. Carlos Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Brussels-Paris: Schepens-Picard, 1890–1932), 7:1389.

vis-à-vis Innocent XI.²⁹ The main theme of Sorba's letters is a harsh critique of Oliva's leadership, which the author considered the root cause of what he interprets as Innocent XI's extraordinarily dismissive treatment of the Society.³⁰ Four specific letters, three of which date to the months preceding Oliva's demise on November 26, 1681, and the fourth to the month following it, are particularly insightful. They vividly portray an uneasy relationship shared by the Society and its superior general with the pope while the decoration of the Gesù apse was underway. First, in a letter of June 21, 1681, Sorba recounts the awareness of a priest held in high esteem by Oliva that the pope's praise in public of the Society was of little import as it was restricted to unimportant matters and addressed to unimportant people.³¹ The extent to which the Society had lost papal favor is best illustrated by Sorba's rather melodramatic lament in a letter of August 29, 1681:

This much is true, and it has been oft repeated, and [much] deplored, that despite the close ties subordinating the Society of Jesus to the pope, the vices of a few have resulted in [the Society] being reduced to such a state, that if its sons [the Jesuits] deal with the pope or his closest ministers in non-official matters, including for the holiest and highest reasons, [the Jesuits] are declared in these events almost proscribed, excommunicated, and plague-stricken. *I am telling you for sure that if the Eternal Father [himself] were to be incarnated and live dressed as a Jesuit, and deal with the pope or with his ministers in this manner; [he, too] would incur the same disdain and the same persecutions [emphasis mine].*³²

29 The corpus of Sorba's letters housed at the Archivum Secretum Vaticanum [hereafter ASV] documents internal tensions within the Society of Jesus as well as Oliva's precarious relationship with Innocent XI (ASV, *Fondo Gesuiti*, 47). The letters often lack specific dates and any form of pagination. The letters I cite are dated, so I identify them using the dates. Overall, many letters reveal Sorba's dismay at the state of affairs within the Society, especially its relationship with the French monarch Louis XIV, which he felt was damaging its standing with the papacy. The tone of the letters indicates that Sorba's discontent may have stemmed primarily from the unfairness with which he claims to have been treated. His disparagement of Oliva's leadership of the Society should thus be taken with a grain of salt; indeed, the allegations he levels against Oliva may well be exaggerations that grew out of a personal falling out between the two Jesuits.

30 A draft of a manuscript entitled "Ricordi al P.N.N. di quelle cose che dovrà esporre alla San.tà di N. Sig.re" and a lengthy report marked "Del P. Sorba coll'assistenza de' Padri Bartoli, e Nicolò M[ari]a Pallavicino" mirror and expand upon Sorba's misgivings towards Oliva expressed in his letters, albeit in a more formal and objective manner. ASV, *Fondo Gesuiti*, 46.

31 ASV, *Fondo Gesuiti*, 47, letter dated June 21, 1681, f. 5^v.

32 Ibid., letter dated August 29, 1681, f. 2^{r-v}.

Other letters reveal the difficulty Oliva had in meeting the pope, and a letter dating to November 10, 1681, little more than a fortnight before the father general's passing, is especially pertinent because in it Sorba requests the intervention of his unnamed addressee to set up a papal appointment for Oliva.³³ Assuming Sorba's claims and request are genuine, Oliva's inability to obtain a papal appointment without external mediation attests to an extraordinary falling out with Innocent XI. Finally, a letter dating to December 14, 1681, records Innocent XI's singularly favorable reception of the officiating Jesuit superior general (Charles de Noyelle, general 1682–86) just a few weeks after Oliva had passed away. Sorba begins the letter noting the unexpected empathy with which the pontiff had received a group of Jesuit fathers; he describes their perception of the pope's warmth as "signs of the same kind of benign humanity that they might have hoped for from Gregory XIII."³⁴

Innocent XI's disdain for ostentation apart, circumstantial evidence that the Jesuits consciously avoided any subject for the Gesù apse that might have been deemed as self-celebratory, whether related to their founder or even the dedication of their Society, is to be found in an anonymous Jesuit's criticism of the proposed *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. The Jesuit in question opined that the Mystic Lamb was unsuited to the Gesù apse precisely because of its generic nature:

There is, however, an argument to be made against the design to represent in the tribune of the Gesù the said vision [*Mystic Lamb*] consisting only of the act of opening the Book by Christ appearing with the five open wounds, and the following adoration of the twenty four Elders. *And [the argument against the subject] is this: that nothing about this subject connects it specifically to the church of the Gesù, [and] it might just as easily be painted in the Minerva or the Ara Coeli etc. So, perhaps another mystery of equally majestic appearance selected from the same Apocalypse would be more appropriate for the location, and suitable for the mother church [which is] like the capital of the entire Society of Jesus [emphasis mine].*³⁵

The author of these observations then suggested an alternative subject from the third chapter of the Book of Revelation, specifically John's revelations to the angel of Philadelphia, as a more appropriate theme for the Gesù tribune because of its emphasis on Christ's name. Arguing that the "new name" referred to in Revelation 3:12 is the name "Jesus," because the patriarchs only referred to

33 Ibid., letter dated November 10, 1681, f. 1^r–v.

34 Ibid., letter dated December 14, 1681 f. 1^r.

35 ARSI, *Rom.* 143-II, ff. 252^r–53^v; published in Curziotti, *Decorazione*, 131–32 (note 138).

the savior as the Messiah or as the Christ, and that “the [name] of Jesus was new and brought by the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin when he announced the conception of the Son of God in Luke 1,” he opined that this passage offered a more suitable alternative for the theme of the fresco than the *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*.³⁶ The author of the document even argues that Abbot Joachim’s words “ordo quem designat Jesus” in his commentary on the Apocalypse written about five centuries earlier signify his belief that an order named for Jesus would appear in the church. Therefore, the author suggests, Christ could be represented in the Gesù tribune in the act of giving his name to the angel of Philadelphia, whose ten lamps would symbolize the ten early companions of the Society.³⁷

This interesting document was published by Jacopo Curzietti, who refers to it only in passing to conclude that the topic for the Gesù apse was the subject of heated debate within the Society. It seems more likely, however, that once the decision to forego *Joshua Stopping the Sun* was made, a few high-ranking Jesuits undertook pragmatic deliberations rather than a heated debate to select an appropriate alternate subject with which to decorate the Gesù apse. Likely wary of incurring Innocent XI’s displeasure if they were to decorate the Gesù apse in either an extravagant or a self-aggrandizing manner, they must have solicited opinions from various members of the order, as the manuscript cited above suggests, for its author ends with the words: “I offer these thoughts of mine with total submission to the will of whoever may best judge it.”³⁸ If such were the case, the selection of the *Mystic Lamb* for the apse vault would evidence the Society’s avoidance of any large self-referential decoration in the apse vault.

The *Angelic Concert* in the Presbytery Arch

An unexpected conundrum is presented by the *Angelic Concert* (c.1680–83) in the presbytery arch adjoining the apse, for its modest size and apparently generic theme are deceptive in light of its central location and the obviously self-referential nature of its inscription: “Vocatum est nomen eius Iesus” (Fig. 9).³⁹ While musician angels commonly decorate churches, the scroll

36 ARSI, *Rom.* 143-II, ff. 253^v; published in Curzietti, *Decorazione*, 131–32 (note 138).

37 Curzietti, *Decorazione*, 132.

38 Ibid.

39 The inscription derives from Luke 2:21: “[After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and] he was called Jesus [the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb].”

FIG. 9 *Baciccio. Angelic Concert, 1680–83, fresco. Rome, Church of the Gesù, Presbytery arch.*

recording the naming of Jesus in this representation is especially relevant to the Society. Also, since heavenly music was reportedly heard when Ignatius died, the *Concert* might just be a remnant of Oliva's original plans for the apse with a clever lyrical reference to Ignatius's passing.⁴⁰ Had Ignatius's relics been translated to the high altar, the *Concert's* spatial relation to them would have closely resembled the arrangement of music-making angels depicted above the saint's sepulcher in an illustration from a biography published in 1610 and explained in its caption: "Above the Blessed Father's tomb heavenly music is heard" (Figs. 10, 10a, 10b). If the *Concert* was indeed conceived to complement the display of Ignatius's relics, its outwardly generic nature could explain its survival after Oliva's main plans for the apse fell through.

40 Even though Ignatius's 1609 biography did not depict divine musicians, the caption of its final plate connected music with his mortal remains: "As his holy bones are translated, shining stars appear in the burial place, and heavenly singing is heard there too." John W. O'Malley, S.J., and James P.M. Walsh, S.J., eds., *Constructing a Saint Through Images: The 1609 Illustrated Biography of Ignatius of Loyola* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2008), plate 79.

FIG. 10 *Adriaen Collaert (Flemish, 1560?–1618). Vita beati patris Ignatii, 1610, Plate 14. Rome, ARSI (ARSI-Bib, 18 V, Plate 10). COURTESY OF ARSI, ROME.*

Had *Joshua Stopping the Sun* appeared above Ignatius's relics in the apse, the significance of the inscription in the *Angelic Concert* would have been heightened. The compositions in the apse vault and the presbytery arch would then both have related to the Holy Name, which is also alluded to by the high altarpiece, exalted in the nave vault, and commemorated in the inscription of the dome.⁴¹ Consequently, all the imagery along the longitudinal axis of the Gesù would have related to the Holy Name. In addition, the glorification of Ignatius, who is portrayed in the dome and in the vault of the left transept chapel, would have been augmented by subtle allusions to him embedded in *Joshua Stopping the Sun*, the *Triumph*, and the *Angelic Concert*. However, the substitution of *Joshua Stopping the Sun* by the *Mystic Lamb* in the apse vault significantly changed the manner and diminished the extent to which Ignatius is celebrated in the Gesù.

41 The inscription along the base of the Gesù dome, Philippians 2:9–10, “[Deus] donavit illi nomen, quod est super omne nomen, ut in nomine Iesu omne genu flectatur caelestium terrestrium et infernorum,” reprises that of the nave vault to celebrate the Holy Name.

FIGS. 10A,B *Adriaen Collaert, Vita beati patris Ignatii, Plate 14, Details (Music-making angels over Ignatius's tomb, above, and caption, below).*
COURTESY OF ARSI, ROME.

The Identity of the Addressee in Sorba's Letters

A final point remains to be made concerning the identity of the unnamed addressee of Sorba's letters. From the contents of the letters, it may be ascertained that he was a high-ranking prelate who enjoyed the confidence of Innocent XI to an extent that empowered him to mediate with the pope on

behalf of the Jesuits. An incidental clue in a letter dated September 2, 1681, suggests he could be Monsignor Gianfrancesco Negroni, the treasurer general of Innocent's court. In the letter, Sorba extends his sympathies to the addressee for not having been among those raised to the purple.⁴² Negroni had been passed over for a cardinalate when Innocent XI named his first batch of cardinals in 1681, and his stormy relationship with the Society and Oliva—he was the patron of the right transept chapel of the Gesù dedicated to Saint Francis Xavier—had been the cause of much friction with the Jesuits.⁴³ So headstrong was Negroni in his desire to have the chapel decorated as per his wishes and by an artist of his choosing that Oliva had even released Baciccio from his contractual obligation to decorate its transept vault.⁴⁴ The decorations Negroni then commissioned from Giovanni Andrea Carlone broke thematically as well as stylistically with those executed by Baciccio, and the Jesuits' meek acceptance of this intentional stylistic disjuncture with the decorations of the dome and vault is easily explained by the combination of the patron's strong personality and close ties to Innocent XI. Although Innocent XI did not raise him to the purple in 1681, he did so in 1686, and Negroni emerges as a likely candidate for the unnamed addressee of Sorba's letters.

Conclusion

The substitution of *Joshua Stopping the Sun* with the *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* in the apse vault of the Gesù may not have been simply a consequence

42 ASV, *Fondo Gesuiti* 47, letter dated September 2, 1681, f. 1^r.

43 The Jesuits' fears that Negroni intended to override their authority in decisions concerning the Chapel of Francis Xavier are documented in a series of letters that also detail his flaunting of his close relationships with Clement IX and Innocent XI, during whose pontificates the chapel's decorations were begun and completed, respectively. Pecchiai, *Il Gesù di Roma*, 133–37. Filippo Trevisani notes that in the Chapel of Saint Francis Xavier in the Gesù, to which Negroni had obtained the patronage rights, the coat of arms of Pope Innocent XI appears along with that of Pope Clement IX, for both pontiffs had played important roles in promoting Negroni's career. Filippo Trevisani, "Giovanni Battista Negroni committente dell'altare di S. Francesco Saverio al Gesù di Roma," *Storia dell'arte* 38–40 (1980): 361–70, here 364.

44 For the addendum absolving Baciccio from the responsibility of decorating the vault of the right transept chapel while still paying him in full based on Negroni's wishes for the chapel, see Tacchi Venturi, "Convenzioni," 151.

of Cortese's demise coupled with an accommodation of Baciccio's style, as has been accepted in scholarship thus far. Rather, the change in subject appears to have resulted from a series of interlinked factors: Ranuccio Farnese's tardiness in funding the renovation of the apse; Cortese's death; Baciccio's timely presence on the scene; and the accession of Innocent XI to the papacy following the demise of Clement x. If Sorba's letters are to be believed, they strongly suggest that the differing attitudes of Popes Clement x and Innocent XI towards General Oliva and the Jesuits, and the different views each pope held on the propriety of any lavish embellishment in the Gesù, played crucial roles in the Jesuits' decision to change the subject of the apse fresco. Originally conceived during the favorable reign of Clement x, Oliva's project for the apse was meant to promote a hagiographic association between Ignatius and Joshua. However, the ascension of Innocent XI to the papacy in 1676 seems to have played a major role in disrupting these plans. The new pope's emphasis on austerity and decorum was, it would appear, a central factor leading the Jesuits to eschew an allegorical celebration of Ignatius in favor of the considerably less controversial subject of the *Mystic Lamb*.

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