

**ARTIGOS**



## NOTES ON THE BLOOD OF CHRIST IN DEVOTIONAL PANELS OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper intends to briefly present theological aspects regarding the Last Judgment, the role of Christian images in Late Medieval art and, connecting both topics, iconographic changes and developments in Italian visual representations of the Last Judgment, particularly in panel paintings, by the end of the Middle Ages. We aim to relate these changes mostly to their expected religious functions in the stimulus of private devotion.

**Keywords:** Last Judgment; image and devotion; piety of blood.

The Last Judgment is one of the most important themes for Christianity, remembered as one recites during the Mass the Creed which is still very similar to the version defined in the 1<sup>st</sup> Council of Nicaea in 325, and then slightly modified in the 1<sup>st</sup> Council of Constantinople, held in 381. Theologically, the Doomsday is connected both to the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ<sup>2</sup>. In effect, if he was not made man, died on the cross and resurrected to redeem the sins of mankind, there would be

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<sup>2</sup> The Creed from 381, in fact, stresses that Christ “*Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis. Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato; passus et sepultus est, et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria, iudicare vivos et mortuos, cuius regni non erit finis*” [“(…) who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end”]. The English translation of the Constantinopolitan Creed was taken from “English versions of the Nicene Creed”. Available at <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English\\_versions\\_of\\_the\\_Nicene\\_Creed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_versions_of_the_Nicene_Creed)>. Access at 2021.11.05.

no reason for his final return in the Second Parousia at the end of times. His sacrifice for humanity entitles him to the role of Judge of all men. The Last Judgment, henceforth, is the ultimate moment in which Christian history is fulfilled at last, the second and final moment when Christ returns to judge all men, and separate them between the blessed and the wicked, who shall go, respectively, to the blisses of Heaven or to the tortures of Hell through all eternity.

Its theological significance justifies the importance given to visual representations of the Last Judgment, which was first alluded to through the scene of the separation between the sheep and the goats, in a clear reference to a passage from the Gospel of Matthew<sup>3</sup>.

Figure 1 – Sarcophagus with the separation between the sheep and the goats, late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Provenance of the image: <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/466583>>. Access in 2021.11.05

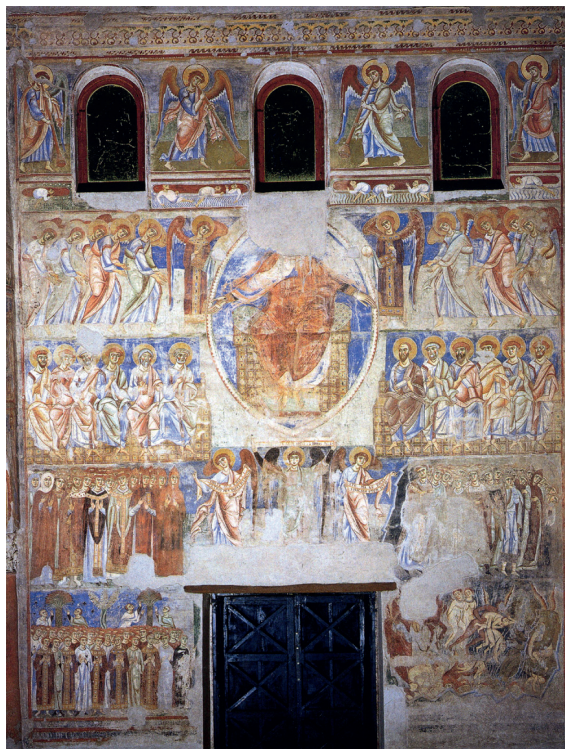
3 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (...).’ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (...).’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”. Mt 25, 31-34, 41 and 46. English Standard Version of the Bible. Available at <<https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt25.31>>. Access in 2021.11.05. This kind of depiction can be seen in Roman sarcophagi, such as the example shown in this paper, but also in other media, as the Byzantine mosaic that integrates the decoration of the Basilica of Sant’Apollinare Nuovo, in Ravenna, from ca. 500.

The Last Judgment began to be clearly depicted in Western European art in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, becoming extremely popular by the 13<sup>th</sup> century in all Christendom. In the Italian Peninsula, unsurprisingly, it was not different. The Doomsday in Italy was often represented in a monumental scale on the inner façade of churches, where frescoes would eventually occupy the entire mural surface, as in the example in the Basilica of San Michele, in Sant'Angelo in Formis (Campania), from ca. 1080 – the oldest painting of the Last Judgment in Italy, and one of the oldest cases in Western Europe (fig. 2). The dimensions of such images made it possible to develop thorough visual descriptions of the theme<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, beside such monumental paintings, we may also find many examples in panel paintings, which were very popular at least until the 16<sup>th</sup> century and even later. We shall return to this argument still in this paper.

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4. Obviously, there may be differences in these depictions, but some iconographic types appear more consistently in all periods. The most developed scenes of the Last Judgment include Christ-Judge who traditionally presents the stigmas (and he is, undoubtedly, the most important element of the whole scene); the trumpeting angels, who would unequivocally indicate the moment of the final judgment, the angels who carry the *Arma Christi* and, in few cases, also the angels who bring the books of Life and Death, described in scriptural texts; the resurrection of the bodies; the act of judgment *per se*, often represented by the weighing of souls (usually presided by Saint Michael); the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist (or, less commonly in Italian examples, Saint John the Evangelist) on both sides of the Christ, forming the *Deesis* group (of great popularity as it shows the possibility of saints' intercession before the judge); and, finally, the separation between the blessed and the damned. Eventually, Heaven and Hell would also be included in the scene. For a discussion, see Quirico, 2014.

Figure 2 – Last Judgment, ca. 1080. Basilica of San Michele, Sant'Angelo in Formis.



Provenance of the image: CHRISTE, Yves. *Il Giudizio Universale nell'arte del Medioevo* (trad. M.G. Balzarini), Milan: Jaca Book, 2000

Christian images have been developed in all periods of time and places where Christianity was established as religion. Even the many controversies about their legitimacy, which flourish within its history, stress that Christianity is, in fact, a religion deeply connected to images, since its first developments<sup>5</sup>. The French medievalist Jean-Claude Bonne emphasizes their importance as *ornament* to Christian religiosity, a word that must be understood according to its Medieval Latin meaning: an “indispensable equipment to the fulfillment of a function, as the weapons of a soldier or the sails of a ship” (Baschet, 2006,

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion about Christian images in the first centuries, see Uspenskij, 1995, especially the first chapter, in which the author defends that even the first Christian writers, such as Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, did not disapprove Christian images, but only pagan idols and idolatry.

p. 496). Christian images, therefore, are paramount to both Roman and Orthodox Churches, whether we consider their liturgy, their rites in a broader way, or even the daily devotion of the common faithful.

Religious functions of Christian images in Western Europe must be considered in the light of the writings of Gregory the Great (ca. 540-604), the pope who, in the turn of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, wrote two letters to Serenus, bishop of Marseille, who was inciting iconoclast activities within his diocese<sup>6</sup>. As Gregory wrote, and was followed by many Medieval theologians after, Christian images in general should depict sacred histories (which would come from many different sources such as the Sacred Scriptures, apocryphal gospels, sermons and oral traditions that would date back to the first centuries of Christendom), in order to serve as an important aid to the learning and memorization of such histories; they should instruct and emotionally move the faithful, especially laymen, leading them to conversion and then to salvation.

Since the turn of the first millennium, but mostly from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century on, after the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council, held in Rome in 1215, the Roman Church stressed its pastoral purpose, as well as the importance of a kind of devotion that could be developed not only during the mass, visibly and publicly, but also in a private way, regardless if inside the church or at home<sup>7</sup>. This devotion would be characterized by “a progressive affirmation of an interiority and a subjectivity of the faithful” (Lamy, 2002, p. 408), and could be summarized as an inner religious dialog between a man and a saintly figure he would select. The stimulus to such personal devotion was seized especially by Franciscans and Dominicans, the Mendicant Orders that renewed the status of religion among laypeople as they

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6 Discussions regarding Gregory's letters abound in modern historiography, stressing constantly that *Bible of the illiterate* is a definition that does not satisfy all aspects of Christian images defended by the pope. See, for instance, Chazelle, 1990; Duggan, 1989; Pereira, 2016; Schmitt, 2007.

7 Peter Seiler, analyzing Italian panels portraying the life of Christ, states that these paintings, “especially because of their numerous individual scenes in small format, were not intended for larger audiences. Instead, notwithstanding where they were displayed – whether in private spaces or within churches – we can assume that they served primarily for the private devotion of individuals or small groups of worshippers” (Seiler, 2002, p. 261). From the *Duecento* on, therefore, we may find specific spaces inside religious buildings that were conceived for inner prayers and meditations through images.



reached toward them with popular sermons held in vernacular form around the cities' public spaces. A further consequence of this renewed religious spirit was also the encouragement to develop this devotion with the support of one or more images, which would become the privileged focus of prayers, meditations and any other devotional action the faithful would consider appropriate. These images, needless to say, were defined as devotional<sup>8</sup>.

Images depicting Christian saints and themes, therefore, turned out to be particularly important and efficient to these changes in religiosity and to the development of personal devotion in the last centuries of what we define as the Middle Ages, an importance that they retained also in the Early Modern Period and even later on. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century on, and throughout this period, small-scale panel paintings became more and more popular and, due to its cheaper cost when compared to a sculpture, for instance, also more accessible to the common folk<sup>9</sup>. In 14<sup>th</sup>-century Italy, as a matter of fact, these panels were widespread, showing past histories and events; many could unmistakably be classified as devotional images, whether depicting Christ, the Virgin Mary or saints, and even religious scenes that could be related to such figures<sup>10</sup>. The influence of these devotional objects would be felt, as mentioned before, way past the first decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

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8 Tommaso da Celano writes in his book of miracles of Saint Francis, from 1252, that Roman wives had in their houses "a painted icon on which they venerated the image of their favorite saint", indicating that by mid-13<sup>th</sup> century this practice was already well established (Wilkins, 2002, p. 372).

9 This popularity would be diminished only by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the development of prints that would be cheaper than these panels made them even more prevalent. Nevertheless, it is also important to stress that, in *Quattrocento* in Italy, "not only paintings but also sculpted devotional objects (...) become as common as paintings in domestic inventories", usually reliefs, but we may suppose there were also statuettes (Wilkins, 2002, p. 375). On the other hand, we must consider that these more sumptuous objects (beside the cost of sculptures, panels became larger, with "almost life-sized figures", as Wilkins explains) are evidently connected to the upper classes, whereas the common folk would only be able to afford small paintings or cheap prints.

10 Victor Schmidt analyzes the making of these panel paintings in Italy, showing how many of them were pre-fabricated and finished only in a second moment, when a commission was effectively placed. In the *Trecento* in Italy we had, therefore, an in-stock structure organization in many ateliers (Schmidt, 2005, p. 206).



Many visual representations of the Last Judgment must likewise be understood within this broad context of religion, images and devotion. Nonetheless, it is paramount that we ponder important differences between religious images in general, and visual depictions of the Doomsday in particular, as it is unique, different from any other Christian theme: in fact, it is a future event, and therefore it obviously has not yet occurred (and, as such, it could not be classified as *historia*); the event is itself more important than any of the saintly figures depicted, many of whom cannot even be identified (the scene, then, could not be considered an *imago*). There is always the inclusion of Christ as Judge, of course, but even his importance is accentuated by the context of the judgment, and not the contrary. Representations of the Doomsday, hence, should not be classified as proper devotional images.

Nevertheless, we can clearly perceive, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century on, a growing emphasis on the depiction of the Last Judgment in Italian panel paintings. Some panels were certainly made for public spaces, as Fra Angelico's famous painting for the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, in Florence, whose curious shape is due to the fact that, originally, it formed the superior part of a choir chair.

Figure 3 – Fra Angelico. *Last Judgment*, ca. 1431. Tempera on panel, 105 x 210 cm. Museo di San Marco, Florence.



Provenance of the image: <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fra\\_Angelico\\_009.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fra_Angelico_009.jpg)>. Access in 2021.11.06

Still, there were many panels that include a depiction of the Doomsday that were probably meant for personal devotion, as their small scale suggests<sup>11</sup>. When the Last Judgment was painted in these small-scale panels, its composition had to be much condensed when compared to monumental images; hence, only the most distinctive elements of the scene could be depicted – many panels include only Christ-Judge and another complementary element that makes evident it is a depiction of the Last Judgment, and not of the *Maiestas Domini*, for instance (Quirico, 2013, p. 23-24). When we consider both the dimensions and the simplified composition, we may certainly infer that many of these panels were intended from the beginning as private images, to specifically satisfy the devotional needs of their commissioners. The form of these panels, therefore, as well as their composition and iconography, are directly related to their religious functions and uses as private devotional images, which are certainly different from the expected functions of monumental frescoes in churches.

Most of these panels includes more than just the representation of the Last Judgment, as it is frequently associated to scenes of the Crucifixion and of the Virgin and Child. Actually, there are few, if any, private panels that depict exclusively the Doomsday<sup>12</sup>. Such iconographic combination emphasizes the theological interrelations between the Incarnation, the Passion and the Last Judgment, as we considered before<sup>13</sup>. These connections between such essential Christian themes are already a well-established topic in theological studies, albeit not sufficiently discussed in relation to panel paintings.

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11 Personal devotion does not mean necessarily a domestic use, as we may find small panels that were “intended for use by monks or nuns, for example, while others might have been created for use in the home but by tertiaries”, as the iconography often indicates (Wilkins, 2002, p. 371).

12 We have some panels that nowadays stand alone in museums, such as a panel (beginning of the 14th century) attributed to Segna di Bonaventura, at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, in Angers. However, it was probably the central panel of a triptych, as marks of hinges on the wood indicate, and we may infer the same for other panels depicting the Last Judgment. To see the Angers painting, <<http://ow-mba.angers.fr/fr/search-notice/detail/mba-1142-mt-dep-2309f>>. Access in 2021.11.16. A more thorough discussion regarding this topic, and the influence on visual arts, may be found in Quirico, 2015.

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That is evident, for example, in the Virgin and Child panel of the so-called Master of the Clarisse, who may be identified with Rinaldo da Siena, painted around 1265-68 and nowadays in the collection of the National Gallery, in London (fig. 4). Its small size (less than a regular paper sheet) suggests it was made for private prayer. It has a traditional, conventional Byzantine-like style but, on the other hand, also an intimacy that “creates a tender image of motherhood ideal for an image for private contemplation”<sup>14</sup>.

Figure 4 – Master of the Clarisse. Virgin and Child, ca. 1265-68.  
Tempera on panel, 31,4 x 19,5 cm. National Gallery, London.



Provenance of the image: <<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/master-of-the-clarisse-possibly-rinaldo-da-siena-the-virgin-and-child>>. Access in 2021.11.10

14 “Master of the Clarisse (possibly Rinaldo da Siena)”. Available at: <<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/master-of-the-clarisse-possibly-rinaldo-da-siena-the-virgin-and-child>>. Access in 2021.11.10.

What interests us most in this panel are the elements around and above the central figures of the Virgin and Child, as they “tell the story of the redemption of man through Christ’s conception by the Holy Ghost and his death”<sup>15</sup>. On either side of the group we can see Gabriel and Mary, representing, obviously, the Annunciation – which recalls, just as the baby Jesus on Mary’s bosom, the Incarnation of God. Above, a Crucifixion includes Mary swooning and supported by two other female saints on the left, John the Evangelist at the right of the cross, and at the extreme right two male figures, one of them a Roman centurion.

In the spandrels above we can see two groups of figures, forming a scene that can be unmistakably identified as the separation between the blessed and the damned, who resurrect at the sound of the trumpets blown by two angels. At the left, the group is invited to ascend to Heaven, whereas at the right side the wicked cover their faces with their hands, as they are repelled by the other angel. The small scenes in these spandrels, as might be expected, evoke the Last Judgment. As this painting may have been the central panel of a triptych, we may suppose Christ-Judge could have been depicted in one of the side panels, as in the small triptych attributed to Berligniero Berlinghieri at the Cleveland Museum of Art collection, and probably also made for personal devotion.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.



Figure 5 – Berlighiero Berlinghieri. *Virgin and Child with Saints*, ca. 1230s. Tempera on panel, 42,6 x 51,5 cm (overall). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.



Provenance of the image: <<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1966.237>>. Access in 2021.11.10

These theological connections also explain why Christ-Judge often raises his arms in visual representations of the Last Judgment, presenting his stigmas, an unequivocal proof of his sacrifice for mankind<sup>16</sup>. As Yves Christe explains, “the wounds of the hands and of his side, after being shown to Saint Thomas, are shown to all men, as proof of the identity of the victorious Son of Man and of Jesus crucified and resurrected” (Christe, 1973, p. 39). That is how Christ presents himself, for instance, in Guido da Siena’s panel, perhaps painted originally for the so-called Ricovero di Fra Roncone, which became later the Ospedale della Misericordia, in Grosseto (Tuscany).

<sup>16</sup> A discussion regarding changes in the position of Christ’s hands in Last Judgment scenes can be found in Quirico, 2013, p. 10-12.

Figure 6 – Guido da Siena and followers. *Last Judgment*, end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Tempera on panel, 105 x 210 cm. Museo Archeologico e d'Arte della Maremma, Grosseto.



Provenance: Photography by the author

We have, then, many examples of small-scale panel paintings in which are depicted the most important Christian theological themes. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century on the connection between the Passion and the Last Judgment in particular is enhanced by the greater emphasis we perceive in the depiction of Christ-Judge's stigmas in these panels. If Christ must always be represented with the stigmas after the Resurrection, and therefore they must also be included in Last Judgment scenes, the great difference lies in the quite unique fact that they actually bleed in few of these panel depictions, as we may observe in Guido da Siena's panel, as we have seen made originally for a pub-

lic space, but similarly in paintings for personal devotion, as in Berlinghiero Berlighieri's triptych, and likewise in Giovanni da Rimini's panel in Palazzo Barberini, in Rome, in which the Last Judgment is the last scene of a sequence that begins, at the top, with the Nativity and the Crucifixion side by side<sup>17</sup>.

Figure 7 – Giovanni da Rimini. *Stories from the life of Christ*, ca. 1300-1305. Tempera on panel, 52,5 x 34,5 cm. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome.



Photography by the author

<sup>17</sup> The Barberini panel could have been paired with another panel of Giovanni da Rimini, with scenes from the life of the Virgin and other saints, nowadays in the National Gallery, in London, which can be seen in <<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/giovanni-da-rimini-scenes-from-the-lives-of-the-virgin-and-other-saints>>. Access in 2021.11.10. They were not a diptych, because there is no evidence of holes for connecting hinges. Nevertheless, they were both used for private contemplation, possibly together, as informed in the description on the National Gallery's website.



It seems reasonable to consider that minute details such as bleeding stigmas are depicted in small-scale panel paintings, and not in monumental frescoes representing the Last Judgment. In fact, we must recall the usual position of Christ-Judge in the composition – in the upper part of the scene; in a monumental painting, that means Christ would be depicted far above the observer's eyes, and it would be difficult to distinguish the blood that poured from the wounds. In a panel, on the other hand, the greater proximity between the faithful and the painting, as well as the need to touch the object to open it, when it comes to diptychs and triptychs<sup>18</sup> – an essential element of this new affective religiosity –, would make it much easier to identify the bleeding stigmas.

This prominence given to bleeding stigmas in Italian Last Judgment panel paintings, hence, may be connected to personal devotion; nevertheless, there is another aspect that must be considered: the so-called *piety of blood*, which explains the greater importance given to Christ's blood and its cult in Eucharistic celebrations since the *Duecento* – a “bloody frenzy”, according to Caroline Walker Bynum (2002, p. 689). Although such celebrations gave importance particularly to the elevation of the consecrated host, the debate around the statute of the blood shed by Christ to save mankind became a paramount aspect of Christian theology by the end of the Middle Ages, particularly among Franciscans and Dominicans. His blood, as might be expected, is the key element to the constant memory of the Passion by the faithful, when it is not clearly depicted or alluded to; evidently in the Eucharist, but also in visual arts.

Dominique Rigaux points out that “the Precious Blood is from the start a sign of visibility: it allows men to see the sacred” (Rigaux, 1999, p. 393), even if just a glimpse of it. As Rigaux also recalls, we must bear in mind that the devotion to the holy blood, both in spiritual literature as in the visual arts, develops from the cult of Christ's wounds. Hence, if the stigmas indicate Christ's sacrifice for mankind, but also his victory over death, the visual depiction of the blood that pours from the wounds

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18 As Wilkins points out, “touch during ritual is not merely an exercise but can function to transform the devotional experience into a physical, tangible act” (Wilkins, 2002, p. 376).

emphasizes even more this salvific dimension of Christian religion, and the spiritual and sacred beyond that awaits men<sup>19</sup>.

This aspect of Late Medieval religiosity explains the popularization of paintings of the Crucifixion in which the blood pours vividly from Christ's stigmas, in a *crescendo* of drama that culminates perhaps with Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece, in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>. The popularity of representations of the blood of Christ, both in literature as in visual arts, stresses that "the need to see the Blood became as strong as the need to see the host" (Rigaux, 1999, p. 402).

Perhaps the emphasis on blood depiction can also be linked to the need of a greater ecclesiastic control over laymen's devotion. The real blood was, as Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) stressed already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, "completely un-seeable in glorified veins". Bynum also recalls us that "body and blood were seen only through (...) the species on the altar. And blood was doubly veiled, for the laity received it only by concomitance, in the round white wafer of the body of Christ" (Bynum, 2002, p. 699). The emphasis in the depiction of Christ's blood, then, could somehow compensate the impossibility to actually *see* it. On the other hand, the reasons for this emphasis in devotional panel paintings of the Last Judgment, specifically, is still open to examination.

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19 We must recall biblical passages such as Hebrews 9, 12-14, which emphasizes the salvific power of Christ's blood: "(...) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God". *English Standard Version of the Bible*. Available at: <<https://biblia.com/books/esv/Heb9.11>>. Access in 2021.11.11.

20 For a discussion regarding Christ's blood in Late Medieval art, see Quirico, 2020.

Nonetheless, we can fairly conclude this prominence is related to the debates between the most important Mendicant Orders – Dominicans and Franciscans alike. In fact, many of these panels explicitly establishes a relationship with these orders, as in most panels it is frequent the inclusion of a saint connected to them. In this context, we must not forget the importance given to the debate around Christ's blood by both Dominicans and Franciscans since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but particularly in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>21</sup>. And, in a circle of interrelations and influences that connected all the elements brought by this paper, we must recall the stimulus to devotion through images that also came from both orders around the same time.

We have presented here the first developments and conclusions of an ongoing study. Hereafter, we intend to deepen discussions regarding the relations between form, composition and iconography and expected religious functions of Italian visual representations of the Last Judgment, particularly in panel paintings, establishing more specifically the connections between personal devotion and these panels. We hope to link these devotional objects, particularly those that include the depiction of Christ-Judge's bleeding stigmas, more closely to the piety of blood developed still in the *Duecento*, as well as to the cult of Christ's blood and the theological debate around it, mostly between Franciscans and Dominicans.

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<sup>21</sup> We cannot bring this discussion to this paper. It is important to stress only that the so-called *De Sanguine Christi* disputation hinges around the possible split between the two natures of Christ that, according to the *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* written by the Pseudo-Dionysius, were separated during the Passion, and brought together only at the Resurrection – and, as is frequently stressed in Latin texts, we have also the difference between *sanguis* the blood inside Christ's body, linked, therefore, to life, and *cruor*, the blood shed in the cross. Blood may be, then, both life and death (Bynum, 2002, p. 705-706). The peak of this fierce debate, one must recall, was reached between 1462 and 1480. In 1467, in fact, the Franciscan Francesco della Rovere, future Pope Sixtus IV, wrote his *De Sanguine Christi* treatise. And, in 1482, the now elected pope alludes to the position he defended in this debate, through his treatise, in the Sistine Chapel he built and decorated, specifically in the *Temptation of Christ* scene painted by Botticelli around 1482. On the Sistine Chapel and the blood of Christ, see Goffen, 1986.

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