

# Kirsi Eskelinen

---

*Jacopo Bassano freskomaalarina. Cartiglianon ja Enegon kirkkojen freskot: konteksti, rekonstruktio ja tulkinta. (Jacopo Bassano as a Fresco Painter. The Frescoes of the Cartigliano and Enego Parish Churches: Context, Reconstruction and Interpretation.)* Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimituksia / Finska kyrkohistoriska samfundets handlingar 206. Helsinki: Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura 2008. Väitöskirja / Dissertation: Helsingin yliopisto / University of Helsinki, 2008.

## Dissertation Summary

---

The object Summary of this study is Jacopo Bassano (c. 1510–92) as a fresco painter and the significance of frescoes in his late production. My research focuses on the only surviving cycle of frescoes of his later years in the Cartigliano parish church, bearing the date 1575. The other cycle studied here was painted for the 16<sup>th</sup> century parish church of Enego. It contained one of the most extensive pictorial decorations executed by Jacopo Bassano with his eldest son Francesco. The fresco cycle decorated the vaulted ceiling and the walls of the choir as well as the walls of the nave at the Enego church. In addition, there were 28 paintings with Old Testament subjects in the nave ceiling. However, nothing has survived of the fresco decoration and the paintings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century church, nor has any visual documentation of them remained. The present-day church of Enego dates back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, the only artefact preserved is the small altarpiece attributed to Jacopo Bassano which depicts the *Saints Justine, Sebastian, Anthony Abbott, and Roch*. This piece is generally dated to c. 1555/1560.

Cartigliano is situated approximately 8 kilometres from Bassano del Grappa in the province of Vicenza. Enego stands in the mountain region of the Altopiano dei Sette Comuni, which was reached with difficulty in the days of Jacopo Bassano. It was my visits *in situ* to those two parish churches that first aroused my interest in their frescoes.

The previous research on the frescoes of Cartigliano has been mainly concerned with the questions of attribution and dating. However, Franco Signori has recently paid attention to the iconographic programme, which he maintains to be linked to the Catholic doctrines confirmed by the Council of Trent. In contrast, the Enego cycle has been studied only in relation to the dating of the choir frescoes attributed to Jacopo Bassano.

My hypothesis is that the Tridentine period is the proper context to place and examine both of the above-mentioned fresco cycles. I analyse them in relation to the other commissions that Jacopo Bassano and his workshop executed for churches in the Venetian countryside, namely altarpieces, during the period after the Council of Trent (1545–63) in the 1560s and in the 1570s. In the previous research, attention has primarily been paid to the high number of altarpieces he produced during these years, but the reasons for this activity have not yet been examined.

It has been assumed that the altarpiece attributed to Bartolomeo Montagna and showing *St Virgin Mary with the Infant and Saints John the Baptist and Simon Cananeus* was hanging on the eastern wall of the choir at the Cartigliano church at the moment when Jacopo planned the fresco decoration, and that the altarpiece was in fact the focal point of his scheme. However, I challenge this assumption and consider the space to be an important premise for the decoration. For this reason, I will attempt to reconstruct the area of the high altar and the east wall of the choir as it was in 1575 when Jacopo and Francesco Bassano painted those frescoes. As my main objective, however, I propose to interpret the iconographic programme as a whole.

As to the Enego church, I question the prevailing assumption concerning the dating of the choir frescoes attributed to Jacopo Bassano. My argument is that there is no reason to presume that the altarpiece and the choir frescoes have been executed simultaneously. Instead, I will present a new interpretation of the dating of the frescoes and attempt to shed light on their historical and interpretative context. Furthermore, I will reconstruct the entire programme including the fresco cycle in the choir, the nave and the ceiling paintings.

My argumentation is based on evidence collected from church records and from the *Libro secondo*, the Second Account Book, which is the only surviving manuscript from the original four books that the Bassano workshop kept from the beginning of their activity under the leadership of Jacopo's father, Francesco the Elder. The *Libro secondo*, published in 1992 by Michelangelo, is one of my most important primary sources. Moreover, the church records for both the Cartigliano and the Enego parish churches include the bishops' visitation records and related inventories from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, which are mainly unpublished documents preserved in the Archivio diocesano in Vicenza (Cartigliano) and in the Archivio della Curia Vescovile in Padua (Enego). Other essential sources for my research are *Le meraviglie dell'arte ovvero le vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello stato* by Carlo Ridolfi (1648) and *Notizie intorno alla Vita e alle Opere de' Pittori, Scultori e Intagliatori della Città di Bassano* by Giambattista Verci (1775), both of which include a biography of Jacopo Bassano and a thorough description of the decorations in the Cartigliano and Enego churches.

The present study is divided into five main chapters. In Chapter I, I delineate the operational environment of the Bassano bottega in the small countryside town of the Venetian republic in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and show how this environment was reflected in the commissions and working methods of the bottega. I also examine the profitability of the bottega under the leadership of Jacopo Bassano and review its production during the 1560s and the 1570s.

Chapter II focuses on examining the drawing practises of the Bassano workshop on the basis of written sources and drawings. Here the drawings attributed to Jacopo Bassano are analysed in relation to the Venetian drawing practises. Special attention is given to what are called the *ricordo* drawings, and the discussion or debate concerning the *ricordo* will be updated. My purpose is to give the reader an idea of the drawings and their function in the working practises of the Bassano workshop under the leadership of Jacopo Bassano, and of the problems related to them. Another important objective is to provide the context for the discussion later on concerning the studies which were executed with coloured chalks.

Chapter III concentrates on the sacred art after the Council of Trent in the 1560s and 1570s in Veneto. I therefore delineate the reforms carried out along with the Tridentine Council at the regional level and consider its impact on sacred images. Furthermore, I review the way in which some of the liturgical foci, primarily the cult and the veneration of the Holy Eucharist, were reflected in the church interior. This review is limited to Venice and Veneto. I also consider in this post-Tridentine context the commissions of altarpieces granted to Jacopo Bassano during the 1560s and the 1570s, as well as the theological issues of the time possibly reflected in them.

The first three chapters also form an introduction to the most extensive and central chapters of the study dealing with the Cartigliano and Enego parish churches. The fourth main chapter focuses on the fresco decoration

of the Cartigliano parish church. First, I will try to define the interpretational context for the frescoes, in other words, the background for the commissioning of the fresco decoration, the building history and the space structure of the choir in 1575, the date of the decoration. Above all, I will present an interpretation of the overall iconography of the fresco programme.

Chapter V deals with the lost church of Enego. I will try to reconstruct the structure of the church building, the altars with their respective altarpieces, as well as the frescoes and ceiling paintings executed by Jacopo Bassano and his workshop. Of these the only surviving piece is the small altarpiece attributed to Jacopo Bassano from the northern altar. Nonetheless, important conclusions regarding the dating and interpretation of the frescoes and ceiling paintings can be drawn from the written primary sources. I will present a reconstruction of the frescoes attributed to Jacopo and his son, Francesco Bassano, including their dating, the iconography of the fresco programme and its interpretative basis. These reconstructions are based on the visitation records and inventories from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and on the oldest relevant literature, namely the descriptions offered by Carlo Ridolfi and G. B. Verci. It is especially interesting to consider the large compositional sketches attributed to Jacopo Bassano which have been executed using coloured chalks, many of them also dated in 1568 or in 1569 by the painter, and to compare them with the lost frescoes in Enego.

I have suggested that the frescoes of the Cartigliano and Enego parish churches should be examined in the interpretational context of the spirituality of the post-Tridentine period. This creates the historical context for the decorations and functions as a basis for the iconographical interpretations I have proposed. The cult of the Holy Eucharist was popular in Venice from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Along with the decrees of the Council of Trent on the Sacrament of the Eucharist and on the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, the cult of the Eucharist grew in popularity even further after the mid-Sixteenth century. This is clearly reflected in the pronounced growth in the number of altars and chapels dedicated to it in Venice. Furthermore, the high altars of the Cartigliano and Enego churches were dedicated to the Santissimo Sacramento.

During the post-Tridentine period, churches underwent thorough renewals which consisted of the restructuring and redecorating of their interiors. These reforms focused on features emphasised in the liturgy, and in particular on the cult of the Eucharist. The high altar was given special attention by moving it to the centre of the choir, along with the Host in the tabernacle being placed over it which then became the focal point and object of cult in the liturgical activity. All this was also reflected in the decoration of the area of choir and the high altar. It became common to juxtapose subjects from the Old and the New Testament typologically in order to visualise the doctrines related to the Eucharist in the decoration of choirs and chapels dedicated to the Holy Eucharist.

Another new feature was the thematic coherence evident in the subjects of the single altarpieces which formed a unitary iconographic programme. Early examples of this in Venice are the decoration of the lost church of Santa Maria Umiltà from the beginning of the 1560s and the decoration of the church of Redentore from the latter part of the 1570s. The thematically coherent programme could also embrace ceiling paintings, as is the case in the Sala Superiore of Scuola Grande di San Rocco and in the above-mentioned church of Santa Maria dell'Umiltà. In addition, series of paintings on Marian (Mariological) and Christological subjects were also common among the ceiling paintings, as is the case at the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Lentiai painted by Cesare Vecellio in 1577–78, and at the Scuola di Santa Maria della Carità of the church of San Francesco in Padoa which was painted by Dario Varotari in 1579–82.

The redecoration of churches provided artists with good opportunities for employment during the latter part of the Cinquecento. This is also discernible in the numerous commissions for altarpieces that Jacopo Bassano received during those years. In fact, this redecoration explains the abundance of the altarpieces in his production

in the 1560s and especially in the 1570s, a fact that has been acknowledged in the previous research, although the reasons for the sudden increase in altarpieces seem to have been largely ignored. Many of his altarpieces, which can be dated to the end of the 1560s or the beginning of the 1570s, are thematically linked to the theological issues of the Council of Trent. Furthermore, many of them seem to be connected to a project of restructuring and redecorating a church interior. An example of this is the altarpiece of *Saints Peter and Paul* (Modena, Galleria Estense) which Jacopo painted for the Jesuit church of Santa Maria dell'Umiltà in about 1561. This is also Jacopo's earliest known commission for a Venetian church. Other examples of such paintings are the *Crucifixion* (1562–63), which was painted for the high altar of the Dominican monastery church of San Paolo in Treviso, *Saint Roch visiting the Plague Victims* (c. 1573, Milano, Pinacoteca di Brera), which was painted for the high altar of the church of San Rocco in Vicenza, and the *Entombment of Christ* (Vicenza, Chiesa dei Carmini) painted for the church of Santa Croce in Vicenza.

In addition to altarpieces, Jacopo decorated chapels and entire church interiors with frescoes. Franco Signori has linked the commission of the Cartigliano fresco cycle to the visitation of Bishop Matteo Priuli in 1566. According to Signori, the Bishop had paid attention to the choir dedicated to the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist as this choir was still lacking decoration (*Signori* 1998, 55–56). However, in the visitation report dated in May 1566 no such reference is made of the decoration. This short report concentrates on the inspection of the condition of the altar and on the proper preservation of the Eucharist (ADV, 29th May 1566, 89r-90v.). W.R. Rearick has suggested that a plague epidemic broke out in the summer of 1575 in Bassano and that Jacopo therefore fled to Cartigliano. The priest don Iseppo Rolandi subsequently took advantage of Jacopo's stay in Cartigliano and commissioned him to paint a fresco cycle in the choir of the church (*Rearick* 1991, IV, n. 6). However, I do not find Rearick's hypothesis convincing. I agree with Rearick that the frescoes were in all probability commissioned by don Iseppo Rolandi, who was from Bassano and who must have known Jacopo well. He had been appointed as priest at the parish church in Cartigliano in 1553. Nevertheless, that commission was certainly not due to the coincidental stay of Jacopo in Cartigliano. First, Jacopo was familiar with Cartigliano and the parish church. This is because the Bassano workshop had worked earlier for that church on several occasions under the leadership of Jacopo's father, Francesco the Elder. Jacopo also often visited Cartigliano for other reasons in the 1570s, for he had acquired some estates there in 1570 and in 1573 (*Signori et al* 1992, 89). It is important to note that Jacopo was a well-known master in the 1570s, and the Bassano workshop had executed altarpieces, frescoes and even liturgical objects for the churches of the region for several decades, as the entries in the *Libro secondo* show.

To fund the fresco cycle, the parish church used the income from rentals of the ferryboat on the Brenta River. This income was ever-growing towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (*Mantese* 1966, 28–30). Even the Morosini family could have supported the project financially, as they were already maintaining the altar dedicated to St Laurent which they had commissioned for themselves.

The choir of Cartigliano was dedicated to the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. I consider it probable that the spirituality of the Catholic Reformation prevailing after the Council of Trent and the special emphasis put on the Sacrament of the Eucharist in the liturgy have influenced the decision to decorate the choir. Even so, a direct connection between Bishop Priuli's visitation and the decision to decorate the choir cannot be proven. Moreover, the forthcoming Jubilee in 1575 could have acted as a stimulus for that decision.

I have tried to show that the iconographic programme of the frescoes in the choir of the Cartigliano parish church has obvious points of contact with the Catholic doctrines reconfirmed by the Council of Trent. First, Jacopo has placed the date of the frescoes deliberately in the Tablets of Law received by Moses as a sign of the New Covenant. The subject *Moses receiving the Tablets of Law* was used as a prefiguration of the Church. The date 1575 in the Tablets of Law, coinciding with the Jubilee of the Catholic Church, betrays the conscious connection

between the Church and the Early Christianity. Furthermore, the placement of the date in the Tablets of Law emphasizes the significance of the Catholic Church and its authority as the bearer of the original Christian doctrine. On the other hand, this can also be interpreted as an allusion to the continuity and long tradition which the Catholic Church represents.

The former choir of Cartigliano parish church has undergone several restructurings and currently serves as a side chapel. I consider this space to be part of the interpretational framework for the decoration. As a result, I have tried to reconstruct the area of the high altar and the east wall of the choir, the focal point of the mass and the decoration as well, as it was in 1575 when Jacopo and Francesco Bassano painted the frescoes. These frescoes have been restored on several occasions. The first restoration in the 1950s was conducted under the supervision and guidance of Michelangelo Muraro, who was then acting as the superintendent at the Soprintendenza of Venice. On that occasion, a huge wooden altar, which covered the best part of the east wall and which probably dated back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was removed (See Fig. 17). Underneath the altar, a niche was revealed, dated by Muraro to the reconstruction of the church in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 18). During the restoration of the 1950s, the niche was filled in (Fig. 19).

The different stages of the restoration and of the wall structure can be studied in the photographic documentation preserved at the Fondazione Cini in Venice, and in Verona at the Soprintendenza per i Beni Architettonici e per il Paesaggio per le province di Verona, Vicenza e Rovigo. Unfortunately so little written documentation exists that, for the moment, conclusions can only be based on the visual evidence (*Muraro* 1952; 1956; 1960). In my research I have proposed three different interpretations of the structure of the eastern wall, but the existing documentary evidence does not allow me to establish the matter with more certainty. To verify these hypotheses, a material study on the wall structure would be needed. Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct such a study during the restoration work completed in 2007.

In the first of the three alternative interpretations I propose, the point of departure is the even wall surface which Jacopo painted in its entirety, in other words, also underneath the current altarpiece attributed to Bartolomeo Montagna. It follows that the fresco decoration was later lost as the niche was built. In fact, the documentary photographs seem to confirm the assumption that the decoration continued further under the present frame of the altarpiece. This means that the painting attributed to Bartolomeo Montagna possibly served as an altarpiece. It could have rested against the altar, as there is a narrow space between the wall and the altar, or it could have been hanging lower down on the wall as it is at present.<sup>1</sup> I consider this first interpretation to be the most probable.

According to the second interpretation, the niche was already there when Jacopo painted the frescoes. In that case, the wall surface together with the niche and the altar all formed an ensemble. This means that instead of a painting, a crucifix or a statue stood in the niche. According to the third alternative, there was a window which was later transformed to a niche of the same size and form. A window on the wall would then explain the placing of the altar about 50 cm off the wall surface. However, what seems to contradict this hypothesis is that Jacopo has not taken into account the light which would have flowed from this hypothetical window, as is the case with the window in the southern wall, seems to contradict this hypothesis.

In the photographic documentation, it is possible to discern an inscription in the upper-right corner of the antependium (Fig. 15). This was fragmentary already during the restoration in 1954–1955, and Muraro made no attempt to interpret it (*Muraro* 1956, 27). In fact, only the central part of the original inscription is preserved. Yet

---

<sup>1</sup> The pala of Montagna was restored in the 1970s. On that occasion, it was noted that the painting appeared to have been transferred from panel to canvas. The pigments did not adhere perfectly to the surface, which was taken as evidence for the transfer. If the pala was originally on panel, it could have been placed resting against the altar in a wooden frame structure, as I have suggested.

it is possible to decipher that inscription, thanks to the notes made by an unknown priest sometime in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is the date of consecration of the Cartigliano church, “1518 Die 2 Mazo”, and originally it also included a sign of the cross (*Mantese* 1966, 27; ADV, handwritten notes, undated). This inscription could date back to the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as has been pointed out by Anja-Inkeri Lehtinen and Outi Merisalo. Even if the altar is not in its original shape, the inscription provides further support for the hypothesis that the altar was originally positioned here.

While planning the fresco decoration, Jacopo has made use of the structure of the choir and of the position of the altar located slightly away from the wall. By the painted colonnade, which forms an exedra, he has transformed the eastern wall into an imaginary choir with an apse. At the same time he has created an illusion of what is called a “double altar”, and this made it possible to celebrate the mass towards the congregation and towards the apse. To complete the illusion, Jacopo painted steps which lead to the altar from behind. The two apostles depicted on both sides seem to be climbing up these steps. In addition, the colour and the shape of the steps painted by Jacopo resemble the real stone steps on the right side of the altar.<sup>2</sup>

A common feature in the choir frescoes is the juxtaposition of subjects typologically from the Old and the New Testament. On the southern wall, there are *The Forbidden Tree* and *The Expulsion from Paradise*, and on the opposing northern wall there is *The Crucifixion*. A similar division is displayed on the eastern wall. On the upper part, there are subjects from the Old Testament; on the left, *The Sacrifice of Isaac* and on the right, *Moses receiving the Tablets of Law*. Beneath are depicted two Apostles from the New Testament. There are different opinions as to their identity. In the recent research, it has been proposed that these Apostles are Peter and Paul. However, I consider the Apostles Simon Cananeus and Jude Thaddeus as the most probable ones, as Michelangelo Muraro has suggested. The matter is difficult to resolve with certainty since the figures have lost layers of colour and especially as the attribute of the right hand-figure is very worn out. This could be a sword and hence connected to Saint Paul, but it could be a saw as well, referring to Saint Simon Cananeus. Usually the patron saints were depicted on the high altar, a fact which is in favour of the latter mentioned Apostles. The life stories of the Saints Simon Cananeus and Jude Thaddeus emphasize their missionary work as well as their readiness and zeal for martyrdom. In the same way, the Cartigliano frescoes emphasize the readiness of the Apostles to die for the cross, that is, to obey God to the last. This in turn is linked typologically with the subjects from the Old Testament depicted above them.

The Apostles are depicted as being turned towards the altar, to which they seem to show veneration. The object of their veneration is the consecrated Host (The Body and Blood of Christ) which was preserved in a tabernacle in the middle of the altar. The Apostles Simon Cananeus and Jude Thaddeus suffered martyrdom while defending Christian faith against idolatry. The portraying of these particular Apostles could therefore allude to the defending of the Catholic Church against heretical Protestant doctrines. One of the central doctrines that was under attack at that time was related to the Sacrifice of the Mass, namely the belief that in the mass the Christ's sacrifice on the cross was enacted bloodlessly. Another disputed doctrine concerned the transubstantiation, in other words the belief that in the consecration the entire substance of the bread and the wine were literally transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. The choir of the Cartigliano church was dedicated to the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, to which the iconography of Jacopo's frescoes was also connected.

The four evangelists are depicted together with the Church Fathers on the vaulted ceiling. Saint Mark and Saint Jerome are together, Saint John and Saint Gregory the Great are together, Saint Matthew and Saint Ambrose are together and finally, Saint Luke is represented together with Saint Augustine. The authority of the church fathers is thus emphasized. It is important to note that the Council of Trent had confirmed the authority of

---

<sup>2</sup> Conservator Egidio Arlango drew my attention to this fact. The steps in front of the altar were reconstructed in the 1950s. (Arlango's oral communication to the author 25.10.2005).

the Latin Vulgate by Jerome as the official translation of the Bible and the apostolic tradition as a part of the Catholic doctrinal basis.

The semi-circular colonnade can be interpreted as an allusion to the roots of the universal Catholic Church, to the early Christianity, especially to the Roman Christian Church and to its founders, the 12 Apostles. Thus both the colonnade and the Apostles could allude to the universal Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Apostles can also be connected with the sacrament of ordination, the sacramental nature of which was called to question by the Protestants. The foundation of the ordination is the postulate of its special sacredness and thereby also of the papal superiority.

Church Father Augustine distinguished three significant periods in world history. The first is the period preceding the Law of Moses, from the creation of the world until the moment when God pronounced the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, which is called *Ante legem*. This was followed by *Sub lege*, the time of the Law of Moses until the advent of the Messiah. The last period is referred to as *Sub gratia*, the era of grace, which followed the Redemption work of Christ. The subjects of the Cartigliano frescoes depict these different eras: *The Forbidden Tree*, *The Expulsion from Paradise* and *The Sacrifice of Isaac* stand for the era of *Ante legem*, *Moses receiving the Tablets of Law* stands for *Sub lege*, and *The Crucifixion* for *Sub gratia*. Jacopo has depicted the salvation history of humanity with its turning points in the frescoes of Cartigliano, as has been pointed out in the previous research.

As Livia Alberton Vinco da Sesso has noted, the pictorial motifs of the Cartigliano frescoes appear even in the background of the contemporary early paintings of *The Four Seasons*. These paintings have been interpreted as being what is referred to as “genre scenes”, which are allegories of the four seasons. Recently Bernard Aikema has put forward an interpretation of these works as devotional images, where the peasants in their everyday chores represent a way of life to be condemned and the small biblical scenes in the background as an ideal. According to Aikema, those paintings should be interpreted in a dialectical, moralising sense.

In my opinion, the early paintings of the *Four Seasons* are indeed devotional images. I have presented an interpretation where the biblical motifs of the frescoes and the paintings are connected to a special feast celebrated at the beginning of each of the four seasons, namely the feast of *Quatuor Tempora*. This feast was celebrated in the early Church of Rome, but it took a long time before it was commonly celebrated in the Catholic Church. In Milan, this feast was established only by the Bishop Carlo Borromeo (1560–86). However, it must have been an established practice after the Council of Trent, since it had a liturgy of its own included in the Missale of 1570 and in the liturgical calendar of the Breviarium of 1568.

The feasts of *Quatuor Tempora* lasted a whole week. They were a special period for penitence, prayer and fasting, and their liturgy had points of contact with Easter. They offered an occasion for reflecting the redemptive death of Christ and Christ’s sacrifice. The fulcrum was the mass of the Saturday evening that ended the fasting. It was also the moment when the ordination of new priests took place, since this ordination was permitted only at Easter, *Quatuor Tempora* and *Mediana*. An essential feature in the liturgy of *Quatuor Tempora* is the giving of thanks to the grace of God and the offering of prayers for his protection of the fruits of the earth. As I see it, the idea of sanctification of the seasons, the works related to them and the offerings of the earth, seem also to have a pronounced importance in the early *Four Seasons* attributed to Jacopo Bassano.

From the extensive pictorial decorations by the Bassano family in the parish church of Enego, only the small altarpiece attributed to Jacopo Bassano depicting *Saints Justine, Sebastian, Anthony Abbott, and Roch* is preserved. This altarpiece is generally dated to c. 1560, except for Rearick who considers it slightly antecedent about 1555.

As the only surviving piece it has been given a pronounced position in the research. This is clearly reflected in the dating of the choir frescoes attributed to Jacopo, which are usually considered contemporaneous with the

altarpiece, that is to say executed c. 1554–55 or c. 1560 according to the date given to the altarpiece. As I see it, there is no reason to presume that the altarpiece and the choir frescoes would have been executed simultaneously.

According to the entries contained in the *Libro secondo*, the Bassano workshop received commissions from the churches of Cartigliano, Marostica, Mussolente, Nove and from the monastery of Campo Santo in Cittadella. From the entries it becomes clear that the commissions extended over several decades in all the above-mentioned churches. A common denominator is also the fact that the relationship with these churches had been established already under the leadership of Jacopo's father, Francesco the Elder. The continuity of commissions during a long period of time has also been an important starting point for my interpretation concerning the church of Enego.

By consulting a document that has been hitherto unknown to scholars, I have been able to specify the decoration on the high altar and even the subject matter of the altarpiece. The document in question is the inventory compiled during the visitation made in 1587, and I am most indebted to Pierantonio Gios who discovered this inventory. Though the inventory bears no date, it can be deduced from the fact that the writer is Padre Bartolomeo Velo, who had been appointed to the ministry of Enego in 1585. (Gios 1996a, 117. ACP, *Invent. Dioec.* CDE VII, 181 r. See Appendix 7).

The altarpiece had depicted the Virgin Mary with the Infant on her knees in the middle, with Saint Justine on her right and Saint Catherine on her left. In my opinion, it is very likely that the altarpiece mentioned in the inventory is the same painting that was commissioned to Francesco the Elder and documented in the *Libro secondo* in 1523. The entry in the *Libro secondo* does not specify either the subject matter or the altar for which the altarpiece was intended. However, I find it reasonable to presume that the altarpiece was commissioned for the high altar. It can therefore be concluded that the workshop of the Bassano family had established a long relationship with the church of Enego. The painting that probably was intended for the high altar was commissioned to Francesco the Elder. It was later that Jacopo executed the altarpiece for the altar in the northern aisle of Saint Justine in c. 1560. Later, Jacopo was commissioned to paint the frescoes in the choir and on the nave walls which I presume he executed together with his son Francesco in the 1570s, as well as the 28 ceiling paintings.

The main objective of my research has been to demonstrate that the fresco decoration of the Enego church should be placed in the same interpretational context as the frescoes of Cartigliano, namely in the period following the Council of Trent. I have put forward a new interpretation of the passage referring to the choir frescoes in the visitation report submitted to Enego that described the visit of Bishop Niccolò Ormaneto in 1571. In that visitation report, the frescoes are attributed to Jacopo Bassano, whose name is even cited twice. Previously Elin Bordignon Favero and W.R. Rearick have deduced from the passage in that report that Jacopo had painted both the ceiling and the walls of the choir. However, Enrico Garavelli has observed that if interpreted word-for-word, only the ceiling paintings are mentioned but no reference is made to the walls (Garavelli's oral communication to the author 14.12.2005). Hence, it can be concluded that only the ceiling paintings, *The Four Evangelists*, were completed with certainty by the time of the visitation in 1571. Furthermore, this means that the work had been initiated recently, since it was a common practise to paint the ceiling first.

Based on my reconstruction, I suggest that the frescoes in the choir and on the nave walls formed a coherent cycle with a unitary iconographic programme which also included the 28 paintings with the Old Testament subjects on the nave ceiling. The fresco cycle contained subjects depicting the infancy, life and suffering of Christ. Due to the accurate description of G.B. Verci, it is possible to reconstruct the sequence and position of the pictorial motifs. If seen in a clockwise sequence and beginning with the choir's east wall, the order of the subjects can be determined. Starting at the upper part of the east wall, the works were *The Archangel*

*Gabriel and The Virgin Annunciate*. Then on the south wall there was *The Adoration of the Shepherds* and *The flight into Egypt*. Next on the south wall of the nave there was *The Baptism of Christ*, *The Samaritan woman at the well with Christ*, *The Expulsion of the Merchants from the Temple*, *Christ in the House of Simon the Pharisee with Mary Magdalen in his feet* and *The Hebrew planning the Arrest of Christ*. On the north wall of the nave, the cycle continued with *The Arrest of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane*, *Christ before Caifas*, *The Flagellation of Christ*, *Christ Crowned with thorns* and *Christ Carrying the Cross*. Finally, the cycle ended with *The Crucifixion* on the north wall of the choir (Fig. 41).

My argumentation concerning the dating of the choir frescoes is also based on the structural and compositional solutions used by Jacopo, which resemble the choir frescoes of Cartigliano which have been dated as being executed in 1575. Above all, these are the compositional solutions on the east wall: large figures framing the altar on both sides, placed on the upper and lower parts of the wall, and the semicircular colonnade, which in the lower part creates an illusory architectural background. Both churches have choir ceilings structured in the same way, and a similar festoon has framed the surfaces of the vaulted ceiling. In fact, it is possible to deduce from the description of Verzi that the single pictorial motifs were placed in the space of the choir in a similar way as in Cartigliano, and also the visual effect was of the same kind. In addition, both churches had the same subject on the north wall, *The Crucifixion*, which alone filled the entire wall surface. The paintings were alike even in their details, which can be judged from the description offered by Verzi. Moreover, both churches have been similar with respect to the relation of the pictorial motifs on the east wall to the altar and to the division of the south wall on the two surfaces by a window with their related motifs (Fig. 26, 40). The similarities in the placing of the subjects in the space, in the visual effect and even in the subject matter, as is the case with *The Crucifixion*, mean that the fresco decorations of the Cartigliano and Enego churches have been executed in a short time span, and they have to be dated close to each other.

In addition, the 28 paintings on veterotestamentary subjects on the ceiling were also a part of the iconographic programme together with the frescoes. The pictorial motifs of the ceiling stand for the periods of *Ante legem* and *Sub lege*, whereas the cycle on the wall surfaces depict the era *Sub gratia*. As I interpret the evidence, the ceiling paintings and the frescoes on the wall surface formed a unitary iconographic programme which, just as in Cartigliano, depicted the salvation history of humanity.

There are several examples of corresponding co-ordinated programmes in Venice and in terraferma which have been executed after the Council of Trent and which can be dated back to the same period as the frescoes and paintings in Enego. These examples are the library in the Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria in Praglia, Scuola di Santa Maria della Carità at the church of San Francesco in Padua, the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Lentiai, and the church of Santissimo Crocefisso in Sacco di Piove. From my point of view, the frescoes and the paintings of Enego need to be studied in the same interpretational context as the above-mentioned cycles where the artists have observed the reforms and norms established by the Council of Trent.

It is possible that even the frescoes attributed to Jacopo Bassano in the churches of Fietta and Nove, which had already been lost in the time of Verzi and are known only from the references made by Ridolfi, contributed to the bringing of the church decorations up to date in the post-Tridentine period. One way to clarify this matter is to consult the visitation records and inventories. The local archives of the parishes might also contain relevant material for this purpose.

The parish church of Enego, with its frescoes and paintings, is an example of an important complex that has been overlooked in the research because the actual works of art have been lost. However, as I have shown in this study, it has been possible to obtain new information concerning the decoration of the church and the works of

art attributed to Jacopo by combining and examining together diverse sources such as the references made by the early critics, the ecclesiastic records and the entries in the *Libro secondo*.

Besides the Cartigliano cycle, no other later frescoes by Jacopo Bassano have been preserved. Bassano painted *The Flight in to Egypt* on the facade of the church of San Giuseppe in Bassano in 1575 and *The Saint Roch* to the church of San Girolamo. These paintings have been described by Verci. If the frescoes of Enego date to the 1570s as I have proposed in my reconstruction, this would have some consequences. Firstly, a conclusion could be drawn from the decorations of Cartigliano and Enego that the frescoes had a more prominent place in the production of Jacopo Bassano of the 1570s than has been thought in the previous research. Attributing an earlier date would also cast new light on the production of Jacopo in this respect and would necessitate its partial reevaluation especially in relation to the studies of the frescoes.

Drawings form an important aspect of Jacopo Bassano's production and they are connected essentially with the preparatory practises of works of arts. Jacopo Bassano made drawings to prepare for his frescoes, a fact that is confirmed by the drawings in coloured chalks connected to the Cartigliano frescoes. Even so, when scholars have searched for the possible works of art that the drawings could have been prepared for, the question concerning preparatory drawings for frescoes has not been much considered.

For the Cartigliano frescoes, several *modello* drawings were made which are large drawings in coloured chalks. Jacopo also executed drawings in a similar technique which delineate compositional solutions. Different hypotheses have been proposed in their regard, but it has not been possible to connect them to any known work of art attributed to Jacopo Bassano or his workshop. These drawings are *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (1569, *recto* and *verso* Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett), *The Scourging of Christ* (1568, Washington, National Gallery of Art), *The Arrest of Christ* (1568, Paris, Louvre) and *The Expulsion of the Merchants from the Temple* (Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum). The central issues regard the purpose of these drawings, in other words, whether they are autonomous or preparatory studies, and the question of which works of arts they could have been made for. Three of the drawings have Jacopo's autographic annotations in which he has indicated the date of execution as being in 1568 or in 1569. Jacopo did not usually date his drawings, but for this period, there are exceptionally many dated sheets. In addition to the date of execution, 1569, which occurs twice, he has written "Nil mihi placet" on the *recto* of the Berlin sheet. The same autographic annotation appears in another drawing dated in the same year, *The Visitation* (1569, Florence, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi). I have suggested in this study that the coloured chalk drawings could be preparatory studies for the same fresco cycle, and that could explain the need to date them. The annotation "Nil mihi placet" expressed a feeling of dissatisfaction with the results, as Vittoria Romani has suggested, and was hence related to a concrete task. I have also suggested that the large compositional studies in coloured chalks, *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (Berlin), *The Scourging of Christ* (Washington), *The Arrest of Christ* (Louvre) and *The Expulsion of the Merchants from the Temple* (Malibu), were preparatory drawings for the fresco cycle in Enego depicting scenes from the life and suffering of Christ. All the subjects of the aforementioned drawings were included in the Enego cycle. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that we have no other works by Jacopo from other Christological cycles which would also include subjects from Christ's infancy and life, nor is there any known reference or documentary evidence to such a cycle.

Some complicated issues remain to be resolved in the study of Jacopo and his workshop's drawing practices. The central question concerns the definition of some highly finished drawings executed in bistre wash and white heightening over a black chalk drawing. These sheets have been considered as being either preparatory drawings or *ricordo* drawings. Several sheets attributed to Jacopo and dated in 1568 and in 1569 belong to this group. However, these sheets have not been associated with any known works of art. These include *The Archangel Gabriel* (1569, Christ Church picture Gallery, Oxford), *The Virgin Annunciate* (1569, Gabinetto Disegni e

Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence), *The Visitation* (1569, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence) and *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* (1567, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence).

While considering the question about the purpose of these drawings dated in the late 1560s, Rearick has as his starting point the supposition that the drawings must be related to the paintings. He considers the drawings as being either preparatory studies for paintings or records of paintings or their parts. In other words, the drawings were copies. Rearick seems to classify rather systematically the drawings executed in bistre wash as being copies which he calls *ricordi* – drawings recording an invention. His thinking has, in this respect, become even more rigid in the course of time. Ballarin has criticized among others the inflexibility of the theory of *ricordo*. He has emphasized the problematic aspects of Rearick's arguments based on the execution technique of the drawings. Ballarin also argues that Rearick has not sufficiently taken into consideration the quality of the drawings. My understanding of this issue is that the generalisations concerning the execution technique of the drawings and underlying the *ricordo* theory of Rearick are not plausible. These drawings have to be judged independently on a case-specific basis.

The question concerning the *ricordo* has even more general significance for the research, because it seems to be an established concept in the art historical discourse. The *ricordo* does not merely concern the drawings attributed to Jacopo Bassano or to his workshop. On the contrary, it represents a wider problem concerning the interpretation which, in the end, is linked to the concept of the original. At the same time, the meaning of the concept of *ricordo* seems to have become more extensive. Nowadays this concept can refer not only to the drawings, but even to the paintings themselves. Thus the *ricordo* turns out to be a large and complex issue that warrants a study of its own.

One of the starting points for Rearick's hypothesis of *ricordo* was *The Virgin Annunciate* in Uffizi. However, there is an evident *pentimento* in the face of the Virgin Mary which has not been noted before. This became visible when I was scanning a reproduction of the drawing. The left eye of Virgin Mary had first been sketched higher up, and even the direction of her eye had been different; the eye was open and directed more upwards. Even the position of the Virgin's head might have been altered. In my understanding, such a large *pentimento* in the drawing excludes the possibility of a *ricordo*, a derivation from a painted original as suggested by Rearick. Instead, I believe the drawing to be a study. Ballarin has suggested that the sheet is a preparatory drawing, *modello* or *cartone*, for a fresco painting. I consider the hypothesis put forth by Ballarin as being plausible.

In the previous research, the drawings have been regarded as preparatory studies for paintings in the first place, even if evidence of such connections could not be shown. As I see it, and in the light of the results of this research, it seems ever more plausible that Jacopo's works contains more preparatory drawings for fresco paintings than has been previously thought.

The subject of my research – the frescoes of the 1570s – is a less known but nevertheless an important feature in the oeuvre of Jacopo Bassano. These frescoes are poorly preserved, and they have been studied less than the other aspects of Jacopo's production. As a matter of fact, only a fraction of Jacopo's frescoes have survived. It is on the basis of this fragmentary material that we create our idea of Jacopo as a fresco painter. As a consequence, our interpretation is influenced by the splintered, random material. The annotations in the *Libro secondo* and the references made by Carlo Ridolfi and G.B. Verci demonstrate that the fresco painting in Jacopo's oeuvre has been more significant than could be deduced from the surviving fragments. This study is an effort to contribute to the understanding of the importance that the frescoes had in Jacopo's production. By means of research, it is possible to gain glimpses of a vast material which has been lost centuries ago.