Although Fra Angelico is one of the great masters of Renaissance art, we know surprisingly little about his early years as a painter. While contemporary sources and patronage by the Medici and Strozzi attest his prominence in the 1430s, the paucity of documented works from this decade and the previous one has proven a great obstacle to the hypothetical reconstruction of his youthful activity. Though various notices on this major artist had been his foresight in suggesting the topic and for the invaluable advice and assistance he has offered throughout the years of my research on Angelico. Paul Barolsky has given me much encouragement and editorial advice on the dissertation and this article. I would also like to thank Ulrich Middeldorf for his thoughtful criticism and Gino Corti for corroborating my transcriptions of the documents cited here. Umberto Baldini generously gave me his manuscript on the San Domenico di Fiesole Altarpiece before its publication and permitted me to examine the altarpiece during its restoration.

* This article is based on part of my dissertation, Fra Angelico: His Role in Quattrocento Painting and Problems of Chronology (University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1977). I wish to express my gratitude to Frederick Hartt for
published by Baldinucci\(^1\) and Father Marchese\(^2\) before the twentieth century, only a few could be related to extant works. The rest of his chronology was deduced from an erroneous entry in the monastic *Cronaca quadripartita* of San Domenico di Fiesole which seemed to establish his novitiate in 1407\(^3\), his presumed presence in Cortona and Fiesole through the teens\(^4\), and his activity in San Marco in the mid-to-late 1430s. Unable to account for Angelico's development before his first documented work of 1433, scholars found it difficult to trace his youthful career and define his historic role.

It was not until the 1955 quincentennial of the painter's death that a major breakthrough in understanding his early activity was achieved. Refuting long-held, erroneous beliefs concerning the artist, documents published by Cohn\(^5\) and Father Orlandi\(^6\) challenged the birthdate of 1387 or 1388 accepted

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Begun about sixty years after Angelico's death, the *Cronaca quadripartita*, the chronicle of San Domenico di Fiesole, was composed by Fra Giovanni Tolosani from the fragmentary notices of the convent's early years. The third section in which the entrance and ordination of friars, including Angelico, is recorded is especially incomplete. The artist's entrance into the Order is noted by a marginal entry in this register, yet there is substantial reason to question its accuracy as did Orlandi. As the archivist observed, there are many lacunae in the folios preceding and following the page on which Angelico's novitiate is recorded, the date for all but one entry on these pages being omitted. Of all the entries in the *Cronaca*, Angelico's seems to be the only one whose date is written in the margin. Though scholars since Orlandi generally have accepted the inaccuracy of the notation in the *Cronaca*, those before him believed it to be correct and based their notion of the artist's chronology on his putative 1407 novitiate.

\(^4\) Following the account fabricated by Marchese, *Memorie*, 236–55, critics assumed that Angelico spent his first years as a Dominican between Cortona and Foligno, the cities where the monks from Fiesole stayed during the Pisa Schism, not returning to their own monastery until late 1418. On the Pisa Schism, see S. Orlandi, *Necrologia di Santa Maria Novella*, II, Florence, 1955, 516–17, and *San'tAntonino*, I, Florence, 1959, 11. However, R. Morçay, *Sant'Antonin, fondateur du couvent de Saint-Marc, archevêque de Florence*, Paris, 1914, 37, N. 1, and A. Messini,


\(^7\) G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' piu eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* (ed. P. della Pergola, L. Grassi, and
secular status as late as 1418, when he received payment for a now-lost altarpiece. Additionally, Father Orlandi related other notices to such important commissions as those for San Domenico di Fiesole, the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Trinita, and San Domenico di Cortona. These archival discoveries have necessitated drastic revisions in the painter’s chronology and call for a reassessment of Angelico’s importance during the first few decades of the Quattrocento.

While the Orlandi-Cohn documents are invaluable to our knowledge of the artist’s life, their usefulness in illuminating his early activity is limited. Though they confirm that Angelico was in Florence during the late teens and the twenties, only one reference can be related to an extant painting datable before 1430. Considered problematic even in Baldinucci’s first edition of 1550, and as 1387 in the second edition of 1568. Orlandi, Rivista d’Arte, 1954, 161, N. 1, also cites the few critics who disagreed with the Arene.

8 Cohn, Memorie Domenicane, 1956, 218–19, published a notice recording partial and final payments in January and February of 1418 to *Guidoni pieri pictori* for an altarpiece originally commissioned from Ambrogio di Baldese. S. Orlandi, Beato Angelico, Florence, 1964, 8, N. 1, has identified the ‘lost’ work’s central panel as the Museo di San Marco *Madonna and Child with the Trinity* (in its pinnacle), but considerations of style militate against his argument.

9 Orlandi’s selection and interpretation of the documents pertaining to the commission of the Descent from the Cross for the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Trinita, now Museo di San Marco, and the works for San Domenico...
day\textsuperscript{10}, the identification of Angelico’s origins as an artist and his youthful works is still the subject of critical controversy. Despite the extensive literature devoted to the artist, scholars have failed to reach any consensus on these issues. Such is the difference of opinion that roughly two-thirds of the paintings Boskovits recently attributed to Angelico in the 1420s\textsuperscript{11} were rejected or omitted by Pope-Hennessy in his 1974 monograph\textsuperscript{12}. It thus seems clear that the question of the artist’s beginnings is far from resolved.

In the following pages, I will attempt to reconstruct Angelico which were executed in this decade include Saint Anthony of Padua, Sacro Convento, Assisi; Saint Michael Archangel and Saint Nicholas of Bari, formerly Johnson Collection, Bel Air; Saint Mark and Saint Matthew, Musée Condé, Chantilly; Madonna and Child with Six Angels, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit; several illuminations from Missale 558, Museo di San Marco, Florence; Virgin and Child between Twelve Angels, Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt; Madonna of Humility with Four Angels (repainted) and ciborium of Christ Showing his Wounds, The Hermitage, Leningrad; Madonna and Child with Two Angels, Alba Collection, Madrid; A Bishop Saint (with some question), formerly Moses Collection, New York; Madonna of Humility with Saints John the Baptist, Dominic, Francis, and Paul, Galleria Nazionale, Parma; God the Father, Louvre, Paris; Adoration of the Magi, Abegg Collection, Riggisberg; Madonna and Child with Saints Dominic, Catherine and Angels, Pinacoteca Vaticana, Rome; and Announcing Angel and Virgin Annunciante, formerly Tucker Collection, Vienna. As has been observed in the literature, evidence of shop participation may be detected in many of these works. However, I believe there is little doubt that Angelico was responsible for the design of these

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presumed lost or no longer recognizable as such, a corpus of early works remains which I will identify and date on the basis of stylistic evidence. All of the paintings I will discuss have been associated with Angelico at some point by critics, but there has been no agreement regarding their authorship or chronology. I will advance new arguments to attribute these works to Angelico and revise their datings. While it is not possible to date Angelico’s early paintings precisely because of insufficient documentation, I will propose a relative chronology which should provide a better understanding of the painter’s development and receptivity to innovation. This reconstruction also will evaluate the role Masaccio and Gentile da Fabriano played in the formation of Angelico’s early style. While their influence on the artist has been noted by several critics, the extent to which he was inspired by their works has been underestimated greatly. A reexamination of Angelico’s activity during this decade reveals that he was one of the few artists of his time to have understood the advances of his great contemporaries.

Although Angelico is recorded as dipintore in 1417, his first extant, documented work was not executed until more than a decade later. Published by Orlandi, an entry dated March 30, 1429 from the ledger of Debitori e Creditori from San Domenico di Fiesole records an outstanding debt of ten florins for an altarpiece belonging to the convent of San Pietro Martire. Orlandi identified the work in question as the San Pietro Martire Triptych (Fig. 1), now in the Museo di San Marco, Florence.

The San Pietro Martire Triptych is already quite distant from Angelico’s origins. It is notable for its near-repudiation of the late Gothic tradition that preceded it, for to a degree unparalleled by his contemporaries, the artist seems to have realized the significance of Masaccio’s and Gentile’s innovations. His response to Masaccio is clear in his treatment of space, the monumental proportions of the figures, and the heavy habits of the Dominican saints. The round, soft faces of the Madonna and Child and the tooled, gilt cloth of honor behind them seem to reflect his knowledge of the central panel of Gentile’s 1425 Quaratesi Altarpiece (Fig. 2), while the convincing gestures of the figures in the scenes from the life of Saint Peter Martyr between the pinnacles suggest his study of its predella. The San Pietro Martire Triptych is important for what it tells us of Angelico late in the twenties, but it does not betray his origins. From this, his first documented, extant work, his artistic roots can no longer be traced.

To come closer to Angelico’s beginnings as a painter, we must turn to a well-known work from earlier in the decade. Executed for the monastic church to which Angelico made religious profession and still in situ, it is the San Domenico di Fiesole Altarpiece (Fig. 3). The altarpiece is accepted unanimously as autograph, and most critics have dated it in the twenties. Its completion by the artist plures annos antequam the consecration of San Domenico in October of 1435 is noted in the convent’s Cronaca quadripartita. Although its appearance and original format as a triptych were paintings, and that he played a leading role in their execution.

14 See, however, R. Longhi, Fatti di Masolino e di Masaccio; Critica d’Arte, V, 1940, 173–77, and M. Salmi, Problemi dell’Angelico; Commentari, I, 1950, 75–81, and Il Beato Angelico, Spoleto, 1958, 71f., who have attempted to trace Angelico’s youthful oeuvre with some questionable results.

15 A. «Ghiudo di Pietro dipintore del popolo di santo michele bisdomini» – the layman Angelico – was presented to the religious confraternity of San Niccolò di Bart of Santa Maria del Carmine on October 31, 1417 by the miniaturist Battista di Biagio Sanguinii. See Cohn, Rivista d’Arte, 1955, 207–16, for the document.

16 Cohn, Memorie Domenicane, 1956, 218–20, publishes documents of January and February, 1418 for an altarpiece executed by Angelico for the Gherardini Chapel, Santo Stefano al Ponte, and a notice of 1423 for a painted cross for Santa Maria Nuova. However, both works generally are presumed to be lost.


21 See Orlandi, Sant’Antonino, II, 1960, 111f., for the entry from the Cronaca recording the consecration of the church and its three altars. Though the notices in the Cronaca pertaining to the friars’ ordination are inaccurate (see N. 3, supra), there is no apparent reason to doubt the validity of the 1435 entry. It is quite specific with regard to the authorship and dating of the church’s altarpieces.
compromised greatly by a modernization undertaken in 150122, it is still an important document of the artist’s youthful oeuvre. Its style suggests that it was painted some years before the San Pietro Martire Triptych.

There is much that is traditional about the San Domenico Altarpiece, distinguishing it as an earlier painting than the triptych. Its elegant character and bright, enamel-like palette, particularly its cangiante chartreuse and crimson, recall Lorenzo Monaco. As opposed to those of the San Pietro Martire Triptych, the proportions of the figures are slender, and drapery, particularly that of the kneeling angels and Saint Barnabas, falls in thin, curving folds to the floor. At the same time, though, there are indications that Angelico had already seen the most advanced works of the early twenties. The recession of the tesselated floor, foreshortening of the arms and lobed and pedestal of the throne, and kneeling angels in the foreground suggest his knowledge of the 1422 San Giovenale Triptych by Masaccio (Fig. 4), or to related but no-longer extant paintings by Masaccio from the early twenties.

Subtle reflections of Gentile’s Adoration of the Magi of 1423 (Fig. 5) also may be seen in the predella to the altarpiece, the Risen Christ with Angels, Saints and Beati23, now in the National Gallery, London (Fig 6). The sheer copiousness of the Adoration may well have inspired Angelico’s multitudes of rejoicing angels, prayerful saints, and beati, whose greatly varied gestures, dress and expressions have no real precedent in Florentine art. The softly modelled features and round cheeks of the angels and Saviour seem evidence of Angelico’s study of the Adoration’s predella. The San Domenico Altarpiece thus appears to have been done sometime after the completion of Gentile’s altarpiece in May of 1423. While it is hazardous to propose an exact date for its execution, the forms and space of the San Domenico Altarpiece, less developed than those of the San Pietro Martire Triptych of 1429, would seem to indicate that it was painted around the middle years of the decade.

The relationship between the San Domenico Altarpiece and the San Pietro Martire Triptych is suggestive of Angelico’s development from the early-to-late 1420s. Comparing them, we see that the artist’s ties to the late Gothic tradition diminish as he becomes increasingly receptive to the most advanced art of these years. The more confident handling of space, consistent illumination, and Masaccioesque proportions of the figures in the 1429 triptych indicate its maturity with respect to the San Domenico Altarpiece. These securely attributed works provide criteria for identifying and dating other paintings by the artist which are undocumented. While we cannot determine the precise date of Angelico’s early works, their relative chronology can be seen. His paintings from this decade reveal a significant response to innovation which reaches its climax in the San Pietro Martire Triptych.

Though Angelico’s true giovanile may be lost, an early work which can be ascribed to his hand tells us much about his origins. It is the Pisa Madonna of Humility (Fig. 7)24, the badly damaged central panel of a dismembered altarpiece25 whose original provenance is not known. The Madonna was virtually unnoticed until 1952, when Paccagnini brought it to the attention of scholars27. While noting the original attribution to Angelico recorded in the files of the Museo Nazionale di Pisa, he published it as an early Domenico Veneziano. Repudiating Paccagnini’s opinion and Longhi’s ascription of it to the Master of the Chiostro degli Aranci28, Volpe was the first to propose that the Madonna was executed by the young Angelico29. Accepted as autograph by Carli30 and Boskovits31 as well, the painting is not mentioned at all in Pope-Hennessy’s recent monograph.

22 The altarpiece was originally a triptych with a gold ground, but Lorenzo di Credi unified the three panels, painted in a landscape background, and replaced the back of the Virgin’s throne with a cloth of honor. Marchese, Memorie, 261, N. 1, transcribes the entry from the Cronaca quadripartita recording this transformation. On the original appearance of the work, see Baldini, Scritti, 236-46.

23 Risen Christ with Angels, Saints, and Beati, tempera on panel, 32 × 245 cm. National Gallery, London.

24 Madonna of Humility, tempera on panel, 175 × 71.6 cm. Museo Nazionale, Pisa.

25 R. Longhi, «Il Maestro di Pratovecchio», Paragone, XXXV, 1952, 31, N. 3, has proposed that the wings to the Madonna are to be identified with Saints Barbara and Lucy, and Saints John the Evangelist and Stephen, Musée Calvet, Avignon. However, their dimensions of 148 × 51 cm., framing elements, dissimilar halo punchwork, inferior quality, and style vitiate his argument.

26 A label affixed to the back of the panel indicates that Giovanni degli Alessandri donated the Madonna to the parochial church of Cedri, near Pisa, in 1791. M. Boskovits, «Appunti sull’Angelico», Paragone, XXVII, 1976, 48, N. 9, has suggested that the Madonna may have been executed for the Alessandri family chapel in San Pier Maggiore.


30 E. Carli, Il Museo di Pisa, Pisa, 1974, 96f., gives the panel to Angelico with some question.


The *Madonna* deserves to be better known, for it is one of the earliest extant paintings of Angelico.

That the *Madonna of Humility* is a youthful work by the artist is suggested by a comparison with the central panel of the *San Domenico di Fiesole Altarpiece*. The Pisa Madonna's slender proportions and her drapery, particularly the ungirt, rose gown with its soft folds, are clearly related to those of the Fiesole Virgin. Her high brow, almond-shaped eyes, delicately drawn nose and mouth, and small ears covered with a translucent veil seem nearly identical to the features of the Fiesole Virgin. The modelling of the Infant's anatomy and his rounded facial features, distended cheeks, and foreshortened, cruciform halo are similar to those of the San Domenico Christ Child as well, revealing their common authorship.

The Pisa *Madonna of Humility*, however, seems a somewhat earlier work than the *San Domenico Altarpiece*. Its iconography, the crimson and gold brocade of its floor, and the incised mandorla around the seated Virgin are surely less advanced features than those found in the *Fiesole Altarpiece*. The contours of the figures are more linear than in the altarpiece, and the loop of the Madonna's mantle above her knee is a Gothic residue soon to be eliminated. It therefore seems likely that the Pisa *Madonna of Humility* precedes the *San Domenico Altarpiece*, perhaps by a year or two.

Proposed here as Angelico's first extant, large-scale painting, the *Madonna of Humility* discloses much of his early training. There has been considerable speculation regarding the identity of Angelico's teacher 32, but the style of the *Madonna

32 There is no critical consensus regarding Angelico's training. Vasari and contemporary sources are silent on the matter. The first critic to consider the problem

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Infants of the two panels, since Angelico’s is nude, but their body proportions and facial features are generically related.

As important as the Pisa Madonna is for what it may reveal of Angelico’s training, it is also critical for another reason. Its style is considerably less linear than that of his probable teacher, and indicates Angelico’s receptivity to other artistic currents of the time. The elegant character of the panel, the subdued rhythms of the Virgin’s mantle, and the soft modelling of the Child’s anatomy seem to indicate that the painter had seen such early works by Masolino as the 1423 Bremen Madonna of Humility (Fig. 9) or other paintings by him which are no longer preserved. Though critics have tended to disparage the significance of Masolino’s contributions to early Quattrocento painting, a number of paintings by Giovanni dal Ponte, Bicci di Lorenzo, and others35 from the twenties reveal his influence was Baldinucci, Notizie, 15, who identified Angelico’s master as Gherardo Starnina, an opinion shared by J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle, A History of Painting in Italy, IV, New York, 1911, 66; S. d’Agincourt, Histoire de l’art par les monuments, II, Paris, 1823, 123; and I. B. Supino, Beato Angelico, Florence, 1919, 8. Marchese, Memorie, 230; and originally, Pope-Hennessy, Fra Angelico, 1952, 5, suggested that Angelico was taught by Masolino. A. Pichon, Fra Angelico, Paris, 1922, 39, proposed that the artist was taught by Gentile da Fabriano. Most recently, Pope-Hennessy, Fra Angelico, 1974, 5, has conjectured that Angelico was a student of Ambrogio di Baldese and the miniaturist Battista di Biagio Sanguigni. However, the most widely accepted opinion, shared by R. L. Douglas, Fra Angelico, London, 1902, 14; R. Van Marle, The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting, XI, 1928, 35; P. Muratoff, Fra Angelico, 10; G. Bazin, Fra Angelico, Paris, 1949, 22; M. Salmi, Il Beato Angelico, 4–8; and many others is that he was taught by Lorenzo Monaco.


34 The 1417 document cited in N. 15, supra, refers to Angelico as a dipintore, and the payment of early 1418 cited in N. 18, supra, «pro residuo solutionis tabule altaris» is made to Angelico directly. This suggests that he was already an independent master by 1418, and received his instruction as a painter prior to this time. According to S. La Sorsa, L’Arte dei Medici, speciali, e merciai, Molfera, 1907, unpaginated, the minimum age for becoming apprenticed to a master was fourteen and the duration of instruction was at least three years. If we accept a birthdate for Angelico in the late 1390s and the general applicability of these guidelines, we can deduce that he probably was apprenticed in the early-to-mid teens to have received an independent commission by 1417.

35 Giovanni dal Ponte’s Pisa and Certosa del Galluzzo Madonnas, Bicci di Lorenzo’s Empoli and Ponte a Greve Madonnas, Francesco d’Antonio’s Fighine fres-


tends to support the traditional claim that the painter was taught by Lorenzo Monaco. This is revealed by a comparison of the Pisa panel to the Washington Madonna of Humility (Fig. 8) attributed to Lorenzo and dated 141333, around the time when Angelico was likely to have been apprenticed34. Even though the works may be about a decade apart, a telling relationship still exists between them. The Madonnas each have slightly elongated proportions, narrow wrists, and curving fingers. Their facial features are quite similar, for they have small mouths and chins, slender noses, and almond-shaped eyes. Falling in a graceful curve over her lowered knee, its lining exposed, the mantle of the Pisa Virgin and long lines of her ungirt, patterned gown are in the tradition of this and other Madonnas of Humility by Don Lorenzo. It is difficult to compare the
and suggest that he was well regarded at the time the Pisa Madonna seems to have been executed. It is also possible to detect Angelico's study of Gentile da Fabriano, an artist who was to be of continuing importance in the painter's formation during the 1420s. Angelico's awareness of such works as the Adoration of the Magi is indicated not only by the modelling of the facial features of Virgin and Child, but perhaps more compellingly, by the foreshortened hands, lowered head, and torso of the Infant which call to mind those of Gentile's young Saviour. The face of the Lord and foreshortening of His hands in the roundel of the pinnacle could well have been inspired by those of Christ in the central cusp of the Adoration.

Though Angelico's probable origins in the art of Lorenzo Monaco are thus evident in the Pisa Madonna of Humility and the San Domenico di Fiesole Altarpiece, they become increasingly less apparent in his paintings from the second half of the decade. His initial interest in the conservative Masolino wanes, and in a forthright way, his works reveal a deeper understanding of Masaccio and Gentile. While the emulation of these great masters seems to have been an important phenomenon of the 1420s, few of Angelico's contemporaries understood their innovations. Such lesser artists as Francesco d'Antonio, Andrea di Giusto, and Giovanni dal Ponte adopted recognizable figures or motifs from their works, but the style of these secondary masters shows, at best, a superficial comprehension of their principles. That this was not true of Angelico will be apparent. An examination of his works datable in the second half of the decade reveals the extent to which he understood the innovations of Masaccio and Gentile and suggests the larger historical significance of his early development.

First, let us consider the sagomato Crucifix (Fig. 10), now in the Museo di San Marco, Florence. Its original provenance is unknown, and its first recorded attribution is to the School of Lorenzo Monaco. It was not until about twenty years ago that the cross was associated with Angelico. In an entry in the catalogue for the Mostra di opere d'arte restaurate, Baldini published it as an early work by the artist. Though dating the painting between 1422 and 1425, he concluded that it could not be identified as the crucifix Angelico executed in 1423 for Santa Maria Nuova and generally presumed lost. That the work is by Angelico, though some- 

what later than Baldini placed it, is indicated by its style. The monumentality of the Saviour, robustness prior to 1423 make it difficult to establish the extent of the painter's importance. 36 See Longhi, Critica d'Arte, 1940, 145–77, and C. Shell, Giovanni dal Ponte and the Lesser Contemporaries of Masaccio (Dissertation, Harvard University, 1958), who have discussed the significance of Masaccio's and Gentile's influence in the 1420s at length. 37 C. Shell, «Francesco d'Antonio and Masaccio», Art Bulletin, XLVII, 1965, 465–69, and «Two Triptychs» Giovanni dal Ponte, Art Bulletin, LIV, 1972, 41–6. 38 Crucifix, tempera on panel, 164 × 100 cm. Museo di San Marco, Florence. 39 The 1890 inventory of the Uffizi, its former location, lists it as by the School of Lorenzo Monaco. U. Baldini, Mostra di opere d'arte restaurate, decima esposizione, Florence, 1959, 16. 41 See Cohn, Memorie Domenicane, 220, for the docu-
of his anatomy, and consistent illumination of his body and *perizoma* relate it to the *San Pietro Martire Triptych*, indicating that it probably was painted in the second half of the decade.

The painted, cut-out crucifix evolves from a highly conventionalized type whose origins can be traced to the Dugento. Though its popularity had died out by the late Quattrocento, Lorenzo Monaco and his circle had executed *sagomati* earlier in the century, all of which can be characterized as highly conventional. What is unusual about the Florence *Crucifix*, however, is its departure from the conventions of its type. In contrast to Lorenzo Monaco’s Monte San Savino *Crucifix* (Fig. 11), for example, in which the slender body of Christ hangs limply from the cross, this Christ is muscular and his body is still tense. The legs are drawn up more closely to his hips, the veins of his arms bulge visibly, and the fingers curl towards his foreshortened palms. As opposed to the schematically-lit, older *Crucifix*, the anatomy of Angelico’s Christ is illuminated with great consistency. The Florence *Crucifix* seems to be a decisively new interpretation of a traditional type, and it is important that such a departure from the past be accounted for.

A comparison of Angelico’s Christ to the Saviour in Masaccio’s *Trinity* from Santa Maria Novella (Fig. 12) suggests the painter’s source. The *Trinity* was the most revolutionary representation of the crucified Christ of its time, not only for its placement of the Trinity within a mathematically-constructed, ideal space, but for its description of the Lord Himself. The intense illumination of the *corpus domini*, especially of the thoracic and abdominal region of the Saviour, is noticeably different from the earlier type.

Concerning the Santa Maria Nuova cross. Since the provenance of the *Crucifix* prior to 1490 is unknown, the criteria of attribution and dating are the only means of determining if this is the cross of 1423.

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42 See E. Sandberg-Vávala, *La Croce dipinta italiana*, Verona, 1929, a monographic study of this type.

43 Sandberg-Vávala, *La Croce dipinta*, 73, attributes the dying-out of this type in the fifteenth century to the disappearance of the iconostasis from churches and the lack of interest in such *retardataire* types.

44 Among the *sagomati* given to Don Lorenzo in B. Benenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Florentine School*, I, London, 1953, 117–21, are one in Budapest; two in the Accademia, Florence; one in the Museo Horne, Florence; one with Saints John the Evangelist and the Virgin in San Giovanni dei Cavalieri, Florence; and one each in San Giuseppe, Florence; Careggi; and Monte San Savino.
dominal cavities, the muscular arms and calves, the foreshortening of Christ's lowered head and open palms have no precedent in earlier sagomati, and seem to reveal Angelico's study of the fresco. The sculptural quality of the modelling of the Crucifix, so different from that of Lorenzo's Saviour, seems to have been inspired by the frescoed Christ as well. The profoundly-felt influence of Masaccio surely precludes identification of the Crucifix as the 1423 Santa Maria Nuova Cross, and suggests that it was painted after the Trinity, which generally is dated between 1425 and 1428.

Another work revealing Masaccio's importance to Angelico in the second half of the decade is a little known Madonna and Child (Fig. 13), formerly in a private collection in Florence. In 1928, Longhi ascribed the panel to the young Angelico, but the Madonna seems to have attracted little attention on

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45 The date the Trinity was executed has been the subject of much critical conjecture. It has been dated as early as late 1425 by E. Borsook, The Mural Painters of Tuscany, London, 1960, 143, and as late as 1428 by M. Salmi, Masaccio, Paris, 1948, 155, and F. Hartt, History of Italian Renaissance Art, New York, 1969, 168.

46 Madonna and Child, tempera on panel. According to a notation on the back of a photograph in the Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence the panel measures 120 × 75 cm., but R. Fremantle, «Masaccio e l'Angelico, » Antichità viva, IX, 1970, 48, N. 1, citing U. Procacci, gives them as 150 × 90 cm. Reputed to have been in the Oertel Collection, Florence; present whereabouts unknown.

the part of scholars until recently. While Berti\(^48\) and Baldini\(^49\) concurred with Longhi's attribution, Fremantle found the painting so deeply Masacciesque that he wishfully assigned it to Masaccio imitating the early style of Angelico\(^50\). Pope-Hennessy denied it to Angelico altogether, giving it with some question to Andrea di Giusto\(^51\).

Attribution of the Florence Madonna to Angelico is supported by comparing it to the central panel of the San Pietro Martire Triptych. The massive proportions of Virgin and Child, the firm modelling of their faces, hands, and the Infant's anatomy, and the description of the Madonna's heavy mantle with its deep, soft folds are strikingly similar in both works. The Madonna's heavy-lidded eyes, fleshy nose and mouth, and the full cheeks of the Infant are characteristic of his early style, and leave little doubt about the panel's authorship and dating. Examination of the Florence Madonna confirms how greatly Angelico was influenced by Masaccio, for the work

\(^{48}\) Berti, Arte Acropoli, 1963, 11.  
\(^{49}\) Baldini, L'Opera completa, 87.  
\(^{50}\) Fremantle, Antichità viva, 1970, 39–49.  
\(^{51}\) Pope-Hennessy, Fra Angelico, 1974, 226.
attempts to unite figures and a subject from the artist’s great contemporary with more traditional, conservative elements.

The source for the style and subject of the work seems to be Masaccio’s London *Madonna and Child* (Fig. 14), the central panel of the 1426 *Pisa Polyptych*. The relationship between Mother and Son and their monumentality, the modelling of the chubby Infant’s anatomy, the angle of the Virgin’s head and her distant gaze, and the foreshortening of the Child’s legs and halo surely indicate that Angelico had sought to emulate the *Madonna and Child* by Masaccio. The Eucharistic iconography of the Saviour reaching for the grapes of his Passion appears here as well, suggesting the likelihood of Angelico’s reference to the London *Madonna*.

Despite Angelico’s ambitious study of Masaccio’s *Madonna*, the artist seems reluctant to adopt all of its innovative features. Instead of an architectural throne, his Virgin is seated on a faldstool. The cloth of honor seems a return to tradition exemplified by such works as Francesco d’Antonio’s 1415 Cambridge *Triptych* and Lorenzo Monaco’s Palazzo Davanzati *Triptych* of 1410. The Virgin’s drapery is not as full as that of the London *Madonna*, and the curve of the mantle over her arm is a residue of his earlier years. Finally, the naturalistic gesture of Masaccio’s Child stuffing the Eucharistic grapes into his mouth receives a more restrained interpretation by Angelico, whose Infant, instead, merely reaches for them.

A comparison of the *Madonna* to the central panel of Francesco d’Antonio’s Avignon *Triptych* (Fig. 15) demonstrates the superiority of Angelico’s
understanding of Masaccio with respect to that of his contemporaries. Though apparently intended to emulate the London Madonna, the central panel of Francesco’s altarpiece does so only superficially, for it fails to convey the monumentality of its model or describe space and light convincingly. By contrast, Angelico’s Madonna reveals his comprehension of Masaccio’s principles and is truly an advanced work for its time. Its relationship to the Avignon Triptych suggests Angelico’s importance in the late twenties as an interpreter of Masaccio.

While the Florence Crucifix and Madonna and Child are influenced greatly by Masaccio, other large-scale paintings from the second half of the decade reveal Angelico’s interest in the less austere art of Gentile da Fabriano. Two wings from a dismembered altarpiece are a case in point. Saints Catherine and John the Baptist (Fig. 16) and Nicholas of Bari and Agnes (Fig. 17)\(^2\), in a private collection in New York, were published by Pope-Hennessy as autograph panels\(^3\). Noting the influence of Arcangelo di Cola\(^4\) or Gentile on the figures, he dated them around 1423. His opinion on their authorship

\(^2\) Saints Catherine of Alexandria and John the Baptist and Nicholas of Bari and Agnes, tempera on panel, 55.9 \(\times\) 31.8 cm.; 54 \(\times\) 31.8 cm. New York, Private Collection.

\(^3\) Pope-Hennessy, Fra Angelico, 1974, 190.

\(^4\) While some critics have ascribed a great deal of importance to Arcangelo di Cola da Camerino’s role in the development of early Quattrocento painting in Florence, too many of his paintings are lost to evaluate this claim objectively. Those that do remain from his Florentine and later activity, however, seem to reveal

16. Fra Angelico, Saints Catharine and John the Baptist. Private Collection
as well as their dating is shared by Boskovits and Baldini.\(^{55}\) That the panels are by Angelico is confirmed by similarities in figure and facial types, drapery, and illumination to the Florence Madonna and the *San Pietro Martire Triptych*. Qualitatively, the beautiful *Saints* seem equal to the artist’s finest works. However, the style of the wings reveals that they are surely from a later moment than these critics have supposed.

As a comparison indicates, the *Saints* appear to have been influenced greatly by the wings of Gentile’s *Quaratesi Altarpiece* of 1425, the Uffizi *Saints Nicholas of Bari and Mary Magdalene* and *Saints John the Baptist and Michael* (Fig. 18). The representation of Angelico’s *Saints* has a highly elegant character associated with the Marchigian’s works, and their drapery and facial types similarly seem inspired by his *Saints*. The elaborate description of the Baptist’s mantle, especially the manner in which it falls back from his foreshortened blessing hand, its lining exposed, and that of Saint Agnes, whose cloak is gathered in a graceful loop around her slender wrists, seem clear responses to the Quaratesi Baptist and Magdalene. Angelico’s study of Gentile’s *Saints* also is reflected in the small, softly modelled features and heavy-lidded eyes of the figures, especially Saints Agnes and Nicholas, as well as the foreshortening of their hands, Catherine’s wheel, and Nicholas’ mitre.

the influence which more advanced contemporary painting exerted on him.


17. Fra Angelico, *Saints Nicholas of Bari and Agnes*. Private Collection
Though the New York Saints are influenced greatly by those of the Quaratesi Altarpiece, we would be in error to overemphasize their dependence. Angelico’s representation is a good deal more austere than that of Gentile. He eschews the rich textures and brocades of the garments worn by the Quaratesi saints in favor of heavy, unpatterned drapery. The tesselated floor is replaced by a marble one. The expressions of Angelico’s saints seem more intensely spiritual than do those of Gentile’s rather worldly figures. Angelico’s Saints are surely a response to Gentile, but they seem much less imitative than the Florence Madonna and Child. The Quaratesi Altarpiece provides a terminus post quem of 1425 for their execution.

Executed for San Domenico di Fiesole where it was praised by Vasari, the Madrid Annunciation (Fig. 19) also seems to have been painted around this time. Its attribution and dating are much contested. While Berenson and Berti ascribe it to Angelico, Schottmüller, Van Marle, and Pope-Hennessy give it to his assistants, the last-named dating it around 1445. However, the late dating and ascription to the artist’s shop proposed by Pope-Hennessy are untenable. Like the San Domenico di Fiesole Altarpiece, the Annunciation is recorded in the Cronaca quadripartita to have been painted by Angelico many years before the consecration of San Domenico in October, 1435. Rather than being an inferior reduction of the Cortona Annunciation as Pope-Hennessy believes, the altarpiece is an excellent example of the artist’s early style.

56 Vasari, Le Vite, II, 396, saw it on the altar to the right of the choir.
57 Annunciation, tempera on panel, 194 × 194 cm. Prado, Madrid.
58 Berenson, Italian Pictures, 14.
60 Schottmüller, Fra Angelico, 230.
61 Van Marle, Italian Schools of Painting, XI, 78–81.
63 The Cortona Annunciation surely follows the Prado Annunciation, as considerations of style suggest. See Cole (Ahl), Fra Angelico, 126–30.
The Annunciation seems to be an autograph work from the late twenties. The illumination of the panel as well as the monumental proportions, heavy drapery, and softly modelled faces of the Virgin and Archangel are analogous to those of Angelico's other paintings from the second half of the decade. Its bright colors, the pattern of the tooled cloth of honor, the Kufic lettering on the borders of the Madonna’s and Gabriel’s gowns, the pastiglia ornament around the predella, and the lettering of the frame are quite similar to those of the San Pietro Martire Triptych, and seem to be found only in his paintings from this time. The imperfections of the altarpiece – its spindly architecture, the inaccurate perspective of the Virgin's bedchamber, and the literalness with which the Holy Ghost descends from the hands of the Lord – suggests its execution by an ambitious but still fairly unsophisticated artist. Perhaps even more convincing for dating the Annunciation are the influences reflected in it.

That Angelico was much impressed by the works of his great contemporaries, particularly Gentile, is apparent in the Annunciation. The artist's attempt at representing the deep space of the loggia and camera virginis, while not entirely successful, is a significant break from the shallow space and gilt backgrounds of earlier treatments of this theme. It may reveal his study of the Brancacci Chapel by Masolino and Masaccio, as a comparison of the panel with The Raising of Tabitha (Fig. 20) suggests, or of the lost Annunciation in San Niccolò olt’Arno by Masaccio mentioned by Vasari. The scale of the Virgin and Archangel to the architecture is more rational than in previous Annunciations, and may have been
inspired by the Carmine frescoes as well.

Other features of the altarpiece, such as the softly modelled faces of the figures, the lush and varied vegetation of the landscape, the tooling of the cloth of honor and borders of drapery, and most important, the luminary effects, are responses to Gentile’s Adoration of the Magi. Significantly, the Annunciation is one of the first works after the Adoration to use cast shadows. They appear below the bench and against the wall of the Virgin’s bedchamber, beneath the vaults of the loggia, and below the roof of the Visitation (Fig. 21) in the predella. Breaking from the earlier landscape tradition, the gently rounded mountains and vegetation of the Visitation suggest Angelico’s study of the Flight into Egypt predella panel of the Adoration. Gentile’s innovation of atmospheric perspective is put to use in the main panel of the altarpiece as well as in three of the predella panels, where the horizon is an atmospherically graduated blue. Finally, the more intimate, anecdotal character of the predella and the facial features, proportions, and drapery of the figures may be ascribed to Gentile’s influence as well.

The attribution and dating of the Annunciation recorded in the Cronaca quadripartita are supported by the style of the work itself. Its relationship to the San Pietro Martire Triptych and the influences it reflects suggest its execution in the second half of the decade. Rather than being a reduction of the Cortona Annunciation as Pope-Hennessy proposed, it is its ambitious forerunner. Some of its innovative features, such as its classicizing loggia and foreshortened columns, the perspective of the camera virgins, and the didactic inclusion of Adam and Eve, were adopted in various works, including Fra Filippo Lippi’s San Lorenzo Annunciation, Bicci di Lorenzo’s Baltimore Annunciation, Paolo Schiavo’s Monticelli Altarpiece, and many others. The influence the altarpiece exerted on the artist’s contemporaries is an indication of Angelico’s growing importance in Florentine painting and anticipates the leading role he was to play in the next decade.

Our reconstruction of Angelico’s chronology in the 1420s may be concluded with the altarpiece that introduced this discussion. It is the San Pietro Martire Triptych, his earliest, extant documented

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64 See Vasari, Le Vite, II, 290.
65 There seem to be several references to Gentile’s Adoration of the Magi in Angelico’s predella. The weary midwife of the former’s nocturnal Adoration of the Child may be paraphrased in Saint Anne, head on hand, in the Birth of the Virgin. The conversing women in the Flight into Egypt are recalled in the Magi of the Adoration of the Magi predella panel, and the urban setting of the Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple reappears in Angelico’s treatment of this theme.
66 A. Parronchi, *Il dossale di San Cosimo e Damiano,* Arte antica e moderna, XXXIII, 1966, 55, also has observed that the Marriage of the Virgin predella panel seems to have been the source for Andrea di Giusto’s fresco of that subject in the Cappella dell’Assunta, Duomo, Prato.
67 See Cole (Ahl), Fra Angelico, and my forthcoming article on Angelico in the 1430s.
work. Until Father Orlandi published the notice establishing its authorship and approximate date of execution\textsuperscript{68}, attribution of the triptych was contested by several critics, Berenson\textsuperscript{69} and Muratoff\textsuperscript{70} among them. Yet the notice and stylistic evidence leave no doubt about its authorship. Seen in the context of Angelico’s development in this decade, it is the logical culmination of his activity since the \textit{San Domenico di Fiesole Altarpiece}.

The \textit{San Pietro Martire Triptych} serves to summarize the artist’s relationship to Masaccio and Gentile. His study of Masaccio is apparent in the space of the work, for the saints, no longer rigidly aligned as in the \textit{San Domenico Altarpiece}, stand in a broad if timid semi-circle around the Virgin. The panel is consistently illuminated from the left, and the habits of the Dominican saints are convincingly heavy and volumetric. Angelico’s characterization of the homely saints—the round-faced Saint Thomas, the more ascetic Saint Dominic—seems another response to Masaccio. The monumental proportions of all the figures and the firmly modelled, round features of Madonna and Child reveal the influence of both these masters.

The small-scale components of the triptych also suggest Gentile’s effect on Angelico. The floral-patterned and tooled cloth of honor and composition of the central panel indicate he had studied the \textit{Quaratesi Altarpiece}. The landscape, figure types, and naturalistic reactions of the figures in the scenes from the life of Saint Peter Martyr between the pinnacles seem to reflect Angelico’s response to the predellas from the \textit{Adoration of the Magi} and \textit{Quaratesi Altarpiece}, as do the graceful postures of the Announcing Angel and Virgin Annunciante in the roundels. The predella to the triptych\textsuperscript{71}, the Courtauld Institute \textit{Dead Christ with Six Saints} (Fig. 22)\textsuperscript{72}, reveals the painter’s development since the London \textit{Risen Christ with Angels, Saints and Beati} from the \textit{San Domenico di Fiesole Altarpiece}. The bodies of the female saints are fuller, their drapery appears heavier, and their faces are more firmly modelled.

Documented in 1429, the \textit{San Pietro Martire Triptych} reveals the great advances Angelico had made since executing the Pisa \textit{Madonna of Humility}

\textsuperscript{68} The March 30, 1429 date on the entry from the San Domenico ledger which was published by Orlandi, \textit{Rivista d’Arte}, 1954, 170, states that ten florins are still due on the altarpiece. Early 1429 therefore is only a \textit{terminus ad quem} for its execution.

\textsuperscript{69} Berenson, \textit{Italian Pictures}, 12.

\textsuperscript{70} Muratoff, \textit{Fra Angelico}, 79.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Dead Christ with Six Saints}, ca. 1429, tempera on panel, 155 × 20.3 cm. Gambier-Parry Collection, Courtauld Institute Galleries, University of London, London.

\textsuperscript{72} U. Baldini, \textit{L’Opera completa}, 86, originally identified the predella as belonging to the altarpiece.
and the San Domenico Altarpiece, in which there are still reminiscences of his origins. By the time he executed the triptych, the painter’s assimilation of Gentile and Masaccio was all but complete. Only the Baptist can be said to reveal the artist’s roots in Lorenzo Monaco. The receptivity and understanding of innovation epitomized by the San Pietro Martire Triptych will be seen throughout his career.

Except for Masolino, whose emulation of his great collaborator Masaccio was notably short-lived73, Angelico seems to have been unrivalled in his appreciation of the progressive art of the twenties. His paintings from this decade are important not only because they represent his earliest recognizable oeuvre, but because they document the phenomenon of Masaccio’s and Gentile’s influence in a new and enlightening way. Giving us a clearer sense of Angelico’s origins than we have had in the past, they are a vital prelude to understanding his better known works of the 1430s and the 1440s.

73 The often-made comparison between Masolino’s Santo Stefano, Empoli Madonna of ca. 1424 and his San Fortunato, Todi Madonna of 1432 serves to illustrate the artist’s regression to a linear style after his collaboration with Masaccio had ceased.

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