THE MAKING OF A GOD: CULTURE, RELIGION, AND SACRAL MONARCHY IN DUKE COSIMO DEI MEDICI’S FLORENCE

A Dissertation in
History
by
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ABSTRACT

In 1537, the brutal murder of the heirless Duke Alessandro dei Medici brought the young and relatively inexperienced Cosimo dei Medici to the ducal chair of the most tumultuous city of the age: Renaissance Florence. This study examines how Cosimo used the politics of the sacred to legitimate monarchical rule in a city in which sacral monarchy had no historical precedent and few indigenous traditions. Utilizing a broad sweep of sources including government documents, letters, testaments, sermons, devotional literature, humanist tracts, diaries, art, and monastery records, the dissertation argues that Cosimo and his literati borrowed only the models of sacral monarchy that could be inscribed in local cultural and religious assumptions, the mundane axioms and organizing principles of thought with which Florentines and Tuscans made sense of their daily reality. In a sentence, Cosimo’s grandiose political claims worked because they were only a special case of more generalized assumptions writ deeply into both the intellectual and quotidian experience of Florentine life. The work also tackles broader intellectual issues such as the relationship between divine right and absolutism, humanism’s relationship to Christianity, the reception of Machiavellian realpolitik, the construction of patronage networks, and the relationship between religious reform and government.
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Prologue: The Scene

The story begins in blood, with the brutal stabbing of the first Duke of Florence, the last direct male heir in the Medici line. On Epiphany night 1537, the rougish Duke of Florence, Alessandro dei Medici, hastily made his way down the Via Larga to the chambers of his cousin and best friend, Lorenzino. For some time, Alessandro had been needling his dissolute kinsmen to procure the sexual favors of one highly respected Florentine matron, and that night, Lorenzino had promised he would deliver. The prospect was undoubtedly scandalous, but Alessandro undoubtedly did not care; he was convinced his grip on the city was ironclad, and he wantonly utilized the fact to satisfy his reportedly strange sexual appetite, devouring the city’s wives, widows, and virgins with little regard for their age or rank. The prospect was also undoubtedly difficult, but Lorenzino had proved adept and trustworthy in such exploits before. Thus, Alessandro’s mind was probably at rest as he readied himself in the prearranged chambers, removing his armor and sending away his bodyguard, leaving himself just as Lorenzino wanted: naked, defenseless, and completely oblivious to the dangers awaiting him.

Lorenzino had indeed been importuning favors, but not the kind Alessandro expected. Safely hidden in the dark corners of nearby Piazza Santissima Annunziata, he had just initiated his Hungarian servant into his secret plan to assassinate the unpopular duke, ready, however, to sink his dagger into his would-be accomplice instead should he show any signs of trepidation. If pangs of fear or morality pricked the Hungarian’s conscience, he must have kept them to himself. Moreover, it must have come as quite a

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shock to Alessandro to find it was no beautiful matron that Lorenzino had seduced into his bedroom, but a hefty and dangerous looking ruffian. Lorenzino first attempted to dispatch the unwitting tyrant on his own, but the unkindest cut proved insufficient, and Alessandro scrambled to his feet, defending himself from Lorenzino with a nearby stool. The young duke even managed to bite a chunk out of his assassin’s hand before being laid low, six thrusts later. The wounded Lorenzo panicked. Fleeing the scene, he mounted a horse, rode to the city gates, and talked his way out. The guard let him ride, despite the suspicious looking cut on his hand.\textsuperscript{3}

Lorenzino did not stop riding until he reached Venice, where he was immediately hailed as a new Brutus by the rich anti-Medicean exile Filippo Strozzi. Though Alessandro may well have deserved the title of tyrant, the brooding and sulky Lorenzino was hardly cut out for the salvation of the patria.\textsuperscript{4} The terror-stricken assassin was little more than the same petulant youth who had once found himself exiled from Clement VII’s Rome for knocking the heads off the statues on the Arch of Constantine.\textsuperscript{5} Though by his dual blows against monarchy living and dead, he gained a reputation as the slayer of tyrants both ancient and modern, his panic soon proved costly. The Holy Roman Emperor’s agent in Florence, Cardinal Innocenzo Cybo, got wind of the murder before

\textsuperscript{3}The events surrounding the murder of Alessandro and the election of Cosimo can be found, with little variation, in a number of secondary sources. The most authoritative contemporary account is Benedetto Varchi’s \textit{Storia Fiorentina}, composed under Medici patronage by one of the most illustrious scholars of the day. The study of Cosimo’s government has long taken as a key secondary text, Riguccio Galluzzi’s \textit{Istoria del Granducato di Toscana sotto il Governo della Casa Medici a sua Altezza Reale il Serenissimo Pietro Leopoldo: Principe Reale d’Ungheria e di Boemia Arciduca d’Austria, Granduca di Toscana} (Milan: Ristampa Anastica, 1974), 1-17. Nearly forty years ago, Eric Cochrane’s eminently readable \textit{Florence in the Forgotten Centuries: 1527-1800; A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971) gave the English language its first real historical treatment of the period.


\textsuperscript{5}Cochrane, 15.
the news could spread and prudently kept it quiet.\(^6\) Claiming that Duke Alessandro was sleeping off the previous night’s revels, Cybo quietly had the fetid, rotting body secretly snuck out of the chamber and into the nearby family crypt in San Lorenzo. Meanwhile, he sent out urgent pleas for troops, which arrived in due time under the command of Alessandro Vitelli. But by Monday morning the trickle of disquieting rumors had begun rippling across the city and into the dominion, inevitably lapping over the borders of Tuscany itself, and as the news began to spread, so spread the threat from the city’s disgruntled republican element. In Venice Filippo Strozzi was raising troops and cash.\(^7\)

In Rome the Florentine cardinals Niccolò Ridolfi and Jacopo Salviati were drawing up plans for the new government.\(^8\) The excitement was even bubbling over into the streets of Florence itself, where jubilant bands were somewhat prematurely proclaiming the rebirth of republican liberty. The newly restored Medicean principate was facing the largest crisis of its short life; would it survive, or would it be strangled in its cradle like so many other Florentine governments?\(^9\)

On Monday, with an anxious and ominously swelling crowd situated just outside, the Florentine Senate of Forty-Eight nervously assembled to decide the Republic’s fate.\(^{10}\) Alessandro’s next of kin happened to be Lorenzino, whose treacherous act disqualified him from the succession. Cardinal Cybo hit upon the idea of placing Alessandro’s three-year-old bastard Giulio on the throne; of course, he himself would act as regent, keeping the real power in his own hands. Cybo’s plan was extremely distasteful to some of the

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\(^6\) Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, 183.
\(^7\) Ibid, 37.
\(^8\) Cochrane, 31
\(^9\) Between 1494 and 1530, Florence changed governments four times. This latest attempt at Medici rule had been in place since 1530, when the newly humbled Pope Clement VII and Charles V joined forces to crush the last Florentine republic.
\(^{10}\) The Florentine senate was the body of aristocrats known as the *Senato dei Quarantotto*, the senate of the forty-eight.
elder statesmen in the senate, the venerable Francesco Guicciardini foremost among them. However, these men also knew that the rapidly swelling mob would not countenance a naked power grab by the senate itself. The populo, that wealthless and statusless plebeian mob so deftly utilized by the Medici in times of crisis, always preferred the voracity of one lone tyrant to the grasping maws of forty-eight little ones. Nor would the Emperor Charles countenance a return to a real representative republic. The emperor knew that the Medici had occasionally proved useful allies, whereas republican Florence had always remained unswervingly pro-French. Cut open the heart of any Florentine, so went proverbial wisdom, and there one would find the golden fleur-de-lis. There was a real danger that Charles would seize the city for his own rather than risk it to his perpetual Valois nemesis. Most of the oligarchs in the senate had few fond memories of republican rule anyway, which in the last experiment had turned rather nastily against wealthy and noble alike.

All this was enough to prod the oligarchs in the senate into accepting a compromise candidate. To that end, the pragmatist senators engineered the election of seventeen-year-old Cosimo dei Medici, related to a cadet branch of the Medici family through his famous condottiere father and to the main branch through his mother. The young Cosimo was thought to be more or less disinterested in the city’s turbulent political affairs, as he spent much of his time running around in the soldier’s long tunic, hunting and hawking outside the city walls. It was hoped that the absent duke would leave the real business of running the state to the senate. The oligarchs who supported his election
thought they could make a puppet ruler out of him, a figurehead cloaking an aristocratic regime. But the oligarchs had misjudged their man.

Cosimo was the son of Giovanni delle Bande Neri, a brilliant soldier and absentee father, whose liberal-handed generosity and premature death left Cosimo in a rather humiliating and awkward poverty vis-à-vis his Medici relatives. As such, his mother, Maria Salviati, cherished suitably narrow ambitions for him: hitch his wagon to Alessandro’s star and find a suitable dowry to marry; the ducal chair was really never in her purview. His election came as somewhat of a surprise, perhaps not an entirely pleasant one. He was inheriting a desperate situation; indeed, the prospect of taking the reins of an untamed and unbroken Florence was so unattractive that his mother wondered if he should not refuse the offer outright. Since the fall of the last Florentine republic in 1530, Pope Clement VII and the bastard Duke Alessandro had alienated and exiled so many citizens that a veritable army of malcontents had spent much of the last ten years in Rome, Venice, and Bologna, biding their time and dreaming of vendetta. Now that chance had just fallen into their lap, and laden with French gold and silver, they were putting together small armies to march on Florence. Cosimo faced them armed only with a depleted treasury, a pittance allowance, and no independent fortune to shore up the state’s finances. Furthermore, he had no solid assurance of support from the emperor,

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12 The most thorough and accessible analyses of Cosimo’s childhood come from two twentieth century biographers, whose opinions of the man are diametrically opposed. Cecily Booth’s work was meant to clear “the suspicions that blackened Cosimo’s name.” Cecily Booth, Cosimo I: Duke of Florence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921). On the other hand, Roberto Cantagalli’s biography portrays Cosimo as somewhat of a Machiavellian monster. Roberto Cantagalli, Cosimo I: granduca di Toscana (Milan: Mursia editore, 1985).
nor did he even have physical control over the city; that particular card was held by Alessandro Vitello, who had taken possession of the fortress and was not about to let it go without being handsomely rewarded for services rendered. Nevertheless, Cosimo could not pass up the offer of a lifetime. When he entered Florence on Monday morning, he entered alone, without the escort offered by some of his father’s doggedly loyal veterans. Later that day Cosimo was sworn in as “capo et primario” of the Florentine state. Preferring to support this creature of the senate rather than exasperate the pope and Venice by an outright annexation, the Emperor Charles approved the senate’s decision, granting Cosimo formal recognition as head of the Florentine government in September of the same year.

Cosimo did not long remain in such a tenuous position. The seventeen-year-old boy had precocious political talents, a fact that should have surprised no one given the blood that ran through his veins. His forceful personality blended both the foxlike political cunning of his Medici namesake, Cosimo the Elder, and the iron will of his paternal grandmother, Caterina Sforza, whose fortitude is best recalled by a picturesque episode played out on the battlements of Forlì; when a group of conspirators camped outside the citadel threatened to kill her captive children if she did not immediately surrender, she impudently flashed her genitalia and called back, “As long as these remain to me, I can make new children.”

15 As with all colorfully told stories, this one has its doubters, but she probably said something to that effect. See Ernst Breisach, Caterina Sforza: A Renaissance Virago (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 103.
So well equipped biologically and well geared to rule by temperament, Cosimo quickly put his house in order. In the first year of his reign, he won a resounding victory over the disordered and confused bands of exiles that flung themselves into the heart of Tuscany, thereby securing his throne and winning the emperor’s respect. His nemesis Filippo Strozzi, locked in the fortress, soon followed Cato’s example, preferring to end his life on his own sword rather than watch the new tyrant snuff out the last flicker of republican liberty. Two years later Cosimo secured his relationship with the Hapsburgs by marrying himself off to the daughter of the Viceroy of Toledo with a pomp and bravado that belied just how uneasily the ducal crown yet sat on his brow. In 1543 Cosimo would celebrate his first real propaganda victory, regaining the fortress with a timely payment to the perpetually cash-strapped Emperor Charles. In the early 1550s, he would gobble up neighboring Siena in his one and only major military action. In 1569 he convinced the well meaning but ambitious Pius V to crown him Grandduke of Tuscany, a title that his heirs would proudly bear until the nineteenth-century. At his death in 1574, the compromise duke could boast that he had stabilized the ducal finances, secured his borders, doubled his territory, and attracted a dazzling array of scholars and artists to his court, academy, and universities. Most importantly, he would claim that he had pacified the perennially fractious politics of Florentine life, ushering in a golden age of peace underwritten by his own personal power.16

16 Cosimo’s stratagems for centralizing political power have been widely studied in this century. The hares were set running at the beginning of the century by Antonio Anzilotti, who focused on Cosimo’s reorganization of existing bureaucratic structures, which enabled him to directly control all aspects of government. Antonio Anzilotti, La costituzione interna dello stato Fiorentino sotto il duca Cosimo I de’Medici (Florence: Francesco Lumachi, 1910). On the reform of penal law as a centralizing feature of Cosimo’s governance see also Elena Fasano Guarini, Lo Stato Mediceo di Cosimo I (Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1973), 24-47. Furio Diaz has noted his repressive legislation Diaz, 106. A long line of anti-Medicean historians have attributed Cosimo’s success to his efficient liquidation of irreconciliable enemies, a claim that is all the more believable since we find it in the mouth of one of his many panegyricists. Mario
Despite Cosimo’s success his monarchy reportedly weighed heavily on his subjects’ hearts.\textsuperscript{17} The list of complaints to which Cosimo’s situation left him vulnerable was long: in the first place, he was only seventeen years old at his ascension, and for many Florentines, the seat of government was no place for a boy;\textsuperscript{18} second, he had little hereditary legitimacy, and for many Florentines, his actions exceeded the little sphere of authority that the senate had actually tried to concede him; and finally, he was a Medici, and for many Florentines, the very name reeked of tyranny. These nagging and persistent doubts drove Cosimo’s program of artistic, literary, and academic patronage, which attempted to do what neither his name nor his ancestry ever could: legitimize his monarchical government in the eyes of the world and his fellow Tuscans. Failing at this task would mean that he and his line would forever be nothing more than occupants of a blood spattered throne, inheritors of a power won in siege and assassination. Thus, Cosimo quite consciously set out to make his power not just legitimate, but sacrosanct; to make his personage not just regal, but divine; and to make himself not just into a prince, but into a god.

\textsuperscript{17} This, for instance, is the verdict of both of the ambassadors sent to Florence by the Republic of Venice. See \textit{Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato}, vol. \textit{III}, a cura di Arnaldo Segarizzi (Bari: Gius. Laterza et Figli, 1916), 128 and 198.

\textsuperscript{18} It seems that the antagonism between old and young was an old theme in Florentine political life. See Richard Trexler, \textit{Public Life in Renaissance Florence} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 392-393.
**Introduction**

Cosimo certainly must have known that peddling sacral monarchy to Florentines would not be easy, for the Florentine monarchy itself had begun in blood just a few years earlier. Only in 1530 had a starving and outgunned Florentine Republic finally signed away its last liberties to its Medici conquerors. Indeed, Florentine republicanism stood in the starkest contrast to ideologies in the rest of Early Modern Europe. Almost everywhere monarchy was in the ascendant.\(^1\) And almost everywhere this meant some kind of sacral monarchy. In most Christian polities, the ideologies that equated the prince with a god on earth were a matter of long-standing tradition, woven into the tapestries of mythic and heroic dynastic histories.\(^2\) Almost everywhere, paint, canvas, and brush had been set to work to depict monarchical sacrality; gallons of ink had been spilled arguing in favor of it; and whole quarries of stone had been emptied attempting to immortalize it. Florence, however, was one of the last exceptions to this rule, an island of republican consensus in the swelling sea of monarchialism. Florentines thought their republican constitution necessary because, hot blooded southerners that they were, they were a little too noble, a little too unyielding, and a little too honor-bound to bend their necks to one-man rule. In turn, they found the source of their own strength and genius in that very same republican constitution.\(^3\) Florentine historians had long made the expulsion of a monarch a defining moment in their patriotic mythology, never hesitating to compare the

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\(^3\) The most influential expression of this idea was formulated by Leonardo Bruni, the classic exposition of which is in Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 1-71; and see also Girolamo Savonarola, *Trattato di Frate Ieronimo Savonarola circa il reggimento e governo della città di Firenze* (Firenze: Elibron Classics, 2006).
city’s chasing of the tyrant Walter of Brienne to the similar moment in Roman history when that republic had expelled the Tarquins. The equation of liberty and republicanism was so deeply engrained in Florentine consciousness that Cosimo’s Medici ancestors had rather prudently decided to rule the city under a republican cloak, wielding control in the shadows rather than through legitimate organs of governance. At the end of the fifteenth-century, the fiery and persuasive Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola had upped the ante, turning republican liberty into holy liberty, a godly ordained constitution providentially appointed to usher in a golden age of peace. Savonarola’s ghost continued to haunt the souls of Florentines, and his message continued to win minds long after the preacher himself had been lit afire in the Piazza della Signoria. Indeed, when the combined armies of Pope and Holy Roman Emperor sat down outside the walls of Florence to starve out the Last Florentine Republic in 1530, they found a host of Savonarolans peering out at them from the city’s battlements.

Born and bred in such unusual circumstances, the Florentine principate is an intriguing test case for studying the construction of sacral monarchy. Unlike other monarchs, Cosimo could not draw on a body of native tradition. His was a project constructed from scratch and consciously executed over a relatively brief span of years,

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leaving a plethora of source material denied to scholars studying the construction of
sacral kingship in ancient, medieval, or Byzantine contexts. Thus, Cosimo’s example
provides the historian a unique window onto the construction of sacral monarchy in ways
that monarchs heir to more long-standing traditions cannot. And though it is true that he
drew his models from preceding traditions, the whole project was nevertheless
completely novel for Florence; in fact, it flew in the teeth of the city’s most cherished
political ideals and traditions. How then did Cosimo construct a plausible and successful
political mythology of Christian kingship in the very birthplace of the "pagan
renaissance," “modern” republicanism, and Machiavellian realpolitik political
philosophy?7 How did he go from a compromise candidate, whose sole undeniable
recommendation was that he was not a Spaniard, to a divine prince? It is the thesis of
this work that Cosimo and his literati borrowed only the models of sacral monarchy that
could be inscribed in local cultural and religious assumptions, the mundane axioms and
organizing principles of thought with which Florentines and Tuscans made sense of their
daily reality. In a sentence, Cosimo’s grandiose political claims worked because they
were only a special case of more generalized assumptions writ deeply into both the
intellectual and quotidian experience of Florentine life.

The following chapters will put this thesis to the test by examining it under six
different lenses. Chapter one will argue that Cosimo’s princely apotheosis was simply

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7 I do not wholeheartedly subscribe to any of these overwrought categories. I do not believe that
the Florentine Renaissance was entirely pagan, that Florentine Republicanism was modern, or that
Machiavelli was particularly influential as a model to be copied by his contemporaries. I use the terms
anyways because my humble opinions are set against a persistent use of the terms and against the authority
of established scholars. On the pagan renaissance see Part VI of Jacob Burkhardt, The Civilization of the
On the relationship of Florence to modern republicanism the most seminal studies are, of course, J.G.A.
Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); and Baron’s The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance.
one symptom of an intellectual climate that saw the immanent manifestation of God in all aspects of the created order. The assumptions of the day saw the material world through a prism of sacred immanence so strong it occasionally bordered on pantheism. Like many of their Early Modern contemporaries, Renaissance Florentines generally believed that terrestrial divinity could inhere in any person according to his or her use of reason, exercise of virtue, or participation in the sacramental life of the church. Consequently, everyday culture was awash with special cases of terrestrial divinity, from the doctor, to the philosopher, to the scholar, to the artist, to the priest, to any human accomplishing outstanding feats. When Cosimo set about trying to convince Florentines of his princely divinity, his claim was simply one more addition to the pantheon. The second chapter argues that Cosimo’s divine right claims were not absolutist propaganda but rather the inescapable conclusion of a ubiquitously persistent providential worldview. This chapter argues against the dominant discourse of divine right, the one that draws a sharp dichotomy between appeals to God and appeals to consent. Florentine providential thinking was unquestionably multicausal; that is, allowing for the simultaneous action of man’s free choice and God’s guiding hand. Thus, Cosimo’s legitimacy could be both free and divine, by the hand of the almighty and the consent of the republic. This allowed the young duke to tie divine right monarchical claims to more familiar republican mythologies. The third chapter will argue that Cosimo’s panegyrists pushed certain conceptions of Cosimo’s “divine” virtue in order to counter Machiavelli’s realist political arguments, using Cosimo’s success to reassert the practical utility of traditional Christian and humanist categories of moral virtue. The fourth chapter will argue that Cosimo’s position in Florence was indissolubly linked to his ability to act in the long-
standing Medici role as a patron in the Roman curia, a role long sanctified in Florence but lacking the noxious autocratic overtones of a more overt absolutism. This chapter will examine how Cosimo wrote time-tested patterns of Florentine patronage networking onto the larger stage of Roman curial politics. The fifth chapter will argue that while repudiating Savonarola’s legacy of monastic intervention in political affairs, Cosimo nevertheless set out to win the favor of the city’s considerable Savonarolan element by systematically enacting the friar’s program of moral reform. This chapter will examine the topic under the lens of moral legislation, assistance to the poor, and clerical reform. The final chapter will look at Cosimo’s utilization of pre-existing aspects of Florentine sacred life, arguing that he insinuated himself into the sacred by posturing as its defender. Nevertheless, he was usually careful to accommodate his actions to his subjects’ traditional attitudes and desires. This chapter will analyze this dynamic under the lens of sacred office, sacred space, sacred time, and sacred power.

If some of Cosimo’s models for sacral monarchy were already familiar to the rest of Europe, that is because the rest of Europe shared many of their most basic assumptions with those found in the Florentine tradition. However, the extent to which Cosimo’s models of sacral monarchy were inscribed only in local assumptions is thrown into relief by taking a glance at the models of sacral monarchy that his literati did not borrow, for Cosimo’s mythmakers ignored some of the most potent staples of early modern political discourse. For instance, Cosimo did not invite scrofula sufferers to feel the healing power of a divine ruler’s touch.⁸ Florence had no tradition of political thaumaturgy, and

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one could not simply be created from nothing. Second, the metaphor of the prince as head of the body politic was conspicuously downplayed, a metaphor that would have been a hard sell to republican Florence. 9 Third, with one or two exceptions, 10 Cosimo’s literati did not equate divine right with absolutism. Republican traditions dictated that he stress the consensual nature of his power. Finally, Cosimo’s literati had little interest in tracing the Medici line to some more ancient and noble race or to some Wotan-like man/god hidden in the mists of time, for such an attempt would have wounded Florentine and Tuscan pride to the quick. There would be no fictive Trojan lineages, no semi-divine founder. Much to the contrary, during the Cosimian age, the autochthony of the house was cherished and celebrated. “Not from foreign and barbarous provinces,” eulogized Scipione Ammirato, “did Cosimo draw his origin, but from most noble Italy.” And not just from Italy, but Italy’s greatest province, Tuscany, and its greatest city, Florence. 11 Chasing tales of heroic Medicean ancestors through falsified genealogical tables was not a project that Cosimo’s subjects would have appreciated, for the wells of local patriotism ran deep in the little communal territory.

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9 A rather late homage by Lionardo Salviati to the Knights of San Stefano on the occasion of Cosimo’s coronation is the exception that proves the rule in this case. Lionardo Salviati, Orazione del Cavalier Lionardo Salviati intorno alla Coronazione del Serenissimo Cosimo Medici Gran Duca di Toscana (Fiorenza: Sermatelli, 1570), unpaginated.

10 The Bolognese Matasilani was an exception, 16-17.

11 At his funeral oration, Scipione Ammirato, who later wrote his own genealogy of the Medici, remarked that he took pleasure in knowing that “non da straniere, e barbare Provincie egli tragga la sua origine, come (non so con quanta prudenza sia con lor pace detto) molti si sogliono gloriare; ma dalla nostra Christiana antichissima, e sopra tutte le altre nobilissima Italia, et delle Regioni, et Paesi di quella della Toscana.” Scipione Ammirato, Orazione di Signore Scipione Ammirato in morte del Cosimo I dei Medici (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXVII c. 104), 39r-39v. Similar sentiments were expressed by his protomedeico Baccio Baldini, who noted that the Medici were “non d’altronde venuti, ma in essa insino dal suo primo principio nati, et in quella nutriti et allevati, la riconobbero sempre com lor propria madre.” Baccio Baldini, Orazione Fatta nella Accademia Fiorentina: In Lode del Serenissimo Sig. Cosimo Medici, Gran Duca di Toscana, Gloriosa Memoria (Firenze: Bartolommeo Sermartelli, 1574), unpaginated.
In its immediate historiographical context, this thesis supports a growing consensus among Cosimian scholars that in part, the duke’s rule survived by promoting illusions of continuity linking it to the Florentine past.\textsuperscript{12} Old political institutions were not abolished but supported and brought under centralized control. Intellectual and cultural institutions were infiltrated and channeled, while artistic commissions cast Cosimo as the fulfillment of the city’s destiny, the end to which all previous Florentine history had been tending. This dissertation makes a similar case for sacral monarchy and religious politics, which have never been fully studied in the Cosimian age. In this case, Cosimo’s novel attempt at centralized monarchy lived and died by its ability to attach itself to preexisting Florentine assumptions.

The Florentine case thus opens a window onto more generally applicable points. Much of the work on sixteenth-century monarchy has focused on the dualities of political ideology and political exigency.\textsuperscript{13} Historians have asked: from where did rulers draw their models of legitimacy, and what political purpose did these models serve? Insofar as historians have been concerned with the broader relations between politics and the localized axioms of religious and cultural thought, they have almost exclusively directed their attentions to the ways in which reformed religion helped to desacralize the sacral


\textsuperscript{13} For examples of this approach see Bertelli, Ralph Giesey, \textit{The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France} (Genève: E Droz, 1960); Giovanni Ricci, \textit{Il Principe e la Morte: Corpo, cuore, effigie nel Rinascimento} (Bologna: Mulino 1998); Susanna Pietrosanti, \textit{Sacralità Medicee} (Florence: Firenze Libri, 1991).
polity in the later early modern period. Cosimo’s case insists on throwing another element into the mix: namely, the fact that local forms of sacral monarchy developed from expressions of local culture. To borrow a popular early modern metaphor, political ideology and political exigency may have supplied the seeds, the sun, and the water, but religious assumptions and cultural axioms took the place of soil and climate. Specific forms of sacral monarchy could only flower where all these conditions were right. This helps explain the seemingly programmatic element of much of this rhetoric, for the successful projection of sacral monarchy was neither cynical propaganda foisted upon a badly unenlightened audience nor merely a matter of importation and mimicry by artist and scholar clients. At least in some cases, it was the expression of the most basic intellectual assumptions of local culture articulated by rulers and scholar clients who were themselves deeply immersed in that very same culture. This dissertation seeks to examine this dynamic in the Florentine experience, laying bare the pertinent assumptions and explicating their links to political culture.

Finally, it is worth the time to examine the primary leavening agent of Florentine culture, in this case, the urge to reconcile classical and Christian learning. In its most peculiarly Florentine form, this urge found its most satisfying release in the lionization of Plato and Augustine, that is, the most ‘proto’ Christian of the Greek authors and his most

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authoritative Christian interlocutor. But the Florentine impulsion for reconciliation did not end at Plato. The highly influential Pico della Mirandola is instructive here, for Pico was broadminded and championed a distinctive ecumenical syncretism, but nevertheless, his broadminded ecumenical syncretism was primarily ordered to squeezing all manner of ancient philosophy into a Christian box. What’s more, though Florentine humanism had adopted Plato in emphasis over the dry scholasticism of the schoolmen, there was still a healthy dose of the medieval in intellectual life. Florentine thinkers had not turned their back on Aristotle altogether, and it is with perhaps more surprise than is warranted that we find Boethius, Jerome, and Gregory the Great among the most prominent intellectual influences in mid-century discourse; that is, the Latin fathers who had already made a pass at reconciling classical learning and Christian theology. Even Aquinas’s thought entered Florentine intellectual life through Dante and through Savonarola, whose grounding in Thomism colored even his most fiery and inflammatory sermons. Thus, our first three chapters will take this penchant for reconciliation as a theme and a secondary thesis, arguing that many of the axioms of contemporary thought found their most articulate expression on the meeting ground of Christian and classical learning.

This Italian brand of Christian humanism deserves a moment of comment since it seems to remain so rarely acknowledged outside of the field. The master narrative all too often situates Christian humanism decidedly north of the Alps, the fault for which must undoubtedly lay on Burckhardt’s head, regardless of how many shots the previous century has dealt him. For many, the persistence of the old narrative has kept the Italian renaissance triumphantly and modernly secular,\(^{15}\) and this characterization has only

\(^{15}\) Burckhardt lays out his areligious vision of the Renaissance in part VI of the classic work, see pages 426-516. See also the introduction to Renée Neu Watkins, *Humanism and Liberty: Writings on*
recently undergone serious revisions. Indeed, there are few places where this old illusion persists more tenaciously than among historians of Florentine politics, for whom the problem is made pressingly more difficult by the desire to see the birth of modern, secular, activist, realist politics in the Florentine civic humanism of the *quattrocento*. The impetus for the idea derives its legacy from a pair of magisterial figures: Hans Baron and J.G.A. Pocock. Baron’s work, which first came to the attention of the English language world in 1955, posited Florence as the cultural nursemaid to this secular civic ideal, a dramatic break from medieval theological models of politics and history. Picking up on this secular rendering, J.G.A. Pocock argued that Florentine ‘civic humanism’ had been transmitted to Cromwellian England and thence to the early American republic, thus preparing the basis of the modern republican secular state. The last thirty years of scholarship on the subject have been largely marked by Baron’s enduring legacy.

Even less theoretically committed scholars such as Humfrey Butters, Niccolo Rubinstein, John Najemy, and Paula Clarke have neglected the religious element of Florentine political culture in their often excellent and enlightening political

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16 See for instance, Verdon.
17 See especially, Baron, 156-157.
18 Pocock’s thesis generally posits Florentine history and culture as a fundamental element in the emancipation of modern politics and history from medieval Christian understandings of time. See Pocock especially, 8.
monographs. Indeed, even critiques of Baron have at times assumed his fundamental secularizing premise; for instance, James Blythe has established continuities between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance not so much by acknowledging the religious character of Renaissance political discourse, but by interpolating the secular concerns of the civic humanists back into the thirteenth and fourteenth-centuries. In the context of the mid sixteenth-century, scholars of Florentine governance have often come to grips with religion by refusing to acknowledge it as an independent ingredient of political culture, choosing to treat it merely as an instrument of power wielded by cynical autocrats. Such is the operating assumption in the work of Henk van Veen, Maria Lupi, Massimo Firpo, Roberto Cantagalli, and Danilo Marrara. Those few scholars who have taken the question seriously, like Arnaldo d’Addario and Giorgio Spini, have largely confined themselves to studies of the institutional relationship between the ducal government and the local and international organs of church power.

However, recent scholarship has reshaped our understanding of religion’s importance on Florentine culture in general. It must be said that historians of Florentine art have rarely, if ever, bought into the idea of a secular renaissance. The visual evidence for the persistence of Christian feeling is too evident to be ignored. Moreover,

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22 Van Veen 165-166, Lupi 26; Firpo, 311; Cantagalli, 18; Marrara 58-59.
23 See D’Addario *La Formazione*; and Spini, *Cosimo I*.
studies on Italian renaissance religion have come increasingly ‘out of the margins’ in the wake of Charles Trinkaus’ pioneering work of 1977 In Our Image and Likeness and Richard Trexler’s monumental Public Life in Renaissance Florence. However, political historians have been slow to integrate the findings of religious historians, social historians, and art historians into the political narrative. Konrad Eisenblichler’s edited volume of cultural politics in the Cosimian age tellingly does not include a single essay concerning the impact of religion on political culture, even though Eisenblichler surely cannot be accused of being indifferent to the topic. This study seeks to remedy that lacuna, arguing that religious impulses and theological ideals, especially those that achieved the difficult task of reconciling Christianity to classical culture, were an essential constitutive element of Florentine political culture. Cosimo’s political propaganda tapped into these existing religious assumptions and impulses as a way to establish continuity with Florence’s Renaissance past. Thus, in a broader perspective, this study will probe the continuities between Renaissance and Catholic Reformation, thereby indirectly contributing to Paul Grendler’s call to examine the links between two movements that had once seemed to “inhabit different worlds.”

25 The turn of phrase comes from a very thorough historiographical essay on this topic written by David Peterson, “Out of the Margins: Religion and the Church in Renaissance Italy,” Renaissance Quarterly 53 (2000).
As a final theme, this study will insist on a clear distinction between the Protestant and Catholic Reformations’ influence on models of political legitimacy. Leaving divine right aside, most scholars of religion have assumed that the Reformation tolled the death knell for sacral monarchy, and now at least one influential historian has identified reformed Catholicism as a twin motor of desanctification, bolstering his claim with the now manifestly apparent reality that Protestant and Catholic reform ‘tended to have similar social and cultural effects wherever (they) emerged.’ Catholic and Protestant reform were twins in many ways, but this study suggests that their kinship did not extend to the realm of political theology. If the ordering of the world remained deeply religious, then the Catholic reaffirmation of transubstantiation, human merit in salvation, indulgences, the Virgin Mary, and the network of saints all certainly grounded Catholic intellects in habits of thought decidedly more keyed towards seeing the immanent affirmation of the sacred in the material world. These habits of sacred immanence could naught but aid Cosimo’s bid for political apotheosis.

Thus, Cosimo was able to utilize Florence’s intellectual culture in order to cast himself in the mould of a sacral monarch. Where possible, this dissertation will try to extend this analysis beyond the literary elite (though Florence was highly literate at any rate) to unveil how these more general assumptions trickled down and up through the population and even into the court itself, for contrary to prevailing opinion, Cosimo himself certainly shared many of the assumptions that underwrote his sacrality.


29 Monod, 7 and 36, and 53, where he writes “Sacred monarchs...could find little consolation in reformed religion, of whatever variety.” Monod locates this opposition to sacral monarchy primarily among Spanish Jesuits.

30 Cantagalli, 132-133; and Cochrane, 60.
Chapter One: The Familiarity of Terrestrial Divinity

When Cosimo’s one and only war came to a close in 1555, the truce loosened the strings on his notoriously thrifty money-purse just long enough to get the artistic work started again in the Palazzo Signoria. Shortly thereafter, Cosimo’s favorite painter and intimate friend Giorgio Vasari began painting over Lionardo Da Vinci’s acclaimed masterpiece in the Salone del Cinquecento,¹ the large hall that had been built to house the Great Council of the Florentine Republic. The work was part of a larger ongoing project, designed to turn the palace into a suitable residence for ducal couple, and it certainly showed more delicacy of feeling for the Hall of the Great Council than previous Medici projects, such as using it as a horse stable. Still, it is likely that some diehard republicans privately burned with resentment as Vasari’s brush covered, stroke by stroke, the images that had once been meant to sanctify the great symbol of Florentine republicanism, for the new schema was unquestionably meant as a propaganda vehicle for the duke. However, when work on the palazzo was finally completed in 1572, very little of it would have passed for effective propaganda. The schema was so abstruse and disjointed that Vasari felt compelled to devote an entire volume to explaining the dizzyingly complex imagery of the program. There was, however, one exception to this absurd complexity. The central image in the tondo of the room bore the unmistakable portrait of Duke Cosimo himself. With his bare knee thrust out in the traditional posture of royal clemency, Cosimo peered down regally from the upper reaches of the cosmos as the

goddess of Florence placed a wooden crown on his royal head. Most visitors did not need to read Vasari's *Ragionamenti* to realize that this most unsubtle of political imagery, which he called the "key and conclusion to the whole work," had one purpose: to divinize Cosimo with the laurel of apotheosis, to cast him in the mould of a god.

As the historian Ernst Kantorwicz once remarked, “political mysticism...is exposed to the danger of losing its spell when taken out of its native surroundings.” And indeed, few components of early modern political theology are more exposed to that particular danger than claims of princely divinity. In this most ancient of conceits, the monarch was held to be a god on earth, whose power in the state was a microcosmic reflection of the divine powers that ruled over the universe. Though Christianity’s insistence that there was just one God and that worship was owed to him alone took a big step towards undermining the proposition altogether, Renaissance Christians’ insistence on the dignity of creation in general and man in particular codified a far more wide

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ranging concept of terrestrial divinity: the apotheosis of man himself. Indeed, man bore the image of the divine in his very being, and a divine destiny awaited him if only he could be raised up to participation in the divine life. This substitute divinity by participation is how Renaissance Christians made a god out of a man, and though they were often careful to stress the monotheistic unity of the Christian God’s essence, they rarely refrained from conflating their own version of apotheosis with the conceits of antiquity.

Nevertheless, Cosimo’s divinity was a very different kind of apotheosis than the kind claimed by Roman emperors.6 Vespasian’s wry deathbed comments notwithstanding, Roman oblations testified to a real and lively cult of ruler worship; and indeed, some of the less balanced emperors probably really believed themselves to be gods. After all, it would be much easier to be an incarnation of Apollo than the second coming of Christ. Cosimo certainly didn’t believe himself to be either one. At times his princely divinity was left safely in the realm of metaphor; at other times, it was inscribed in a more immanent view of the divine presence in the world. But quite often, the exact mechanics of the process were left conspicuously ambiguous. Whatever the case, his apotheosis was grounded in a local culture in which terrestrial divinity was a surprisingly humdrum affair, deeply inscribed in habits of thought far more widespread than the political arena. This chapter will argue that Cosimo’s apotheosis was an easy sell to Florentines because apotheosis was already a long-standing motif in Florentine culture, a

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motif that potentially transformed any human into a god on earth. While theologians supported the idea with scriptural passages, humanists quoted the ancients. Moreover, since the Eucharist transformed the laity into the body of Christ, the people of God became gods (in a pious sense) at least once a year and with increasing regularity as the Jesuits got their way on the issue of frequent communion. Indeed, by the end of the Renaissance, the rhetoric was so diffuse it had become practically banal; saints and ancient heroes were divine, but so were doctors, artists, and magicians. In Florence, princely divinity was just one more addition to the party, and a rather late one at that.

In Resemblance of the Divine Majesty: Cosimo as a Godlike Prince

Cosimo’s artists had already conjured up evocations of divinity for him a number of times before Vasari put paint to the walls of the Palazzo Vecchio. Though political historians have generally overlooked this feature of Cosimian rhetoric, art historians have found it far less easy to ignore, noting that Cosimo repeatedly appeared in the guise of the divinized Augustus and then, like Augustus, wore the garb of Apollo as well, albeit in an appropriately allegorical sense. When he entered Siena, he entered like a conquering Jesus riding into Jerusalem, the recently subdued populace waving the palm branches of victory. On medals and engravings he appeared as the semi-divine

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7 In this, the sixteenth-century was deeply indebted to the type of rhetoric that Trinkaus has identified an essential feature of quattrocento humanism. See Trinkaus, especially 171-322.
8 One reason for this is that Cosimo’s very good artists have provoked more study than his very poor rhetoricians, who are rarely considered “modern” enough for close scrutiny.
9 The most famous example is Vincenzo Danti’s statue of Cosimo as Augustus, now in the Bargello museum. As Crum elucidates, Danti’s statue was originally on the arch that leads from the Uffizi to the Lungarno. See Roger Crum, “Cosmos: The World of Cosmo: The Iconography of the Uffizi Façade,” The Art Bulletin 71 (1989).
11 I am here following Susanna Pietrosanti’s interpretation of the event. Pietrosanti, 57-58.
Hercules, laboring to restore the Tuscan state. In his lushly designed gardens he was Neptune, striking his trident into the sea and bringing sweet water into the city. Even Cosimo’s family appeared in semi-divine likeness. Craig Hugh Smyth has argued that Pontormo’s portrait of Cosimo’s mother was meant to evoke the Virgin Mary, while Gabrielle Langdon has elucidated subtle evocations of divinity in the Duchess Eleonora’s portraiture. Indeed, the visual evidence leaves little in the way of subtlety or ambiguity; Cosimo was never shy about ornamenting his visual propaganda with divine overtones, and art historians have paid attention.

With some notable exceptions, historians of ducal politics have not paid similar amounts of attention. Despite lack of interest in them, evocations of divinity were by no means buried or apologetic in the duke’s political, historical, and literary projects, for that medium did not limit itself to garbing the prince as a semi-divine pagan deity. Whereas canvas and stone transformed Cosimo into an allegorical pagan god, paper and pen turned him into a simulacrum of the God of the universe. A 1547 work dedicated to Cosimo by a client priest scholar set the tone:

> We confess that there is only one God to whom the prince on earth bears resemblance, and thus, for such resemblance of the divine majesty and to maintain the memory of him, I say that it is necessary to have princes on earth that resemble the divine power.  

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14 Cited in Langdon, 25.

15 Langdon, 72-77.

16 Figline’s work was actually a translation of an older work, which Figline had found insufficiently monarchical. Thus, he added his own first chapter on the sacrality of princes. Giovanni Fabrini di Figline, “Chapter One,” *Il Sacro Regno del Vero Reggimento, e della vera Felicità del Principe* (Venetia: Domenico and Giovan Battista Guerra, 1569), 4-5. “noi confessiamo, che sia un solo Iddio: a la cui simiglianza è in terra il principe, e perciò per tale risembranza de la divina maestà, e per mantenere la sua memoria, dico, che i principi sono necessari in terra, che rassembriamo la potenza divina.” It is likely that the Giovanni Fabrini di Figline is the same Giovanni di Feglini who renounced a benefice to Averardo
Indeed, even as early as 1547, there was little question on what footing panegyrics to monarchy needed to be grounded. Ducal courtiers, academicians, humanists, and simple aspirants to ducal favor were not far behind in unoriginal repetition of the argument. A 1548 work dedicated to Cosimo and his son Ferdinand insisted that one needed, “in [princes] to revere the highest God.” In his Dialogus del Giusto Principe, which he humbly laid at Cosimo’s feet in 1550, the one-time republican, one time exile, and always bankrupt Antonio Brucioli suddenly developed a taste for monarchical propaganda, professing, “who does not know that the governance of a just and good prince surpasses all the other forms of governance of which one knows, conforming more to the manner in which God rules over the universe.” If we assume that Brucioli was writing with anything other than a mere mercenary pen here, then the straight face with which he and so many former republicans could adopt formulas like this testifies to terrestrial divinity’s grounding in the axioms of contemporary thought. Twelve years later, the same type of argument came from the pen of another of Cosimo’s literati, Giambattista Gelli, a man whose shameless fawning over the prince was probably a good deal more sincere than Brucioli’s, though ultimately stoked by the fact that offering his pen to Cosimo paid better than the cobbling trade for which he was otherwise destined.

Serristori’s son in 1546. This would make him a client of one of Cosimo’s most important ambassadors. See ASFi, Auditore di Giurisdizione e Benefici Ecclesiastici, 4375 c. 23-25. 


Thus, Gelli’s opinion comes as little surprise; he wrote, “as men are obliged to render honor to God, they must in the way that they best know and are able to always honor their prince, who is the simulacrum and true image of God.”

In yet another work offered to the dedication-hungry Cosimo, Florentine canon and Medici client Matteo Saminiati piggybacked Cosimian claims of sacral monarchy with absolutist papal claims, noting how appropriate it was that God left his church in the care of a monarch:

> in whose person the Majesty and greatness of the creator is represented on earth. Indeed, one voice confesses that monarchy is such a thing, a fact that is clearly proved first of all from the proportion and similitude that it holds with the governance taught by God for the ruling of heaven; no one can deny that whatever participates more in that is more noble and more perfect than anything else.

The precedents for these arguments were many. They might have harkened all the way back to Plato or to Roman ruler worship. We might chase the paper, or papyrus as the case lay, all the way to the fertile banks of the Tigris, Euphrates, and Nile. They may have been drawn from literature closer at hand: Patritius, Vergerio, Castiglione, Giles of Rome, and even Erasmus had allowed the prince something of the divine.

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20 Giambattista Gelli, “Dedicazione,” *La Circe* (Florence: s.n, 1562), 2. “obligati de rendere honore a iddio…debono in quell modo che e sanno e posson migliore honorare sempre i loro principi. quale i simulacri e vero imaginne di iddio.”

21 Matteo Samminiati, *Discorso nel quale con chiarissime et facilissime ragioni si mostra la Fallacia di tutte l’Heresie che in questi tempo travagliono tanto la Cristianità* (BL Mediceae Palat. CXLIV), 13r. “a la cui persona rappresenti in Terra la Maiesta, et grandezza del suo fattore; che la Monarchia sia tale tutti ad una voce confessono, e, si pruova chiarissimente prima dalla proportione, e similitudine che ella tiene col governo indotto da Dio, per il reggimento del Cielo, del quale quello che piu participa non si puo negare che non sia piu nobile, e piu perfetto di tutti gli altri.” Sanminiato was a Lucchese who, among other things, gave a funeral oration in the duomo for Archbishop Altoviti. Vincenzo Borghini, *Discorsi di Monsignore D. Vincenzo Borghini; Parte Seconda* (Firenze: Appresso Pietro Viviani, 1755), 591.

22 Patritius wrote that subjects need to obey their princes because there is nothing more similar to God, “than a prince, or a principate.” Patritius, *Il Sacro Regno del Vero Reggimento, e della vera Felicità del Principe*, tradotto in volgare da Giovanni Fabrini di Figline (Vinugia: Per Comin di Trino di Monferrato, 1547), 188. On Vergerio see, Baron, 133-134. Castiglione had argued in 1528 “Just as in heaven, the sun and moon and other stars show the world as in a mirror some likeness of God, so on earth a much liker image of God is found in those good Princes who love and revere him.” Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, translated, with notes, by Leonard Eckstein Opdycke (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 2000), 247. On Giles of Rome, see J.H Burns, *Lordship, Kingship, and Empire: the Idea of Monarchy, 1400-1525* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 57. Erasmus had drawn his
very ubiquity in almost every place except republican Florence makes any single source unlikely. But what is unquestionable is that Cosimo’s literati and artists adopted it for their own political purposes with little in the way of apology to what could only be considered a hostilely captive Florentine audience.

Treatises that divinized monarchy in the abstract were often delivered with saccharine odes to Cosimo’s own rule. For instance, when Fabrini prefaced his own volume with the caveat that he had translated it, “so that by reading it (Cosimo), as in a vivid and clear crystal, might see there all the holy virtues that heaven has given him, and that he has amplified,” readers would have been left with little wonder as to whom Fabrini’s more generalized abstractions were meant to be applied. But the rhetoric could be far more explicitly Cosimian, even among the less ideologically committed. In a 1549 translation of Aristotle’s Politics, ducal functionary Bernardo Segni wrote, “One is not ably to deny that the Great God has made a great demonstration of his favor, having grouped [Florence] under the same type of governance by which he governs and administrates this universe.” This republican was no dyed in the wool believer or even a sincere convert. An admirer of Machiavelli, Segni had followed the secretaries’ lead, trading in his republican credentials for a place at the Medici table and earning his bread from the scraps Cosimo threw to him, even though he had harsh words for Cosimo’s

version of the argument from Xenophon. Desiderius Erasmus, The Education of a Christian Prince, translated by Neil M. Chesire and Michael J. Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1. Moreover, the theme had been recently advanced by a number of Spanish writers as well; for that context see Antonio Feros, “Vicedios pero humanos, el drama del Rey,” Cuadernos de Historia Moderna 14 (1993).

23 Giovanni Fabrini di Figline, ”Dedicazione,” Il Sacro Regno del Vero Reggimento, e della vera Felicità del Principe tradotto in volgare da Giovanni Fabrini di Figline (Venetia: Domenico and Giovan Battista Guerra, 1569), iii. “accioche leggendolo, come in vivo, e chiar cristallo vi vegga tutte quelle sue Sante virtù, che le ha donato il cielo, e che ella ha ampliate con la sua prudenza.”

government. Nevertheless, Segni’s quote bears the mark of a republican-turned-monarchialist desperately seeking justification for changing in his republican colors.\(^\text{25}\)

Again, we cannot be but be struck by the ease with which former republicans adapted themselves to the new ideology.

And it was not just Florentines who could be won over to such rhetorical flourishes. In a congratulatory panegyric, Leonardo Gini exalted Cosimo into the halls of princes who, “who, though mortal, just as the Gods, preside over and likewise administer all things.”\(^\text{26}\)

A post mortem eulogy for Cosimo made much the same claim, exhorting his crusading order to continue to respect the Medici as their heads, since “the governance of the one is the most similar to God.”\(^\text{27}\)

Indeed, there is little question: explicitly divinizing Cosimo was never beyond the pale of acceptability.

Concerned as they were with questions of the universal, Cosimo’s political writers were less likely to fawn over any particular prince than were his panegyricist poets, who relished the rhetoric of terrestrial divinity with a characteristic sense of overstatement that would have made Plato hanker to evict them from his own republic. Fortunately for them, begging the dedicatee to show godlike mercy on the meritlessness of the work gibed nicely with the false pretences of humility required of all early modern writers.

Tuscan poet Michel Capri prefaced his volume accordingly, arguing that by prizing the work on the love with which it was offered Cosimo would:

\(^{25}\) For Segni’s career, see Michele Lupo Gentile, *Studi sulla Storiografia Fiorentina alla corte di Cosimo I de’Medici* (Pisa: Tipografia Successori FF. Nistri, 1905), 19-24. For the harsh critique of Cosimo in his privately composed history, see page 82.

\(^{26}\) Leonardus Ginus, *Pro Travalliatorum Academia Gratulatio.* (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXVII c. 16), 36r. “qui tanquam mortales Dii omnibus presint, comuniterque omnia administrent.”

\(^{27}\) Torquato Malaspina, *Orazione in Lode del Gran Duca Cosimo del Signore Marchese Torquato Malespina Cavaliere di Santo Stefano recitata nella Chiesa de Cavalieri vi. Aprili MDLXXVIII* (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXVII c 104), 200r. “il governo d’un solo à quello d’Iddio simigliante.”
make himself similar (in a certain way) to the heavenly and divine monarch, great father of the uncreated and to his glorious splendor: to whom both the great and the little lights are acceptable, coming to him from us his tributaries in order to honor him, if they come from a heart enflamed.28

The conceit was not limited to laics; Carmelite poet Niccolò Trivigi made the argument in his own poetic homage to Cosimian governance claiming:

If it seems to your Lordship that the duty of lauding you has been too high and difficult an undertaking for my small and weak craft, remember that in every century the creator of the world is greatly pleased to be praised and made known by rude and low intellects.29

In blissful proof of the axiom that art imitates life, even Vasari was drawn to follow the divinizing logic of the poets, begging Cosimo to:

Accept this my, rather your, book on the lives of the artists of disegno, and in likeness of the great God, look more on my soul and good intentions than on my work, taking from me willfully not what I would like to give, or what I should give, but on what I can give.30

Indeed, it seems that dedications were as fertile ground for Cosimo’s apotheosis as canvas or stone.

Moreover, in case anyone had missed the point in the dedication, the poetry itself was no less bashful. Trivigi wrote:

My soul is warmed by love all the day,
And there a temple consecrated to your deeds is raised.

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28 Michel Capri, Canzone di Michel Capri al Serenissimo Cosimo Medici Gran Duca di Toscana (Fiorenza: Bartholomeo Sermartelli, 1570), ii. "Somigliandosi per così fatta guisa (in un certo modo) a'l Celeste, e divino Monarca, gran Padre de l'increato, et glorioso suo splendore; a cui gradisce i grandi, e piccoli lumi, che da noi suoi tributari di quore (per honorarlo) accesi se li vengano."

29 Prete Francesco Da Trivigi, Canzone all'Illustrissimo et Eccelent. Signore, Il S. Cosimo de Medici Duca di Fiorenza et di Siena (Fiorenza: Torrentini, 1565), 4. “Et se à V.S. parrà (come forsi à molti altri pare) che questa sia stata troppo alta, et animosa impresa al mio basso, et debole ingegno, ella si ramenti che sempre in tutti i secoli, Il creator del tutto si compiacque: grandamente, d'esser lodato, et fatto conoscere da rozi, et bassi ingegni, per la bocca de'quali, egli manifestò al mondo gli altissimi secreti della sua immensa divinità."

Whence is my understanding alit, and set ablaze. 
By the worth of your deeds, for not but heat is given by their ray, 
Through which sparkle, and show demonstrably 
The good of the highest God all visibly, 
Like in a Crystal, one sees the sun, limpid and clear, 
In you the beauty of the universe appears.  

Other poets picked up this same concept. In a book of one hundred sonnets to Cosimo,
Niccolò Martelli, who fired off praise poems with rapid-fire frequency, frequently played on the same motif, penning this obsequious ode in praise of his patron:

How much of heaven’s goodness
Is glimpsed by the one who has seen
My Cosimo’s great, divine, and regal mien
That greater blessing our age has not witness’d.

In several other passages, Martelli bestowed the title ‘mio terrestre Dio” more explicitly. But all this was to be expected. If more sober philosophers and historians could not be expected to refrain from bestowing divine honors upon Cosimo, how could one restrain the hyperbole of the poets? Moreover, if we pull the lens away from Cosimo, it will be seen that ascribing divinity to people was so familiar a past time in Renaissance Florence that panegyricists’ pens turned to it almost instinctively when they were set to work to glorify the new Medici monarch.

*Terrestrial Divinity: A Staple of Florentine Christian Humanism*

Anchoring man’s dignity in such a profoundly religious conceit was standard operating procedure for renaissance thinkers, despite the pagan and secular picture of the

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31 Da Trivigi, 5. “De l’alma mia d’affetto ogn’hor si calda; Ch’è fatta à l’opre tue tempio sacrato; Ond’è lo mio intelleto arso, enfiammato; De’merti lor cui raggio altro non scalda; Per cui sfavilla, et vede chiaramente; Il ben del Sommo Dio visibilmente. Come in Cristallo il sol limpidu, et terso; Per te vagheggia il bel de l’universo.” I have chosen to maintain the rhyme schemes for these poems.
32 See Plaisance, 75-76.
33 Niccolo Martelli, *Cento Sonnetti a Cosimo dei Medici* (BR, MS. 3910). Sonnet, xliii. “Quanta vede del Ciel larga pietade; Chi mira il mio gran’ Cosmo e’l suo Reale; Chiaro, aspetto divin che e tanto e tale’; Che maggior ben non ha la nostra etade.”
34 Ibid, sonnet 62, and sonnet 77.
Renaissance painted by Burckhardt. For him, the Renaissance was supposed to have invented a new version of dignified man, independent of the supernatural and profoundly imbued with confidence in his own powers of creation and intellect, a dramatic break from dependent, miserable, and irrational medieval man. And no doubt, Burckhardt’s fiercely independent renaissance man continues to dwell in popular and historical imagination alike as the one who, “can do all and does do all, and carries his measure in himself.” However, few Renaissance Florentines would have looked at themselves in such a decidedly secular fashion. As Charles Trinkaus showed more than a quarter century ago, it was not because he carried his measure in himself that renaissance man believed he could do all but rather because his highest parts, intellect and free will, were created in the image and likeness of a being that had no measure, that is, in the image and likeness of God.

Despite terrestrial divinity’s rather dangerous tendency to slide into Pelagianism and/or overenthusiastic celebration of the heroes of antiquity, many found the rhetoric of terrestrial divinity easily reconcilable with monotheistic Christianity. The apotheosis of man had indisputably scriptural foundations, and neither men nor princes were ever understood to be anything other than gods by participation in the divine life. Moreover, it never really constituted a definitive break with the anthropology of the Christian Middle Ages. Fallen, sinful, miserable man and glorified godlike man were not understood to be mutually exclusive models but rather the end result of man’s free choice; indeed, humanists and preachers frequently shifted gears from misery to dignity in three pages or

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35 Burckhardt, 330.
36 See Trinkaus.
A sixteenth-century sermon, which almost reads as a compendium of the preceding century’s dignity of man literature, paints just this sort of paradoxical picture. Dividing his topic into two parts, our anonymous preacher spent several minutes making the case for the utter misery of man before doing a volte-face and claiming, “the composition of man is the most admirable work that God has made.” The exempla that he had used to prove man’s misery were then turned inside out and used to prove man’s excellence instead. If man came naked into the world to show that he came to suffer, then, on the other hand, nature arranged his nudity to show the greatness of her artifice. If man was born defenseless and weak, lacking the speed of a deer or the claws and teeth of the tiger, then on the other hand, man needed no defense but reason. Finally, if a continual war raged in the pit of man’s being between his reason and his appetites, then, on the other hand, the victory of reason might raise him up to divinity. Indeed, far from posing an intractable dilemma, the paradox provided just the type of rhetorical game in which Christian humanists could revel.

Moreover, once the influential philosopher Marsilio Ficino had set to work on translating the Hermetic and Platonic corpus, the ideal found weighty authorities in the

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37 See Trinkaus, 37-38.
39 Ibid., 57r. “Alone among all creatures, man is born nude and crying, which is a sign of his miseries, that he comes to earth to suffer.” “l’huomo solo nasce nudo, et piagendo, ilche è signo delle miserie, che viene à patire.”
40 Ibid., 59r. “Man is born nude, because nature desires to show the excellence of its work.” “l’huomo nasce nudo, perche la natura vuol mostra l’eccellenza sella sua opera.” The author lifts the motif directly from Petrarch. See Trinkaus, 194.
41 Ibid, 57r. “Man alone has no natural arms for his defense.” “l’huomo solo non ha l’arme alcuna naturali in sua difesa.”
42 Ibid. 59r. “(Man) has need of reason, that abides in him alone, for his protection.” “la ragione sola, che in quello habita, hebbe bisogno di protettore.”
43 Ibid, 58v.
voices of antiquity. For instance, the Hermetic author had bequeathed this passage to posterity:

Now the Father of all Beings, being life and light, brought forth a Man similar to himself, whom he loved as his own child. For the Man was beautiful, reproducing the image of his Father, for it was indeed with his own form that God fell in love and gave over to him all his works.  

Noting the similarities with biblical accounts of creation, humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth century excitedly rushed to proclaim Hermes Trismegistus a prophet on the level of the ancient sibyls, a precursor to the advent of the Word. With impetuous haste, they frequently took to citing his authority on the proposition that man was, “an animal to be honored and marvelously formed in the image of God.” Having incorrectly dated the early Gnostic text to the time of Moses, the humanists took Trismegistus to be the founder of the Platonic school since Plato had evinced several similar conceptions about the divinity of man’s soul. On this account, Ficino had written, “anyone who seriously studies the Platonic writings will, of course, discover all things, but especially these two things out of all the rest, the pious worship of the known God and the divinity of souls.”

Ficino then confidently expounded the myriad numbers of ways in which man was a terrestrial divinity. On these twin foundations, one of them a mistake, quattrocento humanists had laid the basis for the ideal of human apotheosis. And while Burckhardt may or may not have been right to claim that the neoplatonist project of reconciling

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46 Yates, 2.
47 Cited in Trinkaus, 465.
48 Trinkaus, 482-486.
classical culture with Christianity was only an oddity in the Renaissance, the Florentine Catholic Reformation adopted this Renaissance tradition as its own. Burckhardt’s ‘pagan’ humanists were left on the wayside of history, while Cosimo’s culture found itself deeply enmeshed in the neo-Platontists’ questions, sources, and ideas.

Ficino and Pico’s circle had almost turned the Platonic and the Hermetic corpus into a new canon, finding in them authoritative classical support for terrestrial divinity. Less adventuresome spirits had only to turn to more familiar sacred books, for Genesis reported that on the sixth day, God sculpted man in his own image and likeness. Thus, humanist apotheosis found a complementary tradition among religious writers, who cited the relevant passage in Genesis with astonishing frequency. Indeed, it was considerably difficult for renaissance laymen to escape a sermon or devotional tract without finding at least one reference to man’s semblance to the divine. This was not, as Burckhardt would have it, paganism’s corrosive influence on true Christianity. Theologians found plenty of perfectly orthodox uses for the conceit. For instance, one preacher used the concept to underscore the wickedness of sin, arguing that the sinner offended not only God and neighbor, “but the divine image that is in himself.” For another thinker,
terrestrial divinity proved the necessity of the real presence in the Eucharist, since as a being with both angelic and animal nature, man needed nourishment both corporeal and spiritual.\textsuperscript{55} Even a preacher attempting to compete with Luther’s pessimistic anthropology could write that man’s debt to God was all the greater since God had made man’s soul in his own image.\textsuperscript{56}

Indeed, the Christian bible provided its own perfectly orthodox and authoritative justification for terrestrial divinity. But just as often, humanist arguments were advanced \textit{pari passu} with Christian arguments, with preachers calling on classical philosophy to support scriptural passages and with humanist scholars calling on Christian theology to support the claims of the ancients. This is how more than one sermon argued:

In the marvelous composition of man, more than in the great edifice of heaven and more than in the power of the elements and more than in the order of the universe, the excellence of God’s wisdom is made manifest; like in a most clear mirror, one sees in man the being of God himself and the other secrets of his divinity and trinity. Part of this was seen by the ancient wise men with the natural light (of reason), since contemplating thus, Mercury Trismegistus, said what a great miracle is man, in which great things are seen. And Aristotle believed that man was the end to which all things referred.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{56} Fra Andrea Ghetti, Trattato Utile del Reverendo Frate Andrea da Voiterra sopra la Disputa della Gratia, et delle Opere Predicato in Firenze nella chiesa di s. Spirito l’anno M.D.XLIII (Fiorenza: ad instantia Bene Gionti, 1544), 6v.

\textsuperscript{57} Anonymous, “La Dignità,” 58v. “nella mirabile composizione dell’uomo più che nella gran fabbrica del cielo, è più che nella forza degli elementi, e che in tutto l’ordine dell’universo, ciò è rappresentata l’eccellenza del suo sapere: ma si vede ancora, come in chiarissimo specchio, il medesimo essere di Dio, et gli altri segreti della sua divinità, et Trinità, parte di questo vedrò io antichi savi con la luce naturale, poiché contemplando ciò Mercurio Trimigisto, disse, che gran miracolo è l’uomo, nel quale cose grandi si vedevano: et Aristotile credette che l’uomo fosse il fine, à chi tutte le cose riveriscono.” The same argument is found in Anonymous, \textit{I Gradi della Vita Spirituale} (BNCF, Magliabechiana XXXV c. 70), 34r, as well as in Antonio Dolciati, \textit{Prediche Diversi} (BNCF, Magliabechiana XXXV c. 107), 35v; and Davidico, \textit{Anatomia}, 300v-301r.
Plato, Aristotle, Trismegistus, Pliny, Pythagoras. All could be called on to support the
godliness of man, to support the conceit drawn from scripture. But if we have preachers
calling on classical models to support theological arguments, then the reverse was equally
true, for our classicizing humanists were not loath to call on theology. It was, for
instance, in this way that Cosimo’s reader at Pisa sought to cast Plato in a monotheistic
mould. For, though Plato had spoken of more than one god, Vieri used the doctrine of
Christian apotheosis to reconcile Plato’s paganism with Christian monotheism. To this
end, Vieri wrote:

> Although in the Timaeus Plato speaks of other Gods besides the Father of the
> World, that came about because he esteemed that they be Gods in virtue of their
> participation of his eternal and spiritual nature, in similitude to his goodness and
> in their ability to enjoy the paternal heredity. Thus, saith the divine scripture that
> through Jesus Christ the power is given to us to make ourselves Gods and sons of
> God, first, in the life here below by similitude and then in the hereafter through
> fruition of the paternal goods.\textsuperscript{58}

Here the order is reversed, Christ coming to the defense of Plato, with the idea of using
the doctrine of terrestrial divinity as a bridge to span the gulf that divided polytheistic
Plato and monotheistic Christians.

Sixteenth-century humanists were quite aware that they were not the first thinkers
to attempt to reconcile Platonic and Christian philosophy. A very old and very
authoritative voice could be conjured up from late antiquity to give sanction to the entire
project. Recalling Ficino’s own arguments,\textsuperscript{59} Vieri declared Plato, “the most

\textsuperscript{58} Francesco Vieri, \textit{Breve Compendio della Dottrina di Platone in Novello che ella è conforme alla fede nostra} (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXXIV c. 17), 26v. “e se bene Platone nel Timeo pone oltre al padre del Mondo, più Dij, questo viene, perché egli stima, che siano Dij per partecipazione di natura spirituale, et eterna, e per similitudine di bontà, e per potere godere della paterna eredità; così la divina scrittura dice, che per Giesù Christo ci è dato podestà di farci Dij, e figliuoli di Dio, per similitudine di vita quaggiù, e poi per fruitione dei beni paterni.”

conformable to the Christian and the divine, a fact which is amply demonstrated by Saint Augustine, one of the first theologians of our holy and Catholic Church in his work *On the City of God*.

Augustine had gone quite a ways in molding the concept of terrestrial divinity into a Christian form. In his *De Trinitate*, the African doctor argued that if man’s soul was truly made in the image of God, it must bear the image of the creator, namely, a triune structure. Augustine found the appropriate structure in the powers of the soul: memory, intellect, and will. And as Augustine’s work was read with relish throughout the period, his arguments were repeated with similar abandon. Many of the humanists of the *quattrocento* had found it an appealing argument, and not even Savonarola, as skittish as he could be about formal learning, shied away from making the connection between the human soul and the trinity, recasting the argument into peripatetic language and arguing that man is like the Trinitarian God because all creatures are in some ways similar to their cause. In the beginning of the sixteenth-century, Savonarola’s disciple Antonio Dolciati echoed the master’s quotation, orating these words to his own congregation:

> The image of the Holy Trinity is found more expressly in the rational creature, that is, in man. Because when God wished to create man, he said that which is written in the first chapter of Genesis “Let us make man in our own image and likeness.” This image can be considered in three ways and the first is how it is naturally formed. And as the Holy Father Augustine says in his *De Trinitate*, ‘though our mind is not of the same nature as God; it is there that one must seek

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60 Vieri, *Breve Compendio*, 8v. “è la più conforme alla cristiana e divina; come di ciò ne fà ampiissima testimonianza Agostino santo, uno dei primi teologi, della nostra santa e Catolica chiesa, nella sua opera della città di Dio.”


62 Trinkaus cites several of them including Salutati, Valla, 156; Facio, 218; and Brandolini, 299-302.

the image of him, of whom nothing is greater.’ Now our soul is one thing and has three powers of which one is not the other: memory, intellect, and will.  

We find the same argument in a sermon delivered towards the middle of the century:

There is nothing that so well represents another thing as does man represent God, and mainly in his soul, which is incorruptible, immortal, simple without any composition, and all in one being, just as is God, and in his soul there are three powers (memory, will, intellect) which represent the Most Holy Trinity.”

In another anonymous sermon delivered around the same time, an anonymous author claimed that when God created man, he said, “let him be my image, and adorn him with three powers, Memory, Intellect and Will.” Indeed, hearing the words of the African doctor on the lips of religious and theologians should surprise no one, but Augustine was on the lips of Cosimo’s humanists as well. For example, Cosimo’s secretary Domenico Mellini argued for the nobility of the human soul thus, “the human soul has been created spiritual and eternal by the King of the Stars in his own image, with three powers (memory, intellect, will), as he is one essence and one real and true god in three persons, one and the other truly distinct.” Besides the fact it was a far more sophisticated explanation for the trinity than Patrick’s three-leaf clover, what did intellectuals and

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64 Dolciati, 33v. “nella creatura rationale la quale è lhuomo anchora piu espressamente si truova la imagine della sancta trinita. Perilche volendo esso iddio creare quello, dixe quelche è scripto nel genesi al primo capitolo. Cioe, facciamo llhuomo ad imagine et similitudine nostra. La quale imagine si puo considerare in tre modi. Prima chome è formata naturalmente. Et quanto a questo dice el padre sancto augstino nel libro della trinita. Benche la mente nostra non sia di quello natura della quale è iddio: ivi pero si debbe cerchare la immagine di quello: di cui nessuna chosa e, migliore. Hor lanima nostra e, una chosa sola, et ha tre potentie: delle quelli luna non e altra: cioe la memoria, lintellecto, et la volunta.”

65 Anonymous “La dignità,” 58r. “nessuna cosa, è, che cosi bene rappresenti l'altra, come fa l'huomo Iddio, et massimo nell'anima, laquale, è, incorruttibile, immortali, simplicissima senza composizione alcuna, et tutta in un essere, come, è, Iddio, et inquesto esser la tre potenze, con le quali rappresenta Santissima Trinità.”

66 Anonymous, Prediche e sermoni parte Latini e parte Volgari e altre materie sacre, (BNCF, Magliabechiana XXXV cod.128), 31r. “sia la mia immagine, et adornella con tre potentie, Memoria, Intellecto, et volunta.”

67 Domenico Mellini, Trattato di Domenico Mellini Intitolato Visione Dimostratrice della malvagita del Carnale Amore (Fiorenza: Giunti, 1566), 61-62. “Ella (the soul/anima) dal superno Rè delle Stelle è state creata Spiritale et eterna à sua imagine, con tre potenze in un’essenza, si come esso è un’essenza et un solo et vero Dio in tre Persone, l’una dall’altra realmente distinte. Queste tre potenze sono l’Intelletto...la Volontà...et la Memoria.”
humanists find so compelling about Augustine’s Trinitarian anthropology? No doubt, locating man’s divinity in the triune powers of the soul dovetailed nicely with many of their own concerns; it was more specifically the last two powers of the soul with which they were most interested: man’s intellect and his will. Those attributes made man a god in two of the humanists’ favorite areas of human activity: reason and will, especially the will to exercise virtue.

*Intellect, Reason, and Wisdom: The Communanza of God and Man*68

As noted, the powers of man’s soul were three: memory, intellect, and will. Since this tripartite soul was thought to be an image of the trinity, the use of memory, intellect, and will was thought to be a participation in the divine nature. This came with certain caveats, however, for it emphatically did not include intellect used for free speculation. Since God was unerring, only reason exercised rightly could be judged part of the divine. Most early moderns continued to deny a distinction between religious truth and the truths to be gleaned from natural philosophy; moreover, they did not doubt that philosophy was primarily ordered to lead man to knowledge of God, to inform his will of the true nature of the universe, and to guide him toward eternal beatitude. If pagan philosophy could be used as a preparation for attaining truth, so be it. If not, it was to be discarded as folly and error.

Under these conditions, there were no limits in praise of intellect. There is little surprise to hear a scholar and medic like Baccio Baldini exalting those who “live in

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68 In both the Latin and the Italian, a philosophical distinction can be made between intellect (intellectus, intelletto or intelligenza) and reason (ratio, ragione). Intellect equates with understanding, and reason with a discursive search for understanding starting from understood premises. Thus, properly speaking, man only shared intellect with God and not reason, since there was no intelligible way to speak of God ‘searching’ for understanding. But for our purposes the distinction was not always pertinent.
accordance with the intellect, by which man alone is made a kinsman with the divine.”

But the point has even more punch to it in the mouth of the age’s harshest critic of the human mind. The philosopher Simone Portio was both one of Cosimo’s readers at the Studio of Pisa and an avowed disciple of Pomponazzi’s claim that there was little to separate the human mind from that of the animals; nevertheless, he penned this perfectly Platonic prose in 1551, “if the senses are conquered and thrown to earth, and the intellect reigns, then the man becomes free from the senses and as Platonists affirm, almost like a God.”

For the sake of appearing impartial between two great dead Greek philosophers, Portio then called Aristotle in defense of Plato on the point, allowing the Neapolitan Medici client to categorically assert, “The nature of man has been called divine because it is endowed with intellect, which is unmixed and divine; those who live according to this intellect do not merit to be called mere men, but friends of God and his most close kinsmen.” If Portio was in earnest here, then the materialism of his de Anima needs to be read in a different light. If not, the passage is interesting for showing what type of sentiments a scholar had to feign in mid-century Tuscany.

In the thought of less philosophically and more theologically minded intellects, the ideal of friendship with God was transmuted into the more appropriately Christian category of beatitude. Moreover, Christian beatitude drew its possibilities from man’s

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69 Baccio Baldini, Panegirico alla Clemenza di Baccio Baldini allo Illistrissimo S. IL S. Cosimo dei Medici Duca di Firenze (BL, Pluteus XLII cod. 31), 14r. “vivono secondo l’intelletta, per cui solamente l’huomo si congiunge con Dio.”

70 Simone Portio, Se l’Huomo Diventa Buona o Cattivo Volontariamente, tradotta in volgare per Giovann Batista Gelli (Fiorenza: Torrentino, 1551), 31. “se il senso è superato, e mandato per terra, et regna l’intelletto, che l’huomo libero al tutto da esso senso diventa come affermono i Platonici, quasi che uno Dio.”


72 Ibid, 33. “la natura de lhuomo è stata chiamata divina, per essere stata dotata de l’intelletto, il quale e immisto, e divino, et pero quegli che vivono secondo esso intelletto non meritono di essere chiamati puri huomini, ma amici di dio, et congiuntissimi a quello.”
intellect just as surely as the more exclusively philosophical model had. This Christian apotheosis-by-intellect dovetailed nicely with mid-century rejections of Luther's denigration of natural reason. Florentine canon Francesco Diacceto borrowed an argument from Aquinas when he sermonized, “man is in potential to attain the knowledge of the blessed, which consists in seeing God and is thus ordered to his end inasmuch as he is a rational creature created in the image of God.” The classicizing Franciscan Bishop of Bitonto Cornelio Musso, who was in Florence in the 1550s, had the same idea. In one of his more important sermons, he claimed, “the highest father of human nature, to make us superior to all the types of animals, gives us that divine part of reason which makes us equal or at least similar to the angels.” The psalms had declared man to be little less than a God, Christian theology had long made man’s soul or spirit the godlike part, and classicizing scholars would most frequently locate divinity in the second power of the soul, in the ability to reason.

It was philosophers who had attempted to make a god out of Cosimo and philosophers who attempted to make a god of intellect, so there is little surprise that these same philosophers would bestow the accolades of divinity on the purveyors of reason too, that is, on themselves. One humanist courtier wrote that philosophy linked man to the divine through wisdom, “the knowledge of things divine and human, in which is

73 Francesco Cattani da Diacceto, Homelie del Reverendo M. Francesco Cattani da Diacceto Canonico Fiorentino et Protonotario Apostolico (Fiorenza: Torrentini, 1559), 33. “l’huomo è in potenza ad ottener’la scienza de beati, che consiste nel veder Iddio, et a cio è ordinato come a suo fine, per esser’ la ragionevol’ creatura capace di cotal’ecog.n in quanto che l’è ad imagine di Dio.” The same argument can be found in another preacher of some reknown, who was learned in the classics himself but not entirely favorable to classical civilization; Paradiso Mazzinghi, Sermoni e cose Ascetiche (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXXV c. 13), 16v.

74 Reverendo Cornelio Musso, Predica del Reverendo Monsi. Cornelio Vescovo di Bitonto fatta in Trento il Giorno di San Donato l’Anno MDXLV. Per l’allegresse, che si fecere venuta la nuova, ch’era nato il primogenito del Principe di Spagna figliuolo di Carlo Quinto Imperadore (Venetia: Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari e Fratelli, 1553), 3v. “Il sommo Padre dell’humana natura, che per farci superiori a tutte le spetie de gli animali, ci diede quella parte divina della ragione; per farci pari o almeno simili alli angeli.”
contained the common nature (communanza) of God and of men, and the bonds that exist between them.”

Another quoted Augustine saying, “to philosophize is a divine thing,” and with that most Platonic of conceits echoing in their ears, the philo-Platonists in Cosimo’s circle felt quite justified in prefixing Augustine and his Greek mentor’s name with the divine honors. Cosimo’s medic Baldini explained, “Plato, the Athenian, was a philosopher so highly revered among the ancients that he was rightly called divine by them.”

Moreover, the divine honors bestowed upon Plato and Augustine could even be won for philosophers closer at hand. Filippo Sassetti gave just this kind of the praise to the first auditor of the realm, Lelio Torelli, remarking in a funeral oration that his own tear-filled eyes only wished to see the dearly departed “image of the father of reason,” sitting among them in the Florentine academy.

This is the intellectual substratum for the Florentine penchant for prefixing philosophers’ names with the word divus. An offshoot of this ideal made the artist a kind of god as well, since, as Vasari pointed out, God was the first artist and all those imitating the book of nature were just following in his wake. But taken to its logical end, the title was most appropriate for the philosopher/magician, who pierced the barrier separating natural and supernatural, calling on the secrets of the heaven to gain mastery over earth.

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76 Giovanni Bernardo Gualandi, De Optimo Principe Dialogus (Florence: Torrentino, 1561), 115. “Philosophari, res quidem divina est. Homini aut (augustino teste) nulla est philosophandi causa, nisi ut beatus existat.”
77 See Gualandi, 71 and 171.
79 Filippo Sassetti, Oratione in laude di M. Lelio Torelli, fatta, et recitata nell’Accademia Fiorentina da M. Filippo Sassetti Accademico, detto tra gli Alterati l.assetetato (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXVII C. 104), 162r. “mirando la sospesa imagine del padre della ragione M. Lelio Torelli.”
80 Vasari, Vite, 11. See also Ficino’s admiration for the arts of mankind in Trinkaus, 482-483.
Indeed, if the institution of the principate had no monopoly on terrestrial divinity, then Cosimo himself had no monopoly on divine honors. They might be, and were, won by any outstanding intellect.

*Christomimesis, Sanctity and Virtue*

Renaissance Florentines’ love affair with the divinity of humanity did not end with the celebration of the intellect. Reason was primarily ordered to illuminating the other divine attribute of man, the will. Gualandi may have followed Augustine in asserting that, “philosophy is a divine thing,” but this was only, so the quote ended, “because it orders man to beatitude.” In the same spirit, the Platonist Verino wrote, “all the philosopher’s acts and all his speculation need in the end to be directed to the divine cult of that Lord from whom we have received philosophy, just as we have received all other gifts.” Whether treated by classicizing humanist or no, philosophy was still the handmaid to the queen of the sciences: theology. And if the *communanza* of God and man consisted in reason, then this friendship was perfected by Augustine’s third attribute of divinity: free will exercising virtue.

Platonists and Christians found this yet another area of common ground, for in both traditions, virtue was linked to freedom, freedom linked to the will, the will linked to the soul, and the soul linked to the divinity. As Baldini made the case:

The free will is a property of man, and it is a form and perfection that we have from God and from nature since it is of man and this gift which in the sacred letters one reads that God, wanting to create man said: ‘Let us make man in our

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81 See page 46 above.
It was in freedom that man was created in the image of God and by the free exercise of the will in virtue that he could be made like god, liberated from the determinism of matter and body. The argument was not of course unique to Florence, but it was peculiarly important in Florentine culture, for the influential Pico della Mirandola had made the case in his *Oratio Dignitatis Hominis* a near half-century before, and the affirmation lived on as a type of manifesto of the Renaissance. The crescendo and résumé of the argument went as such:

O great liberality of God the father, great and to be admired the felicity of man, to whom is given the ability to have what he chooses and to be what he wants. As soon as they are born, the brute animals bring with them (as Lucullus says) from the womb of their mother whatever they will possess. The higher spirits either from the beginning or soon after are that which they will be for all eternity. At his birth, the father gives man the seed of every kind of life and every type of action. He will develop that seed as he grows and will carry its fruit in himself. If vegetative, he will be like a plant; if sensual, he will be like the brutes; if rational, he will end up a celestial animal; if he lives according to the intellect, he will be an angel and son of God. And if content with the fate of no creature, he will remove himself to the center of his own unity and be made one spirit with God, in the solitary darkness of the father who is set up over all, he will surpass everything.

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83 Baldini. *Discorso*, 23. “la voluntà si come libera è propria dell’huomo, et è una forma et una perfezione che l’huomo hà da Dio, et dalla natura, perciocche egli è huomo, et è questo quel dono per il quale nelle sacre lettere si legge che Dio volendo creare huomo disse, Facciamo l’huomo à immagine et simiglianza nostra, perciocche si come Iddio è libero, et non puo essere violentato ne sforzato da cosa alcuna, così la volontà et il libero voler del l’huomo non può esser sforzato da cosa alcuna.

Pico’s gigantic intellectual status assured this argument’s continuing popularity. For instance, one mid-century preacher paraphrased the great humanist’s claim thus:

Man has all things in himself, thus he is at liberty to be what he pleases; if he does nothing, he is like a rock, if he gives himself to the pleasures of the flesh, he is like a brute animal, and if he so desires, he can be made like an Angel, contemplating the face of the father, and it is in his will to be made so excellent that he be numbered among those to whom God says: gods you are.  

Closer to Cosimo’s court, the physician Baccio Baldini made much the same case:

If with the liberty of the will one conquers evil natural inclinations, he is above Fate and completely lord of himself, and he is similar to God, but if he lets himself be conquered by natural inclinations and obeys them, he becomes the slave of Fate and by his own hand loses the liberty of his will, reducing himself to the level of the animals without reason.

And later in his Panegyric to Clemency he expanded the argument, arguing that when man has been “liberated by the purgative virtues from all perturbations, receiving inside of himself the forms of the naturals things, then looking at himself he understands himself to be similar to God.” Our ducal functionary Gelli expressed his opinion of heroic and supernatural virtue in the same cultural parlance, as that “which raises men above the human condition and makes them participate in the divine.”

Humanists were not the only ones stressing the dignity of man’s free will; this humanist discourse was paralleled by a similar tradition among ecclesiastical writers. In

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85 Anonymous “La Dignità,” 58v. “l’uomo ha in se la natura di tutte le cose, così la libertà di essere cose che gli piace: se sta in otio, è, come pietra, se si da alla carne, è, come animal bruto, et se vuole, è, fatto Angiolo per contemplare la faccia del padre, et, è, in suo arbitrio farsi così eccellente, che sia numerato fra quelli à chi Dio disse, Iddij sete voi.”

86 Baldini, Discorso, 29. “se egli con la libertà della volontà sua vince le sue cattive inclinazioni naturali, è sopra Fato, et del tutto padrone di se stesso, et simigliante à Dio, ma se egli si lascia vincere alle sue cattive inclinazioni naturali et ubbidisce à quella, diviene servo del Fato et perde da se stesso la libertà della volontà sua et si riduce da se stesso nel medesimo grado nel quale sono gli animali senza ragione.”

87 Baldini, Panegirico, 9r. “liberato per le vertù purgative da tutte la pertubations ricevendo dentro di se per i sensi le forme delle cose naturali risguardando poi se medesimo a simiglianza di Dio le intende.”

the preceding century Francesco Patricius, the Bishop of Gaeta and friend to the humanist Pope Pius II, had written:

God is the highest good, and the author of every good, and the end of man is none other if not to approach God by similitude, which one can only do with virtue; whence, the stoics are well to say that between God and man there is a friendship given birth by virtue.  

Thus, the equation of the Picinian idea with Christian ideals of beatitude and sanctity was not long in coming, as virtue was vaulted into prominence as an intermediate means to beatitude. If the dominant spirituality of the day consisted in exhorting pious Christians to imitate the footsteps of the man/god Christ, then this exhortation rested on a theandric foundation, which insisted that God, “orders his creatures to beatitude, whom he has created in his image and likeness,” and that “the image of God in us asks that we live as Gods on earth.” Even Savonarola was captured by the rhetoric of terrestrial divinity, ascribing it to the saints John the Baptist and Saint Paul by claiming that these two were, “almost like God[s] on earth.”

Indeed, this theological version of apotheosis was a cherished part of renaissance thought; as century wore on, its importance only grew as thinkers picked it up and used it as a stick to fend off Reformation opponents. The preacher Musso used it to defend the Catholic doctrine of infused grace and real justification over the Lutheran concept of forensic justification, claiming:

As God took on the pollution of human nature, not outwardly, and not just in appearance or opinion, but really took on the flesh and the soul of a man. Just so,

89 Patritius, 25v. “il sommo bene sia Iddio, et egli essere autore di tutti i beni, e che il fine de lhuomo non è altro, se non per similitudine accostarsi à Dio, ilche solo puo fare con le virtue, la onde bene dissero gli stoici, che tra Dio e buoni era una amicitia generata da la virtu.”
90 Frosino Lapini, Esposizione non meno Utile che Dotta Sopra l’Orazione del Signore tratta dal Concilio Coloniese (Fiorenza: Torrentino, 1562), 3. “ordinò alla beatitudine la sua creature, la quale essa creata haveva à imagine, e simiglianza sua.”
91 Davidico, Anatomia, 301v. “Pur l’imagine in noi di Dio ricerca che viviamo da Dei in terra”
92 Savonarola, Trattato, 5. “quasi come uno Dio in terra.”
the justified, if he becomes a son of God by adoption, is exalted to the divine nature and is deified.93

Responding to Protestant attacks on the doctrine of works, ducal functionary Bernardo Segni wrote:

Perhaps there are some who doubt that virtuous actions that the Sacred Theologians call meritorious are made by us and with our free will, or if they might be a reason to lead us to eternal felicity. I will leave the examination of these points to others...though I will say only this, not with my judgment but that of the sacred theologians, that the moral actions and the actions of the Christian man are different in no other way but in form, and they are not therefore different because one is done freely and not the other, for the first has its form from human prudence, which does not look but to this world below; the Christian man’s actions take their starting point from human prudence but much more from faith in Jesus Christ given in grace to each in baptism. And then, having come to knowledge of oneself, whoever wants to accept that grace that flows into him by faith, I say that he is able to accomplish those moral actions that in this way are called meritorious.94

Writing after the Council’s decree on justification, Segni’s version of grace showed marked continuities between Renaissance ideals of active moral virtue and the Counter-Reformation’s reemphasis on a works based theology.

Though Counter-Reformation theologians like Musso stressed God’s grace rather than will and virtue as the primary agents of deification, not all writers were so careful.

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93 Cornelio Musso, I Tre Libri delle Prediche del Reverendissimo Mons. Cornelio Musso, Vescovo di Bitonto (Vinegia: Giolito, MDLXXVI), 196. “Che si come Iddio, quando prese il confortio dell’humana natura, non estrinsecamente non in apparentia, non in opinione, ma veramente in se stesso tolse la carne, e l’anima dell’huomo; cosi il Giustificato, se diventa figliuol d’Iddio per adottione, è essaltato al confortio della natura Divina, e deificato.”

94 Bernardo Segni, “Dedication,” L’Ethica di Aristotile (Florence: Torrentino, 1550), 7-8. “Ma bene è forse chi dubita, sè l’attioni virtuose e che li sacri Teologi chiammo le meritrie, sien’ fatte da noi stessi e col nostro libero arbitrio o sè elleno ci son’ cagione di far conseguire la felicità eterna. Del qual dubbio voglio lasciare l’esaminazione, benchè ella non fusse fuor di propósito in questa materia, e per non esser questo il luogo di ragionarne, e perchè io non fo professione di questa dottrina, ben’dirò questo solo, non pur’col mio giuditio, mà con quello anchora di Sommi Teologi, chè l’attioni morali, e chè l’attioni dell’huomo Christiano in null’altro son’differenti che nella forma, e non già son differenti, perchè l’uno s’operino liberamente e non l’altrè: conciosia chè la prime habbino la lor’ forma dalla prudenza humana, che non risguarda sonon il bene di quà giù: la seconde bene anchor l’habbino dalla prudenza, mà molto più veramente dalla fede di GIEUSÙ CHRISTO data per gratia à ciascheund’ Christiano nel battesimo, e che dipoi venuto in cognizione di se stesso voglia accettarla, con la qual gratia, che in lui infonde la fede, dico, chè e può operare, sè e vuole, quelle medisime attioni morali, le quali in questo modo gli si fan meritorie.”
The slippage here between classical versions of apotheosis by virtue and Christian versions of sanctity could dangerously skirt the line between orthodoxy and Pelagianism. Even Girolamo Seripando, quite wary of the whole rhetoric of terrestrial divinity, granted that virtue could make one a semi-god. In one of his well-diffused sermons, he argued:

> The heroes and semi gods venerated and so celebrated by the ancients as superior to other men and as saints at a certain grade of divinity (as is written of Hercules or Romulus) won such honor and praises neither by nobility or great riches, but through marvelous works made in benefit, not of the houses and their families, but for all mankind, and through the heights of heroic virtue, with which one is raised from the earth and in turn raises the common condition of other men.

Indeed, the slippage between Christian sanctity and classical apotheosis was more than occasional or accidental, the one was explicitly conflated with the other, nowhere more confusedly than in Gelli, who argued that men of superior virtue were, “called by Gentiles demigods or Heroes, and by the Christians, saints, and blessed.” Saints and heroes thus found themselves strange bedfellows in early Counter-Reformation thought.

Long before Cosimo’s humanists had begun crowning him with the laurel of apotheosis, Florentine culture was already familiar with another type of apotheosis: the divinity of the Christian saint, or perhaps slightly troubling to more inflexibly minded Catholics, the divinity of the classical semi-god.

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95 This was the charge brought against Fra Carioni, whom Grendler has identified as a major link between Renaissance and Counter Reformation. See Grendler, “Man is Almost a God,” 242-243.
96 Admittedly not a Tuscan, but the reforming bishop was read in Florence and widely influenced Counter-Reformation thought. Scipione Ammirato was actually an employee of Seripando before arriving in Florence. See Cochrane, 137-138.
97 Girolamo Seripando, “Terza Predica,” Prediche sopra il Paternostro (BR, MS. 1410), 30v-31r. “gli heroi ò simidij venerati et tanto celebrati da gli antichi, come superiori à gl’altri huomini, et per ssi. aduncerto grado di divinità, come si scrive d’ercole, et di romulo, et altri, non asseguirno tanti honori, et tante laudi, ne per nobilità ne per grandi richezze’, ma per opere maravigliose fatte in beneficio non delle case et famiglie loro, ma di tutta la generatione humana et per l’altezza delle virtù heroice, con le quali si levorno da terra, et alzorno sempre laconditione comune d’gl’altri huomini.”
98 Gelli. Dedicazione di Modo, 5. “per ilche e’ sono da i Gentili chiamati Semidei, o Heroi, et da i Cristiani, Santi, et beati.”
Apotheosis in Sacramental Theology

Christian scholars may have found their prime referent for the doctrine of terrestrial divinity in the book of Genesis, but that was not the only scriptural passage that could by mustered in favor of it. Frequent references were made to the gospel of John and his claim that, “to whoever would accept Jesus and believe in his name, he gives the power to be made sons of God,”99 as well as to Galatians 4:4-7, and its claim of divine sonship by adoption.100 Theological, Christological, and soteriological considerations were paramount here, but preachers readily addressed the message to their flocks in simple terms. “God,” claimed one mid-century preacher in a representative statement, “through the merits of his savior son has given you this most great and precious gift, so that by this you become consorts and participants in the divine nature.”101 Cathedral canon Francesco Diacceto put the matter thus, “We say that we are particularly his children because we have received him through faith and obedience, and he has given to us a particular power of becoming his children through adoption.”102 From Antoninus on, a bevy of local preachers reminded Florentine audiences of their own divine sonship so frequently that the idea was never far from a devout listener’s earshot,103 maintaining

99 The passage in John occurs at 1:12. Among the frequent contemporary references to John and Paul see Bettini, 7r and Anonymous "Giorno del Circunciscione," in Sermoni Raccolti (BNCF, Fondo Nazionale II. III. 413), 45r-51r.
100 “God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”
101 Anonymous, I Gradi, 2v. “Idio pelli meriti del Salvatore figlol suo vi ha donato cose grandissime, e pretiosi doni, accioche per questo doventiate consorti e partecipi della divina natura.”
102 Diacceto, 12. “Diciamo che noi siamo particolarmente suoi figliuoli, per haverlo ricevuto mediante la fede, et ubidienza: et egli ne ha conceduta particolar potenza di divenir suoi figliuoli mediante la grazia dell’adozione.”
103 Antonino, Opera di Santo Antonino Arcivescovo Fiorentino utilissima et necessaria alla instruzione delle sacerdote et di qualunque devota persona la quale desidera sapere bene confessarsi deli suoi peccati (Venetia: Giunti, 1536), 34v.
its place as a centerpiece of Florentine theology in sermons,\textsuperscript{104} devotional tracts,\textsuperscript{105} controversial literature,\textsuperscript{106} confessionals,\textsuperscript{107} and other religious works.\textsuperscript{108} Moreover, the matter was not just one of abstract or historical speculation on the nature of the incarnation and the saving act of grace; for Catholics, both those moments were immediately present, immanent in the waters of baptism.

But if baptism and faith gave each Christian a sort of substitute divinity by adoption, the reception of Eucharist restructured man’s being in far more profound ways. It goes almost without saying that Counter-Reformation theologians reaffirmed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but spiritual guides also increasingly informed the laity that they were what they ate. In the words of one Florentine religious thinker, in the Eucharist, "man dresses himself in divinity," in a sacrament which "changes man into God."\textsuperscript{109} Or as another preacher put it, "this food is spiritual, celestial, and divine, and because it is the food of our spirit, worthily taking it makes us spiritual, celestial and divine."\textsuperscript{110} Local humanist and Petrarchan scholar Lelio Bonsi claimed that the Eucharist was God’s greatest gift because by taking it, “we become the same thing as the body of Christ... there is no doubt that through this grace and communication of the body and

\textsuperscript{104} See Anonymous “La dignità,” 58v-59r, as well as a couple non-Tuscan examples. Frate Girolamo Quaino, Servita, Predica fatta in Udine nella Chiesa Maggiore la Prima domenica dello Advento, l’anno MDLV, sopra la Epistola Corrente, nella quale si tratta della Preperazione a Vita Eterna, et della Temperantia (Venetia: Arrivabene, 1555), unpaginated; and Bitonto, 8v.

\textsuperscript{105} See, for example, Portio, Modo di Orare, 28 and 50-52; Lapini, Esposizione, 9r-17v; Davidico, Anatomia, 79v; and Strozzi, 15r.

\textsuperscript{106} Ambrosio Catarino Polito, Trattato de la Giustificatione de l’huomo nel cospetto di Dio, secondo la pura Dottrina de lo Evangelio (Roma: Cartolari, 1544), 44v and 52v; and Ghetti, Trattato, 12r.

\textsuperscript{107} Petrus Canisius, Somma della Dottrina Christiana, tradotta dalla Latina nella lingua volgare da Messer Angelo Divitio da Bibbiena (Genoa: Belloni, 1561), 7v and 79r Canisius’ important catechism was translated into vulgar Florentine by one of Cosimo’s own secretaries, Angelo Dovitio.

\textsuperscript{108} Mellini, Trattato, 53.

\textsuperscript{109} Lorenzo Davidico, Trattato, 20v.

\textsuperscript{110} Anonymous, "Predica del Santissimo Sacramento delle Eucharistica," Sermoni Raccolti (BNCF, Fondo Nazionale II. III. 413), 6r. “Questo cibo é spirituale, celeste, et divino. perche é cibo dello spirito nostro, et degnamente pigliandolo ci fa tutti spirituali, celesti, et divini...in questo santissimo sacramento communicò tutto se stesso.”
blood of our lord, we transform ourselves into himself.” On these grounds, Christian humanists could again appeal to the authority of Augustine, quoting him as saying “whoever eats of me, you will not change me into yourself, but rather you will be changed into me.” The Jesuit doctrine of frequent communion gave a gentle push to the rhetoric. Whereas the Jesuits’ traditionalist opponents viewed consumption of the Eucharist as the reward of a holy life, the Jesuits argued for frequent communion as an aid to virtue. Thus the champions of frequent communion had an interest in emphasizing the sacrament’s transformative aspects. As it became clear that the Counter-Reformation aimed to match the Reformation blow for blow, and that it would highlight rather than downplay theological differences, the practice of vesting sacral power in the Eucharist only heightened.

Moreover, just as the more general forms of terrestrial divinity could be extended specifically to the prince, the philosopher, the artist, or the saint, sacramental divinity could be extended as a special case to the priest. When Florentines were told that Cosimo was a god or a lieutenant of god because he held the place of god in the state, it would have sounded vaguely familiar since the same claim had long been made for the clerical estate, divine beings because they held the Almighty’s place in the confessional. Those confessing their sins were encouraged to see their priest as the living image of God, acting in the person of Christ. Frequent were the exhortations to go to one’s confessor as the “Vicar and lieutenant of Jesus Christ.”

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111 Borsi, *Sermone*, 105r. “qual cosa puo desiderarsi piu oltra, che diventare una stessa cosa con Giesu Christo? Concosia, che non è dubbio nessuno che mediante questa grazia, e comunicazione del corpo, e sangue del Signore in lui stesso ci transformiamo.”

112 Ibid, 109v. “mangerami, e non tu mutarai me in te, ma si bene trasmutarai te in me.”


114 For example, Davidico, *Trattato*, 14r.
Florentine hammer of heretics Lorenzo Davidico noted, the priest needed to keep his eyes on Christ crucified, “whose place he holds on earth.” Thus, were the laity encouraged to act as if they were confessing not to a man, but directly to God, or at the very least to “be attentive that in the sacrament they are in the presence of God, and that one makes confession, not to man alone, but to God first, and then the one who holds the place of God.” Again, Jesuit spirituality supplied the impetus for a renewed emphasis on confession, though Savonarola had already jumped the gun on the Counter-Reformation in promoting both frequent confession and frequent communion. Moreover, in both cases the renaissance ideal of apotheosis found a new skin in a new religious program. Moreover, it is plain to see just how far we are from Burckhardt’s affirmation that the religious spirit of humanist classicism had paganised Renaissance Christianity, for the heirs of the Renaissance found little difficulty in tying the Renaissance ideal of apotheosis to a rigidly Catholic understanding of grace, redemption, and beatitude.

*His hand in His Work: The Divinization of Nature*

Terrestrial divinity lived in the Florentine imagination in more than just its princely form, but what was the relationship between princely divinity and the other more

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115 For more on Davidico see Massimo Firpo *Nel Labirinto del Mondo: Lorenzo Davidico fra santi, eretici, et inquisitori* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1992).
116 Davidico, Trattato, 14r.
117 Anonymous “Dell Confessione,” in *Sermoni Raccolti* (BNFC, Fondo Nazionale, ii, iii, 413), 2r. in the Italian, the “luoghotenente.”
118 Ambrosio Catharino Polito, *Trattato nuovo utile, et necessario de l'institutione de la Confessione sacramentale introdotta da Cristo, et de la necessita, convenientia, e frutti di quella, Et del modo del confessarsi con la sufficiens essaminatione* (Roma: Contrado del Pellegrino, 1554), 12r-13v. “si ricerca che sia considerativa de la presentia di Dio, et che a lui si pensi far la confessione, et non a huomo puro, ma a Dio prima et dipoi a quello che tien la persona sua in quel attto particolarmente.” This conceit was even extended to the guardian father of confraternities. For Eisenbichler notes that the guardian father was “seen as the agent of God.” Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1785.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 100.
119 See O'Mally 136-145.
120 Burckhardt, 483
general kinds under examination? In fact, there was little qualitative difference it seems, for sanctal, classical, and political apotheosis spilled from the pens of thinkers with little distinction. In a work dedicated to Cosimo, Frate Archangelo, an avowedly Picinian philosopher, defended the ideal of apotheosis thus:

In the Psalter, God is called lord of the gods. God is thus one in essence but many in participation. In another place, the same prophet (David) says: I say you are gods and sons of the most high. When explaining this, Christ said, “you are Gods, who by the word of God were made.” Elsewhere, Jacob says, “he brought us forth by the word of truth, and they are gods by participation and by the anointing of divinity.” Then in John it is written “he gave them power to be made sons of God.” As Aristotle says in his Ethics, one is a God by the excellence of virtue. And the same is written about the judges in Exodus, because they hold the place of God.\(^{121}\)

Here we have the complete exposition of terrestrial divinity, as the brother left out neither Old Testament, New Testament, nor classical exempla. More to the point, the monastic author viewed them all as different manifestations of the same phenomenon, godhood by participation. There is no sense that political divinity is any way special or different from the many other kinds under examination.

But generalized human divinity and princely divinity had more in common than that; indeed, both forms were set to work to serve the same ends: namely, to reveal the inner nature of God by the contemplation of his works. One mid-century author explained the dynamic with a metaphor lifted from Pico. He claimed that upon completing the construction of a city, an ancient ruler would erect a statute of his own likeness somewhere near the center in order to show all by whom the work had been

done. God had done the same thing in his creation of the world, so followed the
argument, breathing his own image and likeness into man before placing him in the
center of creation. Man was God’s marker. Man was his statue, and at least one of
Cosimo’s writers made a strikingly similar claim for monarchy:

Everyone can see that the principate has more similitude with the celestial reign
than any other form of government; it was left by God on earth in likeness of the
celestial court, so that all we mortals might better understand his greatness and
incomprehensible power.

If man in general revealed God as pure intellect and sublime virtue, the prince
highlighted his immense power. Both claims took their starting point from an immanent
view of the creator’s essence in his own work, a desire of the divine artist to leave
something of his own being in the works of his hands. Moreover, the idea of man as a
simulacrum of God was itself only part of an even more general search for the footprints
of the creator in all of creation.

The argument drew its force from a powerful intellectual assumption concerning
the nature of human knowledge: that is, man ascended to knowledge of invisible, spiritual
realities through the visible signs of creation. Of course, this was classically Platonic,
and Vieri put into Plato’s mouth the quotation, “one is not able to rise to knowledge of

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fabricato.” The argument comes from the first book of the Heptaplus, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The
123 Fabrini, 4v-5r. “ogniuno puo vedere, che il principato ha più simiglianza col regno celeste di
tutti gli altri governi, lasciato da Dio in terra à simiglianza de’l celeste coro, accioche si conosca tra noi
mortalì molto maggiormente la sua grandezza, e potenza incomprensibile.”
124 The popularity of this platonic concept in Tuscan intellectua was also a conceit was perhaps
even more strongly held by the scholastics. See Girolamo Savonarola, Triompho della Croce di Christo:
della Verita della fede Christiani (Venice: al segno della Speranza, 1547), 4. “To come to the knowledge of
invisible things, we have need of the visible, because all of our knowledge begans from our senses.” “A
noi bisogna per le cose visibili, venire in cognizione delle invisibili, perche ogni nostra cognizione comincia
dal senso.”
god in this life but in likenesses.” But if this idea had an impeccably Platonic pedigree, it was nevertheless shared by the scholastics. The scholastically trained Dante, for instance, argued in favor of it in the third cantico of the Paradisio, and it is primarily on Dante’s authority that Cosimo’s humanist Domenico Mellini claimed, “it is through the visible creatures that man knows the invisible.” If the prince was an image of the divinity left on earth in order that one might better know the power and greatness of the celestial monarch, he was but one image out of many. With Dante clearly in mind, Mellini even supposed that the carnal beauty of the human face had the same function:

The form is that perfection which truly is the essence of beauty and almost is painted on the human body, and this is a ray of the divine bounty and a splendor that descends from it, which shows itself on the material that is prepared for it and makes of everything around light and desirous with that flower and that vivacity and that grace which he himself produces in the human face and in all the other created things and brings forth this beauty and enraptures to itself everything that is able to know and understand, so that by benefit of it they be made participants in the divine goodness, in which is their true and ultimate perfection. There is no need to stop oneself in earthly beauty and earthly goods, as if it were the highest felicity, since from the beauty and goodness of things below it is necessary to raise oneself up through the intellect to that highest good and that which is loved and desired before all things, and rather to use the things below as a type of ladder that leads to the contemplation of the maker.

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125 Vieri, Breve Compendio, 22r. “Non si può salire alla cognizione della Divina Maestà, in questa vita, se non per similitudine di queste cose create.”


127 Mellini, Trattato, 55. “per le Creature visibili l’huomo conosce le’nvisibili,”

128 Mellini, Trattato, 48-49. “La forma poi è quella perfezione, la quale dà veramente l’essere alla bellezza, et quasi ne corpi umani la dipigne, et questo è un raggio della divina bontà: et uno splendore, che sceso da quella, et sopra la materia preparatagli per ottima disposizione spiegandosi, fa d’ogni intorno lucente et vago quel fiore, quella vivacità, et quella grazia, la quale egli medesimo ne volti humani, et in tutte l’altre cose produce. et questa bellezza provoca , et rapisce à se le cose tutte, che hanno facoltà di intendere et di conoscere, accioche per benifizio di lei elleno siano fatte di essa divina bonta partecipi: in che è la vera et ultima loro perfezione. Nella qual bellezza, et ne’ quai beni non bisogna fermarsi, come in ultimo termine di felicità, conciosia che dalla bellezza, et bontà delle cose di quì giù sia necessario innalzarsi con l’intelletto à quel sommo bello et primo amato da tutte le cose et desiderato: et di queste servirsi come di scala, che ne conduca alla contemplazione del loro facitore.”
The argument was echoed by another of Cosimo’s Platonic humanists, Flaminio Nobili, in a similar tract dedicated to the duke himself.\textsuperscript{129} Whereas Mellini was seeking the secret alchemy that would transmute his sexual impulses into higher spiritual feelings, Nobili was far more circumspect in using the female face and body as a stairway to heaven. But he did not, therefore, deny the common wisdom of using visible markers to ascend to the divine. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
I do not know how necessary of a ladder is feminine beauty to ascend to divine love; it seems to me a far more secure way can be found to the knowledge of the highest beauty by considering the miraculous and ordered effects of nature, the stable movements of the heavens, the vigor of light, and the perfection of the universe.\textsuperscript{130}
\end{quote}

Indeed, sense experience was ladder to the divine not only for humanists but for theologians as well. For instance, the preacher Visdomini affirmed nature’s relation to the divine in a slightly less erotic way, when he argued that God had made the world:

\begin{quote}
to call it, by natural imitation, to uncover the being of God with its own being, and the innumerable and infinite virtues with the little semblances and vestiges that serve for it, so that by this, as by an visible ladder, the fortunate contemplators can ascend to know part of the invisible divine virtue, as (for example) his beauty is seen in the sun, his force in fire, his sweetness in air, his stability in earth, and briefly as in heaven in God alone one knows perfectly his creations, on earth, one discovers as best one can, through his creatures the virtues of the creator.\textsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{129} The idea of beauty as an effluence of the divine was a Platonic concept from the Phaedrus.

\textsuperscript{130} Flaminio Nobili, \textit{Trattato dell'Amore Humano Composto, et donato ha gia molti anni da M. Flaminio Nobili all'Illustris. Et Eccellentiss. Signore Prencipe di Firenze et di Siena} (Lucca: Busdraghi, 1562), 25r-25v. “A questo Divino Amore non sò già quanto necessaria scala sia la bellezza, donnesca; perciocche il considerare i miracolosi, et pur ordinati effetti della Natura, i muovimenti stabili to del Cielo, il vigor della luce, la perfetione dell’universo, mi pare molto più sicuro strada per condurci alla cognition dela Somma Bellezza.”

\textsuperscript{131} Visdomini, 95v. “per rogala di naturale imitatione scoprono l’esser di Dio con l’esser suo, et le innumerabili et infinite sue vertù col piccolo sembiante et vestigio ch’esse ne servano, accioche per esse, come per la scala visibile, possano gli fortunati contemplatori ascendere a conoscere parte delle invisibili vertù divine, come (per esempio) la sua bellezza nel sole, la forza nel fuoco, la dolcezza nell’aria, la stabilità nella terra, et brevemente come sù in Cielo in Dio solo si conoscono perfettamente le creature, così qua giù, come meglio si può nelle creature si scopre la vertù del creatore.”
There was here an explicit affirmation of the dignity of matter and its relation to the divine. It was again the Catholic Reformation that sealed this on religious consciousness. For the reaffirmation of icons based itself largely on the same epistemology. In a world in which the entire created order served no higher purpose than raising the human mind up to the knowledge of the divinity, casting the prince as an image of God was no difficult feat.

**Putting the Familiarity of Terrestrial Divinity to Work**

So popular a motif was terrestrial divinity that Cosimo’s literati did not limit their divinizing panegyrics to his role as prince. If philosophers could win the plaudit of god on earth, then Cosimo’s literati would turn the largely unlettered duke into a philosopher, a purveyor of nature’s healing secrets in his patronage of medical research. If classical heroes and saints could dwell in the empyrean realm, then Cosimo would be a saint or hero on the old mould. And if the suffering Eucharistic Christ stood as the quintessence of the man/God ideal, then suffering Cosimo would be the visible means of sanctification for his subjects. Not only, it seems, did preexisting categories of terrestrial divinity make Cosimo’s new princely divinity easier to swallow, the new princely form ended up swallowing the preexisting categories in the bargain.

So when Cosimo’s literati made him into a philosopher monarch, striding about the Palazzo Vecchio as if it was some kind of Olympian academy, they not only evoked the ideal of the Platonic monarch that the Medici had been cultivating for more than one

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132 Domenico Basilio Lapis, *Epistola Responsiva Domni Basiliij de Lapis Monachi ordinis cistercien, in quoddam epistolium fratris Bernardini de Senis de purgatorio libero arbitrio.* (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXXIV c. 6.), 28r.
generation, but played to the long standing ideal of the semi-divine philosopher: Cosimo as a new Plato, a new Hermes, or a new Ficino. The problems with such a characterization were manifold since the tersely tongued Cosimo bore little resemblance to such intellectual heroes. Cosimo’s had to win his scholar god credentials vicariously instead, by plauditing his patronage of the Pisan Studio and the Florentine Academy, as well as by licensing a ducal printer to disseminate it all to a wider audience. It was to speak to this image that Cosimo invited Ignazio Danti to decorate the walls of the sala carte at the Palazzo Vecchio with maps of the entire known world, the project emphasizing Cosimo’s advancement of scientific knowledge. If the sala was perhaps too private and too subtle to demonstrate Cosimo’s promotion of reason and philosophy, there was nothing private and nothing subtle about the whale carcass that he had publicly dissected just outside the palace in the late 1540s, a very public demonstration of the duke’s knowledge and mastery over the natural world.

Philosophy had wide-ranging connotations in Florence, extending to practical as well as theoretical knowledge. Thus, natural philosophy included one of Cosimo’s favorite projects, the medicinal use of alchemy. Cosimo’s scientists concocted special brews in the foundry, which the duke established in his own palazzo, and Cosimo

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134 Gualandi makes this an acceptable alternative to the ruler himself being an accomplished philosopher. See Gualandi, de Optimo Principe, 114.
135 See, for instance, the prologue to the legislation setting up the Pisan studio. Lorenzo Cantini ed., Legislazione Toscan a vol. 1 (Albizziana da S. Maria in Campo, 1800), 195-196. For Cosimo’s patronage of the Pisan studio, see Giovanni Cascio Pratilli, L’università e il principe: Gli studi di Siena e di Pisa tra Rinascimento e Controriforma (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1975).
137 Fiorani, 74.
gracioulsly dispatched them across the European continent. Fancying himself a type of expert, Cosimo took especial care in licensing the apothecary guild. It was, in fact, a kind of perfect storm; a little wordplay on the Medici surname easily linked Cosimo to the healing profession, a few rhetorical flourishes made the prince a kind of medic of the state, and a dose of traditional theology made Christ a medic of the soul. The end result turned the medical profession into a divine occupation, and the medic/prince Cosimo into an image of Christ, whose superior knowledge healed the wounds and diseases in natural bodies as did his superior science in government heal the wounds in the body politic. As philosophers had been the first to call philosophy divine, so were doctors the first to grant those honors to medicine; it was Cosimo’s own protomedico who drew the connection most vigorously, arguing that Cosimo’s patronage of medicine was:

truly worthy of Great princes, as that which renders them more than any other thing similar to God, because in this way they do the greatest benefit that it is possible to do for men, rendering them and conserving them in that health without which they cannot truly enjoy any of the gifts that God has given them.

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140 See Da Trivigi, 9.
141 Niccolò Martelli, Cento Sonnetti, sonnet vi, “Quante gratie hoggi al Ciel render’ potrai; Di si cortese doni lume si vero; Che le piaghe crudel ch’altrui ti fero; Ridotte in Cicatrice, et risald’ hai.” Bronzino also made the play in his sonnets to Cosimo, see Deborah Parker, "The Poetry of Patronage: Bronzino and the Medici," Renaissance Studies 17 (2003): 234. Cosimo was not the first to use the play on the Medici name to make himself the “doctor of the state.” See Kent, The Patron’s Oeuvre, 119.
143 Cited in Perifano, 85. "un cortesia veramente degna d’essere usata da Principi grandi, si come quella che gli rende più che alcun’altra cosa simiglianti à Dio. perciòché ei fanno a gli huomini in questa guisa il maggior benfitio che sia quasi possibile far loro, rendendo o conservando a quegli la loro sanità senza la quale egli non possono veramente godere niuno di quei doni che Iddio ottomo e grandissimo ha dato loro."
And if this was too potent a metaphor, another eulogist substituted a pagan one, claiming that everyone came seeking healing from Cosimo as if to an Aesculpian god.\footnote{Cited in Perifano, 86.} Perhaps Cosimo’s medical credentials sufficed as a substitute for his lack of thaumaturgic powers, allowing him to play the part of Christ medic by the more scientific and more distinctively Florentine brand of alchemy.\footnote{It may seem strange to claim that alchemy was both more ‘magical’ and more ‘scientific’, but nevertheless that is the case. This is because, at least to Ficino, magic was little more than the manipulation of the occult forces of nature. See Yates, 62-83.} Either way, the association certainly allowed princely divinity to swallow up the divinity of the philosopher.

As intellect was ordered to cultivating virtue, so virtue vaulted the philosopher into the ranks of godhood as well. Cosimo’s literati understood it from the start. Evocations of heroic virtue adorned the decorations for Cosimo’s wedding festivities, while the closing play highlighted the theme by asserting the rather unproven claim that Cosimo ruled his land with ‘not human but celestial virtues.’\footnote{Andrew C and Bonner Mitchell eds Minor, A Renaissance Entertainment: Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1968), 230.} The fashion never died out. Indeed, the language of heroic virtue practically oozed out of the panegyrics written at Cosimo’s passing. In recognition of his virtue, Scipione Ammirato called Cosimo a not human but “divine prince,”\footnote{Ammirato, Orazione, 51r. “non humano ma Divino Principe.”} while Bandini claimed, “(His) divine and immortal virtue could not remain hidden.”\footnote{Ottavio Bandini, Orazione Funerale di M. Ottavio Bandini Fiorentino, Da lui fatte, e recitata il di XIX di Giugno 1574, nell’esequie del Sereniss. Cosimo de Medici primo Grand Duca di Toscana, tradotto dalla Lingua Latina da Francesco Falconcini (Fiorenza: Giorgio Marescotti, 1574), unpaginated. “Non poteva questa divina, et immortal vertù star più nascosta.”} Betti summed the conceit up nicely:

> Considering the weakness of my abilities, I do not know with what name to call him, so that I do not say much less than his valor merits, unless I imitate those ancient Spartans who, when they greatly admired some personage, called and reputed him divine; if this was said in those times about many great Heroes, one can reasonably say it also of the Most Serene Grand Duke. However, those men were admired particularly for some one virtue, but he has collected them all in
himself in such a manner that his soul seems that it was the very tree of virtues that are called Heroic and divine.\textsuperscript{149}

Betti proffered the opinion with some (probably feigned) reluctance, but he was at any rate making an appeal to antiquity that was neither new nor objectionable to his listeners. Cosimo’s artwork had already represented him as the heroic avatar of the virtues of ages past. The examples had drawn from the full light of the Age of Man: Cosimo as the divinized Augustus.\textsuperscript{150} They had come from the semi-legendary age of heroes: Cosimo as the furiously anti-Gallic and attractively republican Camillus, which Francesco Salvati represented on the walls of the \textit{sala udienze}.\textsuperscript{151} They could be also be taken from the more distant mists of time, from the Age of the Gods, when men were so far superior they were likened unto divinity: Cosimo as Camillus or Augustus found natural complements in Cosimo as Hercules or Cosimo as Apollo.\textsuperscript{152}

The trend even manifested itself in themes ripped from the Old Testament, Cosimo as Moses,\textsuperscript{153} Cosimo as Joseph,\textsuperscript{154} Cosimo as Solomon,\textsuperscript{155} or Cosimo as

\textsuperscript{149}Benedetto Betti, \textit{Orazione Funerale di Benedetto Betti. Da Lui publicamente recitata nelle Esseque del Serenissimo Cosimo Medici, Gran Duca di Toscana}. (Firenze: Giunti, 1574), unpag. “considerandole in quel modo che comporta la debolezza del mio ingegno, non so, con qual nome io debba chiamarlo, che io non dica molto meno di quel che merita il suo valore, se gia io non imiterò quelli antichi Lacedemonii, i quali quando ammiravano grandemente qualche personaggio, lo chiamavano et reputavano divino: la qual cosa se fu detta per qualche ragione, in que’ tempi, di molti grandi Heroi, ragionevolmente si potrà ella dire anche del Serenissimo Gran Duca: Però che quelli furono ammirati particolarmente per una qualche virtù, ma questi le havaeva tutte in se raccolte di maniera, che l’animo suo pareva che fusse il proprio albergo delle virtù, che son dette Heroiche et divine.”


\textsuperscript{151}Janet Cox-Rearick, \textit{Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art: Pontormo, Leo X, and the Two Cosimos} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); 251; and Forster, 93. As Camillus as a type for the anti French Cosimo see Andrea Dactii, \textit{Poemata}. (Firenze: Torrentino, 1549), 14.

\textsuperscript{152}For Cosimo as Hercules see Richelson, 79-92. For Cosimo as Apollo in the Boboli garden and its connection with Augustan imagery, see Richelson, 37.

\textsuperscript{153}Richelson, 109-111.
Here again appears the Renaissance tendency to let the rhetoric of heroic virtue slide into the category of Christian sanctity. Francesco Verino, for instance, claimed that the duke was not only “through his benefice and for all his virtues, divine” but that through his “true and highest religion, was most holy.” In this, Verino was speaking a tongue that Cosimo’s client scholars had already mastered, as they had long been smuggling the language of sanctity and the sacred into all sorts of genres, including praise poems, panegyrics, and even legislation, for Cosimo wanted his image to live in that space between ancient hero and Christian saint that the Italian Renaissance found so easy to reconcile.

If pious Christians proffered suggestions of Cosimo’s sanctity with trepidation, how much more dexterity did the panegyricist require when comparing Cosimo to the Eucharist? How could the prince be equated so directly with the body of Christ without crossing the line into blasphemy? It was, indeed, a difficult proposition, but one of the more adventurous of his panegyricists eventually found his way to it. The argument was laid out delicately, without explicit reference to Eucharistic theology:

If we consider the matter closely, we will see that the prince will be like a second God, and we will know that as God wanted to ransom us with his blood and to

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156 Richelson, 112-113.
157 Vieri, *Orazione*, 2r. “il quale per beneficenza, e per tutte le virtù era divino, et per vera, e somma Religione santissimo.”
158 Niccolò Martelli, *Cento Sonetti*, Sonnet xvii,
160 Cantini, Vol. 1, 277; vol. 1, 313; and vol. 2, 151.
liberate his elect, just so, the prince, sent by God, with thoughts, with difficulties, with unease, and with continuous dangers of death liberates the republic from all the scourges that hover over it, and he castigates and corrects the republic, setting it on the road that leads to heavenly glory. Such that we will say, as Hesiod says, the prince is the companion of God, and as God orders the blessed souls their place in heaven, so the prince leads the people to heaven through those ways that are pleasing to God. The matter standing thus, should I not want to say then that one needs to call him a god on earth, just as the Roman Senate called those emperors when they had comported themselves gloriously in some important deed?161

As Fabrini still thought the state to be a mere way station on the route to eternity, the prince’s most important job was to help procure the eternal salvation of his subjects. Thus, the hardships accompanying the task could, at least superficially, be compared to Christ’s saving act on the cross. The prince then became the ‘visible’ means of sanctification through his suffering. However, everyone certainly equated the visible means of sanctification with the Eucharist, which in sixteenth-century Florentine religious thought was primarily conceived as the extension the sacrifice of cross through space and time. Indeed, Cosimo’s own sculptor had given eloquent testimony to the association when shortly after the Council of Trent’s decree on the Eucharist, he began sculpting a Christo Morto to be placed on the high altar of the Cathedral.162 In Fabrini’s argument, then, the suffering servant prince could become Eucharistic in function, if not

161 Fabrini, 11r. “se noi consideriamo bene la cosa, noi vedremo, che sarà come un secondo Iddio, e conosceremo, che come Iddio volse co'l suo sangue ricomperare, e liberare il suo popolo eletto, così il principe mandato da Dio, con pensieri, con affanni, con disagi, e con continui pericoli di morte libera la rep. da tutti i flagelli, che le soprastanno, e la gastiga, e corregge, mettendola in quella via, che la conduca a la gloria celeste. Talche noi diremo quel, che dice Esiodo, che'l principe sia compagno di Dio. e perciò come Iddio ordina a l'anime beate il luogo in cielo, così il principe à quello le conduce per quelle vie, che piacciono à esso Dio. la qual cosa stando così non voglio dire gia, che si debba chiamare uno Iddio in terra, come chiamava il Senato Romano il loro imperadori, quando s'erano portati gloriosamente in qualche importante fatione.”

in essence, and Cosimian princely rhetoric could steal this last and most difficult independent category of terrestrial divinity, just as it had stolen the others.

**Conclusion**

When the rhetoric of Cosimian divinity arrived at the ears of the Florentine populace, it arrived as a concept familiar enough to make it non-threatening. The prince may have been a divine being, but so was every man, at least in some small degree. Man had had been created in the image and likeness of God. Man resembled God in his ability to philosophize, to reason, and to practice virtue. Man took the place of God in the administration of sacraments. Man could become a Son of God in baptism and a god himself by taking the Eucharist. So much was divine, the ubiquity of the concept made it almost banal. Augustine was the divine Augustine, and Aquinas was the angelic doctor. But in Renaissance Florence, this could be ecumenically extended in all directions. Virgil was the divine Virgil, Michelangelo the divine Michelangelo, Augustus the divine Augustus, and Plato the divine Plato. When the young duke’s son incanted the mass with a solemnity above his years, his tutor was moved to flatter the skeptical duke with the opinion that the little ‘angel’ sung with a voice, “not human but divine.”

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163 Boethius, much admired by Renaissance philosophers, had even claimed that since supreme goodness and supreme happiness were identical with God, “each happy individual is therefore divine.” Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, translated with an introduction by Victor Watts (London: Penguin, 1999), 71.

164 All the saints, but especially the oft-cited Augustine usually won the honors.

165 ASFi, Med. 1070 c. 296r. (November 5, 1543). Lorenzo Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio.

166 Vasari explicitly defended the title in *Vite*, 26-27; and according to Deborah Parker this is how Bronzino thought of Michelangelo as well. Deborah Parker, *Bronzino: Renaissance Painter as Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71.

167 Ferrari, 6r.

168 See page 46.

169 ASFi, Med. 1070 c. 133r (December 4, 1542). (Giovanni Conti to Pier Francesco Riccio).
however, was only because the concept of terrestrial divinity was written deeply in the pages of the Florentine Christian experience. It was only a small leap to make the prince a special case.
Chapter Two: Divine Right Rule and the Providential Worldview

In November of 1549, the young cleric and Florentine humanist Giovambatista Gualandi acquired the rectorship of the parish church of San Piero a Castra in the rugged, hilly, and poverty stricken diocese of Pistoia, a ruined little church for which the annual revenue was not even enough to restore the place’s dilapidated condition. Pondering his dubiously lucrative gain, Gualandi mused, “I think that God has so delivered it into my hands, so that at least it would not fall into complete dilapidation.”¹ In April of 1559, Cosimo had a strikingly similar moment. His forces had just mopped up the fragments of the broken and battered Sienese republican armies when the duke received the prize that he had so ardently and unconvincingly claimed he did not want: the most Catholic King of Spain invested him with neighboring Siena as a fief of the Spanish crown. Though his territory instantly doubled, the broken and battered republic was so devastated that taxes needed to be remitted for a full ten years. Pondering his dubiously lucrative gain, Cosimo mused:

We certainly believe that for its own salvation, and by the will of God, Siena has come under our hand, so that according to our custom, justice may prevail over every passion and particular interest; nor we will let be oppressed whoever will want to live free from the power and greediness of others.²

The two vignettes reveal three important aspects of early modern divine right claims.

First, divine right was not just for princes; rather, it was simply one manifestation of a

¹ ASFi, AGBE. 4378 c. 283 (November 27, 1549). “Stimo Iddio habbi cosi voluto mi dia in mano, à causa non rovini in tutto.”
² ASFi, Med., 210 c. 72v-73r (April 28, 1559). “ben crediamo al certo che per salute di quello, et per volunta di Dio /e/ sia venuta sotto la nostra mano, dove che secondo il nostro costume, prevalerà la Justitia ad ogni passione, et affetto particolare, ne lasceremo suffocare chiunche vorra viver bene dalla potenza et ingordigia altrui.”
habit of thought that saw God’s handiwork in all human events, a habit of thought still triumphantly ubiquitous in Florentine culture and shared in the worldview of Cosimo’s courtly circle. The providence that ushered princes and kings to their thrones was no more than a special case of the general providence that guided the daily round of mundane fortune and misfortune, ranging the gamut from an election to a small, unimportant, and unlucrative ecclesiastical benefice to the conquering of kingdoms and republics.

Second, because divine right was so closely linked to providentialism, the various manifestations of the former closely followed the variegations of the latter. Early modern Christians had a jumble of providential ideals, and their concerns ranged widely between the here and now and the hereafter. Indeed, we can even talk of two sufficiently distinct modes of providential thought, a situation that gave birth to two sufficiently distinct categories of divine right. The first providence, based heavily on Augustine, posited a transcendent deity whose inscrutably hidden will directed men towards eternal salvation. Blithely unconcerned with mundane matters, Augustinian politics thus counseled the subject to a sort of political quietism born of Christian resignation. On the other hand, a far more potent brand of early modern Christian providentialism imagined a more active God who rewarded good behavior and punished wicked behavior in this world. Nearly pantheistic in his immanence, this God made both his presence and his will starkly clear through the signs of nature. This version of the Christian God required more imagination from Cosimo’s literati since they were called upon to prove divine favor by signs and successes. The differences in the two providential schemas might ultimately be called
differences of emphasis, but theological subtleties eventually spelled radically distinct political ideologies.

Third, divine right did not necessarily imply an attempt to elude the claims of overlordship vested in other bodies. Cosimo traced his legitimacy back to God, but God’s providence might just as easily flow through the people, through the republic, or through the emperor. For instance, just because he claimed to be duke of Siena by the grace of God did not mean, as Danilo Marrara has suggested, that he was “ignoring the tenor and existence of the act of investiture” or that he did not “consider himself subordinate to any other but himself.” On the contrary, Cosimo explicitly affirmed that he took the little republic both because “it was pleasing to God, and because it was pleasing to the benignity of the Catholic king.” A typical early modern Florentine would have found little objectionable or unreasonable in the statement. Up and down the social ladder, early moderns conceived of providence as a multicausal affair; the Lord worked in mysterious ways, but he normally worked through secondary causes, even through the free will inherent in every human. The reformation debates on grace and works only sharpened opinions on the matter as Catholic theologians and controversialists reaffirmed humanity’s active participation in its own salvation. This multicausal divine right was especially important for a prince staking a claim to monarchical power in decidedly republican territory since it allowed Cosimo’s literati a free hand to argue that the duke’s power flowed from both God and from the consent of the republic, even that his power

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3 Marrara, 27. “senza tener conto del tenore e della stessa esistenza dell’atto di investitura, già nel 1557 aveva dichiarato di avere ricevuto direttamente da Dio ‘l’imperio e dominio’ del nuovo stato, ritenendo, pertanto, di non doverlo considerare subordinato ad altri che a se stesso.”

4 ASFi, Med. 211 c. 28r-28v (August 5, 1559). “Poiche è piaciuto a, Dio, et alla benignità del Re Cat.co di mettermi nell'intero posseso dello stato di Siena.” Emphasis is mine.
flowed from God through the republic. Needless to say, the idea certainly aimed at salvaging republican sympathies.

Just as divine right did not necessarily imply independence, so it did not necessarily imply pretensions of absolutism. As Cosimo had warily remarked in refutation of Pope Paul IV’s triumphalist absolutism:

Never have I found any principate that does not have some limitation…and the papacy does not seem to us to be more absolute than all the others because it was founded by God in charity, poverty and peace; these are the honest limitations set to it…as to peace, truly every sort of limitation is put on the papacy to not make Christians battle and to hold the war against the infidel, these are the voluntary limitations introduced by the word of God, which his holiness gives over to the bonfires.\(^5\)

Cosimo’s rhetorical tug at the bonds linking divine right and absolutism is as telling as it is surprising. By 1556, the prince who had aimed at absolute control over his small state and had perhaps come closer than any of his contemporaries, had come to the realization that the chimera of absolutism was just that: an illusion.

\textit{God’s Choice: Cosimo and Divine Right.}

There is little doubt that Cosimo wanted his subjects to believe he had been ushered to his throne by the guiding and all-powerful hand of God, and his propaganda was not at all averse to connecting those dots for its audience. In this, he was little different from his monarchical peers in other states. But whereas other rulers could lay their claims on holy unction, blood charisma, and the divine gifts of their families, Cosimo could not. He boasted neither unction nor an illustrious family. Was then, his

\(^5\) ASF\(i\), Med. 24, c.145r-146v (July 12, 1556). “mai o trovato che in ogni sorte di principato non vi sia qualche limitatione…non c'è però esser assoluto certe maggior che in tutti li altri perché è fondato da dio, in che nella carita nella poverta nella pace queste sono limitationi oneste… quanto alla pace sia davver ogni sorte di limitation per far lotta li cristiani e tener la guerra contro alli infideli queste sono limitatione volutarie introdotte dal verbo di dio le quali SS la da abrucciare.”
appeal to divine right simply imported propaganda, cynically deployed by a skeptical
literati and received by a skeptically unconvinced audience? The answer is almost
certainly no. The language of divine election and divine right were so deeply embedded
in contemporary consciousness that even those indifferent or hostile to Cosimo’s success
grudgingly admitted to the legitimacy of his appeal to God.

This is not to say that there was no concerted literary effort to seed the idea in the
Florentine mind. On the contrary, divine right caught on early and never gave up its
stranglehold over Cosimian rhetoric. In 1551, Giambattista Gelli exhorted the city to
religious thanksgiving for the gift of such a prince, delivered to Florence from the
heavenly realms:

Among all fortune-favored realms and happy cities, our city and all its peoples
can and should, on equal ground with any other, thank God and glory in the fact
that, after so many travails, the giver of all goods has given us you, Most
Illustrous and excellent signor, for a Prince.”

Gelli’s texts certainly support art historian Van Veen’s assertion that Cosimian rhetoric
was ‘shot through’ with claims of divine right, but what is remarkable about the rhetoric
is simply its unremarkableness. Cosimo was just one more gift from the “giver of all
good gifts.” Indeed, this claim of divine right is embedded in the text more as a mild and
uncontroversial assumption rather than a bold and daring assertion. Indeed, Luigi Paolo
Rosello, a Padovan evangelical with ties to Cosimo’s court, blandly and

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6 Giovambattista Gelli, "Dedicazione," Tutte le Lettioni (Firenze: S.N. 1551), 1. “infra tutti i ben fortunati Regni, et felicissime città, la nostra con tutti gli huomini suoi, puo et debbe al pari di qualunque altra si voglia, ringratiaire Idio; et gloriasi di haver dopo tanti, et tanti suoi travagli, ricevuto da esso, donatore di tutti i beni, per principe, la Illustriss. et Eccellentiss. S.V.”

7 For Rosello as a heretic see, John Jeffries Martin, Venice’s Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 81.
unapologetically just referred to the “state which God has given (Cosimo),”\(^8\) and with equivalent mildness asserted that Cosimo’s “good fortune and the express providence of God had raised him from the private state to the Ducal Dignity.”\(^9\) For Francesco Altoni, one of Giovanni Bande delle Neri’s old soldiers, divine right fell under the more wide-ranging category of vocation. For Altoni, God had “called Cosimo to that high grade in which he found himself.”\(^10\) Others linked Cosimo’s divine right to their own concerns. Frate Archangelo folded a divine right claim neatly into his own desire for literary patronage; in his version, Cosimo was simply one more Medici raised up to be the instrument by which God protected good philosophy and *belles lettres*:

> Now in what branch can [Pico’s arguments] safely nest? By what patronage can they be protected against the strong cavilers? You alone, Cosimo, in all of Italy embrace the republic of letters and cherish it. For whether by fate or divine providence it be done, it was heretofore a special and peculiar characteristic of the Medici bloodline to take up the patronage of the heredity of *belles lettres* and to favor men of genius. Moreover it is necessary that what always was ever shall be.\(^11\)

The play on the divine providence/fate conundrum was simply that: a game of words, for as a student of Pico, Archangelo would have certainly denied that the blind force called fate actually existed. It was by divine providence that Cosimo was placed to protect his work.

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8 In Rosello’s dedication to Lucio Paolo Rosello *Il ritratto del vero governo del prencipe dal’esempio vivo del gran Cosimo de’Medici*, (Venice: Giovan Maria Bonelli, 1552), 3. “il stato che gli ha dato Iddio.”

9 Rosello, 10r. “la cui buona sorte, et espressa providenza di Dio l’ha di privato (benche nobilissimo cittadino) levato alla Ducale dignitá”


11 Frate Archangelo, 2v. “Nam quibus in ramis tutius nidulari poterant. Aut quo patrocinio adversus cavillantes (si qui forte sunt) protegi? Tu in omni Italia literarium senatum unus amplecteres, atque foves; namque sive id fato, sive divina providentia fiat; multis ab hinc a’vis Mediceo sanguini proprium fuit, et quodamodo peculiare, atque haereditarium bonorum literarum suscipere patrocinium, atque ingenijs favere. Necessae est aut idem sempre esse, quod sempre idem fuit.”
Indeed, there was more going on here than the simple flattery of Medici client scholars; divine right does not appear as a theme to propagated, but rather, as a matter to be assumed. Indeed, this is simply because divine right was underwritten by propositions that few early moderns could escape. First, God was the creator of the world and giver of all good things. Second, as all knowing, all-powerful, and all good, God had ordained every event to lead to some human felicity, whether that be in this life or the next. Third, God’s guiding hand cooperated with human will in his eternal direction of natural events. Thus, if anything had happened, it was done at the pleasure of God’s providence, it was done for man’s own good, and its causes could be equally sought in both the natural and supernatural realms. If Cosimo was duke, then God had willed it. If Cosimo was duke, then it was for the good of Florence. And if Cosimo was duke, then God was in some way behind it, even if it was done in perfectly free election. This was no mere propaganda but rather the inescapable logic of a worldview that saw the same author behind both private fortune and public fortune, and behind both natural and supernatural causation.

What’s more, this hypothesis can be tested against the sentiments of less public documents, for not all divine right claims were designed for popular consumption. One such private document, an early advice piece hiding in the voluminous corpus of Cosimo’s registers begins with a familiar bit of flattery:

Having the divine essence, in the most happy and by consequence most fecund birth and nativity of Your Excellency, and in so young an age, filled by the divine, unexpectedly and without any human obstacle, promoted and decorated you in the highest grade of this city.  

12 ASFi, Med. 183 c. 289r-292v. (Undated). In this author's opinion, the most likely candidates for the authorship of this letter seem to be Vincenzo Nobili, future depositario generale, or Vincenzo Bovio. “Havendo la divina essentia nella Felicissima et per consequens fecundissima genitura et nativita di V.X. et
The author, probably a member of Cosimo’s inner circle, remained anonymous, signing only with a frustratingly ambiguous “Vinc.” However, it is clear that in this document we are eavesdropping on the internal conversation of the ducal court, and that as we do, we find that Cosimo’s own courtier believed it worthwhile to treat Cosimo’s divine election as a matter of private conviction rather than populist fluff.

If it is hard to explain why the charade would have been played out even in private correspondence, it is even harder to explain away the speech made by the Venetian ambassador Vincenzo Fedeli to his own senate. Though Fedeli admired much of Cosimo’s work, his republican and Venetian ideological commitments would not suffer him to give Cosimo his real approbation. Fedeli thought Cosimo’s swift and terrible princely justice a close kin to proper tyranny, and he categorically maintained that the Florentine soul suffered under the heavy yoke of one-man rule. Nevertheless, in Fedeli’s opinion, Cosimo was the unfavorable judgment of God on the tyranny of the many and the unfortunate means whereby the Almighty might restore peace to the city and staunch the Florentine penchant for shedding civil blood:

The Lord God permitted that they be subjected to one prince alone, which in the end redounded to the benefit of all because now, with the presence of this tremendous and frightening prince, everything has returned to its first principles. And the terror of his severe and sudden justice is so great and so powerful and efficient is the arm of his justice (which touches all orders, without respect of anyone), that though they stand as subjects, to their infinite grief and pain, they stand however, in peace and in quiet. No longer does one hear of disorders and perturbations among them, the Lord God having salvaged from so many detestable evils this one good: each stands securely in his state, though each stands in obedience.  

\[^{13}\text{in si tenera eta afflatu divino in expectato et senza alchuno humano obstaculo promossa et insignita al supr emo grado del principato di questa sua Citta et Stato.}^{13}\]

\[^{13}\text{Vincenzo Fedeli, Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato, Volume Terzo, a cura di Arnaldo Segarizzi (Bari: Gius. Laterza et Figli, 1916), 129. “il signore Iddio permise che fossero sottomessi ad un pren cipe solo: il che finalmente è ritornato in beneficio di tutti; perché ora, con la presenza}\]
Despite all, God’s providential care could not be denied Cosimo. Later in his speech, Fedeli continued in the same vein. “I have wanted to say that this election was made by the divine will alone because neither the people, nor the state, nor Caesar wanted him.”

In this argument, Fedeli started from the exact opposite presuppositions as Cosimo’s own mythmakers, for they assumed, as we will show, that Cosimo had the full support of the Florentine Republic and that his election was freely made. Nevertheless, the end result was the same; whatever the circumstances, Cosimo’s ascendancy had proceeded according to divine plan. Fedeli had no interest in legitimizing Cosimo to his own senate or perpetuating the myth of Cosimo’s free election, but he found Cosimo’s divine right claims devilishly difficult to resist, ensnared as they were in inescapable habits of thought.

As least one native Florentine document suggests that even republicans found it difficult to avoid glimpsing God’s hand in Cosimo’s election. One anonymous diarist, whose sentiments reveal him to be both a Savonarolan and a republican, certainly had his own choice words for Medicean tyranny. Nevertheless, like most Florentines, he instinctively sought God’s will in both political and natural events. Thus, he simply could not escape casting Cosimo’s election in terms of providential right. For instance,

del tremendo prencipe e spaventevole, tutte le cose sono tornate a’ suoi primi principi. E tanto è il terore delle severe e subite esecuzioni e tanto è potente ed esecutivo il braccio della sua giustizia (che tocca tutti gli ordini, senza rispetto di persona alcuna), che, se bene stanno soggetti con infinito rammarico e cordoglio, stanno però in pace ed in quiete, né più si sente disordine né pertubazione alcuna fra loro, avendo il signor Iddio cavato da tanti detestandi mali questo bene: che ciascuno sta sicurissimo nello stato suo, purché stia ne’ termini dell’obbedienza.”

14 Ibid, 135. “Il che ho voluto dire, ché questa elezione par fusse fatta per sola volontá divina, perché poi né al popolo, né al Stato, né a Cesare piacque.”

15 Marucelli, Cronaca Fiorentina, a cura di Enrico Coppi (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2000), vi.
he not only noted that the men who elected Cosimo must have been “inspired by God,” but he claimed that God’s providence extended even to the two men who discovered the dead Alessandro’s body. “God,” he scribbled in his diary, “who is a great lover of our city, wanted that they not raise tumults; rather, inspired by God, they went quietly to Cardinal Cybo.” The author may have thought that Cosimo was a tyrant, but at least he was the tyrant that God wanted for Florence.

Let us take one more example of the grudging acceptance that Cosimo’s reign garnered from the non-ideologically committed. This one comes from the quill of a Sienese Dominican, Ambrosio Polito, who shared little more with the new duke than a fiercely anti-Savonarolan grudge. In a tract in which our author attacked Savonarolan doctrine with a fury that only a disillusioned former partisan could drum up, Polito criticized Savonarola’s proposition that a popular state was necessary in Florence. This was not an attack on Savonarola’s politics; the Sienese Polito accounted himself an enthusiast of no particular political ideology. This was a Dominican attacking another Dominican’s logic, and as such, Polito took issue with Savonarola’s claim that a popular state in Florence was necessary because the people did not want an oligarchy. Polito countered that if the friar was fair, he might as well argue that a popular state was unworkable because the oligarchs did not favor it, and thus the rein should be given to a prince. Moreover:

One sees that in the end, this is what was agreed upon, and God has favored it. Though I do not want, however, that anyone repute me a partisan of any

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16 Cronaca Fiorentina, 5.
17 Cronaca Fiorentina, 3. “Volse Iddio, amatore della nostra città, che questi non levassero romore, anzi inspirati da Dio andorno pianamente al cardinal Cybo.”
state...that state will always be pleasing to me, whether in Florence, or any other city, which will be just and will do justice.  

Indeed, Polito was no partisan of Cosimo either. He did not need to be; his line was perfectly Augustinian and could have been applied to any state in any age. Indeed, divine right knew no partisanship either; it was simply the expression of inescapable assumptions.

Indeed, divine right was not just for propaganda; it was often uttered off-handedly and sometimes found in the mouths of ambivalent or hostile non-partisans. This fact suggests that the entire program was at least as much tied to the long standing habit of providentialist thought as to cynical projections of political power. Such rhetoric was the natural and rather inescapable consequence of a Christian humanist thought that saw, not just political events, but rather all of life's events as the work of a providential, all-powerful, and all-seeing divinity.

Providential Governance: A Staple of Christian Humanism

But was the providential lens still the preferred mode of viewing reality in the Renaissance? The affirmation will take some proving since it flies in the face of previous claims. For instance, Burckhardt thought that the religious apathy of Renaissance humanism and the corruption in the established church had already overturned the medieval providentialist worldview, exchanging in its turn a resurrected fatalism drawn from pagan wisdom.  

Did humanism mean the liquidation of providential history, or...  

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18 Ambrosio Catarino Polito, Discorso del Reverendo P. Frate Ambrosio Catharino Polito, Vescovo di Minori. Contra la Dottrina et le Profetie di Fra Girolamo Savonarola (Vinegia: Ferrarj, 1548), 44r. “Et vedi che alla fine à questo si sono poi accordati, et Iddio l’ha favorito. Benche non voglio però, che niuno mi reputi partigiano di stato alcuno... piacerami sempre quello stato, ò in Fiorenza, ò in altra Città, il quale sarà giusto et farà giustitia.” Bold type is mine.

19 Burckhardt, 481-482.

20 This point of view has been put forth more recently by Ianitzi, 1-3.
did Italy’s most important humanists staunchly refuse to live in any but Augustine’s world? Indeed, at least in Florence, providence was very much alive. The passage of time only served to choke Burckhardt’s putative fatalism out of existence entirely since Counter-Reformation ideology obviously could make no place for any anthropology that excluded human freedom.

One of the ways that Florentine humanists pledged their allegiance to providentialism was in their preference for Plato. Indeed, Plato’s view of causation could be reconciled to the Christian doctrine of providence more easily than any other ancient philosophy. The Stoics had imagined fate as an inexorable chain of causation; and thus, humans possessed little ability to grab the reins of destiny away from the impassive influence of the stars. The Epicureans had raised a kind of blind materialism to the imperium of the universe, binding man in the inextricable chains of his own pleasures. Plato, on the other hand, had exiled the idea of fortune from philosophic discourse altogether since trusting to the naked power of chance would have been a crime against belief in divine order. According to Plato, the superior man threw off the chains of the body and lived according to the spirit. Or so claimed his Renaissance interpreters.21

Indeed, Florentine Christian humanists were not the first to slip a Christian hand into a Platonic glove. The most authoritative Platonist in Cosimo’s Tuscany almost certainly had the Augustinian lens in mind when he called Plato in to defend the Christian doctrine of providential care.22 It didn’t hurt that he could round his discussion with a

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22 Augustine of Hippo, The City of God, an abridged version from the translation by Gerald G. Walsh, Demetrius B. Zema, Grace Monahan, and Daniel Honan. With a Condensation of the original
couple of pithy paraphrases from Holy Writ, such as, “God has diligent providence over us, so that even the hairs on our head are known to him, nor will one hair fall to the earth apart from the will of the celestial father.”

Moreover, though Plato was the obvious champion to defend that sort of Christian rhetoric, Aristotle’s thought could be contorted into the Christian viewpoint as well. Whereas Aristotle had absolutely upheld the doctrine of fortune, he nevertheless defined its more problematic elements out of existence, concurrently keeping will as an essential aspect of human existence. Thus, Florentine Academician and Knight of San Stefano Lelio Bonsi could make Augustine and Aristotle both right: the former with regards to objective reality and the latter with regards to subjective reality. Fortune did exist, as Aristotle said, but only insofar as the whole question was considered from the subjective weakness of human vision. Only divine eyes could see the beauty in the divine order:

The sentence of the sacred theologians is without a doubt more true and more certain than all the others, as it is briefer and easier, since theologians, taking away all the things of chance and fortune, reducing all the effects of all the causes in the power of God and in divine providence, in the manner that, though when one considers the effects from our point of view, and in their particular reasons, it seems that one can call them based on fortune and chance; however, considering them from the point of view of God, and in their universal causes, one sees manifestly that they proceed with great order and from his infinite wisdom. And we know that God not only has cognition but also the care of all things, not only celestial and eternal things, but worldly and corruptible things. I do not say universal according to the species, but even according to particulars and even to the individual...so that not a leaf moves without his knowledge or will.
Aristotle, then, could also be salvaged for a providential worldview as well, if only on the grounds of some proto-phenomenology.

With the most authoritative church fathers and two great Greek philosophers on their side, Florentine Christian Humanists went on confidently expounding the doctrine of providential care with only few exceptions. Following very closely in the wake left by Coluccio Salutati nearly one hundred years earlier, Cosimo’s protomedico explained away fate thus: “By the word fate, Tuscans mean the absolute and free will of the best and most great God and the providence that he has of all the universe.” Baldini was not alone; the humanist Gualandi dedicated a whole volume to shattering the idea that worldly events were wrought by the blind wheel of the goddess Fortuna, while Vincenzo Borghini felt it necessary to note that happiness consists not on the stars but on the maker of the stars. Indeed, Florentine thinkers seemed readily to agree that an omniscient and all-powerful hand drove all the world’s events.

Moreover, if humanists on the high cultural level espoused Augustinian views, preachers took up the office of transmitting it to a wider audience. On this point, there was very little difference between the lettered elite who read Verino and Gualandi’s learned tracts and the simple churchgoer who listened as Lorenzo Davidico assured, "God

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27 See Trinkaus, 51-102.
29 Io. Bernardo Gualandus, De Vero Judicio ac providentia Dei, ac ipsius Gubernatione rerum Mundi, Apologia (Florentia: Torrentinus, 1562).
30 Cited in Cox Rearick, 287.
has providential care over each of us, as if he did not have any other care."\textsuperscript{31} Constant repetition hammered the point into general consciousness, as devotional authors and preachers explicitly reaffirmed Augustine’s worldview for their attentive flocks.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, this idea was not only a staple of high Christian humanism but likely filtered down until it penetrated the thinking of whole swaths of Florentines.

Moreover, Cosimo’s client-scholars almost always referenced God’s more mundane and general providence explicitly when constructing the duke’s divine right mystique. Given his profuse belief in the Christian and Platonic doctrines of providence, we can certainly believe that Verino was in earnest when he wrote at the funeral of Cosimo, "Divine Providence has given us Cosimo, not only for a most benign Lord, but also for a loving, just, and most prudent Father and most powerful defender of his holy church."\textsuperscript{33} Fabrini had also anchored his arguments for divine right firmly on the rock of the more wide-ranging category of divine providence as well, writing:

> Who, with pure heart, will believe the high and Immortal creator of every created thing, (as no one can deny) governs, rules, and orders all the universe, will also not doubt that (almost as one of his own members) he disposes and orders each republic to that government and order of living from time to time that he knows sufficient to maintain it.\textsuperscript{34}

At Cosimo’s coronation ceremony, Salviati made the same claim, inserting his own opinion into the debate on fortune and providence by claiming that Cosimo was not only

\textsuperscript{31} Davidico, \textit{Trattato}, 28. “ha tanta providential sopra ciascuno di noi, come se altra cura non havesse.”

\textsuperscript{32} In addition to the other examples cited in this chapter, see Strozzi, 44. Lapini, \textit{Esposizione} 3; Visdomini, 29; Seripando, 10r.

\textsuperscript{33} Vieri, \textit{Orazione}, 2r. “la Divina Providenza, non solo per Signore begnissimo ci haveva dato, ma ancora per amorevole, giusto, e prudentissimo Padre, e difensore potentissimo nostro, e della sua Chiesa santa liberamente donato.”

\textsuperscript{34} Fabrini, 1r. “Chi con puro cuore, e perfetta fede crederra, che'l sommo, et immortal fattore di ciascheduna cosa creata...(come negar non si puo) governi, regga, e disponga tutto l'universo, non dubitera ancora che (quasi come sue membra) non disponga a'l bene, et ordini à ciascheduna rep. che egli ama, quel governo, et ordine di vivere di tempo in tempo, che conosce sufficiente à mantenerla,”
legitimate but sacrosanct, writing, “the fortune of this prince renders testimony of his virtue, and fortune is the minister of divine providence in his care over all terrestrial things.” Cosimo’s assumption of the throne was just an event, and he had a divine right to sit on it only because the same God who ruled over the daily round of all events ruled over the political world as well.

*Augustine’s Providentialism, Christian Resignation and Political Quietism*

Divine right was certainly grounded in providential thinking, but in Early Modern Florence, providentialism had more than one meaning, both for Christian politics and for life in general. Providence was not some monolithic intellectual structure riding on Augustine’s intellectual ascendancy; it was a fractured and tension-riddled hodgepodge of ideas drawn from different lineages. The Augustinian brand of providential thought posited an inscrutable God directing human events from behind the scenes, making the sun to shine on both the good and the wicked. The other, perhaps more pagan brand, posited a direct link between fortune and virtue; God sent scourges and disasters to the wicked, while raining blessings on the devout. The split in this providentialist thought was not an absolute split; even the most committed Augustinian admitted that God sometimes rewarded his servants in this life, while even the most committed material providentialist admitted the superiority of the life-to-come. However, differences in emphases there definitely were, and as divine right was so clearly a byproduct of assumptions about divine providence, there appeared two different and complementary

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35 Salviati, 9. “Di che la virtù argomento, la fortuna di questo Principe rende testimonianza, la qual Fortuna sopr’alla cura delle terrene cose sempre della Divina Providenza è ministra.” Others, like Betti and Giurgi, also used the language of providence to explain Cosimo’s divine right. Betti, unpaginated; and Tommaso Giurgi, *Orazione di Giugurta Tomasi Academico Travagliato da lui publicamente recitata nell’Academia il di nove di Gennaro.* (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXVII c. 16), 5v.
divine rights. The next two sections will examine the variant political implications of this split. This section will argue that Augustinian assumptions about providence led to Augustinian lessons on political obedience, for Augustine had asserted that even wicked princes were sent by God, and as all misfortunes, should be waited out with Christian patience. Thus, Christian political quietism grew quite naturally from the more familiar category of Christian resignation.

The coexistence of evil with a benevolent, all-powerful, and providential God raised the specter of theodicy in a powerful way, a fundamentally monotheistic problem that absorbed the energies of Renaissance Florentines just as it had absorbed the energies of centuries of Christian thinkers. In general, Augustinian scholars came to the master’s conclusion that evil was a result of man’s free will and that misfortunes were trials sent to test the virtue of honest men or scourges sent to raise men out of the dust of ephemeral existence. Misfortune was like the loving beating delivered by a father to his wayward child. As Augustine had so resoundingly written some thousand years before:

Truly, these temporal goods and ills, he wanted to be common (to both the just and the wicked), so that men would not seek greedily after the goods of this world, which are seen to be had even by the wicked, nor would they shamefully avoid the ills, which afflict the good as well.

On the level of high culture, the bishop of Hippo continued to be a key referent. Gualandi’s 1562 tract on providence was little more than an hundred page elaboration on these Augustinian ideas. God sends misfortune in order to call the unrepentant back to him, but in the end, when time and space have passed away, man will account his misfortune as benefit since it led him back to the divine fount of all grace. Gualandi echoed the sentiment noting, “the evils that happen in the universe are not caused by

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36 Gualandi, *De Iudicio*. 
God, but he uses them to conservation and well being of the universe.”

Lorenzo Strozzi was more specific, proffering four reasons why God should allow misfortune: to occasion merit, to correct sins, to work some miracle, or to perfect one in virtue. The proper response, as Strozzi spent the whole tract declaring, was not to rage against the night but to calmly resign oneself to God’s judgment in perfect Christian patience. At the duke’s own request, Strozzi forced his own sickly body to scribble down the last few pages of the manuscript, which he dutifully presented for the duke’s approval. Of course, he did not forget to throw in the appropriate flattery of the duke’s own practice of the patient virtue of resignation.

Here, Strozzi was on good footing with the patron, for Cosimo nurtured a healthy respect for his own heroic patience, a fact that he had repeatedly attempted to publicize. At least one of these publicizing projects bordered on overkill, as he commissioned no less than three translations of Christendom’s greatest exponent of resignation, the nemesis of Fortuna and her perpetually spinning wheel, Boethius. Of course, Cosimo got the dedication on all three.

There is nothing to suggest that Augustine and Boethius exceeded the intellectual ability of Florence’s exceptionally large pool of common literate men. Rather, those fathers’ ubiquitous presence in fifteenth-century notebooks suggests quite the opposite, as even non-humanists copied their favorite passages into a medium that they could keep close at hand. Moreover, these Christian ideals could even be propagated to the illiterate. Few mediums were as effective at it as the sacred play. Not only would many

37 Baldini Discorso 41-42. “et avvengono i mali in questo universo senza che Iddio ne sia cagione, anzi gli usa alla conservazione et al ben’esser dell’universo.”
38 Strozzi, Trattato, 56.
39 Ibid, 1.
40 Three translations were produced; one by Varchi, one by Domenichi, and one by Bartoli. Each bore dedications to Cosimo.
41 The notebooks, or zibaldone, were collections of handwritten passages copied down from favorite authors. See Kent, The Patron’s Oeuvre, 88.
Florentines have seen several *rapresentazioni*, quite a few would have acted in them as well. The themes of divine providence crept into several sacred plays but perhaps none so comprehensively as that which we shall now place under examination, the *Rapresentazione di Abataccio*, republished in Florence in 1547. The opening lines reveal the play’s intent:

O you who seek to know
The secret mind of God
Oft take good as woe
But judge with a vision flawed;
Because truth is hidden
You forget justice but
You will see today if you are intent
How we need to stand content.

The moral prematurely revealed, the play proceeded to make theological didacts out of its adolescent cast. The first actor to come on the scene is a merchant, dressed in the occupational garb quite familiar to all Florentines. This first player loses a sack full of money at a well, which is in course found by a second actor. Having found and kept the treasure, the second actor exits the stage. A third man arrives at the well just in time for the merchant to return and demand his money. When the wrongly accused third man fails to hand over money that he does not have, our merchant strikes him dead. Enter an old hermit who has observed the whole messy business. Disgusted that he has spent his whole life doing penance as the dupe of a God who would allow such injustice to flourish, he renounces his profession, his faith, and vows to give himself over to pleasure. On the way to his future debaucheries in Alexandria, he is met and accompanied by an

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43 Anonymous, *La Rappresentazione di Abataccio*, (BNCF, B.R. 179.1), 1r. “O Voi che siate vaghi di sapere; le occulte cose eserceti di Dio; et giudicate col falio vedere; et parvi quel che e bene tal volta rio; perche nascose son le cose vere; voi la giustitia mettet in oblio; voi vedrete oggi se voi state attenti; come alquì dobbiamo star contenti.”
angel disguised as a man. The hermit immediately takes this angel for a robber and villain, a conceit that is only confirmed when the angel steals a holy man’s prized vase and drowns the beloved son of a generous host. When they knock on the door of an abbey, the fat and greedy abbot refuses their request for shelter, at which the angel hands the greedy abbot the holy man’s vase. At this point, our hermit is sure that he is traveling with no mere bandit but rather with a demon in the flesh.

However, the angel now manifests his true being and illuminates the hermit’s dull vision, explaining the ultimate justice of all events. The merchant whose loss had occasioned the hermit’s crisis of faith was no honest banker but a thief who had lost nothing but ill-gotten loot. The second man, who found the bag, was a just and poor man. By giving the treasure over to him, chance had ensured that the money would see its way into the coffers of the poor. The man whose death at the well the hermit considered so unjust was actually in the habit of delivering occasional beatings to his own father, and his death at the well was little more than just retribution. Abataccio thus incorporated the ideal of earthly misfortune for earthly misdeeds. However, the play’s real message lay in showing God’s direction of man to final felicity. The holy man, whose prized vase had been stolen by the angel, had been entirely holy except in this one thing: his attachment to his precious vase, which robbed him of zeal in prayer and tied him down to earthly life. By stealing the thing, the angel removed the one stumbling block on the holy man’s path to heaven. Whereas the holy man had his vase for a stumbling block, the innkeeper had his son, and his charity had flagged lately as he began to hoard up his wealth as an inheritance for the beloved heir. Indeed, he loved the son too much, so much that he even went to the lengths of making illicit contracts in order to
secure the son’s future wealth. Finally, the angel claimed that he had only given the ill-
gotten vase to the abbot in order to speed him on his way to hell. However theologically
suspect this last bit may have been, the message was clear enough; the apparent triumph
of injustice is an illusion, as is the triumph of misfortune when viewed under the
teleological lens. High Augustinian theology produced for an illiterate mass.

But did the underlying message really penetrate minds? The evidence is too
scanty to really say for certain, but we do have some lines penned by an anonymous
chronicler suggesting the lesson did work. When one of Cosimo’s taxes on milling grain
occasioned a general muttering amongst the populace, this anti-Cosimian diarist wrote,
“There was great murmuring against the prince by everyone. Nonetheless, one needs to
accord oneself with the will of God who allows these things for some end, and thus it
follows that whoever wants to eat, needs to pay.”44 Indeed, it would be difficult to
believe that having soaked in the message from childbirth, Florentines would not at least
occasionally translate the social ideal of resignation into real political inaction, especially
when Cosimo’s propagandists so frequently reminded them of their Christian duty.

Moreover, it was pretty clear that Cosimo bought this ideal of Christian
resignation himself, for this was the pose he repeatedly struck when suffering the slings
and arrows of misfortune. When his beloved duchess took ill and died with malaria, he
wrote these deeply Boethian lines to his son Francesco:

Worldly actions are such that every day, according to the will of the great mover,
our imperfect bodies are moved now in pleasure and now in displeasure. But he

44 Cronaca Fiorentina, 147. “gran mormorazione del principe per tutto il mondo. Niente di meno,
bisogna accordarsi con la volontà di Dio che a qualche fine comporta simili cose, et così segue et chiunque
vuol mangiare bisogna che paghi,”
that cannot err disposes of us and our life and death in such a way that is pleasing to his great goodness. And we must always think that it be for our benefit.\textsuperscript{45}

Giving advice to his son he wrote:

Be consoled thus, and thank God for everything that is his will; serve him and pray to him that he directs you to conform to his will and gives you consolation in all these events, as only he is able to do. Nor have I found any consolation in these cases than that which God has given me.\textsuperscript{46}

This posturing, and it seems that it was more than just posturing, was not isolated to this incident; such an attitude was Cosimo’s usual response to misfortune and the advice that he repeatedly sent out to friends on the deaths of their own loved ones.\textsuperscript{47} These deeply Augustinian lines came to Cosimo straight out of contemporary religious literature; for instance, the tract Strozzi sent dedicated to Cosimo exhorted the reader not to complain when relatives die since God moves us, now in pleasure, now in displeasure. “It is a stupid thing to go against the will of God, knowing that he elects the best time for us to die,” wrote Strozzi; rather, whoever murmurs against their misfortune, “denies God’s providence and goodness.”\textsuperscript{48} Strozzi may have just as well been turning Augustine into a textbook for Christian stoicism.

Indeed, this everyday duty of patient suffering and heroic trust was doubly important since it underwrote the political implications of Augustinian providentialism:

\textsuperscript{45} Cosimo I, Lettere, 183. “L’attione mondane son tali che ogni giorno, secondo che è la volontà del gran motore, si muovono hor in piacere et hora in dispiacere di noi altri corpi imperfecti. Ma egli, che non può errare, dispone di noi et della vita et della morte in quel modo che all sua gran bontà piace. Et sempre debbiamo pensare che sia a beneficio nostro.”

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 190. “Consolati adunque et ringratia Dio di ogni suo voler, servilo et pregalo che ti indirizzi conforme al voler suo, et che ti dia consolatione di questi successi, si come egli solo lo può fare. Nè io certo ho trovato in questi casi altra consolatione che quella che Dio m’ha data.”

\textsuperscript{47} On the death of his daughter, the duchess of Ferrara, see ASFi, Med. 213 c. 50r (May 4, 1561); on the death of his son Piero see ASFi, Med.10 c. 167r-168r (June 8, 1547); on the death of Cardinal Savello’s father ASFi, Med. 194 c. 76r-76v (July 19, 1551); on the death of Cardinal Santiquattro ASFi, Med. 185 c. 156v-157r (October 23, 1544); and to Agnolo Niccolini on the occasion of the death of that minister’s son ASFi, Med. 196 c. 16v (November 17, 1551).

\textsuperscript{48} Strozzi, 21r. “per cio che stolta cosa è constrastare alla volontà di Dio, sappiando egli massimamente eleggere il tempo meglio per noi.”

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.,14r. “chi ne mormora pare che nieghi la providenza et bonta sua.”
namely, political quietism. Princes should be good, but the wicked prince was like any sort of misfortune, whether that be the loss of a child, an earthquake, or some less dramatic ill. And Cosimo’s literati were not loath to attach the political message directly to the more mundane religious one. Indeed, Cosimo himself posed as the model. When Cosimo ostensibly demonstrated his usual cold resignation on the death of his mother, Varchi’s funeral oration drew out the implications for his subjects:

> Among the sweetness of life, it is very true that good subjects need to content themselves and happily receive all that which is pleasing to the prince and their lords, just as good princes and lords, of which our prince is undoubtedly one, need to receive happily everything that is pleasing to God.⁵⁰

Cosimo’s resignation to his misfortune at the hands of God was here made a lesson in political quietism. Deity mimesis was stretched to its logical conclusion, but only insofar as it resonated with an ideal already cherished in Florentine life.

> Indeed, the ideal of political quietism was always made with reference to God’s more mundane governance over all misfortune. Fabrini’s work tied the strings of Christian resignation and political quietism up nicely:

> How true is this opinion of so many poets, briefly I will prove to you. God is most wise; he knows future things, like the present and the past. And what's more, he is most just and unchangeable, and all the things that are, are by his will. If thus, all the things are by his will, and he is just and wise and unchangeable and having always before his eyes the future, as if it were the present or the past, it follows that what he orders to happen from time to time cannot be otherwise than what he has ordered, nor could it be better, neither could it be changed, whether by others or by himself, because if others changed it, it would be more from God than from them, and if he changed it, he would be mutable and thus, not just, or at least not wise, not just because if he had ordered things justly, justice would be

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⁵⁰ Benedetto Varchi, *Orazione Funebre per Maria Salviati* (BNCF, Fondo Nazionale II, IV, 1, 8), 120v. “fra le dolcezze sue, è di vero sicome, i buon sudditi si devono contentare et ricevere lietamente, tutto quello che piace à i principi, et Signori loro, così i signori e principi buoni, i quali senza alcun dubbio è V.E. debbono riscievere lietamente et contentarsi di tutto quello, che a Diò piace.”
obtained, and not wise, because if he changed them himself because he had not ordered them well, it would be a sign that he had not seen correctly.  

Fabrini’s characteristically mind-bending prose was nothing more than a convoluted way of saying that the rule of divine right and political quietism was a specific case of a more general providence and Christian resignation. Another Medici courtier, Cosimo’s fawning polymath ambassador to Venice Cosimo Bartoli, one of the century’s most enthusiastic Platonists and anti-Machiavellians as well as the architect of Cosimo’s takeover of the Academia Fiorentina, wrote that without the will of God, “no Prince has their supreme power,” and that all citizens were therefore called to conform themselves to God’s will by “living quietly.” Finally, Gelli used this conceptual language to exhort Cosimo to punish those malefactors who had rebelled against him, and thus “against the will of God.” Thus, our first category of divine right quickly became little more than the de facto legitimization of any status quo and the duty of the Christian citizen to suffer political woes as he should suffer any misfortune.

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51 Fabrini, 7r. “Quanto sia vera tale oppenione di tanto poeta, brevemente ve lo voglio provare. Iddio è savissimo, conosce le cose future, come le presenti, e passate; di piu giustissimo, e immutabile; e tutte le cose, che sono, sono per volontà sua, Se dunque tutte le cose seno per sua volontà, et egli giusto, et savio, et immutabile, et havendo sempre avanti gli occhi il futuro, come il presente, e passato, ne seguita, che ancora quello, che egli ordina, che venga di tempo in tempo, non possa esser altramente, che egli ha ordinato, ne stare meglio, ne si possa mutare, ne da altri, ne da lui stesso; perche se altri lo potesse mutare, sarebbe da piu di Dio, e se egli lo mutasse, sarebbe mutabile, et di piu non giusto, o almeno non savio. non giusto; perche, se egli l'havesse ordinato giustamente, lo caverebbe di quella giustitia, non savio, perche, se egli lo rimutasse per non l'havere ordinato bene, sarebbe segno, che malamente egli havesse veduto.”

52 Bartoli, Discorsi, 321. “Imparino adunque i Principi a governare prudentemente per via della virtù della bontà et della clementia non deviano però dall’justizia, i loro sudditi; piuttosto che per la via dell’vizij della malignitá o crudeltá; et i Privati a viver quieti alla volontá di dio, senza il quale non hanno i Principi le supreme potestá loro.”

53 Bartoli’s role in Cosimo’s takeover of the Academy see Plaisance, 80-86.

Augustine provided a clear, indisputable, and easy legitimation of Cosimo’s principate, and no doubt, he was seized upon with vigor. Augustine had his limits, however. Many, if not most, early moderns preferred a God whose will was slightly less inscrutable, a God who was a little less patient in his justice. Nor was every one ready to swear fealty to any tyrant who had waded to his throne through rivers of bloodshed. If God sent the prince to do justice to a crooked and degenerate race, then could he not also send an avenging rebel to enact his justice against a tyrant? Tyrannicide was still a concept in play, and the age, both Italian and European, was a fruitful era in civil and religious disobedience.\textsuperscript{55} Moreover, Christianity’s explosively revolutionary streak was rarely so strong as in Florence, whose popular and learned culture celebrated both the martyrs and tyrannicides of antiquity with equal approval. Thus, simply appealing to the divine will was not enough. A prince, and especially a new prince, needed to demonstrate some concrete sign of divine favor. This chapter will first explain the underlying conceits of this material providentialism and then show how Cosimo’s propaganda tapped into it.

Any Florentine seeking support for material providentialism need not cast about too far. The idea had an illustrious pedigree, which, in all essentials, predated Christianity. Germans and Celts alike had blamed natural disaster on the gods and were quick to make their king their scapegoat in times of economic scarcity.\textsuperscript{56} The ideal had


\textsuperscript{56} The idea that the king’s relationship with the divinity was essential to the food supply is the famous thesis of the early anthropologists James Frazer. See the reprinted \textit{The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion} (London: Oxford University Press, 1994). Though discredited in some fields, it has
such legs that even in 1527 Cosimo’s contemporary King Gustavus Vasa of Sweden had
noted that his population blamed him personally for the kingdom’s bad weather,
exasperatedly remarking, “It is as if they did not realize that I am a human being, and no
god.” The idea had no less illustrious of a Greek and Roman pedigree, for Renaissance
historians were quite aware that both those societies had attributed material blessing to
the disposition of the heavens.

Thus, the pagan led neatly into the astrological. And the astrological forged an
essential link between transcendent monotheism and material providentialism. In the
eyearly modern schema, God was linked to nature as creator, sustainer, and first mover in a
great chain of causation. Link by link, the power of God descended from his seat above
the stars down to natural world below. First, the prime mover communicated his power
to the intelligences that ruled over the celestial heavens. The intelligences then moved
the stars themselves. The stars themselves generated intelligences that linked to the
elements of the world, and the elements directed natural events here on earth. Causation, as Savonarola explained, was like an onion with layers enveloped within
layers. Cosimo’s protomedico argued that this chain of causation was identical to what
man commonly called fate. This schema salvaged fate as a concept by putting God at the
top of the pyramid and excluding man’s will wholly from fate’s dominion. In that case,

57 Cited in Rory McTurk, “Sacral Kingship in Ancient Scandanavia: a review of some recent
literature,” Saga-Book: Viking Society for Northern Research 19 (1975), 139. “If they get no rain, they
blame me; if they get no sunshine, the do likewise. If hard times befall them—whether hunger, or
pestilence, or whatever it may be—I always have to take the blame for it. It is as if they did not realize that
I am a human being, and no god.”
59 Savonarola, Prediche, 1.
the thing was really nothing else than a name for nature, and defined that way, it was both
an ancient and ill-conceived pseudo-science as well as a strikingly modern view of
nature’s mechanistic processes. Moreover, it legitimated searching for God’s providence
in the signs of nature, since the Almighty set the whole works in motion and ruled over
its operations. Thus, the fundamental tenets of this sophisticated worldview reinforced
what many Florentines almost instinctively believed: lightning strikes, comets,
earthquakes, good harvests, bad harvests, and all other naturally occurring events were
auguries sent by God to warn, to chastise, or to admonish.

Astrology and paganism were not the only streams of thought that drew links
between the ruler’s conduct and the favor of heaven. Renaissance thinkers found plenty
of precedents in Christian thought as well. One of the earliest and most read Christian
historians, Eusebius of Caesarea, had altogether too gleefully sought God’s providence in
the excruciating deaths meted out to the emperors who had persecuted the early church, so
inaugurating the long line of Christian historians that attributed material disaster
directly to sin. And so Renaissance Christian thinkers not only frightened audiences with
examples drawn from the Greek, Roman, and other pagan worldviews, but also with the
same type of historiography that medieval thinkers had used to educate on providence, as
well as the unmistakably similar type of providentialism chronicled in the Old Testament.
As with so many other things in Florentine religious life, Savonarola had set the tone for
this since the old firebrand had drawn his material heavily out of the Old Testament,
ever hesitating to draw lines directly between those books and contemporary political

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events. Indeed, Savonarola spent most of his final years using the Old Testament to threaten imminent scourging on the city’s collective heads.⁶¹

The master’s style persisted. Citing a string of Old Testament examples, Visdomini explained that the immovable and benevolent God of the philosophers nevertheless strikes like the jealous God of the Old Testament because he “cannot tolerate (sins) with his honor, though it is true, that unhappily and against his every intention (speaking humanly), he is forced to show his justice and vendetta.”⁶² Towards the beginning of the century, the Savonarolan Dolciati reminded his audience that Saul’s impious persecution of David had earned him an inglorious death in the field against the Philistines.⁶³ Of course, the most pertinent Old Testament exemplar was the city of Sodom, whose toponymic vice had ignited the immediate disaster of fire and brimstone. Sixteenth-century preachers did not shrink from threatening Italy with the same fate.⁶⁴

It is hard to say just when church and state got a handle on this dangerous fashion of fiery and apocalyptical preaching, but Florentines of the mid-century had been born and bread on such sermons, and old habits died hard.⁶⁵ For instance, Paradisio Mazzinghi, a former republican reading in Cosimo’s Pisan University,⁶⁶ could not refrain from the old style:

The Great and Living God, Our Lord, has in his infallible vision, put in such order from the beginning of the world until today, as has been observed, so that when

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⁶¹ Savonarola, Prediche, 7r-8r.
⁶² Visdomini, part two, 34v. “Non può con honor suo piu tolerar Iddio, Vero è, che mal volentieri et contra ogni sua intintione (parlando all’humana...), pur è forza mostrar anco quanto può la giustitia, e la vendetta.”
⁶³ Dolciati, 38r.
⁶⁴ Anonymous, Prediche, 80r.
⁶⁶ See ASFi, MS. 7 c. 144r-144v (October 26, 1542).
he desires some change or innovations, he gives us mortals some sign beforehand, permitting the people to dispose themselves to penitence.  

God, indeed, sent signs, and astrology told Florentines right where to look for them: up.

Running through the gamut of examples from the Old Testament and Christian history, Mazzinghi ended on a note of terror, the well-worn example of Jerusalem’s destruction and the strange astronomical phenomena that reportedly preceded it:

When God wanted to destroy and annihilate the royal city of Jerusalem by the means of Titus and Vespasian, he wanted to provoke them to penitence with great terror and celestial signs. As Josephus, the author of *de Bello Judaica*, and Eusebius the historian write: a star in the form of a knife hung over the city for one year, and the comets flames were seen to burn, the moon was eclipsed for twelve nights continually, the gates of the temple, though stopped with a great weight, were opened in the middle of the night. On the 21st day of May, at dawn, Chariots of armed men were seen to combat, and many other signs were sent that I cannot relate. After this there was great mortality and hunger, and pestilence and agony, so that the city was totally eradicated.

It was in passages like these that Renaissance astrology and Christian history could prop up old medieval views of history.

Sermons were not the only way that material providentialism was infused into more general consciousness—if it even needed infusion—the sacred play did the trick as well. Concerned as it was with the martyrs of antiquity, the Florentine religious stage quickly familiarized the sight of the Roman tyrant whose persecution of Christians provoked immediate vengeance upon himself and his people. Sant’Agata’s merciless foe...
Quintilian represents the type well. In the midst of Agatha’s torture, the ingeniously complicated stage machinery that Florentines constructed with relish was called upon to produce an earthquake, a sign that the Roman populace immediately recognized as God’s judgment on Quintilian. Massing against the governor, they uttered these imprecations:

O Quintilian, what do you think this has meant
If not that you are wrong to give Agatha such torment
And each of us feels the punishment
And are disturbed and languish malcontent
If you do not leave off, heeding the sign that is sent
All your senses will have cause to lament
For you are the reason this earthquake draws near
And holds all the people in the grip of fear.⁶⁹

Indeed, the tyrant split on the rock of the fearless martyr thereby made its gruesome way into general consciousness. Augustine’s message of eternal felicity and misery is not left out here; the demons did drag his soul to everlasting torment after all. However, the terrifying consequences of Quintilian’s actions most pointedly included material disaster as well. If the erudite conception of the heavenly rotations was too advanced for the common man, then this more simplified medium served to underscore the same message.

The ideal of course swung the other way; if impiety caused misfortune, then only virtue could assure God’s material blessings.⁷⁰ How then, did Cosimo set this axiom to work for his own propaganda? If the ruler’s virtue secured the good will of God, and the good will of God secured the city’s fortune, then Cosimo would give his people both virtue and fortune. This axiom of providentialism is the context lurking close behind Cosimo’s favorite impresa, FORTUNA SEQUESTER VIRTU; that is, fortune follows on

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⁶⁹ Anonymous, *La Rappresentazione di Santa Agata* (BNCF, B.R. 179, 9), 68 r. “O Quintiano non vegian chiaramente; c’ha torto ai dato a Agata tormenti; et ciasucno di noi si ne dolente; et siane assai turbati et malcontenti; se non ti vai condio subitamente; sareno i sensi tua star dolenti; a tua cagion tanti tremuoti vengono; et tutto el popolo in paura tengono.”

virtue. Cosimo slapped these lines on artwork and decorations whenever occasion called for such sentiment.\textsuperscript{71} On one occasion, the message of material providence that the impresa contained was proclaimed in shade of his own palace by one of Florence’s most important boy confraternities, which staged a triumph of David outside the Palazzo Signoria on the antivigil of the Feast of John the Baptist. Of all Old Testament exemplars, none was more often or more emotively used to underscore the links between piety and fortune than David. And if the play’s contemporary political message was lost in the flair of the drama, it would have been hard to ignore the closing lines, uttered while Cosimo watching approvingly above from the comforts of his own chambers:

Now You, illustrious and honored Prince  
By whose great valor, beautiful Florence  
Forgetting its past ills  
Happy and joyful, remains in peace  
Follow then, the style begun  
For whoever fears God first  
Turning his eyes to him, and honoring his laws  
As do you, glorious and happy,  
To a felicitous end, will be lead all undertakings\textsuperscript{72}

Events like this probably caught the widest audiences, but Cosimo’s literati expounded on the terse impresa in several ways. G.B. Adriani, one of Cosimo’s seemingly endless supply of republicans become courtiers,\textsuperscript{73} delivered his judgment on Cosimo’s virtue up to the God of battles, claiming that, “having faith in God and in his clear conscience,

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{71} Cox Rearick, 148-149.  
\textsuperscript{72} Cited in Cronaca Fiorentina, 108. “Hor Voi, Principe illustre et honorato; per il cui gran valor Firenze bella; tutti obliando e suoi passati danni; felice et lieta hor si posa in pace; seguite pure il cominciato stile; perché chi teme primeramente Iddio; rivolta gl’occhi e le sue leggi honorata; come voi fate, glorioso e lieto; felice fine conduce sempre ogni sua impresa.”  
\textsuperscript{73} Adriani was a reader in rhetoric in Pisa, and unlike Varchi, sought the prince’s favor rather than the other way around. See Rudolf von Albertini, Firenze dalla repubblica al principato: Storia e coscienza politica (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1970), 346-350.
\end{quotation}
[Cosimo] always got free of every danger and conquered his enemies often."\textsuperscript{74} The luck that Cosimo lived by might even smile on his subordinates; the poet Symeoni assured the secretary Concini that he need not:

\begin{quote}
Fear death, difficulty or pain.
Because the eternal and Greatest God
Favors the just undertakings of all good Lords.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

Salviati made much the same point when he orated, “Cosimo’s fortune bears witness to the fact that he was not only legitimate but sacrosanct.”\textsuperscript{76} Late in the reign Francesco Verino came to the point with all of this, arguing that subjects would obey religious lords simply because they know that, “their prince is with piety conjoined with the Lord who is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, from whom all aid comes to us in dangerous times, and every good in this present life.”\textsuperscript{77} Verino drove home the overall point: the devout prince should be obeyed because God would rain material blessings on the devout prince’s people. Indeed, the most authoritative Christian voices had been arguing for centuries that all fortune was really an illusion and better called the providence of God. Florentine humanists had been repeating that in earnest for almost two hundred years. Little wonder that when Cosimo chalked up his success to divine favor, few stood to dispute him on the point.

Moreover, it is fairly clear that Cosimo was not just letting his literati run wild with claims to which he lent no credence. Indeed, the duke could no more easily escape

\textsuperscript{74} Adriani, “Orazione Funebre,” 156. “avendo egli fidanza in Dio e nella buona conscienza sua, si sbrigò sempre da ogni pericolo, vinse spesso i nimici.”
\textsuperscript{75} Gabrielle Symeoni, \textit{Le III Parte del Campo de Primi Studii} (Venegia : per Comino da Trino di Monferrato, 1546), 6v. “Non temer già di morte, affanno, o duole; Ch’à giusta impresa d’ogni buon Signore; favorisce l'eterno et sommo Dio.”
\textsuperscript{76} Salviati, 9. “mà sacrosanto.” And “la fortuna di questo Principe rende testimonianza.”
\textsuperscript{77} Vieri, \textit{Breve Compendio}, 5v. “che il Lor Principe è, con la pietà congiunto, con quel Signore che è Signore de’ Signori: e Re de’ Re, e dal quale ci viene ogni aiuto, ne’ pericolosi casi, et ogni bene, in questa presente vita.”
the habit of providential thought than any of his contemporaries. In private, as well as public discourse, he was fully assured that, “God had given him the victory in the battle of Scannagallo.”

On the victory of Montemurlo, he asked one of his rectors to “seize that happiness and comfort that we do here in Florence and render most devout thanks to the divine bounty from which all graces and gifts proceed.” Indeed, Cosimo was as tuned into the signs of fortune as any; when he wanted to convince the pope to cough up some scudi for the emperor’s coming war with the League of Schmalkald, he pointedly instructed his ambassador to tell the pope, “The emperor has found an almost incredible amount of gold and silver in the Indies, (Mexico and Peru) whence one knows that God wants to help him, and thus, you should help him too.”

Indeed, prevailing beliefs often emphasized the idea that fortune smiled on God’s dearest friends. Cosimo’s client scholars thus had only one trick to make, that is, to make Cosimo appear as God’s dearest friend. Mario Matasilani tried just this by arguing that the bizarre coincidences between Augustus and Cosimo’s life were “Signs truly sent from God,” so that the people of Tuscany might be sure that Cosimo’s ascension had happened by the will of God. No sign was so repeatedly utilized as Cosimo’s Capricorn ascendant, represented wherever appropriate places could be found for it. According the wisdom of Cosimo’s circle, the heavens had arranged the ascendant for one purpose: to link Cosimo to his Roman type, Augustus, who had sported a similar horoscope. The

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78 ASFi, Med. 204 c. 21v (August 9, 1554). “Victoria che Dio N.S. ci ha dato,”
79 ASFi, Med. 182 c. 79v-80r (August 1, 1537). “ne pigliate quel contento et conforto faciamo noi di qua col renderne devotissime gratie alla bonta divina dalla quale procede ogni gratia et dono.”
80 ASFi, Med. 23 c. 276r-279r (December 10, 1552). “dal indi ne son venuti una quantita quasi incredibile, onde si conosce che Dio vuole aiutarlo et percio sua sta. lo deve fare ancor essa.”
81 Matasilani, 2-13. “Segni veramente mandati da DIO.”
82 The Capricorn was associated with imperial imagery because it was the zodiacal sign of both Augustus and Charles V. See Josephine von Hennenberg, "Two Renaissance Cassoni for Cosimo I de' Medici in the Victoria and Albert Museum," Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen institutes in Florenz 35 (1991). For the Capricorn motif at the Villa Castello see Forster, 91.
idea was to represent Cosimo’s ascent as the final triumph of that traditional Hesodian
and Virgilian emblem that the Medici had been cultivating for decades, the return of the
golden age.\textsuperscript{83} Cosimo would restore Tuscan peace and glory just as Augustus had done
for Rome. Matasilani summed up the sentiment, writing, “as Augustus was sent to Rome
‘by the disposition of heaven’ in order to quell the discord of civil war, so God sent
Cosimo to Florence in order to quell the turbulence of that city’s factional politics.\textsuperscript{84} And
this was no mere turn of phrase, Matasilani was truly convinced, as most other educated
men of the day were, that God had made ‘heavenly bodies his “means” to communicate
with man.\textsuperscript{85}

Indeed, early moderns gazed at a vastly different sky than we do today. Their
heavens were far more meddlesome, the divinely ordained influxes of the stars constantly
intervening in everyday affairs. God sat atop the heavens, and the heavens sat atop the
movements of nature. This made it far easier for early moderns to find connections
between the moral and physical universe, and in case Florentines needed any
encouragement, preachers readily supplied it, repeatedly articulating the perceived
connection between Christian virtue and the state of the natural world. In this favored
metaphor, sin was a kind of winter of the soul; Christ, the sun of justice, was the
harbinger of springtime. As the Savonarolan devotee Angelo Bettini sermonized:\textsuperscript{86}

\begin{quote}
Thus is passed the winter, and the rains have left and gone away, and on our earth
have appeared flowers that signify the renovation of time, for in the rainy and
windy and cold season, nothing is well. But with his coming, Christ our God, the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{83} It had been a favorite motif of Leo X. See Charles Stinger, \textit{The Renaissance in Rome}
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 298. Indeed, the idea of the eternal spring at least goes
back in Florentine culture to Dante, who adorned the top of the Mountain of Purgatory with his garden
of earthly delights. See Dante, \textit{Purgatorio}, a verse translation by Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander
(Doubleday: New York, 2003), canti XXVII-XXXI,
\textsuperscript{84} Matasilani, 9r-9v.
\textsuperscript{85} Matasilani, 4-6.
\textsuperscript{86} On Bettini’s Savonarolanism, see Poliziotto, \textit{The Elect Nation}, 410.
Sun of Justice, has taken away that season, and as he nears he has begun to heat the earth of our hearts. He has renewed the season and brought back the florid spring in which all things begin to grow and the flowers give hope of subsequent fruits, whose odoriferous and flaming flowers show the renovation of old man, which are, in us, the fragrance and beauty of the celestial grace.  

Betti’s sermon may be read in an entirely metaphorical key, but other preachers did not draw so tidy a distinction between metaphor and reality. Mazzinghi orated:

I am subjected to the power of the devil, and I did not know your holy name, the clouds were tied up, with no rain, and the trees gave no fruit, and the flocks wandered and the fish went away from the sea...But now my Lord, I have known your holy name, and I have repented of the multitude of my sins, and I want to remain always in your grace. And I want always to obey your commandments, gratefully praying and beseeching that you give me your most holy love which is everlasting good; and that by your mercy I pray the you break the bouquet of clouds so that your rain may descend over the earth, the trees give their fruit, and the mothers give birth with ease and their children suckle at the breasts of their mothers.

The rest of this sermon strongly suggests that Mazzinghi incanted these lines in the midst of a local drought. Thus, the linkage between fecundity, grace, sin, and virtue was not always left safely in the abstract realm of spiritual metaphor.

Moreover, our scanty diary evidence suggests that this tendency to seek God’s will in the heavens, in personal fortune, and in nature was no chimera, unabsorbed by the

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87 Bettini 6r-7r. “cioe gia é passato l verno e la pioggia s’è partita e se ne andata et 6v nella nostra terra sono apparsi i fiori che significano la rinovazione del tempo il qual tempo del veno piovoso et freddo nel qual nessuno poteva adoperarsi ci ha pel suo advenimento tolto via il sol della iustitia Christo iddio nostro et col suo appropinquarsi et riscaldar la terra de nostri cuori ci ha rinovata la stagione et ridotta la florida primavera nella qual tutte le cose cominciono a germinare et li fiori ci danno speranza de subsequenti frutti i quali oderiferi et fiameggianti dimostrono la rinovatio del homo vecchio et sono in noi la fragarantia et il decoro della celeste gratia.”

88 Mazzinghi, 8v. “io sono sotoposto alla tua potentia del diavolo et non sapeva il tuo santissimo nome; alor legava le nube no lasciando pinguire, et gli arbori non davano illoro fructo et andava per le gregge delle pecore et incontinenti si dissertavano i pesci del mare legava che non potevano andare per illoro sentiere et tucto per mia lectitia. Ma ora signor mio, ò cognosciuto il tuo sancto nome et sono pentito della multitidue della mia peccati et nella gratia tua voglioio sempre per manere et tue comandamenti sempre voglio ubidire orando adimandando grate che tu me conceda il tuo sancitissimo amore el quale et sempiterno bene; et per la tua misericordia ti preso che tu rompa che garni delle nube siche discenda la piova sopra la terra, gli arbori dieno illoro fructo, et le femine pasturischono sansa alcuna macula et succiano ilfanculli ellacte delle lore madre.”
larger masses.\textsuperscript{89} We have only to consider this passage from the diary putatively ascribed to a certain unknown Marucelli.

On the 24\textsuperscript{th} of January 1543, around the 17\textsuperscript{th} hour, a great eclipse of the sun took place, which lasted an hour and a half, and there were many who stood in complete awe of it, because it was of the type in which you could almost not even see the man next to you, and in truth, I was one of those, because I did not know or think what this frightful thing could be, but then I thought only it was nothing else than a great sign, sent by the great God, so that we wretched Florentines convert ourselves to a new life because one sees and has seen many things in similar times, many greater signs have appeared in the heavens than these, especially in impudent and useless Italy, and all has happened according to the order of the great God, so that we be ready when the scourge comes.\textsuperscript{90}

Even those less ready to run for the confessional were nonetheless accustomed to seeing the heavens mirroring the political world. In his famous autobiography, the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini claimed to have seen a huge beam of fire lingering over the city on the night of Duke Alessandro’s death, an augury of the great political event.\textsuperscript{91}

And if Cellini saw auguries in the sky, he could just as easily find God’s will in the more mundane features of his own life. For instance, when a man who had quarreled with the sculptor’s father suffered a catastrophic fall, Cellini attributed it to the “the sheer mightiness of god.”\textsuperscript{92} When he somewhat impetuously ran into one of his many enemies’ houses, stabbing the unfortunate man through the doublet, he credited his escape from said house to the fact that, “sometimes God mercifully intervenes”\textsuperscript{93} And in his

\textsuperscript{89} For quattrocento examples see, Trexler, 347-354.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Cronaca Fiorentina}, 32. “Addì 24 di gennaio 1543 occorse a ore diciasette circa un grandissimo eclessi nel sole, il qual durò un’ora e mezzo del che molti furono che, per tale ecipse, stettero ammirati perché fu di tal sorte che quasi non si scorgeva un huomo da l’altro et io in verità fui uno di quelli, per non sapere et non pensare che cosa fussi questa così spaventosa, ma solo poi pensavo che altro non fussi che segni grandi mandati dal grande Iddio acciò che noi tutti scellerati ci riducessimo a nuova vita perché assai cose si vedeva et si veggono in simile età, da fare molti maggiore segni apparire nel cielo che questi, massime la sfacciata et inutile Italia, et tutto con ordine del magno Dio, acciò che siamo apparecchiatì quando verrà il flagello.”

\textsuperscript{91} Benvenuto Cellini, \textit{The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini}, translated by John Addington Symonds (Garden City: Garden City Publishing Co, 1927), 162.

\textsuperscript{92} Cellini, 18.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 29.
characteristically narcissistic braggadocio, he chalked up Pier Luigi Farnese’s death in battle to that prince’s personal unfairness to him, giving out this ominous warning, “Let then no prince, however great he be, laugh at God’s justice, in the way that many whom I know are doing, and who have cruelly maltreated me.” Could men who thought as Cellini deny that their princes’ conduct affected God’s providence over political fortune when they were so sure that their own conduct did the same? Indeed, Cellini was not the only Florentine who saw the hand of God in political events. The Florentine chronicler Giovanni Ricci, commenting on a rout of Huguenot in 1569 had these words:

One can know by effects that Our Lord God never fails to aid his own, when they are most abandoned by every human aid, and at the most desperate hour, he intervenes with his most holy hand, in accordance with the promise made by the holy spirit through the mouth of David.

Indeed, set against this backdrop of opinion, Cosimo’s own claims strike one as eminently credible to his contemporaries.

However, as much as men and women saw God in their own private fortune or misfortunes, it was always nature that struck the divine will’s most terrifying blows. For instance, when shortly after Cosimo’s election, a great wind blew down the Apennines, destroying property and striking fear into local hearts, the author of an anonymous diary recorded that all the populace considered it an “augury of most great things;” that is, they considered it a sign from God. When a huge earthquake rocked the Scarperia in June of 1542, the courtier Bernardo Segni remarked: “the people thought that so many unusual and rare signs had not just come by chance, but that they must have been signs of

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94 Cellini, 315.
Moreover, the inhabitants did not need to be told how to respond; they immediately organized processions to the Church of Santissima Annunziata in order to “placate the wrath of God.” When another earthquake hit in 1559, the diarist Agostino Lapini again attributed it to the scourge of God. And an anonymous ricordi culled from the Confraternity of Archangelo had this to say about a 1562 drought:

13 September 1562, the second Sunday of the month. A procession was held to ask for God’s mercy, since through many signs he has shown himself to be very irate with us: first, since it has not rained for more than six months, then because most of the world is full of heresies, and finally because those few Christians that are left are mostly dissolve and improper.

To cite one more example of Florentine reaction to natural disaster, we might add Ricci’s reaction to a flood of the Magra river: “Let it be pleasing to God to let these disasters be at an end, and let him not think our sins worthy of greater castigation.” In a culture in which plays, sermons, and literature had already embedded the idea that the moral state and physical universe were intimately bound up, the ground was already prepared for a positive affirmation of Cosimo’s divine favor.

Thus, there was an essential complementarity between the sermons cited above, elite culture, popular attitudes, and the propaganda that promoted Cosimo’s advent as the return of spring and fecundity. A poem by Martelli’s deftly captures all of the pertinent

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97 Segni, *Storie Fiorentine* (Augusta: D. R. Mertz e G. J. Majer, 1723), 603f. “stimavano i popoli che tanti segni disusati e rar non fussono venuti a caso, e che e’ dovessono significar qualche gran rovina.”
98 Agostino Lapini, *Diario Fiorentino di Agostino Lapini dal 252 al 1596* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1900), 103. “vennero grandissimi terremoti qui in Firenze, ma maggiormente a Scarperia e che in altro luogo, e per tutto il Mugello, dove rovinorno assai case, et vi morirno di molta gente. Et in questo tempo cominciono le compagnie de’ contadini, che sono vicine a Firenze a venire ogni anno a visitare pioceessionalmente La Nunziata, e seguitano et seguiranno per memoria di detti tremoti, per placare l’ira di dio.”
99 Cited in Eisenblichler, 176-177.
100 Ricci, 31. “Piaccia a Dio che habbino havuto fine qui et non guardi a’ peccati nostri degni di maggior gastigo.”
themes: the return of spring, the signs of nature, the Capricorn/Augustus motif, and the
divine providence that moves it all. He wrote:

When Clouds have thickened about the sun
Condensing, all surrounding air
And rain pours, as Capricorn prepares
As is wont to be often begun

By a Miracle of Heaven, it was then undone
Black wet clouds dispersed by prayer
And across heaven’s face appeared a day so fair
They will not open at the hour when frost’s force is none

For appeared the lord who was elect
To the honored seat, and let it ever be
In the memory of the Ages to Come

To show only that we
are subject to the will perfect
of he who moves the stars and sun.101

The praise poem ties up the lines of Cosimian rhetoric quite neatly. The advent of
Cosimo is linked to the naturalistic metaphor of the return of the sun (that is both the
return of good weather and the return of Christ). The return of the sun/son is linked to
the return of spring. The return of spring is linked to the traditional Medici emblem of
the golden age and to the earth’s natural fecundity. And the whole thing is ultimately
dependent on the will of God. Indeed, Cosimo's sun king rhetoric bears more than
passing resemblance to the message of material providentialism delivered from the
pulpits. Da Trivigi’s poetry made the same sort of connection:

Giving its rays, that divine light
Sees that heaven is lit and here resplends

101 Niccolò Martelli, Cento Sonetti, 21. “Quando’il Sol devea piu di nebbie folte; Esser condenso, et l’aer di ogni intorno; Piogge versar come nel Capricorno; Al’ breve di suol fare spesse et molte; Per miracol del Ciel fur via disciolte; Le negre humide nubi et s’allargorno; Dalla fronte solar che piu bel giorno; Non apre al’hor che al giel le forz’ ha tolte; Ch’appersel’ di Signor’ che fusti eletto; Al’onorato Seggio, e Tal fien sempre; in memoria, dei secol’ che verrano; Per mostrar sol che al humane tempre; Nostre soggiunse anco il voler perfetto; Di quel che muove il Ciel.”
In the eye desirous of the lord of all
That he be which he is, which he was, and moves and understands
With every voice and movement in his ear and sight.
Through you, a happy serene face to (God/heaven) belongs
And it has more splendor than before when it was hindered by strong
boggy humors and black clouds.
But the dark veil no longer covers it. 102

The idea was not just limited to the heavens either. Cosimo’s panegyricists pointedly
extended the metaphor to include the bounty of nature as well, which at any rate, early
moderns considered to be dependent on the stars. No occasion was better suited to
promote Cosimo as a vegetable king of plenty than his wedding, with the natural
undertones of sexual potency and fecundity that such an occasion implied. When a series
of land goddess avatars had finished laying their gifts in front of the couple, an actress
suitably identified as Ceres, the goddess of the harvest, linked the prince’s piety to the
land’s fecundity by letting the audience know that she, “gives most generously the fruits
of her breast to those who love her the most.” 103 Moreover, when it came time for
Cosimo’s son Francesco to celebrate his own wedding with Giovanna of Austria,
Domenico Mellini opined that perhaps nature itself was celebrating the nuptials by
stopping its heavy downpour of rain at the new duchess’ entrance. 104 The very public
wedding motif echoed into literature as well. In 1543, Gabrielle Symeoni celebrated
some of Cosimo’s earliest successes with the verses:

...The place of burdock’s and poisonous snakes
(Thanks to God)
Shall be taken by flowers, fronds, grasses, shades

102 Da Trivigi, 8. “Quel divin Lume, che'l suo raggio porge; Acciò, che luce in Ciel, ciò, che qui
splende; Occhio vago di lui, che'l tutto affrena; Che fia qual'è, qual fu, et move, e'ntende; Ogni voce, ogni
moto, ch'ode, et scorge,: Per te la fronte sua liete, et serena; Ha di splendor piu, ch'anzi ingombra, et piena;
tal, che pallustre huomor, o nube oscura; Piu non la copre, o tenebroso velo.”
103 Minor, 196.
104 Domenico Mellini, Raccolto delle feste fatte in Fiorenza Dalli Ill. et Ecc. Nostri Signori e
padroni il Sig. Duca, et Sig. Principe di Fiorenza, et di Siena, Nella venuta del Serenissimo Arciduca Carlo
d'Austria per honorarne la presenza di sua Altezza (Fiorenza: Giunti, 1569), 4v.
Caves, waves, and soft breezes.

So that in place of salt and ice
You will see a rain of such great manna
On the Tuscan fields
That there will be a competition to see
who can Sow the greatest quantity
Ceres, Bacchus, Pan, Pomona, or Pallus.  

The linkage between prince and nature could be made to work in the other direction as well, and those same poets who celebrated Cosimo’s life as a sunny day in the history of Tuscany also bewailed his death as a dark and cloudy storm, since in this case, mother nature for once decided to comply with the exigencies of Cosimo’s political panegyricists. For instance, Bacelli wrote that on Cosimo’s death:

In the midst of a serene heaven,
There appeared at a clap, bitter and windy rain
An unusual fog,
The waves grew, and the river irate and full
I swooned as the beautiful work scattered

And in the same mode, Capri eulogized:

well shows now the darkness, and burning stars, the clouds that obscure the sun
Lamenting of the death of the Great Cosimo

And with those words, Capri sung Cosimo to his rest with the hope he would be received into that most Dantesque of visions: the eternal April. Aldana tied the prince to nature even more explicitly, claiming.

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105 Symeoni, 4r. “di serpi velenose, et Lappe; Occuperan (la Dio mercede) i luoghi; Fior, frondi, herbe, ombre, antri, onde, aure soavi.; Hor si ch’ in vece di brunate et gielo; Piover vedrassi una si grata manna; Sul terren Tosco, che faranno à gara; Di chi ne sparger à piu larga copia; Cerer, o Baco, Pan, Pomona, o, Pale.”

106 Girolamo Baccelli, “Canzone,” Rime Diverse sopra La Morte del Serenissimo Granduca di toscana (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXVII c. 104), 75v. “Apparia d’ogn’intorno il Ciel sereno, Quando in un tratto aspra, e ventosa pioggia; In disusata foggia; Fe crescere l’onde, e’l fiume irato, e pieno; la bell’opra disperse, io venni meno.”

107 Michel Capri, “Canzone,” Rime Diverse sopra La Morte del Serenissimo Granduca di toscana (Magliabecchiana 27: 104), 87r. “ben tel mostraro ancor l’oscura, et adre; Stelle, e le nubi, ch’oscuraro il Sole...Che del morto Gran Cosmo il Ciel si duole.”
Full of great sadness is mother nature,
In vain is she saddened, in vain afflicted,
in vain does she lament
against heaven, against death, and against Fortune...

Hide then Apollo, your beautiful ardent rays
Covered by a heaven of darkened horror...

The examples could be multiplied; since, with the weather cooperating, Cosimo’s poets almost instinctively connected the natural elements to the prince’s death.

We shall end our conversation of the linkage between prince, God, and nature with one final and illuminating example, a passage from an oration given in the Academy of the Travagliati on Cosimo’s crowning as Grand Duke. Recalling the Duke’s initial election to the governance of Florence, the orator spoke these lines:

One felt in a moment, through the will of God that then began to work for our salvation, almost as a new Numa called to such an empire, rather to say better, almost a new David sent her by God. The first auguries were the plants in his possession, which in so cold a season and against the course of nature, miraculously flowered. One can believe that this occurred by divine providence so that through these means, God might tell the Great Cosimo that in the flower of his most green age, he wanted to put him in the midst of this province, almost as a splendid mirror in which looking into, each might be able to direct oneself to the good.

The passage certainly encapsulates material and political providentialism well. Cosimo was likened first to a classical and then to a biblical hero; in fact, the Florentine biblical

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108 Cosimo Aldana, "Canzone," Rime Diverse sopra La Morte del Serenissimo Granduca di toscana (BNCF, Magliabechiana XXVII c. 104), 96r-97r. “Piena d'un gran dolor l'alma Natura; In van si duol, si affligge, e si lamenta; Contro del ciel, di morte e di Fortuna...; Ascondi apollo, i tuo bei raggi ardenti; Vestiti, o ciel di tenebroso horrore.”

109 See also del Vezzo, 108r; and Cosimo Gacci, "Canzone," Rime Diverse sopra La Morte del Serenissimo Granduca di toscana (BNCF, Magliabechiana XXVII c. 104), 102v.

110 Giurgi, 5r-5v. When he was in his villa practicing agriculture “senti in un’ subbito, per volere di Dio che già cominciava ad operarsi per la salute nostra, quasi novello Numa chiamarsi a tanto Imperio, anzi (per meglio dire, quasi nuovo David esservi mandato da Dio, come prima li havevano augurato le piante de le sue possessioni che in 5rtov, così fredda stagione contra il corso di natura miracolosamente fiorirono, per divina providenza come si puo credere che per questo mezzo accennava al Gran Cosmo che nel fiorire de la sua piu verde eta de voleva porlo in mezzo di questa provincia quasi lucente specchio, nel quale risguardando ciascuno, potesse regolarsi al bene operare.” Matasilani also recorded the story about Cosimo’s garden, Matasilani, 28.
hero *par excellence*. God made his favor for Cosimo manifest through a miraculous sign in the natural world. And finally, the whole passage nicely sewed up popular theories of providence and the Medici return of spring motif. By 1570, the lines of development that we have been discussing had converged into a coherent whole.

The point of this excursus has been to show that divine right was based on habits of providential thought deeply embedded in Florentine, and likely all early modern, consciousness. Indeed, it seems highly unlikely that contemporaries would have seen Cosimo’s claims as anything other than an offshoot of a rather typical appeal to providence. Moreover, since there were two modes of providential thought, so were there two types of divine right. Though Christian resignation certainly subdued many into political quietism, many others certainly believed in no such thing. For these, Cosimo wielded the propaganda of material providentialism, and as he leapt from one success to the next, his very fortune became proof of his own divine favor. Though he assumed the role of a pagan king, ensuring the food supply by his virtuous conduct, he assumed that role dressed in Christian garb. Moreover, this garb was familiar to Florentines, who everyday looked for God in the slightest shaking of the earth or the lightning bolt from the sky. To all who thought in such a way, republican or no, Cosimo’s divine right claims must have been rather blandly uncontroversial.

*A Multicausal World: Providence and Free Will*

This all brings us to our third point. To understand Cosimo’s divine right, we must lay our hands on the mechanics of the providential worldview on which divine right was built. For our purposes, we must insist that both in its Catholic and humanist form, providentialism was multicausal. God might lurk omnipotently behind all events, but he
preferred to work through secondary causes. Thus, an examination of Cosimian divine right supports the case that Francis Oakley has made more generally;\textsuperscript{111} that is, even when the prince traced his legitimacy to God, that did not imply that legitimacy came exclusively from God. In definitive contrast to modern science, which generally aims to reduce variables in order to isolate singular causative elements, early moderns were far more comfortable with multicausal analysis, and thus, they were far more comfortable attributing events equally to God’s guiding hand and to the free exercise of human will. Aristotle was the key text here, but two phenomena made multicausal providence exceptionally important for Florentines: the fight against judiciary astrology and the reaffirmation of human cooperation in salvation. Moreover, as the heir to a monarchical title in a republican city, Cosimo found it uniquely important to ground his election both in the will of God and the will of the people. Florentines’ multicausal habits of thought lent the claim considerable credibility.

We have seen how critical astrology was to divine right. These motifs have been excellently studied elsewhere by Janet Cox-Rearick, but that analysis has ignored one critical point. Cox-Rearick argues that Cosimo utilized learned astrological conceits to advance the idea that his rule was preordained destiny, carefully fostering the notion of its “inevitability.”\textsuperscript{112} She then claims that in order to salvage astrology for Christianity, Renaissance astrologers placed God at the top of the hierarchy of causation.\textsuperscript{113} Putting God at the helm of heaven’s wheel was indeed an essential ingredient of Christian

\textsuperscript{112} Cox-Rearick, 255.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 161.
astrology; however, this was not sufficient to Christianize astrology if that astrology posited the ideal of an inevitable destiny directed by the stars.

Cox-Rearick’s general discussion of Renaissance astrology is missing a crucial distinction that contemporary intellectuals would have thought to be of the utmost importance: the distinction between prophetic astrology and non-prophetic astrology. Prophetic astrologers were the fortune-tellers of the early modern world, scanning the heavens to predict the future. Despite the fact that the practice rested on widely shared assumptions concerning the stars influence over nature, this type of astrology was beyond the pale. The problem, so argued the orthodox, was that the future could only be gleaned from the stars if man was included, rather than excluded, from the great chain of causation. That would make man unfree, an unquestionably heretical proposition.

Rather, man’s freedom threw a monkey wrench into the whole system. Verino’s tract let Plato speak for Christianity, arguing that the stars may determine a man’s inclinations, but the future cannot be predicted on that alone:

Though by examining heaven, one can predict what man will be inclined to, as by a remote cause, still a number of more proximate causes compete with that universal cause and render the judgment fallacious. And most of all, that which is in us, that is our will, which is a free power.\textsuperscript{114}

Thus, any astrology that had recourse to the ‘inevitability’ of events was useless for Cosimo. Prophetic astrology titles went on the index right along with heresy and necromancy, and Cosimo leant the inquisitor his aid to root them out.\textsuperscript{115}

Early modern man could not predict the future, but as Verino’s passage suggests, predicting man’s inclinations was another matter. These sorts of predictions were the

\textsuperscript{114} See Vieri, \textit{Breve Compendio}, 100r. “se bene dal Cielo si può predire, quello, à che l’huomo è inclinato, come da cagione remota, concorrono poi tante cagioni più prossime, che possono rendere fallace, quel giudizio, e massimamente intorno nostro, e dalla nostra volontà, che sono potenze libere.”

\textsuperscript{115} ASFi, Med. 210 c. 20r (February 13, 1559).
realm of non-prophetic astrology, a system most readily understood as a slightly more complex version of the animal signs of the modern Chinese zodiac. It let one know about one’s virtues, vices, habits and inclinations, as well as with whom to be friends and whom to stay away from. Lucky days and lucky numbers were still a matter of some dispute. The stars may not have had power over man’s soul, but given the great chain of causation, they did have dominion over his body. So as a dual being, man was at least partially subjected to the influx of the celestial orbs. Cosimo’s medic Baldini could even go so far as to say that, “the soul of man is constrained by fate, since it was conjoined with the body of which Fate is lord, as are all other bodies.”

It was thereby thought that man’s natural composition and his dispositions could be determined by an examination of the alignment of stars at his birth. Only on these conditions could astrology and the concomitant doctrine of fate be accepted as compatible with Christian theology. Only on these conditions did Cosimo make astrology a part of court life. Only on these conditions did he promote his Capricorn ascendant. Only on these conditions did Cosimo establish a chair of astrology at the Pisan studio. And only on these conditions did he have his own horoscope cast. Astrology was fine, just so long as it left room for human will.

And as astrology went, so went the idea of fate. God’s providence may have guided both natural and human events, but providence intruded in human events far more gently than natural events. Whereas the celestial processes over which God presided

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116 Baldini, Discorso, 29. “L’animo dell’huomo adunque è contenuto da il Fato, perciocche egli è congiunto col corpo del quale il Fato è signore, sì come di tutti gli altri corpi.” Even Savonarola, who took the strict anti-augustinian line against judiciary astrology, nevertheless granted some approval to the idea that the stars influence life. Savonarola, Prediche, 1r-2r.

117 Galluzzi, 169.

controlled nature outright, providence simply directed the souls of men. The very old paradox of providence and free will had already been thrashed about and settled by the Christian fathers, but because of the debates on astrology, it had to be resettled to the satisfaction of the humanists again in fifteenth-century Florence. Ficino had certainly claimed that “the soul is above fate through the mind...Thus the soul is placed in the laws of providence, fate, and nature not only passively but as an actor.” Salutati had spelled the argument out more clearly:

It is not inconvenient to submit our wills to fate—provided that they are not deprived of liberty, for then they would entirely not be, but so that they are the causes of their own actions which God works in us, freely and secure from every necessity of constraint. And we call only those actions voluntary which by freely working together with God are the coefficient causes of their actions.

Savonarola had taken on judiciary astrology and fate with similar vehemence at the end of the fifteenth-century, orating:

Things without reason are moved by God towards their end by natural instinct, sooner conducted and lead by others than governed by themselves. But man, who has free will, can have providence over himself, and though he is moved by God towards his end, yet he moves himself as well, working together with God. Thus, it is proper to man to seek with all diligence his ultimate end, to which he has been ordered by divine providence, and to seek the necessary means to arrive there...Divine providence, through the moral virtues, moves all men, but since they have free will, they always are moved freely. And if they will consent to the push of divine providence, they will doubtlessly arrive at their desired end.

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119 See especially Boethius.
120 Cited in Trinkaus, 477.
121 Cited in Trinkaus, 83.
122 Savonarola, Triompho, 15r-15v. “Le cose irrationabili, sono mosse da Dio, al fin loro per instinto naturale, piu tosto condotte et menate da altri, che da medesime governate. Ma l’huomo che ha libero arbitrio, puo haver di se medesimo providentia, et pero è cosi mosso da Dio al suo fine, che anchora muove se medesimo operando insieme con Dio. Adunque appartiene à l’huomo, cercar con ogni studio, e diligentia il suo ultimo fine, alqual è stato ordinato dalla divina providentia e I debiti mezzi da pervenir à quello...la divina providentia, mediante le virtu morali, move tutti gli huomini, iguali per haver il libero arbitrio, sempre move liberamente. Et pero se saranno consentienti alla motione della divina providentia, senza dubbio per I debiti mezzi perverrano al lor desiderato fine.”
Thus, Cosimo’s court physician, Baccio Baldini, had a prestigious legacy to drawn on when he set about arguing:

All these effects (of nature) are lead to their own end by their own nature as man, in as much as they are directed, but not forced by divine providence, but being these effects in the world they are by portents, prodigies, and prophecies, signified to men by the benignity of God, thus was Hannibal directed and incited to the destruction of Italy by his own natural inclinations.\textsuperscript{123}

In both the original formulation and in the resettling, the cooperation of wills was of paramount importance. The upshot dictated that God might foreknow man’s destiny and guide the way with his omnipotent hand, but destiny could only be brought to fruition by human cooperation. It is fairly clear, then, why the idea of ‘inevitable’ destiny must be excluded from our discussions of Cosimian propaganda.\textsuperscript{124} Cosimo’s literati could argue that God had designed Cosimo for rule. He may even have inspired men to make Cosimo prince. But the consent of the republic was absolutely free and therefore, absolutely contingent.

By the time the Florentine Academy came around to lecturing on fate in the mid sixteenth-century, the fight against judiciary astrology had already lost much of its heat. The case against it had already been made and won several years earlier by a host of illustrious names, a list that reads like a who's-who of Florentine thinkers: Dante,

\textsuperscript{123} Baldini, Discorso, 29. “tutti questi effetti sian condotti al fine loro dalla propria natura de gli huomini in quanto elle è dritta ma non forzata dalla divina provedenza, ma per esser quest tali effetti nel mondo molto principali ei sono da portenti prodigii, et profeti per la benignità di Dio significati à gli huomini, et cosi fu drizzata et incitata à i danni d’Italia, la naturale inclinazione d’Annibale al far male à quella provincia.”

\textsuperscript{124} When claims were made that Cosimo was to be like a new Augustus, this was not to emphasize the event’s ineluctability but to emphasize that ‘fate,’ that is God acting through nature, had given Cosimo the natural virtues necessary to rule. Consider, for instance, the appeal that Giugi made to Cosimo’s Capricorn ascendant: “One can see clearly the prudence of this unconquered prince, since he has judged that it is very good to favor this ascendant that he had common with Augustus (Capricorn), which made him, by the will of God, for tunate and pacific, since he would otherwise have been by his nature most bellicose.” Giugi, 6r. “si può chiaramente vedere che se la prudenza di questo invitto principe, non havesse giudicato che è sommamente bene di favorire quello ascendente che egli hà comune con Augusto, il quale lo fa per volere di Dio fortunato et pacifico, egli sarebbe stato per natura bellicosissimo.”
Salutati, Pico, and Savonarola. However, reforming Protestants rekindled Italian interest in multicausal elucidations of the will’s cooperation with providence. Though they had not eliminated free will, Luther and Calvin had denied that humans possessed the freedom to prepare for salvation through prevenient grace and to freely assent to saving grace. Thus, they left little room for active participation in justification and denied man’s coparticipation with God in the event of salvation.¹²⁵ A host of native traditions, including humanism, Florentine neoplatonism, and the preceding centuries’ anti-astrological rhetoric made both Luther’s radically fallen man and Calvin’s double predestination difficult concepts to swallow. Thus, when the debate over grace and salvation came to Italy, Catholic controversialists already knew how to respond. For example, in a work published in Florence with Giunti as early as 1521,¹²⁶ the Sienese controversialist Polito explained man’s cooperation with the divine using a familiar Aristotelian example, that is, by imagining an artist painting a picture. Just as the painter arranged his canvas and materials, so man must prepare to receive grace. This was the material cause. Just as the painter has an idea of what he will be painting, so the soul itself is the form of justification. This was the formal cause. As the painter physically putting his brush to paper brings about the effect, so Christ’s death on the cross brought about salvation. This was the efficient cause. And finally, just as the painter paints for some reason, whether for pleasure or a commission, salvation is accomplished by the will of God. This was the final cause.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ This was a rather distinct debate from the one more commonly associated with the reformation: that is the debate on faith and works.
¹²⁷ Polito, Trattato, 42-50; and Lapis, 26v-27r.
When the Council of Trent gave their own answer to the question three years later, they canonized this multicausal way of looking at justification. The council affirmed that man’s preparation and cooperation were both essential elements of justification, which was nevertheless effected gratuitously from on high. The fathers thereby held to a middle ground between Lutheranism and Pelagianism when they wrote:

They who by sin had been cut off from God may be disposed through His quickening and helping grace to convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace; so that while God touches the heart of man through the illumination of the Holy Ghost, man himself neither does absolutely nothing while receiving that inspiration, since he can also reject it, nor yet is he able by his own free will and without the grace of God to move himself to justice in His sight. Hence, when it is said in the sacred writings, ‘Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you,’” we are reminded of our liberty; and when we reply: ‘Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be converted,’ we confess that we need the grace of God.

The Council then went on to enumerate its own gaggle of causes, though they pointedly deviated from a strict Aristotelian demarcation. Nevertheless, the Council of Trent gave official sanction to this multicausal way of looking at God’s action in the world.

Not all multicausal analysis rested on Aristotle’s weighty authority. It will be recalled that Renaissance thinkers conceived of natural processes as a chain of causes, one enveloped in another. Savonarola had preceded the Reformation controversialists in using the distinction between universal and proximate causes (and primary and secondary causes) to answer the divinatory astrologers. Florentine preacher Lorenzo Davidico borrowed Savonarola’s stick to parry the ‘Lutheran’ doctrine of predestination, arguing, “though God works in all things, this nonetheless does not exclude secondary cause, rather experience teaches that he normally accomplishes things through secondary

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128 Polito was himself a key theologian at the council.
130 Italians tended to use the word “Luterani” as a pejorative for all Protestant reformers.
In a work dedicated to Cosimo’s majordomo Pier Francesco Riccio in 1544, Basilio Lapis upheld the doctrine of grace cooperating with will in the same way:

He who made you cannot save you without your cooperation. God’s work is to call, man’s is to either believe or not believe, which is placed in the choice of our free will, the gospel says no less...moreover, it is right to say that free will has some operation even in good works. 

Though following the argument through its highly involved orthodox formulation, Lapis prime concern was to uphold human and divine cooperation. The Franciscan Cornelio Musso had much the same take:

God moves everything gently, according to its nature. Man is a rational animal with free will. Thus he is moved in accordance with his freedom. It is necessary that when he is moved, he is moved by himself. He is not a branch, he is not a stone; he is a man. He operates as a man, he consents, or he dissents. If he dissents, he will never receive grace because God does not force men. If he consents, he is made worthy of God, and receives him.

Visdomini, another influential Counter-Reformation preacher, put the matter thus:

God operates as the universal cause of whatever is done down here, however what he does from his side, he does not do of necessity, like those works that he does by his most holy, powerful, and most free will in respect of the many concurrent secondary causes that according to their nature are unchangeable, and (as says the Angelic Doctor Thomas) modifying the general influx from the first cause, one is able to say that many effects necessarily emerge, like heat from fire, the courses of the rivers, the light of the sun, the propagation of the animals, and the life of plants. But as to the way that God works in man, because both the one and the other are free causes, (as he says there is no will without liberty), the effects follow completely free and contingent, without any sort of necessity. And since God does not in any way want to destroy the order of his creation in his creatures,
he needs (with the due of his benignity that theologians call the due of promise) to conserve man free and to let him freely operate and freely arrive at his end.\textsuperscript{134}

Visdomini thus granted God the absolute imperium over the entire universe, absolute imperium that is, for everything except for man. Man’s actions were always contingent, salvation included. Thus, just as at the beginning of our chapter, Cosimo concluded that he had been given Siena because it was pleasing to God and pleasing to the benignity of the Most Catholic King,\textsuperscript{135} Visdomini could similarly conclude that salvation was effected because it “is pleasing to God, and pleasing to the saved.”\textsuperscript{136}

Cosimo could share this strikingly similar turn of phrase because Visdomini’s multicausal providence was no paper phantom. Cosimo and his court shared this habit of providential thought, and it bubbled to the surface for both mundane and important events. Births, safe-travel, illness, death, and even love: though the proximate causes for these events were plain to see, Cosimo’s Renaissance court found little trouble in attributing them concurrently to God. Birth, of course, was an occasion to reaffirm the deity’s imperium over the mundane. At the birth of each of his children, Cosimo rendered due thanks to God for his wife’s abundant fecundity.\textsuperscript{137} Of course, this thanks could not possibly have been meant to exclude the secondary causes for her pregnancies, causes that the duke knew as well as any. The habit was catching, or at least, it was

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\textsuperscript{134} Visdomini, 35v-36r. “Operando Iddio come causa universale qua giù ciò che si fa, quantunque dal lato suo non faccia alcuna cosa necessariamente, come quello che tutto opera colla santissima, potentissima, et liberalissima sua voluntà, per rispetto però di molte cause seconde concorrenti secondo la loro natura che non è vertibile, et (come dice l’Angelico dotore Tomaso) modificando il generale influsso che dall prima causa deriva, si può dire che molti effetti necessariamente emergono, come il calor del fuoco, il corso de’fiumi, il lume del sole, la propagation de gli animali, la vita delle piante; Ma quanto opera Iddio nell’huomo, per esser l’una, et l’altra causa libera, che (come dissi) non è volontà senza libertà, l’effetto segue senza alcuna sorte di necessità pienamente libero, et contingente; non volendo Iddio a modo alcuno romper l’ordine posto dalla sua creazione in le sue creature, per loquale debbe (con debito della sua benignità, quale chiamamo i Teologi debito di promessa) conservare l’huomo libero, et far che liberamente operi, et liberamente, giungi al suo fine.”
\textsuperscript{135} See footnote number 2.
\textsuperscript{136} Visdomini, 44v. “piace a Dio, et piace anche a loro.”
\textsuperscript{137} See ASFi, Med. 37 c. 154r (November 2, 1555).
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simply standard. On the birth of Cosimo’s third child, the cardinal historian Paolo Giovio sent him the following congratulatory note:

It is a great sign and more than clear and manifest that the soul of your Excellency is right and just in public and private actions, and of a temperate government and religious life that is very dear and acceptable to Our Lord God, since having made proof of your resolute constancy and patience when he raised to paradise your immaculate lamb so quickly, he has desired to restore her and expiating every trace of the sickness of the flesh, with such a beautiful gift of a child born without difficulties.\textsuperscript{138}

The immaculate lamb was Cosimo’s illegitimate daughter Bia, who had been carried off in February of the same year. And though the letter was private, the private ideal had public utility, echoing into official propaganda. In his \textit{Commentari}, a work begun under Alessandro and finished under Cosimo,\textsuperscript{139} the long time Medici client Filippo Jacopo Nerli compared Cosimo’s many children to the special grace granted to Abraham.\textsuperscript{140}

Indeed, births affirmed God’s providence over both human and political affairs.

Births were not exactly ordinary affairs, but references to providence could be uttered on less important occasions. For instance, on journeys early modern peoples saw God in the winds that pushed their sails, the weather that graced their travels, and the bandits who did or did not attack their caravans as they road through lawless lands.\textsuperscript{141}

Given the dangers involved, it is no surprise to see travel correspondence filled with casual references to providence, and Cosimo’s court was no exception. For instance,


\textsuperscript{139} Lupo Gentili, \textit{Studi}, 65.

\textsuperscript{140} For Nerli’s connection to the Medici see Albertini, 320. He was, in fact, Cosimo’s uncle. Filippo Nerli, \textit{Comentarij de’ Fatti Civili Occorsi dentro la Città di Firenze Dall’Anno MCCXV al MDXXXVII} (Augusta: David Raimondo Mertz, 1728), 298.

Cosimo wrote happily in 1537 that it “had pleased God to bring (Averardo Serristori, his Roman ambassador) safe to Nice.” He wrote the same to his auditor Vintha, who had just dispatched a courier to Germany. “Let it be pleasing to God to give your courier good fortune since we hear that the roads in Germany are very dangerous.” Indeed, references to providence occur so frequently that we would be tempted to see them as meaningless figures of speech were they not uttered in more desperate occasions.

No occasion was more desperate than illness, nor does any other life-event better illustrate the complexities of early modern providential multicausality. As David Gentilcore has shown for Naples, wellness was both a physical and spiritual affair. Etiologists not only tracked down the effective physical agents of disease but also sought to lay bare the primary moral causes lurking behind the same illnesses. Gentilcore writes, “Physicians could concentrate their own efforts on natural secondary causes, while allowing that these ultimately derived from divine primary ones.” This was certainly the attitude that Cosimo himself took when illness struck, as he sought out the natural remedies prescribed by his doctors while simultaneously attributing his cures to the grace of God. Indeed, just like all manifestations of earthly providence, physical and spiritual remedies were meant to work cooperatively. For example, one letter from court, reporting on one of Varchi’s life threatening bouts of fever, ended on the line, “we hope for the prudence of the doctors by the grace of God.” Indeed, response to illness

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142 ASFi, Med. 2 c. 34r (September 24, 1537). “a dio e piaciutore condurvi salvi in Nizza”
143 ASFi, Med. 10 c. 128r-128v (May 18, 1547). “a dio piace dar buona ventura, poi che s’intende el camino esser in Germania pericoloso molto.”
145 ASFi, Med. 1170 c. 162 (February 19, 1543). “gratia di Dio speriamo per la prudenza de Medici.”
reveals just how easily Early Modern Florentines discovered the cooperation of human and divine agency in daily events.

Moreover, love struck from above just as surely as illness. We are not surprised to hear Cosimo call his own monumentally bad decision to marry his daughter to Paolo Giordano Orsini as "pleasing to God." But he also claimed the will of God in marriages quite a distance more removed from his own political interests. For instance, when one of his soldiers married a certain lady-in-waiting of the Marchessa Caterina Cybo, he attempted to secure the lady’s dowry for the adventurous and rash young man with the appeal to God’s providence over marriage:

> Needing to use the dowry, he has asked that I recommend him to your Very Reverend Signor (Innocenzo Cybo), and it seems that I should not fail in such an office for one who stands in my service, I pray your Very Reverend Lord, that since it is the will of God that he marry this lady, let it please you to favor him so that he receives the dowry which he tells me is in the hands of the Marchessa.

After all, marriage was a sacrament and thus, sanctified by providence in a special way.

The models for multicausal providential election did not just come from the daily round of life events. The ideal was already a familiar political spectacle, enacted behind locked doors every few years or so in Tuscany’s neighbor to the south, for the papacy was the early modern elective monarchy *par excellence*. Like the Holy Roman Emperor and like Cosimo, the popes owed their position to an election; in their case the push, pull, and sometimes outright simony of papal conclaves. Nonetheless, the popes wielded a God-given absolute power and prefixed their names with the title *providentia dei*.

Cosimo understood that only multicausal providentialism could make sense of this papal

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146 ASFi, Med. 37 c. 145r (undated, 1555). “che a dio N.S. piaciuto far seguir.”
147 ASFi, Med. 191 c. 47r (May 13, 1549). “havendo a usare la dote mi ha pregato che io il raccomandi alla s.v.r et ill-ma del quale officio, non mi parendo potere manchere, per stare ne servitii mia. Priego v.s.r. che poi che é stata voluta di Dio che si casi con la detta Damigella, le piaccia favorirlo che consequisca la dote che mi dice essere in mano del sopradetta Marchessa.”
claim. After the divisions in the imperial party had somewhat disastrously brought the anti-imperial Paul IV to the papal chair, Cosimo made the best of the situation, writing privately to his ambassador Alessandro Strozzi:

With all the divisions and controversies that have been in the imperial party (which we have heard about from yours and others’ letters), one can say that these have caused the election of the Cardinal of Naples to the pontificate, we nonetheless recognize his election to be from the first cause, which is Our Lord God and we hope from him those holy works to the universal benefit and conservation of the Holy Church.148

Perhaps there was a bit of wishful thinking on Cosimo’s part here and there was certainly a bit of rhetorical pandering, but the sentiment was underwritten by a mind clearly familiar with the the political uses of multicausal providence.

*The Divine and Republican Prince*

Conventional historiography has long made a hard distinction between models of legitimacy: kingly legitimacy based on divine right or republican legitimacy based on the consent of the people. Bendix posed the question in his very title: *Kings or People?* Of course, Bendix’s work naturally assumed that legitimacy derived from God and legitimacy derived from the consent of the people were mutually exclusive.149 Nor is Bendix alone. Citing Hobbes in an influential early work on Divine Right, John Neville Figgis explicitly excluded consent from the divine ordination of monarchy.150 And

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148 ASFi, Med. 37 c. 107 (May 26, 1555). “Con tutto che nella parte Imperiali sien state quelli gran divisioni et controversie che per letteri vostri et daltrì habbiamo inteso et che queste si possa dire che habbino causato la elettione del cardinale di Napoli al Pontificato, noi la reconosciamo nondimeno da la prima causa che è N.Sgri Dio et speriamo di lui quelle s. opere a beneficio universale de Christani conservatione dela S. Chiesa et exaltatione dela Religione et fede nostra che la vita et le sante opere, sue hanno promesso.”


150 The relevant passage from the Leviathan is “We will still believe and maintain that our Kings derive not their title from the people but from God; that to Him only they are accountable; that it belongs
Walter Ullman traced an entire conceptual framework of medieval political thought based on the competition between the two theories of government: one popular, consensual, secular, nonsacral and rooted in classical and pre-Christian civilization; the other, authoritarian, divinely ordained, theocratic, and sacral, the blame for which is laid squarely at the feet of Christianity. More recently, Helmut Koenigsberger and Mack Holt have lent their authorities to the same dichotomy. Studies of Cosimo’s personal rule have followed the more general trend. One recent study on Cosimo has even made this distinction an overarching theme, positing a divine right absolutism that gave way in the 1560s to a republican citizen prince model. However, such an argument incorrectly assumes that divine right monarchy was incompatible with all appeals to republican consent. Perhaps Hobbes weighs too heavily in our collective historical imagination. On the other hand, Francis Oakley has pointed out that it is wrong to assume the, “conceptual relationship between forms of kingship rooted in the divine and those rooted in popular election and limited in some sense by popular will must necessarily be one of opposition or contradiction.” Cosimo’s Florentine experience proves Oakley’s point in a way few other early modern examples could. Republicanism was a going concern in Florence in ways that it was not in most other states, and Cosimo

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151 I am following here Oakley’s analysis of Ullman.
152 On this point, Koenigsberger writes: “In contrast to the emperors, kings, and princes of early modern Europe, no republican regime claimed to be dei gratia, instituted and justified by the will of God.” Koenigsberger, 44. In this, he is surely just ignoring Savonarola’s Florentine republic. See also Mack Holt, The French Wars of Religion: 1562-1629 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 78-79.
153 Van Veen, Cosimo I, 5.
154 See Oakley, 54. More than one medieval political theorist had drawn similar conclusions, for instance Terrevermeille. See Burns, 45-46; on the coexistence of consent and divine right in Fortescue see Burns, 65-70. There are no solidly apparent links between this late medieval thought and Cosimian discourse, and Cosimo’s Renaissance political theorists would certainly not have needed to rely on them to invent the dual election discourse. Glenn Burgess has attempted to delink absolutism and divine right in the context of English monarchy. Glenn Burgess, "The Divine Right of Kings Reconsidered," English Historical Review 108 (1992).
needed legitimation by popular will for many reasons: to blinker his people by preserving
a facade of republicanism, to escape from outright vassalage to the Hapsburgs,\textsuperscript{155} and to
filch the Republic’s prestige for rights of precedence in foreign courts. Providential
multicausality thus reveals its critical importance; with it, Cosimo could be a divine and
republican prince.

Had it not waited on publication until the eighteenth-century, Benedetto Varchi’s
official history would have given elegant testimony to this exigency, for nowhere did the
exigency exist more forcefully than in Varchi’s mind. Varchi was born and bred a
republican,\textsuperscript{156} and in 1537, he had welcomed the new duke with a spew of vituperative
anti-Medicean verses.\textsuperscript{157} He ended up nesting in Cosimo’s court less for ideological
reasons than for personal ones. Varchi had been tutor to the Strozzi children, Cosimo’s
arch nemeses and the last best hope for a republican Florence. But the Strozzi had cast
Varchi out of their house when he took an undue affection for their youngest son.\textsuperscript{158}
When Varchi quarreled with Piero Strozzi over a debt, Piero had him publicly beaten in a
Padovan piazza, sending him a note, “I have sent you part of what I owed you, and you
can consider me in debt for the rest.”\textsuperscript{159} Shortly thereafter, he found new employment
with Cosimo, whom he certainly found a more cordial employer. Cosimo officially
commissioned Varchi’s history, giving the superstar poet a free hand for a surprisingly
frank treatment of the republicans and the Medici. Perhaps that is why it never saw the

III, Il principato Mediceo, edited by Elena Fasano Guarini (Florence: La Tipografica Varese, 2005), 324-
327. Such an appeal to the popular will would last long into the ducal period.
\textsuperscript{156} On Varchi’s republicanism see Umberto Pirotti, Benedetto Varchi e la cultura del suo tempo
(Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 197): 6-8.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{158} Cantagalli, 94.
\textsuperscript{159} Cited in Pirotti, 15. “Mandovi parte di quel che voi avete a avere da me, e appuntatemi
debitore del restante.”
light of its own day. At any rate, Varchi was somewhat uncomfortable with the theoretics of sacral monarchy, and thus, he cast Cosimo in the role of reluctant prince, assuming his throne only because lifted to it by the acclamation of the people. Dissuaded from accepting the senate’s offer, the young Cosimo found these words put into his mouth by his biographer: “As a principate should not be sought with evil ways, so it should not be refused when offered justly, for such an act would go against both human and divine precepts.” Varchi left little doubt; divine right rested explicitly on legitimate forms of consent. For the former republican, *vox populi, vox dei*. In this case, divine precept was made manifest by the suspiciously unanimous set of favorable beans that the senate cast in support of Cosimo. With this trick, divine right was neatly married off to a lingering consensual republicanism.

Cosimo not only needed republican legitimacy for home-grown republicans but also for his prestige in foreign courts, terrified, as he was, that the world would rebuff him as the upstart scion of a usurious bloodline. Soon after his ascension, Cosimo’s fears erupted in a precedence clash with the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole d’Este, who was heir to far more impressive feudal titles but ruled over a far less impressive state. Among the many reasons that Cosimo’s *literati* advanced for his preference was that by his election, Cosimo had been made heir to all the dignities of the Republic. As the reader may suspect, this popular election was not meant to exclude his calling from God, but rather, to complement it, embellishing it with right and justice:

> From his first ascension, he surpassed so many other princes in the rightness and justness of his power. Indeed, this point is true and worthy of all acceptance and can be proved by the authority of the law of our Christ, when he said that those who did not enter the sheep fold through the gate are robbers and thieves,

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161 The voice of the people is the voice of God.
however, those who do enter through the gate, the true door, are pastors, but the pastor going through the gate is nothing but a type for the just vocatio dei of princes to principates, by those who have the right to call them to it.\textsuperscript{162} Ferrari proceeded to illustrate this bit of creative exegesis with a few religious and classical examples. Having drawn his text from the New Testament, Ferrari then drew an exemplum from the Old. God’s direct intervention, he claimed, had made the Hebrews a free people; by signs and portents he brought them out of the land of Egypt to plant them as a tender shoot in the land of Israel. However, in free council they had handed over their rule to Saul, derogating their God-given power to a king. Heaven had smiled on this free election, as God had immediately granted the gift of prophecy to the new king. In this way, heaven and earth, man’s will and god’s will, had both cooperated in his election. Two examples from the classical past quickly followed.\textsuperscript{163} In a 1551 tract, Lucio Paolo Rosello made much the same claim:

The true election is that which is made by souls that are neither forced, nor corrupt, but free, as in truth, was seen at the advent of Duke Cosimo, and if we examine this election by the notable and virtuous successes of Cosimo, we will see that a higher power governed the souls of those who made such a holy election.\textsuperscript{164}

For Rosello, only the people’s election could be a divine election.

The dual election ideal not only attended on Cosimo’s political needs in his own lifetime, it even followed him to the grave. As Carmen Menchini has pointed out,

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\textsuperscript{162} Ferrari, 29v-30r. “qui suae pr\'imae institutionis rectitudine et iustitia imperandi aliis tantumdem Principibus, praestaret hic sermo verus est, et omni acceptatione dignus, quem probat authoritate legis Christi nostri dicentis furem et latronem esse eum, qui non intrat per ostium in (olile?) ovium, introeuntem vero per ostium, verum forem Pastorem, sed ingressus per ostium formans Pastorem non est aliud quem justa dei vocatio Principum ad principatus per illos, qui ius vocandi ad illos habent.”
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 30v.
\textsuperscript{164} Rosello, 10-11. “La vera elettione è quella, che si fa da gli animi non violentati, non corrotti, ma liberi, come in vero si vede essere avvenuto nel Duca Cosimo…e se vogliamo essaminare questa elettione da I notabili, e virtuosi successi di quella, vederemo che furono da piu alta potentia governati gli animi di coloro che fecero così santa elettione.”
eulogies for Cosimo were generally unapologetic in referencing the election. But this did not mean that divine right was absent from Cosimo’s eulogies either. For instance, Scipione Ammirato claimed that the election of Cosimo was itself “freely made,” and then by divine providence “approved.” Bernardo Puccini remarked, or at least planned to remark, “Cosimo was given by God to the world, putting his election into the hearts of those citizens who held the highest authority of the republic in their hands.” Eulogists neatly elided the problem of the senate’s own legitimacy by conflating the forty-eight hand-picked oligarchs who comprised the senate with a more slippery, ethereal “universal will of the people.” The former republican G.B. Adriani pulled off the trick by claiming that upon Alessandro’s death, “the light and fame of that noble youth…came almost divinely (corse quasi divinamente) to the eyes of the people, he who alone seemed to be able to heal the wounds of his country.” Bernardo Davanzati was even less ambiguous. “The Greeks and the Romans attributed fortune to their gods,” Davanzati declared:

but of Cosimo’s so great success, one must not seek the Gods of the Greeks or the fortune of the Romans, but the divine will of the Great blessed God, who makes him worthy of it, or better, by his never erring judgment, who perhaps chooses this man, pleasing to his heart, and raises him to great fortune by miraculous means, so that by his miraculous virtue, he might govern two peoples,

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166 Ammirato, Oratione, 41r. “Liberamente fatta.”
167 Ibid., “quasi divina providentia approvata.”
169 Adriani, “Orazione Funebre,” 33. “quasi divinamente corse loro agli occhi il lume e la chiarezza di questo nobile giovenetto della istessa famiglia de’ Medici, il qual solo pareva che potesse sanare le piaghe della sua patria.” Emphasis mine. Adriani is also using the traditional worldplay on the Medici name which means physicians as well.
170 Davanzati, Orazione fatta Dal Bernardo Davanzati alla morte di Cosimo I (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXVII c. 52), 5v. “tanto stupendo successo non si dee riconoscere ne da gli iddii de Greci ne dalla fortuna Romana, ma dal benigno volere del grande Iddio benedetto, che lui’ ne fece degno, o
Davanzati left no doubt what those miraculous means were: “just as was done in ancient times, the people spontaneously elected a king.”¹⁷¹ Thus, Davanzati could write:

> In his eighteenth year (as he who is the dispenser of all things human and divine wanted) occurred the death of Duke Alessandro, all eyes turned towards Lord Cosimo, and immediately he was made head, and then Duke of the Florentine Republic.¹⁷²

The people’s will was thereby made an instrument of God, a fact which the reader should not find incredible since Early Modern Florentines saw God’s hand behind all secondary causes.

All that remained to be seen was whether God positively desired Cosimo’s election for the benefit of the republic or simply allowed the thing to go on as a convenient way to purge the republic’s sins. At this point, Cosimo’s heroic virtue made another appearance, now materializing as a visible sign of God’s favor. Moreover, heroic virtue concurrently provided yet another occasion to stress the consent of the republic. This time the conceit was supplied by political philosophy speculating on the primitive formation of society. In yet another Cosimian dedication, Giovambattista Capponi imagined the scene. Some primitive men of uncommon virtue, “had found things beneficial to human kind.” Lifting a page from Saint Augustine, Capponi imagined the stupefied primitives accounting these superior inventors as godlike beings.¹⁷³ Thus,

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¹⁷¹ Ibid, 4r-4v. “così naturalmente ancora si faceano i Re di quegli Eroici tempi, quando i popoli eleggeano spontaneamente, colui che gl’altro avanzasse di meriti, o di virtù sue.”

¹⁷² Ibid, 3v. “nel diciottesimo anno essendo venuta (come volle colui, che di tutte le cose divine et umane e’ ottimo dispostore) la morte del Duca Alessandro, tutti gli occhi si voltarono al Signore Cosimo, e subito egli fu dal Senato fatto capo, e poi duca della republica fiorentina.”

¹⁷³ Giovambatista Capponi, *Spechietto della Inclita Citta di firenze et suo dominio* (BL, Pluteus LXII c. 24.), 1v. “Quando si ritrovava uno che in tal consideratione (the ability to live by natural laws) excedessi dicevano quelli esser dìi, ne mancho lo credevono quando conosciuto havessino uno piu che laltro havessi ritrovato altra cosa abenificio dalla humana natura.”
when it came time to form a civil society and live by laws, men naturally turned to these
god-men, acclaming them by common consent. This sort of system naturally tended
towards the identification of a singly heroic individual, “so much so that after a long
time, one individual arose, whom it was supposed was a god and merited to be exalted
above the others; this one was proposed as head over all the others since the primitives
knew that unity and monarchy are a unique and divine thing.”174 Rosello imagined the
birth of primitive society in much the same way:

When one man is found who is so completely furnished with virtues...then such a
man is born to be a prince. We know too well that the first princes were elected
only through the fame of their virtue, since the people, without expecting any gain
or pain, elected those whom they reputed most able to keep the common peace.
And in the Old Testament, the people of God, not confiding at all in themselves to
know how to elect a just and wise prince, asked one of God.175

The lines between these fanciful flights of imagination and Cosimo’s own election could
not be less subtle.

Thus did Cosimo’s client scholars wage an unrelenting campaign to link his
virtues to his election, casting his natural abilities as a sign properly interpreted by the
people who handed him the principate. For instance, Varchi remarked that the Almighty
had given Cosimo an innate knowledge of rule along with the reins of government. Thus,
long before the events of Epiphany 1537, God’s foresight had been forming Cosimo’s

174 Ibid, 2v. “tanto che doppo longo tempo vengono aun tale individuo, che dicevono quello esser
uno dio et piu che li altri meritare di esser exaltati, et come capo sopra li altri quello preponevono, quando
per lor medemi conoscevono launita et monarchia esser cosa unica et divina.”
175 Rosello, 26v-27r. “quando se ne troova alcuno tanto compiutamente fornito (with virtues) che
sono rari discesi, che tal huomo è nato ad esser Prencipe. Sappiamo troppo bene, che que’primi Prencipi
furono eletti solamente per fam di virtù, poi che I popoli senza aspettare alcuno particolar premio, ò pena,
elegggevano ciascuno quello, che reputave piu atto à mantenere la pace commune. Et nel vecchio
testamento habbiamo, che il popolo di Dio non confidandosi di saper per se stesso far’ elettione di Prencipe
giusto, et saggio, lo chiedeva à Dio.”
political abilities, providentially grooming him as a special favor to the Florentines.\textsuperscript{176}

Betti echoed the sentiment, claiming that Cosimo’s God-given heroic virtues had:

made one able to reason and judge that he had been born, not to live privately, but to rule, and to rule a most great people and state. And as one knows, when he was still young, he was by divine council elected, and, the people being united in it, he assumed the governance of the state after the bitter death of Alexander.\textsuperscript{177}

One final example should suffice. Francesco Verino tied Cosimo’s double election to his virtues as well, arguing “this man was born to govern the most flowered part of Italy for so many years so well.”\textsuperscript{178} Though being born to rule by “Divine Providence”\textsuperscript{179} he was nevertheless, “made duke, lord of the Florentine republic, by his own citizens.”\textsuperscript{180} This message could be easily inserted into the oft-repeated axioms concerning the cooperation of man’s free will and God’s providence: providence had endowed Cosimo with virtue so that Florentines might grope towards the divine plan through their own inclinations.

Thus, divine right waged no war with republican consent in Cosimo’s Florence. Both mythologies found ample birth to play, and such a dynamic brought a favored motif to the fore: Cosimo’s dual election by God and the people. The throne was thereby secured “by the divine will, by (the Medicis) merit and prudence, and by the benevolence of their subjects.”\textsuperscript{181} In this case, multicausal habits of providential thought let Cosimo have his divine right and his consent to boot.

\textsuperscript{176} Varchi, \textit{Storia Fiorentina}, 205-206.
\textsuperscript{177} Betti, unpaginated. “poteva a ragione giudicarlo nato, non à privatamente vivere, ma à regnare, et reggere ampissimi popoli et stati. Come si conobbe, essendo egli molto giovaneetto, per divino consiglio, eletto, et assunto unitamente da suoi cittadini, dopo la acerba morto del Duca Alessandro, al governo di questo stato.”
\textsuperscript{178} Vieri, \textit{Orazione}, 4v. “questo huomo nato per governare la più fiorita parte d'Italia tanti anni così bene,“
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid, 2r.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid, 4v. “fatto Duca, Capo, Signore della Republica Fiorentina, da suoi Cittadini stessi,”
\textsuperscript{181} Malaspina, 199v. “volere divino, et per merito, et prudenza loro, et per la benivolenza de'Sudditi, et per lo forte, et potere stato.”
Conclusion

Beyond question, Cosimo believed himself a divine right monarch from the very first, even from that very first night, which he spent hiding in the fortress as the mob, in a burst of traditional enthusiasm, sacked his house and stole his precious few possessions. He believed himself a divine right monarch simply because like everyone else, Cosimo assumed God’s omnipotent guidance of all human events. Thus, Cosimo’s divine right was uncontroversial. But based as it was on a fractured providential worldview, his divine right fractured into two complementary and competing divine rights. Finally, because of the easy reconciliation of providence and free will, Cosimo did not need to follow the lead some of Europe’s other kings, undergoing a quasi sacramental unction with a holy oil flown mysteriously to earth by the miraculous intercession of God’s angel interlopers. Florence’s staunch upholding of the immanent sacrality of nature and man, God’s guiding hand over natural events, and the special providence that God held for human events all did the trick just the same. Indeed, in place of the French king’s miracles, Cosimo’s literati stressed a more human manifestation of providence: the senatorial election, which was consciously sanctified as a moment of divine intervention, the hand of God guiding human events. This was all sublimely important for a monarch dealing with the urgently pressing claims of his city’s republican legacy. But it turned out to be sublimely easy in a place that took its providence so seriously.

Chapter Three: Rescuing Virtue from Machiavelli

Cosimo’s biographers have rarely spared him either undeserved praise or outright villainization; for nearly five hundred years now, he has appeared in the historical annals either as the savior of the patria or a Machiavellian monster, wading to the throne through the blood of his countrymen. Even in an age of scandal and intrigue, Cosimo cuts a particularly sinister figure in the characterizations drawn by those who whispered about him in the dark alleys of Florence. For instance, one chronicler suggested that he assassinated his own father in law, the Viceroy of Naples, when his wife revealed her father’s alleged plot to take over Florence.1 At least one modern historian found he could still report Cosimo’s alleged poisoning of Cardinal Ridolfi in the middle of the 1555 papal conclave.2 And a number of parties reported, in all good faith, that upon learning that his son Garzia had killed his son Giovanni, he himself had immediately taken vendetta justice by slaying Garzia on the spot; upon which news, his beloved duchess died of grief.3 It was even whispered about that after her passing, the lecherous old he-goat had taken both his niece and granddaughter into his bed.4

Though modern historians have dismissed much of this as the gossip of enemies,5 Cosimo continues to appear in the annals of historical literature as a perfect incarnation of amoral Renaissance power politics, as if he had simply stepped out of the pages of

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1 Lapini, Diario, 109.
3 See ASFi, Manoscritti 166 c. 14v.
5 Especially Booth, 2.
Machiavelli and onto the Florentine stage.\textsuperscript{6} No doubt, Cosimo would be sorely distressed to hear the spin that posterity has put on his accomplishments, for he and his propagandists spent a considerable amount of energy trying to do exactly the opposite.\textsuperscript{7}

If Machiavelli had set a number of hares running into Florentine and European political thought by questioning the practical utility of the traditional categories of virtue, Cosimo’s literati presented him as Machiavelli’s living riposte, proof of why traditional virtue guaranteed political stability. Whereas Machiavelli claimed it nearly impossible for a prince to be loved and feared, Cosimo’s literati made him a prince feared for his justice and loved for his clemency. Whereas Machiavelli said the Christian religion robbed the citizenry of the bellicose spirit necessary for the state’s stability, Cosimo posed as the bellicose yet pious prince whose manly fortitude was ordered to securing the higher end of peace. Even when they seemed to agree, they did not really agree.

Whereas Machiavelli said that a prince needed to rule by the vice of miserliness, Cosimo sported a thrifty temperance. Indeed, Machiavelli may have subsequently achieved immortality as an original and modern thinker, but no prophet is accepted in his own country. Florence was the first to produce a Machiavelli, and consequently, the first to produce the slew of anti-Machiavellians whose gaggle of unoriginal political tracts provided a far more compelling model for early modern thinkers.\textsuperscript{8} Thus, this chapter argues that Cosimo’s projection of divine virtue was born in antithesis to a powerfully

\begin{footnotes}
\item[6] Cantagalli, 18; Van veen 165-166; Pieraccini, 13-14; Michele Lupo Gentile, \textit{La Politica di Paolo III nelle sue relazioni colla corte Medicea} (Sarzana: Lunense, 1906), iv.
\item[7] See Menchini, 352.
\end{footnotes}
unpopular set of reflections recently advanced onto the Florentine stage by the infamous Florentine secretary.

Virtue: Machiavellian, Humanist, and Christian

Machiavelli’s originality needs little introduction, his place in modern political thought secured by his most famous work, *The Prince*. In that set of political reflections, Machiavelli made a number of startling political observations: princes should learn how to hoard money, to be cruel and inhumane, and to break their word when advantageous. He most famously wrote, “A man that desires to do good in all things, paves the way for his ruin among so many men that are not good. Whence it is necessary that a prince, wanting to maintain himself, learn to be able to not be good.” And later in the same work:

You must understand that a prince, and especially a new prince, is not able to observe all those things for which men are normally regarded as good, being often necessary in order to maintain the state, to work against faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion…[one ought] not depart from the good, if possible, but being necessary, one must know how and be willing to do the bad (male).

Basing his philosophy on the predictability of man’s evil inclination, Machiavelli reformulated virtue for the age, paying little heed to the traditional categories of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The chancellor secretary of the merchant-

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11 Ibid, XVIII, 115-120.
12 Ibid, XV, 103. “uno uomo che voglia fare in tutte le parte professione di buono, conviene’ che ruini in fra tanti che non sono buoni. Onde è necessario, volendosi uno principe mantenere, imparare a potere essere non buono.”
13 Ibid, XVIII, 118. “hassi a intendere questo, che uno principe e massime uno principe nuov, non può osservare tutte quelle cose per le quali gli uomini sono tenuti buoni, sendo spesso necessitato, per mantenere lo stato, operare contro alla fede, contro alla carità, contro alla umanità, contro alla religione…non partirsi dal bene, potendo, ma sapere entrare nel male, necessitato.”
banking republic fancied virtue a kind of martial, military power, hearkening back to the word’s original meaning of manly courage. As Felix Gilbert explains:

The meaning of [virtue] in his writing has many facets, basically it was an italianization of the Latin word *virtus* and denoted the fundamental quality of man which enables him to achieve great works and deeds…Virtù was not one of the various virtues that Christianity required of men, nor was virtù the epitome of all Christian virtues.  

Such a philosophy constituted a direct break with Christian moral philosophy and set itself up in direct contrast to a thousand years of received wisdom. But though Machiavelli and his friend the political realist Guicciardini may have individually marked a break with medieval political thought, that edifice had not been built in a day and could not be overturned by the quills of two Florentines alone.

Because Machiavelli was a native Florentine genius, there would be no damnatio memoria of the man himself. Machiavelli took his place in the pantheon of Florentines, and Cosimo actually tried to get his works expurgated and republished.  

Machiavellian virtue was another matter. It had a number of strikes against it, the most potent of which was the fact that both Christian theology and Florentine humanism closed ranks against it. While Machiavelli’s virtue was mainly ordered toward fulfilling the passions, Christian humanist virtue consisted in a type of self-control exercised over those same passions. Most mid-century humanists shared the categories of virtue with their Christian brethren, and theologians did not shrink from acknowledging the humanist contribution to the study of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.  

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15 Plaisance, 24.
16 Antoninus had prefaced his discourse on them with the admission they had been treated of “not just (by) the Holy Doctors, but also the philosophers, rhetoricians, and poets.” Antoninus, 65. “Della quale non solamente parlono gli dottori santi, ma anchora li philosofhi, rethorici, et poeti.”
agreed with humanists over the ends to which the moral virtues tended, that is toward the
perfection of the civil life,"\textsuperscript{17} quite specifically a civil and peaceful existence “in this
world.”\textsuperscript{18} Florentines’ explicit and self-conscious engagement in the debate over the
active and contemplative life has resulted in an overwrought idea that there was some
kind of death struggle between a self-abnegating, world-hating, contemplative Christian
virtue and a self-loving, world-affirming, active Renaissance humanist virtue. No such
death struggle went on. The Christian tradition had never entirely shunned the world, and
when Christian preachers denounced the evil of “the world,” they primarily meant a
system of social values that placed undue emphasis on acquiring the desires of the flesh.
On the other side, Renaissance humanist virtue was not nearly as ‘world’ affirming as has
been claimed, for it was by no means a celebration of the corporal attitudes so stridently
denounced by Christians. If Renaissance virtue was an active virtue, it was still a self-
abnegating virtue. If fortitude was necessary to wage war, then it required a certain scorn
of life. If the prudent prince sought the utility of the state by ordering everything to its
ends, those ends were dictated not by utility, but by justice. If justice was necessary to
build a civil society, then it required setting aside personal interests. And for all
humanism’s activism, virtue was still primarily a preparation for beatitude. Even the
semi-Protestant Varchi could admit as much, concluding that the civil life contained “not
only all happiness, but even a good part of the divine.”\textsuperscript{19} Thus, despite the classicizing

\textsuperscript{17} Dolciati, 34r. “moral virtues make man perfect in human civility.” This was very much a
Savonarolan ideal see Polizzotto, \textit{Children of the Promise}, 6. Quaino, the virtues help refrain the appetites
and thus seperate civil man from rustic man, unpaginated.

\textsuperscript{18} Bettini, 101v. He wrote that the life of man should aim to “rafermarli da gli imperi de desiderij
bestiali et altri disordinate passioni. Cominciarono a dimostra la via per la qual noi sia passati delle virtudi
non conoscendo pero a qual piu alto fine /e/ caminassero che a in viver civile et pacifico in questo mondo.”

\textsuperscript{19} Cited in Rodolfo De Mattei, \textit{Il Pensiero politico italiano nell’età della Controriforma, vol. One}
(Milan: Ricardo Ricciardi, 1982), 29. “non solamente la felicità tutta quanta, ma eziando buona parte della
divina.”
overtones of Machiavelli’s version of virtue, most humanists found as little to like about him as Christian thinkers, for his attack on moral virtue threatened their intellectual edifice just as surely as it threatened the Christian one.

Machiavellian virtue was distasteful for other reasons as well. First, traditional virtue was more than just the means to a healthy society; it was a participation in the divine life itself, a type of deity mimesis.\textsuperscript{20} One of Cosimo’s panegyrists spelled it out directly:

Your people see that you appear similar to God (as much as man can). As he rules the universal orb with highest care, highest wisdom, highest justice, and highest piety, just so, everyone knows and experiences your great vigilance, wisdom, justice, and piety.\textsuperscript{21}

Indeed, since God was the perfection of all virtues, any direct attack on them constituted an indirect attack on divine governance. Moreover, Christian theology packed an added punch. Since the best theologians asserted that there was no difference between God’s essence and his existence, God did not simply ‘have’ justice, he ‘was’ justice. He not only ‘had’ peace, he ‘was’ peace. And he not only ‘had’ prudence, he ‘was’ prudence.\textsuperscript{22} Thus, Machiavelli’s impugning of traditional virtue was a bit too much like a direct challenge to the Almighty himself. This was a problem for which Machiavelli simply did not account. Humanists and theologians delivered a third strike to Machiavelli by referencing the lingering providential ideal examined in chapter two: the linkage between the prince’s virtue and the fortune of the republic. This argument was particularly

\textsuperscript{20}Thus, Cosimo’s promotion of his own natural virtue was not, as one recent historian has claimed, a significant shift away from the model of “divine governance” towards a traditional republican (read secular) stance of buon governo, Van Veen, \textit{Cosimo I}, 54, but an attempt to reconcile the two, to prove that divine governance was good governance.

\textsuperscript{21}Ginus, 34v. “Propterea nimirum; quod quemadmodum divinitus dominatum dari hominibus certo sciant; sic te (quantum homini licet) Dei quam simillimu’ esse conspiciunt. Ut summa cura, summa sapientia, summa iustitia, summa pietate, orbem ille universum administrat; sic vigilantissimum, sapientissimum, iustissimum et maxima pietate insignis’ tui te omnes agnoscent et experiantrur.”

\textsuperscript{22}See for instance Musso, 7. “Iddio...non solo ha, ma è somma, e perfetta pace.”
appealing because it seemed to strike Machiavelli on his own ground: the material stability of the state. A fourth blow struck Machiavelli with the very ubiquity with which traditional categories of virtue had been impressed into both popular and elite culture.

While preachers hammered home the ideal of Christian virtue from the pulpit and saintly bishops entrusted it to their confessionals, humanists made it one of their favorite themes and Florentine artists continued to find it a convenient theme for allegorical representation. It even trickled into popular culture itself, as the perpetual war between virtue and vice made its appearance on the piazza during the running of the buffalos, a festival in which the hulking beasts were fashioned into suitable allegorical representation of various vices and then run through the Piazza of Santa Croce hotly pursued by similarly fashioned avatars of virtue stinging them and beating them with rods.

Given moral virtue’s honored place in learned and popular discourse, there is little wonder that Machiavelli’s new pagan virtue found so little traction in Florence. Indeed, Machiavelli’s plea for political realism had the opposite effect, swelling into a backlash of antimachiavellianism, a pervasive Florentine trope that Cosimo’s client scholars mined to its full extent. Cosimo as the answer to Machiavelli worked because Machiavelli’s themes were so recognizable, and because Florentines so desperately wanted to believe Machiavelli wrong. Thus, the third leg of sacral monarchy was built on yet another space of intellectual reconciliation between Christianity and humanism.

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23 In the most public instance, the cardinal and theological virtues were translated onto the less famous south doors of the baptistery by Andrea Pisano in 1330. Gloria Fossi, _Arte a Firenze_ (Firenze: Giunti, 2006), 52.

24 For instance in the trionfal companies. See _Cronaca Fiorentina_, 52.

25 See Mellini, _Raccolto_.

Love the Prince, Fear his Justice: Monarchy, Consent, and Deity Mimes

Was a prince to be more loved or feared? Machiavelli responded that since most men act from fear of punishment rather than from love of the good, the prince must seek first to make his subjects tremble. But just how scandalous was this bold assertion? Almost everyone would have agreed with the underlying principle: the common run of men act more from fear than love. Almost everyone would have agreed that a healthy dose of fear was necessary for civil living. And almost everyone would have agreed that civil governments were responsible for inculcating civil living. Machiavelli’s scandal did not lie in his admonition to fear; it lay in his indifference to using cruelty and injustice to achieve the desired effect. In the *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli famously quipped, “Where the safety of the country depends on a resolution, no questions of justice or injustice, humanity or cruelty, should be allowed to play a part.”

In *The Prince* he wrote, “A prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty.” Early moderns found it quite acceptable, even praiseworthy, to strike dread into the hearts of men. But they found it quite unacceptable to be so frankly cruel or unjust about it. Cosimo untied Machiavelli’s knot by tying fear inseparably to justice, and tying love inseparably to clemency. In this way, he could have it all. Justice legitimized fear as an instrument of government, and Cosimo could claim his subjects’ love for himself. Moreover, as unamiable a figure as the stern duke was, he found it essential to stake his claim to his subjects’ love, at least on the rhetorical level, for both the prince’s justice and the people’s love lay at the very heart of early modern myths of

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political legitimacy, as well as to Cosimo’s image as a citizen prince who ruled by consent. Cosimo thus sent his theorists scampering to claim that justice legitimized fear, that it was of practical utility in running a state, and that a prince should seek to be more loved than feared.

Cosimo never lacked the stomach to turn to the rhetoric of fear. But in this, he was largely uncontroversial. Savonarola himself had said, “there is no animal more evil” than a man who lives without fear of the law, and Cosimo agreed. He even punctuated his own legislation with the Machiavellian-type sentiment, beginning one law with the passage, “His most illustrious and excellent lord Duke is aware that men of modern times abstain from doing evil more from the fear that they have of the penalty than for any virtue or any other respect that moves them.” The law then went on to shore up the loopholes of justice, so that more rigorous justice would produce more effective forms of terror. This rhetoric was apparently not just for public consumption. An anonymous unpublished advice piece also counseled Cosimo to the same thing, and Cosimo obliged, frequently instructing his rectors to kindle the dread of justice in their subjects’ hearts.

Cosimo was well aware that he could not successfully legitimate his real Tuscan state in the way that Machiavelli had legitimated his imaginary one. Rather, he took his cue from Augustine’s imaginary state instead. While giving play to his frequently pessimistic ponderings, Augustine had acknowledged that all polities eventually rest upon a foundation of violence, and he had rather pointedly tagged them all with the

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28 Savonarola, Trattato, 6.
29 Cantini, vol. 1. 313. “Advertendo l'Illustrissimo, et Eccellentissimo Signor Duca di Firenze, qualmente gli Huomini de moderni tempi si astengono dal male operare pel timore, che gl'hanno delle pene, che per alcuna virtù, o altro rispetto che gli muova.”
30 ASFi, Med. 183 c. 289r-292v (Undated, 1539).
title, ‘robber states.’ 

For Augustine, only justice could salvage their legitimacy. As in so many other areas of Christian thought, as went Augustine, so went Florentine humanists. Cosimo’s functionary Giovambattista Capponi cribbed the line for his own legal tract, a work that was of course dedicated to Cosimo. He wrote “justice is the way to conserve human and political conversation without which all the monarchies and republics, and reigns and empires would not be civil conversation but truly robberies, (latrocini).” Augustine, not Machiavelli, remained the authority of choice, and that meant that justice would have to hold an honored place in Cosimo’s discourse, for fear and dread were non-starters without the rhetoric of justice.

Cosimo needed no such tract to inform him that the Augustinian principle of justice provided a far more compelling model of legitimacy for his subjects and functionaries than Machiavelli’s *ragion di stato*. Justice did hold an honored place in Cosimo’s own discourse from the beginning, on his lips at every important moment of his reign: at his election to the ducal chair, his wedding ceremony, and his consecration as grand duke. Shortly after his ascension, he sent a circular to his local rectors promising to “keep justice in its honored grade,” while to others he claimed that justice was, “above every other thing, desired and venerated by us, since we know that it is the principal foundation of every good, and so acceptable to the lord our God.”

The rhetoric of justice was not just for his propagandists, Cosimo knew how to speak that language as well.

32 Capponi, 4r. “el modo di conservare la humana et politica conversatione sanza la quale tutte la monarchia et le republiche, regni imperii non civile conversatione ma veri latrocini certamente sarebbono.”
33 For the respective events see respectively, Richelson, 47; Minor; and Pietrosanti, 86.
34 ASFi, Med. 182 c. 1v (January 15, 1537).
35 ASFi, Med. 182 c. 59r-59v (June 15, 1537). “sopra ogni altra cosa desiderate et venerato atteso esser il principale fundamento de ogni summo bene et tanto piu accetta /a/ nostro s-ri Idio.”
However, there was no propaganda value in justice unless it was equitable justice. Even unbiased accounts are in agreement that Cosimo’s sword fell relatively equally on the heads of all, with no respect to wealth, rank, or title.\textsuperscript{36} The closer the relation, the better the propaganda value. The idea had its precedents. Florentines celebrated the just exemplars from classical antiquity primarily for delivering up those closest to them, even for casting their own children into the jaws of the law.\textsuperscript{37} Cosimo certainly played at that type of justice on paper. For instance, when trying to confirm his son Giovanni as Archbishop of Pisa, he once wrote to the pope, “I am most resolute that if Giovanni does not hold the life that is suitable for a good priest, I will not only not let him continue to advance in that vocation but rather completely remove him from it.”\textsuperscript{38} On occasion, Cosimo had to put words into practice. Early in his reign, he sent his imperial ambassador Giovanni Bandini to his dungeons on the account of sodomy.\textsuperscript{39} Years later he sacrificed another one of his own to justice, Giovanni Tovaglia, when he caught him with his hand in the state’s till.\textsuperscript{40} During the 1560s, he gave his secretary Pietro Carnesecchi up to the Inquisition on charges of heresy.\textsuperscript{41} Cosimo was no longer just

\textsuperscript{36} Fedeli, 137-140.
\textsuperscript{37} See Gualandi, \textit{De Optimo}, 52.
\textsuperscript{38} ASFi, Med 24 c. 97 (December 27, 1555). “anzi sendo io risolutissimo che quando mio figlio non tenessi la vita che conviene a buon prete non solo d i lascialo seguitare in tal profession ma del tutto rimuoverlo.”
\textsuperscript{39} The claim made by Cantagalli that the imprisonment of Bandini was a Machiavellian move used to punish the unfortunate ambassador for attempting to ransom the life of Filippo Strozzi years earlier does not fit Cosimo’s own stated sentiments, nor would it have followed the advice of Machiavelli, who cautioned princes not to wait on administering justice, but rather have all the bloody business done at once. Fedeli, 140.
\textsuperscript{40} Most modern treatments have made this out to be a Machiavellian move \textit{par excellence}; a salve to Pius V in order to get crowned grandduke. But this assumes that Carnesecchi’s guilt or innocence was all the same to a religiously tolerant Cosimo. However, the idea that Cosimo was religiously tolerant is rather anachronistic, and Carnesecchi was undoubtedly guilty of heresy. Thus, the obvious and often overlooked explanation for Cosimo’s deliverance of Carnesecchi was that he simply came to believe that Carnesecchi was guilty.
playing. When his auditor Torelli delayed a case involving a poor widow who had a suit against Cosimo’s majordomo, Cosimo railed:

This gives us cause to think that you do not esteem my honor much, which consists in doing justice equally; and moreover, it is a heavy charge against you, since everyone should say that you do not expedite the case because it concerns my majordomo, rather get on with it, and give justice to whomever it rightfully belongs. And remember to terminate those cases that concern my servants with more speed than you have heretofore done...doing justice to whomever it belongs, without respect of persons.42

Only in rare cases does political rhetoric match up so neatly to political reality; this was why Cosimo’s eulogists applauded his stubborn refusal to play favorites as his most singular heroic virtue.

Making no distinction of clientage or kinship was closely followed in importance by making no distinction of wealth; the scales of justice should not be toppled by the gold of rich men. For this reason, Giovambattista Capponi made much of the “not little terror,”43 with which Cosimo castigated magistrates who allowed poorer claimants bled out of their cases with endless delays and prorogations. To the same end, Pier Paolo Vettori eulogized:

But that Justice, which not without reason in the guise of a certain star has been called light of the other virtues, was most cared for by him over every other thing, and revered, so that all were held in the same grade without difference, neither did anything avail in his court, neither grace or curse, since he esteemed the poor men and ignoble in the same way as he did the rich and the noble.44

42 Cited in Anzilotti, 126. “Ciò ci dà causa prima a pensar che voi stimate poco l’onor nostro, che consiste in far giustizia egualmente; e inoltre gran carico a voi, per doversi dir da ognuno che per essere essa causa con il nostro maiordomo voi non la spediate, anzi ci andiate con rispetto per fare giustizia a chi l’ha...E ricordatevi-termina- in causa, che tocchino a’ nostri servitori spedirle di qui innanzi con più prestezza...facendo giustizia a chi l’ha, senza rispetto.”

43 Capponi, 7v-8r. “non poco terrore.”

44 Piero Vettori, Orazione di M. Piero Vettori, Recitata nell’essequie del Serenissimo Cosimo de’Medici, Grnd Duca di Toscana, Nella Chiesa di San Lorenzo (Firenza: Marescotti, 1574), unpaginated. ”Ma quella giustizia, la quale non senza cagione, à guisa di una certa stella è stata delle altre virtù chiamata luce, sopra ogni cosa fu da lui sempre attesa, et riverita, imperoche e’ furono in grado medesimo tenuti tutti, et senza differenza, ne valse appo lui alcuna cosa, ne grazia, ne disdetta, facendo stima degli huomini poverelli, et ignobil nel medesimo modo, com de’ricchi, et de’nobili, et senzache vi fosse alcuna cosa differente, à quelli, et al dicidere le loro controversie sincero, et incorrotto se stesso dimostrando.”
Impartial justice was combined with equal fear and terror to all. As the premier legal historian of the age tells us, this was no idle rhetorical exercise; Cosimo really did reorganize Florence’s justice system to offer a “rapid, secure, and impartial justice” for all.\textsuperscript{45}

But despite the legitimizing connotations associated with the virtue of justice, many were still shaken by Machiavelli’s attacks. Was legitimacy all for naught if justice had no use in conserving the realm? Few anti-Machiavellians were ready to just dismiss the Florentine secretary without attempting to carry the battle to his own ground. That made it imperative to show that justice paid off in utility. Of all of the things for which justice was given credit, none was more important than the inculcation of civility. This was a category to which Machiavelli had paid little attention but which was increasingly stressed as a most peculiarly human institution and even an intermediate end towards salvation. Where there was no justice, there could be no civility.\textsuperscript{46} Where there was no civility, there could be no trust. Where there was no trust, there could be no economy. Where there was no economy, the prince had no security. Gualandi quoted Cyprian by writing:

\begin{quote}
The Justice of the king is the peace of the people, the safeguard of the patria, the immunity of the plebs, the furnishing of goods of the people, the care of the feeble, the joy of man, the temperament of the air, the serenity of the sea, the fecundity of the land, the solace of paupers, the heredities of son, and even the hope of future beatitude.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{45} Marrara, 34.
\textsuperscript{46} As Cosimo remarked, the Duke of Piombino does no justice, and his people “live like beasts.” Cosimo I, \textit{Lettere}, 86.
\textsuperscript{47} Gualandi, \textit{De Optimo}, 47. The quote from Cyprian reads, “\textit{Iustitia Regis pax est populorum, tutamen patriae, immunitas plebis, munimentum gentis, cura languorum, gaudium hominum, termperies aeris, serenitas maris, terrae foecunditas, solatium pauperum, haereditas filiorum, et sibimetipsis spes futurae beatitudinis.”
Natural and supernatural elements were inextricably bound up here, but justice’s importance to commerce, industry, and wealth is played here entirely on the ground of practical utility. This purely natural utility is echoed in Ammirato, who wrote of Cosimo:

> a great sign of his justice was the ability to freely go through his dominion day and night, not finding any who would give you trouble or impede your way and hinder you, the power to be able to enjoy your goods, and not have to fear soldiers, courtiers, judges and notaries.  

And Bernardo Segni wrote that Cosimo’s efficient administration of justice was responsible for the returning age of abundance, since each was able to ply their trade diligently, without fear of confiscation or robbery. Thus, the justice of the prince was the wealth of the land. The wealth of the land was the security of the throne. Justice, contra Machiavelli, had an absolutely useful function.

On another account, Cosimo’s political philosophers countered the embattled Florentine secretary by upholding the prohibition against cruelty and injustice, arguing that it was the surest way to a prince’s ruin. The formula was simple. Cruelty and injustice led to the people’s hatred. Hatred led to the loss of the realm. Citing Sallust, Gualandi wrote, “the reign is transferred from person to person on account of injurias.” And Brucioli gave cruelty pride of place in his reasons why rulers’ lost their realm.

Puccini eulogized:

> Cosimo had justice always as a companion, rather as a guide and lord. Indeed, prudence, which sees the causes for which reigns and lordships are kept or fall,

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48 Ammirato, *Oratione*, 48v. “il potere di giorno, et di notte liberamente andare per questo Dominio; il non trovare che ti dia noia, et che il tuo camino ti impedisca, e t’intralci, il poter goder de’ tua beni, e del tuo havere senza temer del Soldato, del Cortigiano, del Giudice, et del Notaio, il non ti far bisogno, nonche con danari, et con favori, ma ne pure con le piacevoli apparenze d’honori, et di servitù di comprar la tua ragione, et il tuo diritto.”


50 Gualandi, *De Optimo*, 18. “Regnum a gente in gentem transfertur propter inijustitas et injuriias.”

51 Brucioli, 227.

52 On Puccini’s career see Lamberini.
would be worth nothing if justice did not appropriately retain or chase those things away so that one lives reasonably, justly, and legitimately.  

Rosello expressed his own opinion in dialectic form, “if you cite me six hundred examples, you will never be able to persuade me that cruelty is a better way to conserve reigns than clemency. And if you will examine history, you will find few who have succeeded by using cruelty, like Cambise and Sylla.” Thus, Rosello not only accused Machiavelli of shoddy political thought but of rotten history as well. In that light, he justified Cosimo’s rigor by claiming, “I will not say he used cruelty, but rather severe justice.”

Justice not only legitimized, it divinized as well. As Gualandi argued, the prince was like the scalpel in the hand of God’s vengeance, drawing in the lineaments of divine law on earth. To that end, the prince needed to conform his own law to the divine law. As Gualandi quoted Augustine, “every law is an inane censure if it does not bear the image of the divine laws.” Thereby, legislation became yet another route to apotheosis. Puccini eulogized:

Much luckier are those who (like those under Cosimo’s rule) are ruled with good and right laws, and the author of those laws should be lifted high with the greatest praises. With good reason the ancients called lawgivers sons of Gods, because in laws, man is rendered more similar to God, for God is the principal of every order and every right.

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53 Bernardo Puccini, Oratione nella funerabile pompa del Serenissimo Cosimo dei Medici Gran Duca di Thoscanz di Bernardo Puccini, agli Ilustrim Signori honorati Gentihuomini della corte. (Magliabecchiana 27: 13), 4v. “elle havesse per compagna la Giustitia anzi per guida, et per signora, avenga che nulla gioverebbe che la prudenza vedesse le cagioni per le quali i regni et le signorie si ribbono /o/ caggiono, se la giustitia non le ritenesse /o/ scacciasse, accio ragionevolmente, giustamente, et legittimamente si viva.”

54 Rosello, 14v. “Se mi citaste sei cento esempij, non mi potreste persuadere, che la crudeltà fosse piu atta à conservare I regni, che la clementia e se vorrete discorrere per le historie, vi trovarete pochi, a’ quali sia riuscito bene usare crudeltà, come avvenne à Cambise, et à Silla.”

55 Gualandi, De Optimo, 53. “sic iste iustississimis aeterni Dei legibus conformari studeat.”

56 Ibid., “omnium legum est inanis censura (augustinus teste) nisi Divinae legis imaginem.”

57 Malaspina, 198r-198v. “Molto più avventurosi quelli che si reggono con buone, et dritte leggi, et alto si debbono con somme lodi levare gli Autori di esse; onde à gran ragione furono da gli antichi
So law giving was yet another form of deity mimesis, and Cosimo did not refrain from mimicking the deity in his legal judgments. For instance, while writing to explain why he was denying the request to have goods reinstated to the family of a certain rebel, Cosimo seized this stance of deity mimesis by retorting:

We have responded on this subject in the past days at more length to M. Bernardo your brother on the same headings that are contained in your letter of the sixth of September. Thus, with this we will only say that as we have not let ourselves be conquered by the courtesy and friendship of he that has faithfully served and obeyed us, so it seems to agree with the dignity of our office to proceed with justice against others that in breaking the divine and human laws have sought to offend not only their lord but also their patria and relatives, as did Alberto your brother. And since in so wickedly committing his act, God has given his person the penalty that he merited, so all the more is it clear that we are right to give sentence against his memory. Since he has been justly condemned, his goods and substance will be applied to our fisc.⁵⁸

Soon after this incident, Cosimo’s auditor Polverini wrote legislation making the confiscation of rebel goods standard practice. Cosimo pursued this law in the teeth of his counselors’ wishes; and in fact, the idea was strictly contrary to the Machiavellian injunction against putting one’s hands on the goods of one’s subjects.⁵⁹ But as we can see, the measure was not just about filling his empty treasury with the booty of unfortunate rebels, it was also about enacting justice in parallel with the divine, so that

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⁵⁸ ASFi, Med 10, 334r-335r (July 29, 1547). “Habbiamo risposto alli giorni passati assai largamente à M. Bernardo vostro Fratello, sopra li med-mi capi che si contengono anche nella lettera vostra de vi di Settembre. Però con questa vi diramo solamente; Che così come non ci siamo mai lassati ne lasseremo vincere di cortesia et d'amorevolenza da quelli, che ci hanno fidelmente servito et obbedito: così ancora ci è parso che convenga alla dignità dell'ufficio nostro di procedere con giustizia contra li altri, che sprezzate le divine et humane leggi. Hanno cerco di offendere non solamente noi loro signore, ma ancora la patria et li congiunti suoi, come fece Alberto vostro fratello, alla persona del quale havendo iddio N.S. in quello atto, che sceleramente commetteva, dato quella pena che meritava, Dimostrò ancora à noi quanto dovessimo con ragione fare contro alla sua memoria, quale essendo per ciò giustamente dannata ne vengono in consequentia applicati al nostro Fisco li beni et substantie sue.”

⁵⁹ Galluzzi, 145-146. For Machiavelli’s quip see Machiavelli, Il Principe, 111-112. “above all, the prince needs to keep his hands off his subjects goods, because a man will sooner forget the death of his father than the loss of his patrimony.” “Ma sopratutto astenersi da la roba di altri; perché li uomini sdimenticano più presto la morte del padre che la perdita del patrimonio.”
the long arm of the prince’s vendetta could, godlike, extend even to the memory of the offender.

To fully imitate the deity on this score, Cosimo needed to claim exactly the quality that Machiavelli said was so impossible: to be both feared and loved. Displacing the concept of fear onto justice was a big step forward. Winning love by clemency was another. Love the prince, fear his justice. But for legitimacy and divinity’s sake, love was the more essential element, a point on which Cosimo’s humanists took Machiavelli squarely by the horns. The wisdom of Patritius held, "the Prince becomes a tyrant when his citizens are forced by violence to serve him and is a just prince when by love they obey him." The republican Brucioli agreed; legitimacy could only be won by the love of the subjects:

A secure and just dominion is a clear and manifest sign that a king has been constituted by a people and also loved by them. Or still yet because the people have submitted willfully, and they neither can, know, or want to be ruled in any other way, by any other dominion, being thus accustomed to obey and be governed. And only these two can truly be called principates, and all the other types of perpetual domination are unjust tyranny.

Rosello wrote:

When the Prince does not injure his subjects, does not steal their goods, and does everything with right on his side, those that want to live peacefully love him with all their heart and wicked men can do nothing but complain. But then the prince cannot be hated, because he does nothing to make himself hateful, even though he is feared because he does not pardon delinquents.

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60 Patritius, 23. “il principe diventa Tiranno, quando i suoi cittadini sono forzati con violenza servirlo: et è principe giusto, quando per amore l'ubbidisco.”

61 Brucioli, 212-213. “E che pertanto anche questa sia sicura e giusta dominazione ne è chiaro e manifesto segno che da’ loro popoli successivamente sono costituiti re e da quegli amati, e ancora perché volentieri a quegli si sottopongono i cittadini, né si possono, sanno o vogliono reggere altrimenti senza una tale dominazione, essendo già assuefatti a obbedire e a essere governati. E questi due solamente si possono con vero nome di principe chiamare, e tutte l’altre specii di dominazioni perpetue sono ingiuste tirannidi.” For Brucioli’s repeated and unsuccessful attempts to woo Cosimo's favor, see Giorgio Spini, *Tra Rinascimento e Riforma: Antonio Brucioli* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1940).

62 Rosello, 19v. “Quando il Prencipe non ingiuria I soggetti, non rapisce I loro beni, et fa il tutto evidenti ragioni, coloro, che bramano di viver quietamente, l’aman di cuore; et gli scelerati non hanno di
How was this love to be garnered? Rulers were supposed to learn from a page in divine governance. If fear was to be inculcated through justice, then love was to be won by the virtues of mercy and clemency, subsets of the cardinal virtue of temperance. Given that, Machiavelli's injunction to a new prince to be cruel, swift, and bloody upon taking the throne struck at the very heart of the juridical basis of the Christian state. This situation put Christian political theorists in a mad rush to reassert the traditional position and reiterate the saintly Archbishop Antoninus’ paraphrase of King Solomon, "Mercy and truth guard the king and clemency strengthen his seat." In 1562, one of Cosimo’s more classicizing panegyricists took his cue from Seneca rather than Solomon, arguing to much the same effect, “Nothing is more efficacious in safeguarding the reign and holding it stable, nothing is better or more apt to winning the benevolence of the city and more easily holding it than clemency.” Cosimo’s ambassador to Venice, the polymath Cosimo Bartoli, took on Machiavelli’s challenge more directly, arguing that princes succeed best in keeping their reigns:

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every time that they resolve to be more loved than feared, and whenever they remember they need to be more benign than severe fathers of their people, because from the love that they carry to their subjects will be born the desire that their subjects will have to benefit them and from this desire will be born the actions from which will be born the universal love of the people towards them and the people’s desire of the prince’s safety and happiness. 65
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63 Antonino, 69r. “La misericordia et la verità guardano il re et la clementia fortifica la sua sedia.”
64 Gualandi, De Optimo, 105-106. “Nihil efficacius regnum tuetur, ac stabile tenet, nihil melius, nihil aptius ad veram civium benevolentia conciliandam, atque diutissimè retindendam, ispa clementia.”
65 Bartoli, Discorsi, 321. “et questo gli riuscirà ogni volta che essi si risolveranno di volere essere piu amati che temuti, et che essi si ricorderanno di havere ad essere benigni piu che severi padri de loro popoli; perché dallo amore che ei porteranno a sudditi, nascerà il desiderio che eglin’haran di beneficiarli, et dal desiderio la azione, della quale nascerà lo universale amor de popoli verso di loro, et il desiderio della salute, et felicita di quella.”
A 1546 eulogy by one of Cosimo's most trusted humanists for one of Cosimo's most trusted advisors gave Machiavelli another thrashing. Arguing that at the time of the Medici restoration, the dearly departed Francesco Campana had served the new lords well by winning more friends than enemies with his clemency, a eulogist told his audience that Campana often reminded Duke Alessandro:

> If enemies by fearing him hold him in hatred, his friends, loving him, will hope from him every good. Reminding him often of the opinion and mind that Julius Cesar had on this issue: sooner wanting to obtain greatness for himself by pardoning those that had offended him than persecuting them (as he would have been able) and vindicating every injury.  

Caesar, of course, was the preeminent example of the magnanimous and clement winner of allies, and his assassination at the hands of so-called friends was a fact quite conveniently overlooked. Finally, Baccio Baldini appealed to clemency’s utility in his panegyric to the same virtue when he claimed, “from this high virtue are thus conserved the reigns and the provinces, since when the prince bestows clemency on those who have not sinned maliciously, one comes to render the souls of the subjects most devoted towards their princes.”  

Here then Cosimo’s humanists took the fight to Machiavelli’s own ground, drumming up the same sort of utility for mercy as they had for justice.

The need to make this propaganda explicitly refer to Cosimo was felt as a pressing itch, but it was difficult to scratch because the unbending duke did not always deal his panegyricists a strong hand. For example, when Cosimo’s spies foiled Pandolfo

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66 Giovanbatista Cini, Orazione recitata da Giovanbatista Cini nell'Accademia Fiorentina publicamente nel Morte di Messer Francesco Campana (BNCF, Magliabecchiana XXVII c. 2), 9r-9v. “dicendo che se e nimici col temerlo l'havevano in odio, che gl'amici amandolo spererebbono da lui ogni bene, ricordandogli spesso l'opinione, del'animo che haveva sopra questo Julio Cesare, il quale piu tosto volse procacciarsi grandezza, perdonando a color che l'havevevano offeso, che perseguitantogli (come harebbe potuto) vendicarsi di tutte l'ingiurie.”

67 Baldini, Panegirico, 5v. “Da questo così alta vertù adunque son conservati i regni, et le province, perciò che giudicandosi per lei benignamente questo gli non malignamente peccano, si viene a render gli animi de i soggetti divotissimi verso i principi loro.”
Pucci’s plot against the duke’s life in 1559, no rebel neck was spared. Cosimo’s close advisor Bartoli made the event an occasion to remark on Cosimo’s clemency anyways, arguing in a rather clumsy sleight of hand:

Though Pandolfo and the others that were taken were made what the due of justice desired, His Excellency nonetheless pardoned the goods of Pandolfo, letting his children have them and the goods of some of the others, with his usual clemency, castigating sooner with clemency than with rigidity.68

This pardoning of goods may have actually have been one of Cosimo’s most Machiavellian moves; Machiavelli thought men would sooner forgive the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony. Nevertheless, Bartoli parleyed the example into an exposition on ruling by virtue rather than mere astutia alone. In a dedication to Cosimo, Fabio Bentovoglio made the point again by comparing Cosimo’s mercy to Augustus’ mercy, “the greater (Augustus) grew in greatness, so much more was he tempered and benign: just the same, the greater Cosimo grew in fortune, the more he has used beautiful acts of clemency and goodness.”69 And Bentovoglienti claimed that in this way Cosimo had obtained to both love and fear; the good loved him, while the evil feared him.70 Vieri bespoke the same sentiments, claiming that Cosimo was a new Solomon:

In clemency then, which often needs to accompany the distributive penalties of justice, this our Great Prince has been even more memorable, using it with those for whom it was appropriate, such as those who in public or private injury have erred, not so much because of an evil soul, but because they were led by some great passion or deception, or because they felt the need to flee some great ill or dishonor. With these, his Excellency has used justice and clemency together.71

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68 Bartoli, Discorsi, 321. “Et se bene di Pandolfo et de gli altri che furon presi fu fatto quel che voleva il debito della iustizia; perdonò nondimeno S.E. et a beni di Pandolfo rilasciandoli a figliuoli, et alla roba di alcuni altri, con la sua solita clementia, gastigando piu tosto con clementia che con rigidità, quegli che havevano errato.”

69 Bentovoglienti, 1v. “esso quanto fu in maggior grandezza, tanto piu fu temperato e benigno: cosi ella quanto é stata in maggior fortuna, tanto ha usato piu belli atti di clementia e di bontá.”

70 Ibid., 9r. “è stato da rei temuto, e da buoni amato come giustissimo.”

71 Vieri, Orazione, 9r-9v “Nella clemenza poi, la quale molte volte dee stare accompagnata con la Giustizia distribuita delle pene, è stato ancora memorabile questo nostro Gran Principe, usandola con chi si conveniva, come sono coloro, i quali nelle ingiurie publiche, ò private hanno errato, non tanto per loro
By the time of his funeral, the plots against his life had been conveniently dropped from memory, and Cosimo appeared as a legitimate and beloved prince, a fact which he repeatedly demonstrated, as Davanzati eulogized, by leaving his "bodyguards and going through the city alone, like a true and legitimate king, guarded by the benevolence of his subjects." In Cosimian mythology, mercy had won and love had prevailed. Machiavelli had been thrown down from his rhetorical pedestal by the living example of Cosimian virtue.

Moreover, mercy was just as surely necessary to claims of divinity as justice was. Cosimo’s panegyricists and humanists were not long in promoting it. Rosello wrote: “in every way, clemency needs to conquer cruelty, otherwise the Prince would not resemble God, of whom he is the living image, since we see God use pity towards us sinners, whose sin renders us worthy of eternal death” Gaulandi wrote, “Can it happen that a clement prince is not loved by all? When he robes himself in clemency, he shows himself to the citizens to be such a man who desires to be divine himself.” And as Baldini noted in his panegyric to clemency, clemency was “more than human,” since, “as the Platonists say, one becomes by clemency, similar to God.” Bartoli weighed in by saying:

A Prince should not think to anything else but to order his business and comport himself toward his subjects in that same manner in which he would like God to
comport himself towards him, and if he wants that God be implacable towards his own errors, even to his ultimate ruin, so then can he be towards his subjects. Moreover, there will never be a prince, nor ever was there one, that was completely shielded from the wrath of God, and if God does not punish the errors and defects of men immediately, but rather is benign and lets himself be placated, is it not even more reasonable that a prince, who is no more than man, should also pardon those who error? And exercise his Power and Authority with composed, benign, and tranquil soul?

Justice had its own logic of deity mimesis and so had mercy.

But if justice and mercy were two jousting aspects of the divine nature, the real proof of princely divinity was the ability reconcile the two, since for early modern Florentines the resolution of these two contradictory attributes was a central, if not the most central, characteristic of God. Again and again, pious listeners were told that God’s infinite justice and infinite mercy had been reconciled on the cross, since Christ’s sacrifice paid the due that man could not effect himself. Thus, Cosimo needed to show some similar sort of superhuman balancing act. Rosello lent him the rhetoric, “We see Duke Cosimo carry himself in such a guise that his subjects fear him, but they do not hate him, just as God the father is feared but not hated. And he accomplishes this by

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76 Bartoli, *Discorsi*, 291. “Ne doverebbe un Principe pensare ad altro che ad ordinarsi et portarsi non altrimenti verso i suoi sudditi che in quella maniera, nella quale ci vorrebbe che Dio si portassi verso di lui, et se ei volessi che Dio fussi implacabile verso i suoi errori, fino all’ultima sua rovina, di calo egli. Oltre a che non sarà ne fu mai Principe alcuno si grande che possa essere del tutto sicuro dalla ira di Dio; et se Dio non punisce subito gli errori, et i difetti de gli huomini, anzi è benigno et si lascia placare, non è egli piu ragionevole che un Principe che non è altro che un huomo, perdoni ancora egli a gli errori de gli huomini? et eserciti con animo posato, benigno, et tranquillo lo Imperio, et la autorità sua?”

maintaining a clement and severe justice.” Salviati echoed the sentiment. In his oration for the coronation, he remarked that Cosimo was “so just in his clemency, or so clement in his justice,” that it was a “divine, rather than human virtue.”

In all this, Cosimo’s humanists were only echoing the duke’s own self-promotion. Cosimo knew very well how to strike a clement pose. For instance, he once responded to a supplication written by Cardinal Carpi by boasting, "I have never denied grace to citizens who, having repented of their past errors, had asked it, except for those who willfully had wanted to sin and only had recourse to me when they had no other choice." Indeed, he filled his responses to supplications for mercy with phrases such as this, "we will be satisfied and content that justice always has its due and honored place as long as it always accompanied by some honest and justified mercy and pity." He also knew how to make mercy look like deity mimesis. Informing the commissary of Borgo San Lorenzo that he would agree to cut a certain offender’s monetary penalty in half, he

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78 Rosello, 19v. “veggiamo il Duca Cosimo portarsi in guisa, che i suoi lo temono, ma non gli portano odio. Si come Iddio, et il padre, il quale è temuto, et non però odiato. Et questo gli riesce mantendo una clemente, et severa giustizia.”

79 Salviati, unpaginated. “si giusto nella clemenza, ò si clemente nella giustizia” that it was “anzi divine, che humane vertù.”

80 ASFi, Med. 208, c. 98r-98v (October 19, 1558). “Io non ho mai denegata la gratia à quei miei cittadini, che col pentirsi delli errori passati, me l’hanno domandata, eccetto pero ad alcuni, che volontariamente hanno voluto peccare, et ricorrere di poi quando non hanno potuto far altro.”

81 ASFi, Med. 182 c. 250r-250v (March 13, 1538). “Noi ci satisferemo et contenteremo sempre che la giustitia habbi il suo debito et honorato luogo purche lei sia sempre accompagnata con qualche honesta et giustificata misericordia et pieta,” in response to letter about condemned simone cinelli. See also ASFi, Med. 183 c. 9v-10r (May 22, 1538), informing his vicar not to “non si escha del dritto corso della debita iustitia accompagnata dalla misericordia.”
Figure 3: Mater Misericordia Bigallo
justified his decision with a short quip from Psalm 32, recited in a passable blend of Latin and vulgar, "because the land is full of the mercy of the lord, moved by efficacious prayers."

The line had particular resonance in Florence because it was on the impresa that the Bigallo’s Mater Misericordia image held in her hands while her cloak enfolded the city of Florence. In appealing to this psalm, Cosimo appealed to a powerfully emotive Florentine trope.

Cosimo even knew how to take on Machiavelli more directly. Writing on the subject of the punishment of the rebel Sienese in 1547, he petitioned his brother-in-law:

I will not fail also to remind you with due reverence that needing to castigate the delinquents, his majesty (The Emperor), whether he leave that city in its usual liberty or put it in subjection, in either case ought to lean towards clemency and grace rather than the rigor of justice since the thing is such an old case. I do not say then that he should leave unpunished the gravest wrongs and demerits, rather that he castigate a smaller number than he could, because the castigation of a few, beyond being an example to others, will cause them to stand in fear and at least will not incite a general hatred, and then, the remission and grace of the many will generate in their souls a love towards him.

There could be no more explicit rejection of Machiavellian cruelty. There could be no more explicit rejection of the Machiavellian preference for fear over love. And there could be no more explicit rejection of the Machiavellian platitude that fear and love could not practically exist together.

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82 ASFi, Med. 182, 261r. "quia misericordia Domini plena est terra mossi alle prece efficace."
83 ASFi, Med. 10, c. 226r-231v (June 25, 1547). “Non lasserò anco di ricordare con debito reverentia (havendosi à venire al’ castigo de delinquenti) che la Maesta Sua, lassando quella città in la solita liberta, ö vero mettendola in subiezione, nell’un caso et nell’altro debbia piu presto pendere nella Clementia et nella gratia che nel’rigore della Justitia, poi che la Cosa è tanto invecchiata, non dico gia di lassar’ impuniti e’ delicti e demeriti loro piu gravi, ma fare il Castigo in manco numero che si puo, et non nella moltitudine, perché il Castigo di pochi oltre che sera exemplare alli altrj, e fara star ognuno in timore, almeno non inciterà l’odio universale, et di poi la remissioni et la gratia di molti generera amore nelli animi loro verso di quella.”
Like all his contemporaries, Machiavelli assumed that the Greeks and Romans had been profoundly religious, albeit mired in the stink of their own peculiar superstitions. Moreover, like his contemporaries, he assumed religion to be a constitutive part of a stable reign. But Machiavelli twisted the received wisdom all out of recognition. Whereas medieval intellects had salvaged the state as a handmaiden to religion, Machiavelli salvaged religion as a handmaiden to the state. But having taken up this principle, he favored a religion of strength over a religion of weakness, a religion of glory over a religion of humility, and a religion that shed blood over a religion that let itself be bled. In short, his religious tastes tended decidedly for the pagan over the Christian. On this account Machiavelli sarcastically quipped:

Our religion, having shown us the truth and the true way, makes us esteem less the honor of the world. Whereas the gentiles esteemed honor much and thinking glory to be the highest good were more ferocious in their actions…And if our religion asks that one have strength in oneself, it wishes rather that it be apt to suffer rather than to do strong things. It seems to me that this way of living has rendered the world weak and given it in prey to wicked men.

The old pagan rites had bred strong stock, distinguished by feats of war. Bloody rites had inured Roman boys to violence, blood, and destruction, while the admittedly fictitious auguries kept the Roman legions united in fatalistic belief in their own invincibility. All in all, Machiavelli’s healthy republic demanded more masculine and martial religious rites than Christianity had to offer.

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84 See Machiavelli, *I Discorsi*, chapters XI-XIV.
85 Machiavelli, *I Discorsi*, 381. “Avendoci la nostra religione mostro la verità e la vera via, ci fa stimare meno l’onore del mondo: onde I Gentili, stimandolo assai, ed avendo posto in quell il sommo bene, erano nelle azioni loro più feroci…E se la religione nostra richiede che tu abbi in te forza, vuole che tu sia atto a patire più che a fare una cosa forte. Questo modo di vivere, adunque, pare che abbi renduto il mondo debole, e datolo in preda algi uomini scelarati.”
The Christian humanists at Cosimo’s court found this highly objectionable, convinced as they were that Machiavelli had mistaken the reason for war, the reason for religion, and for that matter, the reason for civil society itself. Machiavelli sought the primary end of the state in stability, and to his way of thinking, stability required strength. Stability required a people of military might and perpetual belligerence. Traditional Christian politics sought the end of civil society in peace, wedding gentleness to the age’s effervescent manhood. Peace primarily required the instruction in civil living that was best inculcated by religion, primarily Christian religion. It is not hard to see then, how these variant first principles translated into widely variant attitudes toward the relationship between religion and war.

The Medici had never been soldiers. For decades, the family had championed the Christian ideal of peace. For instance, in 1530, during the restoration, Lorenzo Martelli wrote these lines about Pope Clement VII:

Many and many years ago; this
Our Sweet blessed peace
As the other virtues; too much scorned
Would have returned to the supernal cloister
If he, showing us the high eternal power of heaven,
Had not left to you Clement, the ruling of the impious and fallacious world
Saying, I give to you my peace

Now, from every high country, every bank,
Chased here, he comes
And you, Florence, are kept happy by the clement Pastor
having chosen you for a nest.

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86 Religion was considered a virtue, in that it was a subset of justice, in this case, rendering God his due.
87 Lorenzo di Lodovico Martelli, “Trionfo della Pace,” Canzoni, O Vero Mascherate Carnascialesche, collected and edited by Paolo dell'Ottonaio, Canon of San Lorenzo (Fiorenza: Torrentino, 1562), 126. “Molti e molti anni son, che questa nostra; Dolce Pace gradita; Come l' altre Vertù, troppo schernita, Seria tornata alla Superna choistra; Se chi, del ciel, ne mostra; Alto valore eterno; Non havesse al governo; Lasciato Lei, del mondo empio, e fallace; Dicendo, Io dono à Voi della mia pace. Hor d'ogni alto paese, d'ogni Lido; Qui, scacciata sen viene; E te Fiorenza; ù lieta la ritiene ; Il Clemente pastor, scielt'ha per nido.”
For centuries the Medici had been offering themselves as the only element able to put an end to faction and war in Florence, this to justify their ever more blatant encroachments on Florentine liberties. Religion would continue to be an essential element of this rhetoric.

Even so, Machiavelli had raised the issue of war, peace, and religion in a particularly damning way for Christian politics. Had the demasculinizing of the old Roman virtue of fortitude and the meddlesome hand of the Roman church made Italy a prey to evil men? Recent history would have testified forcefully on Machiavelli’s behalf, with German, Spanish, and French armies crisscrossing the peninsula, leaving behind a swath of destruction. Was it not then essential that the prince cultivate the military arts? Should the old religion be scrapped for a more martial one? How could humanists and Christians alike respond to Machiavelli’s seemingly unanswerable critique of the emasculating effects of Christianity? The answer in lay in playing up the bellicose aspects of Christianity and by returning to a familiar voice; the answer lay in returning to Augustine and the just war tradition that had served Western Christendom for centuries.

Recognizing the state’s need of security, Augustine had argued that war could be justified, and even meritable, if waged for a just cause, with right intent, and by the proper authority. Medieval and early modern warlords had continued training their hands in the belligerent arts, imbuing the military profession with religious sanctification by upholding the maxim that Machiavelli had so outrageously ignored: there could be no cause for war but peace.

This maxim was a difficult resolution of a difficult dichotomy, which Machiavelli’s challenge pressed upon Cosimo with sudden urgency. Nevertheless,
Cosimo set out quite consciously to prove that he was a prince who could reconcile the contradiction. Gualandi put the case forward with reference to the Davidic ideal, “We do not condemn your armies; otherwise, the condemnation would lay upon the head of David, the most bellicose prophet king, nevertheless most beloved of God.” Gualandi then echoed the just war theory of Augustine, underscoring that, “wars are thus to be undertaken…for this reason, so that that when the war was over one might live in peace, for it is certain that wars are justified when waged by a just edict, for recovering territory, or repulsing the causes of injustice.” Augustinian warfare still had legs, and with the appropriate caveats, the soldier prince could still be a holy figure, both wreaking justice upon his foes and offering a lasting peace to the land.

Cosimo had little difficulty advancing the idea that he was a man of war. A military lineage, a citizen militia, a crusading order, ducats for Emperor’s wars, ducats for the French civil wars, and one local war carried to a successful conclusion: all these testified to Cosimo’s military prowess, and all these have misleadingly suggested to historians that Cosimo was a land-hungry rabble-rouser, willing to offer his sword at any opportunity in order to expand the confines of his own narrow borders. There is no doubt that Cosimo relished his role as the new strong man of Italy. Moreover, Cosimo’s bellicosity was continually linked to Christian religion. The eulogies directed to his zeal for war primarily trumpeted religious themes: his formation of the crusading order, his funding of the Imperial religious wars and French civil wars, or his participation in the

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88 Gualandi, De Optimo, 77. “Vestram igitur militiam non damnamus, alioqui reprobandum bellicosississimus David, Regius vates, Deo summe charus…”
89 Ibid, 79. “Suscipienda igitur sunt bella…ob hanc causam, ut fine iniuria in pace vivatur. Ceterum bellum iustum est, quod ex edicto geritur, de rebus repetundis, aut propulsandae iniure cause.”
crusade against the infidel Turks at Lepanto. The militant Counter-Reformation religiosity that underscored this cast Cosimo more in the light of a medieval crusading knight than a glory hungry Roman dux.

But Cosimo’s image as a religious warrior was balanced by a role that archival evidence suggests the cautious duke relished even more, peacemaker of Italy. As the Italian wars raged on during the mid sixteenth-century, Cosimo spent much more time attempting to tamp out the fires of war than he did in kindling them. For instance, in 1547 Cosimo urged the emperor not to take military action against rebellious Siena. In 1549, he put his mediating services at the disposal of pope and emperor, hoping to get the old antagonists to reach some sort of accord in Florence. When war threatened again in 1550 between the new Pope Julius III and the departing Farnese, he counseled both sides against recourse to arms, worried that the ensuing war would set all Italy afire. He then privately cautioned the pope against attempting to play one set of barbarians against the other, hoping to forestall Julius from letting the French get another foothold in Italy. A short six years later, another pope was rattling the saber, this time the anti-Spanish Paul IV threatening King Philip, and again Cosimo suggested the issue be resolved peaceably, offering his own services as a mediator. Indeed, Cosimo wanted to wear both hats, the warrior prince who could ensure lasting peace.

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91 ASFi, Med. 10 c. 40r-44v (April 18, 1547).
92 ASFi, Med. 323 c. 43r-43v (September 21, 1549).
93 See ASFi, Med. 323 c. 66r (February 12, 1550). ASFi, Med. 323 c. 103r (May 29, 1550).
94 ASFi, Med. 323 c. 121v-122r (May 4, 1552).
95 ASFi, Med. 323 c. 91v-92r (February 10, 1551).
96 ASFi, Med. 24 c. 145r-145v (July 12, 1556).
Never was this posture more important than during his war with Siena. In the first place, Cosimo was at terrible pains to show that the annexation of Siena was not his casus belli. He had, in fact, refused to move against the unruly neighboring republic several times before events beyond his control forced his hand in 1552, and even on the eve of battle, Cosimo had sought to avoid open confrontation by signing a non-aggression treaty with the French, a move which one particularly unsympathetic biographer has attributed to a kind of Machiavellian cunning, but which is more convincingly read as reluctance to upset the balance of power by inviting the French fox into the Italian henhouse. Cosimo was not ready to stake his own state on a foreign war. However, war came against all attempts to forestall it, and when it did, Cosimo—we don’t know how disingenuously—acted as if he entered into it with pangs of bitter remorse. He did not pose as bellicose expansionist, but rather as the Italian liberator from the Gallic menace. For instance, in a letter to a Sienese he assured, “our end in this war is nothing other than to liberate the city from the oppression and servitude of the French, that under the pretext of liberating the state of Siena, desires rather to make it their own and hold it in continuous war.” If the charge did have some truth about it; and if it was true that Cosimo had not just dreamed up this dislike for French intervention in Italy, it nevertheless spoke to the Christian humanist assumption about war as well: war was meant to bring about the end of war.

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96 Besides his aforementioned refusal to intervening in 1547, Cosimo had readied himself to come Siena’s aid against in 1544. ASFi, Med. 5 c. 513r-519r (March 26, 1544).
97 ASFi, Med. 323 91v-92r (Feb 10, 1552).
98 This letter was in repsonse to a request for a safeconduct. ASFi, Med. 202 c. 46r-46v (February 7, 1554). “Certificandolo che il fin nostro dela guerra non è altra che liberarli dalla oppressione et servitu di Franzese che sotto professo di liberar li stati se le fanno proprii et di tengon in continua guerra.”
In addition to this pose, Cosimo did as much as could to separate himself from the vindictive bloodshed that his German mercenaries wreaked on the Sienese. Shortly after hostilities commenced, he wrote to the Sienese captain and reggimento of the people, claiming:

It displeases me much that it is not in my ability to provide that the Emperor’s soldiers not come to make prey and damage (as those from Porto Ercole have written me) in their dominion because with the forces at my disposal, I am not able to prohibit them. As for the Porto Erculanis themselves, let them consider that if it was in my power to restrain the soldiers God willing, they would know in this what they have been able to know in all my other actions; that I have always desired to do them only benefit.  

And his promises were not just promises. No early modern monarch could control the dogs of war once they had been let slip. But Cosimo’s war correspondence is full of exasperation toward his German mercenaries, and anyone whose bad behavior came to the attention of the duke was threatened with sacking, or worse. Writing to Bartolomeo Concini, who was off waging the actual war on Cosimo’s behalf, he ordered:

It is with great sadness that we have heard of the robbery (rubaria) that the army of the Marchese has made in Casole, from which not even the house of God was spared. We do not want these iniquities; when the army is able to sack a town, the churches must be respected, and we desire that the first that dares to make an insult to churches, monasteries, hospitals, and other such places, pays the price of such wickedness with the loss of his head.

99 ASFi, Med. 199 c. 60v (March 2, 1552). “Grato m/e stato di intendere per la lra delle ss.w. dell'ultimo del passato, che le habbino proveduto opportunamente al disordine successo ne giorni passati à portohercole. Di che son stato anco avisato per lettere di Mons. di Thermes, et ne resto con oblgo alle ss.w. et alla sua ancora. Mi dispiace bene che non sia in faculta mia di provvedere, che li soldati Caesarii non venghino à predare et far danni come scriviano che fanno, nel dominio loro, perchè trovandosi con le forze, che gli /e/ noto, non posso io prohibirli che non lo faccino. Come per se stesse lo possano considerare, et volessi dio, che fusse in poter mio di poterci provvedere, perchè cognoscerebbero in questa si come hanno potuto cognoce in tutti le altre actioni mie, ch io ho desiderato sempre di fargli benefiitto.”

100 Cosimo, Lettere, 157. “con nostro molto dolore abbiamo inteso la ruberia che l'ercito del marchese ha fatto in Casole, da cui neanco la casa di Dio è andata esente. Noi non vogliamo queste iniquità; quando l’ercito può dare il sacco, le chiese hanno essere rispettate, et il primo che averà ardire di fare insulto a chiese, monisteri, spedali, et altri tali luoghi, noi vogliamo che paghi la pena di tanta sua malignità con la perdita del capo.”
Cosimo knew the rules of warfare very well, even if his soldiers did not. The warrior prince of peace needed to keep an eye towards the peaceful ends of the war.

His panegyricists set themselves the task of publicizing the message. For instance, Giurgi lauded Cosimo’s knowledge of warfare with a disclaimer, “You see how at the time, he knew the occasion to fight, and you conclude from this that if for the maintenance of the peace, it was necessary to wage war, he would show himself no less of a general than Pirro.” But Giurgi was not content to remain there. Cosimo was greater than ancient generals in the fact that, “conforming himself to the will of Jesus Christ, he only let himself be induced to go to war when he saw that the works of seditious rebels disturbed peace and justice in his state.”

Another panegyricist of the Travagliati wrote, “Others take glory in the fact that they have waged many wars, but you not at all, except those by which you have been moved to wage because of necessity.”

Closer to home, Puccini eulogized, “never did he operate against his enemies for any other reason than to have peace.” Puccini’s laud was all the more remarkable given his role as military engineer during the war of Siena. On the subject of the Sienese war, Baccio Baldini claimed that Cosimo went to war, only after “seeing that the thoughts of peace, which he had so long had, and had tried to bring about many times, no longer had any place.”

And Malaspina claimed that Cosimo was not only like a Romulus,
drawing up the military in good order, but like Numa, who instituted the civil (read peaceful) customs of religion.\footnote{107}

If Cosimo’s panegyricists praised the reticence with which he went to war, so much more did they praise his manner of waging it. Baldini eulogized:

Knowing the Great Prince, that one must not make war for any other reason than to have peace, and there being still in the city of Mont Alcino some of his enemies, he deliberated to conquer them sooner with his clemency and his goodness rather than with arms.\footnote{108}

Ottaviano Bandini noted that he took up the war without wanting it and waged it, “with such prudence and sense, that he made his enemies love him as much as his subjects and made his subjects fear him as much as his enemies.”\footnote{109} Apparently, more than one Machiavellian platitude could be taken on at a time. Either way, Cosimo stands in these eulogies as the living riposte to the war hungry Florentine secretary.

Machiavelli had called on Roman religion to promote the kind of martial spirit he wanted in his republic; Cosimo called on the Christian religion to promote his own ideal of peaceful bellicosity, using the liturgy to help celebrate his military victories. In 1537, mass was sung when Cosimo’s forces defeated Filippo Strozzi at Montemurlo, and then again in 1554 when they defeated his son Piero at Scanagallo.\footnote{110} Mass was sung for the entrance of the Imperial guard into Siena,\footnote{111} as well as for Cosimo’s investiture as Duke of Siena.\footnote{112} Mass was even called upon to celebrate King Philip’s victory over the

\footnotes\footnote{107}{Malaspina, 196v.} \footnote{108}{Baldini, Orazione, unpaginated. “cognoscendo questo Gran’ Principe non per altro doversi far la guerra, se non per haver la pace, essendo ancora nella città di Mont Alcino, rimasti alquanti de i nimici, deliberò con la clemenza, et con la bontà sua vincerli più tosto che l’armi.”} \footnote{109}{Bandini unpaginated. “La quale guerra egli con tanta prudenza, et senno governò, che non meno si fece amare da’ nemici, che da’ suoi, ne meno si fece temere da suoi, che da nemici, talmente che condusse la cosa à quel felice fine, il quale da ognuno era sommamente sperato, et desiderato.”} \footnote{110}{Lapini, Diario, 113.} \footnote{111}{Ibid., 116-117.} \footnote{112}{Ibid., 125.}
French,\textsuperscript{113} the peace of Chateau-Cambresis,\textsuperscript{114} and the victory over the Turks at Lepanto.\textsuperscript{115} The choice of liturgy is instructive here, for in each case the mass of the Holy Spirit was the chosen fare. This is not surprising since the propers encapsulated the dualities and contradiction of Christian warfare so well. As recited in early modern Italy,\textsuperscript{116} the Psalm opened on a tone of belligerence, the Psalmist-king gloating over the destruction of the lord’s enemies. “Let the lord rise up and scatter his enemies, let all those who hate him fly from his face. As smoke comes to an end, let them come to an end; as wax melts before the face of a candle, let sinners perish at the face of God.”\textsuperscript{117} But with the gory words of Psalm 67 still ringing in listeners’ ears, the gospel radically changed the tone, with Christ promising to send the Holy Spirit, and intoning, “I leave you peace, my peace I give you.”\textsuperscript{118} As its mainstay in the liturgy and incorporation in Medicean poetry suggests, this passage had particular cultural resonance. And indeed, the dichotomy written into this particular liturgy served Cosimo’s concerns well. Opening on a tone of belligerence, the liturgy of the word ended in peace, a dichotomy highlighted by a bit of theater. During the mass, the principal actors wore victory garlands on their heads and carried the traditional olive branches of peace in their hands. If Machiavelli had berated Christianity for its weakness, the Mass of the Holy Spirit gave Machiavelli his answer; Christian princes would not shrink from battle, but while they

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 122. \\
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 124. \\
\textsuperscript{115} Cantini 7, 409. \\
\textsuperscript{116} According to Chiesa Cattolica, Missale Romanum (Venetiis : ex libraria officina a Serena, 1554). \\
\textsuperscript{117} Psalm 67. “Exurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici eius: et fugiant, quod oderunt eam a facie eius. exsurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici eius et fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie eius sicut deficit fumus deficiant sicut fluit cera a facie ignis sic pereant peccatores a facie Dei.” \\
\textsuperscript{118} John 14: 27.
clutched the instruments of war in one hand, they would clutch the olive branch of peace in the other.

*The Passions and the Interests: Governance of State and Governance of Self*

In the first two sections of this chapter, the differences between Machiavelli and Cosimo are as plain as day. Other cases are far more ambiguous. However, Cosimo and Machiavelli were not even agreeing when they seemed to be speaking the same language. This point is amply demonstrated by the discourse surrounding the virtues of temperance and fortitude.

Indeed, Machiavelli had no love lost for greedy princes. For him, human selfishness assured that nothing could stir up plots like a prince who was too liberal with his subjects’ money. According to Machiavelli, a man would far more easily forgive the execution of his kin than he would the purloining of his own purse.\(^{119}\) Again then, Machiavelli’s admonition to temperance was born out of regard for his highest value, the stability of the patria. Christian humanism had no love for greedy princes either, but that brand of temperance was ordered to an entirely different end: controlling the passions and the appetites. Here we find the heart of the contrast between Christian and Machiavellian politics: the former was ordered to the perfection of the individual, the latter ordered to the perfection of the collective. For Machiavelli, private vices could be public virtues, and because of this, he found little intrinsic value in the regulation of the passions. Though practical utility would dictate that his citizens restrain their passion for lucre, his healthy republic would have unleashed other passions, especially for worldly glory, setting men’s individual appetites against each other in order to strengthen the whole.

For, it was in tumults, he argued in a kind of social Darwinian way, that the Roman
republic grew strong.\textsuperscript{120} Whereas Machiavelli’s superior political man could fulfill all his
desires, Christian humanism’s superior political man possessed only the ability to restrain
his. In a Christian humanist world, only the man who could be lord of himself could be
lord of others. One sermon, given in Florence in the 1550s, describes this dynamic
between passion, virtue, and lordship:

Every human affect obeys the (virtuous), every passion is broken on their law. Think if the (virtuous) would not know how to give laws to the earth and sea, if they know how to give laws to the unbridled bestial desires. They do not let themselves be conquered by wrath, they are not transported by lust, they are not corrupted by greed, they are not perturbed by hatred, they are not bewitched by jealousy, they are not puffed up with pride. Does it not seem that the man who knows how to govern himself is worthy to govern everything?\textsuperscript{121}

Indeed, it was rhetoric like this which gave virtue its political utility. It was rhetoric like
this which Cosimo needed to tap into.

To some extent Cosimo’s projection of temperance was no projection at all; he
had been raised in a household in which temperance was a virtue by necessity, and in his
adult years the memory of poverty lingered on in a thriftiness that often devolved into
cheapness, a trait which exasperated his chronically underpaid functionaries and enraged
his chronically underfed guests. For example, the Germans who attended his son’s
wedding to Giovanna of Austria were overheard loudly grumbling at the frequency with
which they had been forced to untie the strings of their own purses.\textsuperscript{122} Apart from special
occasions, he normally shunned the regal dress favored by other princes, sporting instead

\textsuperscript{120} Machiavelli, \textit{I Discorsi}, 70-72.
\textsuperscript{121} Musso, 154. “ogni humano affetto obedisce loro: ogni passione si lascia frenar dalle lor leggi
Pensa, se darebbon legge alla terra, et al mare, se sanno dar legge à queste bestie sfrenate. Non si lascian
vincere dall’ira, non trasportar dalla libidine, non corromper dall’avaritia, non turbar dall’odio, non fascinar
dall’invidia, non gonfiar dalla superbia. Chi signoreggia se stesso, non ti par, che sia degno di
signoreggiara ogni cosa?”
\textsuperscript{122} Lorenzo Priuli, \textit{Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato, Volume Terzo}, a cura di Arnaldo
the traditionally simple Florentine habit. He kept a plain table and a small retinue, and a brief skim through the archives will show that rejecting pleas for places at court was an embarrassingly frequent occurrence. Apart from fighting a war that he never wanted and following the traditional Medici habits of collecting and building, Cosimo was just as stingy a ruler as Machiavelli could have ever wanted.

All this could go to show Cosimo as a typical Machiavellian, a man who cared little for the moniker of miserly so long as his state was not in jeopardy. However, this surface similarity masks entirely variant underlying worldviews. Cosimo’s literati never extolled Cosimo’s temperance with reference to reason of state, but rather inserted it into the more generalized battle between appetites and will. As Giurgi wrote, Cosimo lived:

operating not so much as his appetite demanded but only what was necessary for nature, and those expenditures he does make, he does not make so much for himself, as for the service of the high dignity in which he finds himself because he knows well that princes are the measure to which the people seek to conform themselves, indeed, it was not without reason that Socrates affirmed, the citizens cannot be temperate where the prince is intemperate.

Machiavelli’s reason of state makes no appearance at all here; rather, the traditional category of temperance is defined in the traditional way and extolled for the traditional

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123 Ibid., 93-194.
124 One example that is typical of the letter that Cosimo’s poverty forced him to send out time and time again can be found in ASFi, Med. 188 c. 47r (May 10, 1548).
125 For an emblematic visual representation of the statesmen as man who could control himself, see Graham Smith’s elucidation of the palazzo Vecchio’s Joseph tapestries.
126 Giurgi, 11v -12r. “operando non quanto l’appetito domanda, ma solamente quanto é necessario a la natura, et questo non tanto fa’ per cagione di se medesimo, quanto per servire all’altezza del grado, in che egli è collocato, perche sa’ molto bene ch’i principi sono la misura, ala quale tutto il popolo cerca di conformarsi; pero non senza ragione affermava Socrate che non possono i cittadini esser’ temperati; ove il principe sia intemperato; e temperatissimi donque saremo tutti noi, poi che tale è la temperanza del gran Cosmo.”
reasons. For Giurgi, Cosimo was not the prototype Machiavellian, but rather the antitype to Savonarola’s tyrant.127

As Giurgi implied, the prince’s temperance was mirror for his people. Only the lord of himself could be lord to the city, and only when the people followed this example could they be allowed to share in governance. Thus, when Cosimo promulgated his first sumptuary law in 1542, the penalties for failure to comply were as follows:

All citizens eligible to any offices, from age 18 on, need to have in the city for their use an acceptable lucchi foderati di drappo and the long and civil habit according to the current costume, and if election or lot is drawn for office of one who does not wear them, they will be forbidden to any office, whether drawn for it or elected for the entire time that they continue to not wear said habit, and their lot needs to be torn up.128

The old civil habit had much to recommend it over imported foreign fashions. The civil habit was austere, plain, and far less expensive than the foreign frippery being imported into the city. By wearing it, Florentines could literally garb themselves in a symbol of their own restraint. Second, the old civil habit tapped into all the emotions associated with Florentine, Italian, and republican pride. As Castiglione had lamented, “the old fashions were a perhaps a badge of freedom, as the new ones have proved an augury of servitude.”129 Thus, dress was highly political as a symbol of freedom; failure to prove the ability to regulate the passions; that is failure to regulate one’s dress meant inability to rule over others. Again, Cosimo’s projection of virtue was traditional, not Machiavellian.

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127 For Savonarola’s critique of the intemperance appetites of the tyrant see, Savonarola, Trattato, 22-23.
128 Cantini, vol. 1, 320. “Debbino i Cittadini habili alli Offitj da 18 anni in sù portar per la Città per uso loro lucchi foderati di drappo, o di pelli non prohibite, o mantelli lunghi e civili secondo che hoggi si costuma, e chi non gli porterà, et nel tempo delle tratte, o eletioni che di lui si facessino si troverà non gli usare, s'intenda haver’ e habbi divieto da tutti, et per tutti li offitj a che e sarà tratto o eletto, per tutto quel tempo che enon andrà in detto habito, e debbasi la sua poliza stracciar.”
129 Castiglione, 97.
On first glance, Cosimo and Machiavelli might have well agreed on the importance of fortitude as well, but scratching the surface of the rhetoric reveals fundamental disagreement. It will be recalled that Machiavelli had rather pointedly criticized Christianity because it only required fortitude in order to “bear ills.” However, not only did Cosimo’s humanists prefer the fortitude of patient suffering to achieving great deeds in war, they did not even read Roman fortitude in the same way as Machiavelli. When classical precedents needed to be found, Christian humanists looked to Seneca and Tullius. There was good reason for this, for the stoics had specifically enjoined that fortitude did not consist in audacity, love of danger, or pursuit of fame and glory. For the stoics, fortitude primarily consisted in the ability to bear all, gain or adversity, with perfect and resoluteness calmness. In this case then, it was the stoic tradition that could most easily be reconciled to Christian practice, and thus it was to the stoics that Cosimo’s humanists turned. Since this most anti-Machiavellian way of defining fortitude had been chosen as the social ideal, Cosimo’s fortitude had to be anti-Machiavellian fortitude, the ability to bear the pricks of fortune with perfect equanimity. Moreover, just as Christian temperance found its visual representation in clothes, Christian stoic fortitude found its visual representation in the serene face.

This exigency explains Cosimo’s preferences in his own representation, that is, in his preference for Bronzino’s famous portrait over Cellini’s equally famous bust, for whereas Cellini’s bronze conveys a sense of unbridled wildness, Bronzino’s Cosimo stares out to us impassively across the centuries. Indeed, upon the patron’s pleasure at seeing his first copy, Bronzino said he would draw one even better; Cosimo responded

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130 See footnote, 85.
131 Gualandi, De Optimo, 65. “Fortitudo (ut inquit Seneca) nonest inconsulta tementitas, nec periculorum amor, nec formidabilium appetitus; sed scientia distinguendi quid malum sit, quid secus.”
that he did not want a better copy, he wanted one exactly like the first, and so much did he like the image that more than 20 copies were eventually produced. On the other hand, Cellini’s bust of Cosimo shared the fate that a bellicose little emperor would share some two centuries later: Cosimo banished it to the far reaches of the Island of Elba, to the military fortress in Cosmopolis. If fortitude was written in an imperturbable face, then there is little surprise in the preference for the work of Bronzino’s hand. In this case, life imitated art, as Cosimo wore the same serene face at the funeral of his wife and children. Indeed, Cosimo’s panegyricists did not seek evidence of his fortitude in glorious deeds but in the moment most cherished by Christian stoicism, the death of loved ones. Even one of the most anti-Medicean of chroniclers can be heard to admit with admiration that Cosimo had conducted the funerals with “great constancy, though he had lost two sons and a wife in so few days.” Davanzati used the sad occasion to exalt Cosimo on the pedestal of exemplum, writing:

He recognized all things as coming from the hand of God and happily accepted adversity, which his divine majesty exercises to test his beloved. With tranquil and calm soul, Cosimo supported the death, first of two children, then of two children and a most beloved consort, happening almost at a stroke... O mind confirmed and perfected in God, and strong soul that is immune to the strikes of fortune and the world.

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132 Cochrane, 52.
135 ASFi, *Manoscritti* 166 c. 14v. “costanza del Duca che aveva perso due figlioli e la moglie i n si pochi giorni.”
136 Davanzati, 11r-11v. “dalla mano di dio ugualmente riconosceva, e volentieri accettava le cose avverse, con le quali sua maestà divina esercitò, e pruova i suoi diletti, e con animo riposato e tranquillo sopportò la morte prima di due figliuole, e di due figliuoi dolcissimi e della consorte amatissima, quasi in un tempo, avvenute...O mente in Dio confermata e perfetta, o animo forte e tetragono, ai colpi della fortuna, e del mondo, veramente Socratico.”
Figure Four: Cellini’s Cosimo Bust

Figure Five:
Bronzino’s Cosimo In Armor
Cosimo bore up just as required of a good Christian, but was there any utility in it? In order to counter Machiavelli, the literati also dreamed up a practical use for fortitude, arguing that only the man who could suffer could avoid the sadness or fear that might otherwise interfere with the discharge of his princely duties. Baldini claimed that Cosimo was never heard to:

complain or lament of so great a ill as the death of his two sons and duchess consort, neither did he ever stop attending to business, and especially the things of justice. Rather by letters he comforted those that were absent, and with words he comforted those that were present, showing these events to be merely human events, and thus saying that one needed to comport oneself with a pleasant soul.137

As was often the case, this exposition of fortitude’s practical utility made a public necessity out of private virtue. Thus, Cosimo’s political fortitude was inscribed in a system of personal morality that had often been blithely expounded in myriad mediums. In this way, Cosimo could delicately remove the wedge that Machiavelli had driven between political virtue and private morality.

Conclusion

Machiavelli had sharpened the discourse of virtue, calling into play a number of long hallowed categories, and the man’s literary legacy lived deeply in Florentine consciousness, even though it lived mainly as taboo, for the Florentine secretary’s most infamous work was rarely referred to directly, and though the duke kept a copy in his personal library, he had dutifully marked it P for prohibited.138 Regardless of what Cosimo may have absorbed from the pages of Machiavelli, his government was not

137 Baldini, Orazione, unpag. “egli supportò (the death of his wife) con tanta costanza et grandezza d’animo, che mai non fu udito da alcuno dolersi ò rammaricarsi di così grave danno che egli haveva ricevuto, ne mai tralasciò lo attendere à suoi negozii, et spezialmente alle cose della giustizia: anzi che per lettere confortò quelli, che erano assenti, et à parole quei che erano presenti, mostrando loro questi essere avvenimenti humani, et perciò doversi con piacevole animo compotare.”

138 Bryce, 303.
founded upon a Machiavellian ideology. Only a choice few found the new political
philosophy compelling. On the contrary, for Cosimo’s mythmakers, Machiavelli was a
both sounding board and whipping boy; Cosimo was the living anti-Machiavellian prince,
saving Christian virtue for a Christian politic.
Chapter Four: Prince or Patrone? Cosimo as Ecclesiastical Patron

The merchant republic of Florence had always needed to be especially careful about the friends it chose and the enemies it made. The tentacles of Florentine merchant activity stretched all across Europe, and disturbances in the patria’s foreign policies sent economic shivers rippling down the collective spines of Florentines abroad. Foreign merchants resided at the pleasure of other governments, and guarantees of security were hard to come by. But of all the enemies the Florentine Republic might make, few held potential disaster in their hands like the neighbor to the south: the papacy, which brandished the threat of interdiction with ominous menace. An interdiction would lead to the suspension of all commerce with other Christian nations and allow foreign governments to thuggishly extort money from the Florentine nations residing in their midst.¹ Though the Papal States were in so many ways like any Italian power and engaged in so many secular pursuits, the patrimony of Peter was no ordinary state. Fortunately, Florence and Rome had often engaged in close financial collaboration.² Guelf in temperament, Florence had occasionally proved one of the papacy’s most useful allies. Absent outright treachery or territorial dispute,³ Tuscany had been content to give due obedience to Rome and play the game of papal politics, invading the eternal city

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³ There were occasions of both, the papacy was certainly complicit in the Pazzi conspiracy to assassinate Lorenzo, and the fourteenth-century War of the Eight Saints was fought over territorial disputes.
ecclesiastical posts and growing stupendously rich as papal bankers.⁴ During the preceding century, Florentines had allowed control of their local church to go out of their own hands and into the papal curia, although their tight links with the eternal city had suited them for controlling the local church through Rome.⁵

Cosimo, on the other hand, got off on the wrong foot with his papal neighbor. Bad feeling between the duke and Pope Paul III abounded almost immediately, for in Cosimo’s first year, Paul snatched away the widow of the duke’s assassinated predecessor for his own grandson Ottaviano, robbing the new prince of his hope of bringing her to his own marriage bed. Paul then proceeded to derogate the patronage rights on some of Tuscany’s choicest benefices by wielding the powers of excommunication and to extort a tithe out of an impoverished Tuscan clergy by unsheathing the spiritual sword of interdiction. When Cosimo balked, justly assuming that Paul wanted Florence for his own and justly afraid that the tithe money his priests sent out might return in the pockets of the pope’s mercenaries, the pope bullied Cosimo into submission anyway. Short years later, duke and pope almost came to blows over Cosimo’s expulsion of the Dominican Savonarolans of San Marco. And short years after that, the two again exchanged hard words over extradition of the fugitive Cardinal of Ravenna, whom Cosimo harbored in his state against Paul’s wishes. Obviously, Cosimo was off to a rocky start.⁶

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⁵ Bizzochi,165-167.

⁶ For Cosimo’s relationship with Paul III see Spini, Cosimo I; Gentile, La Politica; and Antonietta Amati, "Cosimo I e i frati di San Marco," Archivio Storico Italiano 81 (1923).
But Cosimo had no choice but to come to grips with Peter’s successor since the pontiff held the reins of both spiritual and temporal power in one set of hands. Two sets of power meant twice as much business to conduct, and Tuscan demand for favors in the Roman court would not wait on a pope friendly to Cosimo. Moreover, Cosimo could not simply arrogate church jurisdictions to himself since the tonsured estate let loose howls of protest whenever Cosimo stepped too clumsily on the toes of ecclesiastical liberty. Even had he so desired, he could not have disentangled himself from Rome’s spiritual authority without cutting the ties that bound him to Rome’s considerable bounty of secular favors, or without putting in jeopardy the standing of many of his clients from the Papal States. The institutional agreements that gave Spain and France so much control over their respective national churches did not exist for Cosimo. Nor could he be a Reformation prince, for the bonds between Rome and Tuscany ran too deep, and his standing in Florence was linked to his ability to keep those favors in the Roman curia coming. His people wanted patronage, not absolutism, and thus, it was a patron that he had to be.

This chapter argues that Cosimo chose an ecclesiastical policy of cultivating and maintaining ties in the Roman curia by turning the greasy wheels of patronage with networking techniques learned on the streets of Florence, that is, through the bonds of

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8 One recent scholar has made the claim that Cosimo tacitly allowed a crypto-Valdesian movement to operate largely unfettered in his territory during the first twenty years of his rule. The argument stands on the idea that Cosimo was making a veiled anti-papal statement. Massimo Firpo, *Gli Affreschi di Pontormo a San Lorenzo; eresia, politica, e cultura nella Firenze di Cosimo I* (Milano: G. Einaudi, 1997). Whatever Cosimo’s actual knowledge of this group’s feelings (and there is no direct evidence he knew anything about their religious persuasions), he tried very hard to never break with the papacy or submit the church to his direct control. See Niccolo Rodolico, "Cosimo I e il concilio di Trento," *Archivio Storico Italiano* 122 (1964), 8.
kinship, friendship, and proximity. Sanctified by its associations to the heavenly court and legitimated by long usage, such a tactic cut through questions of governmental forms, lacking as it did the toxicity that a more overt form of absolutism over the church would have generated. On the other hand, the patronage system generated its own limitations, and the second part of this chapter will be devoted to illuminating them. Cosimo may have relied on a system of contacts in the papal curia, but the same contacts could press the directions of Cosimo’s ecclesiastical policies in uncomfortable ways, forcing some of the less attractive aspects of the Counter-Reformation on Cosimo in ways he would have preferred to avoid.

*Patronage and The Heavenly Chain of Intercession*

Florence had never seen a ruler quite like Cosimo, a prince who dared to compare his office to God’s office. But princely divinity was just one category out of many; the state could mirror the sacred cosmos in other ways. Indeed, Florentine political life held more important ties than the bimonthly round of office holding anyways; Florence was not ruled by office holders but rather by the shadowy puppet masters who pulled their strings. The key to holding those strings usually lay in playing the game of patronage with the most dexterous hand.⁹ Moreover, this extra-institutional system of favor and privilege had its own logic of sacral mimesis, for the earthly chain of intercession was but a pale reflection of that more glorious heavenly chain, which funneled supplication up to the Almighty through the saints and Virgin Mary. Cosimo’s namesake, Cosimo II Vecchio, had understood the game with characteristic perspicacity. Though he could never be a prince, he could be divinized in his role as patron and intercessor, a fact that

his artistic commissions sought to stress with paint and canvas.\textsuperscript{10} His clients must certainly have gotten the point, for they were not loath to pepper their letters of thanks or supplication by quipping: “you are my god on earth...never have I wished anything more in life than to take shelter under the wing of your power and authority.”\textsuperscript{11} In the fifteenth century, Averardo Medici had been addressed the same way; for instance, Bernardo Alammani wrote to him, “I commend myself to you with all my heart, for my only hope is in you and in God...You are my God on earth and all that I crave in this world is the honor and prosperity which I am confident I will receive by your favor.”\textsuperscript{12} The motif lived on into the younger Cosimo’s age as well, as amateur political theologians continued to juxtapose the categories of saintly and patronly intercession. For instance, Varchi uttered these telling words at the funeral of Cosimo’s mother, Maria Salviati:

\begin{quote}
you should pray to [Maria Salviati] devoutly night and day without end so that, just as she was your secure port in all your tempests here on earth, interceding for you and asking not only mercy and pardon but also the grace and favor of her only and illustrious son for whatever you needed, so now she will certainly succor you in your sins and all your needs, ever interceding for you and asking for you in the kingdom of heaven, not only favor and grace, but pardon and mercy from the most holy and only son of God.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

This linking of earthly patronage and celestial intercession did not issue from the mouth of some unabashed monarchalist. As the reader will recall, Varchi was a republican. But a patronage network was not a governmental form; it was just as important in the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{10} Kent, \textit{The Patron’s Oeuvre}, 134-138
\textsuperscript{11} Cited in Ibid., 135.
\textsuperscript{12} Cited in Kent, \textit{The Rise of the Medici}, 49.
\textsuperscript{13} Varchi, \textit{Orazione}, 125r. “senza fine devete piu tosto, et di notte et di giorno pregarla devotamente che ella si come fa qui sicurissimo porto à tutte le vostre tempeste intercedendo per voi, et impetrando, non pure pieta e perdono ma gratia ancora et favore dal suo unico et illustrioso figliuolo sempre dunque bisogno, cosi ora certissimo soccorso alle vostre colpe, et d'ovunque bisogni e sempre interceda per voi et v'impetri su nel Regno del Cielo, non solamente favore et gratia, ma perdono e pietà dal santissimo et unico figlio di Dio.”
\end{flushleft}
republican system as it had ever been to monarchy. Patronage was a part of Florentine life, and thus, divinizing the patron was not too bitter a pill for a republican to swallow.

Patronage networks were sanctified in the very language used to describe their operations, for the patronage system pilfered words and concepts directly from a more sacred semantic register. Grace was one such concept. Cosimo’s own clients conflated the two different types of graces with strategic ingenuity. Consider this request for a vacant benefice to which Cosimo held the patronage:

Being vacant the Church of Santa Maria of Stia because of the death of the rector, and pertaining to your Excellency to elect the new rector to whom be committed that care, and since as you must know, you have the *jus patronato* of that church. I, not at all confiding in any particular merit or sufficiency which I don’t know is in me, but only in your beneficence which has always been natural to your most illustrious house and in the bounty of God which is powerful enough to make grace and sufficiency super abound in all others, so he may in me, I have recourse to supplicate you of your grace.  

The juxtaposition of the prince’s grace and God’s grace was certainly no accident. The author could not but have known he was shrewdly tapping into an old tradition of equating patron and deity. Nor would Cosimo have missed the connection, for his own letters borrowed just as heavily from sacred expressions. Like many early modern Italians, he asked his favors as *gratia*, he appealed for intercession (*intercessioni*), and he accomplished the task by praying (*preghi* or *pregando*) the next person on the chain of intercession. This slippage of language may have sometimes operated just out of the

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14 ASFi, AGBE. 6076 c. 63r (August 16, 1565). “Sendo vacata la pieve di Stia per la morte di quel piovano et spettandose Vostra Eccelentia Illustissima il fare elettione di nuovo Rettore à chi si cometta quella cura, per essere patronato di quella, come la debbe sapere. Io non confidando punto in alcuna particular merito o alcun sufficientia che non ne so conoscere alcuna in me, ma solo nella bontà sua la quale è stata sempre naturale a quella Illustissima casa et nella bontà d’Iddio il quale è potente fare soprabbondare come in tutti gli altri ancora in me, che gratia e sufficientia. Recorro humilmente à suplicherle della presnte gratia.”

15 See for instance, ASFi, Med. 197 c. 39r (March 25, 1552).

16 ASFi, Med. 201 c. 117v (April 28, 1554).
realm of conscious deliberation, but only because Florentine experience had engrained
the habit binding heaven and earth in two parallel chains of intercession.

Florence and the Roman Connection

Why did Cosimo have to play the game of patronage in Roman courts? Simply
because Roman favors were highly important to Tuscans. It was Rome’s game, and
Cosimo played it on Rome’s terms. For, Rome was no ordinary neighbor. With a
strange shape, jutting aggressively northwards around the eastern edge of Tuscany, the
Papal States formed an uncomfortably high percentage of his border, and the fact that the
same set of Roman hands dispensed both spiritual and temporal favors made a working
relationship with the papal curia indispensable. Most importantly, the considerable back
and forth of peoples, moneys, and offices between the neighbors dictated that Cosimo
develop contacts who could protect his clients’ interests in Rome. Cutting spiritual ties,
or “going Turk” as Cosimo put it, would have simply put his secular interests in the
Papal States in too much jeopardy. Moreover, winning the loyalties of his subjects by
getting them favors in Rome was a sine qua non of holding the first position in Tuscany.

What stoked the voracious Tuscan appetite for favors in the papal curia? For
starters, Tuscans conducted more than their fare share of civil and financial business with
their southern neighbor, often invading the Tiber’s banks as foreign bankers and
merchants. In litigious Early Modern Italy, legal issues always nipped hot on the heels of
business ventures, and with not infrequent regularity, Tuscans found themselves standing
before Roman tribunals. The whole process could be quite daunting because
unsurprisingly, the ability to get anything accomplished in Roman courts was

17 ASFi, Med. 5 c. 628a-628b (March 28, 1546).
indissolubly linked to who one knew, what strings one could pull, and what favors one could call in. As one of Cosimo’s supplicants complained, his case had been dragged out for, “four months without being able to end it, because of the many favors given to the adversary, a familiar of Reverend Cardinal Trani.”

A good number of such unhappy litigants had little sense of how to navigate the snaking turns of curial politics. Faced with such bleak prospects, they often turned to the most powerful patron they knew: Cosimo. Cosimo was happy to oblige, putting his clients directly in his debt with little more than the dispatch of a letter. Legion were the occasions on which Cosimo called on his patronage network in Rome to expedite a case or provide legal favors. If Tuscany was to continue doing business with Rome, Tuscans simply could not avoid legal entailments in the Papal States, and they could not prosecute them successfully without a patron. Cosimo had to step into the breach.

Legal favors made up a large part of Cosimo’s patronage business, but there were other favors to be had. For instance, Tuscans who could not find opportunities to ply their trades in a Tuscan post often looked to the Church’s state. For physicians, lawyers, philosophers, and humanists, curial Rome was a welcome alternative to the duke’s notoriously tight-fisted government. However, like legal favors, choice jobs were usually not to be had without connections. So, when Tuscans went to Rome, they armed

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18 ASFi, Med. 197 c. 69r (April 28, 1552). “e gia stato costa quattro mesi senza haver mai potuto conseguirne il fine, per i molti favori (dice lui) che vengono fatta all’adversario suo familiare del R. Cardinal Trani.”

19 The list is much larger but for a sampling of cases, see ASFi, Med. 23 c. 82 (September 30, 1552); ASFi, Med. 23 c. 294r-294v (December 10, 1552); ASFi, Med. 37 c. 153r (November 1, 1555); ASFi, Med. 183 c. 97v (September 13, 1538); ASFi, Med. 185 c. 156r (October 23, 1544); ASFi, Med. 188 c. 25r-25v (April 30, 1548); ASFi, Med. 191 c. 52v (May 22, 1549); ASFi, Med. 194 c. 122v (September 26, 1551); ASFi, Med. 196 c. 14v (November 13, 1551); ASFi, Med. 196 c. 28r (December 2, 1551); ASFi, Med. 196 c. 80r-81v (January 24, 1552); ASFi, Med. 197 c. 13v (February 27, 1552); ASFi, Med. 199 c. 46v (February 17, 1553); ASFi, Med. 202 c. 64v (February 20, 1554); ASFi, Med. 204 c. 49r (October 6, 1554); ASFi, Med. 207 c. 131r (August 6, 1558); ASFi, Med. 208 c. 35r (February 27, 1558); ASFi, Med. 208 c. 105v-106r (November 14, 1558); ASFi, Med. 210 c. 4r (January 5, 1559); ASFi, Med. 211 c. 42v (June 22, 1560).
themselves with a credential letter from their duke and patron. As a result, Tuscans’
ability to make their way in the Papal States very well depended on what mood the curia
had toward Cosimo at any given moment.\footnote{20}

Moreover, this flow of peoples was no one way street; convivial Florence
siphoned its fair share of the pope’s citizens in its turn. Cosimo encouraged this, enticing
such adventurers as Ridolfo Baglioni, Stefano Palestina, Stefano Colonna, Giovan
Batista Savelli, and Conte Giovanfrancesco da Bagno into his employ as soldiers of
fortune.\footnote{21} Ties of blood linked Cosimo to other subjects of the Papal-States. For
instance, Cosimo numbered the Rossi of San Secondo and the Cybos of Massa-Carrara
among his kinsmen.\footnote{22} Thus, Cosimo’s clients and family kept him entangled in papal
politics whether he willed it or no. For instance, in 1549 Cosimo’s Colonna clients
goaded him into asking Julius III to restore them to a castle they had held under Clement
VII. When short years later, Cosimo found himself Stefano Colonna’s heir, he called on
one of his cardinal intercessors to protect the widow.\footnote{23} When Lorenzo Cybo’s wife died

\footnote{20 See ASFi, Med. 192 c. 92v (December 17, 1549); ASFi, Med. 195 c. 119v-120r (October 28,
1551); ASFi, Med. 196 c. 28v (December 2, 1551); ASFi, Med. 196 c. 35r (December 9, 1551); ASFi,
Med. 197 c. 29v (March 16, 1552); ASFi, Med. 198 c. 119v (September 19, 1552); ASFi, Med. 199 c. 124r
(May(misdated as June) 5, 1553); ASFi, Med. 199 c. 138v (June 4, 1553); ASFi, Med. 199 c. 153v-154r
(June 30, 1553); ASFi, Med. 201 c. 175r (July 1, 1554); ASFi, Med. 203 c. 39r (November 20, 1553);
ASFi, Med. 206 c. 127v (November 18, 1557); ASFi, Med. 208 c. 83v (September 21, 1558).

\footnote{21 Baglioni’s presence in Cosimo’s army is well attested in the secondary literature, as it sparked a
violent feud with Paul III when Baglioni put himself at the end of Paul’s Perugian rebels. Stefano Colonna
was the \textit{Luoghotenete Generale} of Cosimo’s army from 1541 to his death in 1548; the Colonna family
continued as allies during the war of Siena in the 1550s, see Adriani, “Vita di Cosimo,” 67. See also
Graham Smith, “Bronzino’s Portrait of Stefano Colonna. A Note on its Florentine Provenance.,” \textit{Zeitschrift
für Kunstgeschichte} 40 (1977). For notes on GiovanFrancesco da Bagno, see G.B. Adriani, \textit{Istorie de’suoi
tempi} (1583, Prato: Fratelli Giachetti, 1824), vol. 4, 65. For Giovan Battista Savelli, see \textit{Cronaca
Fiorentina} 132.

\footnote{22 Count Troilo di Rossi of San Secondo had married Bianco Riario Sforza, daughter of Cosimo’s
paternal grandmother Caterina Sforza. Cosimo was second cousins once removed with the three Cybos:
Caterina, Cardinal Innocenzo, and Lorenzo, the Duke of Ferentillo, who had married into the Malaspina
family of Massa-Carrara. The Cybos’ mother Maria Maddelena dei Medici and Cosimo’s maternal
grandmother Lucrezia dei Medici, were both daughters of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

\footnote{23 On the first matter, see ASFi, Med. 192 c.131r (March 9, 1550). On his supplication to Cardinal
Carpi see ASFi, Med. 195 c. 47v (June 25, 1551).}
in 1553, Cosimo wrote on his relatives’ behalf to the Cardinal Legate of Perugia, trying to keep the papal contado of Ferentillo under the family’s control.\textsuperscript{24} Cosimo intrigued to keep the Rossi in their feud of San Secondo during the Farnese wars over Parma,\textsuperscript{25} and the loyal duke got the displaced Perugian rebel Ridolfo Baglioni restored to a new state in the papal territory under the auspices of Julius III’s good graces.\textsuperscript{26} When Cosimo again got a friendly pope in Pius IV, he tried to use his influence to secure Conte Giovanfrancesco da Bagno safe passage to defend his rights in the deprivation of his state.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, friendly contacts in Rome were essential if Cosimo was to protect the interests of clients holding land or titles from the pope.

Cosimo’s client network was not only swamped with high ranking papal feudatories but also with men of more modest lights, who got themselves in serious trouble in the papal patrimony with astonishing regularity. Petty vendettas escalated into homicide with such frequency that the history of the age reads as much like an Icelandic saga as the rebirth of Western Civilization. When the desperate end of murder was consummated, the offenders often came scampering across the Tuscan border to the safety of foreign lands. Extradition was a dodgy proposition and pursued only for certain types of criminal. Those exiled guests who could win Cosimo’s favor and patronage found that they had won a powerful ally in getting the sentence remitted in the pope’s courts. For instance, Cosimo was inclined to help Bernardo Camaiani, brother of two of his closest confidants, to make peace with the family of his victim and to gain pardon

\textsuperscript{24} See ASFi, Med. 202 c. 6v-7r (September 20, 1554).
\textsuperscript{25} ASFi, Med. 197 c. 78v (April 24, 1552).
\textsuperscript{26} ASFi, Med. 23 c. 66r-67r (September 30, 1552).
\textsuperscript{27} ASFi, Med. 212 c. 99v (June 3, 1560).
from the pope. Cosimo was also inclined to offer his protection to men like Antonio Barzellino, a Medici client who had killed his wife in a fit of passion when he found her committing adultery. Those were just the kind of extenuating circumstances that Cosimo thought deserved a little clemency, and his Barzellino client was just the type of man whom Cosimo was of a mind to help.

Thus, secular matters snared Cosimo into a Roman net from which he could not have disentangled himself even if he had wanted. Rome’s dominion over the world of the spirit only doubled its importance. Matrimonial cases, inheritance cases, benefice cases: the Roman Church claimed the right to adjudicate over a broad swath of life. The renouncement of any benefice often had to go to the Roman courts, and all dispensations needed to be run through the papal datary. Any priest who found that he did not possess the right qualifications for holding a benefice had to throw himself on the mercy of the curia. To cite just one pertinent example, Cosimo’s choice to run the Hospital of the Innocents, Vincenzo Borghini, needed a dispensation because the position required the care of souls, and as a regular, he could not exercise the function without release from his vows. Too young, too old, too criminal, too married: any number of reasons might drive a priest to ask for Cosimo’s assistance. To exacerbate the issue, the

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28 On Bernardo Camaiani. See ASFi, Med. 189 c. 75r-75v (November 24, 1548). He also intervened for a criato of his house, Neri da Volterra, ASFi, Med. 207 c. 132v (October 21, 1558); for the nephew of Cardinal Poggio, ASFi, Med. 23 c. 363r (December 28, 1552); for Conti Alamano, vassal of the pope and creature of the Medici house, ASFi, Med 23 c. 251r (November 22, 1552); and for an unnamed criato, wanting a dispensation to hold ecclesiastical benefices although he was a convicted murderer, ASFi, Med. 210 c. 9r (January 14, 1559).

29 ASFi, Med. 197 c. 26v (March 13, 1552).

30 ASFi, Med. 23 c. 375r (December 31, 1552); ASFi, Med. 196 c. 38rv (December 16, 1551); ASFi, Med. 197 c. 25v (March 11, 1552); ASFi, Med. 201 c. 13r (September 5, 1553).

31 To cite on example out of many, Cosimo stumped in order to get benefices that had been left in deposit for the young Alessandro dei Medici, future archbishop of Florence and future Leo XI, before he had come of legal age, notwithstanding the council’s prohibition. ASFi, Med. 201 c. 110r-110v (April 19, 1554).

32 ASFi, Med. 23 c. 317r-317v (December 12, 1552).
ordinary hierarchy was not the only hierarchy beyond Cosimo’s control; intervening with
the regular orders normally required the use of Roman connections as well. Any
number of modest requests might come before Cosimo, and he would have been expected
to put his patronage ties to work for the good of the second estate with the same alacrity
that he did for his other subjects.

There is little surprise that ambitious clerics came cap-in-hand to beg Cosimo’s
assistance, but Cosimo’s game was bigger than that. To that end, he put his network at
the convenience of his own bishops, who had as much business to conduct in the Roman
courts as anyone. When they wanted to renounce their bishopric, they needed a
dispensation, which occasioned Cosimo’s intercession. When they wanted to reform a
monastery or punish some troublesome monks, they needed the cooperation of the
regular hierarchy, which meant getting Cosimo to unleash his cardinal protectors on the
generals of various orders. When they were having a dispute over some pensioned
benefice, they needed a legal favor, and Cosimo was the man for that. Even when they
wanted a promotion, they came to him. Not only did he help secure some of his clients a
red hat, he even helped two of them to the biggest promotion of all, playing the role of
pope-maker in the conclaves that elected Julius III and Pius IV.38 Indeed, since so many beat a path to his door asking for favors from the cardinals, he simply could not ignore the Roman network.

All of this was a role that he neglected at his own peril, for Tuscans expected favors in Rome. Only by building ties to the cardinals in the papal curia could Cosimo forge the type of patronage network he needed. How did he construct this network? It is to this subject that we know turn.

Winning Friends and Influencing Cardinals: Networks of Ecclesiastical Patronage

Cosimo’s networking followed a pattern familiar to Florence, familiar to Italy, and probably familiar to much of early modern Europe. As recent works have shown, Florentines tended to knot up the bonds of patronage with ties of parenti, amici, and vicini, in loose English rendering, bonds of kinship, bonds of friendship, and bonds of neighborhood.39 Cosimo followed this well-worn trail, writing familiar patterns of patronage networking onto the grander curial stage. He used his and his children’s marriageability to cement bonds with potential cardinal/patrons. He courted the friendship of high-ranking ecclesiastics with entreaties and offices. And he showed himself particularly adept at winning the good will of local and neighboring cardinals, for these cardinals had benefices and interests in Tuscany that required his friendship.

The first bachelorhood that Cosimo sold on the marriage market of Italian nobility was his own. And while he may have chosen Eleonora de Toledo for love, eschewing the

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38 Cosimo was instrumental in both Julius III’s election. See ASFi, Med. 323 c. 52r (November 15, 1549), and Galluzzi, 112, as well as Pius IV’s election. See Diaz, 186.
viceroy of Naples’ notoriously ugly and awkward older daughter for the stately elegance of the younger sister, the alliance with the family was itself rather coldly calculated. That move not only won him powerful friends in the court of Charles I, it won him one very powerful voice in Rome: the influential Toledo cardinal. As the son of the second Duke of Alba, Toledo was brother to the viceroy of Naples and uncle to the duke’s new bride. Moreover, he was no mere leftover from the days of Medicean Rome; Paul himself had given him the red hat in 1538, and Toledo had real influence in Roman politics.40

Cosimo did not waste time in putting his new familial connections to work, leaning on Toledo as a crutch in the curia during the 1540s and 1550s. Whether it concerned the most important matters of Roman patronage, like attempting to get his son made Archbishop of Pisa,41 or the least important matters, like trying to win an inheritance case for a poor client widow,42 archival evidence suggests that Cardinal Toledo was Cosimo’s primary go-to.43 Cosimo’s marriage to Eleonora thus gained him one powerful secular and one powerful ecclesiastical ally. The marriage, moreover, set the tone for both his secular and ecclesiastical networking policies. For the connection to the Toledos bound him tightly to imperial interests, and as we shall see, he cast his lot primarily, though not exclusively, with the imperialist party in the curia.

When his own daughters came of age, he shopped their maidenhood with equal dexterity, selling their nubility for both ecclesiastical and secular profit. In 1551, he had

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41 On this matter see, ASFi, Med. 37 c. 331r (December 27, 1555).
42 ASFi, Med. 196 c. 13rv (November 12, 1551).
43 See for instance, ASFi, Med. 185 c. 45v (May 5, 1544); ASFi, Med. 185 c. 64r (May 14, 1544); ASFi, Med. 189 c. 54r (November 1, 1548); ASFi, Med. 192 c. 19r (October 9, 1549); ASFi, Med. 192 c. 131r (March 9, 1550); ASFi, Med. 195 c. 65v (July 9, 1551); ASFi, Med. 195 c. 106v (October 12, 1551).
promised a marriage to the Del Monte clan, which never came off.⁴⁴ He gave one daughter as a peace offering to the Este duke of Ferrara, Alfonso II, simultaneously using the alliance to try to forge links with Alfonso’s cousin, the Cardinal of Urbino. In this case, Cosimo was pushing the term extended kinship to its limits; the Cardinal of Urbino was only a second cousin to the Duke of Ferrara.⁴⁵ At any rate, more important bonds of kinship were there for the taking. In 1558, Cosimo married his daughter Isabella off to Paolo Giordano Orsini. Had he lived longer, Cosimo would have lived long enough to bitterly regret the choice. For, one night in 1576, while feigning amorous intentions and passionately kissing his estranged bride, the ill-mannered and ill-bred Paolo strangled the unfortunate princess to death with a cord that one of his servants lowered through a hole cut into the ceiling.⁴⁶ Disastrous as the decision may have been on a personal level, giving his daughter Isabella’s hand to a scion of the Orsini clan was ultimately good politics. For in this way, he not only tied himself to the powerful Roman family, but to one of his more important ecclesiastical patrons as well, Guido Ascanio Sforza, better known as Cardinal Santa Fiora. Sforza was a scion of the house of San Fiora, the child of Bozio II, and the uncle of Paolo Giordano Orsini.⁴⁷ Cosimo made much of the new ties created between himself and one of his most important ecclesiastical contacts, celebrating their new relationship and receiving the cardinal in Florence in 1559 with great pomp and ceremony.⁴⁸ Though Santa Fiora was a somewhat inexplicably committed imperial, he also gave Cosimo ties to the enemy whom he so desperately wanted reconciled, for Santa

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⁴⁴ Cronaca Fiorentina, 132.
⁴⁵ ASFi, Med. 207 c. 131v (August 6, 1558). Giulio della Rovere, the Cardinal of Urbino, was the great grandson of Ercole I d’Este Duke of Ferrara.
⁴⁶ Langdon, 148-168.
⁴⁷ Orsini was the child of Guido Ascanio’s sister, Francesca di Bozio Sforza.
⁴⁸ ASFi, Manoscritti 166 c. 13r.
Fiora, whom Cosimo had counted among his biggest supporters long before the ill-starred nuptials, was a grandson of Paul III through the maternal line. It was this lucky connection and nothing else that had won him his red hat in 1534 at the tender age of 16. If Burgos was one of his crutches in the papal court, Santa Fiora was the other, and Cosimo wrote to him seeking patronage on many occasions. Thus, in the first place, Cosimo constructed and cemented his bonds of ecclesiastical patronage in the old fashioned way: he married into them.

If Cosimo could not break with Rome, neither could he afford to break with his own bishops. Fortunately, he did not need to be so proactive on his own home front. The familial Medici stranglehold over the office of the papacy had left him a suitable episcopal legacy, as many of his own and neighboring bishoprics were already in friendly familial hands. When he ascended to the throne, the archdiocese of Pisa was in the care of Onofrio Bartholini Medici; the bishop of Forli was Bernardo Antonio Medici, the bishop of Arezzo another distant cousin, Francesco Minerbetti Medici, the bishop of Lucca was his half uncle, Guido Sforza Riario, the child of his paternal grandmother. Volterra should have been in good hands, but for the ambitions of Cardinal Salviati, his uncle and one time nemesis. Apart from Salviati and his occasional crony (Archbishop Ridolfi, who soon became Archbishop of Florence), Cosimo began his reign with a

49 Sforza’s mother was Paul’s daughter, Costanza Farnese.
50 For examples see, ASFi, Med. 24 c. 54r-54v (undated, 1555); ASFi, Med. 37 c. 38r (November 18, 1553); ASFi, Med.189 c. 7r-7v (May 2, 1555); ASFi, Med. 187 c. 57r (November 7, 1548); ASFi, Med. 191 c. 51r (March 17, 1548); ASFi, Med. 202 c. 11v-12r (April 8, 1549); ASFi, Med. 202 c. 23v (January 6, 1554); ASFi, Med. 206 c. 30v-31r (January 22, 1554); ASFi, Med. 206 c. 91v (June 22, 1557); ASFi, Med. 208 c. 142v (December 28, 1557); ASFi, Med. 208 c. 90v (September 30, 1558).
51 Was the child of Medici supporter Zanobi Bartholini.
52 Bernardo Antonio di Medici was the child of Antonio di Bernardo Medici and Francesca Tedaldi.
53 Francesco Minerbetti was the child of Thomasso Andrea Minerbetti and Bartolommea di Bernadetto Medici.
malleable brand of favorable bishops, tied to the Medici house through kinship and friendship ties. Where real bonds were lacking, close ties could be ensured through fictive kinship. It was in this way that the Medici had bound the Martio family to them. Originally descended from a branch of the Vespucci, Angelo Martio Medici had served under Alessandro and been granted the bishopric of Assisi by Clement VII. Both Angelo and his nephew, the hyperalliteratively named, Martio Marzi Medici the bishop of Marsico, served as secretaries under Cosimo, both holding other important posts as well. Though not really blood relations, the family was allowed to add Medi to their surname, thus forever binding their destiny to the fortunes of the patron. Absent outright blood ties, few actions could more demonstrably seal the patron/client relationship.

Cosimo and his wife were fruitful, but their supply of marriageable spawn was not endless. Kinship networking had its natural limits, limits often imposed by the tragic deaths of children and young brides. Given that, ties of amici could supply where marriage strategy failed. Amicizia covered a much broader range of arrangements than is implied by the English word friendship in that it included a whole range of formal client-patron ties just as important as the emotive valence we consider an essential aspect of friendship. “Friendship” might consist in little more than the businesslike presumption that one party would supply access to offices and the other side would supply political support. In this limited sense of the term, Cosimo succeeded in making many of his bishops his “friends.” For example, his first ambassador to the emperor’s court was none other than the learned Bishop of Cortona, Giovambattista Ricasoli, whom Cosimo later

55 See Trexler, 131-158.
would entrust with the delicate mission of winning Queen Catherine dei Medici as an ally.\textsuperscript{56} When Cortona went to France, Cosimo substituted the bishops of Forli and Arezzo as ambassadors to the imperial court. There were more modest uses to be made of bishops as well. He employed two successive bishops from nearby Assisi as secretaries at his court. And where offices were not appropriate, literary patronage could be substituted. He won a strong link to the Farnese court in his patronage of Paolo Giovio, the bishop of Como.\textsuperscript{57} Finally, Cosimo solidified the goodwill of the Minerbetti bishop of Arezzo by loaning the bishop a pile of low-interest money from the Monte.\textsuperscript{58}

If Cosimo was well adept at turning his bishops into clients, equally adept was he at turning his clients into bishops, both in his own, and other people’s lands. In 1551 Julius III installed Cosimo’s secretary and one time ambassador to Trent, Pietro Camaiani, as bishop on the green hills of nearby Fiesole.\textsuperscript{59} On his prodding, Alessandro Strozzi was made the bishop of Volterra in 1568.\textsuperscript{60} Jacopo Guidi, one time secretary and future Cosimian encomiast, became the bishop of Penne and Atri in 1561, under the benevolent promotion of Pius IV.\textsuperscript{61} Of all these, however, none was as dear to his heart as the promotion of his son Giovanni to the Archbishopric of Pisa.\textsuperscript{62} Upon Giovanni’s untimely death, the archbishopric went to another Medici functionary, the one time

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\textsuperscript{56} ASFi, Med. 10 c. 28r (April 21, 1547).\
\textsuperscript{57} Giovio dedicated his \textit{History of Illustrious Men} to Cosimo and was also in Alessandro Farnese’s circle in Rome.\
\textsuperscript{58} ASFi, Med. 2 c. 14r (August 28, 1537). On the loan to the Minerbetti bishops see, Carol Bresnahan Menning, "Loans and Favors, Kin and Clients: Cosimo dei Medici and the Monte di Pieta," \textit{The Journal of Modern History} 61 (1989), 493-495.\
\textsuperscript{59} On Camaiani’s role at Trent see, Hubert Jedin, "La politica conciliare di Cosimo I," \textit{Rivista Storica Italiana} 62 (1950).\
\textsuperscript{60} Scipione Ammirato, \textit{Vescovi di Fiesole, di Volterra, e d'Arezzo del Signore Scipione Ammirato}, Reprinted from the Florentine Edition of 1637 (Firenze: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1984), 188.\
\textsuperscript{61} Medici Archive Project. http://documents.medici.org/people_details.cfm?personid=850&ret umnstr=orderby=Name@is_search=1@result_id=0. (Accessed December 3, 2008).\
\textsuperscript{62} ASFi, Med. 24 c. 97r-97v (December 27, 1555). Cosimo’s appeals to Paul were, of course, to little avail.
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governor of Siena, Agnolo Niccolini. Finally, by favoring the young Alessandro Medici’s career, Cosimo assured his nephew’s smooth transition to Bishop of Pistoia and then Archbishop of Florence on his way to the papal chair. Thus, he was able to bequeath his successors the support of friendly bishops in the same manner that his family had bequeathed friendly bishops to him.

Early moderns may not have minded the stuffy formal friendships born out of the patron/client bond. However, that does not mean that amicizia was always without more warmly human feelings. In the age of Castiglione’s courtier, grace and likeability counted for something. For instance, Cosimo trusted Alessandro Strozzi implicitly, not only because of his faithful service but also because the client had idled away more than one afternoon gambling with the patron at a Medici villa. It was with the desire to cultivate these same kind of personal ties that Cosimo received Cardinals Burgos and Santa Fiore as his guests in Florence, while unsuccessfully trying to wheedle visits to Tuscany out of both Cardinal del Monte and Paul III. When he visited Pius IV in Rome in 1560, the two reportedly locked themselves together for hours on end, and when Cosimo left the eternal city, he left with a pope largely willing to do his bidding, despite the unease of the Roman citizens themselves. Formal friendships were also sweetened

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63 Marrara, 60; and Lapini, Diario, 142.
64 See ASFi, Med. 1170 c. 378 (April 11, 1543).
65 Cardinal Burgos’ presence in Florence in 1543 is attested numerous times in the filza ASFi, Med. 1170. On Cardinal Santa Fiore see footnote 48.
66 When Paul made his way through Tuscany up to meet the emperor in Nice in 1537, Cosimo’s ambassadors unsuccessfully tried to get him to come through Florence, but were stymied by the brothers of Monte Uliveto who got him to go by their monastery instead, thus leading toward Fucecco and away from Florence. The matter of a papal visit was not only one of diplomacy but also of prestige. See ASFi, Med. 331 c. 6r (March 31, 1538). Even after their most heated exchange, that of the San Marco controversy, Cosimo tried to get Paul in Tuscany in 1546. ASFi, Med. 8 c. 111r (October 18, 1546).
by the exchange of gifts, outward signs of the ties that bound. These gifts could help to create the fictive kinship bonds that replaced biological ones. In 1551 for instance, Cosimo sent Pope Julius III two crystal vases on Christmas with the notice that he was observing an old Spanish custom of filial piety in which the son presented gifts to the father. When that pope’s creature Cardinal Innocenzo del Monte, racked by gout, requested two mules to travel through Florence, Cosimo found it wise to indulge him, even though he had to take them from his own duchess. Indeed, less formal emotive ties mattered, and formal friendships could be created or cemented by more informal wooing.

Strictly speaking, our last category of patronage networking, vicinanza, applies only to the links that bound men of the same neighborhood to common interest parties, but the concept might as well be equally applied to the Italian map at large. Bonds of mutual interest made neighboring churchmen the most highly pliable kind of churchmen, for the overlapping of secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions meant that foreign cardinals and bishops often had ecclesiastical benefices in Cosimo’s jurisdiction, benefices which they could not seize without the ducal placet. The archival evidence suggests that this is exactly how Cosimo rangled two of his more important cardinal protectors into his

1,000 horses and 400 arquebusiers for his guard. He is lodged in the Pope's palace and entertained with all kinds of banqueting. The Duchess also is there, and daily plays with the Cardinals and others; they write that this week past she lost 6,000 crowns. The Duke is daily at least two hours alone with the Pope in consult. Most men judge his being here will breed no purpose. Mr. Pasquin and “Morphero” talk at liberty with schedules upon each corner “non sine quare lupus ad urbem.” (not without asking why the wolf (Cosimo) is in the city (Rome).

68 ASFi, Med. 24 c.344r (December 24, 1552).
69 ASFi, Med. 192 c. 55v (September 14, 1559). “etiam con incomodo della Duchessa.”
70 See Kent, The Rise of the Medici, 61.
circle: the cardinal Bishop of Faenza, Pio Ridolfo Carpi, and the future Pope Julius III, Cardinal Giovanni Maria Ciocchi del Monte. As one time legate to the Marche, and one time bishop of Faenza, Cardinal Carpi had considerable interest on Tuscan soil. My research affirms that he had at least three Tuscan benefices for which he supplicated Cosimo’s assistance, but the number is likely greater than that. In one case, Cosimo had to ride to Carpi’s rescue and battle off a rival claimant who was trying to seize the benefice by force of arms. In his turn, Cosimo called on the neighboring cardinal on a number of important occasions. When he wanted to reform the Conventual Franciscans, he enlisted the help of Carpi, who was the protector of the order. When he wanted to secure the generalship of the still troublesome friars for his own confidant, he tried to get Carpi to fix the election. And when he was trying to get one of his own secretary’s inquisitorial cases expedited, he penned Carpi an impassioned plea. Of course, these were only the tip of the iceberg. Routine smaller favors begged from Carpi filled up volumes of correspondence as well. In these, Carpi was one of Cosimo’s most consistent friends, and their friendship lasted until the prelate succumbed to his gout in 1564.

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73 For instance, it is certain that Carpi held at least one benefice in the diocese of Arezzo. ASFi, ABGE. 4375. See also a letter Cosimo sent on behalf of the schalco of Cardinal Carpi’s to the commissary of Castrocaro on two vacant benefices. ASFi, Med. 182 c. 81r (August 4, 1537). And ASFi, Med. 197 c. 48r (March 31, 1552).
74 ASFi, Med. 182 c. 95v (September 7, 1537).
75 See ASFi, Med. 185 c. 145v (July 26, 1544); ASFi, Med. 323 c. 31r (May 24, 1549).
76 ASFi, Med. 194 c. 115r-115v (September 14, 1551).
77 ASFi, Med. 212 c. 70v (May 15, 1560).
78 For the mutual links of favors that bound the two together see ASFi, Med. 182 c. 81r (August 4, 1537); ASFi, Med. 182 c. 95v (September 7, 1537); ASFi, Med. 183 c. 186v (January 25, 1539); ASFi, Med. 185 c. 78v-79v (May 23, 1544); ASFi, Med. 185 c. 145v (July 26, 1544); ASFi, Med. 194 c. 27r (March 20, 1551); ASFi, Med. 194 c. 28v (March 21, 1551); ASFi, Med. 195 c. 47v (June 25, 1551); ASFi, Med. 212 c. 110r-110v (June 16, 1560); ASFi, Med. 323 c. 31r (May 24, 1549). ASFi, Med. 210 c. 48v (April 1, 1559).
Carpi was a small gamble. Like Cosimo, he was an imperial anyways, so Cosimo risked little in courting his patronage. The gamble that really paid dividends was the relationship Cosimo cultivated with Cardinal Del Monte, who, in an abnormal turn, had sought the duke’s goodwill as early as 1542. Del Monte had good reason to do so. For Paul III soon granted him all of the benefices that had belonged to the cardinal’s deceased uncle, many of them in their native Monte San Sovino, in the diocese of Arezzo. Cosimo’s archives show that Del Monte’s attempts to turn grace into revenue quickly degenerated into a mess of competing claims and threats. Thus, Cosimo’s friendship was fundamentally important for Del Monte, and Cosimo did all he could for him, readily giving the agent immediate possession of any non-disputed benefices, agreeing to the possession on those benefices for which he personally held the ius patronato, and even using the bully stick to force others to cede their claims to the del Montes. In 1546, Cosimo did Del Monte an even bigger favor, reserving all cases involving the cardinal’s benefices personally to himself, to be heard only by his auditor, Lelio Torelli. Cosimo’s gamble did not go unrewarded. Del Monte was Cosimo’s lifeline at the first session of Trent, and their relationship was solidified through the lifelong friendship that Del Monte cultivated there with Cosimo’s ambassador. It comes as no surprise, then, that Del Monte favored Cosimo at the papal court in his precedence controversy with the

79 Averardo Serristori, Legazioni di Averardo Serristori ambasciatore di Cosimo I a Carlo Quinto e in Corte di Roma (1537-1568), compiled and edited by Luigi Serristori (Firenze : Felice le Monnier, 1853), 135.
80 ASFi, ABGE. 4375 c. 296 (August 6, 1546).
81 ASFi, ABGE. 4375 c. 2 and 63. The same cases make it clear that Cosimo’s aid did not extend to subverting justice for del Monte’s gain.
82 This is a plaintive note from Lorenzo Fuggini, whom Cosimo has clearly strong-armed into settling his dispute with the del Monte’s over Santa Maria di Ambra. ASFi, ABGE. 4378 c. 324.
83 ASFi, Med. 5 c. 633r-634r (April 20, 1546).
84 Julius later made Cosimo’s ambassador Bishop of Fiesole. See Jedin, 364; and Ammirato, Vescovi, 54.
Duke of Ferrara. Cosimo returned the favor; against the inclination of the emperor, the aspirant kingmaker pushed Del Monte through as a compromise candidate in the 1549 conclave. This was an undoubted triumph. Cosimo had long-suffered under the ire of an unfavorable pope, and a candidate that owed the election primarily to him was a welcome change.

In his early years, Cosimo used his control over benefices to win one more important patron, whom we would be remiss not to include on this list, for his earliest ally in the Roman court was one of his own, the Reverend Cardinal Santiquattro, Bishop of Pistoia. Cardinal Santiquattro was a Pucci, and as a Pucci, he held a number of patronato privileges in Tuscany. Thus, Cosimo took Pucci’s familiars under his own protection. When the new Archdeacon of the Cathedral, Victorio di Imola, got into disputes over his benefices, the complaints were filed over to Santiquattro in Rome, then over to Cosimo, and then were quickly settled, though Cosimo again had to use force to do it. For his part, Santiquattro was one of Cosimo’s earliest cardinal friends at a time when it was an undoubtedly unpopular position for a cardinal to take. When Cosimo’s refusal to help collect the tithe ended in interdict in 1540, Santiquattro went to the feet of the pope on the duke’s behalf. And when Cosimo wanted to keep the bishopric of Assisi inside his own circle of familiars (though it was outside his territory), it was Cardinal Pucci whom he asked to intercede. Pucci was thus a lifeline to the newly

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85 ASFi, Med. 10 c. 263r (July 6, 1547).
86 See footnote 38.
87 ASFi, Med. 183 c.104r (September 20, 1538).
88 See ASFi, Med. 652 c. 20r (January 21, 1540) and ASFi, Med. 652 c. 77r-77v (November 12, 1540).
89 ASFi, Med. 182 c. 198r (January 12, 1537-38).
elected Cosimo and his only way to wring the smallest concessions from his antagonist in the papal chair.

However, in the twelve short years between his ascension to the ducal throne and Del Monte’s ascension to the papal chair, Cosimo had come a long way. In 1537, even his own cardinal uncle Jacopo Salviati had tried to get rid of him, an outcome that would have delighted the pope, though he refused to lift a finger to make it happen. By 1549, that uncle had been put in his place, and even Paul III had made his peace with Cosimo. Indeed, attitudes toward the young duke had palpably changed, and the tentacles of his petty empire of patronage extended into the highest chair in Christendom. By 1550, Cosimo had put together a very impressive ecclesiastical patronage network, even in the teeth of the pope’s general repugnance. Playing the few cards he had, he reaffirmed and solidified the ties of kinship that his family had left him, he made new ties of kinship by utilizing his own marriageability and then that of his children, he opened up his tight fist and spent some of his little money on entertaining important ecclesiastical dignitaries, he granted offices to his own bishops, and he utilized his small sphere of ecclesiastical jurisdiction to win over a few key ecclesiastics. Whether on the small stage of Florence or the larger stage of curial Rome, Cosimo survived by using time-tested patterns of patronage.

The Counter-Reformation Comes to Florence

As we have seen, Cosimo’s ecclesiastical standing was very much tied to a traditional system of patron/client relations. However, the same system that opened the church’s doors imposed its own limits and boundaries. Those who did favors in Rome expected to receive them in Florence, and one of those favors included bringing the
Counter-Reformation to the Arno’s banks. This section will use the pontificates of Julius III and Paul IV to show that Cosimo’s differing status as a patron contributed to his differing attitudes toward the Inquisition, from a staunch promoter of the institution under the papacy of his good friend Julius III to a stauncher defender of state jurisdiction under the unlikable Paul IV. Indeed, Cosimo’s favorable standing in Rome during the early 1550s put him in a favorable mood when the messy and uncomfortable business of auto-da-fe was suggested to him. By the end of the decade, Cosimo was out of credit at the Roman court and had little to lose in the way of patronage. It was then that he showed his independent streak. Only the advent of a favorable pope in Pius IV again brought Cosimo’s anti-heretical nature to the fore.

It would not be out of place to take a moment to examine Cosimo’s own sentiments on heresy. Many students of Cosimo suggest that political expediency alone informed Cosimo’s religious policies, assuming, as they do, that the duke learned his governance on the pages of Machiavelli. This line of analysis is mistaken; Cosimo may not have been a trained theologian, but not all his religious opinions were marked by Machiavelli’s peculiar brand of apathetic indifference. On the contrary, he had always believed himself safely on the Catholic side of the reformation divide. For instance, when he exhorted a subject to end a vendetta with the argument that the disputant would thereby, “gain merit in the sight of the lord,” he thereby affirmed his attachment to the traditional Catholic doctrine on grace and works. And later correspondence reveals this

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90 For the point of view that Cosimo was a sola politica thinker see Maria Lupi, "Cosimo de’Medici, Domenico Bonsi, e la riforma della chiesa a Trento," Rivista di Storia della chiesa in Italia 36 (1982): 26; Firpo, 311; Marrara, 58; Cochrane, 60; and Cantagalli, 77.
91 See ASFi, Med. 182 c. 80v (August 4, 1537).
to be no mere slip of the pen; as a Catholic son, Cosimo apparently made little place in his heart for the Reformation doctrine of sola gratia. Indeed, before Rome ever got to him, he was going after heretics on his own. As early as 1544, he had ordered processions in the city for both peace and the conversion of the Lutherans, while in 1549, he had to be begged to send a certain heretic Francesco Puccerrelli to the galleys, as he had apparently personally wanted the unfortunate man burned. Given the man’s highly conservative personality, this is no surprise. Cosimo would have looked on the Reformation as a cosa nuova, and all new things stoked his suspicions. Moreover, it would have been rather a hard case for a Medici with two popes in the maternal line to deny the traditional Roman authority. In this case, then, personal belief married nicely to political expediency; Cosimo’s desire to prosecute heresy proceeded at least partially from an uncynical attachment to the traditional religion.

On the other hand, he did not want the apparatus of Roman repression tramping unfettered through his own backyard. Though Cosimo did not always give the Inquisition free play, it was no anachronistic concern for religious tolerance that stayed his hand; it was his distaste for the Inquisition’s methods. He wanted his justice quick; the Inquisition was glacially slow. He liked his justice cheap; the Inquisition bled its subjects dry while holding them interminably in prison. He strove to make his justice impartial; the Inquisition proceeded, according to him, far too often on baseless and anonymous whispers uttered by jealous neighbors. In 1560, he had even been so bold

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92 For similar telling expressions see ASFi, Med. 182 c. 1v (January 15, 1537); ASFi, Med. 182 c. 169r (November 12, 1537); ASFi, Med. 182 26v-27r (March 11, 1537); and ASFi, Med. 182 46r (May 5, 1537).
93 Cronaca Fiorentina, 46.
94 Ibid., 112-115.
95 ASFi, Med. 212 c. 118v-119r (June 31 1560). “Non s'inganano punto le ss.w à credere, ch'io sia acerrimo persecutore delli Heretici, tanto e, il zelo, che ho sempre havuto, et haverò verso la santa fede
as to write a somewhat impudent letter to the Roman office, a letter that captures his
general attitude in a few choice lines:

Do not be at all deceived in believing that I am not a most zealous persecutor of
Heretics, such is the zeal that I have always had and will always have toward the
Holy Catholic Faith and the Holy See. I thank you for the note that you have
given me on the 23rd of the past month, in order to illuminate me about the
erroneous opinions spreading in Siena and of the provisions that you think should
be made; but because it would be no marvel, if in a place like Siena, particular
passions or ambitions sought to harm others by some sinister invention, I would
desire that, as you wrote last week, you come to some particulars about the
business; because I will provide in the future against such rebels to the faith of
Christ so much that you will not having any difficulty or trouble in knowing what
my mind is. Nonetheless, it does not seem that I should have to proceed in the
dark in such important business without a good basis, especially since the
business affects mostly honored and noble persons.

Indeed, though he had little love for heretics, Cosimo quite palpably disliked the
Inquisition, and he knew his Italian subjects did not like it either. Unfortunately, we
possess little knowledge of Cosimo’s early dealings with the Holy Office, courtesy of the
mob that sacked the hated institution and burned its documents on the death of Paul IV.
The darkness only lifts in the early 1550s, when Cosimo was lending the Inquisition the
full might of the secular arm. In one single day in 1552, Cosimo’s officers arrested 40
heretics, marching them through the streets of Florence to the cathedral, penitential garb
and lit yellow candles testifying to their shame as excommunicants. At the head of the
procession was one of Cosimo’s own, Bartolommeo Panciatichi, ducal secretary.96

Panciatichi was not Cosimo’s first sacrifice to ecclesiastical policy and rigorous justice;

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96 The most detailed secondary work on Cosimo’s auto-da-fe is Bertoli.
nor would he be the last. Cosimo did not even spare his own from the Inquisition’s dungeons.

Why such deferential treatment to an institution that he so obviously loathed? Simply because his patronage network in Rome wanted it, and he could not hold out against requests from that quarter. Cosimo agreed to the *auto da fe* only after the Master of the Sacred Palace had exhorted him to the brink of tears. The request almost certainly came directly from the pope,\(^{97}\) who at this time was none other than his good friend, the former Cardinal del Monte. Cosimo could hardly turn down a pope who had spent the first two years of his papacy showering his former protector with an ample bounty of Roman patronage. Apart from having given Cosimo the *stocco* and *berretone* in 1551,\(^{98}\) Del Monte provided secular and ecclesial posts to Cosimo’s clients,\(^{99}\) and gave them considerable favors in their litigation.\(^{100}\) Whereas Cosimo had occasionally refused to write letters to Paul III on the grounds that his recommendations did more harm than good,\(^{101}\) now he could send clients back to the eternal city and to a pope who held him in particular esteem.\(^{102}\) Even the queen of France asked for Cosimo’s intercession since as Cosimo wrote, “The Most Christian Queen [holds] it as a certainty that my intercession

\(^{97}\) It seems that the Pope personally assured the Venetian ambassador of Cosimo’s commitment. See Bertoli, 64. And the pope supplied credential letters to the Master of the Sacred Palace later in the same year. ASV, Index Breviarum, *Giulio III*, 123.

\(^{98}\) Firpo, 379.

\(^{99}\) Cosimo, for instance, won Piero Guicciardini a spot as a *collaterale* of the Campodoglio, a civic judgeship in Rome. For the request see ASFi, Med. 194 c. 35v (March 28, 1551). The thank you note for the successful bid is in ASFi, Med. 196 c. 79r. Cosimo also got his client the Bishop of Pavia the governorship of Rome. ASFi, Med. 196 c. 28r (February 12, 1551). He also got Giovanni Maria Pichi the job of Potestaria of the Iesu, see ASFi, Med. 195 c.108v (October 14, 1551); Pichi’s election is mentioned in a letter from Cardinal Burgos to Cardinal del Monte in ASV, *Segr. Stato, Principi* 20 c. 595 (September 27, 1552). For other successes see ASFi, Med. 199 c. 138v (June 4, 1553); and ASFi, Med. 199 c. 153v-154r (June 3, 1553).

\(^{100}\) ASFi, Med. 194 c. 19r (June 23, 1551); ASFi, Med. 194 c. 36r (March 28, 1551); ASFi, Med. 194 c. 114v (September 14, 1551); and ASFi, Med. 196 c. 24v (November 30, 1551).

\(^{101}\) ASFi, Med. 5 c. 511r-511v (March 25, 1544).

\(^{102}\) ASFi, Med. 192 c. 136v (March 11, 1550).
with the Pope can accomplish much.” Indeed, Roman patronage had gotten almost too good. Things had reached such a pitch that Cosimo had to remind others that the pope was not a puppet with strings pulled from Florence. As he wrote to his ambassador:

> It will do us harm if it seems as if His Holiness moves by our order, because in fact, we do not want to push him but only to remind him and to inform him of everything, so that as a Father and Lord, he might take those expedients that seem suitable.

To a duke who had spent years butting heads against the inimitably thick skull of Paul III, this new concern must have certainly been a welcome problem.

The pope was not the only one in Rome turning the screws on Cosimo. Cosimo’s patron Cardinal Carpi was also part of the Inquisition’s machinery, and if the pope and his Del Monte clan were making demands that Cosimo could not refuse, how much less could he refuse the demands of his relative, the Cardinal Toledo. The Dominican Toledo had sat on the inquisitorial tribunal since its inception in 1542 and appears to have been quietly instrumental in swinging Cosimo to Rome’s way of thinking. The buildup of tensions and threats apparently went on for some time. Already on March 3, 1551, Cosimo had gotten into a spat with one of Toledo’s commendatori, and when the dispute had come to the attention of the Cardinal, Cosimo wrote to excuse himself. “I would not have shown so little affection,” the still slightly irate duke claimed, “if your commendatori to whom you show so much affection, had not imputed me to be little religious, or to say better, imputed that I was a Lutheran, if he had not done that, I would not have treated

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103 ASV, Segr. Stato, Principi 17 c. 115 (October 13, 1552). “La christianissima Regina tenendo per fermo che la intercessioni mia appresso V.Sta habbia à poter molto.”

104 ASFi, Med. 323 c. 100r-101r (Maggio 1551). “ci faria danno il vedersi che SS.ta la stringessi per nostro ordine perche in fatto non vogliamo stringerla ma solo ricordar e informare Ssta del tucto accio da padre e signore, pigli quelli expedienti li parranno a proposito”.

105 Eubel, 25.
him as I did.” Stale rumors of his own heterodoxy were apparently lingering from his altercations with Paul III, and they were giving Cosimo cause for pause. He was certainly asking himself if that was why Toledo had just failed him in his bid to secure the commenda of San Jacopo sopra’Arno in Florence. Would Cosimo’s most important of relationships and whole patronage network slip through his fingers if he refused to move aggressively against the heretics in his own state? He did not wait to find out. When one of his readers at Pisa came under suspicion later that year, he assured the cardinal that the inquisitors would be given all assistance to prosecute the unfortunate offender.

Because the inquisitor is ordinarily here and hears cases involving similar errors, if anyone accuses him, he can come before them, since the inquisitors are not only permitted by me, but given every aid to be able to castigate whoever errors, and we will do likewise against him, if any heresies are found in him.

However, eventually Cosimo needed to back up his tough talk with a little exemplary justice. Eventually, Cosimo needed to let slip the Inquisition on his own city.

This was the context of Florence’s first real auto da fe, for it is almost certain that Toledo lent his ascendancy over Cosimo to the Master of the Sacred Palace’s exhortations. Tucked obscurely behind Cosimo’s other dispatches to the Inquisition appears a letter from Cosimo to Cardinal Toledo, sent shortly after the auto-da-fe, which pointed out that the duke had now fulfilled all the promises that he had made concerning

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106 ASFi, Med. 194, 8r (March 3, 1551). “Se il Commendator Rengisso (al quale la S.V. ILL. et R mostra particolare affettione), non m’havesse imputato per poco religioso, o per dir meglio, per Lutherano, non harei fatto il resentimento che ho fatto con esso lui.”

107 This is, at least what he implied to Burgos in the same correspondence.

108 ASFi, Med. 195 c. 79v (July 21, 1551). “perche qui dove ordinariamente é lo inquisitori si riconoscano simili errori se alcuno lo accusa può venire da esso, che sendoli non sol permessa da me, ma dato ogni favore, per potere castigar chi erra, si farà il simile contra di lui, se si troverà che in lui sieno heresie.”
Clearly, Toledo had been twisting the arms of his ducal in-law into compliance with the Inquisition. Indeed, with Carpi and Toledo badgering him from the Inquisition’s side, and Del Monte hectoring him from the seat of Peter, Cosimo could not hold out for long. The request for harsher Inquisition not only came from Rome but from those members of Cosimo’s patronage network whom Cosimo could not refuse.

All Cosimo’s cooperation during the years of the Del Monte papacy is thrown into relief by his largely indifferent attitude to the blandishments of Paul IV, a far more zealous pope who had gradually choked off Cosimo’s access in the papal curia. As Paul moved into ever more intransigent anti-imperial positions, Cosimo’s patronage system broke down, and with it the pope’s leverage over Florence. With Toledo dead, Cardinal Santa Fiora locked away in Castel San Angelo, and all the imperial cardinals out of favor, Cosimo could hardly expect much patronage from his steadfast supporters in Rome. Nor was the pope personally well disposed to the Hapsburg client-Duke of Florence; the vitriolically anti-Spanish Carafa reportedly counseled the duchess to begin costuming herself in black, since her husband was the son of the devil. Things had definitely changed. Under the del Monte pope, clients had flocked to Cosimo’s patronage, “having great faith that ‘his’ intercession could dispose the Pope to do a benefit.” Under Paul, Cosimo apologetically caveated his patronage with the excuse that he did not know, “how

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109 ASFi, Med. 196 c. 93v-94r (February 9, 1552).
111 Cited in Booth, 160.
112 ASFi, Med. 201 c. 103r-103v (April 8, 1554). “haver gran fede che la intercessione nostra gli habbia molto à giovare in disporre S.S. à farlo questo benefito.”
well my ink runs in that court in these times.”¹¹³ And indeed, Cosimo’s ink did not run well there. As the English ambassador in Rome noted, the hostile Paul knew just where to squeeze, taking out his vengeance against the duke’s pro-imperial policies by proceeding, “against many men of (the Pope’s) estate who serve the Duke of Florence.”¹¹⁴ Given such tensions, Cosimo’s failures as an intercessor with the bellicose old pope were many. Perhaps Cosimo’s most vexing failure was his inability to keep his client Eustachio Petrucci, a Knight of Malta, from losing his commenda. In 1558, Paul ordered all the Knights of Malta to ready themselves for combat as the shadow of the Turkish fleet loomed over the dangerously exposed Christian outpost. Cosimo asked a dispensation for the frail and aging Petrucci,¹¹⁵ but the duke could neither win permission nor forgiveness; when the elderly knight failed to show, Paul III deprived him of his abbey and turned a deaf ear to all of Cosimo’s attempts to get it back for him.¹¹⁶ Paul heard Cosimo’s appeals on behalf of the Abbot of Galgano with the same deaf ear, for the duke repeatedly attempted to intercede in order to keep the old abbot from spending his last few days in an Inquisition jail.¹¹⁷ All efforts were to no avail; Cosimo could offer his clients little more than formal and useless pleas in the Roman courts.

If patronage was the sinew of state, Paul’s actions hacked at the very tendons of Medicean Florence itself. On the other hand, with less to lose, Cosimo could afford to be less cooperative with Paul’s increasingly pitiless campaigns against heresy. Cosimo

¹¹³ ASFi, Med. 37 c. 157r (November 2, 1555). “io non sappi, come à questi tempi corra il mio inchiostro à quella corte.”
¹¹⁵ ASFi, Med. 208 c. 126r-126v (December 18, 1558).
¹¹⁶ And Cosimo was still asking in 1560. See ASF, Med. 212 c.100v (June 3, 1560).
¹¹⁷ ASFi, Med. 208 c. 68v (August 28, 1558).
played the game more deftly this time, asserting independence while avoiding the outright hostility that had ignited passions during Paul III’s papacy. For instance, in December of 1557, Cosimo’s government firmly rejected the Inquisition’s creeping tendency to expand their jurisdictional competencies. Processes for scorn of the divine cult, dishonoring sacred things, blasphemying God and the saints, usury, thefts, sacrileges and other wicked things, they argued, had customarily belonged to the state’s jurisdiction and would continue to do so. More importantly, the Inquisition would have no jurisdiction over Jews. “Florence,” the defiant auditor Vintha sardonically remarked, “would not become another Spain, where the Inquisition puts its hands on everything.\footnote{Cited in Anzilotti, 190-191. “l’esempio dell’Inquisizione che usa la Spagna, mostra quanto la sia perniciosa e detestabile, poiché l’abbraccia ogni cosa.”} The timing of the pronouncement was no accident, for Cardinal Toledo had died in September of that same year, and Cosimo could afford a little independence.

With Toledo gone, Cosimo’s government continued to draw a line in the sand against Paul’s Inquisition. When Paul issued an ultra repressive Index of Prohibited Books, Cosimo at first played a waiting game, trying to save the booksellers excessive financial loss by appealing to a stay of execution on some of the less offensive titles. He wrote his auditor Torelli:

Having seen what you write to Concino about the commissary of the Inquisition, we will be content that he be able with edicts and other actions to move against the prohibited books that treat of religion and sacred things, or of Magic, spells, geomancy, chiromancy, prophetic Astrology, and similar other matters since we have always been an observer of religion and most fierce persecutor of such crimes, but considering the particular damage to many without any profit from the orders of His Holiness, we want to suspend until we hear from Rome the order for other books, even those by prohibited authors, unless they treat of religion and faith.\footnote{ASFi, Med. 210 c. 20r (February 13, 1559). “Veduto quanto scrivete al concino circa il commissario dell’Inquisizione, ci contentiamo che egli possa con editti, et altro eseguire contra li libri prohibit, che trattano della religione, et cose sacre, ò di Magia, incanti, geomantia, chiromantia, Astrologia}
Cosimo was almost certainly planning to wait the pope out, hoping that Paul would simply die before the issue came to a head. The obstinate old pontiff, however, refused to comply, showing surprisingly stubborn longevity in his octogenarian twilight. Cosimo still had a trick or two up his sleeve however, and when Paul pressed him into lighting the bonfires in March of 1559, he indulged in a little sleight of hand, instructing his agents to leave non-heretical titles on the shelves and to make more “show than effect.”

Even in individual cases, Cosimo dug his heels more firmly into the ground than he had under Julius III. For instance, despite the hostilely indignant requests of the Bishop of Bologna, he refused to extradite the Sozzini heretics to the Papal-States, only sending them after the friendly Pius IV replaced Paul IV. In December of 1558, he promised to send a Tuscan priest named Francesco to Perugia for questioning, but later correspondence suggests that Francesco’s extradition never took place. In January of 1559, he ordered some Spoletini heretics sent to Rome, but his commissary dallied for so long that they were able to bribe their way out of prison. And by the middle of 1559, he was flat out refusing the Inquisition’s request for extradition.

Indeed, both on the level of grand theory and individual justice, Cosimo’s legacy of cooperation with the Inquisition became very spotty during Paul’s papacy, for Paul gave
Cosimo very little motivation to cooperate, and the pope’s advanced aged counseled the duke to a policy of Janus faced quiescence and practical indifference. However, this would not last long. The next two popes were both friends to Cosimo, and both brought the agencies of repression to Florence for good.127

If patronage seems to have dictated Cosimo’s attitude towards the Inquisition, the same patronage ties dictated his attitude to the other leg of Catholic reform, the Jesuit order. Of course, the two were not entirely distinct. The Roman Inquisition had specifically ordered Cosimo’s Jesuit confessor to butter him up for the inquisitorial crackdown of 1552,128 and the Jesuits themselves would become the prime persecutors of Sienese heretics during the 1560s.129 Moreover, the same patrons that had foisted the Inquisition on Cosimo seem to have slipped the Jesuits into Florence as well. For, despite his personal respect for Diego Lainez, Cosimo could not bring himself to fully trust the new Spanish order. His attitude towards religion was one of nearly unswervable conservatism, and even when he set out to reform an order, he did it with an eye to the past, since to Cosimo, reformation primarily meant reducing observance to “ancient constitutions.”130 Moreover, the Jesuits had powerful enemies, some of whom were whispering poisonous words into Cosimo’s ears.131 Thus, Cosimo took his first Jesuits only on the recommendation of Cardinal Carpi, who got the Jesuits a foothold in Florence

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127 Though as Adriano Prosperi notes, by this time very few Florentines clung with any intensity to the heretical ferment of the 1540s and 1550s. Adriano Prosperi, "L’inquisizione Fiorentina dopo il Concilio di Trento," *Annuario dell’Istituto storico italiano per l’età moderna e contemporanea* 37-38 (1995).


129 See Marchetti, 162-164, and 196.

130 ASFi, Med. 183 c. 198r (February 22, 1539).

by gifting two of them to the ducal couple in 1546.\textsuperscript{132} Always a good judge of talent, the Jesuits quickly got the right man on the job, for Diego Lainez quickly became the duke and duchesses’ personal confessor and won over two of the duke’s most influential advisors, Alessandro Strozzi and Giovanni Rossi.\textsuperscript{133} The piously devout duchess seems to have been particularly attached to Lainez, as she repeatedly tried to find ways to keep the pope from sending the talented future general away from Florence.\textsuperscript{134} Lainez so won over the ducal couple that by 1547, he was giving sermons in the duomo to what he reported as wildly enthusiastic crowds.\textsuperscript{135}

By this time, the Jesuits wanted a place in Florence where they might leverage the court into supporting the order’s spiritual work of administering sacraments, converting sinners, and educating talented young nobles. And though the Jesuits may have had powerful enemies, they had powerful friends as well. One of these was Alessandro Strozzi, one of the duke’s most trusted advisors on ecclesiastical affairs and a man who knew the ins and outs of ducal politics. When Ignatius asked Strozzi his advice, he suggested enlisting the help of the Cardinal Toledo.\textsuperscript{136} When Toledo’s letter arrived, it arrived accompanied by the more verbal admonitions of Cosimo’s father-in-law, Pedro de Toledo. For, Lainez reported that when the cardinal’s letter was read to the duke, he threw up one last defense. In a final gasp of reserve, he muttered, “Some of these new things are dangerous, and while there may be some good men in the order. Perhaps not all of them are. I’ve heard stories from Rome that Jesuits steal the wives right out from

\textsuperscript{132} Galluzzi, 366.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Polanco, vol. 2, 179.
\textsuperscript{135} Diego Lainez, Lainii monumenta; epistolae et acta patris Jacobi Lainii, secundi praepositi generalis Societatis Jesu (Matriti: Typis G. Lopez del Horno, 1912), vol.1, 63-64.
\textsuperscript{136} Epistolae mixtæ, ex variis Europæ locis ab anno 1537 ad 1556 scriptæ Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu (Matriti, excudebat A. Avrial, 1898-1901), vol. 1, 336-337.
under their husbands.” Strozzi, Eleanora, and the visiting Pedro de Toledo all then went to work, refuting the rumors and breaking down the duke’s obstinate resolve. Lainez simply looked on in silent satisfaction. Indeed, between Carpi’s politic maneuvering and the heavy-handed lobbying of the Toledos, Cosimo could naught but be won over. Against the duke’s inclination, the Jesuits got their college in Pisa and a subvention from both Eleanora and Cosimo. A few years later, they got the church of San Giovannino in Florence as well. Like the Inquisition, the Jesuits were in Tuscany to stay, bringing with them their educational program, spiritual exercises, and fervent obedience to Rome.

Conclusion

Cosimo did not wield ecclesiastical power so much as an absolutist duke, but in the time-honored fashion of a patron. Tuscans may not have been in the habit of bowing their necks before a divinely endowed prince, but every one of them understood doffing their cap to a sanctified patrone. Moreover, Tuscans simply expected that the number one citizen would play the part of their protector in Rome. Thus, when there was little to recommend Cosimo to a hostile pope, he appealed to the papal curia. When his subjects had interests that only the curia could satisfy, he turned to the cardinals for whom he could return a favor. When things ran smoothly, Cosimo grew in legitimacy, power, and reputation; it was a network that he could not afford to ignore. However, nothing in life is free, and the same patronage system that won him so much legitimacy also put him in its own peculiar straitjacket. There was little that he could do. He preferred a friendly

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137 Ignatius, 717. “Su Excelencia tocó otro capítulo, diciendo que estas cosas nuevas son peligrosas, y que aun cuando algunos sean buenos en la Compañía, no lo son todos. Y habló de ciertas ocurrencias de Pistoya y de otras cosas que Marcos Bracci le había dicho de Roma, es á saber, nosotros quitábamos las mujeres á sus maridos.”
139 Polanco, vol. 3, 213.
pope and hampered range of movement in ecclesiastical affairs to absolute liberty in ecclesiastical affairs and a potent enemy to his immediate south and east. Only when he had nothing to lose in Rome did he show an overweening concern for his own jurisdictional prerogatives. With Jesuits and inquisitors at the gates, Cosimo could do little but huff in annoyance, and then meekly let them into the sheepfold.
Chapter Five: Cosimo and Savonarolan Reform; Stealing the Opposition’s Thunder

Savonarola had often proclaimed that Florence should have no king but Christ. Indeed, he had bellowed the phrase from his pulpit so often, it became the mantra for the republicanism of the Savonarolan movement. On the other hand, his followers were certain that under Medici rule, Florence would have no king but vice.¹ Lust, greed, vanity, irreligion. Hadn’t Florence bred a den of sodomites under the Medici’s watch? Hadn’t the banking family defiled their own hands with filthy lucre and the detestable sin of usury? Hadn’t Lorenzo raided the city’s dowry fund to pay for his own extravagances? Hadn’t he himself been the ringleader of pagan carnival?² Unsurprisingly, Cosimo was no friend to this brooding band of Savonarolan devotees, and he cannot be blamed for his reluctance to bestow favor on a movement that so boldly called for his own head. On the other hand, Cosimo nevertheless sought to steal a leg up on the Savonarolan movement by purloining the cowled friar’s program of moral legislation point for point, making it a central feature of his own projection of sacral monarchy.

Thus, while Cosimo scotched the head of the Savonarolan element by attempting to expel the monks of San Marco, he cut the legs out from under the movement by implementing a series of morality laws that to any attentive contemporary observer would have looked unmistakably akin to Savonarola’s own. Indeed, the friar’s campaign against vice had lived on in the memory of his followers, and they almost immediately thrust it back on the Medici.

¹ It seems that the anti-Medicean conspirator Boscoli had had this in mind when plotting his revolt against the Medici. See H.C. Butters, Governors and Government in Early Sixteenth-Century Florence: 1502-1519 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 211.
² And in this consideration, the Savonarolans may well have been right, for even one modern historian has noted that up to the time of the last Florentine Republic, moral legislation was the main difference between Florentine popular government and Medici government. Stephens, 215.
upon the city as soon as the republicans had gained the upper hand in 1527. Thus, in a moment of sublime historical irony, Cosimo based one of the crucial pieces of his own self-fashioned image on the ideological back of his most determined foes. Moreover, the Savonarolan program dovetailed nicely with other trends of Catholic reform being enacted all over Italy. Thus, the Savonarolan prince could pose very easily under the colors of the Counter-Reformation. For starters, the duke immediately set himself the Augean task of ridding the city of what he considered its moral vices, a project that he vehemently pursued with direct reference to Savonarola’s own underlying assumptions: namely, moral criminals would bring the wrath of God down on the whole city, while the punishment for their crimes would be laid upon the head of the unhappy magistrate who failed to exact justice. Cosimo took up the friar’s mantle in two other key areas: protection of the poor and reform of the clergy. In so doing, he attempted to undermine the argument that the Medici supported vice by picking up the shattered pieces of the Savonarolan tradition of moral reform.

**Cosimo and the Wailers**

As he lay dying, Lorenzo the Magnificent had called to his bedside the Dominican whose voice had lately been stoking the fires of spiritual renewal in the Florentine populace. About to face his last judgment, Lorenzo reportedly despaired of God’s mercy, as his soul was fouled with many sins and crimes. Into the sick man’s chamber stepped Savonarola, the steel-willed holy friar of God, who had already shown that he feared no man and no Medici. Here was the making of an epic struggle for the Magnificent’s soul. In the gentle manner that marked his pastoral care, Savonarola assured Lorenzo that no sins were beyond forgiveness. “You must do just three things,” assured the friar. “First,
you must put all your trust in God’s mercy.” The dying Lorenzo nodded in assent; that could be done. “Second,” continued Savonarola, “you must return all the wealth that you have accumulated through dishonest means.” Lorenzo showed a touch of hesitation before giving his assent to this proposition as well; it would be done. Sensing that now was the time to capitalize on the dying man’s pangs of conscience, Savonarola thrust home. “To win eternal salvation, Lorenzo,” he concluded, “only one thing remains; you must restore Florence to its liberties.” On hearing those words, Lorenzo turned his back on Savonarola and faced towards the wall, preferring to die without the friar’s absolution.

Or so the story goes. Most likely, nothing of the sort took place. Some lively imagination likely invented the tale to smear Lorenzo’s reputation. Invention passed into hearsay, hearsay into rumor, rumor into myth, and myth into history. But rumor flew swiftly on wings forged in a political climate highly discontented with Medici rule. In the end, the story tells us little about Savonarola, much about the movement that came to bear his name. Though Savonarola had eventually taken it into his head that he was Florence’s personal prophet of republicanism, much of the Savonarolans’ anti-Medicean vitriol appeared only after the friar’s untimely end on a scaffold in Piazza Signoria. His cult sprang up almost immediately, even though the Florentine government had done its best to squash it by posting a guard at the pyre to prevent his supporters from gathering up the ashes of his charred body to use as relics. After the initial shock of the confession and execution, Savonarola’s band of devotees regrouped and began agitating for his canonization. Miracles were recorded, the divine punishments meted out to his tormenters duly noted, and hagiographies composed; in short, many revered Savonarola

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4 Weinstein, 153-156.
as a martyr and a saint.\textsuperscript{5} With the return of the Medici in 1512, the Savonarolan religious movement quickly married itself to the anti-Medicean political movement, adopting the title of Wailers as a point of pride, even though their enemies had invented the sobriquet as an abusive caricature. The themes of liberty and republicanism proffered tentatively by the friar became the war cry of the disaffected political class. Savonarola’s supporters hailed him not only as the patron saint of church reform, but also as the patron saint of political liberty.\textsuperscript{6} The embarrassing matter of his unfulfilled prophecies could be safely postponed to the coming time when the Florentines would once again chase the tyrant Medici out of Florence; the Savonarolans thereby welded their immediate desire for political change to an eschatological religious message. After Alessandro’s assassination, they were the most gleeful element of the Florentine population, publicly declaring that the time for fulfillment of Savonarola’s prophecies was at hand. In the streets they proclaimed, “that Florence would not only recoup its ancient liberty but would enjoy it through all eternity with all those graces and felicities that had been prophesied and promised to it by God through the mouth of [Savonarola].”\textsuperscript{7} The locus of the entire movement was none other than the Dominican convent of San Marco, where the friars zealously guarded Savonarola’s memory and kept his dream of a godly republic alive.

\textsuperscript{5} Despite the best efforts of certain parties to quash this, the agitation would last throughout the sixteenth-century. Cosimo himself complained to the pope about it in 1545. ASFi, Med. 6, 282v-283v (October 15, 1545). Archbishop Alessandro de Medici forbade his cult later in the century, as his cause for canonization became a major fault-line in the post-Tridentine church hierarchy. Miguel Gotor, \textit{I Beati del Papa: santità, inquisizione, e obbedienza in età moderna} (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2002), 1-23.

\textsuperscript{6} An image which is perhaps truly behind Savonarola’s popularity in nineteenth-century Italy and his fame in modern historiography, especially his characterization in Pasquale Villari, \textit{La storia di Girolamo Savonarola e de’ suoi tempi}, two vols. (Florence: Successori le Monnier, 1887-1888).

\textsuperscript{7} Varchi, \textit{Storia Fiorentina}, 195. “che Firenze non solo ricuperebbe la sua antica libertà ma la si goderebbe in eterno con tutte quelle grazie e felicità che al popolo fiorentino erano state da Dio per la bocca di lui profetate e promesse.”
However, Cosimo’s first blow did not fall on the monastery of San Marco but rather on the *capi rossi* conventicle that Alessandro’s government had left simmering through the 1530s. The *capi rossi* were a group of laymen charged with poor relief during the last republic. However, with that government’s untimely end in 1530, the group became more exclusively proletariat and religiously fanatic, engaging in such annoying behavior (from Cosimo’s point of view) as prophesying the imminent apocalypse and actively attempting to undermine the Medicean government. It did not take long for Cosimo’s spies to sniff out this increasingly bold movement and subject its leaders to the ridicule of public shaming, seating them on ass, mockingly attiring them with mitered heads, and then whipping them through the streets of Florence while the crowd jeered them on. Its leaders were all exiled or sent to prison, their mouths forever sealed to further prophesy.8

If Cosimo had had any doubt whether the Savonarolans would be friend or foe, the *capi rossi* had laid them to rest. However, his failure to strike a wide sweeping blow at the institutions that had housed their conventicle anticipated his caution in proceeding against the city’s real hornet’s nest of Savonarolans. Cosimo crafted his case against San Marco carefully. In April of 1545, he sent a letter to Francesco Romeo, general of the Dominican order, notifying him that certain brothers were accepting minors as novices, “seizing babies hardly come from their mothers’ wombs to make them into friars.”9 Because this practice contravened the “common laws”, 10 set a bad example to the populace, and was a source of scandal for the church, Cosimo begged the authority to

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8 See Polizziotto, *The Elect Nation*, 420-432.
9 ASFi, Med. 6, c. 2r-3r. (April 1, 1545). “e’ frati pigliano e’ fanciulli e’ quali sono apena natj e gli fanno fratj” “the frate seize the children that are barely born and make them brothers.”
10 Because no one could oblige his goods until the age of eighteen.
remedy the abuse. Over the summer, tensions worsened when one rash friar had rather imprudently published a work prophesying the fall of the current regime. Cosimo seized upon the publication as a *casus belli*, letting the sword of justice fall on the entire convent. However, the brothers were quickly able to bring enough pressure on Cosimo to ensure their release. In August of 1545, Cosimo tried another tactic, expelling all of the brothers of San Marco from their convent, as well as the Dominicans of San Domenico in Fiesole and Santa Maria Magdalena di Pian di Mugnone and replacing them with more tractable Augustinian friars. International circles raised a firestorm of protest, not least of which came from Rome itself. Since Savonarola had attacked the papacy with more remorseless vehemence than he had ever challenged the Medici, the brothers’ appeal to Paul III was fodder for not little ironical commentary. But Paul saw Cosimo’s transgression as a clumsy plod on ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Thus, the matter was quickly swept up in the ongoing dispute between pope and duke and Farnese and Medici.

Cosimo cited a laundry list of complaints against the brothers of San Marco: they frightened old men into leaving their goods to the monastery, robbing families of the patrimony; they reverenced Savonarola as a saint; and they even read heretical books.

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11 ASFi, Med. 6, c. 2r-3r. (April 1, 1545). He instructed his ambassador Averardo Serristori to “go to the feet of our Lord Paul III and ask him on behalf of us that he be content to grant to us, by way of papal brief or any other way that is pleasing to His Holiness, the authority to stipulate that brothers of any sort, observant or conventual, or monks, not be able to accept anyone who is not over the age of seventeen, and that any that have been given the habit but have not yet reached that age or taken their vows be sent back to their mother and father’s house.” “andiate a piedi di nostro Sig.re [Paul III] et per parte nostra [canceled: glie] lo preghiate che sia contento concedercj. o per via di breve o per altro modo che più piacesi a S. S.tà [canceled: con], autorità che noi potiamo vietare che frati di nessuna sorte così osservanti come conventuali o monaci non possino accettar nessuno che non passi la età di 17 annj, et che tutti quelli che egli hanno vestiti in sino adosso che non aggiungono a questa età se già e non havessino fatto professione gli mandino [canceled: via] a casa de' padri et delle madri loro” adding that il breviare commissioni di questa autorità Suo Benedetto la indirizzi a chi gli piace, che non di questo non curiamo.”

12 Amati, 244-245.
13 Ibid, 246.
14 ASFi, Med. 6 c. 282v-283r. (October 14, 1545).
15 ASFi, Med. 6 c. 257r-258v (September 21, 1545).
Responding to the charges, the cardinal protector of the order admonished Cosimo to think on what the goodly Saint Antoninus would have thought about the expulsion. To this, Cosimo quipped back, “If Anthony were still alive today and saw the way in which his brothers comported themselves…he would throw them all in the river with a rock around their neck.” However, realizing that the crime of heresy did not technically fall under his jurisdiction, Cosimo was careful to note that he did not evict the brothers because of their heterodox religious positions but only because of their secular offenses. He claimed that the brothers followed the poor example set by Savonarola by meddling in affairs of state and inciting the people to sedition. Moreover, the Medici family held the *ius patronatus* of the convent. Writing to his ambassador in Rome in October of 1545 he claimed:

We have sent the brothers of San Marco away because of their bad behavior, which does not harm me by way of religion but because of the peace and quiet of this state. And if I had not sent them away already, I would send them away again because apart from the fact that one must do thus in affairs of state, I have sent them away because they live in a convent of our house, of which we not only are able to evict from but are able to burn down every time it returns to us, which perhaps I should have done so that that air will not infect all the others that will live there in the future.

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16 ASFi, Med. 6 c. 282v-283r (October 14, 1545).
17 As the reader will recall, Saint Anthony was the prior of San Marco, Archbishop of Florence, and a canonized saint
18 Cosimo, *Lettere*, 95.
19 ASF, Med. 6 c. 257r-258v (September 21, 1545). “The usage that has been in the convent of San Marco, from that bad seed of Savonarola goes on today, that is in mixing themselves with the affairs of the state.” “La usanza che è stata nel convento di S.to Marco da quall mala semenza in qua di fra Girolamo vadino ancora mescolandoci qualche cosetta dello stato.”
20 ASFi, Med. 6 c. 280r-281v, (October 23, 1545). “Noj habbiamo mandato via e’ frati di S.to Marco per e’ mali comportamenti loro, i quali a me non nocevano per via di religione, ma per la quiete di questo stato, et se io non gli havessi mandati gli manderei via di nuovo, perchè oltra che nelle cose di stato si debbe far così, io gli ho mandati via, perchè stavano in un convento di casa nostra, del quale noj non solamente gli possia cacciare a posta nostra ma lo potiamo abrusciare ogni volta che ci tornassi bene, che forse haveremo fatto meglio, acciocchè quella aria non infetti tutti quelli altri che per lo avenire vi debbano habitare.”
On the matter of the state’s jurisdiction over treason, Cosimo refused to budge an inch, boldly telling his ambassador to inform the pope, “in affairs of state, not only will I not give special respect to brothers, but even if cardinals will give me cause, I will hang them by the throat without another word.”

The subtle reference to Lorenzo’s execution of the Archbishop of Pisa following the Pazzi conspiracy would not have gone unnoticed.

Nor would such brash talk go unanswered by Rome. When rumors began trickling out of the curia that the Duke of Florence was a heretic who sheltered heretics in his realm, Cosimo rushed to his own defense, indignant and a bit genuinely bewildered that the pope would support scandalous heretic friars who denied his own legitimacy.

Laying his arguments out before the emperor, he claimed that the brothers:

Do not leave anything in the city on which they do not put their hand, and they maintain in the souls of their followers and of others citizens that intense desire that they have always had, that is, to be under the protection of the French and to govern the city by the people. They conduct themselves in such a manner that if I had not taken the opportune and quick provisions that I did, in short, there would have followed some scandal and disorder of importance, and this last reason was why I did all I could to evict them from that monastery, having first searched to make some provision and come to some solution with the general protector of the order.

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21 Amati, 251. “Farete liberamente intendere a S. Santità che, nelle cose di Stato, non solo non havrò respetto a’ frati, ma se e’ cardinali ne daranno cagione gli impiccherò per la gola senza farne una minima parlata.”

22 ASFi, Med. 6 c. 280r-281v (October 23, 1545). Referring to the claim that he sheltered heretics Cosimo claimed, “We are amazed at the rumors that His Holiness follows so atrociously towards us as you wrote us and it seems to us that the matter non no longer proceeds for zeal of religion, but by the desire of His Holiness with this occasion to show his ill will towards us. He knows well that at other times we have even sent heretics to Rome, which had not been done by some others; for instance like the duke of Ferrara who is the pope’s own vassal, who has done exactly the contrary. Not only has he not given heretics into the hands of His Holiness, he has kept them in his state.”

23 ASFi, Med. 6 c. 316 (October 31, 1545). “non lassando cosa alcuna nella città et nello stato mio, nella quale non volessino metter le manj, mantenendo del continuo nelli animj di detti lor seguacj et dellj altrj cittadinj ancora quello intenso desiderio che hanno sempre hauto di stare sotto l’ombra et patrocinio della corona di Francia et di governare la città a populo. Di maniera che se io non ci havessi fatta opportuna
Such an argument was very likely to carry weight in a court that had an overriding desire to keep Italy at peace and France out of Florence. But, as the case dragged on into November, it became increasingly clear that the pope was not flinching. In November, Paul played his trump card, threatening Cosimo with excommunication if he did not submit the case to Roman jurisdiction.  

Cosimo bent his stiff neck to the pontiff’s will again, but he was not done with the brothers of San Marco. The dispute with the pope and the Dominicans continued to rage on into 1546. If he could not evict the brothers, then perhaps he could starve them out by cutting off state subventions to the convent. The pope responded by arresting Cosimo’s agent in Rome and seizing his papers, prompting Cosimo to levy five thousand foot soldiers in a show of defiance. However, as much as they enjoyed watching the two sides squirm, neither the Venetians nor the emperor would let the ghost of Savonarola haunt the peace of Italy again; thus, the emperor quietly informed Cosimo of the need to come to an accord.

Threatened excommunications notwithstanding, Cosimo’s laments against the scandalous order continued until well into 1548, and his fight would continue until he had scattered political Savonarolanism to the winds.  

*Moral Offense and the Wrath of God.*

While Cosimo repudiated Savonarola and persecuted his legacy, he could not afford to ignore the undeniably magical sway that the message seemed to hold over much
of his citizenry. Given Savonarola’s persistent popularity, Cosimo took steps to win over the city’s Wailers by implementing a program of civic reform and moral legislation that bore the unmistakable stamp of Savonarola’s own social program. No contemporary would have missed the fact that Cosimo had made Savonarola’s targets his own: blasphemers, sodomites, prostitutes, and gamblers all found Cosimo’s legislation a heavy yoke. In this, Cosimo was very different from his Medici predecessors, little different from his Savonarolan ones. Savonarola’s attacks against these types of sinners had been frequent, and his calls for their blood reached a near hysterical pitch as the wolves closed in around him. From the pulpit in the fateful year of 1494, he had frequently railed in tones such as these:

I tell you that God wants justice; I say it again, God wants to see justice, and he wants you to punish the blasphemers, and gamblers, and sodomites, and everyone else that is against him and his government. I tell you that God wants them punished; good government punishes the wicked and chases away the sodomites and the evil-doers from the land.  

It is not hard to imagine the powerful effect this type of message had on the devotees who packed the seats of the cathedral. Savonarola would have begun his sermons quietly, perhaps elucidating some abstract point of theology. But as he turned from theology to political and moral lessons, the tension would have slowly built, the friar’s voice getting louder, his hands thumping the pulpit with ever more force. Tears may have streamed from his eyes as he drove the message home, bewailing Florence for the imminent scourge that hung over it if its government would not heed his warning and correct these moral offenses. For this was the heart of the matter. Savonarola was assured that moral

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offense would call down the wrath of God not only against the sinner, but against the entire city as well. According to his logic, if the republic left justice undone, the penalty would be visited upon the republic’s head instead. This was the state’s interest in the matter, and it was on these grounds that Savonarola urged on the city’s government from his cockpit and pulpit in the cathedral. Of course, Cosimo was well aware of the friar’s moral arithmetic, and rather than suffer the imputations visited upon his predecessors’ heads, he adopted Savonarola's moral program point for point, proceeding against blasphemers, sodomites, prostitutes, and gamblers with a fury that even the most dogmatic of Savonarolans could applaud.

The friar’s imprecations against offenses like blasphemy had not fallen stillborn from the pulpit; rather, they quickly breathed life into reinvigorated moral legislation. In 1494, the Republic passed laws tightening the screws on blasphemers, providing for harsher penalties and more stringent enforcement.29 When Savonarola’s spiritual heirs got the reins of government, they did much the same.30 Moreover, from the first, Cosimo showed himself just as stern a taskmaster as the Savonarolans had ever been. As early as 1537, the Otto di Guardia was already publishing edicts against blasphemy.31 When this failed to have the intended effect, Cosimo tightened up the laws in 1542, penning this legislation:

Having the Most Excellent and Illustrious Lord Duke and his Magnificent Counselors considered that it is very necessary that any state, besides making opportune provisions and orders for the city and dominion, wipe out vice completely, especially those vices that provoke the wrath of the high and omnipotent God: and knowing that blasphemy is a sin that offends His Majesty more than any other, which brings forth in to the world turbulences and

30 Stephens, 215.
31 Diario Fiorentino di 1537, 556.
unforeseen scourges, and wanting to extirpate it completely; it seems suitable to increase the penalties for such delinquents since people have not been corrected by virtue of the laws heretofore made, which impose light penalties, but quickly forget divine judgment and continue persevering in vice. Thus, with the opinion of the most wise and prudent citizens, they have provided in the following way.\(^\text{32}\)

The following way was harsh. Blasphemers caught in the act could expect to be two hundred \textit{lire} poorer, deprived of office for six months, and branded with a new perforation in their tongue. The second offense involved a three hundred \textit{lire} fine, the amputation of the tongue, and the deprivation from office for one whole year. On the third offense, a five hundred \textit{lire} fine was exacted along with public shaming on an ass, two years on the dreaded galleys, and perforation of the tongue.\(^\text{33}\) Since the law deemed it necessary to award perforation of the tongue on the third offense to one who was meant to have had his or her tongue amputated on the second offense, we might doubt that such severe corporal punishment was unswervingly meted out to the offending member.\(^\text{34}\)

Nevertheless, the severity of the intention cannot be doubted, for the law provided judges the discretion to hand out capital punishment to particularly egregious or recalcitrant blasphemers.

Nor could any Savonarolan doubt Cosimo’s commitment to ridding the city of the other vice that Savonarola detested: sodomy. Indeed, Savonarola’s calls for the blood of


\(^\text{33}\) Ibid.

sodomites, an act for which Florentines had a particular reputation, had been so intense that in modern times, even his hagiographers mention it only with considerable embarrassment. When Savonarola gained ascendancy in the city, he wasted no time in putting rhetoric into policy, pushing through an anti-sodomy law on the same day that the Great Council was approved. Savonarola’s republic prosecuted the ‘nefarious vice’ with such vigor that upon the Dominican preacher’s execution, one newly elected balia member reportedly exclaimed, “Praised be to god, now we can practice sodomy again.” Such enthusiasm was undoubtedly premature. When the republicans threw the Medici out in 1527, sodomy legislation was on the docket once again. Cosimo certainly knew all this and quite consciously chose to play to that constituency, filling up his own galleys up with unfortunates caught in the act. As early as 1542, Cosimo had the law drafted that read:

His Excellency the Most Illustrious Signor Duke and his Magnificent Counselors are aware how much in these recent times people so little restrain themselves from the nefarious vice of sodomy because of the small penalties imposed by the laws thus far ordered, and wanting to completely wipe it out, because of the great offense that it gives to the high and omnipotent God and the dishonor that it brings to the city, and mainly to he whom is given the care, and governance, and rule of the people, and so that in his city and Dominion, people live with fear of the Lord’s Majesty, and with due honesty, which is necessary for political life. Moved by said and other urgent, just, and reasonable causes, they have with the opinion of the wisest and most prudent citizens, provided in the following manner.

35 Erlanger 25.
37 Erlanger, 119
38 Erlanger, 2.
The penalty depended on a dizzyingly complex array of qualifiers and distinctions. Depending on the offender’s age, level of participation, and class, he would certainly face some combination of public shaming, whipping, deprivation of office, fines, and/or transportation to row one of Cosimo’s galley ships. Indeed, Cosimo’s laws put teeth into Savonarola’s program of moral reform.

In the pecking order of vice, blasphemers and sodomites were followed hotly by prostitutes. Unlike blasphemy and sodomy, prostitution was not strictly illegal. In fact, reforming clergymen often had a hard time even getting people to frown upon it with an appropriate level of distaste. As in many southern European cities, more than a few Florentines considered prostitution a legitimate occupation and useful social service. With their strict set of sexual mores, the Savonarolans obviously could not share that opinion. The last Florentine Republic had severely curtailed prostitutes’ liberty of action, and Cosimo quickly followed in their path. To his credit, Cosimo did attempt to hack at the root of the problem by providing orphan girls with the skills required to find more honorable employment. But of course, stricter rules on existing prostitutes were a matter of course. In 1553 all active prostitutes were required to leave a fourth of their goods to the Converite, the monastery in which reformed prostitutes mended their lives and ostensibly discharged their troubled consciences. This served a twofold function. Doubtlessly, Cosimo hoped the tax would discourage some from the trade, and thus, wipe their stain off his census roles. Second, like many religious institutes of the age, the

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40 Ibid, 212-213. This law on blasphemy was apparently rebanded in 1549 see Cronaca Fiorentina, 102.
41 Antoninus affirmed that much of the population (wrongly he made sure to mention) did not consider prostitution a sin. Antoninus, 20v.
42 Poliziotto, The Elect Nation, 351.
Convertite had fallen into poverty, and it is not hard to imagine what scandals arose from a destitute batch of former prostitutes turned nuns, some of whom had obviously not entirely traded in their old ways.\textsuperscript{44} In 1561, Cosimo’s legislation against prostitutes got tighter, as he stipulated that they could not live nearer than 100 braccia to any female monastery, on the penalty of 200 spiccioli.\textsuperscript{45} This certainly knocked more prostitutes off the official roles and won Cosimo plaudits from the finger-wagging Savonarolans.

Drunken gamblers were the last category of citizen to see their merry excesses sharply curtailed under Savonarolan and ducal regimes. Indeed, the Savonarolan republic had been so hard on the gamblers that they had reportedly wiped the vice off the streets altogether, with chronic gamblers fearfully retreating to pursue their leisure activities quietly in their homes.\textsuperscript{46} By now it should be no surprise that the last Florentine republic had also prohibited gambling altogether,\textsuperscript{47} which was undoubtedly one of their least popular moves. Like blasphemy and sodomy, gambling chanced the wrath of God. For instance, when Arezzo revolted under the Soderini government, the Savonarolans in the practiche suggested the best remedy might be to seek God’s aid by more stringently enforcing the anti-gambling laws.\textsuperscript{48} Neither official church doctrine nor Cosimo himself held grudges against gambling per se; Rome was awash in wagers and the duchess herself had a notorious addiction to gaming.\textsuperscript{49} But when drunken artisans, poorer folks, and even wealthy citizens risked money that they neither had nor could afford to lose, the result

\textsuperscript{44} Cantini, vol. 2, 322.
\textsuperscript{45} Cantini, vol. 4, 184-185.
\textsuperscript{46} Ridolfi, 128.
\textsuperscript{47} Polizziotto, 351.
\textsuperscript{48} Gilbert, 71.
\textsuperscript{49} Booth, 123.
could be a social and religious catastrophe.\textsuperscript{50} Cosimo was thus a touch more circumspect, preferring only to forbid large wagers or those made with IOUs, the type of gambling that risked wasting a livelihood.\textsuperscript{51} In any case, both the Savonarolans and Cosimo struck at gamblers’ favored locales; the Last Florentine Republic had closed the taverns in 1528,\textsuperscript{52} and Cosimo repeated the experiment in 1559.\textsuperscript{53}

To some extent, Cosimo seems to have been playing to Savonarolan sympathies. But why did he prosecute moral crimes with such vehemence? Why pursue blasphemers and sodomites to their unhappy juridical end? The answer probably lies in the fact that Cosimo had himself completely swallowed Savonarola’s underlying justifications of moral legislation. Indeed, Cosimo’s legislation evoked Savonarolan explanations for the secular prosecution of blasphemy and sodomy;\textsuperscript{54} that is, more than others, these two sins provoked the wrath of God and called down swift and immediate judgment on the city. The idea was longstanding, but it drew special force in Florence from Savonarola’s insistent and incessant cry that justice be done before it was too late. The warning lingered in the new monarchical air. When Cosimo’s faithful humanist Gualandi scanned the Old Testament for examples of God’s wrath; he chose as his exempla Sodom and the

\textsuperscript{51} Brackett, 137.
\textsuperscript{52} Trexler, 350.
\textsuperscript{53} Diaz, 135.
\textsuperscript{54} That blasphemy and sodomy belonged to the civil power to correct drew its force specifically from the argument that because they would provoke civil disaster from the wrath of God, it was in the competency of the civil authority to correct. See Elena Pasano Guarini, “Produzione di leggi e disciplinamento nella Toscana granducale tra Cinque e Seicento,” in \textit{Disciplina dell’anima, disciplina del corpo e disciplina della società tra medioevo ed età moderna}, edited by Paolo Prodi and Carla Penuti, 1587-224 (Bologna: Società editrice Mulino, 1993), 671. Such a view seems to have been widespread not only throughout Italy, but throughout Europe as well. See Paul Grendler, \textit{The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 26. The confusion existed in Milan as well, see Domenico Sella, \textit{Lo stato di Milano in età Spagnola} (Turin: UTET, 1987), 69. It was on these grounds that Luther himself justified civil interference in blasphemy cases, James M Estes, \textit{Peace, Order, and the Glory of God: Secular Authority and the Church in the thought of Luther and Melanchthon, 1518-1559} (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 44-45.
Golden Calf. Even in the changed government, old assumptions still reigned; what really angered God was sodomy and blasphemy.\textsuperscript{55}

Thus, Cosimo’s Savonarolan legislation was neither cynically conceived nor laxly executed. Rather, the iron duke pursued moral offenses with the zeal of a true believer. Nor is this altogether surprising. Despite his protestations against the wicked friar, Savonarola was in his blood; his maternal grandfather, Jacopo Salviati, had been a supporter,\textsuperscript{56} and Maria Salviati and her circle seem to have shown some Savonarolan preferences.\textsuperscript{57} His legislation held the promise of the renewal of the Savonarolan spirit, and evidence of his uncynical attachment to the program was not long in coming. Given the relish with which Florentines performed the nefarious act, Cosimo quickly discovered that he had to let the sword of justice fall on those whom he would have preferred to protect. Shortly after the inception of the law, a probe into the office of the Magistrate of the Pupils revealed several prominent Florentines utilizing the office to procure the sexual favors of orphaned boys. Cosimo was even forced to arrest his own secretary Giovanni Bandini and send him to languish in the Bargello prisons for the better part of his life. Bandini was a dubious loss at best. Far more difficult was the arrest of Pandolfo Pucci. Pucci was the son of Cardinal Santiquattro, a powerful voice in the Roman curia and at times, one of the few cardinals whose support Cosimo could claim in the papal courts. In his battles against the perennially aggressive Paul III, Cosimo could ill afford to lose Santiquattro as an ally.

\textsuperscript{55} Gaulandi, \textit{De Iudicio}, page 43-45.
\textsuperscript{56} Martines 151; and Polizziotto, \textit{The Elect Nation}, 251-252.
Though Pucci eventually beat the charges, a prince with a keener sense of *realpolitik* would have doubtlessly hushed the incident up immediately, for howls of protest and appeal were not long in coming from Santiquattro and his supporters; even the pope himself sent Cosimo a letter.  

Moreover, the arrest could not have been solely for PR purposes since the government kept mum on Pucci’s arrest until rumors that he had conspired against the state forced them to reveal their true case.  

Why then take the risk of losing a most valuable friend in the papal curia by tossing his son in prison? Cosimo excused himself to the cardinal with arguments that might have just as easily come from Savonarola’s own mouth. Responding to his eminent but precarious ally, Cosimo wrote:

> I have been forced to do this by the observance of the laws and by the honor of God, whom I do not want to irritate, since he has given me so many graces. From the inception of this holy law, I have sent more than twelve poor men to the galleys for this same offense. I cannot, nor should I, irritate God by not castigating also the noble and the rich, it pains me to the core to know that this unhappy fate strikes you; it strikes me as well, as I have found that Giovanni Bandini has also fallen into the same error. Be comforted though and have patience since God orders all for the best; believe thus that he has ordered this for the best and conform yourself to his will.

One can imagine that the cardinal found Cosimo’s exhortations to Christian resignation less than comforting, for the relationship between Medici and Pucci was never quite the same. So if we creep into Cosimo’s own skin for a second, it is clear that he thought the enforcement of these laws was a matter of the highest practical politics, though it was not

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58 ASFi, Med. 5 c. 377r-379r (November 17, 1543).  
59 See *Cronaca Fiorentina*, 22; ASFi, Med. 1070 c. 317 (October 16, 1543).  
60 ASFi, Med. 5 c. 355r-356r (November 16, 1543). “Sforzato io dalla osservantia delle leggi et dal honor di Dio, il qual faccendomi ogni giorno tanto gratie non vorrei irritare, havendo da poi che fu fatta questa santa legge mandato per il medemo conto della soddomia meglio che xii poveri huomini in galeria non posso ne debbo irritare Dio con non gastigare ancora li nobili et ricchi. fammi male insino al anima che sia tocco à v.s.r et à me questa mala sorte, per trovarcì si nel medemo errore ancora Giovanni bandini...conforte v.s. haver patientia et poi che Dio ordine tutto per il meglio crederche cosi ancora habbia ordinato questo et conformarsi con la voluta sua”
realpolitik as it is now understood. His moral legislation was not merely or even primarily a salve to Florentine consciences; rather, Cosimo was truly afraid of divine punishment being meted out to his state if he did not act. It was a real politics in the sense that early modern men considered the wrath of God a real possibility, saw it acting in worldly affairs, and thought that it could be influenced by their own morality. In this, Cosimo acted as a convinced Savonarolan, even though he would have abhorred the name.

On the other hand, it was not just practical politics. If Cosimo really was afraid of an imminent punishment, he was that much more afraid of eternal punishment. For our purposes, Pucci’s case functions as a sort of strange test case, elucidating just how far Cosimo shared Savonarola’s view of justice and governance. Writing to his ambassador in Rome he explained himself thus:

I have had Pucci seized, doing it against my own inclination. But already having admonished him several times, I do not want to have to render an account to God for the sins of others, especially since I have already sent many poor and middle class to the galleys, in accordance with the tenor of the law that is most known to all.\textsuperscript{61}

Such words might also have come straight from the pages of Savonarola in his concern to exalt the transcendent over the mundane. The action may have lost Cosimo powerful friends. Despite repeated attempts to win him back, Pandolfo Pucci would try to stick an assassin’s dagger in Cosimo’s back in 1559. However, a heady cocktail of factors forced his hand in ways that he would almost certainly have preferred to avoid: he found that he wanted for Savonarolan allies, he believed in the imminent manifestation of God’s

\textsuperscript{61} ASFi, Med. 355r-356r (October 16, 1543). “che io ho habbi fatto pigliar contro la mia voglia, ma havendolo piu volte admonito, non ho voluto dar’ conto a dio d’peccati d’altri, maxime havendo fatto mettere in galea, molti poveri et mediocri per il med-mo peccato, secondo il tenor’ delle leggi notissimo a Ciascuno.”
displeasure, and he feared that justice left undone would be his own undoing on the day of reckoning.

Father of the Poor

Savonarola’s moral program had not been all about the grim business of persecuting sodomites and putting sharp implements through the appendages of blasphemers. From his first entry onto the Florentine stage, Savonarola had cast himself as the protector of the poor, sheltering the masses from the insatiable and blood-soaked jaws of the city’s rich elite. Even if Savonarola had not put his magnetic appeal to work in order to win over the Florentine masses, Cosimo would have found casting himself as the protector of the poor to be an indispensable piece of sacral legitimation. Savonarola had made it even more indispensable. To that end, he adopted the Savonarolan program of poor reform, enacting sumptuary laws, fighting usury, reorganizing poor relief, and tracking down abuses in the hospital system. More than one Florentine government had fallen when the masses saw it siding with the rich over the poor. Cosimo was determined not to make the same mistake.

In the first place, Cosimo could not dispense with direct government subventions, which in the early modern world still went under the name of charity. Never was he a more severe autocrat than on the question of poor relief. For instance, when one of his familiars ignored an order concerning the distribution of bread, he shot off this dispatch to his agent:

You will tell Mister Bernardo Carnesecchi that he is to remember that our advice is an order, and that whoever opposes it, we repute to be our adversary. We desire that the poor be succored, nor do we want that bread be lacking to them;

62 According to Parenti such accusations had helped add to the unpopularity of the Soderini government of the early sixteenth century. For the charge, see Butters, 57.
they are more numerous than the rich and merit from us much regard, for our own interests as well.\textsuperscript{63}

Cosimo nimbly cultivated his image with the poor by selling grain below market value, breaking the heads of grain hoarders, and auditing the account books of illegal exporters. Though modern economic analyses have had harsh words for this protectionism,\textsuperscript{64} contemporary Savonarolans would have certainly applauded every intervention that brought the price of grain down. In this case, Cosimo brooked no compromise; he understood the essential complementarity between his own position and his image as father of the poor.

Protecting the poor also meant purging the rampant graft in the provincial hospital system and hunting down greedy careerists who directed endowments into their own pockets. His first action of the sort came during his first year on the job, when he refused to allow the Rector of the Hospital of Santa Croce Castello to collect the \textit{entrate} since word had reached his ears that the rector had been converting the funds to his own personal use.\textsuperscript{65} This pursuit of malfeasance lasted the length of his rule, his control over the life of pious institutions largely secured when he succeeded in getting his own reformist clients appointed to the two arch Florentine hospitals: the Hospital of the Innocents,\textsuperscript{66} and the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. Moreover, his pursuit of malfeasance did not just end at the rectors’ office. The Spedalingo of the Innocenti was given full power to track down and punish any wet nurses who had defrauded the

\textsuperscript{63} Cited in Pieraccini, 13. “Direte a M. Bernardo Carnesecchi, che si ricordi, che i nostri consigli sono voleri, e quelli, che ci si oppongono li reputiamo nostri avversari. I poveri vogliamo soccorrergli, nè vogliamo che gli manchi il pane; sono in più numero de’ ricchi, e meritano da noi anche per nostro interesse molto riguardo.”
\textsuperscript{64} Diaz, 130-135.
\textsuperscript{65} ASFi, Med. 182 c. 81r-81v (August 5, 1537).
\textsuperscript{66} Gavitt, 262.
hospital, while the Magistrate of the Pupils was explicitly charged to do the same with those who defrauded the orphans under their care. Thus, in his characteristically severe way, Cosimo made protection for the poor into a highly public piece of his government’s administration.

Cosimo’s adoption of Savonarolan charitable zeal followed less direct lines as well, like his meddlesome control over his citizens’ garments and jewels. By the end of the fifteenth-century, foreign finery increasingly held the Italian peninsula a slave to the whims of ostentatious fashion; Florentines were no exception, increasingly laying aside their old simple civil habit for the foppery of foreign tastes. Under its best colors, Savonarola had seen the rich brocades and precious gems with which Florentines increasingly adorned their costumes as needless expenditure. At the worst, they were the devil’s work, the father of lies playing on the vanity of weak wills. After passing a sumptuary law in August of 1496, Savonarola’s army of boy followers had browbeat Florentines into handing over such superfluities, piled them in the middle of the Piazza Signoria, capped the entire load with an effigy of the dark lord, and then lit the whole works as a bonfire of vanities. In its slavish imitation of its progenitor’s legislative policy, the Last Florentine Republic overwhelmingly voted a similar law in 1527, though that occasion was accompanied by considerably less dramatic pyrotechnics.

Cosimo again showed himself a keen student of Savonarola. In 1546, even at the height of the San Marco controversy, Cosimo published the sumptuary laws that we

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67 Ibid., 240-246.
68 ASFi, Misc. 27/III c. 905 (1544).
69 Erlanger, 173-175.
70 Roth, 64.
71 Henk Van Veen cites the 1562 sumptuary laws as evidence that after 1559, Cosimo, trying to appear as a republican prince, had no problem utilizing Savonarola rightly interpreted. While Van Veen is certainly correct about the utilization of Savonarola, his thesis requires posits a temporal split that simply
have cited earlier in chapter three.\textsuperscript{72} These laws were not only meant to encourage the virtue of temperance but to stymie the most visible reason the poor had to envy and despise the rich. The law of course, was seemingly in keeping with Cosimo’s own Spartan tastes; indeed, the 1562 draft of a new sumptuary law came from his own quill,\textsuperscript{73} and Cellini’s irreverent pen has made posterity the awkward witness to at least one epic battle Cosimo fought with his Spanish wife over expenditure on jewelry.\textsuperscript{74} But the timing of the move, at the height of the San Marco controversy, suggests that the legislation was meant to resonate with that element of the citizenry who still felt deep attachment to the rustic simplicity that reigned in the Savonarolan republican days.

Our demagogic pair waged their respective wars on poverty far more directly than just by cutting back the expenditure of the rich. One of the biggest splits between Medici and republican had long been the vigor with which the respective parties prosecuted the usury of Jewish moneylenders. The city’s large banking firms had salved their own reputations by making a subtle distinction between usury as a private loan at excessive interest and money recouped in exchange for risking capital, thus freeing their own consciences to demonize the Jewish moneylender.\textsuperscript{75} Scruples in the banking capital of Christendom sufficiently spared, popular preachers had made railing against usury one of their favored topics. When the fiery Bernardino da Feltre almost incited the populace to riot against the city’s Jews in 1488, Lorenzo the Magnificent had stepped in to protect them, curbing the excesses of the city’s religious and economic frustrations. Savonarola

\textsuperscript{72} Cantini, vol. 1 320-326.
\textsuperscript{73} Pieraccini, 13.
\textsuperscript{74} Cellini, 326-328.
had very different opinions. In his characteristic tendency to let all good impulses run bad, the friar’s call for protection of the poor repeatedly degenerated into calls for the expulsion of all Jews from the city. To that end, he prodded the city into the construction of a Monte di Pietà that would fill the breach created by the Jews’ expulsion. The Monte was essentially one part charity, one part bank, and one part pawnshop, an institution that encouraged the upper classes to invest liquid capital at a five percent interest rate as a form of charity. It then used the capital to give low interest loans to poor people against the collateral of their possessions. Lorenzo dei Medici had been rather lukewarm towards the project, but Savonarola had pushed it through on the weight of his own charisma, encouraging donations from his bully pulpit.

Though the Monte was a Savonarolan pet project, it did not suffer extinction at the new government’s hands. Rather, Cosimo found it quite useful, utilizing it as an arm of state finance and as a post of patronage. Above all, however, Cosimo’s support of the Monte allowed him to steal the Savonarolan thunder, casting himself as the defender of the poor against unjust usury. Cosimo supplemented this creative posturing with his preferred method of reform: placing harsher penalties on existing legislation. In April of 1545, Cosimo submitted all contracts of usury and the strange names under which such illicit contracts went to the authority of the Florentine Otto di Guardia and Balia, fixing harsher penalties and increasing supervision. When that did not work, since people were loath to litigate at Florence, he extended the power to his rectors in the dominions, seeking by any means possible to wipe out usury in all its variations.

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76 For an indepth study of the Monte, see Bresnahan Menning.
77 Cantini, vol. 1, 253-255. 14 April 1545.
The image of the monarch as a fatherly defender the poor was no novelty in the mid-sixteenth century. The dictates of Christian politics had long made this a duty of any Christian monarch. And the Medici themselves had, to a limited extent, rode to power on a wave of populist demagoguery. But the forms and institutions in which Cosimo carried his program were deeply imbued with a Savonarolan spirit; the friar’s voice echoed through the decades and into Cosimo’s own legislation. If Cosimo was father of the poor, Savonarola had been their grandfather.

**The Reform of the Second Estate**

By the sixteenth-century, the poor state of the secular and regular clergy had persisted for several generations as a rankling fester on the body politic of Christendom. As a result, anticlericalism was an endemic feature of early modern life, whose reoccurrence repeatedly manifested itself in virulent outbursts of satiric verse and prose skewering greedy abbots and lascivious friars. Before the Counter-Reformation, few brands of writer gave the wayward clergy quarter; if the second estate could dismiss Bocaccio’s anticlerical vignettes, they could not escape Antoninus’ fatherly admonitions. Clergy were supposed to form the moral backbone of the republic, and yet everywhere their misdeeds gave cause for scandal. Everywhere their flocks went sheperdless. Deeply convinced that the contemporary church was a shambled ruin whose scourging was imminent, Savonarola brought anticlericalism to a fevered pitch, directing shaft after shaft at tepid and avaricious prelates. Savonarola was sure of this single fact: the causes of all ills in society descended from the bad example of princes and prelates. A 1496

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78 Though this old view, based largely on the testimony of the disaffected Cavalcanti has been somewhat modified, the Medici did seem to have developed a reputation as populists. The Savonarolan republic was certainly frightened of the Medici’s popularity with the poor. Martines 178,
sermon laments, “If the princes and prelates were good, all the world would be good as well. O tepid, o evil princes and priests, O Sammaria, you are the cause of the impending scourge.” In the lens through which Savonarola viewed his whole world, the age’s priests and princes were alike to Old Testament idolaters, human sacrificers who handed over their flocks to eternal destruction in pursuit of the idols of ambition, lust, and greed. With that in mind, Savonarola called for a general renewal of the priestly class. Starting with his own monastery, he began a reform of monastic discipline that spread all over Tuscany. He also urged on the necessary complement, making calls to cut the wheat from the chaff and remove the unreformable.79

Cosimo quickly set out to prove that monarchical rule could deliver on the promise of Savonarola’s clerical reform, tracking down scandalous priests and nuns and then punishing them with characteristic severity. For his part, Cosimo’s intervention into cathedral politics was so frequent that at least one Savonarolan chronicler could grant that:

if the duke had not frequented our Cathedral as much as he has done, it would be worse than a whorehouse because of the immoral prelates. They are so afraid of Cosimo and hold such account of him, that were it not for him, the evil priestly sect would have reduced our beautiful cathedral into a simple country church, which are constantly despoiled in order to give the blood of Christ to prostitutes.80

As the quote implies, religious reformers were perhaps overweeningly interested in the sins of the flesh. And little flesh was more fussied over than that of Tuscany’s nuns, whom Cosimo spent considerable energy trying to keep chaste and docile behind their

79 Savonarola, Prediche, 117. “...se fussino buoni li principi, et li prelati, e faria bene tutto il mondo. O tepidi, o cattivi principi e sacerdoti, o Sammaria, voi siete causa di questo male. Savonarola’s opinion resonated nicely with the concerns of the Counter-Reformation, which also proceeded largely on the assumption that a reform of religious would trickle down to a general reform of the laity. See especially Wietse De Boer, The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan (Boston: Brill, 2001).
80 Cronaca Fiorentina, 43.
convent walls. The 1545 law on female monasteries set the tone, providing the basis for state control over all feminine monasteries not directly subject to the ordinary. This characteristically Counter-Reformation concern dovetailed nicely with Savonarola’s own concerns. The legislation established operai who were to oversee the temporal administration of the sisters’ lives. The operai were normally locals, and Cosimo specifically enjoined that they be of good reputation and if possible, related to the nuns themselves. To coordinate the work of the local operai, the duke set up a council of three deputies, thereby linking local administrators to his own personal will. However, the paucity of business conducted by the deputies suggests that the bonds to the center were weak; the deputies were only called upon for problematic cases. Their real work was not so much directed towards centralization as it was to keeping lecherous friars away from the brides of Christ, that is, providing the structure under which Cosimo could break the bonds that existed between female and male monasteries, bonds which led too often to scandals of the sexual kind. It was this concern that constituted the bulk of their work; indeed, most of their early letters were no more than curt dispatches ordering a number of male religious houses to have no further commerce with their dependent sisters. The local commissaries were put on guard, strictly enjoined to let no one visit the convents without license, especially the former father confessors. The deputies even inspected the walls of female convents personally to make sure that easy access could not be had. On one occasion, they ordered the podestà of Barga to find some remedy to the

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81 Although Cosimo would come to the defense of his nuns over the stricter reforms imposed by Trent. See Silvia Evangelisti, "We don not have it, and we do not want it’: Women, Power, and Convent Reform in Florence," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34 (2003).

82 There were similar magistracies in Lucca, Genoa, and Venice. See Simonetta Adorni-Braccesi, *Una Città Infetta: La Repubblica di Lucca nella Crisi Religiosa del Cinquecento* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1994), 21-23; and Martin, 61.

83 ASFi, ABGE. 4889 c. 7r (April 12, 1545).

84 See for instance, ASFi, ABGE. 4889 c. 1r-5v.
fact that the Prior of Ortignano’s house was just high enough to see into the well-windowed, and extremely visible, convent of Saint Andrea di Bibbiena; whereas on another occasion, they asked the local rector to intervene in order to stop the nuns of San Lorenzo Outside the Walls from changing their habits for street clothes and leaving the convent. Cosimo had shown that Florence was no longer willing to wait until the regulars put their own houses in order; as Savonarola had tried before, he would drag them kicking and screaming if he had to.

He accomplished this in two primary ways; the first and most successful was by promoting his own reforming candidates into key positions of authority over the Tuscan church, the second was to use his networks of patronage to drag the ecclesiastical hierarchy on board with his programs. Indeed, it was no accident that Cosimo’s clients were so successful in climbing the ladder of the ecclesiastical hierarchy or that the names of his secretaries so often appeared later in the ranks of bishops. The majordomo Pier Francesco Riccio, a zealous reformer and maybe even secretly a Protestant, was named the prepost of Pescia in 1547. In 1548, Cosimo wrote to Cardinal Gaddi asking him not to employ the reforming priest Francesco Incontri in his bishopric of Cosenza, so that he could remain as the vicar to the bishop of Cortona. He also tried to get Cortona moved

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85 On the prior of Ortignano’s house see, ASF, ABGE. 4889 c. 26v (March 17, 1545). The deputati remarked, “Little can be done to fix the fact that the prior can see into the convent from his house.” “poche cose possono far quelle monache che non sieno viste di detta casa.” On the scandalous nuns of Santucce see ASFi, ABGE. 4889 c. 129r-129v (September 3, 1559).


87 On Incontri’s behalf he wrote, “Francesco Incontri, who is found at the governance of the bishopric of Cortona, a person very learned, and of good customs, of which those people, are very satisfied, and since I hold no less dear to my heart than one should, the spiritual things than any other thing of this state, for the honor of God, and the maintence of religion, I hold him most dear, and I would desire that men just like him, be in all the other bishoprics.” “Si trova al governo del Vescovado di Cortona M. Francesco Incontri volterrano, persona docta, et di buoni costumi et della quale quei populi, si satisfanno molto, et io che non meno a cuore (anzi piu quanto si devi) le cose spirituali che li altri di questo mio stato,
to the vacant bishopric of Pisa in 1555, so that he could get Alessandro Strozzi or Paolo Niccolini elected to personally oversee reform in that diocese. Indeed, Cosimo’s attempts to get men of character in his bishoprics occasionally backfired. He would fall out with Camaiani, the Bishop of Fiesole, in the third session of the Council of Trent over the issue of Episcopalian residency, and his attempts to get his absentee enemy Cardinal Ridolfi replaced as Archbishop of Florence by someone more reforming miscarried when Ridolfi handed the see over to an archrepublican enemy, Antonio Altoviti.

As he used his bishops to conquer the secular clergy, so he exploited the same patronage network to conquer the regulars, working through the generals to chastise their naughty monks and adopting the bully pulpit to persuade regular congregations to put reforming generals at their head, preferably reforming Tuscans. Indeed, Cosimo simply could not keep his hands off the monastic elections. In 1551, he unsuccessfully attempted to swing the election of the Franciscan general to his own man. Undaunted, he sent a vicar to a Camaldesi synod in 1552, asking them to elect a reforming general and preferably a Tuscan. In 1553, he wrote to the synod of Servites:

> Having heard that the general of the servite brothers, who was an Arezzo, is dead, and desiring that that grade of our fathers of that Religion of Tuscany not go to a non-Tuscan and wanting particularly that our convent of the Annunziata be honored as a place so famous and which for an infinite amount of years has never had that dignity in its house, all these reasons have moved me to write to you at per l’honor di dio et mantenimento della religione che lo ho carissimo) desiderio che de pari suo fussino in tutti li altri vescovadi.” See ASFi, Med. 188 c. 83r-83v (August 9, 1548).
> See ASFi, Med. 24 c. 99r (December 27, 1555).
> Arnaldo D’Addario, Aspetti della Controriforma a Firenze (Rome: Ministro dell’Interno pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, 1972), 344
> For examples see, ASFi, Med. 187 c. 49r-49v (March 17, 1548), when he asked the general of the Fransiscans to approve of the disciplining of three monks from Santa Croce who refused to end their commerce with the neighboring female monasteries, or ASFi, Med. 188 c. 58r-58v (May 24, 1548) thanking the general of the Augustinians for allowing the bishopric of Cortona to punish a number of friars whom he had arrested.
> See below page.
> ASFi, Med. 197 c. 33r-33v (March 20, 1552). “a correggere et reformare quei defetti et mancamenti che potessino esser in essa.”
present so that you with our Lord the protector of this religion, which we understand to be the most Reverend (Cardinal) Santa Croce, asking his holiness to honor the convent of the Annunziata and to elect the Venerable Father Antonio Zacheria, our Florentine, and a person very religious and of good judgment, lettered and of exemplary life.  

The pesky frequency with which Cosimo pestered the religious orders certainly testifies to the pressing urgency he felt for clerical reform, as well as his desire for tractable generals. There is no doubt that Cosimo felt he needed Savonarola’s reforming credentials.

It would be wrong, however, to end our discussion of reform here. Cosimo did not simply drag a recalcitrant church trippingly along behind him. Cosimo was not always the main impetus behind reform, and as the gears on the motor of Catholic Reformation creakingly groaned to life, Cosimo was just as often the ally as he was the initiator. For instance, the first project to enclose female monasteries on Tuscan soil came not from Cosimo but the Bishop of Arezzo, who was given secular aid for the project as early as March of 1537. Cosimo’s generosity in loaning the secular arm continued unabated, as he sent his commissaries, vicars, and podeste piles of credential letters for reforming projects initiated by the church.

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93 ASFi, Med. 199 c. 142v-143r (June 12, 1553). “Havendo noi inteso esser morto, Il generale dei Frati de Servi, che era Aretino, et desiderando che tal grado non esca dei padri nostri di quella Religione di Thoscana, et che particolarmente ne fussi honorato, Il convento nostro dela Anuntiata, per esser luogo tanto celebrato et il qual gia infiniti anni sono, non ha mai havuto quella dignita in casa ci siam mossi a scrivervi la presente perche siete con N.S. et con il protetter di essa Religione che intendiamo essere Il Rm Santa Croce (at this time Marcello Cervini), per operare che il grado si dia a frati nostri di Thoscan, supplicando ss e sr a honorare il convento dela Nuntiata condurlo al Ven padre Antonio Zacheria nostro Fiorentino persona molto religiosa di buon governo, litterata et di exemplari costumi et dela quale si puo fermamente sperare atteso le buone qualita sue et quella Religione ne habia a esser universalmente contenta et sodisfatta farete adunque lofficio con ogni caldezza et efficacia.”

94 For Cosimo aid to the bishop of Arezzo see ASFi, Med. 182 c. 30r-v (March 20, 1537). For a sample of some other examples of Cosimo’s other interventions, see ASFi, Med. 182 c. 169r (December 11, 1537), which is a letter giving aid to the provincial of Castrocro in order to bring some conventual Fransiscans of Castrocaro to obedience. ASFi, Med. 182 c. 266v-267r (April 8, 1538), Aacredential letter for the general of the Camoldesi. ASFi, Med. 182 c. 252r (July 8, 1539), a credential letter for the general of the Camoldesi. ASFi, Med. 194 c. 50r-51r (April 10, 1551), offering help to an unknown source to
As in other areas, it is clear that Cosimo’s motivations here were profoundly imbued by Savonarola’s assumptions; namely, the assumption that the scandalous lives of priests negatively affected the civil comportment of his subjects. Having arrested a priest for carrying arms, he tried to appease the bishop with a page from Savonarola, arguing that a priest, “should not be better off than laics, for which reason they need to be corrected; one should suffer that those who should be an example of obedience and good morals do the contrary.” As it was for Savonarola, so it was for Cosimo, and so it was for Cosimo’s Counter-Reformation, a top down and overarching reform of society starting with the reform of the clergy. At least one of Cosimo’s handpicked bishops agreed with him, attempting to set the standard of obedience for his flock himself. He was, so he claimed, not about to rat out those who carried arms surreptitiously or spoke ill of the name of the prince, but “for love of the patron, I will remind them of the rights my patron holds in the bishopric.” Thus, subservient and reforming priests could be used to extend control and pacify the dominion. In this case then, religion was clearly being used as an instrument of rule.

However, one should not make religious reform all about utility. For, Cosimo was serious about the state’s teleological functions. Civil society was no end to itself but was meant to be a helpmate on the way to beatitude. It was an ideal that Savonarola
and Cosimo shared with most early modern thinkers; the government had the duty to help remove bad priests, to honor the divine cult, and to set the populace on the road to salvation. The concern seems to have been real, littered as his correspondence is with references to the well being of his subjects’ souls.\textsuperscript{98} Eulogies, of course, picked up on theme. On this account, Betti claimed:

\begin{quote}
The monasteries of sacred virgins, and other places that are dedicated to the divine cult that had been built, maintained, embellished, restored, and helped by the great piety of this Prince are a testimony to his religion. Is it not well known that he has often fulfilled the office of a most vigilant and loving Pastor, nurturing them and making sure that diligent care was kept of them? I have heard, not long ago, from a most Reverend religious that he had seen the whole letters written in the hand of the Grand Duke, written to those who had care of the Monasteries located in the furthest reaches of his state, in which appears the rare goodness, Rather I will say it, the sanctity of this Prince.\textsuperscript{99}
\end{quote}

Thus, the state had an interest in religion for dual yet complementary ends: both for the stability of the reign and because a cultural assumption supposed it the state’s job to promote the spiritual well being of subjects. We need not assume that one necessarily excluded the other.

To the reasons already adduced, we might add one more. Religious reform was a matter of Tuscan pride, playing into the myth of a religious Florence and a religious

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[98]{Writing to his potesta of Prato to lend the secular arm in a scandal with monks, he warned him to proceed with such caution in discovering the defects of the nuns so that, “One does not need to hear fables being told to the people and taking away their soul and devotion to those who are well disposed to serve the divine goodness and to be a nun. In this case then, propaganda took a back seat to religion. ASFi, Med. 183 c. 151v-152r (November 1538). “non si habbi ad intendere. se fussi possibile per alchuno quale ne possa incaricare et renderli monasteri predetti col discoprire e defecti et mancamenti loro fabula al popolo et torre lo animo et devotione à chi fussi ben disposta servire a sua bonta divina et monacarsi”}
\footnotetext[99]{Betti, unpaginated. “di questo, ne sono testimoni i monasterii delle sacre vergini, egl’altri luoghi, che al culto divino sono dedicati, i quali sono stati fabricati, mantenuti, ornati, restaurati, et aiutati dalla somma pietà di questo Principe. Non è egli noto, che egli ha fatto spessissimo volte l’ufficio di vigilantissimo et amorevolissimo Pastore, nutrendole, e procurando, che ne fussse tenuta diligentissima cura? Io intesi, non ha molto tempo, da un Reverendo Religioso, che egli haveva vedute le lettere intere di mano del Gran Duca scritte à chi haveva la cura de’ Monasterii, posti nelle piu lontane parti del suo Stato: Nelle quali appariva la rara bontà, anzi (lo dirò pure) la santità di questo Principe.”}
\end{footnotes}
Tuscany, a myth with which Savonarola had so deftly mesmerized and manipulated his audiences.\textsuperscript{100} Like any number of other early modern polities, Florence wanted to be both the New Jerusalem, the shining city on the hill, and the new Rome, light to the barbarian world. Since the city had no empire, their peculiar little light could not be political. Florence’s special mission had to be cultural or religious. Savonarola’s passing had not tempered the fashion. Leo X deliberately married the ideal of Tuscan religiosity to Roman Empire,\textsuperscript{101} and Cosimo’s humanist Gualandi was still bragging about it years later, citing Sallust with the quote, “The Etruscans were, he says, very great in supplication of the gods, very small in their own homes.”\textsuperscript{102} Even after Etrusco-mania had reached its height in Cosimo’s early reign, the Arch of Religion, designed for the wedding \textit{apparato} of 1565, was emblazoned with this inscription:

\begin{quote}
For inventing Grain learned Athens is famed;  
Rome for being fierce at war and powerful in empire;  
But this our mild province of Etruria is known for its divine practice and superior worship of God,  
Which they say uniquely possessed the skills of honoring the Deity and teaching sacred practices;  
now it is the site of true piety and from it this reputation never will be taken any time.\textsuperscript{103}
\end{quote}

Indeed, the religiosity of Tuscany and Florence was a matter of patriotism, and thus, the reform of the clergy a matter of national pride. Cosimo was very much puffed up with the same local pride, peppering letters with the type of self-congratulatory language. “Florence is ‘perhaps more than most’ dutiful in religion” he wrote to the College of

\textsuperscript{100} Weinstein, 27-66.  
\textsuperscript{102} Gualandi, \textit{De Optimo}, 33. “Erant (the tuscans) inquit in supplicijs deorum magnifici, domi verò pauci.”  
\textsuperscript{103} Cited in Van Veen, \textit{Cosimo I}, 184.
Cardinals, “and our cathedral is the most well administered in the world.”

Indeed, Florence had been trying to live up to their self-imposed reputation for quite some time. Cosimo held out the promise that he could finally deliver it.

**Conclusion**

There is little question then that Cosimo grounded his moral legislation on Savonarolan tradition. Indeed, he stole the Savonarolans’ thunder almost point by point, leaving no area of their moral program unresurrected. Whether Cosimo acted thus because he shared a substantial part of their worldview, and there is evidence that he did, or because he was savvy enough to realize that accommodation to this most potent of Florentine traditions was politically wise, his system of moral legislation was writ deeply into the political consciousness of his Florentine subjects. Cosimo knew the Florentine mind. He knew that a large segment of the population would judge him a tyrant if he did not make some effort to improve the city’s morals, and he knew that justice demanded an even-handed application of these laws. Cosimo’s usurpation of the Savonarolan system did not, as Henk van Veen has argued, have to wait on some tardily discovered republican principles, but rather was a key piece of Cosimian self-identity at the same time he was casting Savonarolans out of the bosom of his city. Cosimo, the moral reformer was part of his princely identity, a princely identity, nevertheless, liberally borrowed from the playbook of the most republican soul of the age.

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104 ASFi, Med. 5 c. 628a-628b (March 28, 1546).
105 Van Veen, 162-166.
Chapter Six: Cosimo as the Defender of Sacred Traditions

Unlike most other European monarchs, Cosimo did not come to a throne replete with the trappings of sacrality. Whereas most monarchs had wide-ranging prerogatives over the appointment to sacral office, Cosimo had surprisingly little. Whereas most monarchs were heir to lines that had monopolized public sacred space with regal aplomb, Cosimo’s ancestors had limited their personal and dynastic patronage projects to their own neighborhood churches. Whereas most monarchs came to a reign already associated with sacred festivals, miraculous signs, and other forms of sacral power, Cosimo found himself the first successor to the reviled bastard of an unpopular pope. Whereas most monarchs relied on centuries of accumulated traditions of sacral power, Cosimo had to start nearly from scratch. That, however, does not imply that he had nothing to work with. The sacred had always occupied a privileged position in Florentine political life; if anything, sacral politics had been a far more potent element of republican government than they had ever been when Medici held the reins of state.¹ Couldn’t Cosimo tap into some of these traditions himself? Indeed, there was certainly no compulsion limiting his propagandists to antique or foreign political ideology. But how could Cosimo make native customs his own? This chapter will argue that Cosimo’s intervention into Florentine sacral politics followed a fairly consistent pattern. First, he insinuated his presence and control over the traditional forms of the sacral by posing as their defender. Careful, however, not to use his power unwisely, his keen eye always sought to accommodate his control to his subjects’ traditional desires.

¹ See Martines, 85-110.
First, this chapter will examine how Cosimo handled appointments to sacred office, arguing that he made himself a zealous defender of his subjects’ ecclesiastical patronage rights in order to insinuate his own control over the process. Nevertheless, he went to great lengths to respect his subjects’ primary patronage concerns: communities’ desire for local priests and lay patrons’ desire to keep familial benefices in the family. The second section will make the same argument on the grounds of sacred space, arguing that Cosimo’s patronage of Florence’s hallowed spaces did not proceed haphazardly. Rather, Cosimo followed the traditions of citizen patronage, keeping public projects public and keeping private projects in acceptable locations. The third section will outline Cosimo’s policies toward sacred time and sacred festival, an area of civic life over which he wielded indirect control since sacred time had civic functions, and civic rulers had obligations to sacred time. Cosimo used his power to wriggle into the traditions of sacred time and sacred festival, setting them both at the service of his own personal power. However, archival evidence demonstrates Cosimo’s acute eye towards appeasing his population’s intensely held feelings regarding sacred festival. The final section will argue that Cosimo quickly took up the defense and control over manifestations of supernatural power: specifically the miracle and the indulgence. In his handling of these topics, he again proved that he had a finger on the pulse of popular piety. In all respects, Cosimo showed himself adept at using pre-existing aspects of the sacred to adorn a ducal chair bereft of sacrality. As the defensor sacris he took control of sacral life. As a prudent accommodator, he kept it.
Sacred Office: Cosimo and the Benefices

In early October of 1548, the parishioners of San Lorenzo a Campi gathered nervously and silently in their little medieval church on the outskirts of the small Florentine town of Campo Bisenzo. Perhaps foreseeing his impending mortality, the old parish priest was putting his house in order, and to that end, he had called the parish together in order to elect his successor. There was nothing unusual about the motley assembly of poor provincials and rich Florentines gathering to cast their votes for their future pastor, for many Italian communities possessed the right to present a candidate to the bishop for confirmation, a right known as the *ius presentandi*. However, this particular election came with some added dramatics. In recent weeks, a powerful Florentine noble named Piero Tournabuoni had been inviting local peasants to his house to dine on some pretext or another and then bribing, cajoling, and even threatening them to vote for his own handpicked candidate. Though he had done all he could to keep word of his underhanded tactics from the ears of the community’s more influential members, the current local priest caught wind of the matter and called on the aid of a powerful intercessor, Francesca Salviati, Cosimo’s maternal aunt.

Not content to let the benefice slip out of his grasp so easily, Tournabuoni showed up to church on the day of the election in the company of a band of armed retainers, who entered with a boisterous and cocksure bravado, intimating to the frightened parishioners that they were, “more ready for combat than to elect a new priest.”

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2 ASFi, AGBE. 4377 c. 306r-307r (October 27, 1548). “più presto per combatter che per elegger il nuovo prete.”
insisted that his candidate should be voted upon first, most of the peasants prudently held their tongues. However, another Florentine citizen, Bernardo di Zaccheria Strozzi, arose to protest. Strozzi dared to argue that his own favored candidate, Ser Cresci, should be accorded the first ballot since Ser Cresci had been born in the commune and was well-known and liked by the parishioners. Tournabuoni’s candidate, on the other hand, was “completely unknown to many.”

On Strozzi’s cue, the threat of violence that had been boiling under the surface now erupted, as Piero’s uncle strode up to Strozzi and struck him a resounding blow across the face with his fist. “How dare you speak to your elders with such arrogance,” bellowed the captain, and while he delivered his threat, he gently fingered the blade concealed under his cape. Bernardo did not back down, retorting that he came to speak for his interests in the parish, to which the uncle replied, “Are you willing to fight and die for those interests?” Strozzi took a quick glance at the majesties of the altar and thought better of it, “I’ve not come to fight and kill,” he said, “I came to elect a priest.” Though in her own account of the events Francesca Salviati downplayed her own role, one can only speculate that it was she who interposed her authority (and perhaps her own armed guard), sending all the Florentine citizens ignominiously out into the piazza. Lots were drawn to see which candidate would go first, and Ser Cresci made good on his patron’s claims, winning his neighbor’s vote of confidence, and the election, on the first ballot.

Tournabuoni’s antics were not the only questionable ways that various interested parties tried to steal benefices away from unwitting local communes and poor patrons. Parish rectors renounced benefices to their friends without the patrons’ permission. Well-connected individuals arranged to have patronage rights derogated in Roman courts.

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3 Ibid., “a molti incognito del tutto.”
where poorer claimants could not afford to litigate. And wealthy claimants often bled their antagonists out of legal battles by dragging cases out in eternally prorogued lawsuits. If all else failed, determined individuals could take the same route as Tournabuoni, using violence or the threat of violence to bully frightened neighbors into submission. For instance, disputes over hospital benefices in Pistoia had stained the streets of that mountain community red with civil blood, as the law of vendetta impelled the contending parties into ever more unspeakable atrocities. Pistoia represented an extreme case, where ancient grudges exacerbated new conflicts, but everywhere vacant benefices remained a potent source of unrest and conflict. Poor record keeping, interminable litigiousness, and the quick resort to violence had made a complete mess of vacant Tuscan benefices. A quick review through the archive of the Auditor of Jurisdiction and Ecclesiastical Benefices bears this out, as Cosimo’s attempts to put an end to the chaos slowly brings the situation into focus. In 1546, the first year for which the licenses of possession to benefices are preserved, some 22 percent of the auditor’s business involved disputed cases. And violence was either used or threatened in at least three of those 45 disputed cases. Indeed, the situation was ripe for the intervention of the secular authority.

The threat of violence and conflict provided Cosimo with his entrepôt. Appealing to a power exercised by Florentine governments since 1466, Cosimo’s government quickly set itself the task of administering all benefices that went vacant on Tuscan soil:

Since experiences has shown us the disorders and scandals that can arise on account of Benefices vacant by death or by any other cause, it seems to us appropriate to call this to attention and to provide, as much as one can, that in the

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4 The Auditor of Jurisdiction and Ecclesiastical benefices was a new magistracy set up and given a special mandate by Cosimo to hear cases involving ecclesiastics. See Anzilotti, 119-129.

5 The numbers come from ASFi, AGBE. 4375.
future these no longer occur, and to offer (to the rectors of the state) the ancient constitutions signed between the Apostolic See and this city, disposing that one take possession of vacant benefices in the name of whoever represents the state, in order to give them to who canonically has the right to them and to take away the ambition from whoever intrudes on them by arms or force.\(^6\)

The extent to which Cosimo was grounding his claims on Florentine tradition is abundantly clear, for apart from appealing to the city’s “ancient constitutions” with Rome, the text of Cosimo’s law practically echoed that of 1466.\(^7\) Moreover, Cosimo’s legislation was not, as so much other early modern legislation, an idle threat; the duke was not in the habit of delivering idle threats. Indeed, it only universally applied what Cosimo had already been doing on a case-to-case basis.\(^8\) When the news of a priest’s death reached the administrators of the territories, a local macebearer was immediately dispatched to the local church to seize the goods. Most of the time, he would stick around to determine to whom the *ius patronato* belonged. If it belonged to the community, his sword would guarantee order in the election. If the benefice remained vacant for a long time, the local rector or vicar would make sure that the spiritual needs of the populace were taken care of.\(^9\) Having put such authority to use, Cosimo had

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\(^6\) Cantini, vol. 1, 186-187. “avendo noi per esperienza veduto quali disordini, e scandal, che alcune volte sono intervenuti per conto dei Benefizi vacati per Morte, o per qualunque altra si voglia cause ci è parso a proposito avvertire, e provvedere per quanto si può, che per l’avvenire non ne seguan più, e che si offervi le antquisite costituzioni perciò firmate tra la Sede Apostolica, e questa Città, disponenti. che se ne prenda la Possessione in nome di chi rappresenta questo stato per restituirla dipoi a chi canonicamente, e di ragione sarà giudicato spettarsi, e tor l’animo a qualunque presumersi armata mano, o per forza intrudervisi.”

\(^7\) The Florentine Republic had in 1466 argued, “If the authority of the magistrate is not interposed on the possession that is sought, it often happens that great disputes arise, and controversies lead to the taking of arms and bloodshed.” “Nisi interposita auctoritate magistratus possessiones petantur, sepenueruo fit ut magiae rixae oriantur et ad arma et sanguinem contentiones prorumpant.” Cited in Bizzocchi, 119

\(^8\) ASFi, Med. 182 c. 100r (September 7, 1537); ASFi, Med. 183 c. 12r (May 24, 1538); ASFi, Med. 183 c. 44v (July 6, 1538); ASFi, Med. 183 c. 47r-47v (July 11, 1537); ASFi, Med. 183 c. 53r-53v (July 26, 1537).

\(^9\) See ASFi, Med. 183 c. 242r (June 14, 1539).
theoretically wide-ranging powers over the Tuscan church; in fact, he had little will to use the power arbitrarily.

Why did Cosimo protect subject communities’ patronage rights with such vehemence? For starters, Cosimo’s protection of the patronato was not only about the politics of control but rather a matter of shame and honor, his standing in the eyes of new subjects. As a result, protection could at times slip into bullying. Writing to the abbess of a Lucchese monastery who was trying to usurp patronage rights over a small church in Florentine territory, he sarcastically quipped:

Though your most Reverend Excellency is the superior and ordinary of said pieve, and as such has the faculty to confirm the election of the patrons, and even, perhaps to receive a tax from it, I do not believe that without the consent of the patron, you can confer this pieve to anyone, and though perhaps the Pope could do it, derogating the patronato with his supreme power, His Blessedness is not accustomed to doing so in my state; so I don’t think that you either could or should be trying to do it with your ordinary authority.

Having duly chastised the abbess, he threatened to take the fight all the way to the Roman courts, where he assured her that she would not win. Cosimo would not be denied as a defender of his subjects’ patronage rights, even if it meant letting slip one of his occasional bouts of literary fury against hapless opponents.

Indeed, he knew that such a role was a winning position in the eyes of his subjects. However, he also realized that the defense of his subjects’ patronage was

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10 It was for this reason that Cosimo fought tooth and nail to keep Paul III from derogating the hospital of Altopascio, for he was mortified at the embarrassment and lack of standing that this would cause him in the eyes of his own subjects, writing “To do such a thing would be very scandalous in this city and to me, a great disgrace.”

11 A pieve was a parish church that held the rights to baptize and bury. It usually functioned as a pole around which were collocated smaller chapels and shrines.

12 Ibid.
defense of his own patronage, for his lack of control over the Tuscan church left him with little recourse but to beg the *patronato* rights of others. Because Cosimo was heir to a permanently poor treasury, granting benefices made up a vital cog in financing a largely clerical government. 14 Of course, European monarchs had spent centuries raiding the church’s coffersto pay their officials, but relative to other monarchs, Cosimo possessed precious little control over his local church. As heir to the Signoria, Cosimo inherited the right to appoint rectors to any benefice that had belonged to the Captian of the Guelf Party, that is, all the patronage rights that had been seized from exiled citizens. However, in a nod to the virtue of clemency, Cosimo had restored the goods of many exiles in 1537. Thus, the sum total of these benefices did not amount to much. Moreover, Cosimo’s effective control was often limited to agreeing to a renounce. In the first ten years for which records are preserved, Cosimo nominated rectors to only 18 posts, less than one percent of all benefices and less than two posts a year, not nearly enough to feed the voracious appetite for benefices at his perpetually low-on-cash court. 15

Cosimo’s lack of authority frustrated him in all sorts of ways, but he would not make his newfound monarchical power extend to usurping ecclesiastical liberties. As a secretary related, Cosimo once responded to a request for a benefice by referring the requester to his uncle, the Cardinal Burgos, with the frustrated quip, “I do not know who better can give a benefice than Cardinal Burgos, because I am the duke, and the duke does not give benefices or ecclesiastical goods.” 16 On another occasion, when an agent of the Cardinal of Tournon requested a sinecure in Florence, Cosimo refused the request

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14 On the clericalization of Cosimo’s court and his use of the benefices see, Taddei, 29-75.
15 From the years 1546-1559, ASFi, AGBE filze 4375 to 4388.
16 ASFi Med. 1170 c. 76r (December 7, 1552). “non sappai chi meglio li potessi far gratia di beneficii che il cardinale di burgos et don francesco et che lui era duca et li duca non danno beneficii ne entrate ecclesiastiche.”
with the explanation that all the sinecures in the city were filled up, and he would not
touch an occupied one. “I cannot,” Cosimo declared, “be imputed of having done
violence to ecclesiastical things or of putting my hands on benefices on my own authority
and without the express order of His Blessedness.” Cosimo was neither the French king
nor the Spanish king, who both had won wide-ranging patronage rights from previous
popes. His conscience and deep ties to Rome denied him the options of the English king,
who simply took the church’s property for himself. In that case, only one option was left.

To protect his image and collect patronage rights, Cosimo had to go cap-in-hand
to those who held them: local communities, guilds, cathedral chapters, popes, bishops and
lay patrons. Local rectors were Cosimo’s blunt edge in the awkward and unpleasant task,
as Cosimo occasionally instructed them to cajole communities into naming him their
procurator, always with the ever most caution and tact. In the early days, local rectors
received such instructions with a marked regularity, though it is unclear how often they
succeeded. Certainly, folding to the duke’s request would not have been without benefit
to the local community; when a community’s patronage rights were endangered, ceding
their rights to Cosimo gained them a powerful and zealous ally. When rival factions
threatened to tear the community apart, Cosimo could help to find a candidate suitable to
all. By the 1550s, Cosimo had developed such a reputation that his aid was actively

17 ASFi Med. 194 c. 52v (April 11, 1551). “io non potrà esser imputato d’alcune violentia, ò
d’haver messo la mano nelle cose ecclesiastiche con propria autorità et senza espresso ordine di S.B.”
18 For a non-exhaustive list of examples see. ASFi, Med. 182 c. 100r (September 7, 1537). ASFi,
Med. 183 c. 12r-12v (May 24, 1538). ASFi, Med. 183 c. 69v-70r (August 9, 1538). ASFi, Med. 183 c.
205v-205v (April 1, 1539). ASFi, Med. 183 c. 276v (August 5, 1539). ASFi, Med. 183 c. 280v (August
12, 1539). ASFi, Med. 195 c. 30r (June 17, 1551). ASFi, Med. 195 c. 78v (July 21, 1551). ASFi, Med.
208c. 74v (September 3, 1558). ASFi, Med. 208 c. 93r (October 4, 1558).
19 ASFi, AGBE 4376 c. 136-138 (July 28, 1547).
20 ASFi, AGBE 4376 c. 274 (September 27, 1547).
sought. However, at times, it seems all that Cosimo could offer a community was his own goodwill, a chip that the community might never find the opportunity to cash in. Communities knew they could politely ignore Cosimo’s request and some did, even if the duke’s macebearer had taken up residence in their parish church. When communities rebuffed him, Cosimo could have theoretically exercised his de facto power, but as noted, he was loath to do that when it was not accompanied by a de iure justification.

The limits, then, of the prince’s control over benefices become obviously clear. In order to get cooperation, he needed to accommodate. He needed to gain a reputation as a judicious procurator for local communities, one who could be trusted to respect local wishes. And there is little doubt that local communities had very definite plans for their benefices. Keep locals in; keep forestieri out. This mantra had remained largely unchanged since the fifteenth-century. Forestieri, or foreigner, did not necessarily mean non-Tuscan. It could simply meant non-local. It will be recalled that the community of Campi rejected Pier Tournabuoni’s candidate on the grounds that he was a foreigner to the commune, while Ser Cresci had been born in the parish and was well known to the people. In another case, a dispute between the stubborn community of Calamecha and the bishop of Pistoia demonstrates that ‘too-foreign’ might simply mean a priest from a neighboring diocese. Though both Cosimo and the bishop had exhorted the community to elect the bishop’s man, they protested claiming, “it is not that we do not know him to be worthy of such a thing, but having been in your service, we do not want in any way that it be thought that we punish our own diocesan priests to give our benefice

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21 ASFi, AGBE 4379 c. 191 (February 13, 1550); and ASFi, Med. 208 c. 77v (September 4, 1558).
22 See ASFi AGBE 4377 c. 151 (July 28, 1548); and ASFi, AGBE 4377 c. 222 (September 11, 1548).
23 See the Calamecha case below.
24 Bizzochi, 138.
to one of your domestic priests.” Cosimo and the bishop had no choice but to give the community what they wanted, for the *patronato* rightfully belonged to them.

If anecdotal evidence alone strongly suggests that local communities wanted local priests, statistical evaluation confirms the impression. Between 1546 and 1550, the first five years for which such records were kept, local communities freely electing a rector to a parish were 20 percent more likely to elect a local priest than the bishop and 25 percent more likely to elect a local priest than the Roman curia. 60 percent of the rectors elected by the parishioners were members of the local community. The ordinary, on the other hand, appointed a local as rector only 40 percent of the time, and Rome appointed a local rector only 35 percent of the time. If communities could not find a suitable local priest, they usually preferred a diocesan one; the same statistical pool demonstrates this even more starkly. 84 percent of all rectors elected by communities were diocesan priests, compared to 52 percent elected by the ordinary and 58 percent elected by Rome. Many bishops came from outside the diocese and were not resident anyways. Because they used the benefices to pay for their households, their choices did not always match the communities’ desires. Not infrequent were the legal battles of local communities supporting their local candidate against an ordinary trying to foist his foreign domestic on them. To any prince paying attention, it was clear what communities wanted. Cosimo

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25 ASFi, AGBE. 4377 c. 222 (September 11, 1548). “noi non abbiamo mai voluto consentire, non gia che noi non lo conosciamo degnissimo di tal cosa, ma per essere stato alli servizi vostri, non vogliamo che homo del mondo posse pensare che noi castigiamo e nostri preti diocesani per darli a prete vostri domestici.”

26 See Figure 1 below.
Provenance of Priests Elected to Benefices by Communities (1546-1550)

Provenance of Priests Granted Benefices by the Ordinary (1546-1550)

Provenance of Priests Granted Benefices by Rome (1546-1550)
certainly was paying attention and eager to avoid the type of trouble that his bishops
often found. A case from 1554 illuminates Cosimo’s sensitivity to local feeling. When
the Bishop of Lucera tried to steal the primierato of the Aretino cathedral for his nephew,
Cosimo set his powerful Roman patronage network in motion to protect local interests.

Writing to the adopted papal nephew, Cardinal del Monte, he claimed:

It has come to my attention that our Aretino Citizens find it a very bitter pill that
the first dignity and offices of the Aretino Cathedral are exercised by a foreigner (forestiere) and a person who is not suitable nor accepted by them. It seems that
they have lamented it with much right. Though already two times, I have sought
the litigation between Niccolo Gamarrini of Arezzo and the nephew of the Bishop
of Lucera, on the primierato of that Cathedral be agreed upon suitably, I cannot
fail…to entreat S.V. a third time that he be content to make the bishop dispose
himself to accept an honest pension and to let Gamurrino enjoy the primierato
 pacifically, since he has already resided 20 months and is well liked by the all the
clergy and the city. 

In this case, del Monte leaned on the bishop, the bishop leaned on his nephew, and within
the month the matter was settled. The real winner was Cosimo, who got to ride to the
rescue to the rescue of the most important Aretine temple with little more than the
dispatch of a letter.

Thus, Cosimo understood that there was more to promise a local community than
simply finding a “discreet person, who was suitable for the divine cult.” Communities
wanted a local if possible, and Cosimo tried to oblige. As his court and administration

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27 For example, before sending a servite named M. Basilio to Prato in 1538 to read in logic, he sent
letters to the community asking for their opinion of the man and what they thought of the election of him.
See ASFi, Med. 183 c. 17v-17r (May 30, 1538).
28 ASFi, Med. 201 c. 81v-82r (March 11, 1554). “Intendo che pare molto aspero alli nostri
Cittadini d’Arezzo che la prime dignita et offitii della Cathedrale Aretina sieno exercitate da persone
forestiere et non sono idonee’, ne accette loro, et parendomi che io molta ragione sene dolglino ancorche io
gia due volte habbia recero de la cause che ,e, tra Nicolo Gamarrini di Arezzo et un nipote del Ves di
Lucera sopra il primierato di essa Cathedrale si accomodi tra essi convenientemente non ho possuto
mancare (illegible) la terza volta con pregar la S.V. che sia contenta far opera quel Vescovo si disponga ad
acettar una pensione honesta, et lassar goder pacificamente il primierato al Gammurrino, poiche ve è
riseduto gia XX mese et satisfa molto al universale di quel Clero, et dela Citta.”
29 ASFi, Med. 201, c. 140 (May 28, 1554).
30 Although, this was a sine qua non, and a standard promise to any community from whom
Cosimo attempted to get a procuratorship. From ASFi, Med. 182 c. 113v-114r (October 6, 1537).
were composed of Tuscans of all stripes, he found ample opportunity to give communities what they wanted, matching his *criati* with their own local bases of power. For instance, in 1548 he made his Pratese tutor and majordomo, Pier Francesco Riccio, the Prepost of Prato.\(^\text{31}\) In his capacities as heir to the Captain of the Guelf Party, he gave his Aretino secretary Pietro Camaiani two benefices in Arezzo,\(^\text{32}\) and tried to get him a title on two more.\(^\text{33}\) With less success, he tried to get his secretary Angolo Dovitio a benefice near his hometown of Bibbiena.\(^\text{34}\) In 1555, San Piero and San Pagolo in Cortona went to Giovambattista Vanucci, a Cortonese.\(^\text{35}\) Indeed, of the 24 times that Cosimo used his own patronage between 1546 and 1559, he presented diocesan priests 19 times, and local priests 13 times, numbers that approach the percentages of local communities themselves. Though not always possible, he tried to match priests with localities as closely as he could.

Cosimo gave in to the sensitivities of local feeling at other times as well. When the community of Pescia ceded him their right to elect the archdeacon of the cathedral church, he made sure that it stayed in the hands of a native Pescian.\(^\text{36}\) When the pope granted him the hospital of San Lazzaro in Volterra, he gave it to his Volterran secretary, Jacopo Guidi.\(^\text{37}\) When the Capponi presented the Hospital of Altopascio to one of Cosimo’s secretaries, he gave it to the secretary with the closest hometown: Ugolino Grifoni of San Miniato. Even when exhorting others, he exhorted them to match man with locality, whether seeking to get his familiar Guasparre di Prato elected and

\(^{31}\) For the license of possession see. ASFi, AGBE 4350 c. 404.
\(^{32}\) See ASFi, AGBE 4379 c. 10. In 1542, Cosimo gave perhaps another two benefices to Camaiani in the Arezzo diocese. See ASFi, Med. 5 c. 39r-40r (January 9, 1542-1543).
\(^{33}\) See ASFi, Med. 192 c. 107v-108r. (December 26, 1549).
\(^{34}\) ASFi, AGBE. 4375 c. 156 (May 29, 1546).
\(^{35}\) ASFi, AGBE. 4384 c. 570.
\(^{36}\) ASFi, Med. 185 c. 141r (July 24, 1544).
\(^{37}\) ASFi, AGBE. 5097 c. 27 (October 30, 1554).
confirmed in benefices in his native town, asking the Archbishop of Volterra to
nominate his Volterran client Vincenzo Riccobaldi to a Volterran benefice, or trying to
catch a client named to a vacant benefice in his native Castello di Santa Croce. As a
patron, he intervened to try to keep the Bishop of Vasona from contesting a benefice held
by the son of his auditor, Jacopo Polverini, in the Polverini strong base of Prato. When
the men of Cecina gave their voice to Cosimo, he elected a local priest named Piero
Vincenzo to the rectorship of San Giovanni di Evangelista. This case gives us a clue into
why local communities would hand over their own rights; when another party challenged
the patronato and appointed a non-local, Cosimo rushed to the defense of his own local
candidate. Moreover, when Cosimo’s intimates renounced their own benefices, it
seems that they were encouraged to renounce them to locals. Whenever he could,
Cosimo tried to pair his diversely drawn court with benefices in their own hometowns. It
was a win-win situation. The clients found them easier to rector, the communities
preferred the locals, and Cosimo avoided conflicts. Since he did not get many chances to
nominate rectors on his own rights, he made sure to accommodate this important wish of
local communities

Local communities were not the only players in the game; individual lay patrons
had amassed a healthy percentage of the territory’s ecclesiastical patronage rights as well.
Cosimo showed himself just as zealous in their defense, though not quite as importunate

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38 ASFi, Med. 182 c. 92v-94r (August 27, 1537).
39 ASFi, Med. 206 c. 63r (November 14, 1556).
40 ASFi, Med. 185 c. 149v (Undated, 1544).
41 ASFi, Med 23 c. 631r-631v (March 5, 1552-1553).
42 ASFi, AGBE. 4375 c. 136-138 (July 28, 1546).
43 See for instance Alessandro Strozzi’s renouncement of the church of San Piero di Sopra vicino a
Sancto Casciano ASFi, AGBE. 4376 c. 459 (January 12, 1547); and Christopher Herrera’s renouncement of
a benefice in Arezzo ASFi, AGBE. 4379 c. 370 (October 29, 1550).
in begging their patronage rights. Moreover, Cosimo lent a sympathetic ear to their concerns, the primary concern being the desire to keep benefices in the family. Our five-year sample shows that from 1546 to 1550 some 53 percent of all lay patronage benefices, either by election or renounce, were given to someone who shared the patron’s last name. Thus, it was not long until patrons began coming to Cosimo claiming their rights by familial lineages and begging Cosimo to make sure that those familial rights were not derogated in Roman courts. When the stakes were high enough, Cosimo would send his Roman machinery clanking to life, littering his letters to Roman contacts with supplications on behalf of his familiars, relatives, and bishops.

Thus, Cosimo followed the republic’s lead by intervening in the regulation of the most important and most lucrative aspect of the sacred: sacred office. By protecting the patronato and accommodating feelings in local communities, Cosimo was able to finagle his own control over Tuscan benefices, something he refused to do on an assumed monarchical authority. Thus, Cosimo found a way to write his benefice politics and control of sacred office into the traditions of Florentine life.

44 Cosimo did convinced Pandolfo Pucci, that is before Pucci tried to kill him, to give the benefice of Tre Santi in Valdelsa to the brother of the dead rector, Piero dei Jacopo Medici. ASFi, Med. 197 c. 64r (April 16, 1552); for another example see ASFi, AGBE, 4375 c. 360 (September 6, 1546).
45 The number of benefices given to relatives and in-laws is probably quite a bit higher than that, but absent extensive genealogical tables, relatives related in the maternal line would be impossible to trace. The number is once again drawn from a five-year sample (1546-1550) of over a thousand benefices.
46 See ASFi, AGBE, 4377 c. 34.
47 To take one example out of many. He interceded with the vicar in Pescia to favor keeping a Fortini chapel in the hands of the family. ASFi, Med. 183 c. 288r (August 21, 1539).
48 For instance, Cosimo favored the career of young Alessandro dei Medici, future archbishop of Florence and later Pope Leo XI, who as the child of Bernardo Medici and Francesca Salviati was Cosimo’s first cousin. As soon as Alessandro came of age, he went to lengths to get the benefices that had been reserved for him. ASFi, Med. 201 c. 110r-110v (April 19, 1554).
49 For the nephew of his client bishop Alessandro Marzi Medici, bishop of Assisi, ASFi, Med. 182 c. 91r-91v (August 19, 1537). And he also interceded for the Uncle of his secretary, Martio dei Marzi Medici, the bishop of Marsico, in order to a restore him a benefice. ASFi, Med. 182 c. 215r-216v (January 30, 1536-1537). For the bishop of Arezzo, see ASF, Med. 2 c. 14r (August 28, 1537). And for the bishop of Lucca. ASFi, Med. 189 c. 57r (November 7, 1548).
Sacred Space

The widest and arguably most beautiful street in Florence, the Via dei Calzaiuoli, runs from the Piazza Signoria to the cathedral square, linking as it were, the heart and mind of the early modern Florentine republic. On one end lay the seat of political power, the palazzo tower silently jutting over the city skyline and keeping vigilant watch over the city’s peace. On the other end lay the Florentine cupola, one of the largest in the world, standing as a testament to what Florentine tour guides love to explain as the sheer audacity of Renaissance man’s belief in his own powers, since the architects planned and built the base of the church before the technical ability to finish the dome even existed. In the middle lay the church of Orsanmichele, once the cities’ grain market then transformed into a house for a sacred image of the Virgin Mary, the exterior decorated by the cities’ major and minor guilds in demonstrations of religious, civic, and professional pride. The Calzaiuoli is thus elegant testimony to the intimate linkage of the political and religious, for in the early modern world, the two spheres were not only conceptually, but also spatially connected.

Cosimo’s Medici ancestors had been masters of bolstering their popular political appeal by patronizing the city’s sacred temples and monasteries. Cosimo wasted little time in following in this wake. His projects were so widespread that it is easy to mistake them for an attempt to monopolize all the city’s sacred space. However, arbitrary takeover of sacred space could breed resentment, and stamping one’s arms on any given church lacked credibility, a point that Cosimo understood well. For instance, when the Arno overflowed its banks in 1547, the rising tides spared neither secular nor religious buildings. A number of the monks whose complexes lined the river had no choice but to
wade through the slodge to the *Palazzo Signoria* in order to appeal for aid from the government. Cosimo obliged, but the occasion, which he used as a convenient way to barb Pope Paul III, reveals some of Cosimo’s thoughts on sacred space. As one of his secretaries recorded:

> The more diligence and solicitude that will be used in (rebuilding these monasteries), the more it will be appreciated by his Excellency, who laughing, has said to me that, if he has these walls rebuilt, the monks will need to put his arms on it and make a memory of this ruin as Paul III does on every building that he constructs.\(^{50}\)

Making light of that particular pope was common sport in Cosimo’s court, but the text is illuminating for the offhanded attitude it reveals; Cosimo knew that slapping personal markers on every temple lacked credibility, and he knew it looked cynical. Thus, the duke’s exigencies were mutually contradictory. As a private citizen and a Medici, he had a tradition of private patronage to uphold. As a prince and representative of the city, his aims had to be more widespread. Such a situation required a deft touch. Fortunately, Cosimo had a strategy, one that had been successful on occasions. He would play different roles at different times, acting as a personal patron in some churches and a duke patron in others. Indeed, Cosimo was no stranger to this game of chameleon-like persona shifts; referring to his tendency to vary his personality according to the occasion, his court whispered about the young Cosimo that he “dukes and undukes himself at will.”\(^{51}\) He duked and unduked himself as a patron as well, using a heavily personal patronage only in those sacred spaces in which the Florentine traditions of citizen patronage dictated he had a legitimate claim, that is in neighborhood and familial churches. On the

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\(^{50}\) ASFi, Med. 1173 c. 291 (August 8, 1547). “Et quanta più diligentia et sollicitudine ci si apporterà sarà all’Ecc.a sua [Cosimo I] tanto maggiormente grata, la qual ridendo, mi ha detto, ’S’io fo rifare i muri alle monache ci doverranno metter la mia arme, et far memoria di questa ruina come fa fare Papa Pauolo [Paulus III] a ogni fabbrica che fa.”

\(^{51}\) Fedeli, 146.
other hand, he kept his own presence largely out of public projects, directing and funding them in traditional ways.

For some time into the Renaissance period, the Florentine urban space continued to look fiercely territorial. Neighborhood mattered, and neighborhood churches were a focal point of neighborhood pride. Thus, it is not surprising that the pattern of sacred patronage continued to be largely drawn along neighborhood lines. This is born out in a quick survey of the record books of the Franciscans of Santa Croce, the Benedictines of le Murate, and the Augustinians of San Jacopo tra il Fosse, who win this honor for no other reason than they were all in the same quarter, and they all kept some of the era’s tidier records. Between the years 1555 and 1580, Florentines made a total of forty-two major bequests to these three monasteries. Some were entirely monetary; some were grants of property. Most all of them carried the duty of performing masses for the deceased soul. Of these forty-two bequests a full thirty-six, or eighty percent of the testators can be demonstrably linked to the monastery by ties of family or neighborhood. Moreover, one of the remaining six patrons was Giovanna d’Austria, the wife of Francesco I, who as a foreigner could not have been expected to know or respect traditions of citizen patronage. Though these bequests were somewhat more

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53 Major implies that they were large enough to be recorded in the monasteries’ record books. This usually meant that the money either funded a perpetual grant for mass or some other number large enough to have made it into the monasteries’ compilation of bequests.
54 At times the familial or neighborhood connections between donor and monastery are plainly demonstrated in the legati books themselves. When they are not, the process of establishing connections between people that lived 500 hundred years ago and the places that they lived is of course, a tricky business, but one made easier by the 1562 census conducted by Cosimo. It is for this reason that I have chosen the years 1555-1580, since they allow me to place the proper names in the propers quarters. In each case, I have linked the person to the quarter of Santa Croce, either their own name, or the name of someone to whom they were related in the first degree. See Silvia Meloni Trkulja, *I Fiorentini in 1562: Descritione delle Bocche della Citta’ et stato di Fiorenza fatta l’anno 1562*, a cura di Silvia Meloni Trkulja (Firenze: Bruschi, 1991).
modest than the major artwork pieces commissioned by the duke, the patterns were the same: quite unsurprisingly, people continued to give money to monasteries that were in their own neighborhood, in which they had relatives, or in which they had familial traditions of patronage. When Cosimo set about patronizing his own sacred spaces, the pattern had already been neatly laid out for him.

One of Cosimo’s first real personal projects involved considerable restorations in San Lorenzo, which he handed over to Jacopo Pontormo, the same artist who had so indelibly immortalized Cosimo’s namesake in a 1520 portrait. This was only Cosimo’s first step in putting his own highly personal and highly Medicean claim on San Lorenzo. When the New Sacristy was completed, Cosimo staged a public translation of the bodies of Lorenzo and Giuliano dei Medici into their current tombs, and while he was commissioning Pontormo to paint the sacristy, he was planning great statue of his father Giovanni delle Bande Nere on the base of the basilica’s front steps with Bandinelli. Though his favored sculptor’s agonizing lethargy robbed Cosimo of seeing this completed in his lifetime, he was able to hang some of the standards won at Scannagallo up on San Lorenzo, in triumphant symbiosis with his ancestral sacred space. And he also personally commissioned Bronzino’s Martyrdom of San Lorenzo, which, unlike Pontormo’s ill-starred work, survives to this day. This was not the only personal element of Cosimo’s relationship with San Lorenzo. In 1550, the opera of San Lorenzo consented to offer up masses for Cosimo’s parents: Giovanni and Maria. Of course, the Medici creatures that had tasted years of Medici bounty were good enough to offer the prayers

55 Lapini, Diario, 124
56 Lapini, Diario, 113.
free of charge.\textsuperscript{57} In all these cases, then, Cosimo was only patronizing space on which he had an indisputable claim. Not only was San Lorenzo in the Medici’s traditional San Giovanni quarter, but it was just across the street from the Medici family palace. Indeed, San Lorenzo was the Medici church \textit{par excellence}; the Medici had paid for the construction of much of the church out of their own pockets, and over the years, the family had made considerable endowments and bequests.\textsuperscript{58} Thus, the San Lorenzo commissions did little more than put Cosimo’s mark on a space to which he had indisputable ties of family, neighborhood, and tradition.

Cosimo also courted this same highly personal relationship with the monastery/church complex of Santissima Annunziata. Another important shrine in the San Giovanni quarter, this monastery lay on the axis leading out from the city center and into the traditional Medici lands of the Mugello. Like San Lorenzo, the Annunziata had been heir to a long history of Medici patronage. Both Cosimo the Elder and his son Piero had reserved cells among the Servites, and in the mid \textit{quattrocento}, Piero dei Medici had commissioned the artist who had built his own family palace to design an equally sumptuous home for the miraculous image of the Virgin Mary; Michelozzo did not disappoint, producing the plans for the baldachin under which the image still stands to this day.\textsuperscript{59} Over the intervening years, Medici patrons had littered the space with \textit{ex votos},\textsuperscript{60} and, unlike their Dominican neighbors down the street, the Servite friars had

\textsuperscript{58} Gaston, 111-123.
\textsuperscript{59} Fossi, 149-150.
done nothing to lose the goodwill of their Medici patrons. Indeed, in 1498 the Servites had been among the most anti-Savonarolan elements of the city, even loaning siege ladders to the angry mob that sacked San Marco and took Savonarola prisoner. In the forty-some intervening years, every turn in the Medici’s political fortune breathed life into the white-hot rivalry conducted by the competing religious houses.

Thus, Cosimo had rightful historical, religious, and political ties to this Florentine shrine as well, ties which he cultivated with a markedly personal nature. Cosimo made at least one highly theatrical procession to the Annunziata, but the new Medici rulers left more permanent signs of their presence in this sacred space as well. To the Medici ex voto’s already in Annunziata, the duchess added her own, a finely carved silver bust, given in thanks for the numerous times she had had recourse to the Madonna. A list of votive offerings compiled in the seventeenth-century also mentions a bust of Giovanni delle Bande Neri, which we might reasonably assume was placed there by Cosimo. Cosimo appeared even more explicitly and personally. In 1560, Alessandro Allori included his likeness in his Expulsion of the Money Changers. And in 1569,

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61 Martines, 239-240.
62 Polizziotto, The Elect Nation, 333.
63 See page 308.
64 Mancini, 97. “testa fino al busto d’argento al naturale, di buon peso.”
65 Mancini, 93
66 Richelson, 115.
Cosimo commissioned a statue in his own image and likeness to fill a niche in the Annunziata’s Chapel of Saint Luke, which was to house the confraternity of artists.\(^{67}\) Moreover, though Cosimo’s move out of the Medici palace may have severed his local ties, his court and artists maintained a lively presence in the local church. Ugolino Grifoni, the sons of Agnolo Niccolini, and his cupbearer Sforza Almeini were all among those who had houses nearby.\(^{68}\) Vasari actually lived in the convent for a time.\(^{69}\) And the inclined tourist can still discover the tombs of a number of high-ranking officials and artists, including the secretary Angelo Marzi Medici, the writer G.B. Tedaldi, the painter Giovanni Stradano, the treasurer Thomasso dei Medici, and the sculptors Baccio Bandinelli and Giovambattista Giambologna. Moreover, the remains of Cellini and Pontormo are there as well, enjoying in death the rest which their various neuroses denied them in life. Thus, long after Cosimo moved out, his court continued to be a vital connection to the Annunziata neighborhood.

If Cosimo had a heavy personal presence in churches to which he had legitimate ties as a citizen patron, quite different were the projects undertaken in the Cathedral, Santa Croce, and Santa Maria Novella, spaces to which Cosimo could not lay such historically valid personal claims. Unlike San Lorenzo, the cathedral had been built with public rather than private funds.\(^{70}\) Cosimo acted accordingly. Under Bandinelli’s influence, Cosimo’s first cathedral project consisted in little more than transforming the wood choir into a more suitably eternal marble, for the choir had been built on the

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\(^{67}\) Richelson, 113-114. All previous scholars have taken this to be Cosimo as Joshua.  
\(^{68}\) Fantoni, 177-178.  
\(^{69}\) Rubin, 98.  
\(^{70}\) Brucker, 32.
designs of Brunelleschi, an artistic hero of the republic. Rather than snatch control of the *duomo* outright, Cosimo chose to work through the traditional republican entity, the opera of the *duomo*, the compliance of which he secured by submitting it to his own oversight in 1540. The funding for projects in the cathedral still came largely out of the opera’s traditional revenues, though privately the entity was now largely hemmed in by Bandinelli’s caprice. Thus, Cosimo directed the project through a traditional entity and funded it with traditional means. Moreover, despite Bandinelli’s claim that Cosimo’s projects were designed to leave his eternal memory in the city’s major church, Cosimo’s presence in the form of *stemma* or personal imagery is noticeably absent from all of the major works undertaken in the cathedral, including Bandinelli’s choir, the large Bandinelli altar statues, and Vasari’s last judgment in the cupola. The observer searching for Cosimo’s likeness in the cathedral will search in vain, for Cosimo well knew the differing protocols for public and private projects.

Cosimo completed the huge renovations to Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella in the same way, though with an entirely different program in mind. In this case, the ideas for the renovations percolated out of Trent rather than out of Bandinelli’s imagination. Tridentine architecture stressed laic participation in the Eucharist, but from a liturgical standpoint, the walling of the Cathedral choir had only further cut the laity off from the mass. Thus, the post-tridentine projects went in a wholly different direction, as Cosimo commissioned Vasari to remove the rood screens and redesign the side chapels

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71 Verdon, 522-523.
73 What remains today of Bandinelli’s choir is just the base of the original structure.
for use as more intimate liturgical settings. Indeed, in many ways, the physical
renovation of these two buildings was a visible representation of church reform. And the
timing of the project was no accident. It certainly was not just by chance that Cosimo
restructured the city’s most important Franciscan church on Tridentine lines in the same
year that the Franciscan general synod met in Florence and reformed the order itself
along those same Tridentine lines. Indeed, there is an argument to be made that the
whole project was a giant visual representation of Cosimo’s work in reforming the
conventuals.

Cosimo had had both the conventual Dominicans and Franciscans in his
reforming sights for years. He had spent the 1550s keeping his thumb on the Dominicans
of Santa Maria Novella by intriguing to get his own confidant appointed protector
general, before he finally gave up and handed control over to the Observants. He had
spent years bending the ear of the Franciscan cardinal protector as well. In 1544, he
cajoled Carpi into getting the Franciscan general to come to Tuscany to help reform the
monasteries. When even that measure failed to get the business of reform done,
Cosimo continued to complain to Carpi, urging the Cardinal in no uncertain terms to elect
a general who would ‘repress the insolent lust, sodomies and sacrileges these religious
commit.’ Cosimo knew just the man: his own confidant Raffaelo Sannini, whom he

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74 Marcia Hall, 7-13.
75 On Cosimo’s intervention in Santa Maria Novella, see ASFi, Med. 199 c.109v-110r (April 18,
1553); on the monks replacements see Lapini, _Diario_, 117.
76 ASFi, Med. 185 c. 145v (July 26, 1544).
77 ASFi, Med. 323 c. 31r (May 24, 1549). “poter reprimer la insolentie lusture, soddomie, et
sacrilegii che in questo religiosi sone della quale v.s.r. ne è protettore e il papa pastore, e grande conto
debbon render a dio che con si mal esemplo di simil religiosi.”
78 ASFi, Med. 194 c. 115r-115v (September 14, 1551). Adopted from Alessandro’s
administration, Sannini had worn many hats for Cosimo already, functioning as a local inquisitor, a ducal
informant, and an instrumental collaborator in carrying out the reforms of the female monasteries.
had already foisted on the order in the role of Tuscan provincial. This particular project failed; so Cosimo would have to wait on his reform. But it all paid off in 1565 when the general synod met in Florence and redrew their constitution, remedying, at least on paper, many of the faults which Cosimo had spent years complaining about. Thus, these architectural projects gave visual expression to Cosimo’s very popular interventions in church reform.

In both cases, Cosimo chose to work through the churches’ respective opera, although in both cases he had denuded them of their independence, giving Vasari a free hand to impose uniformity on the hodgepodge of familial chapels that had grown up over the years. His hand was certainly a little heavier now, but he did give the displaced families the right to fund the construction of the new chapels. Many took the offer with less than a whimper. Some bowed out, their places taken by the duke’s own favorites, but even the new men were well matched to places in which their families had historical ties. For instance, Alessandro Strozzi got a chapel in Santa Maria Novella, a long time Strozzi church in the traditional Strozzi quarter. The physician Andrea Pasquali also got a chapel in the Dominican church, right above the spot where his family held a tomb. When a branch of the Serristori family declared that they could not pay for the new chapel in Santa Croce, their rights were transferred to another branch of the family, to Averardo Serristori, the duke’s ambassador to Rome. Thus, Cosimo’s personal marks were largely absent from these projects as well; if he took a sledgehammer to familial

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79 ASFi, Med. 182 c. 35v-36r (April 11, 1537).
80 For instance, their commerce with women of ill repute, their scandalous association with female monasteries, their propensity giving the habit to excessively young boys, and their propensity to take more brothers than they could afford. Santa Sede, Bullarium Romanum, Tomus VII, auspicate Francisco Gaude (Augusta: Seb. Franco et Henrico Dalmazzo Editoribus, 1862), 401-422.
81 Hall, 16-27
82 Hall, 133.
chapels, he assuaged feelings by keeping those familial chapels in familial hands. In this he was following historical precedent; the last major renovation of Santa Croce had also been accomplished with a combination of private and public funds.⁸³

Two other patronized sacred spaces will round out our discussion and bring the pertinent dichotomy to the fore. The first project was legitimized on the grounds of neighborhood, the second on familial ties. Indeed, neighborhood ties did not cease to matter. Moreover, new houses meant new neighborhoods. When Eleonora's already frail health took a turn for the worse in the late 1540s, Cosimo used her private fortune to purchase the old Pitti palace on the other side of the Arno. From there on out, Cosimo began to cultivate ties with the Oltrarno’s most important monastery/church complex, Santo Spirito. Before the move, not even a whiff of a relationship can be detected. But after the move it was among the Augustinians of Santo Spirito that he sought a new confessor in father Girolamo Cardenas.⁸⁴ It was in Santo Spirito that Cosimo sponsored and attended a *sacre rappresentazione* of the Annunciation in 1565.⁸⁵ And it was in Santo Spirito that he made an entirely personal donation to refurbish the interior.⁸⁶ Of course none of this was beyond the pale of acceptable private citizen patronage, for Santo Spirito was Cosimo’s new neighborhood church.

As we have remarked, neighborhood was not the only tradition relevant to citizen patronage. Familial ties served just as well. Few sacred spaces were as tightly bound to Cosimo’s court as was the convent of the Santissima Annunziata detto Murate, which, situated near the old city walls on the Via Ghibellina, was nowhere near the centers of

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⁸³ Fossi, 422.
⁸⁴ ASFi, Med. 207, c. 95v-96r (September 6, 1557).
⁸⁵ Lapini, *Diario*, 151.
⁸⁶ Van Veen, *Cosimo*, 122-123.
Cosimo’s private power. Nevertheless, le Murate was on the court rolls for monthly payments by 1558, and Eleonora funded the rebuilding of the nuns’ refectory in 1560. One of Bronzino’s portraits of Cosimo even found its way into the convent’s collection. What could draw Cosimo to such close ties with a convent so distant from his base of power? For starters, the Medici bank had financed the sisters’ move to the Via Ghibellina in the fifteenth-century. This gave the Medici their in. In the mid-quattrocento both Piero Cosimo and Lorenzo had taken an interest as financial benefactors of the monastery. Lorenzo had even given an ex voto offering, an image of himself, to the monastery in return for the virgin’s intercession with his gout. However, Cosimo was not just a Medici. His paternal grandmother, Caterina Sforza, had patronized the Murate years before, bequesting 2,000 gold Florins to the monastery in exchange for the nun’s gifts, prayers and favors, one of included which hiding her jewels and children in safekeeping during her revolt against the Borgia. Later, Catherina received permission to keep a cell in the cloister at her personal disposal. However, more recent familial ties were probably more important. Before being married off to Henri of Valois, young Catherine dei Medici had been deposited in Murate as a lay sister to receive protection and education. It is quite possible that Cosimo’s patronage of the convent grew out of his desire to appease her. Catherine’s grateful memories of a childhood spent in the cloister paid off for the monastery when she became Queen of France, and Catherine apparently choose to do her giving through Cosimo. Records

87 ASFi, Med. 631. Le Murate was on the books as a creditore for 20 fiorini per month.
88 Lowe, Nuns Chronicles, 135.
89 Ibid., 373.
90 Lowe, Patronage, 264.
91 Lowe, Nun’s Chronicle’s, 372.
92 Ibid., 175-176.
show Cosimo ordering alms of grain for the monastery on the queen’s behalf in 1548.\textsuperscript{93} The timing coincides with Catherine’s accession to the throne and Cosimo’s desire to use his consanguinity to effect a rapprochement with the French.\textsuperscript{94} Thus, Cosimo's patronage of le Murate was shrewd; on the one hand it did fall under traditional and more common patronage patterns while at the same time furthering his international diplomatic interests. Like most of his projects, it was adroitly done. He kept his public projects outwardly public, and he kept his private projects only where tradition dictated that they belonged.

\textit{Sacred Time and Festival}

The Catholic world continued to divide time itself into sacred and profane moments, regulating the city’s ritual life by the liturgical calendar and local religious festivals. Moreover, the liturgical calendar was not just liturgical, and religious festivals were not just religious; rather, both marked important elements of civic identity. Florence was no stranger to the overlap. Florentine religious festivals always celebrated the civic in the sacred and the sacred in the civic.\textsuperscript{95} Like other Italian communes, the feast of the city’s patron saint was the most important civic celebration of the year, in Florence’s case the feast of Saint John the Baptist on June 24. The feast of the Annunciation on March 25 remained important as well since this was the day on which Florentines continued to celebrate the New Year, even after the switch to the Gregorian calendar. Cosimo put sacred time and sacred festival under the ducal pinions, but at the same time, he manipulated them both, molding them into a celebration of his own

\textsuperscript{93} ASFi, Med. 189 c. 74v (November 11, 1548).
\textsuperscript{94} See Cosimo’s painstakingly constructed letter to Catherine on her ascension. ASFi, Med. 10 c. 28r (April 21, 1547).
\textsuperscript{95} Heidi Chrétien, \textit{The Festival of San Giovanni: Imagery and Political Power in Renaissance Florence} (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 1-3.
personal power. Quite predictably, Cosimo was ever careful to not to push his control too far, for accommodation was key to mastering the hands of sacred time as well.

Indeed, as the fires of religious dissent broke out over Europe and Italy, holding fast to the liturgical calendar became a matter of more importance than simply keeping to tradition; it became a matter of confessional identity. As controversialists took to their pens and inkpots in order to win hearts and minds, Italian governments took to less benign instruments in order to win conformity, tightening legislation that forbid manual labor on certain major feasts. As part of his self-fashioned identity as the protector of Catholic tradition, Cosimo wasted little time in tightening the screws on his own legislation, making sure that no man’s “little reverence and fear of the great and omnipotent God,” would bring, “dishonor and public scandal on the Christian religion.”

The ban on work had a long arm: peasants were not allowed to seed the land, work their fields, or transport agricultural goods; merchants were not allowed to buy or sell, and bottegas, artisans, and bankers were obliged to close. Few exceptions were made, but there was some accommodation. Candle makers were allowed to sell votive candles, while doctors and apothecaries could keep their shops open. And among the most important accommodations to popular sensibilities, destitute artisans were allowed to work in their shops as long as they kept the windows tightly shut. The new law proposed few novelties; the secular power had long used coercion to keep the sabbath holy, but as with his other legislation, Cosimo’s promulgation of a law meant he was

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97 Ibid., 370-372.
about to get serious in prosecuting it. It also meant that he was about to get serious in defending sacred time.

However, transforming defense of sacred time into control of sacred time was a trick for no mean political conjurer since all sorts of limitations boxed him in. He couldn’t just go about inventing his own religious feasts. The timing of feast days was out of his control, and thus, despite their civil associations, it would have been difficult to use the Roman calendar in order to create new mythologies of Medici power. However, the feste, or religious feasts, were closely linked to a more distinctly civil phenomena, the feria.\textsuperscript{98} Ferie primarily involved a prorogation of certain courts and the suspension of private and/or public debts. It was a little like a civic holiday before such a thing existed and before such a word would have even been entirely intelligible. The feria was the civil authority’s preferred mode of making sure everyone honored the feast day, but Cosimo’s government did not let the Roman calendar limit the imaginative uses to which it could be put. For instance, in times of economic distress, governments might create ferie in order to temporarily lift crushing burdens of debt from the backs of the peasantry.\textsuperscript{99} Only greedy and unpopular creditors could protest a move like that, but Cosimo was prepared to use the feria for less altruistic reasons as well. Already in 1539, the Supreme Magistrate used a feria to make a sort of holiday out of Cosimo’s accession to the throne. The deliberations read:

The supreme magistrate realizes that on the ninth day of the present month of January his excellency, the Lord Duke Cosimo dei Medici was solemnly elected

\textsuperscript{98} In liturgical terminology, the term feria was often equated simply with feast day. The equation of feria as a feast day is currently lost in ecclesiastical terminology, but the original sense lives on in modern Italian in its meaning of holiday. In later liturgical terminology, feria came to refer to a weekday, in which sense it lives on in the modern Italian word for weekday: feriale. However, it is clear that the Tuscan government has neither of these religious meanings in mind in its legislation; a feria at this time and in this setting was a distinct category whose most distinct function was the prorogation of debt.

\textsuperscript{99} Cosimo for instance created ferie for this reason in 1550, 1554, and 1562.
and assumed the highest supreme grade of his city, and was deputed Duke of Florence. Not wanting to let so memorable a day pass in silence without universal demonstrations of happiness for this solemn event, by their solemn decision, they decide, make, and create a feria with full security in the city and suspension of private and public debts in the city, contado, and districts.  

Cosimo’s minions add a few touches of their own to this new civic holiday by holding a solemn mass in the cathedral and lighting an appropriately modest fireworks display.  

The day may not have technically been a religious feast, but any observer would have certainly felt that it was, for the feria and mass mimicked the more properly religious feast days, while the fireworks display conjured up images of the Festival of Saint John. Thus did defense of sacred time become control, and thus did control become utilization.

When Cosimo came to officially regulate the celebration of ferie in official legislation, his own holiday was officially enshrined in the Florentine books. Moreover, the new calendar showed a marked favoritism towards Medici feasts. For instance, the celebration of the ascension of the Medici Pope Clement VII was not among the several ferie that he declared null and void, and if Clement was one among only three popes that did not lose their status, it is no surprise that Cosmus and Damian, the traditional Medici saints, were also among those who did not lose civic recognition of their own day. In any case, the Supreme Magistrate had already been granting Cosmus and Damian their feria on a year-to-year basis anyways.  

Thus, Cosimo was able to thrust the traditional protector saints of the Medici house, as well as himself and his line, into the ranks of

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100 ASFi, MS 5 c. 46r (January 7, 1540). “Advertendo come il di 9 questo del presente mese l’Ex-tia del S. Duca Cosimo de Medici fu solamente electo et asunto al primaro et grado supremo dela sua città et deputato secondo duca di Firenze, non volendo passar si memorabil giorno in silenzio e senza universale demonstrationi d’allegrizza per loro solenne partito Deliberano feciono e crearono feria et pienissima sicurta nella citta, contado, et distreette.”  

101 A letter from an unknown source to Ugolino Grifoni confirms that these quickly became traditional accoutrements of the festival of Cosimo’s election. See ASFi, Med. 1070 c. 14r-14v (January 9, 1542).  

102 ASFi, MS. 5 c. 16r (September 19, 1539).
protector saints of the Florentine populace, along with such local heroes as Saint Romulus of Fiesole, San Donnino, Saint Giovanni Gualberto, and San Zenobius. Cosimo also used the *feria* to celebrate political triumphs, such as his victory of Scanagallo, the treaty of Chateau-Cambresis, and the victory over the Turks at Lepanto. Of course, Cosimo did not invent the political use of festival time; the Last Florentine Republic had created its own peculiar republican festival celebrating the expulsion of the Medici. But Cosimo twisted the government’s protection of sacred time for his own political needs, inventing and preserving a number of quasi-personal holidays.

Cosimo’s own personal schema of legitimation included more than just playing around with the sacred calendar. Traditional civic celebrations could penetrate personal sacrality in other ways as well. For instance, Cosimo’s wedding feast mirrored a key element of the San Giovanni feast. At a central moment in the wedding festivities, the avatars of Florence’s dominions appeared in succession, promising future fecundity in both their own land and in the loins of the betrothed. In token of the promise, each of the goddesses laid representations of their bountiful agricultural dowries at the feet of the couple. The avatars of the dominion were not meant to represent pagan gods in a pagan sense but rather to represent the people and the land, their products laid at the feet

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104 Cantini, vol. 3, 103-104.
107 Minor, 223. The pagan flair of the pageant, no doubt, followed the typical contemporary poetic license in this matter. At any rate, the various goddesses were reinserted into a Christian framework by asserting their inferiority to the God of universe. Apollo enjoined Cosimo, “And since they give you their pure and sincere hearts with their dearest and most beautiful dowries love them as a father, just and true giusto e vero. For their humble prayers above the stars will obtain from Him who governs the world and Heaven, life and issue and honor, with eternal peace.”
of the couple a symbolic representation of the tribute of the territories. The foreign observer might have missed the obvious civic significance, but Florentine observers most certainly would have instantly called to mind a similar moment during the festival of San Giovanni, in which the subject communes offered their own banners, food, and wax torches, laid at the feet of Florence and John the Baptist.\textsuperscript{108} In this way, the republic had ritualistically assured itself as the keeper of the dominion’s treasures, indeed, the keeper of empire itself. The associations must only have been heightened because in a nod to civic tradition,\textsuperscript{109} the wedding had been arranged to fall just before the June celebrations of the San Giovanni festival.\textsuperscript{110} Thus, the poetically pagan pageantry effected the symbolic transfer of sacral power; Cosimo made himself the new keeper of empire.

Indeed, sacral time and sacral festival could be made to serve political ends, but Cosimo well understood the limits in which his control was hemmed. A case from 1537 reveals his rapid learning curve. The men and the community of Figline held an annual procession of what they reverenced as a piece of the true cross. However, like most similar processions, this was both a religious and a civic ceremony. As such, the community of Figline and the brothers from the monastery that owned the piece had showed their reverence for the relic by locking horns in a bitter struggle over precedence in the procession. Cosimo was well aware that this admixture of civic and religious passion was a powder keg destined to ignite violent altercations on the street, and so Cosimo ordered the procession postponed. As a salve to religious scruples, the pious Cosimo suggested that, “in exchange of the procession, the community supplicate and multiply with orations towards the divine goodness so that he accept with open arms and

\textsuperscript{108} Chrétien, 38-39.
\textsuperscript{109} Kent, \textit{The Patron’s Oeuvre}, 60.
\textsuperscript{110} Minor, 100-101.
receive in his most holy grace, everyone who with contrite and humble heart seeks
him.\textsuperscript{111} The response of the community does not survive, but it was certainly bold
enough to make the cautiously prudent Cosimo back off. One day later, Cosimo wrote
back belaying the order and allowing the procession.\textsuperscript{112} Some one was giving Cosimo
good advice, for it is not hard to imagine how quickly the duke himself would have
become the target of the opprobrium that surrounded Figline’s civil discord. Cosimo
gave a similar nod to the people’s penchant for imbuing sacred festival with civic
meaning on his trip to Rome in 1560. When asked by Alessandro Strozzi at what point
they might leave the city, Cosimo responded that they could not leave Rome until after
the feast of St. Peter, writing, “the feast of Saint Peter is just beginning, in the middle of
the month that you say you want to leave, and if you leave so close to the time of the
festival, it will seem that you don’t care about it, and you are fleeing that day so
celebrated in that city.”\textsuperscript{113} Indeed, Cosimo well understood the power and meanings of
civic festivals.

Thus did Cosimo shrewdly take control of sacred time, celebrating his own power
in forms that Florentines would find familiar and inoffensive. As always, Cosimo was
self-regulating, understanding the extent to which his subjects would accept his control
over sacred time, backing off at the prudent moments, and regulating his intervention to
send acceptable messages. Thus, Cosimo’s control over sacred time followed his usual
pattern: defense, insinuation, control, and accommodation.

\textsuperscript{111} ASFi, Med. 182 c. 51r (May 25, 1537). “cambio d'essa si supplichi et multiplichì con le
orationi appresso la Bonta divina atteso che ella gratamente accetta et riceve in la sua gratia sanctissima
ciaschuno che col cuor contrito et humiliato la ricerca.”
\textsuperscript{112} ASFi, Med. 182 c. 51v-52r (May 26, 1537).
\textsuperscript{113} ASFi, Med. 212 c. 72r (May 16, 1560). “che fatta la festa di San Piero si metta à camino, pero
che da mezzo il mese come scrivete che doverebbe esser la partita, al detto tempo della festa come si breve
spatio che poco importa, et parera che fugga quel giorno così celebre in quella città.”
Sacred Power: Indulgences and Miracles

Sacred office may very well have been the most lucrative element of sacral tradition, sacred space may have been the most visible, and sacred time might have been the most controllable, but none of these was the most important; that palm went to sacred power, namely, the indulgence and the miracle. These were sacral power in their most important manifestations. The first flowed through the hierarchical channels of the church and guaranteed the penitent sinner remission of the temporal punishment of sins: in the abusive, caricaturizing vernacular so often attached to it, a get out of purgatory free card. The indulgence could be won in this life, or the price would have to be paid in the next, either through the prayers of those left below or in the happy torments of purgatory. On the other hand, miracles sometimes skirted the hierarchical structures of the church, putting the believer in direct contact with the supernatural. Cosimo wasted no time in putting his government on top of both.

From the first, Cosimo took indulgences under his own personal care. Only three months after his election, he instructed Chiarissimo dei Medici to give every aid to the jubilee proclaimed by the Prior of the Incurables, “because from such a meritorious work one is able to do much for the salvation of all those that seek eternal salvation”114. From

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114 The local jubilee is not to be confused with the universal jubilee proclaimed by the pope, but it is clear that this jubilee must have ultimately rested on the Roman authority, as it seems to have included some sort of indulgence with it. ASFi, Med. 182 c. 26v-27r (March 11, 1537). “The Venerable Prior of the Incurables has the authority to authorize a jubilee, as you will see by the form of this attached letter, and sending into that city in order to have them participate in so great a divine grace and gift, he has asked us that we exhort you as we do with this letter, that you appear before whoever represents the spiritual there, in order to give them every honest aid and favor. We will be grateful if you do not fail, because from such a meritorious work one is able to do much for the salvation of all those that seek eternal salvation.” “Il venerabile Priore dell’Incurabile di questa Citta ha auctorita di ponere et concedere jubileo come per la forma d’essa si demostra et mandando in quella citta per participareli una tanta divina gratia et dono ci ha ricercato vi exhortemo come facciamo efficacemente per questa nostra glie ne instantia appresso a chi rapresenta lo spirituale per cio et ogni altro, ogni vostro honesto presidio et favore Perho ci sara grato non gli è ne manchiate a causa una tanto meritevole opera si possi tirare avanti per salute di tutti quelli che bramano la eterna salute.”
the beginning, Cosimo’s line on indulgence was in strict conformity with Catholic doctrine. As with indulgences, so with indulgence’s concomitant partner: masses for the dead, which early moderns almost always commissioned with the thought of quickening their passage through purgatory. In this case, Cosimo tipped his hand with a bout of panic. In 1540 the pope had interdicted Florence over the disputed collection of a tithe, and Cosimo had boldly claimed that all his priests would prefer to stand interdicted rather than hand over a single scudo to Rome.\textsuperscript{115} However, as All Saints and All Souls Day approached, Cosimo’s bravado faltered, and so did the confident expectation of his subjects’ support. All Souls Day meant the ceremonies for the dead, and thus, the interdict tread on dangerous ground, messing as it did, with the souls of dead relatives. He wrote to his ambassador Serristori, “It seems to be appropriate, and my duty to remind the Pope that we are now near the solemnity of All Saints and the ceremonies of the dead need to take place.”\textsuperscript{116} When the bull came through, Cosimo asked Serristori to rush it to Florence so that it would be there in time to give the proper orders.\textsuperscript{117} However, because Paul’s anti-Cosimian hackles were once again up in a dander, Cosimo neither got the immediate suspension, nor the dispensation for All Saints, a fact that left him unpopular with the populace and furious with the pope.\textsuperscript{118}

From that point on, Cosimo took more care. Both in 1545 and 1546, he asked his ambassador to get the pope’s personal confirmation for the cathedral’s traditional indulgence on the feast of the Annunciation.\textsuperscript{119} Indeed, even with an unfriendly pope,

\textsuperscript{115} Cosimo I, \textit{Lettere}, 55.
\textsuperscript{116} ASFi, Med. 4 c. 105r-108r (October 30, 1540). “mi ,e, parso convenir’ al debito mio Come già siamo alla Solemmita di tutti e santi conseguentemente alla cerimonia da morti.”
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} ASFi, Med. 4, c. 110r-112v (November 4, 1540).
\textsuperscript{119} See ASFi, Med. 5, 510r (March 8, 1544); and ASFi, Med. 5, 571r (March 2, 1544).
Cosimo respected the power of the indulgence. With friendly popes he was downright obsequious. In April of 1560, Cosimo made a *feria* for the indulgences attached to the crusade.\(^{120}\) In December of the same year he made a *feria* for eight whole days, strongly recommending that his population take advantage of the indulgence offered for the reopening of the Council of Trent. The text read:

Aware of how much clemency and charity the most beatific and Holy Vicar of God on Earth, Pope Pius IV has been moved to give freely to the faithful Christians of the treasures and Graces of the Most Holy Church, and since one must provide that every person freely and without impediment be able to enrich themselves of so particular gift of indulgence...their lordships publicly band and notify how they have made and created a feria for the city of Florence only...and exhort every person that next Sunday, in which solemn processions will be made in the City, that they dispose themselves to follow devoutly according to the order of the Bull, in order to gain such an indulgence, and pray to God with all their heart for the conservation, augment, and greatness of the true and living faith.\(^{121}\)

Cosimo himself set the example; in Rome at the time, he made the procession with the barefooted pope from Saint Peter’s to Santa Maria Sopra Minerva.\(^{122}\) Cosimo closed the bodegas down for another Florentine Jubilee in 1564, this indulgence given to those who would visit the seven major churches of Florence.\(^{123}\) He then did it again for the Holy year of 1565,\(^{124}\) and again in 1566 for an indulgence proclaimed for the Knights of

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\(^{120}\) Lapini, *Diario*, 126-127.

\(^{121}\) Cantini, vol. 4, 105. 22 Dec. 1560. “Atteso con quanta clemenza, e carità cristianamente si sia mosso il Beatissimo, e Santissimo Vicario di Dio in Terra Papa Pio Quarto a dare liberale a Fedeli Cristiani delli Tesori, e Grazie della Chiesa Santissima, e che perciò fa di bisogno provvedere che ciascuna persona possa liberamente e senza impedimento arrichirsi di tanto particolar dono dell’Indulgenza già publicata; Imperò Lor Signorie fanno pubblicamente bandire, e notificare a ciascuno come hanno fatto, e creato Ferie per la Città di Fiorenza solamente quanto all’esecuzioni personali et etiam per gli cessanti da dover cominciare domani che sarà il di 23 del presente, e per dover durare tutto detto Mese di Decembre, e però esortare ogni persona che Domenica prossima nel cui giorno si faranno per la Città Processioni solenni si disponga a seguirle dietro divotamente secondo l’ordine della Bolla per conseguirne tanta Indulgenza, Supplicando Dio di tutto cuore per la conservazione, augumento, e grandezza della sua vera, e Santissima Fede.”

\(^{122}\) Cantini, vol. 4, 106.

\(^{123}\) Cantini, vol. 5, 172.

\(^{124}\) Cantini, vol. 5, 187-188.
Malta. Florentines got the opportunity to win more indulgences in 1571, this time to celebrate the fact that Christendom’s princes had set aside their differences just long enough for one military action against the Turks.

Cosimo’s protection of the indulgence fit tidily into the prevailing ideology of secular government and its duty towards its subjects’ salvation, but as always, protection also meant control. Before any edicts concerning indulgence could be nailed to the church doors, they had to pass through the hands of Cosimo’s own auditor. In practical effect, however, it seems that petitions to proclaim indulgences were almost never denied. Indeed, there is only one occasion on which Cosimo did not give total deference to the welfare of the souls burning in purgatory. In the century-long search for revenue to fund the building of Saint Peter’s, Julius III had awarded all unfulfilled pious bequests to be applied to the Fabrica di San Pietro. He had also deputed agents of the Fabrica to go rifling through old wills to find them. When the agents of the pope pressed Cosimo to open up Tuscan wills to the Deputati’s prying gaze, Cosimo respectfully but firmly said no thank you, declining his aid to the agents of both Julius III and Paul IV. His arguments were rather telling. Apart from the predictable protestations of the poverty of the patria, he felt that his subjects might find it irritating to see their bequests sent away from their local monasteries and to Rome instead. He thus did not want it, “to be a reason that people might refrain from similar good works.” On that note he bragged, “here in Tuscany, the zeal of religion is conserved, perhaps more so than in other states,

125 Cantini, vol. 6, 8-9.
126 Cantini, vol 7, 362-363.
127 On Paul IV, see Anzilotti, 188-189.
and I do not want it to diminish at all.” Cosimo thus argued, rather paradoxically, that the deputies could not fulfill the pious bequests of the dead because the pious bequests of the dead were simply too important. Indeed, even if Florentines professed obedience to Rome, that obedience did not imply that they loved seeing their treasures go south. Thus, the accord that Cosimo finally reached with Pius IV in 1562 stipulated that only a fifth of such lasciti go to Rome, with a third of that fifth staying in Tuscany for the benefit of its native temples. This time it was Rome harrying for a quick expedition so that they could publish the indulgences associated with spontaneous apparition before the feast of All Saints. With that, Cosimo ordered all Florentine notaries to present their wills so that the Roman auditors could free those souls, “perhaps still racked in the pains of purgatory.”

Thus, Cosimo quite readily went along with most of Rome’s indulgences. But why protect the indulgence, the very item that had set so many fires of reform in the north? No doubt, the factors were many. Cosimo’s own language suggests a personal belief in the Catholic doctrine of merit. He also was desperate to win the goodwill of Rome and his own bishops. However, other evidence suggests the explanation very well may lie elsewhere, in his own population’s enduring belief in purgatory and consequent enduring appetite for indulgences. This should not surprise; purgatory held a special place in Florentine culture as the central piece of the most authoritative theological work of the age: Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. The importance of Dante’s masterpiece transcended

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128 Cosimo respectfully declines in a letter to the papal nephew in 1551. See ASFi, Med. 194 c. 25r-25v (March 18, 1551). “fussi per esser causa di far ritirar le persone da far simili buone opere.” “et ci si conserva il zelo della Religione, for se piu che nelli altri stati, il quale non vorrei che per cio si diminuisse punto.”

129 ASFi, Practica Segreta 6 c. 186.

130 ASFi, PS. 6 c. 334.

131 Cantini, vol. 4, 339. “si trovano forse ancor astretti alle pene del purgatorio.”

132 See page 204-205.
the literate world, for his peculiar vision of heaven, hell, and the space between had even been translated onto the walls of the cathedral in 1465. Moreover, the shades populating Dante’s literary masterpiece had been unequivocal in begging prayers from the living for their speedier passage up the holy but tortuous mountain of Purgatory.\footnote{Dante, \textit{Purgatorio}, canto III, verses 140-145.} Nor did Dante’s uncritical acceptance of prayers for the dead give way to significant challenges in the leap from \textit{trecento} to \textit{quattrocento}. If anything, the voice of Archbishop Antoninus had been even more insistent, remarking that under the commandment of honoring father and mother, the pious believer needed:

to make sure that they have given the bequests made to the churches and other pious places, at the due time, if their parents are dead. And if they had not done it, one is able to call them a homicide of the souls of his parents, taking away from them the due suffrages, which is not without great sin.\footnote{Antonino, 16v. “se poi che sono morti, ha satisfatto alli lasciti fatti alle Chiese, ò ad altri luoghi pij, al tempo debito. Et quando non lo habbi fatto, tale si puo domandare homicidario, dell'anime de suoi genitori, subtrahendo à quelli, li debiti suffragii, ilche non esenza grande peccato.”}

In one sense the Reformation had cast the bishop’s assertion in grave doubt by throwing the gauntlet down against the whole business: works, purgatory, masses for the dead, and especially indulgences. But in another way, the Reformation had only made belief in purgatory stronger by making it a mark of Catholic identity. One controversialist sermon, published on the request of Alessandro Strozzi, illustrates the point. Although the author reportedly was on the cutting edge of Italy’s Protestant movement,\footnote{On Ghetti’s heretical sermons in Venice see Martin, 88.} the cutting edge apparently did not extend so far as to deny purgatory, indulgence, and the efficacy of prayers for the dead. Though the first half of the sermon upheld the ultimate dependence and meritlessness of man before God with a passion that ultimately landed its
author in front of the Inquisition, the excursus left no doubt on what side of the confessional divide it proposed to fall, ending on a crescendo of doctrinal purity:

Being Christ so rich and so just, and not having need of his merits, which de jure must follow his works, we can ask for them ardently, and with them we can subvent our miseries, and we can ask for his bloody sweat, his hunger in the desert, his difficulties in prayer, and speaking piously, if we are negated this, we can shake and break down the gates of heaven with tears and cries, asking for what is ours, though, he being the height of faithfulness would never deny them.

And violent yet pious metaphor thus said, he exhorted his flock to continue to make their pious bequests. If this was uttered out of the mouth of one of Italy’s reformers even before the council’s decree on justification, we can easily imagine what the hardliners said about indulgence. Moreover, as the leaders of the Protestant movement were either chased underground or out of Italy in the 1540s, one message on indulgences came to predominate. In fact, the Reformation probably made the point a more important theme than it otherwise would have been.

To gauge the continuing popularity of indulgences and the belief in purgatory, Cosimo would not have needed to spend several weeks in the archives pouring over the often illegible handwriting of hundreds of testaments; rather, he would only have needed to look and see how long the processions were or how many flocked to the churches in which the indulgences were being promulgated. The historian does not share that luxury;

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136 See Firpo, 229-232.
137 Fra Andrea, Trattato, 15r. “essendo Christo tanto riccho, et tanto giusto: et non havendo bisnig de suoi meriti, quali de iure debbano ricevere le sue operationi, dimandiamogli arditamente che con quegli suvvenga alle miserie nostre, et dimandiamogli tutti i sudori suoi: et quel sudar del sangue, dimandiamogli la fame patita nel deserto, gli stenti fatti nell’orare, ne luoghi deserti, la fatica e fiacchezza di sua vita al pozzo, et tutto quel che egli finalmente per noi ha patito, et piamente parlando, se egli ci negassi questo, noi potiamo percuotere et rompere il Cielo con le lachrime et gemiti, chiedendo quelch’è nostro: ma egli che e fidelissimo non ce lo potrà negare.”
138 For examples of Tuscan religious writers support of purgatory. See Gradi, 14v, Davidico, Anatomia, 80r-81v; Dovitio 116-188v; Strozzi, 36r, Visdomini, 201-219; Mellini, Trattato, 62-63. “da ogni macchia purgata per purgazione ò che di quà si faccia fra voi, ò nello stato dell’altra vita.” Trattato ochino.
139 See Giovanni Romeo, L’inquisizione nell’Italia Moderna (Rome: Laterza, 2002).
the only remaining clue that speaks the language of personal belief are testaments. By the mid 1540s, Italian Protestants would have needed to be exceedingly cautious to whom they mouthed their religious opinions. By the middle of Cosimo’s reign, open professions of Protestant ideas, especially those immortalized in print, would have only earned one an unpleasant exile to Geneva or an even more unpleasant visit to the local inquisitor. However, apart from the three lire tax that went directly into the cathedral’s coffers, no one could compel the dead. Testators could show their religious preferences by choosing to have masses or prayers said for them and/or by choosing to commend their souls to God’s mother as well as to God. The first action showed an active belief in purgatory and a rejection of the protestant doctrine of sola fide. The second showed an affirmation of Catholic identity. Of course, the formulas were a rote piece of notarial lingo, but even individual notaries showed so much variation in their usage of formulas that individual preference must have played a role.

This thesis can be tested against three contemporaries whose religious views can be established on the basis of non-testamentary evidence: Bartolomeo Panciatichi, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Benvenuto Cellini. There is no question that Bartolommeo Panciatichi, one of the duke’s own secretaries, harbored Protestant opinions. He didn’t even harbor them especially deep down since he was arrested, inquisited, and found guilty of heresy in 1552. Only Panciatichi knows how much sincerity there was in his forced abjuration, but the will he had crafted two years prior exemplifies true Nicodemism in testamentary form. He left no money for masses, no money to any monastery, no instructions for his heir’s prayers, and he commended his soul only to God, leaving out the traditional invocation of the Virgin Mary. Clearly, Panciatichi did
not expect to make it to heaven with pious bequests. This, of course, did not imply an absence of real charitable impulse. He did leave money to dower impoverished noble girls, but he gave no indication that he expected to reap any merit from this act; the formula *pro rimedio animae* is conspicuously absent from any section of his testament. And while he did leave the question of whether to marry or join a monastery up to his daughter, she got a considerably smaller dowry if she chose the monastic route. Thus, in every way, Panciatichi’s will showed the marks of a true Protestant.¹⁴⁰

On the other hand, Niccolò Machiavelli’s will betrays the attitudes of a convinced unbeliever, for Machiavelli was neither Catholic nor Protestant but rather “unconcerned with religion in an emotional sense.”¹⁴¹ In due form, Machiavelli left no money to pious causes, no money for masses, no instructions for prayers, did not invoke the virgin, and left only vague instructions on where to bury his body.¹⁴² Whereas Panciatichi had left alms to pious causes, presumably on the grounds that the true Christian ought to be charitable for only the honor and love of God, Machiavelli concerned himself only with divvying up his property amongst his heirs. It was a fitting last testament for a man whose political philosophy had been scandalously less concerned with the hereafter than any of his contemporaries.

In the final case, the sculptor Cellini’s will shows very different preoccupations, for Cellini’s autobiography reveals him to have been a man of deep and almost hysterical attraction to Catholic forms of piety. For instance, when Paul III threw him into prison for a spell in 1539, he turned to his guardian angel, praying to God to let him know what

¹⁴⁰ Panciatichi’s testament is found in ASFi, NA, 16332 c. 319r-321r.
¹⁴² This is the second of Machiavelli’s two testaments. ASFi, NA. 3698 c. 102r-105r.
sin he was “so sorely expiating.” Thus, Cellini most certainly believed in the doctrine of expiation, as well as the intercession of the saints, and thus, despite a wild youth, or perhaps because of it, he left a considerable sum of money for masses and orations in his honor, as well as an anniversary mass in the baptistery of San Giovanni. The sums were by no means negligible. Needless to say, he commended his soul to the virgin in the traditional way, thereby demonstrating his belief in the vision that his dark night in prison had provoked. Thus, our three verifiable examples confirm the thesis: wills were truly a space where people could express their personal views on death, merit, indulgence, and purgatory.

That being the case, the wills of Florentines are a window onto broader religious views. When studied from this angle, Cosimo’s protection of the indulgence appears as a winning policy since it seems that belief in purgatory remained a constant of Florentine spirituality. Throughout the period, a remarkably consistent percentage of testators left money to heirs, churches, or monasteries with the specific injunction that prayers be said for their potentially suffering soul, this over and above the funeral mass which the overwhelming majority of testators left to the discretion of the heirs. Requests for masses and prayers neither tailed off nor grew with any remarkable change over the course of the five decades in question. A sampling of over fourteen hundred wills notarized in Florence between 1520 and 1569 shows that nearly half of all Florentine testators

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143 Cellini, 222.
144 Cellini, 223-224.
145 Cellini had several testaments drawn up. See ASFi, NA, 6762 c. 44. His other testaments are in the same volume.
requested masses or prayers for their souls during the 1520s. If we include those testators who preceded other types of bequests with the phrase in rimedio animae, the number of testators actively affirming belief in purgatory climbs to fifty-four percent. The number changed very little between the decades; in the 1530s, it was at 49 percent. At the height of Protestant infiltration in the 1540s, the sample actually shows its highest percentage of testators asking for masses and prayers: almost 52 percent. In the 1550s, the number drops to 47.99 percent, and in the decade of Trent’s close, the number climbs back up to 49.76 percent. If we add those testaments that did not ask for prayers but used the formula pro rimedio animae, we find the same consistency. The lowest decade includes 53 percent of all testators, only five points removed from the 1530s, the highest decade. The remarkable constancy of these wills suggests that Florentine interest in indulgences remained largely untouched during Cosimo’s reign.

What, exactly, do these numbers mean? Did Protestantism affect just a few, or did pro-indulgence literature cancel out its effects? My view tends towards the former. For, it is clear that an overwhelming majority of the populace continued to self-identify as Catholics, even if they didn’t all requests masses for their souls. Though the very rich could often afford seemingly endless bequests for masses, it seems that the office of the dead may have been out of some testators’ price range. The going rate appears to have been two scudi, roughly equivalent to three weeks wages for a skilled artisan. This impression is confirmed by the fact that those identified as nobles, and presumably more able to afford such luxuries, requested levels at a percentage appreciably above the

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146 See Figure Two.
147 Goldwaithe, 439.
general population, at 61 percent. When a mass could not be afforded, some simply
donated money to monasteries or to pious societies. Others left money to dower poor
girls. When these bequests were prefaced with certain phrases like *pro rimedio animae*,
the testaments suggest that the testator adhered to a Catholic theology of the afterlife.
Even when these were omitted, the traditional invocation of the Virgin Mary marked the
testator out as Catholic. Normally the formula ran something like this: “the testator
humbly and devoutly commends his/her soul to omnipotent God, and to his most glorious
mother the Virgin Mary, and to entire court of the celestial paradise.” Though it was
standard testamentary formula, it did not need to be included. The formula could be
varied at will, and it was occasionally omitted, as we have seen in the cases of Panciatichi
and Machiavelli. Thus, when all factors are taken into account, the same pool of
testaments set the number of Catholics near to 93 percent of the total testating population.
That number steadily and slowly increased, from 92 percent at the outbreak of the
Protestant revolt in the 1520s to 98 percent by the end of the period. This is in marked
contrast to similar trends in a city like Munster, smack in the confessional hot zone. In
1536, this city’s testators used the traditional Catholic invocation of Mary in more than
60 percent of cases. That number shriveled to almost zero by the end of the century.
Thus, it seems that the continuing popularity of the indulgence was simply one piece of a
more diffuse process of Florentine Catholic self-identification. Cosimo’s ever more
active support of the indulgence followed his population’s own lead. Indulgences simply

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148 For a breakdown between nobles and non-nobles see figure four.
149 In its full Latin, “In primis quidem animae sua omnipotenti deo, eius glorissime matrisque
semper virginis marie, toti curia celestii paradisi, humilte, devote, comandavit.”
150 See Figure Three.
151 Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Munster, 1535-1618* (New Haven: Yale
remained an essential aspect of popular piety as the Florentine mind became ever more rooted in the triumphant Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation.\textsuperscript{152}

Indulgences were fairly uncomplicated. Rome loved to give them, Florentines loved to get them, and all Cosimo had to do was get out of the way. But the other great manifestation of sacred power, the miraculous intercession of the Virgin, was a touch trickier to handle. The Virgin’s habit of making unannounced appearances on Tuscan soil could skirt the hierarchy and undermine political authority in potentially explosive ways. Thus, the prudent prince moved swiftly to take oversight of one of Tuscany’s most potentially explosive miracles. In 1536, the Virgin Mary had appeared to a shepherd girl in the small commune of Combarbio, just outside of Anghiari. The local bishop examined the matter, declared the apparition authentic, and approved the cult. Within months, votive offerings were pouring in, miracles were being reported, and the walls of a shrine were quickly appearing near the location of the apparition. Combarbio was quickly becoming a hot spot of intense local piety.

When the events of 1537 unfolded, the men of Anghiari and the Virgin of Combarbio both had strong opinions to offer. Anghiari voiced its opinion by offering the commune as a base of activity for the republican rebels.\textsuperscript{153} Our Lady voiced her opinion by miraculously freeing a nun from prison and giving her a message to take to the new duke: “unite the city and live in peace and the fear of God, or a great scourge is prepared for Florence.”\textsuperscript{154} Cosimo could not let his Lady’s threats go ignored, nor could he let such a politically explosive apparition continue to go unchecked in such a politically

\textsuperscript{152}See Figure Three.
\textsuperscript{153}See ASFi, Otto 8 c. 14r (August 2, 1538).
\textsuperscript{154}Diario Fiorentino di 1537, 561. “unire la città e si vivessi pacificamente e con timore di Dio, altrimenti che grandissimo fragello era preparato sopra Firenze.”
explosive region. As usual, scandal gave Cosimo his opening. When a question arose over appropriations of bequests, Cosimo took swift and immediate regulatory action, ordering his local vicar to make an exact account of all donated alms and forbidding anyone to proceed with church construction without the consent of the vicar. He also asked his the vicar to provide him with more detailed information on the apparition itself. What miracles had been reported? Which were true? Which were false? How were alms being distributed? How did the Virgin manifest herself? And most importantly, was the devotion born out of a true spirit of charity or was there something sinister behind it?

Having got his ear to the ground early, Cosimo eventually got his own set of eyes on the place, cajoling the community to make the church the preserve of the politically quiescent Carmelites. His attention to popular piety, however, prevented him from giving free play to his natural skepticism and mistrust; he quickly instructed his vicar to “communicate this our letter with men that live there, but do it so as not to alter anyone in their devotion or good mind, and so that no scandal arises.” Accommodation and control.

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155 ASFi, Med. 182 c. 74r-75r (July 14, 1537). Cosimo wrote to his vicar, “You find out how this things stands and how it has been governed up til now, and how the accounts of money and things are mangaged, for the buildings that are made on occasion and at certain times, and what order had been held and is held in the building of the church, with whose advice and with whose design it has been constructed up til now, and speso the alms that have been made for whom they have been distributed, and if in this there has been any distributed from some particular friendship, or only for mere charity, and send a notula of the miracles that have happened up to now, and those that are believed to be true, what is the manner of the apparition of Our Lady, one says that she appears to a young girl three days a week, in what way and with what signs does she manifeste herself, from the beginning until now and the reasons that they are more or less appreciated and finally, all that on such count does it seem to you that said devotion proceeds from sincerity and integrity of good spirit or truly from some particular interests of utility of some.”

“Voi intendiate come sta questa cosa et si lel governato insino adesso e lentrata et uscita di detti dinari et robbie et come si son dispensati et se le spese per lo edificar sono facti /a/ caso et a tempi che profictino et che ordine si lel tenuto et tiene nella edificazione della chiesa con che consiglio et disegno quello si lel murato sino adesso et speso le elimisone si son facti et se sono stati distribuiti et achi et se in questo lel corso particolar amicitia /o/ pur mera carita col mandar una notula della miracoli successisino adesso et riscontrati per veri quello se ritarie dell apparitione di nostra donna se dice farsi alla fanciulla tre giorni della settiman in che modo et che segni se ne manifestano come da un tempo in qua et la cagione perche sonno piu /o/ mancho cherezati et finalmente tutto quello che per tal conto vi par detta devotione proceda da sincerita et integrita di buono spirito /o/ veramente per interesse particular di utilita di alchuni.” Like much of the correspondence from the early period of Cosimian governance, the response of the vicar is lost.

156 ASFi, AGBE. 4377 c. 102 (June 22, 1548).
Cosimo wanted oversight, but the last thing he wanted was to set his own government up against the Virgin in the popular mind or to shake the simple people’s faith in the manifestation of the divine.

Cosimo found a way to turn his surveillance of the miraculous to his own account in other ways, quietly abetting the image of Annunziata in its silent duel with Our Lady of Impruneta by favoring the latter more properly Medicean image at the expense of the more ambivalent former. Both images had long and storied histories. Both had important places in Florence’s economy of the miraculous. According to legend, the Madonna of Santa Maria Impruneta had been painted by Saint Luke, and then buried by San Romualdo, semi-legendary bishop of Fiesole, in the fourth century. Its impressive origins were accompanied by an equally impressive rediscovery, the sort of miraculous dramatics at which medieval historians excelled. Having made a start in walling their church, locals returned every morning to find, like Penelope’s suitors, that the work had been inexplicably undone over the night. Taking this as an omen that they were building in the wrong spot, they loaded a mule with supplies and sent him on his way, electing to build the church wherever he might stop. As the reader may guess, the mule fortuitously chose the very spot at which Romualdo had hidden Saint Luke’s image centuries before. The Impruneta legend was born. The image made its first appearance in Florence during the plague year of 1354, and from that point on had been repeatedly carried into the city in order to ward off plague, pestilence, drought, war, and flooding. In Florentine minds, the Impruneta was by far the most important symbol of the Virgin’s special protection over the city.

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157 Francesco Rondinelli, *Relazione del Contagio Stato in Firenze L’anno 1630 e 1633 Con un breve ragguaglio delle Miracolosa Immagine della Madonna dell’Impruneta* (Firenze: giovanni Batista Landini, 1634), 250-258.
The miraculous image of the Annunziata was a close second, sporting a more colorful history and a rival list of miracles. Though of more recent vintage, the Annunziata’s origins were comparably dramatic. Having agonized over how to paint the Virgin’s face, a thirteenth-century Servite monk had fallen asleep in front of his half finished painting. Upon waking, the monk found the Virgin’s face miraculously completed during his slumber. Word spread quickly and miracles followed in due course, the first miracle reportedly being the protection of a local woman. The virgin reportedly blanched this women’s suspiciously dark-skinned baby in order to spare the unfortunate matron from her irate (white) husband. As such stories spread, the image quickly became a locus for the city’s plethora of miracle seekers.\(^\text{158}\)

In these respects, there was not much to commend one Madonna over the other. They played complementary roles in Florentine life: one the focus of personalized devotions, the other the preferred advocate in times of general crisis. There was however, one important difference between the two Madonnas; the Annunziata was an undisputedly Medicean totem, and the Impruneta was not. Whereas the Virgin of the Annunziata was Cosimo’s neighborhood miracle worker, whose cult resided near the traditional Medici power base, the Impruneta spent most of its days on the peripheries of Florence, dangerously out from under the government’s thumb. Whereas the Medici had indisputable claims to the Annunziata, the Impruneta was in Buondelmonti territory. Most of the canonries belonged to Buondelmonti patrons and the interior space was practically littered with testaments to that family’s control.\(^\text{159}\) Though Cosimo’s first

\(^{158}\) Mancini, 86.  
\(^{159}\) See N. Ugo Ceccherini, *Santa Maria Impruneta: Notizie Storiche* (Firenze: Ciardi, 1890).
Archbishop of Florence was both a Buondelmonte and Medici supporter, as a clan, the family had not always been Medici stalwarts; for instance, earlier in the century Zanobi Buondelmonte had been chased into French exile for plotting the Medici’s overthrow. Whatever the case, one thing was certain: the Impruneta was definitely outside Cosimo’s personal control, and it was not entirely clear whose side she was on anyways. In 1526, when the Medici had brought the image in to the city to protect themselves against the citizens, the Virgin showed her displeasure, at least in the eyes of republican observers, by ruining the procession with a thunderstorm. And the Last Florentine Republic certainly did its part to transmute the miraculous virgin into a more forcefully antimedicean image. During their three short years in power, they had brought the image into the city no less than three times before finally electing to house the icon in the city permanently, this of course, to keep the virgin’s protection close at hand against the city’s Medicean besiegers.

Given the recent history, Cosimo probably acted prudently in privileging the Annunziata over the Impruneta. But, of course, Cosimo was wise enough not to show the less favored image any outright hostility. Control always involved accommodation. To that end, he allowed the image to be carried into the city in its traditional function of rain totem, when he had to deal with his first drought in 1538. The Madonna apparently obliged the city with the expected precipitation, so when a summer’s worth of bad storms swelled the banks of the Arno in 1547, Cosimo brought the Impruneta in again, showing

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160 He was in fact the previous rector of the Imprunetan shrine. For Buondelmonte as a Medicean see Maureen Miller, Urban Space, Sacred Topography, and Ritual Meanings in Florence: The Route of the Bishop’s Entry,” in The Bishop Re-Formed: Studies in Episcopal Power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages, edited by John Ott and Anna Trumbore (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 246.
161 Trexler, 69.
162 Roth, 76, 140, 162, 204.
her the reverence that the miraculous image had come to expect from the city’s leaders. It was even reported that as he watched the procession from a window in the Palazzo Signoria, the sight of the piety evoked by the city’s most important icon brought tears to his eyes. But in this case, we cannot ignore the marked contrast between Cosimo’s palpable reluctance to drag the Trojan horse Impruneta into the city’s walls vis-a-vis the quick trigger the city normally showed when disaster loomed. The Virgin made her short journey to the city only after a whole summer of dangerous rains, only after the Arno had already flooded twice, and only after local processions near the sanctuary had failed.

Indeed, Cosimo’s reluctance to turn to the Impruneta is striking when viewed in the light of the city’s history. Between 1432 and 1529, the republic brought the image into the city at least 41 times, and the longest gap in between visits was eleven years. On the other hand, after the processions surrounding the 1547 flood, Cosimo never let the Impruneta into the city again, allowing twenty-seven years to lapse without a visit. It was not for lack of crises. A number of bad harvests might have occasioned processional devotions with the Impruneta, but Cosimo did not call for her, not even when the starving poor were dropping dead in the streets. The war with Siena should have certainly brought the Virgin within the city walls, but Cosimo did not call for it then, not even when Piero Strozzi’s bold military tactics struck right into the very heart of the Florentine dominion. He did not call for the Impruneta when the Arno jumped its banks 1557, cascading into the city and wreaking general havoc. He did not call for the virgin after

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163 Rondinelli, 268-275.
164 ASFi, MS. 4307 c.103r-104r (November 14, 1547).
165 The number is likely considerably higher.
166 Rondinelli, 256-268.
foiling an assassination plot in 1559. And when the 1556 drought prompted some of the Capponi family to beg for the image, he gruffly scribbled on the bottom of the request, “let them have a procession on the mountain.”

Of course, it looked very bad to go about ignoring the Virgin’s succor forever. By 1562, some were starting to mutter about the prince’s lack of devotion, but by 1562, Cosimo had a new plan, one that would demonstrate his support for popular piety without recourse to the Impruneta. In that year, an unusually intense drought not only threatened the harvest but seriously affected the drinkable water supply. This time the hungry bellies were accompanied by thirsty mouths, which cried out for a supplicatory procession, and this time, Cosimo complied. But instead of the Impruneta, Cosimo allowed a different company to bring in a different image: the “Madonna della Quercia,” who was thus handed the Impruneta’s honors of making the rains come. Discovered in an oak tree in 1520 just outside the Porta Pinta, the miraculous image had first attracted the attention of the populace by healing an incurable in the same year. Again, word went round the city. Again, supplications and money poured in. A confraternity was formed to build the church in 1520. Michelangelo was appointed the architect in 1523. And the completed church, now destroyed and lost to history, was consecrated by the visiting Franciscan Bishop of Bitonto in 1552. During those forty years, the importance of the image had grown considerably. Indeed, in 1561 the company had grown so big that it was forced to construct a new building in which to meet. Cosimo was certainly aware of the growing devotion to this image and deftly chose this burgeoning cult to replace

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168 ASFi, PS. 2 c. unpaginated (April 29, 1556).
169 Manoscritti, 14r and Lapini, *Diario*, 134.
170 ASFi, CRS 1324 parte 2, c. 43r-43v.
that of the Impruneta. Indeed, the Madonna della Quercia was a smart choice. The Quercia had a legitimate Florentine history but had never been caught explicitly preferring the republic to the Medici. Moreover, it was a growing devotion, quickly becoming an essential feature of local popular piety. The Quercia allowed Cosimo to invoke the Virgin’s aid through a popular image without turning to the ambivalently hostile Impruneta. This was control over sacred power exercised with an acute sensibility to popular attitudes.

Cosimo’s policy of completely ignoring the Impruneta did not stick with later Medici, and so posterity conveniently chose to forget this abnormal Cosimian policy. But there was little doubt that the canons of the Impruneta knew exactly what end of the stick their image was getting. The Madonna della Quercia was brought into the Florence in September of 1562 and was credited with the rain that followed its return to its church outside the Porta Pinta. This new policy represented a considerable financial hit for the Impruneta, as it dried up the votive offerings that inevitably poured into the Impruneta’s coffers following any successful Florentine procession. Small surprise then that, a short three weeks after the Quercia was brought into the Florence, the Impruneta shot back with its own miracle. A *ricordi* from 1562 explains:

I remember how in the year 1562, it did not rain from the first of March to the fifth of October, and the rivers became ditches. And all the wells around the pieve dried up. And by chance, under Monte Santa Maria, a vein of water was found near to our Pieve, and all the people came for water, and the water was named the Water of Santa Maria, because it came from the Monte Santa Maria, and many that drank of this water who had the fever were healed as soon as they drank; praised be to the glorious Virgin Mother, our Advocate.  

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171 Cited in Ceccheroni, 12. “Ricordo come l’anno 1562 il primo di marzo si raccorciò il tempo, e stette sino a dì 5 d’ottobre 1562, che mai piovve tanto che li fiumi corressino, ne li fossati. Si secorono tutti li pozzi qui della pieve, e qui all’intorno; e per sorte si trovò una vena d’acqua sotto il Monte Santa Maria, appresso alla nostra Pieve, dove concorsone tutti li popoli per detta acqua, e si nominò detta acqua, l’acqua.
The finding of a nearby well may have salvaged prestige, but the Impruneta’s next entrance into Florence would have to wait on a new duke; it would not be called upon again until 1581, having been shut out of the city for an unprecedented thirty-seven years.\textsuperscript{172}

All this stands in marked contrast to Cosimo’s devotion to the cult of the Annunziata. For instance, on the Annunziata’s special feast days, Cosimo made exceptions to his rigid feria laws, allowing the sale of the little votive lights with which the true believers festooned the church.\textsuperscript{173} It was to the Annunziata and its local cult that Cosimo directed the attention of visiting dignitaries.\textsuperscript{174} And, perhaps most importantly, it was the aid of that Virgin which Cosimo sought in times war. After his armies had crushed Piero Strozzi’s forces during the war with Siena, Cosimo staged a wickedly ingenious set piece of sacral power. Bearing olive branches of peace, the messengers brought him the news of his victory over Strozzi in the Piazza Santa Trinità, a location undeniably in the very heart of local Strozzi power and directly adjacent to the Strozzi’s neighborhood church. From there he made his way directly to the Annunziata, to his own sacred space and special protector, remaining on his knees in thanksgiving before the image for upwards of a half hour.\textsuperscript{175} After long years, Cosimo’s Madonna had finally delivered Piero Strozzi into his hands, and she was duly rewarded with votive thanks.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{172}See Rondinelli.  
\textsuperscript{173}Cantini, vol. 3, 226-235.  
\textsuperscript{174}ASFi, Med. 1169 c. 4 (October 19, 1539).  
\textsuperscript{175}Lapini, \textit{Diario}, 112-113.}
Conclusion

Defense, insinuation, control, accommodation. Cosimo’s deft hand consistently utilized this pattern of control to make Florence’s sacral traditions into his own, striking his own practice of ruler sacrality firmly in the ground of local tradition. From his handling of sacred office, to his patronage of sacred space, to the field of festivals, miracles and indulgences, Cosimo traveled a well-trodden ground, winning control and insinuation by showing keen sensitivities to popular piety and custom. Just as the rhetorical aspects of his sacral monarchy consistently referenced Florentine intellectual tradition, his practical exercise of sacral power consistently referenced the traditional assumptions of sacred Florence.
Conclusion

Early modern historians of political sacrality have satiated our historical appetites with studies on certain issues. They have relentlessly pursued genealogies of political thought through space and time. They have looked ahead to the reordering of sacral politics into modern secular polities. They have analyzed the relationships between political propaganda and political exigencies. They have even broken down the relationships between political power and cultural production. However, political mythologies were not just a matter of old ideologies meeting new political exigencies; they also involved old ideologies integrating—and failing to integrate—with basic habits of thought. “Great oaks from little acorns grow,” wrote the great *Annales* historian Marc Bloch, “but only if they meet favorable conditions of soil and climate.”¹ As I have attempted to show, these conditions were not just political, but cultural and religious as well. Indeed, this study reveals just how important it is to avoid reducing political rhetoric to the interaction of political ideology and political exigency. When one does not throw cultural assumptions into the mix, it is very difficult to view successful propaganda in anything but the most cynical terms. But it is hard to see how a credible program of legitimation could have succeeded if it was nothing more than a set of cynical maxims bellowed into the night by out of touch intellectual elites. Rather, the Cosimian experience suggests that successful propaganda sat on a rock of shared local axioms and shared cultural tropes.

Indeed, Cosimo might have been able to cast himself as a terrestrial god and a divine monarch but only because Florentine thought was already comfortable with the

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idea of terrestrial divinity, so comfortable it was almost mundane. Cosimo may have been able to cast himself as divinely appointed but only because in Florence and elsewhere, everything was part of the divine plan. Cosimo may have arisen to save political virtue but only because Machiavelli had left a shattered moral system begging for proof of its own utility. Cosimo may have achieved a divine status as an ecclesiastical patron but only because that is exactly what his subjects wanted him to be. He may have achieved divine status as a reformer but only by tapping into the undying popularity of his archnemesis, Savonarola. Finally, he may have wriggled into control over Florentine sacral traditions but only because he was a shrewd compromiser, playing on the traditional desires and expectations of his subjects. Indeed, we must understand that Cosimo was successful largely because he and his mythmakers seem to have known just what the soil and climate of Florentine culture would bear.

Cosimo’s experience throws light on a pair of other relevant issues. First, the Florentine context gives the lie to the larger general links that historian Paul Monod has elucidated between Catholic reform and desacralization, at least in this one context. Indeed, it is to be expected that the similar social changes wrought by the two reformations would end in similar political effects. But this is only to be expected if theology was irrelevant. It is the unspoken assumption of this work that theology was relevant, both at the cultural level and the deepest levels of political decision-making. Just because Cosimo was neither theologian nor saint does not mean his policies were religiously apathetic. The traditional casting of him as such smacks of Risorgimento bias and Burckhardt’s pernicious legacy on the study of Renaissance religion and politics. Rather, Cosimo and his literati were steeped in Florentine religious and cultural tradition.
Moreover, Florentine Catholic humanism consciously reinvested the visible church and the material world with the sacral in its reaffirmation of the Eucharist, the doctrine of saintly intercession, virtue, grace, and the teleological function of the state. In this, it was no twin to its reformation counterpart. It reflected an entirely different worldview, and thus, it could never produce entirely similar political effects.

Finally, Cosimo’s Florentine stage raises a plague of difficult issues for tidy categorizations of religion, democracy, republicanism, and monarchy. Aristotle’s categories of government had left room to wriggle, and intellectual wriggle there was. Cosimian experience shows just how muddied the waters might become. Elements of republicanism lived on in surprising ways during the early days of the Florentine monarchy, even if everyone knew that one man was running the show. Thus, Cosimo’s case is a call to reexamine the importance of elements of consent theory in other divine right monarchies. But if it is to be done, we will have to detach ourselves from the idea that divine right monarchies were by definition sacralized absolute states that never took consent seriously. We will also need to scrap the idea that republics were triumphantly modern and secular institutions lacking even a whiff of sacrality. Indeed, Florence showed that where conditions were right, both republican and monarchical elements of legitimacy could be simultaneously grounded in both sacred and secular elements. There was simply much more room to play than has traditionally been admitted.

By way of an addendum, we may add one lesson for our present time, for it would be a shame if Cosimo’s most important legacy to an age of nation-building gone awry was the muted shade that his bronze statue offers to weary tourists in the Piazza
Indeed, a shame because the lesson is pressing; to wit, in times of political instability, laying hold of the rhetoric of legitimacy cannot be overlooked. It can be the difference between peaceful succession and revolution, stability and chaos, success and failure. Moreover, the keys that legitimize that rhetoric are often found one step removed from the political realm, in localized assumptions drunk in by local populations like the local air. Cosimo’s propaganda worked because the wily young duke and his even wilier client-scholars took heed of this truism. They pushed sacral monarchy right up to the limits that Florence would bear and then pushed no further. Consequently, Cosimo may have begun in blood, but he ended as a god.

\footnote{2 If the reader will forgive the fact that, technically speaking, the statue of Cosimo is his son Fernando’s legacy.}
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ASFi- Archivio di Stato Firenze

AGBE- Auditore dei Giurisidizione e Benefici Ecclesiastici
CRSF- Corporazioni Religiosi Soppressati da Governo Francese
CRS- Compagnie Religiosi Soppressati da Pietro Leopoldo
Man.- Manoscritti
Med.- Mediceo del Principato.
Misc.- Miscellanea Medicea
MS- Magistrato Supremo
NA- Notarile AnteCosimiano
Otto- Otto della Guardia et Balia
PS- Practica Segreta

ASV- Archivio Segreto Vaticano

Farnese- Carte Farnesiane
Segr. Stato Principi.- Segretario di Stato, Principi

Libraries:

BNCF- Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze

B.R.- Banco Rari
Magliabecchiana
Palat.- Fondo Palatino
F. Guic.- Fondo Guicciardini
Fondo Nazionale

BL- Biblioteca Laurenziana

Medicea Palatina
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BM- Biblioteca Marucelliana

BR- Biblioteca Riccardiana
MS- Manoscritti

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