

The Power of Portraiture: Titian's Portrayal of Pope Paul III as Reformer

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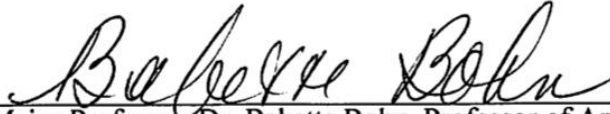
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Introduction

Pope Paul III is known as the greatest and most controversial pope of the Renaissance.¹ The fifteen years of Paul's papacy from 1534-1549 came at the head of many religious and political tensions. In 1517, Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* were published and opened up criticisms of the Catholic Church.² Muslim forces were threatening the Eastern and Southern borders of the Papal States, and tensions were high between Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and King Francis I of France.³ Paul's policies were ambiguous and hesitant; he knew that the Church needed significant reform to survive and prosper, but he also knew that the reform might negate the arrangements he made for his family to become a powerful and lasting dynasty.

This thesis examines the role of Titian's three portraits of Pope Paul III, *Portrait of Pope Paul III Without a Cap* (fig. 1, 1543, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples), *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro* (fig. 2, 1545-46, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples), and *Portrait of Pope Paul III with his Grandsons* (fig. 3, 1545-46, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples), in the creation of Paul III's persona as a reformer during his papacy. Paul navigated his papacy with the knowledge that his visual representations would inform state dignitaries and ecclesiastic members of his personhood. He carefully crafted

¹ Andrea Donati, "Tiziano e il Ritratto di Paolo III," *Tiziano e Paolo III: il Pittore e il Suo Modello*, (Roma: A. e V. Budai, 2012), 118.

² Bryan Cussen, *Pope Paul and the Cultural Politics of Reform: 1534-1549*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 19.

³ Helge Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics in Renaissance Italy* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2007), 47.

his persona through the three official portraits by Titian, knowing they would be copied and would represent him to those who would never meet him in person.

Scholarship on Titian's paintings of Pope Paul III provides many interpretations of these images. Luba Freedman's *Titian's Portraits Through Aretino's Lens*, Bruce Cole's *Titian and Venetian Painting*, and Andrea Donati's "Tiziano e il Ritratto di Paolo III" examine the historical context of Paul's relationship with Titian as his portraitist. Through visual analysis and iconographic evidence, they discuss different aspects of Paul's personhood underlined by Titian. Helge Gamrath's *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics in Renaissance Italy* is a concise history of Paul's impact on the Farnese family and its growth through his policies and political moves. While all of these sources discuss Titian's portraits and Paul's papacy at length, they do not frame all three paintings of Paul through the lens of his role as a religious reformer. In this thesis, I argue that Paul desired to be represented and remembered as a prominent reformer of the Church and sought to establish a view of himself as a multifaceted and intelligent man who used his public image and power to promote both the Church and his family dynasty at the same time.

The first chapter will explore the two single figure portraits, *Portrait of Pope Paul III Without a Cap* and *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro*. It begins with a discussion of Alessandro Farnese the Elder's education and connections that led to his papacy. The chapter analyzes how Titian portrayed Pope Paul III as a reformer. It compares Titian's portraits of Pope Paul III and how they fit into the memory of Paul as a church reformer. The second chapter focuses on the group portrait, *Portrait of Pope Paul III with his Grandsons*, and how this image portrays Paul in a different light. I discuss Paul's political moves to ensure that the Farnese dynasty would continue to prosper and grow in wealth and power. Through controlling the

creation of his image, Paul's roles as church reformer and family patriarch are remembered and discussed to this day.

Chapter I: Titian's Individual Portraits of Pope Paul III: A Diplomatic Representation of a Reformer

Alessandro Farnese the Elder's Early Life and Career

Alessandro Farnese the Elder was born in Camino in 1468 to Pierluigi Farnese and Giovanna Caetani. Alessandro's intelligence and desire for power made him a crucial figure in the family, beginning the great Farnese dynasty that became one of the most influential families in Roman art patronage and religious reform. He turned away from the family traditions of military and agricultural careers and instead pursued an ecclesiastic career.⁴ He chose this path not because of religious devotion, for he was not ordained a priest, but for wealth and power.⁵ He was the first member of the Farnese family to receive a humanist education. As a young man, Alessandro attended Pomponio Leto's *Accademia Romana*, which emphasized classical learning and ancient Roman history.⁶ In 1487, Alessandro enrolled in the University of Pisa. There, he met and befriended fellow student Giovanni de' Medici, son of Lorenzo the Magnificent.⁷ This friendship would prove beneficial for Alessandro because Giovanni de' Medici would go on to be Pope Leo X.⁸ Alessandro moved to Rome in 1489 with a letter of recommendation from Lorenzo the Magnificent and gained a position within the curia in 1490.

⁴ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp*, 1.

⁵ Donati, "Tiziano," 118.

⁶ Luba Freedman, *Titian's Portraits Through Aretino's Lens* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 92.

⁷ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp*, 24.

⁸ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp*, 24.

While in Rome, Alessandro befriended the vice-chancellor, Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia. They were acquainted because Alessandro's sister Giulia la Bella married Borgia's relative in 1489.⁹ It was rumored that Giulia became Borgia's mistress.¹⁰ Cardinal Borgia was elected to the papacy as Pope Alexander VI in 1492.¹¹ This appointment benefited Alessandro's career, and because of his close connection to the new pope, that same year, he was appointed treasurer of the Roman curia. In 1503, Pope Alexander VI died, and Giuliano della Rovere was elected as Pope Julius II. Cardinal Farnese became close with the newly appointed pontiff and used their relationship to exchange his cardinal's church of Santi Cosma e Damiano for the larger and wealthier Sant'Eustachio.¹² In 1511, Pope Julius II selected Cardinal Farnese as a close advisor in his council. Around the same time, he also legitimized the cardinal's five children with Silvia Ruffini, a quintessential step in the rise of the Farnese family.¹³ It allowed them to obtain titles and future claims to the Farnese wealth. In 1513, Pope Julius II passed away, and Cardinal Farnese's close friend Giovanni de' Medici became Pope Leo X. During Pope Leo X's reign, plans for a grand Farnese family palace began, and Cardinal Farnese was appointed bishop of Avignon, the wealthiest bishopric. Before his reign, Cardinal Farnese built relationships with the standing popes to benefit himself and his children.

⁹ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp*, 27.

¹⁰ Eamon Duffy, "Paul III, 1534-1549," in *Ten Popes Who Shook the World*, (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011), 83.

¹¹ Duffy, "Paul III," 83.

¹² Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp*, 30.

¹³ *Ibid.*

On October 13, 1534, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese became Pope Paul III.¹⁴ His election was one of the quickest in conclave history, lasting from October eleventh to the thirteenth.¹⁵ He was sixty-six years old and slowly recovering from an unknown illness. Many cardinals saw his election as their opportunity to become the next pope if he died from his illness.¹⁶ He was popular with the Roman people because he was the first Roman pope in over a century, and it was hoped that he would return the papacy to its former glory.¹⁷ Once elected, Paul immediately began promoting the arts, commissioning numerous and varied works. He understood that visual culture was necessary for the Church in times of conflict and that the arts would help promote his religious and political power.

Titian's First Official Portrait of Pope Paul III – The Vision of a Reformer

Pope Paul III commissioned his first portrait from Titian, *Portrait of Pope Paul III Without a Cap*, in 1543. Titian most likely painted the work in Ferrara and brought it to Busseto, a town in the region of Parma, to present it to Paul.¹⁸ Paul commissioned the work nine years into his papacy when he was seventy-five. Scholars, such as Andrea Donati, believe that Paul chose Titian as his portraitist as part of the political and diplomatic contest between him and

¹⁴ Duffy, "Paul III," 83.

¹⁵ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp*, 47.

¹⁶ Guido Rebecchini, "After the Medici, The New Rome of Pope Paul III Farnese," *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 11, 147 (2007): 157.

¹⁷ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp*, 47.

¹⁸ Donati, "Tiziano e il Ritratto," 121.

Emperor Charles V, who also commissioned Titian to paint his portraits.¹⁹ The Venetian writer Pietro Aretino describes in his letters how state dignitaries would view this portrait when Paul was not able to be present.²⁰ The knowledge that this work would be seen by state and church officials was not lost on Titian, and he portrayed Paul III in an idealized state.

Titian's representation of Pope Paul III references Paul's desire to link his pontificate to the early Christian leader of the church. Paul claimed allegiance to the saint and his ministry of the early Church. During his election, church scholars believed he would choose the name Honorius V in reference to the last Roman pope, Honorius IV.²¹ Pope Honorius IV brought peace to Rome in the thirteenth century, and many hoped Paul III would follow in his footsteps.²² Instead, he chose the name Paul III, harkening back to the early days of the Church, when its leaders established the modern Church's foundation. The name Paul emphasized the longevity of the Catholic Church at a time when Protestant Reformers were criticizing the Roman Church's policies and beliefs. Paul the Apostle was the "Apostle to the Gentiles," who traveled through Arabia and Palestine, proclaiming the new word of Jesus. He discussed and revised the old scrolls of Jewish law to better suit the newly formed Christian Church.²³ Pope Paul's establishment of the Council of Trent only two years later, in 1545, and his connection to Saint Paul through his public portrait would help solidify his place in history as a church reformer.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Pietro Aretino, *Lettere: Il primo e secondo libro*.

²¹ Rebecchini, "After the Medici," 157.

²² Rebecchini, "After the Medici," 157.

²³ E. P. Sanders, "Paul the Apostle of Christ to the Gentiles." in *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought*, (Minneapolis: 1517 Media, 2015), 89.

The work reflected Paul's accomplishments during his reign and portrayed him as leader of the Catholic Church in a time of turmoil. Paul sits in the foreground, filling the entire canvas. Titian positions him diagonally across the composition in a three-quarter view. Paul's eyes make contact with the viewer, a powerful and direct gaze. Paul sits in a burgundy velvet chair with gold detailing. His *mozzetta*, the shortened cape worn by ecclesiastic members during official engagements, is the same color as his velvet chair.²⁴ His right hand is closest to the viewer and in an active pose. His pinky finger is bent, and the other fingers are tense, clutching a *bursa*, a purse that would be filled with coins. On this hand, he wears the only piece of jewelry in the composition: a gold ring with a red ruby. He grabs the chair with his left hand. In the painting, Titian portrays Paul without his *camauro* or cap. Paul is depicted with his head shaven close, his pink scalp peeking through his dark graying hair. He wears a long, spade-shaped beard that is white-gray, emphasizing his age.

Titian's decision to include a neutral background focuses attention on Paul alone. His direct gaze suggests his power as pope. Even in his old age, he conveys a sense of his capacity to rule the Catholic Church and its surrounding empire during the wars and reform throughout his papacy. The decision to portray Paul sitting reflects conventions of sixteenth-century portraiture. Only those in high, powerful positions, such as the pope, would be allowed to sit with others present. Those of lower rank would stand as a sign of respect.²⁵

The *mozzetta* chosen for the portrait does not reflect the season in which Paul would have sat for Titian in Ferrara; Giorgio Vasari states that Paul commissioned this work sometime

²⁴ Egerton Beck, "Ecclesiastical Dress in Art Article VI (Conclusion)," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 8, no. 34, (1906): 272.

²⁵ Bruce Cole, *Titian and Venetian Painting, 1450-1590*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), 130.

between May and July, while Paul and Titian were both in Parma. The *mozzetta* depicted is the winter version, recognizable by the white fur that lines the burgundy cloth. Art historians are unsure why Titian and possibly Paul chose the winter version to be depicted. The richness and color of the velvet *mozzetta* matched the velvet chair. The similarity in color and texture between the *mozzetta* and the chair allowed Titian to work with his painterly strokes.

The absence of other jewels that would have conveyed his family's and the Church's wealth also affirms his role as a reformer of the Church. During the Protestant Reformation, reformers criticized the Church's overspending and overt displays of wealth by the Roman curia. Paul's avoidance of excessive jewelry anticipates his future role in creating the Council of Trent to introduce ecclesiastic reforms. Sebastiano del Piombo portrayed Paul's predecessor, Pope Clement VII, wearing multiple rings on each hand (fig. 4, c. 1531, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles). Paul distanced himself from the previous Renaissance popes by reducing the amount of jewelry in Titian's portrait. It was a calculated step in showcasing the new face of the Catholic Church.

Paul places his hand over the *bursa* in a subtle gesture. A *bursa* might symbolize wealth and high rank in portraiture of the time.²⁶ The purse could have multiple iconographical meanings, displaying the power and wealth of the Church during a time of unrest and turmoil with Protestant reformers or showing the generosity of Paul III and the Church to its people. It also could reference Paul's role as almoner, a distributor of alms, and a characterization of the pope's charity.²⁷ It was a papal tradition for the newly elected pope to throw silver and gold

²⁶ Falomir, "Paul III," 149.

²⁷ Donati, "Tiziano e il Ritratto," 117.

coins during the coronation, showing the Church's wealth and how he would shower his subjects with this wealth and keep them safe and happy under God's eye.²⁸ The *bursa* full of coins reflects Paul's promise of happiness and spiritual prosperity toward his subjects. While this object may not have been a direct reference to church reform, it symbolized Paul's ability to provide for the Church's people. In the same vein, the *bursa* could be a subtle nod to Charles V, who was awaiting financing from Paul to continue engagement in the war against the Protestants.²⁹ Wealth was a necessary tool in the continuing battle against Protestant reformers, and Titian is displaying Paul's ability to protect the Church financially.

The *camauro* is worn when the pope is expecting to receive audiences. Thus, without it, the portrait provides a likeness of Paul that the public would not usually be able to see. Paul's bare head was also an allusion to his humility.³⁰ Titian portrays Paul as being able to bow his head to whoever stands in front of him. The countenance Paul is aiming for reflects the humility of his papal namesake, the apostle Saint Paul. His hair and beard are a direct reference to Saint Paul. In *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Saint Paul is described as bearing a bald head with strong eyebrows and a face full of friendliness.³¹

Titian purposefully crafted Pope Paul III's portrait as a pontiff wizened with age but still intelligent and authoritative enough to control both his influential family and the entire Catholic Church. His old age is apparent in his wrinkled forehead and graying hair, even though Titian

²⁸ Falomir, "Paul III," 149.

²⁹ Donati, "Tiziano e il Ritratto," 117.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Abraham J. Malherbe, "A Physical Description of Paul," *Harvard Theological Review* 79, no. 1-3, (1986): 171.

idealized Paul's features. X-rays of the portrait show that Titian initially depicted Paul as much older. Titian painted Paul with a narrower forehead, a more massive and hooked nose, and shallower cheeks, emphasizing his age.³² The decision to alter Titian's initial likeness most likely came from Paul. He probably desired the portrait to present him as a strong church leader who could enact reform and keep the Church's wealth and power. He did not want to look weak or frail in any way. Titian was accommodating and understood how men of status would desire their likenesses to reflect their outward appearance and inner power and personality. With the changes in the face complete, the portrait of Paul III became a vision of power and status. It could not lead to any doubt of Pope Paul III's continued ability to lead the Catholic Church.

After working on the portrait for two months, Titian presented the portrait to Paul at the imperial and papal court gathering in Busseto in June of 1543.³³ The portrait was a success, and Paul's second nephew, Cardinal Camerlengo Guido Ascanio Sforza of Santa Fiora, requested that Titian paint a replica to use it to gain political favor for Pope Paul III.³⁴ Pietro Aretino described Titian's 1543 portrait as one of Titian's greatest masterpieces, claiming that the resemblance was so remarkable that the portrait would vanquish Paul's death, and allow him to live on forever.³⁵ This positive reception made Titian Paul's first choice for the rest of his commissioned painted portraits, including the *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro* in 1545. Thus in this first portrait, he established his role as the reformer of the Church and with the following two he cemented the persona.

³² Falomir, "Paul III," 149.

³³ Donati, "Tiziano e il Ritratto," 117.

³⁴ Donati, "Tiziano e il Ritratto," 122.

³⁵ Pietro Aretino, *Lettere: Il primo e secondo libro*, 191.

Titian's Second Portrait of Pope Paul III

Titian worked on his second portrait of the pope, *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro* during a defining moment in Paul's pontificate. In December 1545, Paul called the first meeting of the Council of Trent in the Italian Alps. It was the first formal meeting of church officials since Martin Luther published his *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517 that criticized Catholic Church leaders. Theologians and contemporary scholars had growing concerns about the curia's goals since the end of the fifteenth century and criticized the curia for focusing on social advancement and personal enrichment.³⁶ The complaints against the clergy concentrated on three main areas: simony, pluralism, and absenteeism.³⁷ Church officials purchased church titles, held seats in multiple dioceses to gain numerous incomes, and did not reside in the areas they were meant to rule over and provide spiritual help for their subjects. Noble families such as the Borgia, della Rovere, and Medici inundated the papal courts with excessive spending and unscrupulous behavior. These families gave out offices as personal favors and to increase their family wealth. Men of religious calling did not fill the Church's primary offices, leading to the neglect of the faithful because church officials were not fulfilling their duties.³⁸ Martin Luther's writings on how people should read and interpret the Gospel struck a chord with many theologians, lay

³⁶ Bryan Cussen, *Pope Paul III and the Cultural Politics of Reform: 1534-1549* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 19.

³⁷ Cussen, *Pope Paul III and the Cultural Politics*, 19.

³⁸ Ibid.

people, and even some church officials. The call for fixing the institutionalized malpractice grew and gave birth to the Reformation and Protestantism.³⁹

The Council of Trent was the most serious attempt at church reform in one hundred and twenty years.⁴⁰ Paul's predecessors had successfully resisted the demand for reform because they understood one of the first critiques reformers would raise would focus on the need for refinement in the curia.⁴¹ In calling the Council of Trent, Paul opened his pontificate to reform that could lead to his loss of power in religious and political situations. Paul knew this critical decision would shape his papacy. Paul also understood that whatever portrait was created of him would ultimately affect how his policies were perceived. With his humanistic education and growing patronage of the arts, Paul understood that visual culture was just as, if not more, important than his political and religious legacy. By selecting Titian to paint his portraits in the unique way they were completed, he curated how state and religious officials would remember him.

In October 1545, Paul invited Titian to live in Rome and work on multiple commissions for the Farnese family until July 1546. Giorgio Vasari mentions in his *Life of Titian* that the Farnese gave the artist a room in the Belvedere while he visited. Paul and his family members personally greeted Titian.⁴² During his stay, Titian worked on multiple works commissioned from the family, including *Danaë* (fig. 5, 1544-46. Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte,

³⁹ Cussen, *Pope Paul III and the Cultural Politics*, 21.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Duffy, "Paul III," 89.

⁴² Giorgio Vasari, "Titian," *The Lives of the Artists*, 1550, Obelisk Art History LLC, 2020, <https://arthistoryproject.com/artists/giorgio-vasari/the-lives-of-the-artists/titian/>

Naples) and his second portrait of Pope Paul III, both now housed in the Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples.

The *Portrait of Paul III With a Camauro* depicts the pope in a composition similar to Titian's first portrait. Paul wears the same winter *mozzetta* from two years earlier, but this time he sports his *camauro*. Once again, Paul is in the foreground, positioned in front of a fenestrated background, making him appear closer to the viewer. He sits in his velvet papal chair in a three-quarter view, and his only adornment, once again, is the ruby ring of the papacy. The paper in Paul's hand was most likely a document given to visitors during an audience with the pope.⁴³ This portrait presents him ready to accept visitors and state dignitaries.

Paul focuses his gaze on the viewer, but his expression is more solemn than Titian's first portrayal. Compared to the latter, painted only two years earlier, he looks much older in this depiction, although no records indicate an illness or physical ailment in Paul's life. His beard is shapeless, and his hands are far more wrinkled than two years prior. Titian no longer directly references Saint Paul in his depiction of the pope. The rapid aging between portraits may have to do with Titian's familiarity with Raphael's *Portrait of Pope Julius II* (fig. 6, 1511, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), which he had copied. He borrowed the stately manner in which Raphael portrayed Julius II, creating a more official and less publicly charged image of Paul III than his initial portrait through the addition of the papal documents and the *camauro's* addition. The pope knows he is the face of the Counter-Reformation and the new Catholic Church.

In this later portrait, Paul III's countenance is similar to Julius II's appearance in Raphael's painting.⁴⁴ The connection to Julius II's portrait coincides with Titian's encounter with

⁴³ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 97.

⁴⁴ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 95.

the work; during his trip to Rome, Titian painted a copy of *Julius II*. Thus, he was familiar with the composition and the interpretation of Julius II in the painting. Titian took it upon himself to modify Raphael's style of painting to better fit his Venetian style of *colore*. He rejected Raphael's precise and detailed style in favor of a work focused on color and light.⁴⁵

Raphael's portrait was a turning point in papal portraiture. This new approach came from the tradition of portraying royalty in France.⁴⁶ Raphael represents Pope Julius II in the three-quarter view sitting by himself in his chair, breaking with the tradition of portraying pontiffs within narrative scenes.⁴⁷ Earlier artists commonly represented popes in profile view, harkening back to antiquity's medal tradition.⁴⁸ Two examples of this profile view are *The Resurrection with a Portrait of Pope Alexander VI* (fig. 7, 1492-1495, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City) by Bernardino Pinturicchio and his workshop and *Portrait of Pope Alexander VI* (fig. 8, after 1492, Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City) which is attributed to a painter from the Spanish school. In both portraits of the previous pope, the artists depict him in profile view. In the former, Pope Alexander VI appears in a narrative scene of the resurrection of Christ. The latter displays Pope Alexander VI in front of a gold brocade pattern. Compared to these two representations of the previous pope, Raphael's portrait of Julius II transformed the papal representation tradition.

⁴⁵ Cole, *Titian and Venetian Painting*, 131.

⁴⁶ Konrad Oberhuber, "Raphael and the State Portrait-I: The Portrait of Julius II," *The Burlington Magazine* 113, no. 816, (1971):128.

⁴⁷ Cole, *Titian and Venetian Painting*, 130.

⁴⁸ Oberhuber, "Raphael and the State Portrait-I," 129.

Julius wears a simple *mozzetta* and *camauro*.⁴⁹ The number of jewels on Pope Julius II's fingers counteracts his understated clothing. He wears the traditional ruby ring of the papacy on his right index finger.⁵⁰ Besides the ruby ring, he wears five other rings, displaying his wealth and the wealth of the Church. In his left hand, he holds a white handkerchief, which was an attribute of high rank due to the price of silk and ideas of cleanliness.⁵¹ The mixture of the humble symbolism and the characteristics of power displayed through his rings and handkerchief create a well-rounded image of a Renaissance pope.

While *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro* makes a direct reference to *Julius II*, Titian took some liberties to change the demeanor and countenance of Paul to fit the needs of the current papacy better. There are differences in the gaze and the jewelry adorning the sitters in the two portraits that point to changes in the Church and Paul's efforts towards reform. Raphael represents Julius II with averted eyes, portraying an introverted and contemplative pontiff. In contrast, Titian depicts Paul's *camauro* drawn low and close to his eyebrows, drawing all attention to his eyes. While he appears older and more fragile, his stare has not changed since the first portrayal and is still inquisitive and scrutinizing. Titian's portrait of Paul focuses on the pope's intellect.

Julius II was pope from November 1503 to February 1513, during the height of the Renaissance, when the curia expected the papacy to be a symbol of wealth and high status. His rings and silk handkerchief explicitly display the Church's wealth. Thirty-four years later, Paul understood that significant reforms were coming for the papacy. The different popes had ignored

⁴⁹ Oberhuber, "Raphael and the State Portrait-I," 130.

⁵⁰ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 96.

⁵¹ Falomir, "Paul III," 149.

calls for significant reform for the past thirty years, and Paul could not avoid change any longer. In the next twenty years, a new strictness was to enter the Catholic Church. Titian's portraits of Paul purposefully lack excessive decoration and jewelry to represent better the new expectations of how church leaders should be portrayed.

Both of Titian's portraits of Paul III were state portraits meant for dignitaries and church officials. Scholars such as Luba Freedman suggest that the first portrait should be classified as "official," representing Paul III as a reformer, and the second portrait "public."⁵² The first portrait was created with an imperial viewership in mind. The *bursa* and bare head reference Paul's audience with Charles V. The "public" portrait was for juridical purposes and used as a direct substitute when the pontiff could not be present during official meetings.⁵³ The distinction in function and Titian's encounter with Raphael's *Julius II* accounts for the portraits' variations created only two years apart. Titian portrays Pope Paul III with different likenesses because portraits represent both the visible and invisible characteristics of the sitter.⁵⁴ *Portrait of Pope Paul III Without a Cap* shows Paul as the church reformer he desired to embody. His physical appearance resembles the descriptions of Paul the Apostle, an early church reformer. He displays his bald head and spade-like beard for a papal portrait. The later portrait, *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro*, represents Paul in a more recognizable and stately manner. He is wearing his *camauro* and holds the documents of an official visit. His efforts for reform are solidified with the formation of the Council of Trent. The second portrait presents Paul as a dignitary ready to

⁵² Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 100

⁵³ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 96.

⁵⁴ David Ekserdjian, *Eye to Eye: European Portraits 1450-1850*, ed. Richard Rand and Kathleen M. Morris (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 18.

hear grievances and discuss matters of the Church. The paintings were a projection of the public view of Paul's true likeness and his representation as a leader.

Chapter 2: Portrait of Pope Paul III and His Grandsons: The Unfinished Portrait of the Farnese Dynasty

Titian painted his third and final portrait of Pope Paul III, *Portrait of Pope Paul III with his Grandsons*, during the same trip to Rome when he painted *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro*. During this stay, the Farnese commissioned many works from Titian.⁵⁵ Scholar Helge Gamrath believes that Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, Paul's grandson, persuaded Titian to take this trip to Rome by promising the artist many things, including sending a church stipend to Titian's nephew.⁵⁶ Titian was also invited to become the pope's official state painter, but he declined because of his other notable patrons, such as Charles V, and because he would have had to move from Venice to Rome.⁵⁷

Art historians consider the painting of Paul and his two grandsons a state portrait, highlighting the Farnese dynasty and Paul's success in securing important marriages, titles, and ecclesiastic appointments for his family.⁵⁸ Titian started the painting in 1545 when Paul was seventy-seven, Alessandro was twenty-six, and Ottavio was twenty-two. The portrait portrays Paul as the patriarch of his family, highlighting Paul's ability to create a lasting dynasty. It continues the narrative of wealth and power produced by the individual portraits. Viewed as a

⁵⁵ Clare Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale: Alessandro Farnese: Patron of the Arts*, (New Haven: Yale, 1992), 70.

⁵⁶ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 90.

⁵⁷ Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 70.

⁵⁸ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 90.

group, the three portraits come together to represent a man capable of raising his family into power and saving the Catholic Church.

Titian's portrayal of Pope Paul III in the unfinished group portrait is drastically different from the single figure portraits he completed. In this full-length portrayal, the pope seems to recede into the background, making his stature less formidable than in his official portraits.⁵⁹ In the group portrait, Paul conveys his position as pontiff and his role as the patriarch of a growing family dynasty.⁶⁰ He sits in the center of the composition. Unlike his two individual paintings, Titian painted him in full-length. He sits holding onto a red desk with his right hand and holds onto the chair's arm with his left. Paul wears the same winter *mozzetta* and *camauro* as in his other portraits. Again, his only jewelry is the ruby red ring from Charles V. One red shoe peeks out from under his *mantelletta*, a long sleeveless cloak worn under the *mozzetta* by ecclesiastics.⁶¹ Paul is looking to his left, making eye contact with his grandson, Ottavio. Paul has a friendlier disposition in this work compared to Titian's other portrayals. He seems to have aged quite a few years from the single figure portrait Titian completed around the same time. His shapeless beard is the same as in the second individual portrait as well. The chair he sits in is challenging to separate from the background, with the bottom left of it unfinished and only underpainting. The desk does not have anything on it other than a small hourglass. The background is a dark maroon curtain on the upper right side that is pulled back. The rest of the background is black and unfinished.

⁵⁹ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 108.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Anthony Lo. Bello, "M." in *The Origins of Catholic Words: A Discursive Dictionary*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2020): 309.

His grandson Ottavio stands at Paul's left. He is bending over to either speak to his grandfather or to bow to him. His left hand holds back his sword on his left hip, and his right hand holds his plumed hat to his chest. His hands may be gloved, but it is difficult to discern because of the painting's unfinished state. He wears white tights that cover his shoes and a black and maroon tunic. A white collar pops out from under his tunic. Ottavio's dark hair is cropped close to his head. His eyes are focused on his grandfather.

Cardinal Alessandro the Younger, Ottavio's older brother, stands behind his grandfather's right shoulder. He is wearing the traditional red *camauro*, *mozzetta*, and *mantelletta* of a cardinal. Alessandro holds an unidentifiable object in his hands, which he holds close to his chest. Alessandro's dark hair is also cropped close to his head, but he wears a full beard, unlike his brother, who sports a pencil-thin mustache. His eyebrows are slightly raised over his eyes which gaze out directly to the viewer. He is the only figure who stares out of the composition. Scholars believe Cardinal Alessandro was the commissioner of this piece, and his powerful pose and eye contact with the viewer support this hypothesis. He is highlighting his connection to his grandfather and his position of cardinal at a young age. The picture constituted a claim to Cardinal Alessandro and Prince Ottavio as Paul's grandsons and their roles as future patriarchs of the Farnese dynasty.⁶²

Paul's son Pierluigi is noticeably absent from the painting. Scholars believe his absence was purposeful, for, by that time, Paul had put his faith in Ottavio to be the next patriarch of the family.⁶³ Pierluigi was disliked by many political leaders and citizens of his duchy alike for his

⁶² Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 72.

⁶³ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 54.

harsh rule and military prowess. Paul disapproved of his son's lascivious lifestyle and rumored acts of sodomy.⁶⁴ Thus, the group portrait was a calculated move by both Paul and Cardinal Alessandro to display the Farnese members who would successfully keep the family dynasty intact.

The differences in Pope Paul's appearance between Titian's individual portrait with the *camauro* and his group portrait that were created concurrently may have to do with the group portrait's original concept. With the help of x-ray technology, scholars have discovered the underpainting shows that Titian may have conceived of the group portrait as an allegory for the Three Ages of Man.⁶⁵ Paul represented old age and thus appeared feeble and defenseless. Cardinal Alessandro represented middle age, so Titian aged him beyond his twenty-six years. In comparison to Titian's individual portrait of Cardinal Alessandro (fig. 9, 1545-46, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples), his face and nose are longer, and his beard appears much fuller. Alessandro's melancholic expression illustrated the loss of innocence in the transition from youth to adulthood. Ottavio represented youth with his fair, young features and his aggressive and lively stance.⁶⁶ After he completed the underpainting, Titian abandoned the idea, which may have distracted from its original purpose to ennoble the Farnese and display their familial power. Ottavio's nose became less hooked, and Alessandro's face more proportional.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 52.

⁶⁵ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 107.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 108.

Titian most likely took inspiration from another Raphael painting, *Leo X with His Two Nephews* (fig. 10, 1517-1518, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), completed in 1518.⁶⁸ In Raphael's portrait, Pope Leo X and his two nephews are all seated. Leo X is in the middle and closest to the viewer. The two nephews are positioned behind him, the one on the left looking into space to the right and the nephew on the right peering out at the viewer. While the nephew on the right looks at the viewer, none of the sitters interact with each other. Titian's work references the earlier painting by Raphael, but they come from different traditions. Raphael's work was created in a religious tradition, possibly referencing a *sacra conversazione*, a sacred conversation that stands outside of time and space.⁶⁹ The three subjects do not physically interact with each other. They inhabit an area together without having to be in the space together at the same time. Titian's portrait of the Farnese comes from the Italian frescos' secular tradition.⁷⁰ The three sitters create a narrative. Scholars suggest that the portrait represents a specific moment in the Farnese lives, possibly Ottavio asking his grandfather for the duchy of his choice.⁷¹ The portrait takes on the feeling of a history painting, representing a significant moment in the Farnese family as it is happening. Titian portrays the Farnese displaying their power to a contemporary audience. While each of the Farnese men had different political and religious responsibilities, the portrait demonstrates their unity and strength as a family.

⁶⁸ Nelson H. Minnich and Raphael, "Raphael's Portrait "Leo X with Cardinals Giulio De' Medici and Luigi De' Rossi": A Religious Interpretation," *Renaissance Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2003): 1006.

⁶⁹ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 109.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

There are many plausible theories as to why the painting remains unfinished. The most convincing argument is that while the painting was commissioned to compare the Farnese family with that of Emperor Charles V, Paul was given the opportunity to cultivate a necessary relationship with King Francis I of France during Titian's progress. Because of the Holy Roman Empire and France's enmity, work on the group portrait was suspended.⁷² Paul believed that his family line's actual advancement through marriage deals and the addition of duchies was more important than the visual portrayal of his successful and influential descendants. Another persuasive reason for the unfinished state of the portrait is that in March 1546, Titian was called away to Augsburg to portray Charles V and the Imperial Diet members.⁷³

The least plausible theory for the painting's unfinished state is that the depiction of the Farnese's relationship was so offensive to Paul that he forced Titian to abandon it.⁷⁴ Scholar Bruce Cole posits that Titian's subtle narrative created a sense of distrust between Ottavio and Paul.⁷⁵ However, this argument seems weak, considering Vasari's account that the portrait was, "all admirably executed to the great satisfaction of the lords."⁷⁶ Vasari seems a credible witness because he was assigned as Titian's guide in Rome and was present during the painting process.⁷⁷ Moreover, another contemporary, Giovanni Battista Armenini, expressed that the painting was

⁷² Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 72.

⁷³ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*, 105.

⁷⁴ Cole, *Titian and Venetian Painting*, 143.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, "Titian."

⁷⁷ Cole, *Titian and Venetian Painting*, 143.

another important example of Titian's mastery of portraiture.⁷⁸ Because of these contemporary accounts detailing positive attitudes towards the work, one is inclined to discredit this argument.

Because of the portrait's unfinished state, it was not publicly displayed during Paul's life.⁷⁹ From the large number of figures and the importance the Farnese family, we can assume it was meant for important dignitaries, both state and religious. Probably created for the family palace, it would have been a testament to the power of the family. Titian's involvement and his known relationship with Charles V could have shown viewers that the Farnese family had the same political authority and pull as the Holy Roman Empire.

Paul took advantage of his position early in his papacy, creating roles of power for his family. In 1537, Paul created the duchy of Castro from a former papal state to enable his son Pierluigi to become a commander.⁸⁰ He also made Alessandro the Younger and his cousin Guido Ascanio Sforza cardinals at ages fourteen and sixteen.⁸¹ They were given the positions of Vice-Chancellor and *camerlengo*, administrator of finances.⁸² Ottavio was given the small duchy of Camerino that was also carved out of the papal state in 1540 when he was sixteen.⁸³ Ottavio and his brother Orazio were granted permission to use the curia treasury for personal use. Between them, they spent 750,000 *scudi* from 1534 to 1549.⁸⁴ In 1545, Paul made his youngest grandson

⁷⁸ Armenini, *De' veri precetti della pittura of 1587*, 192.

⁷⁹ Dunkerton, *Titian*, 4.

⁸⁰ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 2.

⁸¹ Duffy, "Paul III," 84.

⁸² Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 50.

Ranuccio a cardinal at the age of fifteen.⁸⁵ The same year, Paul carved out Parma and Piacenza from the northernmost Papal States to make Pierluigi the duke of a larger duchy. Many in the curia disapproved of removing the Papal States' property for the pope's son to rule. However, Paul pushed through the appointment with the reasoning that the state did not bring in enough money for it to be protected by the papacy and that if his son were in charge, the duchy would be loyal to the Church.⁸⁶

Paul did not only use his newfound power as the pope to grant titles and land to his family. He also used his influence to set up marriages between his descendants and influential families. In 1537, he successfully arranged the marriage between Ottavio and the illegitimate daughter of Charles V, Margareta.⁸⁷ His oldest granddaughter Vittoria was married to the Duke of Urbino, Guidobaldo della Rovere in 1547. In the same year, he made Guidobaldo's twelve-year-old brother a cardinal. His grandson Orazio was married to Diane de France, the illegitimate daughter of King Francis I.⁸⁸ With these marriages, the Farnese family was connected to the most powerful families and kingdoms of the time.

His contemporaries characterized Paul's policies during his papacy as tentative.⁸⁹ Paul stated to Cardinal Serpando that his main concerns for his pontificate were to re-establish general peace in Europe, specifically between the Holy Roman Empire and France, to call for a council

⁸⁵ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 51.

⁸⁶ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 56.

⁸⁷ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 51.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 48.

for church reform strengthen the Church against heresy.⁹⁰ However, his plans for his papacy left out any direct mention of policies that would lessen dynastic families' power, including his own. Because of his old age, Paul moved quickly to set up his descendants for the best lives and marriages possible to extend the family's wealth and influence. Such nepotistic policies were the norm for Renaissance popes.⁹¹ However, Paul was also the head of the Church when these policies had reached a tipping point that caused a rift between stricter Christians and the church leaders. Paul delicately balanced family promotion and significant reform. The group portrait highlights some of the criticisms of Paul's role as both religious leader and patriarch while still portraying him as the strong leader of the Church for years to come.

Pope Paul III hoped to be remembered as a great church reformer. He began the Council of Trent, established the Jesuit order, and upheld the stronghold of the Catholic Church against Protestant heretics. But this was only one aspect of Paul. He was a multifaceted and intelligent man who used his power to establish his family dynasty as one of the strongest in the sixteenth century. Paul and his grandsons' group portrait reinforces the versatility of portraiture and Titian's continued ability to create and adapt his sitters' character to fit their desired portrayal.

The portrait ended up unframed and unhung in the Farnese cellar for over a century. Along with the rest of the Farnese collection, it was transported to Naples by Paul's descendant Charles III of Spain. Charles III built the Palace of Capodimonte that would later become the

⁹⁰ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 49.

⁹¹ Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics*, 1.

Museo di Capodimonte.⁹² The painting remains in the collection, hanging in the Farnese Gallery section with both single figure portraits of Paul III.

⁹² Jill Dunkerton, Charles Hope, Jennifer Fletcher, Miguel Falomir, *Titian*, (London: National Gallery London, 2003), 4.

Conclusion

On November 10, 1549, Pope Paul III passed away from an unknown sickness at eighty-one. His pontificate was one of the longest in the Renaissance and oversaw the most serious attempt at reform in 120 years.⁹³ While he could not suppress the Protestant Reformation, he laid the foundation for the Catholic Church to move forward with reforms that both responded to Protestant concerns and clarified Catholic differences from Protestant beliefs. Paul's humanist education meant that he understood the potential that the arts and visual culture had in maintaining power and building legitimacy.

Portrait of Pope Paul III Without a Cap, *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro*, and *Pope Paul III with his Two Grandsons* are three different representations of Paul created by Titian. The theme and intended use of each work informed Titian on how to portray Paul. In the first portrait, *Portrait of Pope Paul III Without a Cap*, Titian directly references the physical description of Paul's namesake, Saint Paul the Apostle. Paul's bare, shaved-head and spade-like beard physically tie him to church reform by recalling Saint Paul. The second portrait, *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro*, is a stately portrait. Titian paid attention to previous representations of papal dignity and painted Paul in a more formal light. By referencing Raphael's *Julius II*, he associated Paul with another Renaissance pope known for his art patronage. Paul continues to embody papal power and represents the Catholic Church's strength during the Reformation. In the group portrait, *Portrait of Pope Paul III with his Grandsons*, Paul is represented as the patriarch of a dynasty, with his successors. In the unfinished painting, Titian represents Paul as the capable leader of the Church and the elderly grandfather to a noble family.

⁹³ Cussen, *Pope Paul III and the Cultural Politics*, 23.

This thesis brings attention to the role of portraiture in creating Pope Paul III's lasting persona as a prominent church reformer. Titian's portraits played an essential part in personifying Paul's papacy. Royal portraiture was the principal vehicle by which the nature of the rulers was disseminated. By creating subtle visual messaging in the works, Titian created likenesses of Pope Paul that confirmed the pope's religious and political status as a reformer.



Figure 1. Titian, *Portrait of Pope Paul III Without a Cap*, 1543, oil on canvas, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples



Figure 2. Titian, *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro*, 1545-1546, oil on canvas, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples



Figure 3. Titian, *Portrait of Pope Paul III with his Grandsons*, 1545-46, oil on canvas, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples



Figure 4. Sebastiano del Piombo, *Portrait of Pope Clement VII*, c. 1531, oil on slate, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Figure 5. Titian, *Danaë*, 1544-46, oil on canvas, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples



Figure 6. Raphael, *Portrait of Pope Julius II*, 1511, oil on panel, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence



Figure 7. Bernardino Pinturicchio and his workshop, *The Resurrection with a Portrait of Pope Alexander VI*, detail showing Alexander VI, 1492-1495, fresco, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City



Figure 8. Attributed to a Painter from the Spanish School, *Portrait of Pope Alexander VI*, after 1492, oil on panel, Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City



Figure 9. Titian, *Portrait of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese*, 1545-46, oil on canvas, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples



Figure 10. Raphael, *Portrait of Pope Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi*, 1517-1518, oil on panel, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence

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ABSTRACT

THE POWER OF PORTRAITURE: TITIAN'S PORTRAYAL OF POPE PAUL III AS REFORMER

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This thesis examines the role played by Titian's three portraits of Pope Paul III, *Portrait of Pope Paul III without his Cap* (1543), *Portrait of Pope Paul III with Camauro* (1545-46), and *Portrait of Pope Paul III with his Grandsons* (1545-46), in creating his persona of reformer during his papacy. These three paintings of Pope Paul III were the only official portraits he commissioned during his pontificate. Renaissance portraiture portrays not only the likeness of the sitter but also alludes to the sitter's identity. In this thesis, I argue that the three portraits reveal his chosen identity as a church reformer and family patriarch. Paul allowed only Titian to represent him, indicating the widespread esteem for Titian as a "prince of painters."

Pope Paul III was born Alessandro Farnese. Scholars credit him with establishing the Farnese as one of the most influential families in Roman art patronage and religious reform. The College of Cardinals elected Paul III to the papacy in 1534 at the height of the Reformation. During his reign, Paul navigated church reform while practicing the abuses the Reformation had criticized privately. For example, he placed his sons and grandsons in powerful church and state positions, such as cardinal and prince. In addition, his choice of papal name, Paul, connects him

to Saint Paul, an important figure in early Christian history who called for reform of early church rules. This name choice directly links Pope Paul III to the Apostle Paul and indicates his desire to be perceived as a church reformer himself. Pope Paul's desire that the public see him as a reformer in Titian's portraits directly contradicts some of his actions as pope, and this thesis will examine the checkered reception of these works.