

Good essay on clarify the biblical scheme chosen by michelangelo for the sistine ...

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Michelangelo began in 1508 the Sistine Chapel and in a period of 4 years he painted the ancestors of Christ, the Old Testament Prophets and the pagan Sibyls. He included the Old Testament heroes and leaders defeating enemies of Faith. In 1530 he painted the Last Judgment on the altar wall. The complete work of the Sistine Chapel of Michelangelo shows a complete world history from the very beginning of Creation, the Old Testament including the Prophets and Moses, the pagan world all the way to the Life of Christ and Peter, including the history of the Church portraying the great popes on the walls. It even portrays the end of time in the Last Judgment (McConomy, 1). Michelangelo's painting of Adam reflected the fifteenth-century Italian humanism view of divine beauty in nature and in the human body. This purely aesthetic sense seen in the Sistine Chapel is the principal subject of Michelangelo's frescoes (6). His work also reflects the understanding of creation in the High Renaissance, being primarily an intellectual act, and the physical reduced to the most minimal contact of two fingers (7). It is also good to notice that God creates Adam with his right hand, and the left one is safeguarding Eve. This reflects the right being the good, and the left being the bad which is again reflected in the Last Judgment imagery of the altar wall (9). The Renaissance patriarchy images are also seen during Creation all the way to the Temptation and Fall (10).

The central axis of the ceiling represents the beginning of Genesis: the stories of creation of the world and humanity, the fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and of Noah and his family (Baldwin, 14).

The Genesis begins at the altar wall (separation of light from darkness) and it ends with the Drunkenness of Noah (14). The story of the Genesis

foreshadows the New Testament. Adam and Eve represent Christ and Mary (14). The prophets and sibyls are accompanied by ancestors of Christ. These ancestors are associated with popes as these are the successors of Christ, which begun in the Old Testament (15).

The triumph of the weak over the strong seen in the Old Testament, another effort to save the Jewish people from destruction, is represented with the stories of Judith and Holofernes and of David and Goliath. These stories also prefigure the death of John the Baptist who is as well another type of Christ (16).

The decoration of the ceiling goes chronologically from the altar wall to the entrance wall, representing the Old Testament and the New Testament.

However, the organization of the stories is done in such a way that it can be seen in that order walking from the entrance of the chapel to the altar (17).

From the altar to entrance however, it can be seen humanity separated from God through immoral actions. When it is read in the opposite direction that is from the entrance to the altar the separation from the divine recovers the union with God through Christ (26).

As a conclusion, the Sistine Chapel beautifully reflects the view of God and humanity from a Renaissance perspective, together with the intellectual act of creation, and it also expresses and describes the whole history of Salvation from the beginning of Creation to the End of the World. This can be seen from the entrance walking towards the altar.

Cited Work

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