

Legitimacy through Art in the Rome of Gregory XIII: The Commission to Baldassarre Croce in the Fonseca Chapel of San Giacomo degli Spagnoli

James W. Nelson Novoa

Editing and peer review managed by:

Susanne Kubersky-Piredda, Bibliotheca Hertziana, Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Rome

Reviewers:

David García Cueto, Matteo Sanfilippo

Abstract:

The article deals with the commission made out by the Portuguese merchant banker António da Fonseca to Baldassarre Croce to decorate his family chapel in the church of San Giacomo degli Spagnoli in Rome, the national church of Castille. Fonseca was an outsider on account of his being Portuguese and of Jewish origin yet chose to have his family interred there in a chapel dedicated to the Resurrection. The choice of the church itself, the commission to Croce, and the Resurrection motif fits into a strategy on his part to seek legitimacy and social capital for himself and his family in order to integrate into Roman society.

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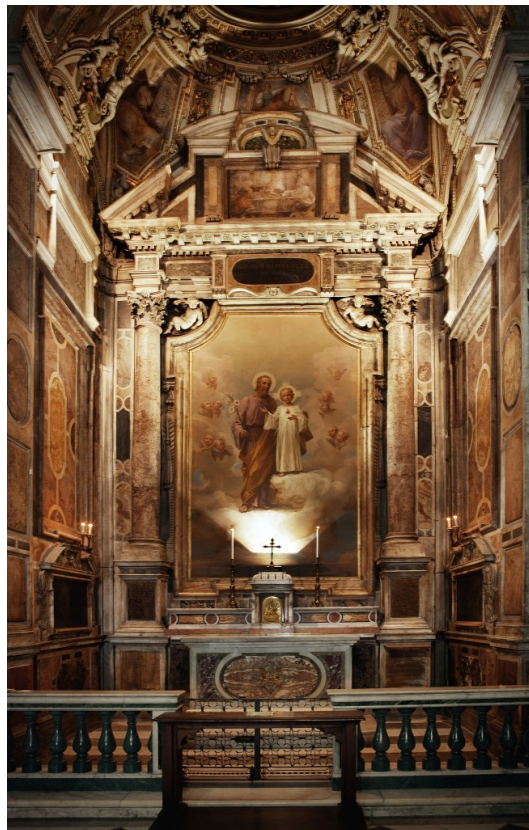
San Giacomo degli Spagnoli and the Fonseca Chapel

[1] On July 14, 1585 a contract was drawn up before a notary of the tribunal of the auditor of the Apostolic Chamber. In it a Portuguese merchant banker, Antonio da Fonseca, commissioned the Bolognese painter Baldassarre Croce (1558-1628) to paint some frescoes in a chapel that Fonseca had recently acquired for his family in the Castilian national church of San Giacomo degli Spagnoli in Rome.¹ The Portuguese banker was not just any patron, he was one of the most prominent members of the Portuguese community and by the time of the contract he had made important inroads into the Spanish community as well. His particular trajectory as a Portuguese *converso*, a descendant of the Jews of Portugal who were forcibly converted *en masse* to Christianity in 1497, made the gesture all the more singular. As such, Fonseca's decision to have a

¹ I must express my profound indebtedness to Marta Rossetti who assisted me throughout the research for this article, for her constant feedback throughout my work on it and her generous sharing of information with me. The article would not have taken the current form if it had not been for her. In addition I must thank Angelo Marinelli for having taken the photographs of figures 5 and 7. The remaining photographs are my own. The painting by Marcello Venusti in figure 6 is published with the kind permission of the Instituto Português de Santo António em Roma and Monsenhor Agostinho da Costa. Borges, Rector of the Instituto. I must thank Dr. Francisco de Almeida Dias, the archivist of the Instituto, for doing all he could in assisting me to take the photographs. The quality of the photographs was notably enhanced by the diligent work of Marta Raïch Creus of the Centre d'Arte d'Epoca Moderna of the University of Lleida. Furthermore I must thank Orsetta Baroncelli for assistance with the transcription of the archival documents and Donald Beecher for his meticulous corrections of this text.

family chapel built in the national church along with his commission to Croce are to be seen as part of an overall strategy for social legitimation which played out over several places and institutions. The contract itself is of intrinsic interest as an important document which has been hitherto unpublished and sheds light on Croce's work in Rome. In addition, the contract and the commission by Fonseca are to be seen in the context of Fonseca's concern with social self-assertion in Rome in the second half of the sixteenth century.²

[2] The chapel, now known as the Saint Joseph, Resurrection, or Fonseca chapel, is one of the few to have survived the vicissitudes which assailed the church over the centuries and is still remarkably intact. This means that the publication of the document must be accompanied by a brief description of the current state of the church, in order to point out the elements in the contract which are still present in the building. (Fig. 1) This article will identify the patron of the chapel, taking into account the likely motivations behind the iconographical options present in the chapel for which Croce was responsible, it will identify the elements that still exist in the chapel and those which have subsequently disappeared but which are known to have existed based on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century accounts of the church, and finally it will incorporate the original document.



1 Cappella della Resurrezione, Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore, Rome. © Author

² The document is published as Document 1 in the Documentary Appendix.

[3] The Spanish presence in Rome during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has itself, of late, attracted the attention of scholars working from a variety of perspectives. These two centuries have rightly been identified as being of the utmost importance for fashioning the image of Spain on the world stage, with the papal court being, at the time, one of the main stages in which the consolidation of a national identity took place. Over that period the Spanish monarchs employed a variety of means, among them art patronage in the city, the presence of prominent Spanish prelates, the most important of which was cardinal Rodrigo Borja who went on to occupy the throne of Saint Peter as Alexander VI (1492-1503) and ambassadors, all part of an overall strategy to impress upon the papal court the importance of Spain as a nation, a dutiful child of the Church, a defender of the faith, actively involved in spreading the Catholic faith both in Europe and beyond.³ The support of the Holy See was fundamental to Spain's imperial designs and foreign policy, its strategies for conquest and diplomacy; hence the attention that Spanish monarchs lavished on Rome.

[4] As with many other nations and Italian states at the time, an important instrument for accruing social capital in Rome was the existence of a national church. These national churches, the majority of which were created in the second half of the fifteenth century, served as the physical embodiments of the respective nations they represented in the Eternal City. They were the public face of nations, through which they manifested themselves in artwork, liturgical celebrations, confraternities, and the acquisition of property and economic interests in Rome. The respective national churches were the instruments used to assert power and influence, depending as they did on the direct patronage of their rulers.

[5] At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Spain could boast two national churches, the church of San Giacomo e Ildefonso degli Spagnoli, the national church of the Castilians, Galicians and Leonese, now known as the Chiesa di Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore, and Santa Maria di Monserrato, the church of the Aragonese and Catalans. As with many similar national churches, the two could trace their origins to private patrons residing in Rome who provided funds for a national hospice for pilgrims which gave rise to a church. In the sixteenth century the importance accorded to the church of San Giacomo is borne out by the funds lavished on it by the crown and its choice as the place for religious and civic ritual which represented Spain, thoroughly understandable

³ Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro, "Forme della presenza mercantile spagnola a Roma all'inizio dell'età moderna: spunti per un confronto europeo," in: *Storia Urbana*, 32, 123 (2009), 83-100; Thomas James Dandeleit, *Spanish Rome 1500-1700*, New Haven 2001; Álvaro Fernández de Córdova Miralles, "Imagen de los Reyes Católicos en la Roma pontificia," in: *En la España Medieval*, 28 (2005), 259-354; Álvaro Fernández de Córdova Miralles, *Alejandro VI y los Reyes Católicos. Relaciones político-ecclesiásticas (1492-1503)*, Roma 2005; Carlos José Hernando Sánchez, ed., *Roma y España. Un crisol de la cultura europea en la Edad Moderna*, Madrid 2007, 241-248; Michael J. Levin, *Agents of Empire. Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, Ithaca 2005; Thomas James Dandeleit, "Spanish Conquest and Colonization at the Center of the Old World: The Spanish Nation in Rome, 1555-1625," in: *The Journal of Modern History*, 69 (1997), 479-511.

given its central and prominent location in Piazza Navona. Later on, it was Santa Maria di Monserrato to become Spain's national church, for after decades of neglect, San Giacomo was sold at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁴

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António da Fonseca and Baldassarre Croce: two foreigners at the court of Gregory XIII

[6] Baldassarre Croce was present in Rome from at least 1576, arriving there during the pontificate of his fellow Bolognese, Gregory XIII (1572-1585).⁵ He was already a painter with a solid reputation, having contributed to the Gallery of the Maps in the Vatican and in the Oratory of the Santissimo Crocifisso in the church of San Marcello. Aside from this work, by 1584 he was firmly ensconced in the artistic world of Rome as a member to the Academy of Saint Luke and the Academy of the Virtuosi del Pantheon. His talents and skills would naturally have been pointed out to someone as intent on leaving a lasting testimony to his presence in the city as the Portuguese banker who engaged his services. The court of Gregory XIII saw a flurry of support for learning and the arts on the part of the cultivated Bolognese pontiff. Science, human letters, and architecture were all given a decided boost and many artists like Croce flocked to the city with the promise of work both in the Vatican and in other of the city's churches or palaces.⁶

⁴ On both churches see: Justo Fernández Alonso, "Las iglesias nacionales de España en Roma. Sus orígenes," in: *Anthologia Annua*, 4 (1956), 9-96; Justo Fernández Alonso, "Santiago de los Españoles, de Roma, en el siglo XVI," in: *Anthologia Annua* (1958), 9-122; Maximiliano Barrio Gozalo, "Tra devozione e politica. Le chiese e gli ospedali di Santiago e Montserrat di Roma, secoli XVI-XVIII," in: *Storia Urbana*, 32, 123 (2009), 101-126; Manuel Vaquero Piñero, "Una realtà composita: comunità e chiese 'spagnole' a Roma," in: *Roma Capitale* (1447-1527), ed. Sergio Gensini, Roma 1994, 473-491; Manuel Vaquero Piñero, "L'ospedale della nazione castigliana in Roma tra medioevo ed età moderna," in: *Roma moderna e contemporanea*, 1 (1993), 57-81; Manuel Vaquero Piñero, *La renta y las casas: El patrimonio inmobiliario de Santiago de los españoles de Roma entre los siglos XV y XVIII*, Roma 1999; Piers Baker-Bates, "A Means for the projection of 'soft power': Spanish churches at Rome 1469-1527," in: *Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture*, 22 (2011), 155-181. For a current day description of the chiesa di Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore and its historical developments see Francesco Russo, *Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore*, Roma 1969.

⁵ See the information by Laura Possanzini on his entry in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 31, Roma 1985; Holger Steinemann, *Baldassarre Croce: ein Maler der katholischen Reform*, Stuttgart 1995; Alessandro Zuccari, "'Rhetorica christiana' e pittura: il cardinal Rusticci e gli interventi di Cesare Nebbia, Tommaso Laureti e Baldassarre Croce nel presbitero di S. Susanna," in: *Storia dell'arte*, 7 (2004), 37-80; Stefano Pierguidi, "L'attività tarda di Baldassarre Croce," in: *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, 25 (2003), 311-322; Elisabeth Priedl, "La pittura architettonica: da portatore di immagine a portatore di significato, Baldassarre Croce nella chiesa di Santa Susanna," in: *Viterbo, Palazzo dei Priori: la storia, il restauro. Atti della giornata di studio 'Un recupero cinquecentesco'. La Sala Regia del Palazzo dei Priori di Viterbo*, ed. Massimo G. Bonelli and Laura P. Bonelli, Viterbo 2011, 49-67.

⁶ On the period see the studies in Claudia Ciera Via, Ingrid D. Rowland, and Marco Ruffini, eds., *Unità e frammenti di modernità. Arte e scienze nella Roma di Gregorio XIII Boncompagni (1572-1585)*, Roma-Pisa 2012; Francesco Ceccarelli and Nadja Aksamija, eds., *La sala Bologna nei Palazzi Vaticani: architettura, cartografia e potere nell'età di Gregorio XIII*, Venezia 2011; Maurizio Ricci, *Bologna in Roma, Roma in Bologna: disegno e architettura durante il pontificato di Gregorio XIII (1572-1585)*, Roma 2012; Marco Ruffini, *Le imprese del drago: politica, emblematica e scienze naturali alla corte di Gregorio XIII (1572-1585)*, Roma 2005; Margaret A. Kuntz, "Pope Gregory XIII, Cardinal Sirleto and Federico Zuccaro: The Program for the Altar Chancel of the Cappella Paolina in the Vatican Palace," in: *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 35 (2008), 87-112; Nicola Courtright, "The Transformation of Ancient Landscape through the Idea of Christian Reform in Gregory XIII's Tower of the Winds," in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 58 (1995), 526-541.

[7] António da Fonseca could also claim to have made Rome the place of his consecration. A native of Lamego, an important town and commercial centre in the north of Portugal, he had been in the city at least since 1556. He was born in 1515 into a family of Jews who had converted to Christianity, and who were linked to commerce, the Portuguese court, and to various forms of tax administration both in Lamego itself and the Douro valley.⁷ His converso origins were not unproblematic in Portugal which had, in 1536, a functioning tribunal of the Inquisition, created in large part to combat what were considered the heretical tendencies of those who were of Jewish origin and who continued to have some form of allegiance to that faith either through beliefs or practices. All Portuguese of Jewish ancestry were potentially suspects and over time those troublesome origins also led to their exclusion from various spheres of professional life in Portugal.

[8] António's brother, Jacome, was the first to leave the Iberian kingdom, sometime in 1542, to publicly take up the cause of the persecuted Portuguese while pursuing business interests in Rome. In the city, Jacome was involved with the spice trade in which the Portuguese had a privileged role.⁸ But his larger sphere of economic endeavour was as a merchant banker, especially given the special role such bankers had in obtaining and cashing letters of credit from abroad, more often than not related to the sale, exchange, and commerce in ecclesiastical offices, pensions, and benefices for which the Roman Curia and the Apostolic Chamber were the principal theatres of operation. Between 1542 and his departure from the city in March 1555, Jacome was one of the privileged Iberian overseers of such operations, a noted merchant banker whose clients were above all Spanish and Portuguese. Thereafter, sensing an imminent major downturn in his fortunes, he abruptly left Rome for the Ottoman Empire.

[9] António would seem to have arrived in Rome shortly after his brother's departure, and, taking over his business interests, rapidly became one of the most respected and sought after members of the Portuguese community in the city. He was a man who could be counted on to lend money to residents in the city and to serve as a middleman in the exchange of letters of credit between Rome and other cities. From at least February 1556 onwards he established important connections with the Portuguese national hospice and church of Sant'Antonio dei Portoghesi, not only joining its confraternity, but serving on

⁷ On António da Fonseca and his family see Susana Bastos Mateus and James Nelson Novoa, "A Sixteenth Century Voyage of Legitimacy. The Paths of Jácome and António da Fonseca from Lamego to Rome and Beyond," in: *Hispania Judaica*, 9 (2013), 169-192. His brother, Rui Fernandes, was the author of an important sixteenth-century description of the city of Lamego, dedicated to the humanist archbishop D. Fernando de Meneses Coutinho e Vasconcelos (1480-1564). See the recent edition: Rui Fernandes, *Descrição do terreno ao redor de Lamego duas léguas 1531-1532*, ed. Amândio Jorge Morais Barros, Casal de Cambra 2012.

⁸ See James W. Nelson Novoa, "Portugal in Rome: Glimpses of the Portuguese New Christian representation in Rome through the Archivio di Stato of Rome," in: *Giornale di Storia*, 3 (2010), http://www.giornaledistoria.net/public/file/Content20101024_JNovoaPortugalinRome.pdf (accessed 14 July 2014).

several occasions as governor of the entire complex between 1560 and his death in 1588.⁹

[10] In a posthumous inventory of the contents of one of his two homes, located in close proximity to the Portuguese national church, we catch a glimpse of a man who ostentatiously displayed his Lusitanian identity through his Portuguese exotica and portraits of national monarchs and popes mixed in with his oriental treasures.¹⁰ Fonseca's overall strategy was to remain in Rome and make sure that his descendants would be able to fully integrate themselves into Roman society.¹¹ His choice of a place for his family chapel was part of this comprehensive plan. The choice was not fortuitous. However prominent a member of the Portuguese community as a merchant banker he was, there were far more advantages to be culled from aligning himself and his family interests and identity with Spain. His decision for the church of San Giacomo as the place for the chapel can be considered an acknowledgement of the unique geopolitical quagmire in which Portugal found itself after falling under Spanish rule. Philip II had managed matters well when Portugal's heirless King Sebastian (1557-1578) died, insofar as his Habsburg connections, military interventions, and simultaneous courting of Portuguese merchants made him the strongest contender for the Portuguese throne. Capitulation to the Spaniards was clear as early as 1580, and by the following year, the Hispanic king became Philip I of Portugal, his reign lasting until 1598.¹²

[11] Fonseca most likely assumed that these new political conditions would last indefinitely. Thus, it is understandable that upon the death of his wife, Antónia Luis, in February 1582, he chose to have her interred in the church of San Giacomo.¹³ After her death he obtained permission from the administrators of the Church to allow her to be buried in the chapel dedicated to Saints Cosimo and Damian, permission which was later

⁹ Miguel D'Almeida Paile, *Santo António dos portugueses em Roma*, 2 vols., Lisboa 1951, 236-237.

¹⁰ The inventory is published in two articles: James Nelson Novoa, "Unicorns and bezoars in a Portuguese house in Rome: António da Fonseca's Portuguese inventories," in: *Agora, Estudos Clássicos em Debate*, 14, 1 (2012), 91-112, and James Nelson Novoa, "Gusti e saperi di un banchiere portoghese a Roma nel Rinascimento," in: *Giornale di Storia*, 10 (2013), <http://www.giornaledistoria.net/index.php?Articoli=557D0301220A740321070500777327> (accessed 14 July 2014).

¹¹ On the Fonseca family in Rome, see Claudio de Dominicis, "La famiglia Fonseca di Roma," in: *Strenna dei romanisti* (1992), 159-174, and Luigi Borgia and Claudio de Dominicis, "La famiglia del palazzo Fonseca," in: Paolo Portoghesi, *Il palazzo dell'Hotel Minerva*, Roma 1990, 155-166.

¹² For the preceding events see Fernando Jesus Bouza Álvarez, *Portugal en la monarquía hispánica (1580-1640: Felipe II, las cortes de Tomar y la génesis del Portugal Católico)*, Doctoral thesis presented at the Universidad Complutense, Madrid 1986; Fernando Jesus Bouza Álvarez, *D. Filipe I*, Lisboa 2005; Rafael Valladares, *La conquista de Lisboa. Violencia militar y comunidad política en Portugal 1578-1583*, Madrid 2008; José de Castro, *O prior do Crato*, Lisboa 1942. For Portuguese merchant-bankers during the Iberian union see James C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640*, Baltimore 1993; Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea. Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492-1640*, New York 2007.

¹³ An inscription in the church, now lost, stated that she died on February 3, 1582. The information is gleaned from an anonymous, seventeenth-century manuscript description of San Giacomo which is unnumbered, Archivio Storico Capitolino (ASC), Rome, Ms. 254449.

confirmed in a papal brief on July 1, 1583.¹⁴ Fonseca was not content with simply using the existing chapel; he proposed a radical transformation of it with a well defined iconographical project. He chose to dedicate the chapel to the Resurrection, taking his cue from a confraternity in the Spanish Church, dedicated to la Santísima Resurrección, created in 1579 which had quickly gained prestige in Rome due to the importance of its members within the Spanish community and the visibility of its annual procession.¹⁵

[12] In this he may have taken his cue from another prestigious confraternity, that of the Santissimo Crocifisso in the Church of San Marcello, which brought together some of Rome's most important nobles, clergymen, and men of commerce in Rome in the late sixteenth century. The institution was founded in 1526, and by the 1560s it could boast of having its own building. By 1578 the walls of its oratory had been decorated by some of the most prestigious painters active in Rome, among them Baldassarre Croce, as stated above, featuring an iconographical scheme pertaining to the motif of the True Cross. Although no evidence of Fonseca's involvement in the confraternity has surfaced to date, there are comparative reasons for thinking that this oratorio provided inspiration for his family chapel of the Resurrection in conjunction with the recently created Spanish confraternity.¹⁶

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The contract with Baldassarre Croce

[13] The Portuguese banker made out the contract to the Bolognese artist two years after he had been granted the right to have the chapel. The architectural work on the chapel was likely the work of one Guillermo Ferran, an obscure Portuguese architect linked to work in the church from 1571 until his death in 1598.¹⁷ Fonseca's Portuguese origins and the iconography linked to the theme of the Resurrection come to the fore in the contract which is published here. In his commission to Croce, the Portuguese banker is very clear about the artwork that he requests of him. In the contract of June 1585, he guarantees Croce 160 scudi to be paid in two installments if he completes the work by the end of the month of October, even making provision for the use of assistants. The

¹⁴ For the remaining chapels see Gonzalo Redín Michaus, "Sobre Gaspar Becerra en Roma. La capilla de Constantino del Castillo en la Iglesia de Santiago de los españoles," in: *Archivo Español de Arte*, 75 (2002), 129-144; Laura Marucci, "Su un disegno per la cappella Herrera e sul San Giacomo degli spagnoli a Roma tra Cinquecento e Seicento," in: *Palladio. Rivista di storia dell'architettura e restauro*, 47 (2011), 79-104.

¹⁵ On this confraternity see Justo Fernández Alonso, "Santiago de los Españoles y la Archiconfradía de la Santísima Resurrección de Roma hasta 1754," in: *Antologia Annuale*, 8 (1960), 279-329.

¹⁶ Rhoda Eitel-Porter, "The Oratorio del SS. Crocifisso in Rome Revisited," in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 142 (2000), 612-623; Josephine Von Hennenberg, *L'Oratorio del Santissimo Crocifisso di San Marcello*, Roma 1974.

¹⁷ Miguel Ángel Aranburu-Zabala, "La Iglesia y Hospital de Santiago de los Españoles. El papel del arquitecto en la Roma del Renacimiento," in: *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, 3 (1991), 31-42, here 40-41.

fact that on 14 April 1586 Croce declared that he was paid in full displays Fonseca's satisfaction with his work.¹⁸

[14] First and foremost in the contract Fonseca calls for an ovate space in which God the Father is to be represented with a choir of angels, together with four prophets who hold tablets or scrolls (tavoloza) which prophesy the resurrection of Christ. The contract does not specify which prophets are to be painted, nor what the texts are to be. While the oval with God the Father has not come down to us, the four prophets remain. (Fig. 2) They are, respectively, Daniel, David, Isaiah, and Elijah. All hold some form of scroll in their hands. While Daniel and Elijah's scrolls have no visible writing, David's and Isaiah's do. David's scroll reproduces Psalm 3:6: "Ego dormivi, et soporatus sum: et exurrexi, quia Domino suscepit me" (Fig. 3), while Isaiah's reproduces Isaiah 55:4: "Ecce testem populis dedi eum, ducem ac praeceptorem gentibus" (Fig. 4). Both verses are, of course, interpreted here as analogical precursors of the Christian message. That the painting in the oval once existed is confirmed by Croce's payment in 1586, which was incumbent upon the work's completion in 1585. Further, an early seventeenth-century anonymous description of the chapel makes mention of the picture adding that God the Father was surrounded by angels and the four evangelists: "[...] nella volta in mezzo in un ovato Dio Padre in una gloria di angeli, nei triangoli i quattro evangelisti, il resto della volta è lavorato con lavori di stucco messi a oro."¹⁹



2 Baldassarre Croce, *Prophets Daniel, David, Isaiah and Elijah*, 1585-1586, Cappella della Resurrezione, Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore, Rome. © Author

¹⁸ The document is published as Document 2 in the Documentary Appendix.

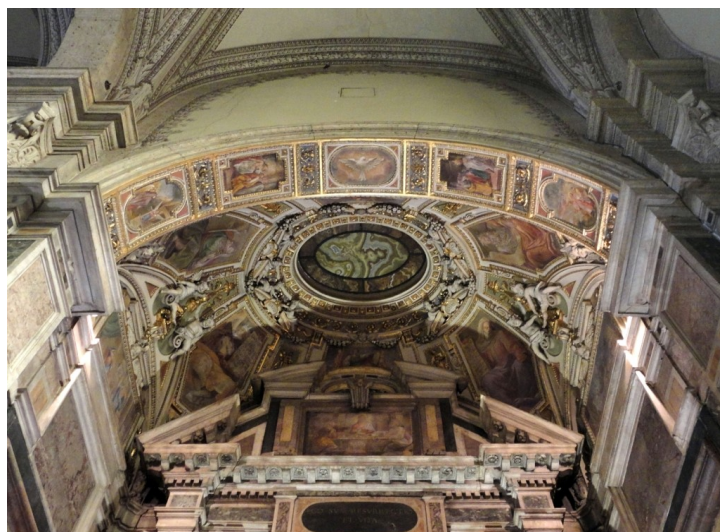
¹⁹ ASC, Ms. 254449.



3 Baldassarre Croce, *Prophets Daniel and David*, 1585-1586, Cappella della Resurrezione, Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore, Rome. © Author



4 Baldassarre Croce, *Prophets Isaiah and Elijah*, 1585-1586, Cappella della Resurrezione, Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore, Rome. © Author



5 Baldassarre Croce (attributed), *Sibyl*, ca. 1585-1586, Cappella della Resurrezione, Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore, Rome. © Angelo Marinelli

[15] Fonseca requested from Croce "un quadro riscontro la fenestrella di sopra della historia che ordinerà signor Antonio." The contract further mentions "doi altre historiette o vani sopra li archi." It is unclear whether one of these may have been the sibyl under the oval between the prophets David and Isaiah and the painting of Christ breaking bread with the disciples at Emmaus. (Fig. 5)

[16] The contract makes provision for scenes chosen by Fonseca under the arch, in all likelihood the four scenes which still exist and all present apparitions of Christ after the Resurrection. They are, respectively, from left to right: the appearance of the angel to the women at the tomb, the resurrected Christ and Saint Thomas, the apparition of Christ to the disciples, and the meeting of Christ with two of his disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the middle of these scenes is a depiction of the Holy Spirit as a dove.



6 Marcello Venusti, *Saint Anthony of Padua with Christ child*, ca. 1539-1549, oil on canvas, 187 x 129 cm. Istituto Portoghese di Sant'Antonio in Rome. © Author, published with the permission of the Istituto Portoghese di Sant'Antonio in Rome

[17] From the contract we learn that he requested a painting to be executed of Saint Anthony of Padua in the lunette similar to the one which existed in the national church of Sant'Antonio, painted by Marcello Venusti (1512-1579), which depicts the Portuguese saint receiving Christ as a child in his arms: "[...] nel triangolo S. Antonio di Padova che fa oratione, a cui appare Christo bambino, sono di Bal[dassarre] Della Croce."²⁰ The request is an obvious reference to Fonseca's Portuguese origins and to his involvement with the Portuguese national church, dedicated as it was, from 1539 at least, to the

²⁰ ASC, Ms. 254449.

Lisbon-born saint known as Saint Anthony of Padua (1195-1231), the city of his death. Venusti's painting still exists, though it is no longer in the church but held in the Istituto Portoghese di Sant'Antonio in Rome. (Fig. 6) The existence of the painting in the Fonseca chapel was corroborated by seventeenth-century sources such as the short biographical entry on Croce by Giovanni Baglione (1566-1643) in his *Vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti* (1642) and Filippo Titi's *Studio di pittura, scoltura et architettura nelle chiese di Roma* (1674).²¹

[18] In addition, we learn from the contract that he commissioned from Croce a painting of Christ "che cava li santi padri del linbo" above the altar, a painting which is mentioned by Baglione and Titi.²² The said painting would have occupied a place above the Fonseca family coat of arms outside the altar itself and its balusters. According to the seventeenth-century description, these arms existed along with statues of Saint John the Baptist and Saint James the greater and a painting of Adam and Eve being expelled from paradise.²³ The items are, however, no longer present in the church. In the contract he gives further instructions to Croce to paint two grids or gates (ferrate) which would have been at the entrance to the altar.

[19] The seventeenth-century descriptions, Gaspare Celio's (1571-1640) *Memoria delli nomi dell'artefici, delle pitture che sono in alcune chiese e palazzi di Roma* (1620),²⁴ Titi's *Studio di pittura, scoltura et architettura* and Baglione's biography of Cesare Nebbia (1536-1614), all point to the existence of a painting attributed to the Orvieto-born painter of the Resurrection which would have occupied the place which the current portrait of Saint Joseph does in the Fonseca chapel. Nebbia was present in Rome from at least 1572 to 1603 and it is unclear when or if António da Fonseca commissioned the painting from him as to date no contract has been found.²⁵ It is claimed that the painting was taken to the church of Santa Maria di Monserrato when San Giacomo was sold.²⁶ The

²¹ ASC, Ms. 254449; Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti dal pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572 in fino a' tempi di Papa Urbano Ottavo nel 1642 scritte da Giovanni Baglione Romano*, Vatican City 1995, 298; Filippo Titi, *Studio di pittura, scoltura, et architettura nelle chiese di Roma (1674-1763)*, Roma 1987, 82.

²² "E di fuori sopra la cappella la storia quando il salvatore libera dal Limbo...", Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti*, 297-298; Titi, *Studio di pittura, scoltura, et architettura*, 82.

²³ "Di fuori nell'arco in mezzo l'arme del fondatore è dalle bande di San Giovanni Battista e San Giacomo maggiore, statue di stucco. Sopra l'arco in un quadro grande Adamo et sua cacciata del paradiso con due statue di stucco," ASC, Ms. 254449.

²⁴ Gaspare Celio, *Memoria delli nomi dell'artefici, delle pitture che sono in alcune chiese e palazzi di Roma*, Facsimile dell'edizione del 1638 di Napoli, introduzione e commento critico a cura di Emma Zocca, Milano 1967, 34.

²⁵ ASC, Ms. 254449; Titi, *Studio di pittura, scoltura, et architettura*, 82; Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti*, 116. In addition, the attribution is repeated in Cesare D'Onorio, *Roma nel Seicento*, Firenze 1968, 53. The most important monograph on Nebbia, Rhoda Eitel Porter, *Der Zeichner und Maler Cesare Nebbia 1536-1614: Mit einem Katalog der Zeichnungen*, München 2009, quotes Baglione on the attribution.

²⁶ Russo, *Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore*, 47. No such painting, however, is to be found in the church.

loss of this painting from the church of the Hispanic congregation is but one example of the many dispersed over the centuries, however relatively unscathed the Fonseca chapel has remained. The seventeenth-century description of San Giacomo also attributes a *Noli me tangere* to Nebbia, a painting which still exists.²⁷ (Fig. 7)



7 Cesare Nebbia (attributed), *Noli me tangere*. Cappella della Resurrezione, Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore, Rome.
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[20] Through his choice to found the family chapel in the church of San Giacomo degli Spagnoli, António da Fonseca was clearly hoping to leave a visible and tangible sign not only of his Portuguese origins but of the Roman instauration of his family. His patronage of the chapel put him on the map in Rome as a respected figure, linked indelibly to the Spanish national church, one of the most prestigious national churches at the time and, in particular, to its recently minted confraternity. His employment of Croce made him a man of taste, a patron of the arts, one who sought after and obtained the best talents possible in the Rome of the moment. In this way Fonseca could confirm his credentials as a bona fide Catholic, taking an active and careful part in the planning of the iconographical project he supported. Fonseca thus obtained the social capital he needed to make a permanent name for himself and his family in the Rome of the second half of the sixteenth century. At the same time, he was able to cancel out any lingering suspicions regarding his orthodoxy, given his converso origins, among members of the Iberian community in Rome. His example is one of many of how social legitimacy was pursued and purchased through art patronage, skillfully undertaken to self-fashion the image of the patron.

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²⁷ "Nel fianco sinistro dell'altare, un quadro a fresco di Christo in forma di hortolaro che appare alla Maddalena nel muro in faccia una fenestra a levante," ASC, Ms. 254449.

Documentary appendix

Document 1

ASR, Notari del Auditor Camera, vol. 7089, fols. 399r/v.

Promissio.

Die 14 iunii 1585.

Magnificus dominus Antonius Fonseca, mercator Lusitanus, Romanam Curiam sequens, et dominus Baldasar Cruz, pictor Bononiensis sponte convenerunt prout infra super pictura fieri in cappella ipsius domini Antonii in ecclesia Sancti Iacobi, nationis Hispanorum, sub invocatione Resurrectionis domini nostri Ihesu Christi.

In primis il detto signor Baldasare pittore promette al detto signor Antonio dipignere detta capella bene e di boni colori a fresco, cioè nela volta un ovato con un Dio Padre con un coro di angeli et li quattro profeti che habiano in mano la tavoloza e ciascheduna con la sua profetia sopra la resuretionone.

Item un quadro riscontro la fenestrella di sopra, della historia che ordinerà detto signor Antonio, o doi altre historiette o vani sopra li archi.

Item il sottarcho depengnerllo secondo parerà al signor Antonio con historia.

Item di sopra detta cappella, nella lunetta di sopra, depignere un Sant'Antonio di Padua conforme a quello che sta dipinto nel hospidale di Santo Antonio di Pertoghesi, dentro la chiesa nel altare maggiore.

Item de fora, sopra la cappella sopra l'arme, un Christo che cava li santi padri del linbo che sia grande conforme al'hornamento li sarà fatto dello stucho.

Item tutte le lettere, di fora e dentro la cappella, tutte d'oro secondo ordinerà detto signor Antonio.

Item l'arme, di fora grande di sopra o delli balaustreti, dipignerolle secondo li sarà ordinato dal signor Antonio.

(fol. 399v) Item doi ferrate inverniciarlle del colore parerà meglio al signor Antonio.

Item, bisognando qualche altra pittura, tanto dentro come fora, la debbia fare secondo li sarà ordinato dal detto signor Antonio, in modo che non resti inperffetto niente; qual pittura il detto Baldasare promette farlla fedelmente tutta di boni colori, e cominciare a lavorare quest'altra settimana e darlla finita, in tutto e per tutto, per il mese di ottobre prossimo; e, manchando in detto, finirà detto lavoro per tutto detto mese; che il detto signor Antonio possi, parendoli, farci lavorare ad altri homini a spese e interesse di detto Baldasare.

Item si convengono che alla fine del lavoro, caso ci fusse qualche differenza, od il lavoro non piacesse a detto signor Antonio, tanto finito il lavoro come inanzi, che si debbia fare revedere da homini periti nel arte e fare quel tanto che loro giudicarano.

Et il detto signor Antonio promette darlli per detto lavoro scuti centosessanta di moneta di giuli diece per scudo da pagarsi, come promette, in questo modo: cioè scudi cinquanta subito che haverà dipinto nel detto ovato il detto Dio Padre con il detto choro o un Profeta, il restante pagarillo secondo farà lavoro; e non piacendo a detto signor Antonio la pittura di detto Dio padre o Profeta, possi rimuovere detto Balda|sare (406r), e mettere altri a fare detto lavoro, senza che sia tenuto a spesa alcuna et che non habbia da pagare cosa alcuna al detto Baldasare per quello haverà fatto, que omnia etc. alias etc. de quibus etc. absque etc. pro quibus etc. se ipsos etc. ac bona etc. in ampliori forma Camere apostolice citra constitutionem providere etc. obligarunt etc. renunciarunt etc. appellationi etc. iurarunt tactis etc. super quibus etc.

Actum Rome in domo solite habitationis ipsius domini Antonii, ibidem presentibus dominis Hectore Diera, clerico Portugalensi, et Emanuele de Fonseca, clerico Portugalensi testibus etc.

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Document 2

ASR, Notari del Auditor Camera, vol. 7089, fol. 406r

Quietantia.

Die 14 aprilis 1586.

Supradictus dominus Balthasar Crux, sponte dixit et confessus fuit sibi integraliter satisfactum fuisse de suprascriptis scutis centumsexaginta pro suprascriptis laboreriis delatis a suprascripto domino Antonio de Fonsecha absente, me etc., una cum scutis sex pro uno quadretto de artibus sue manus (?) et scutis decem, ut dicitur, pro mancia, quos ab eodem domino Antonio absente, me etc., in diversis vicibus et partibus per modum banchi magnifici domini Tyberii Ceuli habuisse et recepisse confessus fuit, de quibus etc. exceptioni etc. renunciavit, quietavit etc. cum pacto iuravit tactis etc. super quibus etc., presentibus dominis Angelo Fidato de Cesis et Sebastiano Bonello de Mathelica, testibus.

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