

## THE LITURGICAL FUNCTION OF MICHELANGELO'S MEDICI CHAPEL

by *L. D. Ettlinger*

*For Peter Murray as a token of 30 years of friendship*

In 1855 Jacob Burckhardt wrote in his *Cicerone* apropos of Michelangelo's Medici Chapel: *...man kann kaum entscheiden, ob er die Kapelle für seine Denkmäler baute oder die Denkmäler für die Kapelle meisselte.*<sup>1</sup> By saying this he drew attention to a problem which often has puzzled historians, but in spite of an overlong list of studies on the chapel this question has never been properly investigated. Architectural historians have considered the place of the chapel between Brunelleschi and the High Renaissance, art historians have looked at the tombs from every conceivable angle, and iconologists have written profusely about the alleged meaning of its architecture and sculpture. But the function of the chapel and the purpose for which it was planned have been strangely neglected.<sup>2</sup>

Although the term *sacristia* appears as early as 1519 (see below), in the planning stage and before building operations had begun, the room can never have been used — or even been intended — as a sacristy, because there are no cupboards for vestments, nor is space available for them, and there is no table for laying out vestments, ready for the priests. It is obvious that the designation *Sacristia* (or *Sagrestia Nuova*) was chosen out of convenience, because the groundplan shows that the New Sacristy corresponds exactly to the Old Sacristy on the south side of S. Lorenzo. Moreover, it is made clear from the beginning that this symmetry was intentional, and as we shall see presently goes in fact back to Brunelleschi's original design.<sup>3</sup>

There is no need to rehearse here the various interpretations which have been put forward since the sixteenth century. But one important consideration of method is necessary before we can offer a different one.

The many attempts to explain Michelangelo's creation share one serious shortcoming: they are based on what we see when we enter the chapel today. True, scholars have taken into account Michelangelo's surviving preparatory drawings (though they hardly agree about their sequence) and the few scraps of evidence to be gleaned from correspondence or notes left by the artist, but they still try to establish the iconography of this complex monument from purely visual evidence. The meaning of architecture and sculpture is deduced from nothing but appearance. But in terms of historical method this procedure is unsound, because it disregards the original function of the ensemble and pays no attention to the context in which the patron defined Michelangelo's task. We should first of all turn our attention to any evidence we have for the commission and we must ask whether it can throw any light on the purpose for which the New Sacristy was built. Next we must ask how the chapel was used, once architecture and monuments had been assembled.



## I

The oldest document in the case is a *Ricordanza* referring to the year 1519 and written down, though several years later, by Baptista Figiovanni, at that date a canon (and after 1534 Prior) of S. Lorenzo.<sup>4</sup> He tells with charming anecdotal detail, how one afternoon in June, just after lunch on the loggia of the Medici Palace, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici (the later Pope Clement VII) summoned him and told him behind closed doors: *Noi siamo d'animo fare una spesa di circa 50 mila appresso a San Lorenzo, la libreria et la sacrestia in compagnia di quella già fatta et nome harà di cappella, dove molti sepolcri da sepolirvi li antenati mancati di vita che sono in deposito: Lorenzo et Iuliano nostri padri et Iuliano et Lorenzo frategli et nipoti.* The Cardinal added that he hoped Figiovanni would be willing to take on the administrative burdens.

Figiovanni's account, which came to light fairly recently, confirms that the shock caused by the untimely death of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, who had died at the beginning of May, may have given the immediate impulse for erecting the New Sacristy. But it must be noted that the Cardinal clearly speaks of plans for a family mausoleum, and that in fact he refers to the burial of Lorenzo il Magnifico and his murdered brother Giuliano before he mentions the *duchi*. This is not surprising, and the sequence can hardly be due to seniority. We must remember that the choir end of San Lorenzo was reserved for burial of the Medici family. The founder of the house, Giovanni d'Averado, lies in the middle of the Old Sacristy, Cosimo il Vecchio is buried in front of the high altar under the crossing, and Piero il Gottoso with his brother Lorenzo lies under the arch separating the Old Sacristy from the chapel of the family Saints Cosmas and Damian. Room had therefore to be found for the later generations (Fig. 1).

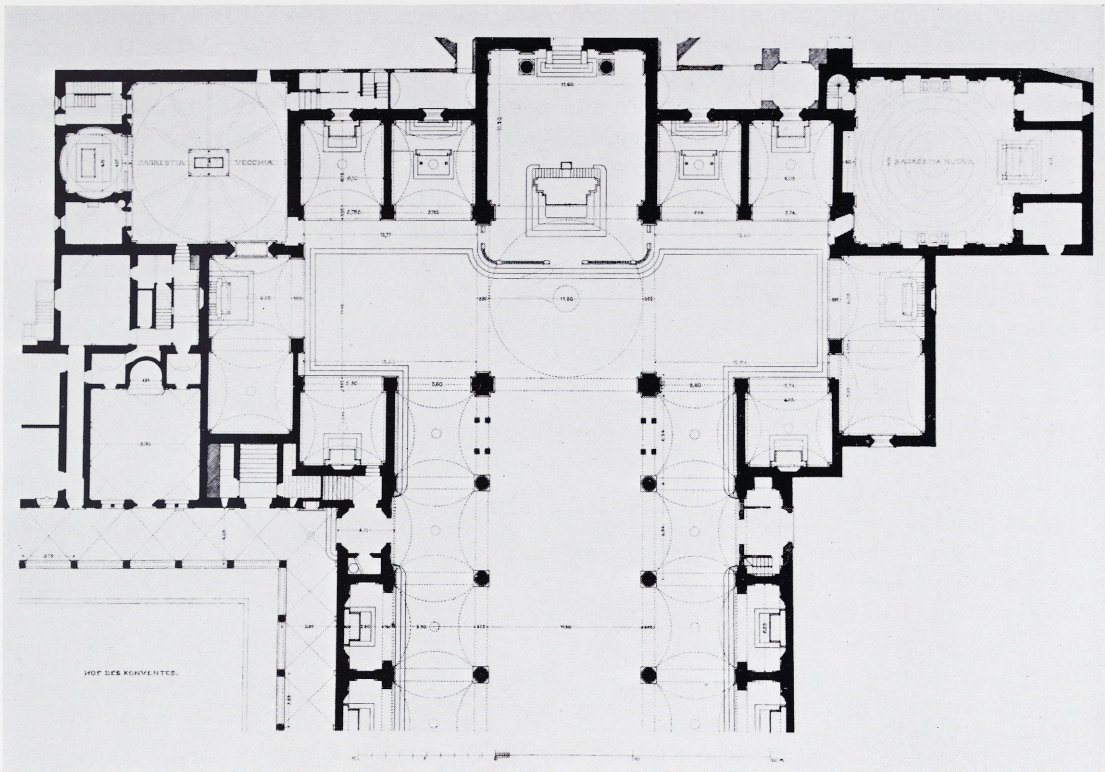
It is significant that the Cardinal explicitly speaks of a consecrated place where the four family members are to be laid to rest: *la sacrestia... nome harà di cappella*. It is also obvious from Figiovanni's *ricordanza* that the Cardinal's cousin Pope Leo X was involved in the plan from the outset, since he speaks of the *magnifici* as *nostri padri* (he was the son of Giuliano, Leo's father was Lorenzo the Magnificent) and of the Dukes as *frategli et nipoti*, confirming a statement to this effect by the contemporary historian Giovanni Cambi.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this conversation is the fact that the Cardinal did not mention the name of an architect who was to design the building, nor of a sculptor who would carve the tombs. Had he done so, Figiovanni could not have failed to mention it, all the more so, as he tells us that the Cardinal charged him with the administration of the building operations. This can only mean that initially the services of an architect were not required because the old Sacristy was to be the model for the new one, and part of the structure was already in existence.

Figiovanni tells us that he accepted the administration on condition that the finances had to be managed by someone else, as was done by appointing Bernardo Nicolini, the Cardinal's Chamberlain. Figiovanni also records that he initiated building operations with two master masons on November 4th 1519, when a number of workmen pulled down two houses, belonging to the Nelli family, and some walling of the church *da questa parte dove la sacrestia far si doveva*.<sup>6</sup>

This part of Figiovanni's account has been understood to mean that the New Sacristy was built from the ground up<sup>7</sup>, and that Vasari was wrong when he said that Michelangelo built his Medici Chapel by putting a cupola over a structure begun already by Brunelleschi.<sup>8</sup> But this does not follow from the text, and there is a solid body of evidence that Vasari, as so often, was a better historian than many of his modern detractors.





1 San Lorenzo, Groundplan of choir with Old and New Sacristy before construction of the Cappella dei Principi, after Stegmann/Geymüller.

The original entrance to the Medici Chapel in the wall of the North transept of San Lorenzo is certainly by Brunelleschi and forms an integral part of that wall, as can easily be checked on the spot. An early sixteenth century account mentions an entrance to the church from the North, and this might have been the door in question.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it is by no means certain that the two houses, which had to be demolished in 1519, actually stood on the site of the New Sacristy. They might have blocked access needed for the transport of building materials. Conversely, since several decades had gone by since building operations on that side of the church had stopped, it is feasible that the Nelli had acquired 'squatters' rights' in the unfinished structure.

A tiny Leonardo sketch datable about 1502 has been adduced to prove that no Brunelleschian structure existed at that time against the North transept of San Lorenzo.<sup>10</sup> But this conclusion surely arises from a misunderstanding of the purpose of Leonardo's drawing. It no doubt shows San Lorenzo seen from the North and a blank wall (as we would expect) where Michelangelo's chapel now rises. If this were a topographical record, why are the Nelli houses, standing there at that time, missing? But it is not a topographical sketch — something we would hardly expect from the hand of Leonardo — but a pictorial note showing the structure of Brunelleschi's famous church. It is a piece of evidence for Leonardo's well known interest in the morphology of architecture.



Finally and most important, there is archaeological evidence for the fact that Michelangelo completed a pre-existing building. It was observed, already in the nineteenth century, that the walling technique in the lower parts of the New Sacristy is identical with that employed in the Old. More recently it has been pointed out that the crypt-like chapel under the New Sacristy has characteristic Quattrocento vaulting and that remains of frescoes datable to the late fifteenth century have been found there.<sup>11</sup>

There is perhaps another slender piece of evidence, this time coming from Michelangelo himself. In the well known letter written in March 1520 when the commission for the facade of San Lorenzo was cancelled, the master gives the unidentified recipient a detailed account of his troubles and of the treatment he had received from the hands of the Medici, but he does not mention with one word that now again he is involved in a major undertaking for them.

All this leads to the inevitable conclusion, that Figiovanni could easily begin building operations without the help of a designing architect, because he was carrying on a structure begun by Brunelleschi. There is no evidence of Michelangelo's involvement with this task, and this is borne out by Figiovanni himself, who mentions Michelangelo only after naming the chief masons and after describing the early building operations.<sup>12</sup> It will be seen shortly that surviving correspondence between Michelangelo and the Cardinal (or his secretary respectively) points to the fact, that the artist was first consulted some twelve months after Figiovanni had started work with his *manovali*. The significance of this must be obvious. When Michelangelo was commissioned to make the Medici mausoleum he had to contend with the groundplan and dimensions of a building erected to be the counterpart of the Old Sacristy. What remained for him was the interior decoration, the cupola, and the design and execution of the tombs.

As mentioned, Figiovanni says that preliminary work on the chapel was done as early as November 1519. We know that in March 1520 the chapter of San Lorenzo voted funds for the building, and on its part appointed him *proveditore*.<sup>13</sup> Building operations proper — as distinct from the demolition work done earlier — were started in the same month. Yet Michelangelo's name appears for the first time in late November 1520, when he submitted a sketch to the Cardinal.

By that time Cardinal Giulio had moved to Rome, and the plans for the chapel had to be discussed by correspondence. Unfortunately Michelangelo's part is lost except for the fragment of one draft. We still have, however, one letter from the Cardinal to Michelangelo and three by his secretary written on his behalf. The Cardinal's letter is dated November 28th 1520, and is written in reply to a lost communication from Michelangelo sent on the 23rd. But a hitherto overlooked draft can only have been made for this letter. Michelangelo writes: *La sagrestia vecchia di San Lorenzo à in mezo una lapida ca. quatro braccia per ogni verso, ond' in luogo di questa nella nuova...*<sup>14</sup> Although this draft breaks off at the crucial place, its meaning is clear. Michelangelo is referring to the marble table, with Giovanni d'Averardo's tomb modestly hidden under it, in the Old Sacristy, intending to say obviously that in its place he wants to put something else in the New Sacristy. This can only have been a freestanding monumental tomb structure, as is clear from many of the master's drawings and the correspondence with Rome.<sup>15</sup>

In his reply of November 28th the Cardinal thanks Michelangelo for the *desegno o schizzo della capella*, adding *et in vero ne piace el modo havete pensato di mittere le 4 sepulture in mezzo della capella...* There is nothing here to suggest that previous consultations about the shape of the tombs had taken place. On the contrary, the Cardinal after these flattering phrases raises a significant objection: *Ma in questo mi nasce una difficoltà, che non so*



*pensare come in 4 braccia di spaccio designato per voi, di larghezza, per ogni verso, possano capere dicte sepulture.*<sup>16</sup>

It is a curious objection, on the surface made on purely aesthetic grounds. The Cardinal finds the room too small for a freestanding tomb with four sarcophagi. Surely, if Michelangelo had in mind a freestanding tomb and had been responsible for the chapel from the outset, he obviously would have planned a building large enough to house such a monument satisfactorily. But he was bound by the size of a structure which he had only to decorate and make into a family mausoleum. At this point, it seems, he was less concerned with the appearance of the interior of the chapel as a whole, than with the chance of realizing his pet idea of being allowed to put up a freestanding tomb. By 1520 he sadly knew that his dream of such a monument to Julius II would never come true.

There developed therefore a clash between the patron's wishes and the artist's ideas, and this emerges clearly from the rest of the surviving letters, all addressed from Rome by Domenico Buoninsegni, the Cardinal's secretary, to Michelangelo in Florence.

On December 14th 1520 Buoninsegni writes: *Io o parlato con Cardinale del disegno che voi facievvi circha el mettere le sepulture in mezzo la chappella... dubita non si occupi lo spazio di tal chappella...*<sup>17</sup> We do not know whether between November 28th and December 14th Michelangelo had sent further designs for a central tomb to Rome, trying to meet Cardinal Giulio's objections with regard to the relative scale between chapel and monument. In any case, by mid-December Michelangelo's suggestion for a freestanding tomb was still very much alive in the artist's mind, and Buoninsegni therefore forwards a request from the Cardinal: *Diciemi che vi priegha li mandate un pocho di schizzo d'una sola di quelle 4 faccie.* Obviously, this is new, as no reference is previously made to a design of this kind. The sentence is in fact the first reference to a wall-tomb. Nevertheless Buoninsegni adds a sentence which speaks not only of deference for the master's opinion, but also indicates respect for his well known temper when crossed: *Vogliatele mettere in mezzo o pure inelle facie della chappella... resolviate in modo che meglio vi pare.*<sup>18</sup>

In Buoninsegni's letter of December 17th the request for the design of a wall-tomb is repeated in almost identical terms, again seeking Michelangelo's opinion about the choice of either type of tomb. Still it is significant that the request for a wall-tomb design is actually made twice within a few days.<sup>19</sup>

On the 28th Buoninsegni thanks Michelangelo for a letter of the 21st. This must have been written in reply to Buoninsegni's of the 14th, because it contained the desired design for a wall-tomb. *El quale disegno subito portrai al Cardinale e li detti la vostra lettera e la lesse tutta, e tutto li piace...*<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless Michelangelo seems to have gone on nagging about a freestanding tomb, because the letter continues: *...ma dubita che quello spazio d'interno non resti meschino...* And then Buoninsegni reports the Cardinal's own solution of the space problem: *...e per questo averia pensato se, in tutta la macchina delle sepulture, fussi da fare inel mezzo un arco che trasforassi, che verrebbe a esser in ogni faccia uno arco, e intersecherebboni li aditi di questi archi inel mezzo e passerebbesi sotto.*<sup>21</sup>

This curious proposal has no precedent in tomb structures, but it has been pointed out that the Cardinal's proposal must have been inspired by a Roman arch, the so-called *Janus Quatrifrons* at the foot of the Palatine.<sup>22</sup> Giulio must have given some thought to the designing of such a strange tomb, because he goes on to make precise suggestions for the arrangement of the sarcophagi: *E in detto mezzo disegnava che, in terra, fussi la sepultura sua, e le altre sepulture li pare che doverrebbono stare alte, sopra li detti archi.*

Two things are remarkable about this plan. We find here for the first time the suggestion of a fifth Medici tomb, that of Cardinal Giulio himself. This was taken up after 1523, when Giulio had become Pope Clement VII. The question was debated for a while whether



he himself and his cousin Leo X could not be accommodated in the Medici Chapel. But by that time Michelangelo's plans for only four tombs were too far advanced to allow so drastic a change in arrangement.<sup>23</sup>

More important is perhaps the 'compromise' character of the arch design. The four sarcophagi for the *duchi* and the *magnifici* would have been raised above the archways, the Cardinal's own tomb was to be under the crossing of the passage-ways. Thus circulation through the chapel would be easier than in a room the middle of which was taken up by a solid monument, as first suggested by Michelangelo. At the same time views across the chapel would be less obstructed. But Michelangelo seems to have been little enamoured of this proposal, because his drawings for it are rather sketchy, and never reach that stage of exploration as do those for a freestanding structure or for wall-tombs.<sup>24</sup>

Even at this stage the Cardinal is careful not to dictate any plan to Michelangelo: *Non dimeni dicie che sa che ve ne intendere piu di lui, e a voi ne rapporta*. All this sounds like a last effort to dissuade Michelangelo from putting up a freestanding monumental structure in the centre of the chapel.

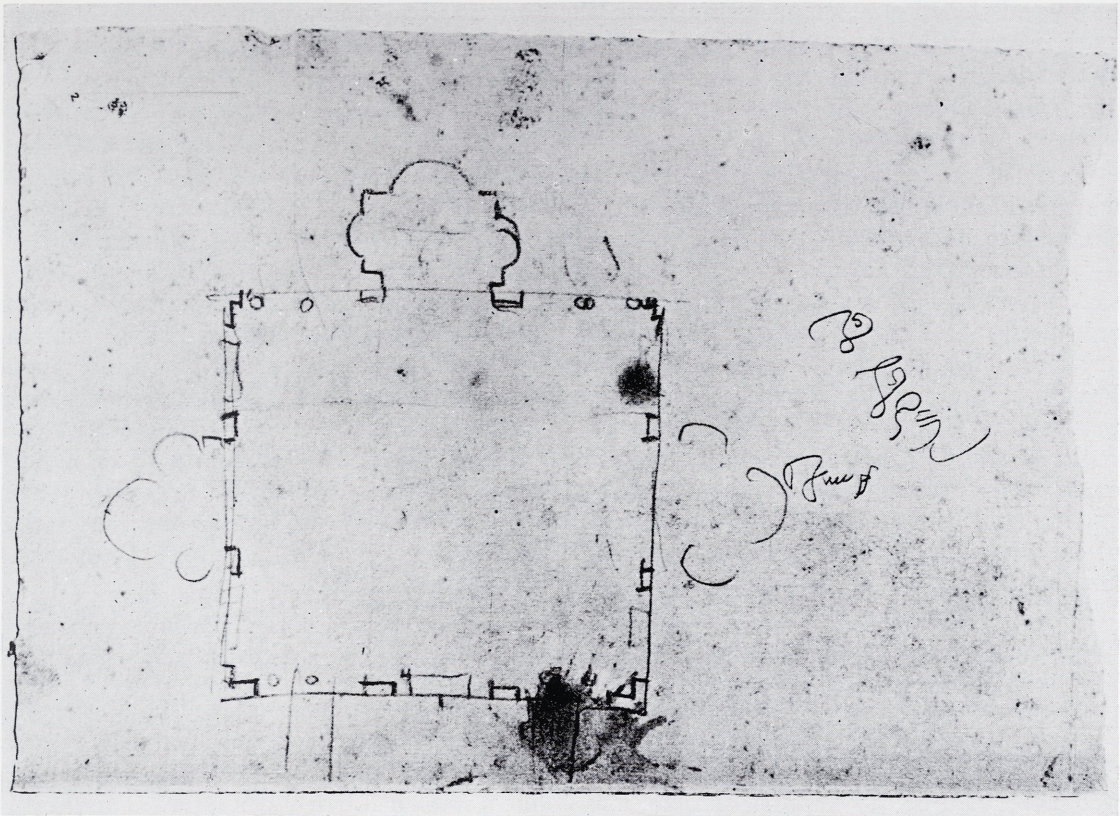
Unfortunately no correspondence survives to throw light on the further genesis of the Medici Chapel. But it must have been at this stage, that Michelangelo drew the only surviving groundplan, the famous drawing in the Archivio Buonarroti (Fig. 2).<sup>25</sup> This plan cannot represent Michelangelo's earliest notions, because there is no central tomb, but four — perhaps even five — wall-tombs are clearly indicated. There are also indications that he was no longer slavishly clinging to the Old Sacristy as a model. The *capeletta*, or choirniche, differs considerably from that of the Old Sacristy by having a deeper apse and deeper lateral niches. The pilasters used by Brunelleschi to articulate only the choirwall and chancel arch are now employed all round the room. In our context it is irrelevant whether the lateral rapidly sketched chapels are part of Michelangelo's original proposal, or are by another hand. But if they are by Michelangelo — as I believe they are, particularly as they match the otherwise empty sections of the sidewalls — they too would show us a stage of the master's architectural thinking which has moved a considerable distance from a mere copy of Brunelleschi's work.<sup>26</sup>

Taking all these considerations together, it seems that this drawing is to be dated to the very beginning of 1521, that is to the time when the Cardinal had at last persuaded Michelangelo to give way and forgo the challenge of making a freestanding tomb. If we look at this groundplan and at the chapel as it appears today, it is obvious that important changes in lay-out took place. Still, Michelangelo's drawing is for a room in which the centre is left free, and this can only have resulted from the correspondence between Rome and Florence.

When Michelangelo sketched this plan he still thought of putting the tombs in the traditional manner against the walls, flanking them with pilasters. Opposite the choirniche a fifth structure, also framed by pilasters, is indicated. It might be another tomb — that of Cardinal Giulio, because the letter of December 28th had implied his wish to be buried with his family — but it could also be the base for the 'retable', the figures of the Virgin and the Medici Saints Cosmas and Damian. A decision between these possibilities cannot be made on the basis of evidence available. But it should be noted that the carving of a Madonna was Michelangelo's intention as early as 1521, when he ordered a suitable block of marble from Carrara.<sup>27</sup>

We do not know how or when the decision to have wall-tombs was finally reached, but it must have been early in 1521 soon after the letters just discussed. Michelangelo had now to come to terms with a building begun by Brunelleschi, and this he did by adding to its





2 Michelangelo, Groundplan sketch for the Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo. Florence, Archivio Buonarroti vol. I, 77, f. 210 v.

height, putting on a cupola, and by using for the interior a system of architectural decoration which can no longer be called an imitation of the Old Sacristy. Most important in this respect is perhaps the division into four instead of three horizontal zones and the sophisticated placing of the windows which ensures an even light at all times.

As to the Cardinal, why should he have been so determined to dissuade Michelangelo from erecting a freestanding tomb in the centre of the new chapel? His reasons are unlikely to have been purely aesthetic, even if he expresses his doubts about the size of Michelangelo's monument. There is no evidence that Clement's patronage was much concerned with artistic merit. He must have been aware of the prestige attached to a freestanding tomb, and there was precedent of a sort for such tombs in the burials of his own family in San Lorenzo. When Michelangelo first suggested a freestanding monument he wanted to remind the Cardinal of such precedent by referring to the arrangement in the Old Sacristy, where Giovanni di Averardo and his wife lie in a modest sarcophagus right in the centre. Cosimo il Vecchio, in accordance with his wishes, was not given a monument, but has an inscribed tombstone under the crossing.<sup>28</sup> Piero il Gottoso was given a tomb halfway between a wall-tomb and a freestanding one when Verrocchio's noble porphyry and bronze sarcophagus was placed under an open arcade between the Old Sacristy and the Chapel of SS. Cosmas and Damian.<sup>29</sup> All this was ignored by the Medici Cardinal when



he commissioned a new mausoleum from Michelangelo. The groundplan dated here to early 1521 is obviously the result of the demands for open space in the chapel and tombs along the walls.

## II

In order to understand this groundplan and the present arrangement of the Medici Chapel we must remember that Figiovanni explicitly states that the Cardinal wanted the New Sacristy to be a chapel, that is a consecrated room fit for services.<sup>30</sup> But such services — whatever their nature — would have been impeded if the centre of this comparatively small room had been taken up by a towering massive monument, leaving narrow passages only along its flanks. Furthermore, if the altar in the *capeletta* were placed in the customary position, the officiating priest at memorial masses and Offices for the Dead would have had the tomb behind his back, thus turning away from the Medici from whom he was praying.

What the Cardinal had in mind when he wanted a chapel for the tombs of his family emerges from the arrangements he ordered to be made for services in the Medici Chapel. We have to ask whether its liturgical function did not determine its lay-out and the placing of the tombs in the side walls and opposite the altar niche. The information needed to answer this question comes from a Bull issued by Clement VII.<sup>31</sup>

Giulio, disappointed in his hopes for the tiara on the death of his cousin Leo X in 1521, followed Hadrian VI and became Pope in 1523. At that moment the structure of the chapel was far from ready, to say nothing of the tombs. In fact just at that time Michelangelo complained about delays. However, by 1524 the lantern was in its place and the cupola was ready to receive its painted decorations, though curiously enough Giovanni da Udine did not get to work at them until 1532/3. Progress on the tombs was also slow. Lorenzo's was completed in the summer of 1526, and Giulio's not until five years later. This means that there was little sense in holding memorial services in the Medici Chapel before the early fifteen-thirties, not to mention the fact that the room must have been cluttered with the marble blocks on which Michelangelo was working. The date of the Bull fits therefore perfectly into the building history of the chapel.

It was issued on November 14th 1532, and the provisions for the services to be held in the new chapel, dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ, are spelt out in great detail. The financial arrangements allowing payment for the officiating clergy are complex, but fortunately need not detain us here beyond saying that ample sums had to be available since the Pope wished to add four new *capellani* to conduct the services required by him.

Their duties are carefully described: *...ordinamus quod... inibi tres Missae per dd. quatuor Cappellanos singulis diebus celebrentur... et in eorum Missis Orationem pro Defunctis, vel praeterquam in Festis duplicibus et solemnibus generaliter, ac Dominicis diebus Missas ipsas de defunctis dicere...*<sup>32</sup>

Such a regulation is not unusual. The appointment of additional clergy for the saying of special masses or offices for the dead was in the first place a matter of wealth, and the frequency of such services depended therefore on the sums given by patrons. When Giovanni di Bicci founded the Old Sacristy he gave money for services to be held there, and the sum was increased in 1429 by Cosimo il Vecchio, for whom in turn similar provisions were made on his death in 1464.<sup>33</sup> Usually such donations were attached to family chapels.

But Clement wanted something special for this new chapel in memory of members of the Medici family: *...ac quidem in d. Cappella singulis diebus die noctuque absque intermissione praeterquam dum et quotiens Missae in eadem cappella celebrantur, psalterium davidicum simpliciter et devote ac voce intelligibili psallatur et recitetur.*<sup>34</sup> Two of the new *cap-*



*pelani* as well as the previously appointed ones and the canons will take two hourly turns in this psalter recital. But it was not only the entire psalter which was recited in this way: *In fine quoque cuiuslibet psalmi dicto versiculo Gloria patri, dicatur illa oratio quae ordinata fuerit in psalterio post quemlibet psalmum, et post orationem cuiuslibet nocturni dicatur Antiphona Si iniquitates cum psalmo de profundis, et versiculo Requiem aeternam et cum reiteratione antiphonae... et oratione Fidelium pro Defunctis, et semper in fine psalterii post orationem dicatur antiphona Exultabunt Domino cum psalmo Miserere mei Deus, et cum precibus et oratione pro defunctis, ut praeferatur, et deinde psalterium de novo incipiatur a capite ac psallatur et recitetur modo et ordine supradictis.*

The Bull, in short, ordered uninterrupted services: three masses per day had to be said, and during the rest of the time, by day and night, the whole psalter was recited, each psalm being followed by a prayer. Such continuous intercession is unique in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Not surprisingly the clergy of San Lorenzo eventually found that they could not maintain praying at this rate. They got some relief from Urban VIII in 1629, who abolished the psalter recital at night, and a further reduction took place after the Medici had lost power in Florence, when in 1807 *una sola recita dell'intero saltero per cadaun mese* was required.<sup>35</sup>

The masses must have followed the traditional liturgy and will not have contained any special features apart from the prayers for the salvation of the Medici. But the psalter is something unusual. Fortunately its text survives. Even if the original manuscript has long since perished, we have a printed text of 1573, which, although it was mentioned as early as 1813 by San Lorenzo's matchless historian Domenico Moreni, has so far escaped notice.<sup>36</sup>

The titlepage reads: *Psalterium David, Secundum vulgatam Bibliorum editionem, cum suis Orationibus in finem Cuiuslibet Psalmi; Iuxta Formam Clementis Septimi Pont. Max.* This reappears on p. I. preceding the first psalm with the addition: *Ad exorandum Deum pro Serenissimis Mediceis, tum vivis, tum defunctis, in insigni Ecclesia S. Laurentij, ab ipsis a fundamentis erecta.* The edition is dedicated to Grandduke Francesco I, and the Chapter paid for the cost of printing.

The *Dedication* tells us why this text *iuxta formam et ordinationem Clementis VII* had to be printed: *Codices enim quibus ad psallendum nostri Sacerdotes hactenus usi sunt, adeo laceri, adeoque attriti ex assiduo psallendi usu, die noctuque, ut vix legi possent, erant.* Pope Clement, Francesco is told, added the chapel dedicated to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ to the church built by the Grandduke's ancestors. *Quod marmoreis statuīs a Michelangelo Buonarota ad sepulcra Medicea solido de marmore miro artificio fabrefacta posuit; nec non testudineo opere magnifice exornavit.* The services are also explained in some detail and attention is drawn to the intercession prayers *die noctuque sine intermissione.* These Clement introduced, both for the sake of the dead and the living, because he knew *ad placandum, promerendumque Deum Optimum Maximum nihil precibus aut oratione prestantius nihil utilius... excogitare posse,* and the Apostle Paul is invoked to support this view. The Grandduke is also told that he may use this psalter for his private devotions, *et ne a capite ad calcem... totum Psalterium tibi legendum sit, habes in fine cuiuslibet Psalmi eas preculas et orationes in epitomen, seu breviarum totius Psalmi redactas: quae quidem non modo sine tedio, sed etiam cum voluptate leguntur.*<sup>37</sup>

The character of these prayers may be gauged from two examples, the prayers following psalms I and III. They are always preceded by the indication: *Oratio.* Psalm I: *Effice nos domine tanquam fructuosissimum lignum ante conspectum tuum, ut tuis imbris irrigati mereamur tibi suavium fructuum ubertate placere, per Christum dominum nostrum.* Psalm III:



*Effunde domine benedictionem tuam super populum, ut tua resurrectione univiti non timeamur ab adversario vitiorum millibus circumdari, per dominum nostrum.*<sup>38</sup>

All prayers in one form or another ask God for salvation and some refer to the Resurrection (e.g. psalms IX, XV, XX, XXXXVIII, LXXV etc.), others, like the Requiem Mass, refer to the *Lux aeterna* (e. g. psalms XXXV, XLII, XLV, LXXII, CIX, etc.) It is obvious that all these prayers were written with intercession for the living and dead in mind. But none of them ever refer to members of the Medici family.

This is hardly surprising. The phrase on the titlepage *iuxta formam Clementis VII* does not mean that these prayers were written for the occasion on his orders. It rather means that they were composed in accordance with a formula prescribed by him. In fact, they can be traced back to early Christian times and probably date from the fifth or sixth century. Their author is not known, but the name of Cassiodorus has been suggested, albeit with proper caution.<sup>39</sup>

The textual transmission of this psalter with prayers after each psalm still awaits further research, particularly for the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance. A fair number of manuscripts is extant dating from the eighth to the thirteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Still this devotional book did not fall into disuse. Leroquais lists six copies for the fifteenth century. The Vatican Library owns a beautifully written and illuminated copy (ms. Barb. Lat 482) dated 1459, which from its fine appearance — the prayers are written in gold lettering — must have been made for a wealthy patron. No doubt, further search would bring to light more examples.

The popularity of the prayers in particular is proved in yet another way. They are included, sometimes separated from the psalms or even without them, in collections of prayers. This happens not only in medieval devotional books, but as late as the mid-sixteenth century. For our purposes the most important text containing each psalm followed by a prayer — identical with those of the Medici psalter — is Ludolph of Saxony's commentary on the psalms.<sup>41</sup>

The author was a fourteenth century theologian who changed from the Dominican Order to the Carthusians, and is supposed to have ended his days (d. 1377) in seclusion. He is best known for his *Vita Christi*, a series of devotional reflections on the life of Christ, intermingled with quotations from the Fathers, doctrinal disquisitions, and prayers. The book was very popular in the late Middle Ages and even later, as can be concluded from the many manuscript copies and printed editions. It greatly influenced Ignatius of Loyola when he wrote his *Exercitia*.

Ludolph also composed a *In Psalterium Expositio*, which is rather elaborate. Each psalm has a Latin *titulus*, a christological heading which, like the psalter prayers, goes back to early Christian times.<sup>42</sup> All psalms are broken up into sections, each followed by a commentary drawn from standard sources. At the end of each psalm follows the traditional prayer. The book was still popular and widely used in the fifteenth century, since it was first printed in 1491 (twice both in Paris and in Speyer). Another edition appeared in Venice in 1521. The date of this Italian printing should be noted.

There can be no doubt that the text of these combined psalms and prayers was available to Clement and his theological advisers when they planned the devotions for the Medici Chapel. Ludolph's text may even give us a partial answer to the question, why the psalms should have been chosen for uninterrupted intercession. For in the *Prohemium* Ludolph calls the psalter a *spirituale documentum* and lists the many benefits it bestows upon its users. Among them the most interesting in our context are the following: *Cum pro defunctis decantatur, tunc sunt verba animae de supplicio at deum clamantis.* And he also says: *Dum cogitas psalmos, Christus in tua mente est. Dum ore decantas Christus in*



*ore tuo est... Christus... omnium psalmarum materia et intentio.*<sup>43</sup> In giving this role to the psalms Ludolph reiterates views which can be traced back to the beginnings of Christianity.

For the Christian Church the psalter was at all times the most popular and most widely used book of the Old Testament. For example St. Benedict insisted that it be recited every week, and in the fifteenth century St. Antoninus advised three recitals per week, with an extra one on feast days.<sup>44</sup> All psalms are, of course, included in the Breviary, and when in 1568 the revised version of the Council of Trent was published, the traditional recital of the entire psalter during the course of every single week was maintained, as was also done recently by the second Vatican Council.

The use of psalms as prayers for the dead can also be traced back to early Christian times. Already in the fourth century the psalter was recited during the interval between death and the *Missa Exsequialis*, and St. Augustine records a similar ceremony after the death of his mother, St. Monica. The practice persisted for centuries<sup>45</sup>, and the *Consuetudines* of various monasteries, particularly Benedictine, speak of it as late as the fifteenth century. However, in general we find such services either following immediately upon death and preceding the burial, or as commemoration on the anniversary of death. Moreover, the practice seems to have been confined to monastic use.<sup>46</sup> We also have reports of psalmody as part of devotions through contemplation, unconnected with intercession for the dead. It is perhaps not surprising that only monastic houses were able to hold services of this kind, but even they ran into difficulties unless two or three teams were available who could take turns in reciting all psalms, a long and strenuous exercise. It has therefore been suggested that the substitution of the Seven Penitential Psalms and the *Officium Mortuorum* probably resulted from the desire to overcome such difficulties.<sup>47</sup>

The so-called *laus perennis*, the continuous intercession, is an intensified form of these occasional psalter prayers for the dead, because God is implored and praised without interruption on their behalf, and the ceremony is perpetual. Clearly the masses and psalter recitals with their prayers, as performed in the Medici Chapel, are aptly described by this term.

Unfortunately the history of the *laus perennis* has been insufficiently studied so far, and our knowledge is confined to a few instances, all belonging to the period between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, and all recorded for Northern Europe. It was certainly a monastic institution, and it was also so costly an affair, that only royalty could afford such constant praying. The best known example occurs at Saint-Maurice (Agaunum) in Switzerland, where according to the sixth century rules of the founder, Sigismund of Burgundy, prayers for the royal house had to be said without intermission, and such services were held for the benefit of the living and the dead. Groups of monks performed these duties in turn, unlike in serving at the canonic hours, in which everybody took part.<sup>48</sup> Charles III ordered in 918 that in the chapel of the palace at Compiègne a *custodia canonicorum* must pray day and night for himself and his wife. They must chant certain psalms of which the King himself compiled a list. The clergy were paid for services from funds given specially for this purpose by the founder.<sup>49</sup>

As pointed out earlier, Clement would have had no difficulty in finding the psalter and the collects. He also would have known of psalter recitals for the souls of the dead, which at least among the Orders were still practised in his day.<sup>50</sup> But how he knew about the *laus perennis* cannot be decided until we know more about this form of intercession and its history.



## III

The elaborate liturgical arrangements ordained by Clement VII are unique for their day. There are, as is well known, many examples, of family chapels or mausolea in which a limited number of masses for the dead had to be said at fixed intervals, such as daily, weekly or annually.

Clement, up to a point, could rely on precedent and invoke family tradition. When Giovanni di Bicci gave money for the building of the Old Sacristy, he also endowed two new canonries. One belonged to the Sacristy, which is dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, the other was for the adjoining chapel of SS. Cosmas and Damian, the Medici patron Saints. The new canons were appointed to say masses for the salvation of the family: *pro celebratione missarum... ac pro sua ejusque parentum ac amicorum animarum salute*. When Giovanni himself died in 1428 his sons Cosimo and Lorenzo gave 900 fiorini *per augmento del culto divino, per l'anima del padre, e per uffizi, a piacimento del Capitolo*. The chapter decided that, apart from the already instituted masses, an extra Office of the Dead was to be said each Monday *pro remedio salutis animae... egregii viri Johannis ac filiorum, atque descendentium et amicorum suorum*.<sup>51</sup>

It is noteworthy that Ferdinando I in his will of 1592 made provisions for memorial services, which echo those of Clement VII, even if their scale is more restricted. He expressed the wish to be buried in the Capella dei Principi, and he urged its speedy completion. In this chapel a mass for his ancestors was to be said every morning, and after evening service the Seven Penitential Psalms had to be recited.<sup>52</sup> Clement's desire to have a consecrated mausoleum with specific services fits therefore into a pronounced family tradition.

When Leo X and his cousin first planned a new burial place for their family as a counterpart to the Old Sacristy, they were not only thinking of a counterpart in architectural terms. The New Sacristy, like its forerunner, was to be a burial place suitable for religious ceremonies, and the term *capella* occurs already in the Medici Cardinal's preliminary announcement to Figiovanni, as we have seen. Giulio's hesitation about accepting Michelangelo's plans for a monumental freestanding tomb, richly decorated with sculptures and large enough to house four sarcophagi, was clearly based on more than aesthetic objections. How could proper services be held in a chapel filled, almost literally, with so large a structure? His own curious proposal to have the tombs placed on a pierced arch — the *Janus Quatrifrons* plan — makes sense only, if we think of the liturgical use of the chapel. The most obvious earlier example of a freestanding Italian tomb, Antonio Pollaiuolo's for Sixtus IV in St. Peter's — took up less space in relation to the chapel in which it was placed, and it did not rise high above the floor.<sup>53</sup> The tomb of Martin V in S. Giovanni in Laterano is below floor level in the *confessio* in front of the High Altar. In neither case, therefore, would the presence of a tomb have obstructed services.

The function of the Medici Chapel with its services of intercession must have determined the lay-out of the interior. As far as we know, the New Sacristy was not a place for public worship. It was intended, from the outset, as a burial place where private services for the departed could be held. It falls therefore into the long tradition of Florentine family chapels, which were of a private nature. A priest prayed at certain times for the souls of the departed — often also for the living — but normally not even members of the patrons' family were present.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, a Bull issued by Paul V and an inscription on the front of the altar promise indulgences for priests who pray at it, but does not mention faithful laymen attending masses in the chapel.<sup>55</sup> Finally, the key to the nature of the chapel and its services is provided by the highly unusual position of the altar and the place of the Madonna with the Medici Saints.





3 Medici Chapel, Interior from the south, facing the altar.

The altar stands on the outer edge of the raised sanctuary, well away from the rear wall, leaving no space in front for an officiating priest, who therefore has to stand behind it, facing across the chapel and looking toward the Madonna with SS. Cosmas and Damian (Fig. 3). Today's arrangement, although only a fragment, was planned by Michelangelo who, as is clear from his drawings, wanted to incorporate these three figures into the double tomb of the 'Magnifici', the *sepoltura di testa*, as he called it in one of his letters. The term is significant, because it stresses the importance of the wall opposite the altar.<sup>56</sup>

In the Old Sacristy the altar was in its traditional position. Since it is always said that the New was to be the counterpart of the Old, this difference is significant. The Old Sacristy had to serve three functions: it was sacristy, burial place and chapel. The New, on the other hand, has one function only: it was designed for burials and the commemorative services connected with them. The place of the priest was determined by this function.

It is natural that during any prayer for the dead the priest should turn towards the Madonna, for she is the most important intercessor for their souls. In this role she is invoked again and again, and most important in this respect is the Collect for deceased relatives in the Requiem Mass: *Deus veniae largitor et humanae salutis amator, quaesumus clementiam*



*tuam, ut nostrae congregationis fratres, propinquos et benefactores, qui ex hoc saeculo transierunt, Beata Maria semper Virgine intercedente cum omnibus sanctis tuis, ad perpetuam beatitudinem consortium pervenire concedas.* Even the type of Mary finally chosen by Michelangelo was due to this role. The *Madonna lactans* shows the Virgin in the very act which gives her the power to intercede for the dead.<sup>57</sup> Thus, during services, the priest and the Dukes, engaged in a common cause, turn to the Virgin, above whom in the lunette was to be painted the promise of the raising of all dead, the Resurrection of Christ.

It is almost certain that this telling scene was to be placed there. As will be remembered, the Medici Chapel is dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ, and it would have been unusual if the imagery of the chapel had not expressed this in a prominent place, preferably in conjunction with the altar. A number of Michelangelo's Resurrection drawings datable to the early fifteen-thirties, might have been done in preparation for such a representation in the New Sacristy, particularly since their composition seems designed for a lunette.<sup>58</sup> We know from a letter by Giovanni da Udine that some, unfortunately unspecified, paintings, apart from the grotesque in the cupola, were planned.<sup>59</sup>

The imagery on the wall opposite the altar — Virgin, Saints, and Resurrection — was clearly occasioned by the liturgy, because with the priest turned towards it, this wall took the place on an altarpiece before which appropriate devotions occurred. Thus, paradoxically, the relationship between altar and altarpiece is the normal one, even if the space of the chapel intervenes between them. But this arrangement was conditioned by the special character of the Medici Chapel. The *Magnifici*, as befits their rank, are placed nearest to the Madonna. The priest and the *duchi* are turned in her direction. The logic of this disposition can still be seen today if one stands behind the altar.

The liturgical function of the chapel could hardly have been expressed more forcefully. This was to be a place for uninterrupted intercession for the dead and living members of the founders' family, and we may ask, whether Leo and Giulio had a *laus perennis* already in mind, when they commissioned the New Sacristy. Unfortunately there is no evidence which allows us to answer this question, but it seems likely.

We have no documents which speak of the highly original arrangements in the Medici Chapel, but its creator can only have been Michelangelo. In the last analysis all the elements come from the tradition of Florentine family chapels and tombs, but they have been combined in a strikingly original fashion.<sup>60</sup> When he was denied his favorite scheme for a freestanding monument — probably for liturgical reasons, as argued above — Michelangelo created instead a unified structure of a very different kind. All his life imbued with Christian beliefs, the never faltering spiritual inspiration of his art, he fashioned from architecture and sculpture a grandiose monument born from its religious function. The perpetual intercession ordered by Pope Clement had been made tangible when the whole chapel was directed toward the promise of salvation and resurrection of the dead.

The celebrated sculptures representing the *Times of Day* fit perfectly into this Christian context. They do so in several respects. They personify earthly time to which the Medici, like all mortals, are subject. Michelangelo himself confirmed this when he makes Day and Night say, that in their swift course they have led Duke Giuliano to his death.<sup>61</sup> The same view is still found in Bocchi-Cinelli, who speaking of the four figures say that they symbolize *il tempo da cui seguendo la morte e la vita nostra consumata*.<sup>62</sup>

It should be remembered that Michelangelo himself mentions by name only two of the figures: Day and Night.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps this is not fortuitous but indicates that for him these had special significance, because in Christian tradition they stand for death and resurrection: *Dies moritur in noctem... Ita lux amissa lugetur et tamen rursus cum suo culto, cum dote, cum sole, eadem et integra et tota, universo orbi reviviscit, interficiens mortem suam noctem*.<sup>64</sup>



The *Rivers* should also be interpreted in a Christian sense. Although at one time Michelangelo had to plan for five or even six tombs, it seems that he never thought of more than four *Rivers*. They can, therefore, in the context of the symbolism of the chapel, only have been meant as representations of the Rivers of Paradise.<sup>65</sup>

Another feature peculiar to the Medici Chapel may also be due to the Christian beliefs which inspired Michelangelo. Visitors are always struck by the remarkably even light which fills the room. This is so, because Michelangelo consciously chose an arrangement of the windows — consciously, because it differs from that of the Old Sacristy — which gives at all times of day and in all weathers a mild and unchanging illumination without any strong shadows. In fact, it is impossible to guess the time of day when one is inside the chapel.<sup>66</sup> We may therefore ask whether perhaps the *lux aeterna*, so frequently mentioned in the Requiem and often referred to in the prayers accompanying the psalms, is hinted at in this subtle way. This hypothesis is strengthened, if we remember that the cupola, by itself a symbol of the Dome of Heaven, was originally decorated by Giovanni da Udine with *bellissimi fogliami, rosoni... uccelli* etc. All these, as is well known, are traditional symbols of Paradise.<sup>68</sup>

Perhaps we can now answer Burckhardt's question (see above p. 287). In 1519 two members of the Medici family decided to complete the counterpart to the Old Sacristy and make this building into a mausoleum where by the tombs constant prayers for the salvation of the living and dead Medici were to be said. As long as this basic function was fulfilled, Michelangelo's genius was given freedom, and once the Cardinal had dissuaded him from putting up a big freestanding structure, he could tell him that his main concern was to get something from his hand.

Family chapels were usually dedicated to the patron Saint of a family or of the founder. When Leo and Giulio built a chapel dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ, they emphasized in an eloquent manner its liturgical function. They had in mind the spiritual fortune of the powerful family, and it is not surprising that Clement thought of having the two Medici Popes buried with their relatives.

Exactly in the middle of the psalter, after the 75th psalm,<sup>1</sup> occurs a prayer asking God for an understanding of the resurrection and the Last Judgment: *...a montibus eternis descendat illuminatio tua super nos mirabiliter, ut resurrectionis tuae gloriam suscipiamus, et futuri iudicii ignominia careamus, per Christum Dominum nostrum.*<sup>69</sup> These are the concepts which shaped the plan and the imagery of the New Sacristy. The uninterrupted intercession became in a truly physical sense an *Ewige Anbetung*.<sup>70</sup> But in the Medici Chapel the dead do not kneel in prayer on their sarcophagi, as they do on Baroque tombs. The action of prayer is not frozen into a marble representation. The priests were ordered to kneel in eternity asking for the salvation of the family which visible and invisible is silently present around them.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> J. Burckhardt, Gesamtausgabe, vol. III, 1923, p. 291.

<sup>2</sup> H. von Einem is exceptional among recent historians in stressing the Christian character of the Medici Chapel. See his Michelangelo (transl. by R. Taylor, 1973), pp. 92 ff. and Die Medici Madonna Michelangelos (Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G 190), 1973. But as early as 1908 F. X. Kraus, Geschichte der christlichen Kunst, ed. J. Sauer, vol. II/2, pp. 613 f. had firmly stated that the imagery of the chapel was created *um den Weg anzugeben, der zum Vater emporführt, und auf dem die Mater Misericordiae als Schirm und Schutzwehr dem Aufwärtsstrebenden beisteht.*



- <sup>3</sup> G. Cambi, *Istorie* (in: *Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani*, vol. XXII), 1786, p. 161 uses the phrase *a riscontro della Vecchia Sacrestia*.
- <sup>4</sup> A. Parronchi, 'Una „Ricordanza“ del Figiovanni sui lavori della Cappella e della Libreria Medicee, in: *Opere Giovanili di Michelangelo*, (Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere „La Colombaria“, Studi X) 1968, pp. 165 ff. Figiovanni's text is printed on pp. 168-171, and all our quotations are taken from there.
- <sup>5</sup> Cambi, loc. cit.
- <sup>6</sup> Parronchi, op. cit., p. 169.
- <sup>7</sup> Parronchi, op. cit., p. 173.
- <sup>8</sup> Vasari-Milanesi, vol. VII, p. 192. See also J. Ackerman, *The Architecture of Michelangelo*, vol. II, 1961, pp. 22 ff.
- <sup>9</sup> Cambi, loc. cit.
- <sup>10</sup> J. Wilde, *Michelangelo's Designs for the Medici Tombs*, in: *Warburg Journal*, XVIII, 1955, p. 56.
- <sup>11</sup> C. de Tolnay, *Corpus dei Disegni di Michelangelo*, vol. II, 1976, p. 23. See also Ackerman, loc. cit.; Paatz, *Kirchen*, vol. II, pp. 467 f. and p. 482.
- <sup>12</sup> Parronchi, op. cit., p. 169.
- <sup>13</sup> C. de Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, vol. III, *The Medici Chapel*, 1970, pp. 52 ff. Paatz, loc. cit.
- <sup>14</sup> P. Barocchi (ed.), *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*, vol. II, 1967, p. 259.
- <sup>15</sup> Tolnay, *Corpus*, 180v, 182r, 183r, 183v, 184v, and *Medici Chapel*, pp. 33-41.
- <sup>16</sup> Barocchi, p. 260.
- <sup>17</sup> Barocchi, p. 264.
- <sup>18</sup> ibd.
- <sup>19</sup> Barocchi, p. 267.
- <sup>20</sup> Barocchi, p. 268.
- <sup>21</sup> ibd.
- <sup>22</sup> Tolnay, *Medici Chapel*, pp. 36 f., figs. 86-88.
- <sup>23</sup> Tolnay, *Medici Chapel*, pp. 76 ff.
- <sup>24</sup> Tolnay, *Corpus*, 181r, 182r, 184r.
- <sup>25</sup> Tolnay, *Corpus*, p. 23 and fol. 178v. The drawing was discovered by Tolnay and first discussed by him: *Die Handzeichnungen Michelangelos im Archivio Buonarroti*, in: *Münchener Jb.*, V, 1928, pp. 379 ff.
- <sup>26</sup> Ackerman, op. cit., p. 23 calls the two doodled chapels on the site walls a fantasy that neighbouring structures and streets made impractical. Tolnay, who had originally doubted whether they were by Michelangelo, now accepts their authenticity, see *Corpus*, loc. cit. It should be noted that they appear opposite the empty spaces on the side walls, between the projected tombs.
- <sup>27</sup> P. Barocchi, *L. Bardeschi*, *I Ricordi di Michelangelo*, 1970, p. 105; *Vasari-Barocchi*, vol. III, pp. 935 f. See also Tolnay, *Medici Chapel*, p. 58.
- <sup>28</sup> V. Herzner, *Die Kanzeln Donatellos in San Lorenzo*, in: *Münchener Jb.*, XXIII, 1972, pp. 109 ff. suggested that the *Resurrection* plate was designed for a tomb of Cosimo il Vecchio, which was never executed, but his arguments are not convincing.
- <sup>29</sup> Piero (died 1469) is buried in the sarcophagus with his brother Giovanni (died 1463). Giuliano (murdered 1478) and Lorenzo il Magnifico (died 1492) were also buried in this tomb, but their remains were transferred to the New Sacristy in 1559 by order of Cosimo I. For the relevant documents see G. Passavant, *Verrocchio*, 1969, pp. 172 f.
- <sup>30</sup> see above p. 288.
- <sup>31</sup> Archivio San Lorenzo, 326. The document lacks signature and seal, and must be a contemporary copy. The text is printed by D. Moreni, *Continuazione delle memorie storiche ...di San Lorenzo*, vol. II, 1817, pp. 468 ff. See also D. Moreni, *Delle tre sontuose Cappelle Medicee situate nell'imp. Basilica di San Lorenzo*, 1813, p. 152, where for the first time reference is made to the various services and extracts from the Bull are quoted.
- <sup>32</sup> Moreni, *Continuazione*, p. 471.
- <sup>33</sup> Moreni, *Continuazione*, pp. 366 f.
- <sup>34</sup> Moreni, *Continuazione*, pp. 472 f.
- <sup>35</sup> Moreni, *Cappelle Medicee*, pp. 155 f.
- <sup>36</sup> Moreni, *Cappelle Medicee*, p. 153, note.
- <sup>37</sup> *Psalterium... juxta formam Clementis VII*, 1573, Dedication, not paginated.
- <sup>38</sup> *Psalterium*, pp. 1, 2.
- <sup>39</sup> *Dom Louis Brou OSB* (from the papers of the late *Dom André Wilmart OSB*), *The Psalter Collects from Vth - VIth Century Sources* (Henry Bradshaw Society, vol. 83), 1949. See particularly pp. 18 f. The name of Cassiodorus was suggested by C. Mohrmann, *A propos des collections de psautier*, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, VI, 1952, pp. 15 ff. See also the review of Brou-Wilmart by H. de Sainte-Marie in: *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, LXV, 1951, pp. 105 ff. The psalms with these Collects were first printed by J. M. Thomasi, *Opera Omnia* (ed. A. F. Vezzosi), vol. I., 1747.
- <sup>40</sup> There are three different versions of these prayers, called by Wilmart respectively the Spanish, African and Roman Series. Only the last is completely preserved and it is also the most popular of the three. For a listing of manuscripts see *Brou-Wilmart*. See also for psalters in French libraries V. Leroquais, *Les Psautiers*, vol. I, 1940, pp. XLVI ff. and vol. II, pp. 120 ff.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ludolphus de Saxonia*, In psalterium expositio, first printed edition 1491, quotations here are taken from the 1521 Venice edition. On Ludolphus see *Sister Mary Immaculate Bodenstedt*, *The Vita Christi*



- of Ludolphus the Carthusian, (Catholic University of America, Studies XVI) 1944, pp. 1-23; on the psalter commentary in particular see pp. 11-13.
- <sup>42</sup> Dom P. Salmon, La prière des heures, in: *A. G. Martimont, L'Eglise en Prière*, 1961, p. 821.
- <sup>43</sup> Ludolphus, op. cit., fol. 1r.
- <sup>44</sup> J. M. Thomasi, op. cit., Introduction (not paginated). For inclusion of the psalms in the Breviary see P. Antonio Coelho OSB, *Corso di Liturgia Romana*, vol. IV, 1937, pp. 24 f.
- <sup>45</sup> L. Eisenhofer, *Handbuch der katholischen Liturgik*, vol. II, 1933, p. 320, and p. 371. M. Righetti, *Manuale di storia liturgica*, 2nd ed., vol. II, 1955, p. 564. A. Baumstark, *Liturgie Comparée*, 1953, pp. 123 ff.
- <sup>46</sup> Dom Anselmus Davril OSB, *Consuetudines Floriacenses saeculi tertii decimi*, (Corpus Consuetudinum monasticarum, vol. IX) 1976, p. 65. G. Constable, *Consuetudines Benedictinae variae*, (Corpus, vol. VI) 1975, pp. 163 ff., 203 ff., 219. Petrus Becker OSB, *Consuetudines et observantiae monasteriorum S. Mathiae et S. Maximini Treverensium ab Johanne Rode abbate conscriptae*, (Corpus, vol. V) 1968, pp. 218 ff., 227. Abbot Rode (died 1439) was an important figure in the reform movements connected with the Council of Basel. His *Consuetudines*, which exercised considerable influence, date probably from the mid fourteenth century. This list could easily be lengthened, but it suffices to show the continued use of psalters and prayers at intercession services in monastic houses. See also C. Callewaert, in: *Sacris Erudiri*, 1940, pp. 176 f. Michael Morris OP kindly informed me that among Dominicans the practice of reciting the entire psalter between death and burial continued well into the twentieth century and he brought to my attention A. V. Jandel, *Caeremoniale juxta ritum S. Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 1869, p. 583 for the rules concerning it.
- <sup>47</sup> M. Righetti, op. cit., p. 371.
- <sup>48</sup> Dom H. Leclercq, in: DACL, vol. I, 1924, col. 858 ff., s.v. Agaunum. O. Gindele, *Die gallikanischen, Laus Perennis' Klöster und ihre 'Ordo Officii'*, in: *Revue Bénédictine*, vol. LXXIV, 1959, pp. 32 ff. A. A. Häussling, *Mönchskonvent und Eucharistiefeyer*, 1973, pp. 54 and 141.
- <sup>49</sup> A. Erlande-Brandenburg, *Le Roi est mort. Etudes sur les funérailles, les sépultures, et les tombeaux des rois de France jusqu'à la fin du XIIIe siècle*, (Bibl. de la Soc. franç. d'archéol., vol. VII) 1975, p. 99.
- <sup>50</sup> Righetti, op. cit., p. 564. S. Hilpisch, *OSB, Chorgebet und Frömmigkeit im Spätmittelalter*, ed. I. Herwegen, 1938, pp. 263 ff. L. Ruland, *Geschichte der kirchlichen Leichenfeier*, 1901, p. 190.
- <sup>51</sup> Moreni, *Continuazione*, vol. II, pp. 22 and 27, pp. 366 ff.
- <sup>52</sup> Moreni, *Cappelle Medicee*, pp. 156 f. See also *Constitutiones insignis et collegiatae ecclesiae Sancti Laurentii*, 1617, pp. 123 f.
- <sup>53</sup> L. D. Ettlinger, *Pollaiuolo's Tomb of Pope Sixtus IV*, in: *Warburg Journal*, XVI, 1953, pp. 265 ff.
- <sup>54</sup> A. Höger, *Studien zur Entstehung der Familienkapelle und zu Familienkapellen und -Altären des Trecento in Florentiner Kirchen*, Diss. Bonn, 1976, pp. 108 ff.
- <sup>55</sup> Moreni, *Descrizione*, pp. 158 f.
- <sup>56</sup> Michelangelo uses the phrase *sepoltura di testa* in his letter to Fattucci, written on June 17, 1526. See Barocchi, *Carteggio*, vol. III, p. 227. About the positioning of the altar see Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, vol. III, pp. 31 f.
- <sup>57</sup> Yrjö Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 1957, pp. 359 ff.; D. C. Schorr, *The Christ Child in Devotional Images in Italy during the Fourteenth Century*, 1954, p. 59. See also M. Meiss, *The Madonna of Humility*, in: *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*, (Torchbook edition) 1964, pp. 151 ff.
- <sup>58</sup> A. E. Popp, *Die Medici-Kapelle Michelangelos*, 1922, pp. 95 ff. Tolnay, *Corpus*, pp. 66 f. and fols. 253r, 255r, 258r. C. de Tolnay, *Tod und Auferstehung bei Michelangelo*, in: *Michelangelo Buonarroti mit Beiträgen von C. de Tolnay et al.*, 1964, pp. 7 ff.
- <sup>59</sup> Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, vol. III, p. 48.
- <sup>60</sup> Tolnay, *Nouvelles remarques sur la Chapelle Médicis*, in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, LXXIII, 1969, pp. 169 ff.
- <sup>61</sup> Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, vol. III, p. 73.
- <sup>62</sup> F. Bocchi, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze*, ed. G. Cinelli, 1677, p. 524.
- <sup>63</sup> Note on a drawing with designs for pilaster bases, (Florence, Casa Buonarroti, nr. 72) dated by Frey, *Die Dichtungen des Michelagnolo Buonarroti*, 1897, nr. XVII, ca. 1523. See Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, vol. III, pp. 73, 134, note 18 and p. 138 note 23, Plate 104.
- <sup>64</sup> Tertullian, *De resurrectione carnis*, ch. 12 (PL, I, 524, II, 810), as quoted by J. Sauer, *Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes*, 2nd ed., 1924, p. 260. With reference to this passage in Tertullian, D. F. Picinelli, *Mondo Simbolico*, 1653, p. 33 writes in the entry for 'Notte': *In morte fu dipinta una notte oscura con motto VERTETUR IN DIEM, che seco porta l'annuncio certo della Risurrectione, concetto con nobilissima eloquenza portato da Tertulliano*. The Tertullian passage and the significance of the four times of day has been connected with the imagery of the Medici Chapel by Kraus-Sauer, op. cit., vol. II/2, pp. 611 ff.
- <sup>65</sup> ibd.
- <sup>66</sup> C. de Tolnay, *Nuove osservazioni sulla Capella Medicea*, in: *Acc. Naz. dei Lincei, Anno CCCLXVI, Quaderno 130*, 1969, p. 3.
- <sup>67</sup> See the prayers following psalms 35, 45, 62, 111, 133, and the oratio post psalterium.
- <sup>68</sup> Vasari-Milanesi, vol. VI, p. 561. Tolnay, *Medici Chapel*, p. 48.
- <sup>69</sup> *Psalterium*, p. 37.



<sup>70</sup> L. Bruhns, *Das Motiv der ewigen Anbetung in der römischen Grabplastik des 16., 17., und 18. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Röm. Jb.*, IV, 1940, pp. 253 ff.

#### RIASSUNTO

L'elaborazione del progetto della Cappella Medici iniziò nel giugno 1519, quando il Cardinale Giulio dei Medici — dal 1523 Papa Clemente VII — espose le sue intenzioni a Figgiovanni, canonico di San Lorenzo, e gli affidò la cura amministrativa dell'opera. I lavori preparatori cominciarono nell'autunno dello stesso anno, mentre la costruzione vera e propria ebbe inizio nella primavera del 1520. Sembra però che l'incarico della decorazione interna e dell'esecuzione delle tombe fosse affidato a Michelangelo solo nel novembre di quell'anno. L'analisi della struttura architettonica e il carteggio — conservato solo frammentariamente — del Cardinale, o meglio del suo segretario, con Michelangelo non lasciano dubbi che il Vasari avesse ragione quando diceva che la Sacrestia Nuova non era stata progettata solo come pendant di quella Vecchia, ma era stata costruita sulle fondamenta già iniziate dal Brunelleschi. Questo significa che Michelangelo nel suo progetto dové tener conto di un edificio già definito nelle sue dimensioni e nella pianta.

Una minuta di una lettera, finora trascurata, la corrispondenza e gli schizzi di Michelangelo dimostrano che l'artista pensò dapprima di costruire una tomba centrale in mezzo alla Sacrestia, mentre il Cardinale, pur non respingendo del tutto questa proposta, preferiva che le tombe fossero lungo le pareti; su tale questione si misero d'accordo probabilmente all'inizio del 1521. I motivi, che lo indussero a preferire la soluzione che lasciava libero lo spazio centrale, furono determinati dalla funzione liturgica della Cappella.

Una bolla di Clemente VII del 1532 fornisce precise istruzioni sulle funzioni liturgiche da tenersi nella Cappella. Al clero di San Lorenzo vennero aggiunti due nuovi canonici, poiché oltre alle consuete messe funebri, doveva anche essere recitato ininterrottamente l'intero salterio con l'aggiunta di una preghiera dopo ogni salmo. Questo significa che la Cappella era giorno e notte destinata ad una continua intercessione.

Fanno parte di questo complesso liturgico la Madonna, vista come interceditrice, accompagnata non casualmente dai Santi della Famiglia, Cosma e Damiano, e la rappresentazione della Resurrezione di Cristo di fronte all'altare, alla quale la Cappella era dedicata. Secondo le disposizioni del Papa, due sacerdoti dovevano stare inginocchiati all'altare durante la recita dei salmi. Avevano quindi davanti a loro la Madonna e la Resurrezione.

Quando il manoscritto originale si logorò per il continuo uso, il salterio con le preghiere venne stampato nel 1573 a spese del Capitolo di San Lorenzo. Sappiamo quindi che nella Cappella Medici, per ordine di Clemente VII, veniva recitata una versione che risale, parola per parola, al primo Cristianesimo e che veniva impiegata ancora nel Medioevo nelle messe funebri. Sebbene la consuetudine di questa *laus perennis* fosse caduta in disuso, i testi relativi erano ancora noti nel Rinascimento e furono addirittura stampati.

Michelangelo, con l'insolita disposizione dell'altare, la posizione della Madonna — alla quale erano rivolti il sacerdote ed i Duchi — e l'affresco della Resurrezione, fece della Cappella Medici un'altissima espressione artistica della „Adorazione perenne“.

Photo Credits:

KIF (L. Artini): Figs. 1, 2. — Photo Marburg: Fig. 3.