

BAROQUE PLAGUE IMAGERY AND TRIDENTINE
CHURCH REFORMS

by

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ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: **BAROQUE PLAGUE IMAGERY
AND TRIDENTINE CHURCH REFORMS**

Christine Maria Boeckl, Doctor of Philosophy, 1990

Dissertation directed by: William Pressly, Associate Professor,
Department of Art History

This dissertation aims to achieve two goals: one, to assemble as many facts as possible about the plague, regardless of period, and to relate this material to images; and two, to present a well-defined group of religious baroque plague paintings in the context of social, political and religious history. This inquiry is primarily concerned with scenes that portray saints actively involved in charitable pursuits, dispensing the sacraments to victims of the most dreaded disease, the bubonic plague.

Chapter I contains a bibliographical essay, divided into three parts: medicine, theology, and art history. The next chapter considers the sources and the formation of baroque plague iconography. The remaining two chapters discuss "documentary" plague scenes and how they relate to historic events. They are presented in two sections: Italy and transalpine countries.

This interdisciplinary research resulted in a number of observations. First, these narrative plague scenes were produced in Italy and in Catholic countries bordering Protestant regions: Switzerland, France, Flanders, and in the Habsburg Empire (excluding Spain). Second, the painters were mostly Italian or Italian-trained.

Third, the artists observed not only the requirements specified by the Church in the 1563 Tridentine Decree on the Arts but also reflected in their work the catechetic teachings of the Council. Fourth, these religious scenes were not votive paintings but doctrinal images that served either didactic or polemic functions. Fifth, the scenes were not intended as memento mori; rather, the iconology conveyed positive images which emphasized that the faithful needed the Roman Catholic clergy to gain life-everlasting. Sixth, these plague paintings were important documents not as recordings of the conditions experienced during an epidemic but as historic testimony of liturgical practices. Last, these selected scenes mirrored the baroque Church's views on the ultimate questions about life and death.

DEDICATION

To my children Michael, Leo, and Maria

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims to achieve two goals: one, to assemble as many facts about the plague, regardless of period, and relate this material to images; and two, to present a well-defined group of religious baroque plague paintings in the context of social, political and religious history. This inquiry is primarily concerned with scenes that portray saints actively involved in charitable pursuits, dispensing the sacraments to victims of the most dreaded disease, the bubonic plague. The meaning of these works could be summed up by the motto of St. Camillo de Lellis (1550-1615), founder of the Camillian nursing order: "Al corpo prima dell' anima, al corpo per l'anima, l'uno e l'altro per Iddio."¹ The relationship among body, soul, and God deeply concerned the baroque mind. An analysis of the plague paintings will give insight into this intricate thought pattern.

Times of pestilence, like war and famine, have always put an extraordinary strain on ethical behavior. From the third century B.C., treatises on the plague contained, along with medical instructions, philosophical discussions of the meaning of this "divine punishment," as well as comments on human behavior. Although plague is a universal theme, it has suggested different concepts throughout the ages. Even today the word stirs a strong emotional reaction and is often used as an analogy for a force

unknown and uncontrollable by men. For people after the Reformation, it alluded not only to frequent epidemics but it signified also another pressing problem: in the sixteenth century plague became a metaphor for heresy.²

Religious plague images have suffered from scholarly neglect, and they have never been presented as a coherent group nor has there ever been an attempt to discuss plague symbols collectively. Their iconography, iconology, functions, patronage, and artistic values therefore have never been fully investigated. Plague subjects were generally assumed to have been commissioned as votive paintings and to relay the message of memento mori. My studies, however, show that only certain types of plague paintings belong in this category of the continuation of medieval piety.

The main body of the works discussed constitute some of the earliest and most effective visual records of the Reformed Roman Catholic Church. These morbid-looking scenes of devastation reflect changes in Church policies and give insight into the revival of liturgical rituals which then remained in effect until Vatican II in 1964. Although the pictures portray disease and dying, they exude a sense of optimism. Their meaning is not death but the promise of life everlasting. To justify such a reading, I have assembled and consulted many historical medical treatises, plague sermons, chronicles, biographies, hagiographic works, and Catholic textbooks (catechisms etc.) published from the sixteenth through

the eighteenth centuries.

One of the major issues addressed will be the question of how much the Church influenced artists. Art historians have long scrutinized the 1563 Tridentine Decree on the Arts and its later interpretations for clues on how the Council of Trent (1545-1563) affected painting. The change in the official attitude of the Church toward art was formulated in one of the last sessions of the Council. It was summarized most effectively:

As soon, therefore, as the Roman Church gave up its attempt at compromise with the Protestants, and followed the course of strengthening traditional doctrines...it became necessary for theologians to underpin the foundations on which religious art was built, and to prove that, far from idolatrous, sacred images were an enticement to piety and means of salvation.³

Nothing should be painted or carved which either misled Catholics or gave Protestants a weapon against the Church. The decency of religious paintings was watched as carefully as their orthodoxy.

Post-Tridentine art in the main followed these new but general guidelines, which influenced the subjects and their presentation. Plague paintings were no exception. The artists reduced realism to conform with the demands of decorum, painted halos on the plague saints, and avoided depiction of animals except as attributes as in the case of St. Roch. They also complied with specified iconography; for example, when Charles Borromeo was canonized in 1610, Rome decreed, that the Milanese

archbishop had to be characterized at all times as "cardinal of the Holy See."⁴

After the Council of Trent, the most innovative subjects were chosen to combat Protestantism. Few of the preferred topics--such as, the last communion of a saint--were entirely new. What sets plague paintings apart from the enormous output of religious baroque art was the choice of innovative and polemic subjects. This aspect has never been mentioned in the discussions on art theory. And yet, it was the focus on theological issues that gave the plague paintings their *raison d'être*.

Many of the plague scenes show the Synod's two most fervently debated issues: the Sacraments and the Canon of Justification, which stated, in direct opposition to Protestant teachings, that faith alone (*fide sola*) was not enough to obtain Grace. Good works and the help of intercessory saints were necessary to gain salvation. The differences between the two religious factions had been codified in catechisms first published in the sixteenth century. They were intended to raise the public's consciousness on moral questions. However, since illiteracy was still rampant in Europe, the Church recognized the advantage in presenting its catechistic teachings in impressive altar paintings which would be accessible to everyone. Plague subjects were singularly suitable to depict sacraments dispensed to laity by the Catholic clergy: Baptism, Confession, Confirmation, Penance, Last

Rites, and, most importantly, the Eucharist. These liturgical customs were depicted against the grim background of a plague epidemic. The new genre of plague paintings glorified the position of the clergy, showed off the qualities of the "modern" saints performing charitable works, and promoted the reforms achieved by the Church after the Council.

The Roman Catholic Church used religious plague paintings as "image makers" in efforts to defend their doctrines against Protestant teachings. Plague scenes were painted only in Italy and regions bordering Protestantism: Switzerland, France, Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, but above all in Catholic Flanders. There is no evidence that Catholic Spain commissioned such paintings. Furthermore, the lacuna of plague paintings in Protestant Scandinavia and England, even after the Restoration, is enlightening. No painted record of London's Great Plague of 1665 exists. Lacking the tradition of plague iconography and religious narrative scenes, British artists did not approach this subject until the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century. Yet the seventeenth-century disaster is unusually well recorded in contemporary English literature and in prints.⁵

The value of my study lies in the investigation of a contained and well-defined iconographic topic in an interdisciplinary context. Essential for the understanding and the proper evaluation of the narrative paintings is the knowledge of

how they relate to medical and socioeconomic issues. Of equal importance is the knowledge of the religious and the cultural ambience in which the plague paintings were commissioned. Seen in wider context, the scenes will reveal to what extent the artists had observed or ignored the guidelines issued by the Church and who the patrons were that had commissioned this rather "unattractive" group of paintings.

The methodology used in this dissertation is different from most other studies because it does not inquire into the patronage of a specific religious order (What is Jesuit art?) but rather takes the subject (narrative religious plague paintings) as the point of departure for gathering information on the individual objects.⁶

Chapter I contains a bibliographical essay, divided into three parts: medicine, theology, and art history. The next chapter considers the sources and the formation of baroque plague iconography. The remaining two chapters contain the discussion of "documentary" narrative plague scenes and how they relate to historic events. They are presented in two sections: Italy and the transalpine regions. The organization of the chapter on Italian plague paintings reflects a north-south topographical arrangement because it coincides roughly with chronological developments: Venice and the Veneto were hit hard in the later part of the sixteenth century; Lombardy and Emilia experienced the fateful plague years of 1576-1577; the area around Rome was most

gravely affected in 1630; while the Eternal City itself, Naples, and the whole south of Italy suffered the worst epidemic in 1656 and in the years immediately thereafter. The chapter on the northern countries, on the other hand, depends less on actual plague epidemics than on the influence of Italian plague imagery. Most of the northern plague paintings were created by Italian-trained artists. Within these two chapters, each region's historical and religious background are briefly mentioned and the individual paintings are discussed in chronological order. The Conclusion presents the results of this inquiry in a broader philosophical and art-historical context. The Appendix provides alphabetical entries on plague saints' lives, with a list of paintings appearing in chronological order. These illustrations are listed as Plates. Images used in comparisons are numbered separately and appear in the List of Figures.

NOTES INTRODUCTION

1 Attend to the body before the soul, the body for the soul, body and soul for God.

2 Heresy was compared to pestilence in Catholic catechisms. Article XXI warns that heretics need to be avoided like the "plague." The Catechismus Major expands on the theme, explaining that no one can become infected with the plague of heresy ("ut aliquis se haeresis p e s t e commaculet") if the pastoral advisors instructed the people properly in the mysteries of the Catholic Faith. Moreover, there is an analogy to the diseased Church--the mystical body of Christ--of which Christ himself is the head; all faithful are living limbs, while heretics become dead limbs. These limbs of the Church interact and are nourished by the grace of God. Even if through sin they become dead limbs, they can still profit by the intercession of saints and good works of the living members of the Church. The Catechismus Romanum explicitly states that good deeds do not belittle Christ's redemption as the Protestants claimed. On the contrary, because Christ is the head of the mystical body (Church) such works have special worth and dignity. Calvin answering Bishop Sadolet writes: "You insult us by calling us enemies of Christian unity and compare us to be destructive like plague for the souls." (G. Bellinger, Der Catechismus Romanus und die Reformation: Die katechetische Antwort des Trienter Konzils auf die Haupt-Katechismen der Reformation, Paderborn, 1970, 127.) Plague as a metaphor for heresy was still used in 1884 when Cardinal Manning wrote, "It was precisely to expel this plague that the Council of Trent labored for eighteen years." (G. Giussano, The Life of St. Charles Borromeo, London, 1884, vii.)

The expression "to avoid someone like the plague" remained popular well into the twentieth century. The plague metaphor was probably too esoteric for the visual arts. Except in Lutheran Bibles (see fig. 12), where the Plague at Ashdod serves as a reminder of the true religion, I did not find any evidence in paintings that the plague-stricken are equated with heretics.

3 Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory in Italy. 1450-1660, Oxford, 1956, 107.

4 San Carlo Borromeo, ed. J. Headly & J. Tomaro, London/Washington, 1988, 26.

5 The problem of why Spain lacks such imagery is complex and needs further investigation. Several modern publications attest

to the severity and frequency of epidemics. The most obvious reasons are that Charles Borromeo was unpopular with the Spaniards and that the Hispanic religious orders were dominated by Jesuits and Franciscans, who rarely commissioned plague paintings. Prof. Jonathan Brown voiced his surprise about this situation in a letter noting that there was a "general lack of documentary images in Spanish Baroque art...I have never been able to discover a reason for this phenomenon." Spain also lacked "plague literature." (J. Grimm, Die literarische Darstellung der Pest in der Antike und in der Romania.)

6 The breakdown in scholarship in questions on theology and religious patronage has been emphasized in the 1987 article by E. Cropper and C. Dempsey, "State of Research: Italian Painting of the Seventeenth Century," The Art Bulletin, Dec. 1987, 495. "To a certain degree, resistance springs from uneasiness about the acceptability or attractiveness of Counter-Reformation culture itself."

CHAPTER I

MEDICINE

The history of European plague epidemics comprises some of the worst disasters ever experienced by man. Over the centuries hardly a country or even a city has been spared from that dread disease. The bubonic plague with its characteristic symptoms--fever, headache, the development of pest bubos, and discoloration of the body--has been recorded in Europe since the sixth century A.D. Plague epidemics influenced whole cultures, changing socioeconomic conditions, philosophies, religious ideas, and the arts.

The World Health Organization distinguishes three pandemics. The first, reported by Procopius and usually called the Justinian Plague, started in 541 A.D. The second, "The Black Death" appeared suddenly in 1347, and then for more than three centuries epidemics kept flaring up and killing an estimated 50 million people. The third, and the least publicized pandemic of the bubonic plague, is still expanding. It started in Asia in 1894 but now has spread through Africa and both of the Americas. A map shows the plague foci of 1974 (fig.1).

Charles Gregg observed, "As the Third Pandemic began, humanity was no better able to defend itself against plague than

in the time of Justinian, thirteen centuries before..."¹ This may not be entirely accurate because he does not take into account all the empirical knowledge that had been gathered over these years. But, as long as the causative agent and the transmission of the disease were unknown, the fight against this invisible enemy seemed close to hopeless. The author gives the best account of the trials and tribulations of the discovery of Pasteurella pestis. Nineteenth-century microbiology equipped scientists with the tools needed to isolate the bacillus and to break the vicious cycle of the "Unholy Trinity": the rat, the flea, and the plague bacillus. Even after the doctors Alexandre Yersin and Shibasaburo Kitasato had independently discovered the culprit in 1894, the so-called Yersinia pestis, the important role of the rat's fleas as vectors was not established until three years later when Professor Masanori Ogata published his findings.²

Plague research still occupies the medical profession today. The modern textbook Diseases transmitted from Animals to Man gives a detailed account of symptoms, vaccines, and medication necessary to combat the isolated cases experienced in the United States. Popular magazines show renewed interest in the topic as well. Articles on the plague flooded the market in 1988, appearing in National Geographic, Archaeology, Life, and Scientific American. The Smithsonian published its latest account in 1990.

There are three principal clinical forms of plague which is

a severe bacterial infection caused by Pasteurella pestis: The bubonic, septicemic, and pneumonic form. The latter two are the most lethal. All three types can appear simultaneously. The incubation period ranges from a few hours to six days but may occasionally be longer. Signa pestis appear most frequently in the lymph nodes of the neck, in the armpit, or the groin of the victim. The symptoms vary, but people most commonly suffer from high fever and develop black splotches which are the result of diffuse hemorrhages under the skin. Eventually the characteristic bubos or nodules that gave the disease its name appear, growing larger and more painful. They can be surgically drained, which may start the healing process. Untreated they will rupture which increases the danger of a general sepsis. The patients are described as being alternately listless or frantic, eventually becoming delirious. Unusual facial expressions are often recorded in plague literature.³ Most patients die of cardiac arrest, and prior to death they frequently lapse into a coma.

The first realistic depiction of the symptoms and treatment of plague can be found in the latter half of the fifteenth century, when a number of paintings and prints illustrate plague bubos. In a Sebastian Chapel in Savoy, for example, a doctor is shown operating on his patient (fig.2). The realism in this religious fresco is startling. The painter displays surprising medical knowledge which he could have gained by studying surgical treatises. A

woodcut, dated 1482, illustrates the operation of an underarm carbuncle (fig.3). Similar realism in describing a plague sore is applied in a northern altar painting (c.1490-1500), where an angel lances the swelling on St. Roch's upper thigh (fig.4). Other prints show ointments being applied to his leg, a treatment which must reflect to contemporary practice (fig.5). A woodcut of c.1500, attributed to Holbein the Elder, depicts the rarely illustrated head bubos (fig.6). All these symptoms have been corroborated by modern medical research.⁴

The case mortality rate for bubonic plague is recorded from 45 to 65 percent depending on the surgical treatment and general health of the patient; and for untreated pneumonic plague it is 95 to 100 percent. The unprecedented loss of life during the Black Death, when an estimated third of Europe's population died, was caused by the pneumonic type. Better data is available since the sixteenth century. These records often give the cause of death, as well as gender, profession, and age group of the deceased. The daily numbers of deaths within a parish are also recorded.

Historic data, supplemented by twentieth-century research of epidemics in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, is the basis for modern plague literature. Some medical facts can be extracted from these statistics: there seems to have been little difference in mortality rates of any age group or sex if the chances of infection was equal (the privileged often had the option of leaving an

endemic area; they had less-crowded living conditions, and they could afford the luxury of personal hygiene). One important study by Dr. Lien-Teh Wu in 1936 indicated, however, that infants under five months of age were indeed less likely to become ill. This offers a medical reason for the most popular plague motif, a dead or dying mother with her healthy baby on her breast. Raphael's design The Phrygian Plague, reproduced in Raimondi's print Il Morbetto, shows this woman-and-child group for the first time in context with a plague scene (fig.7).⁵

Even today, with antibiotic treatment available, the correct diagnosis is vital for survival of a plague patient because medication has to be started within fifteen hours after the onset of the symptoms (intense headaches and coughing mucus or even blood). Modern medical knowledge does not completely guard against misdiagnoses since the symptoms are often confused with those of other diseases. Vaccinations are impractical because immunity is limited. Grave-diggers and hospital workers are reported to have experimented with the consumption of pus sucked from plague-bubos to increase their resistance to the disease. It has been suggested that this unappetizing procedure would have worked much like the oral Salk vaccine.⁶

We now know that an animal epidemic is an essential requirement for the occurrence of a human plague. Most of these epidemics take place in the wild, such as the isolated steppes of

inner Asia, and do not affect, therefore, domestic animals or urban rats. The important question remains: what regulates the rise and fall of plague epidemics? The statement, "Man becomes accidentally involved in the plague cycle but is of no importance to its maintenance and persistence of nature," would have shocked everybody before the Age of Enlightenment since plague epidemics had been assumed to be God's punishment for the sins of mankind.⁷ Many historical accounts of plagues open with some observations on dying animals. This phenomenon is often depicted in prints--never in paintings--and must have been common knowledge. The 1502 illustration of Virgil's Phrygian Plague shows dying domestic animals, although the text lacks such a passage (fig.8). True, most ancient writers, starting with Homer, mention that the first victims of a plague are mules and dogs.⁸ Dying farm animals, including a rat, are illustrated in Francesco Petrarca's Artzney bayder Gluck published in 1532 in Protestant Augsburg (fig.9). It utilized an earlier woodcut of c.1519/20. However, the publisher had adjusted the block to the change in religion by omitting the figures of SS. Sebastian and Roch in the upper left hand corner (fig.10).

Modern scholarship has pointed out that dogs may have become immune over the centuries, being naturally immunized by a less virulent strain of the bacteria. A number of independent medical studies observe the fact that dogs seldom die of the

disease.⁹ This would explain the legend of St. Roch's faithful companion. Moreover, birds may have developed some immunity. Birds were given to children as protective measures against the plague (Raphael's Madonna di Cardinalino). People often carried ferrets and other pets, which probably were effective flea traps until the animal died. Many plague sanitary rules ordered the extermination of small animals, because the connection with the disease must have been observed, yet, the knowledge of cause and effect was still lacking.

Although our scientific knowledge makes it easier to combat the disease itself, we are unable to control the major cycle of wild rodents harboring fleas that depend on them for nourishment. Insecticides are effective in reducing the threat of transmission to men. Killing the rodents is self-defeating because fleas prefer animal hosts to humans.

Fleas, having bitten an infected warm-blooded creature, will be unable to digest the blood because the plague bacillus will cause an obstruction of the flea's digestive tract. Becoming famished, the "blocked flea" will continue to bite his host, eventually regurgitating plague bacilli into the host's bloodstream. If the rodent dies and its body cools off, the flea looks for a new victim. With fewer animals available, the rat flea (Xenopsylla cheopis) will also bite humans. Pulex irritans (human flea) have been proven to be able to carry live bacilli for a duration of about

two months, without the help of a warm-blooded host. This explains why epidemics often recede and flare up unexpectedly. The flea's unusually vexing behavior has also been reported in plague literature.

Since the reason for a plague epidemic was unknown until less than a century ago, a number of fantastic theories were developed that often contained a grain of truth. The Bible already connects wars, famines, and earthquakes with the appearance of plague. Such interdependencies of natural disasters must have been observed for generations before they were recorded in writing. Troop movements often transmit diseases from one region to another. Famines bring infected, hungry animals closer to human homes, and starving people in dire need of nourishment have been known to eat the meat of rats. Such conditions are frequently observed during a siege. Science has no explanation for earthquakes as contributing factors to an epidemic. I would like to venture an uneducated guess: tremors could dislodge the rodent population and bring them in contact with people (rats are known not to venture far from their nests unless there are traumatic conditions that make them move en masse). Apart from these causes, trade is one of the most common culprits of spreading disease. The Silk Road and harbors open to Asian trade have often been blamed for admitting pestilence into Europe.

The rat had been suspected of causing plague long before

science proved it a fact. In China, the disease was called "Rat's Plague," and Dr. Ogata was warned by the natives of Formosa about the dead animals found in city streets. This brings us to the heated debate over whether or not the Philistine plague of c.1320 B.C. (I Sam.5:6), which mentions a plague of rodents could be identified as bubonic plague. There is a strong possibility for such an assumption; a generation later, during the reign of King David, the neighboring Hebrew nation was also afflicted by a plague epidemic (II Sam.24:10-21). However, all this must remain speculative. It is equally difficult to decide whether Poussin, who introduces rats into his famous Plague at Ashdod (fig.11) in 1630 during an outbreak of the bubonic plague in Italy, associated the Old Testament scourge with the contemporary epidemic.¹⁰ Poussin's rats can perhaps be explained by the artist's awareness of an old iconographic tradition of depicting rodents in the Plague at Ashdod. A sixteenth-century print illustrates the plague of "lively" rodents (fig.12).

One of the oldest myths about causative agents was the belief that the plague was transmitted by putrid air resulting from decomposing animals. Again, people were not too far wrong, because insects feeding on such infected carcasses could and did, in fact, transmit the disease. Not directly by the miasmatic air, as it was claimed, but, as modern scholars suspect by mosquitos.¹¹ Fleas, too, can jump on fast-moving hosts and thereby contribute

to the transmission of the disease beyond the limits of direct contact. Modern studies on fleas have shown optimal conditions to be temperatures up to 23.5 degree Celsius (74.3 degree Fahrenheit) and 60 percent humidity.

Hot humid summer months usually aggravated epidemics because of the increase of the insect population.¹² On the other hand, cold winters often meant a reprieve. Nevertheless, many people died in northern climates during January, February, and March, because they huddled together in heated rooms to shelter themselves from the cold, unknowingly creating conditions favorable for the spread of pestilence.

In the Renaissance much credence was given to the influence of astrological phenomena. Such an assumption was based on writings of Aristotle that under the "influence of Saturn and Jupiter whole peoples get exterminated." The fourteenth century blamed the 1348 plague on a constellation of three major planets (Mars, Jupiter, Saturn) in the sign of Aquarius. This zodiac sign is often associated with plague imagery (fig.13). Along with astrological studies, comets were thought to herald pestilence. Elisabeth Schroter proved that the depiction of a comet in Renaissance art indicated a plague topic (fig.14).¹³

Before the twentieth century, the pronouncement of vera pestis (true plague) struck terror in every heart. Often doctors were persuaded by the authorities to suppress information since

the state of quarantine meant grave economic consequences. In retrospect it seems likely that the epidemics of 1656 in Naples and 1720 in Marseilles, each killing close thousands of people, could have been avoided if proper precautions had been observed.

Credit for stamping out the plague and ridding Europe of this scourge in the eighteenth century must be given to empiric remedies. At that time, physicians were still fighting a phantom; therefore precautionary measures such as quarantines, disinfection, basic hygiene, and some surgical procedures played an important part. Stringent sanitary rules were imposed. To avoid contagion trade was stopped and people were kept from moving about from areas that had been affected by the plague. The harbors were strictly patrolled, and boats, cargo, and crews had to remain in quarantine from 22 to 45 days. Wool and other textiles were recognized as being highly suspect (Pestzunder).¹⁴ The land routes into western Europe were blocked with a "Sanitary Cordon" which ran roughly in the areas where the Iron Curtain has been erected--although for very different reasons--to let only merchandise and traders pass through designated checkpoints after they had been cleared of any suspicion of being infected (fig.15). Health passes were issued, and forgery of these could result in severe physical punishments along with heavy fines.

The knowledge of such precautionary measures had been painstakingly gathered over centuries and generously shared by

scholars using Latin as an international language. With every new epidemic some of the old proven remedies were revived and others added, but since the cause of the plague was an enigma and its transmission equally mysterious, progress was slow. Medical treatises, as well as popular wisdom, were of great consequence in the final breakthrough that solved the mystery of the plague and saved the modern world from further epidemic crises.¹⁵

During the Black Death and in succeeding centuries, Arabic medical books were very important. They transmitted the medical knowledge of the Greek physicians via Byzantine authors to the medieval West.¹⁶ Hygienic measures and surgical procedures were described in great detail. Jacopo Bassano's St. Roch of 1590 reflects the situation encountered in the Veneto where the arabic influence was particularly strong (fig.16). The turbaned helper handles the infected infant with tender care. One is tempted to assume that this person portrays a trained physician and not a slave drafted to perform plague duty.

The development and building of hospitals was also the result of the many plague epidemics. Again, the heritage of Islamic knowledge was essential. The Ospedale Maggiore in Milan, founded 1456, was fashioned in part after an Arabic institution. It retained the prescribed form of cubicles built around an open courtyard (fig.17). Stone floors made cleanliness easier (fig.18). It is interesting to see that the pavilion in the center also reflects

the form of an Islamic fountain (designed for ritual washings) but was converted in the West into a Christian chapel designed to be visually accessible to all patients (fig.19).

Venice was most advanced in its measures for organizing against an epidemic, and its practices were followed in the countries north of the Alps. Preparations for a plague epidemic were done deliberately and strategically as if preparing for a siege. Food had to be procured, along with bedding, clothes, medicine, doctors, and clergymen in Catholic regions. Lime for disinfecting grave sites had to be brought in great quantity, particularly into Venice, because of its high ground water level. The Venetians could not bury their dead "six feet under" as the London ordinances of 1655 prescribed to avoid exhumation by dogs.

Quarantine laws were first imposed in Venice in 1348, and because of the city's volatile location as an eastern port, they were constantly improved. The city government built hospitals on some of the islands--the word lazzaretto, Italian plague hospital, developed from the hospital on the island of Nazareth.¹⁷

Tintoretto's famous hospital painting St. Roch depicts a Venetian plague ward of the sixteenth century (fig.20). One of the victims points to a discolored swelling on the upper arm which leaves no doubt to the viewer that the man is suffering from the bubonic plague (fig.21). Therapeutic measures, such as fumigation by open coal fires, are also visible in this and many other

paintings. The higher temperatures and the odor of smoke might have dissuaded the plague vectors from settling near the flames. Smoking of pipe tobacco, often seen in prints, or popular votive paintings is never portrayed in religious art (fig.22).

Printed health rules were distributed and read to the residents to inform them about the dangers of the disease. These city ordinances generally began with the advice to resort to God, and to the Virgin as well as intercessory saints if the regions were Catholic. They also gave ample medical advice which was divided into two groups: prophylactic measures and cures. Although we know now that some suggestions were incorrect, I have concentrated on information that proved to be of use in fighting the disease.

The most important precautionary suggestion was: "If at all possible, avoid contact with sick people!" In case of pneumonic plague this is very important because the bacilli can be transferred by droplets from the nose and mouth. (This includes pets as well.) General cold symptoms often hid the onset of the worst killer, the pulmonary form of pestilence, and the wish "Gesundheit," was a real concern for all that surrounded the sneezer. All plague treatises suggested light and nutritious diets, which included fruits and meat. Fresh air and abstinence of sexual activities were part of prophylactic measures.

Early diagnosis was done by urine analysis even when

discoloration of the skin or lesions were not yet apparent. Many old woodcuts show doctors examining flasks of urines (fig.23). Once the plague was diagnosed, bleeding the patients as well as purgatives were generally recommended by the physician. A long list of herbs, which were used to prepare ointments Zugsalbe, was a must in any medical discussion of the plague. The oldest, and most consistently cited medicine was Theriak. This concoction of herbs has a mythological origin, and was specified by Galen (129-199 A.D.) to be of greatest importance for any apothecary. In the baroque period it existed in two forms: Triaca di Venezia, which was very expensive and only available to the rich because it contained opium, and Theriak pauperum.¹⁸

The sanitary laws decreed that all personal belongings of sick people, such as bedding and clothes, needed to be burnt. The houses where people had fallen ill had to be closed for a prescribed length of time, after which they had to be disinfected by fumigation with sulphur or gunpowder and then aired out before they could be declared habitable. Wind, fresh air, and cleanliness were recognized as effective measures against the plague. Cleaning stone floors with mildly acidic chemicals, such as vinegar, was recommended as early as the sixteenth century.¹⁹ Modern scholarship proved that the plague bacillus has little resistance to antiseptics, heat, or direct sunlight.

The ordinances also informed people of their duty to

separate the sick from the healthy. Infected persons were to be reported and sent to a hospital where they were housed in different units depending on their sex and the stage of their illness. If people refused to go to the pesthouse, they were shut up in their own home without help or financial assistance and their families had to remain in quarantine.

White canes would indicate that the person had been in contact with plague victims. Bassano's St. Roch shows the saint's pilgrim staff with a tied white kerchief (fig.16). Infected houses were marked with white crosses. Domenico Tintoretto's modello for his votive painting shows such a x-shaped cross on the door. In his final version, dated 1631, such mundane details were suppressed (fig.24).

There were rules on how to dispose of bodies and how to bury them. The few lucky persons who recovered were kept, if at all possible, in convalescent homes before they could rejoin the healthy population. They had to receive new clothing, a matter of importance but also of great cost to the government. The wealthy had to provide money for food and care for themselves while the secular authorities had to reimburse the institutions for the care of the destitute.

Discipline, like health laws, was generally the responsibility of secular authorities. Punishments during the plague were severe because the well-being of so many was at stake. A book on civic

regulations published during an epidemic was titled Gold (for public expenses), Gallows (for violators of health laws), Fire (to eliminate infected objects). In 1630 Milan witnessed one of the worst mistrials in its history: men were falsely accused of maliciously smearing the church benches with an ointment that allegedly transmitted the plague, an episode dubbed Colonna Infame. A print shows the culprits taken to their execution. The column is seen on the right (fig.25). Other offenders are visible on various instruments of torture in an effort to uphold the law under such trying times as an epidemic.

Sanitary commissions were headed by gentlemen of substance appointed by the government for a certain length of time. Physicians were also men of rank. The doctors seldom exposed themselves to patient contact; because of their higher education, they appeared only in an advisory capacity. Socially much lower were the surgeons who performed the actual physical examinations and treatments. They, along with the attendants of the pesthouses, the messengers, guards, and grave-diggers (who occupied the lowest rung on the social ladder) belonged to the most endangered group.

Seventeenth-century plague surgeons wore long leather or waxed canvas gowns that covered their whole body. They also donned bird-like masks (fig.26).²⁰ They were frequently depicted in plague literature, but they are absent in religious plague

scenes. I detected such a figure in a secular genre painting, Johannes Lingelbach's The Carnival in Rome, c.1656 (fig.27). The bird-like creature in the background is almost indistinguishable from the other masks of carousing revellers (fig.28). The attention of the viewer is drawn by a man riding in front of the plague surgeon, pointing to this "dreaded figure." In the foreground, a physician, also on horseback, carries a large tome under his arm and has a sign "doctor" on his back (fig.29). The whole scene reflects the artist's irony and distrust in the medical skills at hand.

Hooded masks with coveralls are still worn by modern plague research teams (fig.30). They curiously resemble the outfits of the medieval flagellants, fanatic religious bands that tried to purge the countryside of pestilence by self-inflicted pain in an effort to appease God (fig.31).

The chaotic conditions in a major city during an epidemic are first depicted by Mattia Preti in his plague modelli, commissioned in 1656, at the height of a Neapolitan epidemic (fig.32). These sketches were intended as preparations for the apotropaic frescoes over the seven city gates. With total lack of human sentiments galley slaves are shown disposing of corpses. They were the only ones left to bury the dead and had been promised freedom as an incentive if they exposed themselves to the disease. They wore masks to avoid contagion from putrid air

and were known to have used pitchforks to escape direct contact with the corpses.

The Neapolitan chronicler Micco Spadaro filled his canvas with anecdotal details. The Piazza Mercatello during the Plague is a faithful record of a microcosm of human suffering, a drama that took place outside the city walls, where a health department deputy is directing the muzzled galley slaves in a superhuman effort to clear the place of decaying corpses (fig.33). Each individual group within the painting tells of another tragedy. For example, a woman is shown, forsaken by all, who is about to give birth. This motif appears in many of the secular plague paintings, but is missing from religious scenes. It must have been based on real observations since medical studies show that almost all pregnant women miscarry at the onset of a plague infection.²¹

Although the realism displayed in medical subjects was not in demand in religious baroque paintings, the clergy made valiant attempts to curb the disease during an epidemic. If this seems to contradict the ideology of the Church because the plague was considered a just punishment sent by God for human sins, one has to understand that after the Council of Trent the official view on the avenging God had been modified. It was by no means a vindictive deity who brought on the scourge, but rather God's love for his people expressed in a warning which they should welcome as an opportunity to mend their ways before facing their Maker.

An excellent illustration of this reasoning is offered in the medical innovations introduced by St. Charles Borromeo, who thanked his "lucky stars" for having been archbishop of Milan during one of the worst outbreaks of the sixteenth century, because it finally turned his congregation toward a more spiritual life. He fought the disease with the latest medical knowledge and insisted on the most rigidly observed prophylactic measures to secure the health of his flock. The effect that this progressive religious leader had during the time of crisis can be measured in the relatively low death toll throughout the city. He created outdoor, makeshift hospitals and open-air altars. The archbishop was known to carry a sponge soaked in vinegar at all times to avoid contagion. The fact that he and almost all members of his household survived despite constant contact with plague victims seemed at the time "like a miracle" and a sign of God's favor. However--what may again seem inconsistent to the modern mind--St. Charles was adamant that outdoor religious processions must continue, even against the direct orders of the sanitary commissions. His reasoning can be understood only in light of his strong convictions that his duties to God as his representative on earth made religious practices more important than any human laws.²² The moral dilemma created from diverse views on medical issues and religious obligations, frequently encountered in plague literature, will be treated in a later chapter.

THEOLOGY

Roman Catholic ethics and liturgical practices depicted in the visual arts have drawn little attention from art historians or from theologians, yet, the accuracy achieved in portraying Catholic rites in plague scenes is noteworthy. The close adherence to post-Tridentine teachings make these paintings important historical records.

The Council of Trent did not make any revisions or reforms on already established dogmatic questions; it only interpreted them and republished the decisions of previous councils. The two major issues under discussion concerned the Canon of Justification and the seven sacraments.²³ In the beginning of the seventeenth century all the rules were codified--along with doctrines and rituals. They were taught in Catholic countries until Vatican II.

The Reformation had a tremendous impact on the ethical education of the masses, not only in Protestant regions but in the Catholic countries as well. As John Bossy remarked, "The Reformation brought to a conclusion the process of replacing the seven deadly sins by the Ten Commandments as the system of Christian ethics."²⁴ This was true for all Christian faiths, but, most of all, it caused a change in the approach to sin and redemption in the Roman Catholic Church itself. For the first

time abstract concepts of sin, such as pride, gluttony, lust, were exchanged for a lucid judiciary system of commands: Observe the holidays of obligations! Honor your father and your mother! Thou shalt not steal! Until the end of the Middle Ages people had lived in irrational fear of punishment because they were left in the dark as to whether or not they had done enough to please God. Religious instruction and the sacraments had fallen into disuse, and there was much abuse through superstitious behavior. Consequently, the hour of death, the possibility of the dreaded mors malo, was, for the majority of people who had not lived in an aura of sainthood, a constant threat. Memento mori! This very attitude had caused Luther to dissent. Calvin, Zwingli, and others joined him, and each of the sects issued their teachings in catechisms.

"For nearly twenty-five years Roman Catholics considered catechism publishing as the exclusive right of heretics and regarded such manuals as a badge of heresy."²⁵ In 1566, however, Peter Canisius published the first Catholic version for the much-needed instruction of the public. It became an integral part of the reformation within the Catholic Church. The change in the emphasis on ethical values during this revolutionary period was immense.

Catholic catechisms, such as Canisius's Catechismus: Kurze Erklarung der furnehmsten Stuck des wahren Catholischen

Glaubens contained the Credo, the Ten Commandments, Bible quotes to support the teachings on the pope's supremacy, to which each Catholic had to pledge total allegiance, a brief explanation of the importance and form of the sacraments, the cardinal and Christian virtues and cardinal sins, the necessity for good works, and that God will consider the smallest good as well as the least of the unforgiven sins which will be weighed carefully by Christ.

According to the catechism, the most important obligations of Roman Catholics can be summed up as follows: Practicing Catholics had to pray, fast, and give alms. They had to perform spiritual as well as corporal works of mercy. To remain in the state of grace (a supernatural assistance of God bestowed on a rational being with a view to his sanctification) they were obligated to confess at least once a year and receive communion during the paschal season. With great practicality, the post-Tridentine Church watched over the spiritual progress of its congregations, by registering through the local clergy, all members in the liber status animarum. Every Catholic had to bring written proof ("the holy cards for Communion") that he or she had carried out these religious duties.²⁶ Because of the constant surveillance, the flock could never stray far from the folds of Mother Church. Every parish priest and bishop was accountable on Judgment Day for the souls of his wards.

The sum of these new catechetical rules find their visual

recordings in baroque plague paintings, which differ from pre-Reformation plague scenes in subjects and meanings. They do not express senseless fear as in earlier death imagery. After 1600, the gruesome background of an epidemic was intended to remind the faithful of the ultimate truths and the seriousness of their obligations. Giuseppe Maria Crespi's painting of Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting the Victims of the Plague, c. 1735, shows two Olivetan monks kneeling in the midst of the suffering people, consoling them in their hour of need (I). Other plague patients gaze, transfixed, upon the arriving priest who carries the Eucharistic in a covered container. Despite the presence of death, the people are not forsaken, nor are they without spiritual guidance. Such paintings inspired hope because they translated the 1720 plague sermon by Bishop Belzunce of Marseilles into pictorial language: "He (Christ) wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live!"²⁷ The scenes evoke a positive outlook since the pious could avail themselves of the sacraments of the Church during the hour of death and the possibility of gaining heaven was even closer at hand during an epidemic. Everybody knew that during such trying times the pope would open the treasures of the Church and grant dispensations and possibly plenary indulgences to help the faithful. Papal bulls promised spiritual rewards for those who had risked their lives in the service of others in "heroic charity...not less

glorious than martyrdom, when we expose ourselves to it voluntarily, when facing almost certain death."²⁸

Plague paintings could be called illustrations of the catechisms, a new subject in literature, and therefore also a new subject in the visual arts. The messages expressed were intended to teach people an ethical approach to everyday problems. This lesson is best illustrated in Lorenzo Garbieri's St. Charles adores a Plague Cross where corporal works of mercy are portrayed by those who tend the sick (II). A mother teaches her child how to fold its hands in prayer, and other figures express filial love as well as concern for their fellow man.²⁹ Religious education within the family unit was one of Charles Borromeo's concerns. One important point is stressed in every one of the paintings: the necessity of Catholic clergy to help gain salvation:

It is through the sacerdotium that we are sanctified; the priest is mediator and interpreter of God's law, the vessel of divinity who conveys the promise and the means of salvation.³⁰

These ideas expressed in plague paintings were easily understood even by the illiterate masses. The scenes also served as a constant reminder of ethical behavior in times of adversity, even in more mundane and happier periods. Although some of the paintings, particularly in the north, had been painted by Protestant artists, the patrons were Catholics. Since they had intended these religious plague scenes for the education of the public, these

pictures must have come under special scrutiny by Church officials. Some of the pictures' subjects can even be termed polemic; therefore, Protestant viewpoints must be included in this discussion.

Although the Protestant factions pursued more or less iconoclastic tendencies in church decorations, they subscribed to the adage that "a picture is worth a thousand words" when it came to the printed page. Therefore, along with polemic pamphlets, illustrated Bibles, and catechisms, the Protestants also circulated prints to educate the masses and to persuade people to join their ranks. Nowhere are the basic differences between the two religious philosophies better illustrated than in the woodcut of Lucas Cranach, the Younger, entitled Differences between Lutheran and Catholic Service/ (Unterscheid zwischender waren Religion Christi/und falschen Abgottischenlehr des Antichrists in den furnemsten stucken). The print, published about 1545, is a masterpiece in conveying the chasm that had opened in the Christian community after 1517, when Luther published his ninety-five Theses in Wittenberg (fig.34). This effective and comprehensive propaganda sheet, which addresses the main controversial issues, will serve as an introduction to the theological discussion.

The print is divided into two parts symbolizing the dichotomy of the two branches of Christianity, which are preached

from the two pulpits. The right-hand side represents the Catholic Church with all its shortcomings, as seen through Protestant eyes. The left-hand side corresponds visually to the right but the details reveal the dogmatic changes after the Reformation: The Protestant preacher proclaims the Word of God from an open Bible on which his left arm rests. His right arm is extended and points to a banderole that gives him direct access to heaven. The words are supported by the kneeling Christ and the Agnus Dei before God and symbolize the Protestant belief in justification through faith (fide sola). The divine figures are surrounded by angelic heads, probably indicating the innocent, unbaptized children in heaven who will not have to suffer in purgatory until Judgment Day.

Since the Protestants recognized only two of the established seven sacraments--Baptism and the Eucharist--those are the only sacraments depicted. According to Luther, Baptism causes the forgiving of the original sin, exemption from death and promise of life everlasting if the person will remain strong in his faith. Visible in the print is a large baptismal font from which Melanchthon scoops up the water which he then splashes on the infant (fig.35).

The celebration of the Eucharist had somewhat different meanings in the teachings of the individual Protestant sects. However, none accepted the Catholic doctrine that the p r i e s t renewed the sacrifice (transubstantiation) during mass.

Every Protestant leader had attacked the Catholic practice of allowing only the priests to partake of bread and wine during Communion. They insisted on the literal interpretation of the evangelic message that the cup should be served to the whole community communio utraque. Therefore, Christ's words appear next to the crucifix of the Redeemer in Cranach's woodcut: "Trincket alle daraus. Matthe. 26," the very words that were responsible for the Protestant secession from the Church. The differences in the Eucharistic ritual is depicted in the print where a minister and a layman serve Communion to the congregation in both species: bread and wine (fig.36). The innovation in the service is further stressed by the depiction of the patene and the chalice they are holding. A small amount of communion wafers and a wine jug are prominently displayed on the altar. Of course the Protestant artists had not invented the motif of two figures serving bread and wine. It goes back to early Christian practices, as is the case in the Riha Patene's Communion of the Apostles (fig.37) where Christ is seen twice in a single scene, serving the two forms of the sacrificial gifts.

On the right-hand side of the Cranach woodcut, the Catholics are shown as lacking all communication with God the Father, who appears angry and terrifying. Some of the fire that rains from heaven reminds one of Durer's Apocalypse and refers to the medieval Church's preaching of God's wrath that would

cause epidemics and other scourges (the very concept baroque imagery tried to change). The sainted intercessor, kneeling in front of the deity, is isolated from God and floats in his own space in the clouds. The figure of Christ is nowhere to be seen.

If the Protestants believed in fide sola, the Catholics subscribed to a more intricate system of redemption. The Council of Trent had stated that the members of the human race are equipped with "free will" to work toward their own salvation. Although Confession absolved the faithful of their capital and venial sins, the soul needed to be purified in purgatory before going to heaven. This "imaginary" holding-place had been introduced originally into the Catholic theology to inspire confidence and to abolish the finality of the alternatives between heaven or hell.

The concept of purgatory was revised over the years, and it became a place less like hell, where devils tormented the souls, to a place of purification. The differences can be seen in the print by Jerome Wierix after Bernardo Passero dated 1593, where he depicts purgatory next to hell; the following circle is occupied by the unbaptized children, and the outermost circled by limbo where the patriarchs and just men and women of the Old Testament await their liberation by Christ (fig.38). In contrast to the still frightening hieratic order, Federico Borromeo determined that his artists should portray purgatory by showing angels serving the

suffering souls. This is seen in an eighteenth-century woodcut (fig.39).³¹ To shorten the waiting period in purgatory, "good deeds" could be performed and indulgences acquired. This could even be done retroactively for departed souls by the living members of the Church.

Cranach directs his biting sarcasm against all these traditional teachings (fig.34). He characterizes the Catholic priest on the right with a little devil sitting on his shoulder; the "Good Book" is missing, and the priest is not graced by a visible bond with God. The fat preacher does not extend his hand toward heaven, but points instead to a group of feisty monks seated at an empty "lenten table" signifying the prescribed fasts. Carnival is symbolized by a fool. To their right, a priest celebrates a Eucharistic mass without a congregation (missa privata), a practice the Protestants rejected for a number of reasons. First, because such masses were often "bought" for the repose of departed souls, and since the concept of purgatory had been abolished there was no need to pray for the dead. Second, and most importantly, in Luther's sacramental theology, a Eucharistic celebration was valid only if some of the members of the congregation received communion. In addition to these controversial issues Protestants further objected to the intercession of the saints, processions, the image of the Virgin, blessing of liturgical objects, donation of candles, holy water, and the last

rites. All these cherished Catholic customs, depicted in the woodcut, had been declared by Luther as "kindische unnotige Werke." Moreover, the artist hints at the misuse of large funds, often extracted from the dying. Selling of indulgences had triggered the Reformation, and in the foreground of Cranach's print, Monk Tetzl stands before a table heaped with gold, beside him a nun helps the pope rake in the money. The foreground is filled with coffers and money bags in protest against the custom of redeeming souls and granting absolution from sin with worldly goods and alms-giving. Luther objected to "good deeds" as part of redemption as early as 1521, when he wrote Von den Guten Werken. He quoted St. Augustine: "Good deeds are Faith, Hope, and Love, not mindless prayers of rosary and donating buildings." Protestants had a cautious approach toward "good works" for an important theological reason as well; in their view, "free will" seemed to diminish God's power to deal with mankind. Calvin, defender of "predestination," argues that men should not be overly concerned with their own salvation. He believed that humans were created to adore God on this earth, he wrote, "Deo enim, non nobis nati imprimis sumus."³²

The concept of good works is one of the most vital issues in Catholic doctrine depicted in post-Tridentine plague scenes. As I will explain later in more detail, these pictures served as a subtle but persuasive answer to Protestant attacks such as the one

illustrated in Cranach's print: The "vengeful God" was soon revised by the Roman Catholic Church, and an accepting Christ, or a gentler Virgin, appear in plague pictures. Giordano's votive painting The Virgin and St. Gennaro intercede for the Plague Victims serves as an example for typical seventeenth-century perspectives on life and death (fig.40). Decaying corpses fill the terrestrial part of the painting while the double intercession of Virgin and saint before Christ is bathed in the most glorious, "divine" light. In ex-votos such as this, one can justifiably speak of a revival of medieval piety.

The narrative plague scenes, on the other hand, have a documentary approach to religious art. They stress the saints' ministry on earth. If the religious heroes were known to be ordained priests, they are frequently shown dispensing the sacraments to the suffering victims. Five of the seven sacraments are illustrated in plague scenes: Baptism, Communion, Extreme Unction, Confirmation, and Confession. (Marriages were forbidden during an epidemic and Ordination would never have taken place outside a church.) Processions, intercessory saints in prayer, rosaries, and other pious traditions are often included in these images.

Illustrations of religious ceremonies need to be compared to quotes from the Rituale Sanctorum Gregori XIII of 1584-1602, the official Roman publication on sacraments, Church rituals, and

prayers (also known as Rituale Romanum or Rubric) to establish the subjects portrayed in the individual paintings. This Latin text was known to clergy and informed laymen.

The very definition of a sacrament as an "outward sign" would lend itself well to depiction. Yet, for enigmatic reasons, no continuous visual tradition of the seven sacraments exists.³³ Up to a certain point, this gap is filled by post-Tridentine plague paintings.

Infant baptism was an important issue since many of the Protestant catechisms illustrated adult baptisms. The Catholic Church was adamant; it ordered under threat of excommunication, that babies be christened before they were nine days old.

Lodovico Carracci's St. Charles baptizes an Infant in a Plague Encampment shows the saint making a supreme effort, risking his own and his attendants' lives, so that this tiny orphan will not go to purgatory should the child die before receiving the sacrament (III). The artist represents the Catholic ceremony in minute detail. The archbishop wears his "choir cassock" with his train "down," carried "in state" as specified by the Caeremoniale.³⁴ The use a separate baptismal bowl had been ordered in the Rituale Romanum (tit.II c.1, n.30) for regular church services. The holy water is poured from a liturgical vessel. (Even after Vatican II, the differences between Protestant and Catholic rites still exist).

Private or provisional baptisms, permissible when there was danger of death, were not depicted in plague scenes. Nonetheless, they are often implied in such paintings by the placement of bowls in the vicinity of sickly-looking infants. Jacopo Bassano's St. Roch uses this motif (fig.41). The same artist displays a similar bowl in the St. Valentine baptizing St. Lucilla, seen here in a detail (fig.42). After the christening, a small piece of white cloth is given to the infant in memory of the white gown worn by the catechumen. In plague pictures white ribbons, sometimes stained with blood, lie next to a baby and probably serve as a reminder of such a ritual. Luti's St. Charles administers the Extreme Unction (IV) shows the ribbon and the bowl in the foreground--now turned into a container for holy water with an aspergillum. The baptismal water is indicated in the clear glass bottle next to the child sleeping on his mother's lap.

The last rites were intended to reduce the consequences of sin and to strengthen--even the physical--health of the sick. Luti's painting is one of the few depictions of that sacrament in post-Tridentine art. Various reasons can be given for the sparsity of illustrations of that theme. First, because the Church insisted on a number of preparatory steps such as confession and communion, it required of the priest more than one trip to the infirm. During epidemics, when plenary indulgences were granted, the reception of the Eucharist per modum viatici frequently replaced the

Extreme Unction as the sacrament for the dying.

In Garbieri's St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a plague-stricken Priest, an acolyte is laid out in his surplice (V). He is barefoot, which would have told the Catholic viewer that before expiring he has received the Extreme Unction. Bare feet were associated with these last rites, as shown already in Breviarium Grimani, c. 1510-20 (fig.43). However, during an epidemic, the Church recommended that its clerics reduce the five applications of the holy oil to a single one, usually on the forehead ("una unctio in aliquo sensu [et consultius in capite]") as seen in Luti's work.³⁵ The second reason for the rare examples of the Extreme Unction may be its comparative unpopularity after the Council of Trent, when Protestants often ridiculed it by speaking of "grease" rather than of sanctium oleum infirmorum in their attacks on this sacrament.

Oil of olives, blessed by a bishop on Holy Thursday, was necessary for the last rites. It is visible in Benedetto Luti's St. Charles administers the Extreme Unction in the little glass bottle, next to the container of cotton, on the salver held by an acolyte. The painting shows the abbreviated ceremony performed on a comatose woman because, according to the Rubric, the holy oil could be administered to the infirm--if they are known to be in the state of grace--"who have fallen into delirium...or even when the person is unable to make a sign of sorrow or acknowledgment

of sin."36

Along with the sacrament for the dying, Confirmation also incurred the special wrath of the Protestant reformers. During the sixteenth century this sacrament, designed to convey grace and strengthen the recipient to lead an "adult" Christian life, had also fallen into disuse. The Catechismus Romanum emphasized the importance of Confirmation since the sacrament had been neglected for so long. Consequently, when St. Charles realized during the 1576 epidemic that many of the adult members of his congregation had not been confirmed, he went to administer the sacrament to large crowds. His biographer Giussano published in 1610 a touching story that took place in one of the lazzaretti.³⁷ Illustrated by Camillo Landriani, it follows the text closely (VI). Since only bishops are allowed to confirm, Charles Borromeo is seen in his episcopalian regalia. The artist emphasizes how the prince of the church would expose himself to the danger of contagion. St. Charles confirms Adults during the Plague Epidemic of 1576 depicts the archbishop in the act of anointing with chrism the forehead of a man suspected of having the plague, while very sickly, suffering patients look on. It is clear that St. Charles would confirm them as well because he could not let them go without the spiritual consolation they so ardently desired (fig.44).

The sacrament of Penance is also depicted in plague scenes. Before confessionals were common, the penitent would kneel before

the priest in public places. Illustrated books on Christian Doctrines show the symbol of Penance or Confession: the rod (fig.45). In Antonio De Bellis's plague scene St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim, a priest wearing a simple cassock and biretta is leaning casually on a rod, listening to a confession of a peasant (VII).³⁸ In the same series of paintings St. Charles blesses a Plague Victim, the cardinal archbishop stands in front of a man showing a plague wound (VIII). The diseased's whole attitude expresses remorse. His hand rests on the left side of his chest (since Augustine, the seat of sin), seemingly uttering the word "misereatur." St. Charles lifts his hand to grant absolution. Under normal circumstances penance would have to have been done before communion could be received. However, in case of illness this could be postponed until recovery or even waived altogether. The implications here would be that the plague victim is being prepared for the last rites or more likely for Communion.

After the sacrament of Penance, the viaticum or De Communionem Infirmorum would be brought to a sick person (the last communion has long been called viaticum, since it prepares the way out of this world into the next). The Eucharist received per modum viatici requires that the priest bring it to the house or, in the paintings, to the plague encampments and hospital wards in a designated procession from church. According to the

Rubric certain rituals needed to be observed:

It may be seen that great pains are taken to have the Bl. Sacrament always accompanied by lights, no matter what the state of the weather. The baldachinum or canopy is supported by long staves...or the umbrella is a small canopy which opens like an umbrella...it is supported by a single staff.³⁹

The priest carries the pyxis (small container) or ciborium (a larger liturgical vessel designated for storing or transporting already consecrated hosts) "reverently clenched close to his chest." The bell mentioned in the Rituale Romanum was usually carried by the accompanying acolyte to alert the people on the way that the "Body of Christ" was being taken to the infirm. In de Bellis's painting St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim the saint steps forward from under his baldachin holding the communion wafer in the way prescribed in the Rituale Romanum "with the thumb and the index finger of the right hand." The priest is "required to let the infirm see the host" while he says "Ecce Agnus Dei." (To which the sick person replies, if at all possible, "Domine, non sum dignus.")⁴⁰ The importance of viewing the wafer is stressed in Catholic, but not in Protestant, theology. The difference is visible in Cranach's communion scene where the recipient has already consumed the Eucharist (fig.36). In every single one of the Roman Catholic paintings the host is the visual focal point, not only for the viewer, but also for the communicant.

The Rubric also decrees that, while carrying the Eucharist to the infirm, the priest must bare his head and the ciborium be veiled. A detail taken from Anciet Lemonnier's St. Charles carrying the Viaticum to Plague Victims shows the minister lifting the humeral to reveal the ciborium's cover (IX). In plague literature some confusion exists about the interpretation of processions in the Catholic Church.⁴¹ Therefore, it is important to differentiate between the procession with the viaticum, described above, and other plague probitiary processions staged by the Church.

Apart from the visitations of the sick, there were intercessory processions during epidemics, such as the ones recorded in 1576, where Charles Borromeo is characterized as a penitent to placate God: barefoot, wearing a hooded coat, and a rope around his neck, like a condemned criminal to gain God's favor for the city (X). He would still walk under a baldachin because of the reverence extended to the reliquary of the "Holy Nail." In such a procession the priest is not required to walk "nudo capito" as specified in the Rubric for carrying the Eucharist.⁴²

Thanksgiving processions, such as La Processione del Redentore, to the Venetian votive church, were held when an epidemic was officially declared to have ended (or an anniversary of such events). The Eucharistic monstrance would be exposed for

adoration and carried under a baldachin. The clergy in the procession would wear their full regalia including mitres and birettas (fig.46). Recordings of such pageantry have a long tradition in religious art.

The transferral of the Blessed Sacrament to the sick and the actual distribution of the communion is by far the most popular subject in plague paintings. By the same token, it is also the most controversial topic and, therefore, most frequently found in altar painting in regions which had to defend their ceremonies against Protestant practices.

The chalice, which signified faith, was one of the most important symbols in Christian art. Since it was denied to Catholic laymen, it would not be visible in a painting unless the scenes described communion during mass. In that case the chalice stood on the altar as in Jean-Leon Gerome's Last Communion of St. Jerome (fig.47).⁴³ When the Eucharist was served outside mass, the wafers would be distributed from a ciborium (fig.48) or, in the case of Veronese's devotional image of c. 1585, the Last Communion of St. Lucy, from a pyxis (fig.49).

The depiction of a chalice-like ciborium became popular after 1600. One of the first reflections of post-Tridentine teachings of the Rituale Romanum is found in Procraccini's Charles Borromeo receives the Viaticum (fig.51).⁴⁴ The Council had decreed that priests had to wear liturgical dress, at least the stole, and would

receive the viaticum without wine (fig.51).⁴⁵ This restriction to a single form of the Eucharist in clerical death-bed rituals would have been instituted for the very same reason that had swayed the Catholic Church to refrain from serving the chalice to the laity, the concern for the danger of spilling Christ's blood. The theological explanation was that according to Catholic doctrine, after the consecration during mass, the bread and wine is truly changed into Christ's Body and Blood (transubstantiation) and that in the tiniest morsel of both forms Christ would be present in totality.

The motif of a plague victim receiving the viaticum created the welcome opportunity to display the chalice-like form, symbol of faith, and at the same time drive home the fact that the proper rite for a lay person would be the consumption of the host only. A popular print after Mignard's painting St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim observes the proper procedure of serving the communion wafer from the chalice-like ciborium (fig.52).

In folk art one finds a more realistic depiction of communion served during an epidemic as, for example, in an Austrian ex-voto where a priest uses "communion tongues" to reach the quarantined people. Several of these tools that had helped avoid contact in serving the Eucharist in time of plague are still preserved (fig.53). Such divergence from observing the

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decorous rites are n e v e r shown in official church commissions, nor are priests depicted wearing leather covers against infection or short civilian clothes.

Tridentine reforms were also concerned with the formation of charitable institutions. The Council of Trent had spent a number of sessions on reviewing the importance of religious hospitals. Two nursing orders were founded after the Council: the *Compagnia dei ministri degli Infermi*, also called the Camilliani after their founder Camille de Lellis, and the Hospitallers, founded by St. John of God. The lay brother's 1690 canonization campaign produced Lazaro Baldi's images St. John of God nurses a Plague Victim (XI). The absence of nuns in seventeenth-century sick rooms is readily explained by Pope Pius V's imposed clausura for all female orders.

The change in religious climate before and after the Council is best documented by comparing Tintoretto's St. Roch (fig.20) with Giacomo Lauro's version of 1605 (XII). It is indicative of the trend before the Council to portray miraculous cures of physical afflictions. In 1549 the artists was still free to depict St. Roch healing a victim by laying on hands. In the seventeenth century, on the other hand, the position of the reformed Church is expressed by the introduction of an ordained priest in Lauro's plague ward and the saint's blessing gestus are in agreement with the new demands for spirituality.

Although the Catholic Church supports the faithful from the cradle to the grave, funeral depictions are conspicuously absent from baroque plague paintings. This can be explained by the disregard for the physical body and death per se. After the Council the fear of dying--and of hell--lessened because of the concept of a merciful passage through purgatory on the way to heaven. Abraham a Sancta Clara, the imperial preacher at the Habsburg court, reminded the faithful in his plague sermon of 1680 of their responsibility to help the many souls of the departed in their transition to heaven by saying prayers, celebrate commemorative masses (Mass for the Dead), and the reception of the sacraments.

Greater emphasis on burying the dead is found in medieval art. The earliest known reaction to the Black Death are the annals of Gillis li Muisis Antiquitates Flandriae ab anno 1298 ad annum 1352. In an example of "popular realism" the illustrator concentrates on the burial of the victims (fig.54). No clergy is present to help the townspeople with their overwhelming task.

A plague funeral is depicted in Stefano della Bella's Plague, c. 1648, etched during the Italian printmaker's sojourn in Paris (fig.55). The famous Cimetiere des Innocents appears as a backdrop for the expressive skeletons carrying off the bodies of two infants. One senses immediately a different mood than in the plague paintings in which suffering seems almost routine. The

painted scenes do not create the same empathy as Bella evokes in the viewer in his tiny masterpiece. The funeral depicted in the print seems to relate to a drawing attributed to Adrien Both (fig.56). It shows a coffin being born toward a church where the customary rituals and prayers would be performed. Such rituals of the dead are never included in narrative religious plague paintings.

Although there are no visual records of Protestant funerals, there is little reason to believe that a Protestant funeral would have looked different, save for the hooded attendants of the charitable Confraternities seen in de Bella's print. From literature, however, we perceive certain differences in the particular emphasis of Catholic and Protestant thoughts on death and dying. A German pastor's diary telling of the plague year 1634-35 has survived. Magister Kunkelin, of the small town of Welzheim, wrote of his double duty, occasioned by the death of his colleague, "in the time of the great dying."⁴⁶ His main concern is not to administer the sacraments to his parishioners, as his Catholic counterparts would have done. The Protestant minister tells that he offers the deceased of his flock a "proper funeral" and a short prayer service for the survivors, since nothing further can be done for the dead. The last, sad duty, for the clergy of all faiths was to register the name, the date, and the cause of death in the parish records.

The differences between the Protestant and Catholic religious practices would have been readily understood by the baroque viewer. Plague scenes brought home the message of urgency, but this was not their main function. The real emphasis was directed at the correct observance of the sacraments, the willingness of the clergy to risk their lives in the service of God, and the ethical and responsible behavior expected of family and friends during traumatic times such as an epidemic. Since teaching catechism was one of the most important duties of the clergy, the didactic altar paintings lightened their task by convincing the masses that they were in "good hands" if they followed the teachings of the alleinseligmachende Church and therefore had nothing to fear.

ART HISTORY

An integral part of my investigation was directed toward establishing the extent of religious narrative plague scenes during the baroque period. There are approximately fifty objects known today. Most of the surviving works are still in situ. They function as altar paintings and fresco decorations in churches. A few religious paintings are now in museums. Because of their rather unappealing subject, they had long been banished to storerooms. Recently, however, greater interest in images of the "human condition" brings them more and more to the forefront. Some examples may still be hidden in the seclusion of monastic institutions and others could unexpectedly resurface on the art market. The opening of the Eastern block has yielded some unpublished examples of plague paintings, and there is now hope that others may come to light.⁴⁷ Rural France, too, needs further investigation, because it is likely that images may have survived there unlike those in the cities that were destroyed during the French Revolution. Because of the great losses in baroque art, I have included later examples in the discussion of French regional paintings. Although one cannot disregard the possibility that paintings in all the countries have been lost, they probably were the work of mediocre artists (otherwise they would have been documented). Over the years they could have been replaced by

more up-to-date subjects without ever having been recorded in old guide books.

Although I have tried in various ways to find additional works by reconstructing original decorations of churches, I had little success. The study of such works as Filippo Titi's Studio di pittura, scultura, et architettura nelle chiese di Roma, or Carlo Malvasia's Le pitture di Bologna, and others, yielded few new items. Anna Faggioli Iacometti's "Note per una iconografia dei Santi delle peste a Ferrara nel XVIII secolo" proved to be similarly disappointing. Among seventy-five entries of plague saints, only four were narrative scenes illustrating St. Charles's life. I concluded that this particular type of religious plague paintings were not as numerous as I had expected. This supports the assumption that despite the enormous impact of the disease on religious works, realistic plague scenes were not a universally popular subject.

The analysis of thirteen altar paintings, in two imperial plague-votive Churches in Vienna produced not a single plague scene.⁴⁸ Although I was able to link each of the altarpieces to plague-related iconography, there was a total lack of interest in such a theme. The same artists employed in St. Charles and St. Peter, however, were known to have created plague scenes for churches that had no connection with an epidemic. I made similar observations in a number of Italian churches as well. Having proof

more up-to-date subjects without ever having been recorded in old guide books.

Although I have tried in various ways to find additional works by reconstructing original decorations of churches, I had little success. The study of such works as Filippo Titi's Studio di pittura, scultura, et architettura nelle chiese di Roma, or Carlo Malvasia's Le pitture di Bologna, and others, yielded few new items. Anna Faggioli Iacometti's "Note per una iconografia dei Santi delle peste a Ferrara nel XVIII secolo" proved to be similarly disappointing. Among seventy-five entries of plague saints, only four were narrative scenes illustrating St. Charles's life. I concluded that this particular type of religious plague paintings were not as numerous as I had expected. This supports the assumption that despite the enormous impact of the disease on religious works, realistic plague scenes were not a universally popular subject.

The analysis of thirteen altar paintings, in two imperial plague-votive Churches in Vienna produced not a single plague scene.⁴⁸ Although I was able to link each of the altarpieces to plague-related iconography, there was a total lack of interest in such a theme. The same artists employed in St. Charles and St. Peter, however, were known to have created plague scenes for churches that had no connection with an epidemic. I made similar observations in a number of Italian churches as well. Having proof

that the narrative religious plague paintings were not votive or even commemorative commissions gave rise to the hypothesis that their purpose had to be of a different nature. The question presented itself: what function was served by realistically painted plague scenes that depict saints performing religious rites? This inquiry will clarify the meaning of such works.

The review of patronage was more successful. A number of prominent paintings were commissioned by religious institutions such as the Fabbrica del Duomo in Milan. The subject was also a popular choice by religious orders, to enhance their patron saint's church. They often belonged to nursing orders. Even individual abbots or theologians used this religious genre to advance a saintly person-of-his-choice for canonization. Very few paintings were commissioned by laymen, and none that I know of are ex-votos. Regional interests play a major role in commissions, for example, St. Charles Borromeo paintings, outside Milan, frequently have Lombard backing. The aesthetic preferences of important patrons such as Federico Borromeo influenced the Lombard region in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Pride of ownership of St. Roch's tomb influenced the choice of such subjects in the Veneto.

The northern examples show less variety in the choice of subjects. St. Charles Borromeo administering the Viaticum to plague victims is by far the most popular imagery because it is

most effective in comparing the Catholic faith with "heretical" sects. Patronage and location often reflect politics in the satellite states of the Habsburg realm. In the eighteenth century, the artists were often selected by Catholic patrons for their religious convictions rather than for their talents.

Although plague literature is vast, writing on plague paintings is sparse. Until recently, most of the works that address plague paintings were not written by art historians. The authors were often physicians fascinated by medical aspects of the plague's depiction in art. Some of the most important articles were written by a medical team of the Pasteur Institute, Drs. Henri Mollaret and Jacqueline Brossolet. Another physician's publication on plague iconography is by Dr. Roger Seiler.

Jean Noel Biraben's Les Hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays europeens et mediterraneens, although not totally reliable, it is of great value for art historical research because it contains maps, charts, and dates concerning the spread of the various epidemics. Emile Male's L'art religieux de la fin du XVIe siecle du XVIIe siecle et du XVIIIe siecle touches on some of the topic's iconological questions. His pivotal discussion tackles the pressing questions of the reasons behind commissions of religious art after the Council of Trent. He emphasizes the importance of the theme of the Eucharist in fighting Protestantism. Within the larger picture, the discussion of the plague subject in the chapter

of "Les survivances du passe. Persistence de l'esprit du Moyen Age" seems justified. Since Male's seminal work, no comprehensive studies on Church policies and their influence on iconography have been published, except for John Knipping's Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands. It holds a wealth of information but is, as the title indicates, limited to northern art. The lacuna of such a work for Italy is apparent. Schiller's Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie is a useful source for Protestant art.

A few articles have been vital for the interpretation of plague scenes such as Boyer's "Un cas singulier: le Saint Charles Borromeo de Pierre Mignard pour le concours de San Carlo ai Catinari." A breakthrough in scholarship on sacraments was J. von Henneberg's 1986 publication on "Poussin's Penance, A New Reading." Even more to the point for my discussion, although somewhat controversial, is John Spike's "The Blessed Bernard Tolomei Interceding for the Cessation of the Plague in Siena: A Rediscovered Painting by Giuseppe Maria Crespi." The collection of papers given at a conference on Charles Borromeo and published by J. Headley and J. Tomaro in 1988 under the title San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastic Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century was extremely valuable to my study.

Dissertations, exhibition-and-museum catalogues are

important resources for addressing art historical questions of individual plague paintings. Few titles, however, are dedicated specifically to the subject of plague: Venezia e la peste 1348-1779 is the best of this group. Although this catalogue is far from comprehensive, it covers three hundred years and addresses questions of medicine, religion, economy, iconography, and style, it was helpful in establishing a historical overview of the Veneto. J.D. Clifton's 1987 dissertation "Images of the Plague and other Contemporary Events in Seventeenth-Century Naples" expands on the Neapolitan exhibit of 1983 Paintings in Naples 1606-1705; however, it offers little insight into the religious background of Neapolitan art. Gail Feigenbaum discussed a number of plague paintings in her recent dissertation, "Lodovico Carracci: A study of his later career and a catalogue of his paintings." Martina Fleischer "Leinwanddekorationen Venezianischer Kirchen vom 16. bis ins 18. Jahrhundert. Malerei und Gegenreformation" made a thorough search into the extent of influence exercised by the pope on religious art in Venice. Melchior Missirini's Memorie per servire alla storia della Romana Accademia di San Luca, written in 1883, also cites documents of papal involvement in the administration of this art association. Hagiographic works, particularly the Church's own records of saints, Acta Sanctorum, 1613-1867, and the more modern version, Biblioteca Sanctorum, 1961-1987, were helpful in interpreting scenes.

Questions of quality of art and style play a minor role in this discussion. Some observations on Italian regionalism, however, will be discussed in the individual sections regarding a particular type of composition. Artists working outside their territory will be scrutinized for differences in style with indigenous works and their possible influences on local masters. This is even more important for the discussion of foreign artists working in and outside of Italy. The observation of, or disregard for, Italian traditions are important indicators of their own Kunstwollen.

NOTES CHAPTER I

1 Charles Gregg, Plagues: the shocking Story of a dread Disease in America today, New York, 1978, 39.

2 M. Ogata, "Uber die Pestepidemie in Formosa," Zentralblatt fur Bakteriologie, Parasitenkunde und Infektionskrankheiten, vol. 21 (1897) 769-777. Drs. Franz & Inge Enzinger translated the article in 1988 and kindly supplied me with this text. Ogata writes how this important discovery came about:

He told the Chinese to bring me the rats, however the man replied that those rats were very dangerous because of the so-called "rat plague," since they can easily infect humans...he brought the two rats to me wrapped in a newspaper. When I opened the package I noticed some fleas on the animals.

3 Poussin's Plague at Ashdod shows a great variety of facial expressions. The individual features could reflect the different temperaments since plague discussions always include comments on the different types of people and their reaction to disaster.

4 Lien-Teh Wu, J.W. H., R. Pollitzer, A manual for medical & public health workers, Shanghai, 1936. Wu illustrates on Pl. XXV, XXVI cervical as well as groin bubos. However, the photographs are of such poor quality that it is impossible to reproduce them for a proper comparison.

5 Wu reports that babies under five months have a surprisingly higher survival rate than any other age group. Wu, 321-322. This medical phenomenon is still unsolved. (Dr. Mary Martossian has suggested that the higher mortality rate among older children may be in part the result of malnutrition, see # 12.) Breast-fed infants seem generally immune to disease. In previous centuries babies were tightly wrapped and were therefore not as vulnerable to flea bites.

6 Hilde Schmolzer suggests in the chapter "Die Lehre von Gift und Gegengift," that applying substances such as a toad, in Latin bufo to a plague bubo (intended to draw the poison from he body) was an intuitive precursor of immunization. She mentions that the use of pus taken from plague bubos, which was consumed to increase the resistance to the disease, may have had an influence on later research. In Die Pest in Wien, Vienna, 1985, 123-128.

7 Gregg, 49.

8 J. W. Mannagetta, a seventeenth-century physician, wrote that plagues often followed mass-deaths of animals, probably because the carcasses were not properly buried:

....pflegt oftmals ein pest einzureissen/ wann das Vieh erkranket und abstirbt/ die toten aass aber nicht begraben/ sondern auf der Strass/ gleich ausser der Stadt...oder den Hunden zur Speis vorgeworfen werden.

Ferdinand Olbort, Die Pest in Niederosterreich von 1653-1683, Vienna, 1973, 20.

9 One of the most controversial medical questions remains the theory of immunity. Several independent reports claim that dogs and birds were immune.

"Pigeons, chickens, and dogs do not respond to inoculation with the bacilli," (Ogata, 778). Dogs' immunity to the plague is also reported by Wu, 145. The most recent studies, involving cases from the United States where people had contracted the plague from their pets, proved that only the cats died, while dogs seemed to be unharmed by their infected flea population. Cipollo, Fighting the Plague in Seventeenth-Century Italy, 1981, 74.

Colin McEvedy suggests:

...that a new species of plague bacillus, *Yersinia pestis*, may have evolved that was less virulent than the previous strain.... and it might have acted like a vaccine. (Scientific American, Feb. 1988, 123.

10 Mollaret and Brossolet give insight into the problematic field of scientific knowledge available to the seventeenth-century artists. They believe that Poussin chose a plague subject because of the 1629-1630 epidemic and that he was convinced it was the same disease described in the Bible. "Nicolas Poussin et 'Les Philistins frappes de la peste'," Gazette des beaux-arts, 73 (1969), 172. I concur, because of the inclusion of a man holding his nose would indicate that Poussin did not think that the people suffered from dysentery. Sixteenth-century medical science identified the Plague at Ashdod as dysentery (a printed marginal comment of a 1562 translation of a Hebrew text: La Biblia che si chiama Il Vecchio Testamento nuovamente tradutto in lingua volgare secondo la verita del testo Hebraea). Otto Neustatter argues in Where did the identification of the Philistine Plague (Samuel 5 and 6) as Bubonic Plague originate that historic Bible commentaries did not acknowledge the possibility of bubonic plague until the eighteenth century. But then, "Gottes Muhlen mahlen langsam!"

11 Wu, 303. Flies can carry plague bacilli but may or may not transmit it to other animals. Under further suspicion are the following insects: mites, ants, mosquitos (have been proven to carry plague bacilli after having bitten an infected person), and lice.

12 Mary Matossian, "Did Mycotoxins play a role in Bubonic Plague Epidemics?" in Poisons of the Past, New Haven, 1989, stresses that wetness is an important factor in the development of microfungi which in turn destroy the body's.

13 E. Schroter, "Raphaels Madonna di Foligno-Ein Pestbild?" Zeitschrift fur Kunstgeschichte (1987), 70.

14 Pestzunder signifies everything that needed to be incinerated. The plague was also called the sticking disease, because it clung to wool, feathers, and furs--anywhere in effect, fleas would nest. Paper was also highly suspect. Stones and metals were believed to have positive qualities.

15 A number of important concepts contributed to the modern conquest of plague. Although progress was slow, ideas that had their origin in empiric knowledge led to the development of a vaccine and the discovery of the bacillus during the first months of the third pandemic in 1894.

The London plague of 1665 was carefully studied by a number of physicians, among them Dr. Nathaniel Hodges, who disputed the claim of the Jesuit priest and scientist, Athanasius Kircher, that he had seen animated "worms" under his microscope. In 1721, during the Marseilles epidemic, another doctor wistfully wrote that perhaps a better microscope would help make these "living organisms" visible.

Some eighteenth-century theories used a psychological approach. They thought that a positive attitude could make the difference in falling ill and suggested that one should not be frightened by the disease.

16 The catalogue of the 1988 exhibition in Osterreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Die Arabische Welt in Europa, describes in detail the important contributions made by the Arabs. The text, however, does not specify any plague subjects.

17 The play on the words "Nazareth" and "lazzaretto" has been explained in various ways. (Lazzaro means also leper in Italian. There are some similarities between leper and plague iconography.)

18 Schmolzer, 40.

19 In cloistered houses of female orders, where stone floors were common, few members were lost. Wooden floors are perfect breeding grounds for fleas (and rats), and can be blamed partially for the great losses of life in remote rural areas.

20 Plague costumes were equipped with masks that looked like bird beaks (possibly because few birds died). These protrusions also accommodated some scented herbs intended to protect against the dangerous plague vapors. The cool and slippery surfaces of the long gowns discouraged the fleas from jumping onto the protective garments. "That the venomous atoms of the miasmas would not 'stick'..." C. Cipollo, Fighting the Plague in seventeenth-century Italy, Madison, 1981, 12. The author quotes a contemporary opinion of Father Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, administrator of the Genoa's pesthouse in 1657: "The waxed robe in a pesthouse is good only to protect from the fleas which cannot nest in it."

21 "Pregnant women almost always abort." Wu, 311.

22 The delicate relationship between Church and State was particularly strained during the time of plague. St. Charles, fully aware of the risk of people gathering in great numbers in small, confined quarters, had church services staggered so that only few people attended mass at any given time and he had outdoor altars built for the quarantined part of the population which were later commemorated with stone crosses.

The sale of some spurious remedies was often discouraged as superstitious nonsense by the Catholic Church. On the other hand, "miraculous cures" from relics were promoted by the clergy.

23 The theory of Salvation by St. Anselm of Canterbury explains the concept of Justification. The original sin had offended God, and men owed God restitution. Men could not compensate for the offense because everything was already God's property, therefore,

Only God himself could satisfy the debt; but since the satisfaction was owed by man, a lawful offer of it could only be made by someone who was both God and man...the weight of the compensation which Christ might claim for his death was more than the world might ever contain. Not needing it himself, he asked the Father that the debt be transferred to his fellow men, which the Father could not in justice

refuse. So man was able at length to make satisfaction, to abolish the state of offense between him and God, and to be restored to favor and future beatitude.

John Bossy, Christianity in the West, 1400-1700, Cambridge, 1968, 3-4. According to the author the importance of "Justification" lay in the kinship and dual nature of Christ. In Catholic theology, the doctrine of justification decrees that the initiative comes from God's grace and not from man's free will, yet it requires man's free cooperation."

24 Bossy, 116.

25 Sister Mary Charles Bryce, Influence of the Catechism of the Third Plenary Council, Washington DC, 1970, 41. The author writes on the development of catechisms: Peter Canisius (1521-1597) created the most influential and popular works. His three textbooks were directed at a variety of audiences. Translated into almost every language known to man and republished for centuries, they insured a consistency in the teachings of the Catholic doctrines throughout the world. Summa Doctrinae Christianae, or Catechismus Major, was published in 1554. It contained 211 questions and answers for the study of the clergy. This Latin version had over 150 editions. The vernacular edition Catechismus: Kurzer Erklarung der furnemsten Stuck des wahren Catholischen Glaubens was less demanding of the reader. It contains questions such as: "Who is a Christian?" (who is baptized within the Church and who shows obedience to the Church, observes the uniform ceremony of the Eucharist--in the dual form for priests, and hosts only for the laity--and the other sacraments by an properly ordained priest, prays, fasts, and gives alms." The statement that any sin (venial and capital) can be forgiven by a priest as long the belief in the "alleinseligmachende" Roman Catholic Church is upheld, is also of great importance.

26 Mary Garrard, Artemisia Gentileschi, Princeton, 1989, 415.

27 J. Betrand, A historical Relation of the Plague at Marseilles in the Year 1720, Farnborough, 1973, 360.

Printed plague sermons are comparatively rare because church services were suspended or at least limited. None of Charles Borromeo's sermons were recorded verbatim. Much has been written about his preaching style. It seems antiquated because of his frequent quotes of the scripture rather than addressing the plague itself. About one hundred years later Abraham a Sancta Clara wrote his opus Mercks Wienn within two month after the end of the ordeal in 1689. Some of his remarks will be quoted in

the text. The letter by Cardinal Belzunce to all his clergy which would be read at the "earliest possible time," gives a dramatic account of the epidemic. And a single Spanish publication, Antonio Viera's Pestpredigt, Aschaffendorf, 1973, needs to be mentioned, although it proves that the plague had made no exception in the Iberian Peninsula, it was written as an essay on St. Roch and lacked interest in the disease.

28 Over the years, the text of papal bulls promising indulgences became more and more explicit. The text of an eighteenth-century breve is quoted in Bertrand, 363-367, and covers all eventualities. Pope Gregory XIII in 1576 was much briefer and did not promise complete remission of sin for those who nursing the sick: "Papa Gregorio XIII concede l'indulgenza plenaria in articulo mortis a tutti gli infermi del mal contagioso confessati in parole o in spirito e minori indulgenza a coloro che visitano i contagitati o comunque "negotiano per la liberatione di tal male" a Venezia e iun terraferma..." Venezia e la Peste: 1348-1797, Venice, 1979, 138.

29 Reformers like Charles Borromeo supported schools of Christian doctrine to teach catechisms to children as well as adults. He stressed the role of the parents as religious educators. P. Grendler "Borromeo and the Schools of Christian Doctrine," in San Carlo Borromeo, Washington DC, 1988, 158-172.

30 R. Douglas, Jacopo Sadoleto: Humanist and Reformer, Cambridge, 1959, 151. R. Bainton, in The Reformation of the sixteenth century, Boston, 1952, sums up Sadoleto's plea--the unfortunate appeal of Geneva's bishop to his former parishioners--to regain control over the Protestant city.

31 "Ach dieses Brot hilfft uns aus der Noth" indicates the importance of the reception of the Eucharist by the living for the departed souls. The Eucharist is called "Bread of Angels."

32 J. Calvin, Musste Reform sein? Calvin's Antwort an Kardinal Sadolet, Gottingen, 1954, 15.

33 The best know example of the fifteenth century is the altar attributed to Roger van der Weyden. In the sixteenth century, the Protestants commissioned a few altar paintings depicting the new Eucharistic rituals. Nicolas Poussin was the only artist to paint a series of The Sacraments in the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth G. M. Crespi created the Seven Sacraments.

- 34 McCloud, Clerical Dress & Insignia, Brooklyn, 1948, 53.
- 35 Most quotes from the Rubric are taken from Rev. J. O'Kane, Notes on the Rubric of the Roman Ritual, New York, 1882, 365 and the microfiche version of the original.
- 36 Ibid., 361.
E. Bowron was the first to emphasize the sacramental theme of the painting. "The Paintings of Benedetto Luti," Diss. New York U., 1979, 167.
- 37 G. Giussano, The Life of St. Charles Borromeo, London, 1884, 424.
- 38 Bossy, 134, writes about the controversy of the sacrament of penance in southern Italy.
- 39 O'Kane, 329.
- 40 Ibid., 340.
- 41 John Spike expressed doubts that the procession appearing on the left-hand side in Crespi's Bl. Bernard Tolomei (III) signifies that the priest is bringing the viaticum. He suggests that Bernard Tolomei had organized a procession in the tradition of Pope Gregory and Charles Borromeo. ("The Blessed Bernard Tolomei Interceding for the Cessation of the Plague in Siena: A Rediscovered Painting by Giuseppe M. Crespi," The John Getty Museum Journal, 15 (1987), 110-116.) I disagree with this interpretation for two reasons: first, the pictorial record clearly shows a priest carrying the Blessed Sacrament to the sick. He is walking under an umbrella, holding an invisible object under a veil
- ante pectus cum omnia reverentia et timor, semper
lumine praecedente, cum fit candor lucis aeternae: ut
ex hoc...et deinde umbellam seu baldachinum subeat,
nudo capite processurus. (O'Kane, 331).
- And second, this would have meant that the artist had taken liberties with the facts that are reported in Bernardo's biography, which seems highly unlikely. See also Chapter III,
35.
- 42 "If there is danger of immediate death the viaticum may be administered even during the delirium to those who have led a good Christian life...the sick person should be exhorted to make a spiritual communion..." O'Kane, 323.

43 G. Ackerman, The life and work of Jean-Leon Gerome: with a catalogue raisonne, London/New York, 1986, 196. "The St. Jerome had many changes made, probably for liturgical reasons: his hat was removed..., the chalice the monk was holding was put on the altar, etc."

44 During the sixteenth century the form of a ciborium changed from a Gothic spire to an object strongly resembling the chalice of the mass. (There are precedents as early as the thirteenth century of chalice-like ciboria.) Church law prescribes that a ciborium has to have a lid and that this liturgical object may not be held with bare hands.

45 O'Kane, 329. A priest would receive the viaticum with proper vestments (at least the stole). In Garbieri's St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a plague-stricken Priest the minister kneeling before the saint is seen wearing his liturgical garments.

46 A. Leopold, Die Pest in Welzheim in 1635, Welzheim, 1936.

47 Dr. Getraut Schikola has kindly inquired on my behalf among Czechoslovakian colleagues and has provided me with some unpublished photographs. I am also grateful to Professor Otto Demus and Drs. Irmgard and Heribert Hutter for being sensitive to my "quest." They alerted me to the St. Charles altar in Papa.

48 C. Boeckl, "Altar Paintings during the Reign of Emperor Charles VI, 1711-1740: Kaiserstil in Vienna," Master's Thesis, Univ. of MD, 1984.

CHAPTER II

ICONOGRAPHY

The development of plague iconography is complex, as its imagery draws upon literary as well as visual sources. Plague motifs, both religious and secular, appear in many different media: paintings, illustrations of texts (prints), sculpture, and even architecture. Some of these plague symbols go back to antiquity, others to the seventh century. The year 1347 A.D. constitutes a terminus post for European narrative plague scenes heralding new imagery. During the Renaissance, some of the most important motifs were invented, and post-Tridentine iconography builds on all of these earlier examples. Its traditions last well into modern times.

The earliest literary mention of pestilence is found in The Iliad. Numerous classical writers, besides Homer, describe plague epidemics, most prominent among them Thucydides, Virgil, and Ovid. Procopius relates the story of the sixth-century plague of Justinian, while the most famous account of the Black Death in the late Middle Ages is found in Boccaccio's The Decameron. The most important religious texts are the Bible, Jacobus de Voragine's The Golden Legend, and various later biographies of saints.¹

In the late Middle Ages, literary sources were transformed

into a visual plague vocabulary. Arrows and swords, for example, were used to symbolize the scourge of God. The oldest symbol of pestilence, the arrow, has its origin in antique mythology, for the Greeks believed Apollo to be responsible for plagues. They also prayed to him as a healer of pestilence, and over the years, Apollo's bow and arrow were incorporated into Christian plague subjects. Typical of such plague symbols are bundles of arrows, resembling Zeus's thunderbolt. The plague-votive church of Santa Maria della Salute, for example, is crowned with such an arrow configuration (fig.57).

Giovanni Sercambi, a Lucchese apothecary, illustrated the Black Death in his Chronicle, written c. 1400. The manuscript shows some of the oldest Christian depictions of plague resulting from divine wrath (fig.58). Here, three bat-winged demons shoot arrows and pour a dark liquid from two flasks to kill people on earth. The two bowsmen probably are an adaptation from Late-Antique illustrations of the Niobe story (often used as a metaphor for plague). A seventeenth-century illustration of Diana and Apollo killing Niobe's Children still adheres to the same antique source (fig.59).² The pouring from phials has Apocalyptic connotations but resembles also the symbol of Aquarius (fig.13).³ The victims show no physical symptoms of the plague.⁴ Corpses, arrows being shot from the heavens, and pollution of air will reappear again and again in plague scenes.

In the Bible, the sword frequently is mentioned in connection with the plague.⁵ The Judeo-Christian philosophy on cause and effect of sin, punishment, and redemption through sacrifice is outlined in the story of David's plague, described in II Sam.24:13. The Old Testament relates how the king has sinned against God's commandment and is offered a choice of punishments. His remorse, frequently depicted in medieval manuscripts, has as its main feature King David kneeling before the messenger of Jahweh, an angel with a drawn sword. The imagery survives for centuries in Bibles and the Missale Romanum. Later versions expand upon textual information: The plague angel offers three choices for the atonement of the king's sin, stalks of grain which symbolize three years of famine, a sword which represents three months of war, and the skull, David's choice, which signifies three days of plague. A cityscape shows the threat of the plague to Jerusalem. God would spare the city because of David's peace-offering: the building of an altar where the Lord's messenger had stopped the killing, the sacred site predestined to be chosen by David's son, Solomon, for his famous Temple. The tradition of raising plague votive altars, chapels, whole churches, or donating votive paintings, dominates the Catholic art world for centuries.⁶

Although David's "remorse" frequently is depicted in book illuminations (fig.60), it seldom appears in paintings, except in an

analogous subject: St. Louis, the royal plague saint, intercedes for his people (fig.61).⁷ Bonone's work is datable to the plague year of 1630, it shows the French king kneeling before an angel who holds the skull and sword. The stalks of grain are replaced by a flagellum, symbolic of God's scourge. The whip-like instrument refers to the medieval flagellants who had tried to stop plagues by appeasing God through self-chastisement (fig.31). The sword, skull, and flagellum are the most common attributes of plague saints.

The only other source for Old Testament plague scenes is found in I Samuel 5:6.

The hand of the Lord was heavy upon the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and flicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territories...He (Yahweh) brought mice upon them, they swarmed in their ships. The mice went up into their land, and there was mortal panic in the city.

Nicolas Poussin's Plague at Ashdod illustrates the Samuel Text (fig.62). His canonical image will be mentioned frequently in this dissertation.

In medieval art, the idea of memento mori often is expressed in the form of skeletons. This is first illustrated in the Danse Macabre, c.1425, in the Parisian Cimetiere des Innocents. Its literary source, a poem by Jean le Fevre dated 1374, had been inspired by the plague of the same year.⁸ In the seventeenth century, Stefano della Bella made one of his strongest artistic

statements in his etching The Plague (fig.55). Its setting is the famous Parisian cemetery. Two skeletons wearing headbands, typical of plague orderlies, carry off the bodies of small children. The white bandages may have developed from the image "Death wearing a Blindfold" (iustitia).⁹ Plague as an Archer is probably derived from the Apocalyptic Rider.¹⁰ The tradition of skeletons representing plague-deaths never ceases in prints.

In religious painting, on the other hand, the 1563 Decree on the Arts, discouraged the use of symbolism, allegory, and personification.¹¹ Still, there are enough exceptions recorded to necessitate a general description of this usage: Allegorical figures in plague imagery include "Pestilence," "Death" personifications of cities, and the "Christian Virtues."

In literature the personification of pestilence can be male or female.¹² Cesare Ripa's description of pestilentia becomes the most lasting source for the visual arts. Although not illustrated in the Iconologia, the figure of plague is vividly described as an old woman with hanging breasts.¹³ The first visual realization of Ripa's allegory may have been Ripamonte's title page for La peste di Milano del 1630 (fig.63). Written in 1641, this book became one of the most informative and widely read discussions of plague and probably helped to disseminate this image. In painting, Ripa's allegory of the plague appears first in the 1650s, Poussin's Vision of Francesca Romana (fig.64) and in Spadaro's Ex-voto of

1657 Thanksgiving after the Plague (fig.65). Both paintings depict the Plague as a frightening old woman. Even better known are the sculptural personifications. The most famous of all, the figure of Plague by Josse de Corte, is found on the Salute's high altar The Queen of Heaven expelling the Plague (fig.66).¹⁴

Skeletons in plague paintings do not make their appearance until the second half of the seventeenth century, and may reflect Bernini's grandiose inventions in his papal tombs. The Venetian Pietro Negri shows a unique composition displaying a skeleton and other allegorical figures in his masterpiece in the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice. The commemorative work Plague Scene in Venice in 1630, painted in 1673, displays a very unusual iconography. The smaller section of the composition describes the terrors of the epidemic (fig.67). People are fleeing; they are frightened by Death (skeleton) and Plague (old hag).

The larger portion of the stairway's decoration (fig.68) shows more positive imagery: St. Michael (spear), the Virgin, and the Christ Child. Three saints, Sebastian, Roch, and Mark, intercede for the City of Venice. The worldly power of the state, indicated by the empty throne, has humbled itself before the divine vision. Venetia is seen kneeling in the foreground. She is surrounded by Faith (cross) and Hope or Religion (dove). Negri also shows a number of Christian (moral) virtues: Prudence (snake), Fortitude (column), Justice (scales), and Temperance (pouring liquid from

one vessel into another). Visually, Negri's Virtues (fig.69) resemble northern, secular allegories. Virgil Sol's mannerist Virtues show similar elongation and refinement (fig.70).¹⁵

The idea of Christ healing through Christian Virtues can be found in folk art. A plague votive painting Christ as Apothecary (fig.71). Christ holds scales with the caption "Justice" which relate to the Last Judgment. The jars on the table are labeled: "Charity," "Hope," "Patience," "Humility," etc. In the center, directly before Christ, stands a chalice with the inscription "Faith." The Eucharistic symbol above reminds of the numerous depictions of the communion administered in the plague scenes.

In votive paintings the Trinity, the Holy Family, St. Michael, and particularly the Virgin, were petitioned for help during epidemics. Such paintings often follow a certain compositional pattern--which seldom feature narrative scenes. Characteristic of votive commissions is their division into two fields, the heavenly and the terrestrial. The lower zone is reserved for the interceding plague saints, donors, and victims. Unless it is a private commission, a painting often will depict a specific city and its heraldry. Since it was thought that "collective guilt" brought on the scourge, it was up to the whole township to commission icons, altar paintings, or flags to appease God. Inscriptions and dates are typical of votive commissions.

The early Christian icons, The Madonna of Constantinople,

and the venerated image in Rome's Santa Maria Maggiore, both believed to have been painted by the physician-evangelist St. Luke, have been invoked against plague epidemics for centuries. In the Middle Ages, the Madonna-Misericordia shelters mankind against plague arrows (fig.6). Her image appears in many baroque prints.

Schemata for plague ex-votos showing the Virgin probably developed from church banners, frequently commissioned during or immediately after an epidemic. Such great artists as Raphael and Guido Reni are known to have been commissioned by local authorities to create gonfaloni. Below is a brief overview of the tradition, and how it became integrated into votive altar paintings.

The processional banner for Perugia's S. Domenico is datable to the late fifteenth century (fig.72). On it Christ himself holds plague arrows, and two angels ready their swords and arrows to follow God's command directing their weapons against the city below, while Mary appears as intercessor in the form of a deesis.

Raphael's Madonna di Foligno recently has been recognized as a plague commission.¹⁶ Indeed the famous painting displays the characteristic votive composition (fig.14). In the heavenly realm, the Madonna of the Nikopoia-type (facing the viewer and holding the Christ Child with both hands) is enthroned. The

eschatological ideas are expressed by an angel with a tablet (replacing the scroll similar to the Perugian gonfalone), by the comet, and by a rainbow. In the terrestrial zone the city of Foligno is visible.

Baroque banners follow the same trend and express similar ideas. In 1630, for example, Guido Reni's Pala della peste shows the Virgin and child seated on a rainbow, framed by an aureole of light and angels (fig.73).¹⁷ For Bologna, seven male saints intercede. The seventeenth-century artist adds some anecdotal touches in the lower half of the painting: biers and horse-drawn pest carts are seen in front of the city wall (fig.74).¹⁸

In 1624, plague-ravaged Palermo commissioned van Dyck to paint the famous Rosary Madonna (fig.75). The Flemish master follows the Foligno tradition in as much as he shows the enthroned Madonna seated in the clouds surrounded by angels. The painting also shares with Raphael's creation the nude boy in the foreground. "Der nackte Knabe mit dem Tafelchen" has lost his tablet but retains another quote from Raphael: a boy squeezes his nose to escape the deadly plague vapors, as first seen in II Morbetto (fig.7).¹⁹

Preti's Madonna of Constantinople belongs to the same tradition (fig.76). A confirmed plague commission, executed during the Neapolitan epidemic of 1656, it shows a nude little angel

seated on the foot of the throne holding a votive banderole.

Some of the seventeenth-century plague ex-votos follow a slightly different pattern, because the Virgin becomes an intercessor herself and kneels devotedly before her Divine Son. A double intercession is shown in the famous design of Cerrini's Roman altarpiece The Virgin and St. Charles interceding for the Victims of the Plague. The original painting is lost. However, its design is recorded in an engraving for the Anno Santo of 1650 (fig.77).²⁰ The print must have been well known. A similar composition was created by Luca Giordano in his Neapolitan ex-voto The Virgin and St. Gennaro interceding for the Victims of the Plague (fig.40). Painted before 1662, the master transforms the basic plague vocabulary into a universal statement. The deities are floating on clouds well above the scene of human suffering: the Grim Reaper had spared neither old nor young, male nor female. The harsh realism is counteracted by the brilliant and sensuous colors in the heavenly realm.

It is difficult to assess iconographic developments in regard to particular influences and inter-dependencies between individual motifs. By the second half of the seventeenth century the votive paintings have become stereotyped. I will only enumerate the best known examples of the late seventeenth century: Gaulli's Madonna of St. Roch and Anthony (fig. 78)--one of the few baroque appearances of the favorite medieval plague saint--and Maratti's

St. Rosalia interceding for the Plague Victims (fig.79).

Eighteenth-century plague altars commemorate earlier, local epidemics. (The real threat of the plague had ceased after the first quarter of the century.) Tiepolo's St. Thecla, engraved by his son Lorenzo Baldissera (fig.80), Gaetano Gandolfi's San Feliciano interceding for Foligno (fig.81), and finally, Jacques Louis David's Madonna and St. Roch (fig.82) are brilliantly executed, yet, the cliches presented have lost the power to convince.

Saints invoked against the plague are too numerous to recount and would exceed the format of this dissertation. The popularity of particular plague saints changes according to region and time. St. Sebastian probably was one of the earliest-known plague intercessors.²¹ With this Christian martyr, the antique tradition of Apollo's plague arrows may have been transformed into Christian symbolism. In the Middle Ages the Black Death brought renewed veneration of this saint who since the seventh century had been invoked against pestilence. Sebastian's encounter with the Diocletian archers is described in The Golden Legend, where the arrows are compared to the "barbes like a hedgehog."²² The very fact that Sebastian recovers from his wounds makes him the most enduring favorite of suffering people. An early German woodcut shows the manifestations of Sebastian's cult in the 1437 Pestblatt (fig.83). It depicts the saint's ordeal with a prayer invoking his help against pestilence.²³ St. Sebastian n e v e r

appears in narrative plague paintings, because he did not nurse victims of the disease as most other plague patrons had done. An interesting example of a baroque devotional picture of the saint is Lodovico Carracci's St. Sebastian, which links the plague-Niobe tradition with the early Christian martyr (fig.84). The heroic looking saint rests his foot on a sarcophagus that bears the classical myth of the proud queen's punishment.

After the Council of Trent, the plague saints most often depicted are not the healers invoked in the Middle Ages, such as St. Anthony or even St. Sebastian, but SS. Gregory, Roch, and Charles Borromeo. These were chosen because of their active involvement in epidemics. They represent the image of the charitable "hero" of the Church. Other saints who had risked their lives in the care of the sick in plague hospitals are as follows: John of God, Camillo de Lellis, Cajetan of Tiene, Francis of Regis, Aloysius of Gonzaga, Francis Xavier, Francis of Paula, and Marcarius of Armenia. "Martyrs of charity" were also the Bls. Bernhard Tolmei and Reniero da Borgo San Sepolcro. Women plague saints who were reported to have tended plague victims in previous centuries were the medieval saints Francesca Romana, Rosalia, and Elisabeth.²⁴ (The female saints are seldom depicted performing their medical duties.)

By the seventeenth century most of the saints had well established attributes. Few, however, had been shown in narrative

scenes before the baroque period. Therefore, new compositions had to be invented. I will restrict my discussion of innovative iconographic scenes to three saints: Pope Gregory, because he was the first to be depicted in a narrative scene; St. Roch, as an example of a pre-Tridentine favorite; and St. Charles Borromeo, the model of a Counter Reformation saint.

One of the oldest plague frescoes depicts St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague (fig.85). It is preserved in the papal city in the Church of S. Pietro in Vincoli. Painted after the plague of 1476, it represents Pope Gregory and his clergy in procession.²⁵ The foreground is littered with corpses. The motif of an angel, accompanied by a demon striking a house with the pestilence, refers to a quote from the Sebastian's chapter in The Golden Legend.

We read in the Annals of the Langobards that in the time of King Humbert the whole of Italy was infected with a plague so violent that hardly anyone could be found to bury the dead: and this plague raged above all in Pavia. There were many who saw with their own eyes an angel in the heavens, followed by a demon with a rod. Whenever the angel commanded, the demon struck, and so made death. And as often as he touched a house, the dead were carried out of it. Then God made known to a pious man, that the bane would not cease until an altar was erected to St. Sebastian in the city of Pavia. The altar was raised forthwith in the church of St. Peter in Chains [hence San Pietro in Vincoli]: whereupon the plague vanished completely. And the relics of St. Sebastian were brought to Pavia from Rome, where his martyrdom had occurred.²⁶

An angel with a demon are frequently depicted in fifteenth

century plague imagery (fig.2).

After the Reformation, the demons are excluded from plague scenes. By the nineteenth century, however, art had come full circle as Romantic trends resurrected the stories in The Golden Legend. The persistence of plague iconography is manifested in Pierre Delaunay's Plague in early Christian Rome, 1869, painted almost four hundred years after the S. Pietro in Vincoli prototype (fig.86). In addition to stylistic changes, its iconography has changed as well, because in the nineteenth-century translation the word "demon" has been replaced by mauvais ange and the artist faithfully follows the modernized text.²⁷

St. Gregory's plague procession itself is mentioned in The Golden Legend.

The plague continued to rage, and the pope [St. Gregory] ordained that on Easter Day a procession should march around the city, bearing the picture of the Blessed Virgin which is in the possession of the church of Saint Mary Major. This picture according to the common opinion, was painted by Saint Luke, who was as skilled in the art of painting as he was in medicine. And all at once the sacred image cleansed the air of infection, as if the pestilence could not withstand its presence; wherever it passed, the air became pure and refreshing. And it is told that the voices of angels were heard around the picture singing...Queen of Heaven rejoice!...To this Saint Gregory promptly responded: 'Ora pro nobis...!' Then above the fortress of Crescentius, he saw a mighty angel wiping a bloody sword and putting it back into the sheath. From this he understood that the plague was at an end, as indeed it was. And thenceforth this fortress was called the Fortress of the Holy Angel [Castello Sant' Angelo].²⁸

Zuccaro's St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague adheres closely to the old text (fig.87). His invention can be dated 1581 and it influenced baroque iconography most decisively because of its optimistic symbolism.²⁹ The angel sheathing his sword in a conciliatory gesture (in contrast to the angel drawing his weapon ready to strike) appears repeatedly in baroque plague scenes that do not directly refer to St. Gregory's vision.

Another saint shown in narrative scenes is St. Roch. His portrayal is based on three comprehensive biographies published around 1500.³⁰ Modern hagiography accepts 1350-1379 as St. Roch's dates and assumes his birthplace to be in France. This fourteenth-century saint is not traceable in the visual arts before the end of the fifteenth century, after his body was transferred from Montpellier to Venice in 1471. Actually, St. Roch never was officially canonized by the Catholic Church because the necessary historical data were missing. He is one of the saints whose popular cult was declared officially casus exceptus by Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644). The reason for this special treatment was Urban's personal admiration for St. Roch after the pope's recovery from the plague in Palermo in 1624.³¹

Although evidence of St. Roch's life is badly wanting, the Church considered him to be an exemplary figure. Of noble birth, the saint had abstained from worldly power and had chosen self-

imposed poverty. His love for his fellow men compelled him to nurse plague victims wherever he encountered them during his pilgrimages. When he contracted the disease himself, he chose solitude, and was miraculously fed by a dog--his constant companion and attribute--and nursed back to health by an angel. The very fact that the saint recovered from the dread disease, and that his intercession had caused so many cures, made him the most popular choice as intercessor in France and Venice.

St. Roch's iconographic roots prove to be rather unexpected because the medieval-looking saint is in reality a fabrication of the Italian Renaissance. Some of the visual sources are outright pagan. Plague wounds of the upper thigh do not appear in plague imagery until the iconography of St. Roch introduced them at the end of the fifteenth century (arm and head bubos were the only ones previously shown). His wound appears to derive from an adaptations of a classical text and its illustration: Aeneas receives an upper-thigh wound in Virgil's epos the Aeneid.³² A Roman painting shows Doctor Japyx removes an Arrow from Aeneas's Leg (fig.76). The hero had been shot in the Battle of Troy but had been miraculously healed through Venus's intercession. This antique scene shares its composition with the title page for Maldura's Vita di S.Rochi, c. 1495 (fig.5). Although the woodcut draws on gothic idioms in the drapery folds, the angel's pose is comparable to that of doctor Japyx's. St. Roch strikes a semi-

heroic stance, leaning on his pilgrim staff in a rather awkward attempt at portraying weight-shift.

Tintoretto's St. Roch and the Venetian tradition of the hospital wards, as well as the subtle iconographic changes that occur after 1563, have been discussed previously (fig.20). After 1600 the inclusion of subordinate scenes showing priests administering the different sacraments becomes a standard feature of most plague scenes that portray non-ordained saints (XII).

Baroque depictions of St. Roch often stress the comparison with Christ. Analogies can be found in the following characteristics: Selfimposed poverty, thaumaturgic powers (manus imponens curabat), love of ones fellowman, self imposed suffering, withdrawal from life to contemplate, saving of men and beasts as tools of a higher power, intercession for the suffering human race, and an unblemished life.³³

One more image of St. Roch can be called epoch-making in regard to iconographic development, a print after Rubens's altar painting for the Church of St. Martin in Alost (fig.89). The composition is a brilliant conflation of major events in the saint's life. St. Roch's thaumaturgical gifts and his unjust incarceration is indicated by the vaulted dungeon filled with suffering people; above Christ, accompanied by an angel, receives the plague patron ("Eris in peste patronus"). What made Rubens's composition so influential was the impressive organization of the architecture and

the characterization of the plague victims' mental states. Their fears, their hopes, and the expression of faith indicated by their gestures and sensitive features will be repeated constantly in narrative plague paintings. Even the straw upon which plague victims are bedded will play a role in plague iconography. Of special interest is the fact that in 1623 Rubens did not depict II Morbetto's plague motifs: he employed neither the mother-child nor the man holding his nose. Rubens's print is reported to have been known in Italy during the seventeenth century.

In contrast to St. Roch, Charles Borromeo was a well documented historic figure. His mother, a Medici, gave birth to him in 1538. St. Charles was only forty-six years old when he died, a legend in his own time, and one of the first religious figures recognized as a saint by the Reformed Church. Before his canonization in 1610, his life already had been described by two biographers and personal friends, a clergyman and a doctor.³⁴ The emphasis of St. Charles' iconography rests on his reputation as model shepherd of his flock, one who gives personal assistance to clergy and laity alike.

The quadroni, the nucleus of his iconography, were commissioned from 1602 to 1604 in an effort to expedite his canonization process. Since the saint did not perform miracles during the plague there are no such scenes in painting.³⁵ The most influential canvases are as follows: St. Charles visits a

Plague Encampment (XIII), St. Charles confirms Adults during the Plague Epidemic of 1576 (VI), St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail (X), St. Charles blesses a Plague Cross (fig.90), and the death-bed scene Charles Borromeo receives the Viaticum (fig.50). Except in paintings executed before 1610, the Archbishop of Milan, is characterized exclusively as a cardinal (wearing, whenever appropriate a rochet, mozzetta, and biretta) as officially requested at his canonization.³⁶ His authenticated portrait, painted by Ambrogio Figino, does not embellish the saint's characteristic large nose or his hollow, cleanshaven cheeks.

The saint's reputation of serving the sacraments to the plague victims created a new genre in the Catholic Church: "communion served to laymen." Its prototype Charles Borromeo receives the Viaticum already differed from the old topic, the iconography of the "last communion of a saint," in a number of aspects (fig.50). First, St. Charles's last communion was not miraculously served by Christ, nor was the recipient a saint at the time the painting was completed; and second, the death-bed scene recorded realistically the events in the saint's bed chamber as described by his biographers. Although lay-communion was not part of the Church's repertoire in painting, depiction of this sacrament existed in fifteenth-century woodcuts. A popular print may originally have inspired Cerano's bedside communion (fig.91).

For fifty years after the canonization the Charles-

iconography is diversified, showing a variety of scenes from the saint's life. Lodovico Carracci's St. Charles baptizes an Infant in a Plague Encampment (III) or Garbieri's St. Charles administers the Viaticum to plague-stricken Priest (V) are examples of innovative realizations taken from the saint's biographies. In the second half of the seventeenth century, however, the iconography becomes stereotyped. St. Charles Borromeo administering the Viaticum to plague victims remains almost the sole subject chosen.

The post-Tridentine artist encountered a special problem in depicting the plague because the realism that would allow him to describe the symptoms of the disease had to be suppressed in an effort to create the "decorous" art requested by the Church. To let the viewer know that the painting portrays a plague scene, certain motifs indicated the setting: the plague angel sheathing his sword, the mother-and-child group, figures looking for protection from plague vapors, plague victims gesturing to draw attention to their plight, litter bearers, or, simply corpses.

Raphael's The Plague at Phrygia (fig.7) shows a man holding his nose to avoid contagious air. Although such a figure represents an age-old convention indicating the smell of death (Lazarus), Il Morbetto made it the symbol of plague.

The dead or dying mother with her baby on her breast, already discussed in the medical essay, was another of Raphael's

brilliant inventions. He derived his idea originally from Pliny's description of a famous painting by Aristides in Naturalis historia.³⁷ The text describes a scene of a wounded mother during a siege, who, tries to protect her child from drinking her already "poisoned" milk. Yet, it was Poussin's Plague at Ashdod of 1631 (fig.62) that made this motif synonymous with a plague scene.³⁸ The artist's friend, Pietro Testa, responded in the same year to Poussin's plague symbolism (fig.92).³⁹ Because The Plague at Ashdod was copied by other painters, and reproduced in print several times, its iconography acquired instant fame and made an impact on the visual arts not only in Italy, but throughout Europe.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, a woman with her child on her lap receiving communion, often replaces the dead-mother-and-child motif. Pierre Mignard can take credit for this invention.⁴⁰ The design of St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim was proliferated in print and became particularly popular in the north (fig.52). Francois Poilly's engraving after Mignard (fig.93) is responsible for yet another important plague motif: hospital workers carrying a litter. Three small background figures paraphrase Poussin's pallbearers of Phocion's Funeral (fig.94).

In conclusion, the plague vocabulary of religious narrative painting is, on the one hand, quite diversified considering its

roots, while on the other hand, typification is a distinguishable trend. Baroque plague scenes are less intellectualized than, for example Raphael's Madonna di Foligno. Easily recognizable motifs make religious paintings accessible to viewers, provided they are well versed in Catholic theology.

NOTES CHAPTER II

- 1 Jorgen Grimm. Die literarische Darstellung der Pest in der Antike und in der Romania. Munich, 1965. The author maintains that the subject is primarily mediterranean, with the exclusion of Spain, which corresponds to some degree to the territorial interests of plague imagery outlined in the introduction.
- 2 Elsbeth Wiemann, Der Mythos der Niobe und ihrer Kinder, Stuttgart, 1966.
- 3 Rev.16:2: "The first angel went out, and when he poured out his bowl on the earth, severe and festering boils broke out among men."
Rev. 21:9: "filled with the seven last plagues."
The reference to the end of the world is derived from St. Matthew 24:7 and St. Luke 21:11. According to the two evangelists, plague, along with earthquakes and famines, will precede the Last Judgment.
- 4 Joseph Polzer, "Fourteenth-Century Iconography of Death and the Plague," in Black Death, 1982, Binghamton, 115. The author compares the corpses to the Pisan Campo Santo frescoes, now dated 1333-1336, before the Black Death (1348).
- 5 Pestilence: In Hebrew "deber" in Greek "loimos." Plague is mentioned in connection with the sword in Exod.5:3, Lev.26:25. The Erdman's Bible Dictionary, Grand Rapids, 1987, 818.
- 6 II Samuel 24. and II Chronicles 3:1. Baroque patrons and artists were aware of the separate mentioning of the temple site. For example, Santa Maria della Salute, the 1630 plague votive church in Venice, is often referred to as "Temple."
- 7 St. Louis of France died in 1270 during a crusade in Tunis, possibly of plague. The thaumaturgical powers of French kings have a long tradition. ("Thauma" is the Greek word for "wonder.")
- 8 Polzer, 116.
- 9 Bilder und Tanze des Todes: Gestalten des Todes und in der europaischen Kunst seit dem Mittelalter, Paderborn, 1982, 16.
- 10 Durer's Four Horsemen does not give conclusive evidence that the rider with the bow and arrow signifies "pestilence." Rev. 6:1-2 does not mention plague.

- 11 W. Boschloo, Annibale Carracci in Bologna, The Hague, 1974, summarizes the wealth of theoretical writings on painting. He stresses the newly emerging concept of the artist, who is an instrument of God, to instruct the illiterate. Allegories, which appeared frequently in works addressing the intellectual elite, had therefore no place in religious art.
- 12 H. Schmolzer, Die Pest in Wien, Vienna, 1985, 7. Dr. J. Caswell noted that a toad-like creature has been identified as "Plague" in Grunewald's Isenheim Altar in The Temptation of St. Anthony. The Latin word bufo for toad and its warty appearance may account for its traditional association with bubonic plague (see medical discussion # 6).
- 13 Cesare Ripa, Iconologia, Padua, 1611, repr. New York, 1976, 421-422. PESTE OUERO PESTILENTIA. (not illustrated in the 17th c. editions. In the 1758-60 edition the plague is illustrated as a woman holding a flagellum on Pl. 134. David's Remorse is depicted in the background.)
 Donna vestita di colore tane o scuro, hauera la faccia smorta & spauenteuole, la front fasciata, le braccia, e le gambe ignude, la veste sara aperta da' fianchi, & per l'apertura si vedra la camiseia imbrattata, & sporca; parimente si vedranno le mammelle anch'esse sozze, & ricoperte da un velo trasparente, & a piedi d'essa vi fara un Lupo."
- Ripa goes on to explain that the wolf (according to Philostrate) signifies an animal which was sacrificed to Apollo when plagues threatened.
- 14 Vienna's Pestsaule, too, shows the figure of Plague. For further reading on Pestsaulen, Gertraut Schikola, "Das offentliche sakrale Denkmal in den Habsburgischen Landern: Die Auswirkung der Wiener Pestsaule." Polnische Studien, Vienna, 1980.
- 15 Negri's unique plague iconography was probably influenced by the Corte's Salute altarpiece (finished only three years earlier). The Flemish sculptor (Giusto Le Court in Italian) arrived in Venice in 1657 and may have introduced the Venetian painter to northern prints of allegories.
- 16 Elisabeth Schroter. "Raphaels Madonna di Foligno: ein Pest bild?" Zeitschrift fur Kunstgeschichte, 50 (1987), 47-87. The author speaks of the rainbow as part of the Covenant. I also read it as the rainbow mentioned in the Apocalypse:
 I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven

wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow about his head; his face shone like the sun...in his hand he held a little scroll which had been opened (Rev. 10:1-3).

17 Schroter does not mention the continuity of this tradition in her article. Reni's banner is a confirmed plague commission (Church of S. Domenico in Bologna in honor of the Rosary Madonna) which follows the Foligno-iconography and confirms Schroter's hypothesis.

18 According to Stephen Pepper, the figures of SS. Ignatius and Francis Xavier were added in 1633, two years after the painting had been finished (eleven years after their canonization), Guido Reni, Oxford, 1984, 266.

19 B. W. Lindmann, "Was soll dieser nackte Knabe mit seinem Tafelchen," Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 46 (1983), 307-312, wrote first on the iconography of Raphael's Madonna di Foligno and its tabula votiva.

20 The reason for replacing Cerrini's altar painting in Rome's SS. Carlo e Ambrogio al Corso must remain hypothetical. Compared to Maratti's SS. Ambrose and Charles in Glory (1685-90) Cerrini's The Virgin and St. Charles interceding for the Victims of the Plague, executed before 1650, must have looked archaic. J. Kuhnle, "Carlo Maratti graveur. Essai de catalogue critique." Revue de l'Art, 31 (1976), 57-72.

21 Barbara, Christopherus, Valentin, Adrian, and Nicasius were plague intercessors for the Justinian plague (532). In the year 680, St. Sebastian was added to this list. There are two kinds of plague saints depicted in scenes portraying the plague-stricken: those who have nursed victims during their own lifetime, and intercessors chosen from the ranks of early martyrs. The Church equated the duty that involved risk of one's own life in the service of others--such as spiritual and physical care of plague patients that meant facing almost certain death--with martyrdom. The choice of SS. Thecla, Gennaro, Feliciano, and Adrian points to such an analogy. Although the lives of these four martyrs are poorly documented, they remained in the Community of Saints.

22 The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine. Translated and adapted from Latin by Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger, New York, 1969, 109.

23 The Greek letter τ stands for thaumaturgical gift.

A collection of hand-colored facsimile, Pestblatter des 15. Jahrhunderts, was published by Heitz & Schreiber in 1901. During the late Middle Ages, the hope that specific prayers could prevent infections made them popular. In the baroque period only few a devotional prints were commissioned. Presumably people lost faith in them, but more importantly, paper was suspected of transmitting the disease.

24 Francesca was Rome's official plague saint. She is venerated particularly by the Olivetans. Canonized in 1608, two years before St. Charles, Francesca Romana was elected to become the first saint after the Council of Trent. (At that time the Church tried to revise the status of sainthood.) "She foreshadows the modern female saint, one known primarily for her good works." R.M. Bell, Holy Anorexia, Chicago/London, 1985, 139.

25 The fresco, near the entrance, is in poor condition.

26 The Golden Legend, 109-110.

27 La Legende doree, Paris, 1843, .

28 The Golden Legend, 180-181.

29 Federico Zuccaro's (1540-1609) work was well known, but not well received. His controversy with a Bolognese painter in 1581 caused such a public scandal (Porta Virtutis) that the pope banned Zuccaro from Rome.

30 Marie-Therese Schmitz-Eichhoff, St. Rochus: Ikonographische und medizin-historische Studien, Cologne, 1977. The author gives a comprehensive account of the historic literature and modern scholarship on this "elusive" saint.

31 Ibid., 24.

32 Virgil's Aeneid, XII, 383.

33 Schmitz-Eichhoff, 20-21.

34 Carlo Bascape De vita et rebus gestis Sancti Caroli was translated into Italian and reissued in 1965. The text was considered important enough to be given to every member of the Council attending Vatican II. G. Giussano's Istoria della vita, virtu, morte e miracoli di Carlo Borromeo spawned an avalanche of additional literary accounts, and inspired artists for centuries to come.

35 The "St. Charles cycle of miracles," twenty additional quadroni, were commissioned in 1610, shortly before his canonization. The second series had less of an impact on the arts than the images created in 1602 (possibly because after the Council many theologians viewed miracles with suspicion).

36 The color for cardinals is scarlet red. The rochet, a prelatial garment, token of jurisdiction, worn over the cassock (common to all clerics since the Council of Trent), is white, partially trimmed with lace and sometimes lined with red. The mozzetta, a cape, too, is a sign of jurisdiction (worn by popes and cardinals, and within limits of their own jurisdiction by archbishops, bishops, and abbots). The color of the biretta--an angular ecclesiastic hat--is scarlet red for cardinals. Henry McCloud's Clerical Dress and Insignia of the Catholic Church, Brooklyn, 1948.

37 Pliny, the Elder, Natural History, XXV, 98, in Loeb Classical Library, 1952. Although other artists (Ghirlandai's Massacre of the Innocents) had used the motif earlier, it was Raphael's merit to introduce it into a plague subject (see medical discussion). The text describing the Plague of Phrygia is taken from Virgil's Aeneid, III, 138-142.

38 The artist achieved in this famous work a perfect transferral from Raphael's Virgilian scene to a more appropriate Counter-Reformation topic, the Philistine Plague of the Old Testament (I Sam.5:6).

39 The Eternal City created an environment that fostered many new ideas. Rome was the artistic melting pot of the art world in the first half of the seventeenth century. At that time the influx of foreign artists was still strong. Rubens, Van Dyck, Poussin, Mignard, and Sweerts would in turn create famous plague paintings. Poussin's colleague and friend, Pietro Testa, executed a plague etching for his native Lucca in 1631 which showed a child-angel holding his nose. This would indicate that he had knowledge of Van Dyck's Rosary Madonna. Testa's print also reflects Poussin's famous motif of a mother and child from The Plague at Ashdod (see # 25 and the discussion of the art in Rome).

40 Mignard shows a woman seated on the ground. Her humble pose must have suggested to the people of the seventeenth century the repentant Mary Magdalene or St. Rosalia.

CHAPTER III

THE ITALIAN REGIONS

Italy evolved after the Council of Trent as an area unified only by its language and the profession of the Roman Catholic faith. Yet, the "unified Church," as it presented itself to the outside world, had in fact many different theological factions to accommodate and interior political problems to consider. Moreover, the conformity in Italian church policies was endangered by the foreign rule of the Spanish crown in Naples and Milan. Regions geographically removed from Rome were less influenced by papal authority. Likewise, historical traditions in different regions of Italy need to be considered: Milan, since its inception as a Christian center, had rivaled the Eternal City. It retained in religious matters a certain autocracy and, thanks to the political steadfastness of Charles Borromeo, was able to retain some of its early Christian rites and catechism until the twentieth century. Naples, too, seemed at times out of touch with contemporary Roman church policies. And Venice experienced often strained relations with the pope and was frequently under interdict.

Post-Tridentine theology comprizes various trends and different phases. Our discussion is concerned with Catholic

Reform, Counter Reformation, the Church Triumphant, and the return to the Spirit of the Council of Trent. The discussion of baroque art in the Italian regions (1600-1785) will consider these concepts in theology and will be sensitive to political influences on religious plague paintings.

Some church historians see the Reformation of the Catholic Church as coming to a close with the death of Charles Borromeo, describing that event as "the end of this great period of intellectual and institutional ferment."¹ Since most of the narrative scenes were executed after 1600, we find little of that revolutionary spirit (outside Milan) in plague paintings.

Northern Italy had to defend its faith against heretic neighbors. Therefore, we can speak of a truly Counter-Reformatory movement even in Italy itself. The period after 1600 brought a trend toward compromise and conformity that was achieved by suppressing opposing view-points in an effort to save the unity of the Roman Catholic Church. The first major crisis within the Church ended in 1607 in a draw. The controversy involved the definition of Grace and Free Will. Paul V reserved judgment, and neither Thomism, defended by the Dominicans, nor Molinism, championed by the Society of Jesus, was recognized as objective truth. Today, the Church has declared the relationship between Grace and Free Will insoluble.

With the election of Gregory XIV and the 1622 canonization

of the Jesuit saints, Ignatius and Francis Xavier, a new spirit emerged, often characterized as the Church Triumphant. It, too, had to survive a crisis when the danger of secession arose in the middle of the seventeenth century in the form of Jansenism. This religious movement concerned itself with Augustinian ideas, similar to those of Thomists, which attacked Jesuit policies of expediency on frequent communion without proper preparation of confession and penance. Jansenism was suppressed in Rome but influenced the Gallican Church and other parts of Europe more decisively.² Most of the Italian paintings discussed belong to the period of the Church Triumphant.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, contemporaneous with the Enlightenment, a move toward reform in the auster spirit of the Council was advocated by dedicated Catholic theologians. At the same time Rome lost its political power, and few reform movements were actually implemented. This period could be characterized as one of increasing secularization in philosophy and art. Although the artistic output was reduced, some of the most interesting works were created at that time.

The unifying element in Italy was, as originally stated, the catechetical instructions provided by the Roman Catholic Church. The educational program had its roots in Charles Borromeo's pastoral reforms. He introduced in the 1570's mandatory religious

instructions in all schools. For the children of the poor unable to afford a formal education the archbishop expanded the already existing program of the Schools of Christian Doctrines. Although these institutions were staffed by lay volunteers, they remained under the close supervision by the clergy. Classes met on Sundays and holidays, introducing the illiterate youngsters to the rudimentary skills of reading and the profession of their faith. Such charitable mission work filled an important religious and social need for a large part of the population. Under Charles Borromeo the number in his diocese rose from thirty-three schools in 1563, at the time the Council closed, to 740 in 1584. This educational program was copied throughout Italy.³ The many generations of children raised in such an environment account for the orthodoxy and the codification in Catholic baroque art. Artists, patrons, and the viewers were the product of the same religious instructions that, once established, remained in force for hundreds of years.

VENICE AND VENETO

Venice and the terraferma were frequently ravaged by the plague during the years 1348 to 1630. Accordingly, the Serenissima was first in developing health codes and in building hospitals. Venice seems to have been spared by later epidemics of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

In the baroque period, the Adriatic city was a meeting place for many foreign artists who flocked into Venetian studios to learn from the local masters; at the same time they brought innovative concepts and influenced Venetian painters. The famous print shops in the Serenissima distributed ideas gathered from all over the world.

As far as religious art was concerned, the Venetians were not significantly affected by the Council's ruling. Venice lacked art treatises written by religious reformers such as the Borromeos in Milan or Paleotti in Bologna. The city seemed to work out its own guidelines. Although Venice had to submit to periodic ecclesiastic inspections, political frictions with the Papal State were common and Venice and its territories were banned and excommunicated a number of times.⁴ Still, such external differences would be set aside in time of plague to ensure the well-being of the citizens.

Venice was of great importance for the formation of plague imagery. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many large ex-votos were dedicated by individual urban jurisdictions or even prominent private citizens to commemorate the worst disasters of 1576 and 1630. Even long after the threat had ceased, Venice's votive plague-painting production did not.

As numerous as Venetian votive paintings are, narrative plague scenes are rare. Venice, Cesena, Padua, Treviso, and Verona are the cities where such scenes can be found. Surprisingly only a small number of these historic scenes show their favorite plague patron, St. Roch. Since he was not one of the Counter-Reformation saints, and neither ordained nor a member of a religious order, his depiction in narrative works was limited to the succession of the Tintoretto tradition.⁵

The importance of Venice for this discussion lies in the Renaissance forerunners of baroque plague scenes: Tintoretto's canonical work in the Church of San Rocco, St. Roch (fig.20). Its iconography has been discussed earlier. However, the painting's significance is not limited to the invention of an innovative subject, the plague ward, but lies also in its ingenious composition. The development of a Venetian Raumbuhne supplied future hospital scenes with the viable space needed for the presentation of the multi-figured events.

The hospital piece painted by Giacomo Lauro in 1605, St.

Roch blesses a Plague Victim in San Nicolo in Treviso, is a derivative of Tintoretto's St. Roch (XII).⁶ The novelty in Lauro's scene is its post-Tridentine iconography: the introduction of a priest in the sickroom. It also differs in the realism applied in describing the plague victims, for the disease's symptoms are suppressed. The repoussoir-figure of a woman carrying medical supplies is a quote from Tintoretto's prototype. Lauro crops her to a three-quarter figure in an effort to introduce a temporal quality. The viewer is alerted that he is witnessing the very moment St. Roch extends his blessing.

An interesting comparison can be made with Luca Ferrari's ex-voto St. Domenico intercedes before the Virgin for the Cessation of the Plague, commissioned by the Papafava family (fig.95).⁷ Dated 1635, it refers to the 1630 epidemic and proclaims a miraculous cure of the patient in the foreground (fig.96). The doctors seem to be stunned by the disappearance of the plague boil and to find the skin unblemished (which makes an acceptable baroque subject). Secular physicians never appear next to Catholic clergy in narrative, religious plague scenes.

St. Charles's canonization of 1610 produced a number of scenes from his life's story. Pietro Damini was commissioned to paint one of the first altars erected to the saint: St. Charles washes the Feet of a Plague Victim, about 1615, shows the humility--the saint's motto was humilitas--and his Christ-like love

for all humanity (XIV). The subject as such is important because it was used particularly in Venice as metaphor for confession before communion.⁸ It is also noteworthy that the date of the painting coincides with Federico Borromeo's donation of his uncle's relics to a distant relative in this ecclesiastical rural center (Chiesa arcipretale of Nervesa della Battaglia).⁹

Of much greater importance for the development of the saint's iconography is Saraceni's St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim, c. 1619 (XV). The subject of a layman receiving the Eucharist is fairly new in Catholic art. The victim, propped up in his bed turns longingly toward the saint who holds the host in his right hand and the ciborium in his left. The setting resembles Carlo Procraccini's Charles Borromeo receives the Viaticum of 1602 (fig.50). The Venetian artist had retained the bed, which will be replaced in later versions by the makeshift-straw mattresses of plague encampments (possibly influenced by Rubens's St. Roch). Since the composition appears reversed from the original, Saraceni had probably worked from a print. In a sense, this composition is uncharacteristic of Venetian art, which preferred epic breadth. Saraceni, though a Venetian artist, had just returned from Rome, and wanted to show his awareness of new trends in the art world. The vertical format gives the event a certain intimacy. It also accommodates a second scene with tiny background figures depicting a woman watching elegiacally over

some loved one's sickbed.

A third painting that must have owed its commission not to a specific epidemic (none were reported in Italy between 1577 and 1630) but to the fame of the newly canonized Milanese archbishop. Pietro Bernardi's St. Charles interceding for the Plague Victims is dated c. 1616-7 and was commissioned for San Carlo in Verona (XVI).¹⁰ The painting is Venetian in style, format, composition, and it shows also another trait typical for the Veneto: the allegorical figures of two plague angels in the sky. This is unusual in narrative scenes of the early seventeenth century. The vision is an allusion not only to God's messengers in The Golden Legend, but also to "David's Remorse." The angel closest to the saint extends a skull, symbol of the Old Testament's plague. The heavenly figures sharply contrast with the realistically conceived scene of devastation surrounding the archbishop and his entourage.

A painting that belongs in the second half of the seventeenth century is Domenico Maria Canuti's Bl. Bernard of Tolomei comforting the Victims of the Plague (XVII). Part of a series of six depictions of Bernardo's life, its subject was the fourteenth-century founder of the Olivetan order who had given his life nursing his compatriots in Siena. Laybrother Bernard wears the characteristic white, cowl-collared habit of the order. In 1666, he was neither a saint, nor even beatified, only his cult had

been recognized by the Church and his beatification was declared in 1768. The decorations for Padua's San Benedetto represent a rare subject.¹¹

Canuti, a Carracci student, worked primarily for the Olivetan houses. His artistic heritage is apparent in the "vertical perspective." The iconography is typical for any non-ordained "martyrs of charity"--the background scenes are filled with small vignettes of priests bringing the sacraments for the dying.

Not until the "Golden Age of the Eighteenth Century," when the artistic dominance of Rome had been broken and the focus shifted to other artistic centers, do we find religious plague paintings again in the Veneto. Sebastiano Ricci's St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague is one of the most innovative scenes (XVIII). It was also commissioned for Padua. The altar painting for the venerated Basilica of Santa Giustina must date about 1701, the year when the young artist returned from Rome. The papal subject and its style would support such an assumption and Ricci seemed to be aware also of Cortona's St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail (XIX).¹²

In Ricci's painting, the pontiff's dramatic gesture links the faithful, standing before the altar, with the vision of the Virgin above St. Gregory an event not mentioned in The Golden Legend. (It speaks only of the miraculous influence of St. Luke's icon. The oldfashioned vision of the angel sheathing his sword is also

disregarded.) The human response of the pope's followers to the plight of the plague victims in the foreground shows Venetian baroque art at its best. The brilliant colors promise hope; the virtuosity of depicting fabrics and the sculptural qualities of the kneeling pope successfully combine Ricci's native Venetian traits with his recent Roman experience. The artist plays on the emotions rather than on an intellectual response from the viewer. Here we are far removed from didactic Counter Reformation severity with its interest in textual accuracy in the presentation of a plague subject. However, the use of the clerical colors of white and red (hat and cloak) for the papal costume is correct.¹³

If these few paintings are in any way representative of Venetian narrative plague scenes, and I believe they are, one can easily see that religious fervor and interest in reform had quickly cooled in Venice after the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Some temporary attention to St. Charles was obviously due to Milan's ruling archbishop, Federico Borromeo, who kept the memory of his uncle alive by trading in relics. Most of the Veneto's commissions are related to ecclesiastical orders and not to individual donations. Two of the later paintings came from Padua. Its university had a reputation of having heretical tendencies. The question of its relationship with the Church and the involvement of the clergy of Santa Giustina and the Olivetans who commissioned didactic images would warrant further study.

MILAN AND LOMBARDY

Milan, gateway to the North, was conscious of its ancient tradition in fighting heretics and preserving some of the oldest Church traditions and its liturgies. From the time of St. Ambrose (c.340-397) even to this day, the city had retained its own rites. Milan appeared at times to be in competition with Rome itself. St. Charles was quite successful in the fight against Protestantism as well as in maintaining the old archiepiscopal powers (the reason Rome would rather see the saint depicted as cardinal than as archbishop). The Archdiocese extended at that time from Genoa well into Switzerland and far into the Venetian territory of northern Italy.

Lombardy was part of the Spanish Empire from 1525 to 1706. However, the high-pitched fervor of Milan's religious climate after the Council of Trent was not so much due to the presence of the Spaniards, as to the outstanding personalities of the Archbishops Charles (1538-1584) and Federico (1564-1631) Borromeo. They were recognized as two of the most brilliant and devoted members of the Curia, but they also had their share of friction with papal authority, and, furthermore, they were extremely unpopular with the Spanish civilian government. In 1623 the Spanish factions of cardinals prevented Federico Borromeo from being elected pope when he was favored by some

over Urban VIII.¹⁴

The political tension in Milan that characterized the years of reform within the Church after the Council becomes apparent when one considers that Charles Borromeo was once wounded in an assassination attempt. A controversial figure, the archbishop was a religious fanatic who consciously rivaled with Calvin's Geneva in converting Milan into a holy city. He succeeded in this religious "utopia" to some degree. When he became archbishop in 1565 he had a difficult time in recruiting enough pastoral help for his diocese. When Charles Borromeo died, the whole city mourned him. Federico, his cousin and successor, was quoted as saying that he had all the clergy he needed for the administration of Milan.

Both members of the house of Borromeo distinguished themselves during the two most severe plague epidemics that befell Milan and its surrounding regions. (The city itself became almost synonymous with the onslaught of plague.) In 1576, la peste carliana cost Milan 17,329 citizens out of a population of 100,000. The devastation was even greater in 1629-30, when Ripamonte, the archbishop's secretary, recorded 140,000 deaths out of the 200,000 citizens that made up the Lombard capitol. The city had doubled in size in a short period of time and suffered all the socioeconomic problems connected with such rapid growth. Milan did not recover economically from la peste manzoni (named after Manzoni's novel I promessi sposi which describes the plague

years of 1630-1631) until the Industrial Revolution.

Milanese art of the period 1600 to 1635 conveys deep religious feelings. As pointed out by Peter Cannon-Brooks, "The religious and social climate in Counter Reformation Milan was a powerful formative influence on the cultural life...cruelly cut short by the plague of 1630."¹⁵

Both archbishops had been authors of instructions on religious art. Charles Borromeo's Instructiones Frabricae Ecclasticae has a chapter "De sacris imaginibus pictursive" which stresses that artists should adhere to the religious texts and avoid strange, unnecessary, and false images, so as not to mislead the less-informed public. The clear, albeit short, Instructiones of 1577 is more important for the discussion of the 1602-1610 commissioned quadroni and the development of Lombard plague imagery than Federico's De pictura sacra, which was not published until 1625.

When comparing the number of narrative plague paintings in the heartland of St. Charles with other regions, the results are disappointing. Milan and Lombardy have few such scenes to offer. This is particularly surprising since the quadroni served as prototypes for so many other European painters.

A number of reasons come to mind to explain this scarcity of plague scenes. First, the Spanish rulers probably did not promote this genre of painting. I have mentioned before that

Spain showed no interest in "documentary images" nor would the foreign government necessarily want to support Charles Borromeo in his home town. Flaunting "their" archbishop in Rome or anywhere else was a different matter. Equally important must have been Federico Borromeo's attitudes. Although an avid collector and trend-setter in art, his taste was more that of an aristocratic connoisseur than of a stern bishop and reformer of the Church, the image he liked to convey to his people. This split personality may account for some of the schizophrenic trends in Lombard art of his era. "For him, beauty was inseparable from questions of morality."¹⁶ He seemed to prefer emotionally charged images of saints that portray the sentiments of the soul. Il Morazzoni's St. Roch with his eyes raised toward heaven was obviously more to his liking than realistically portrayed scenes (fig.97). Admittedly, the cycle of St. Charles was commissioned during Federico's administration, but not by the archbishop himself. It was done at the request of a committee and the Fabbrica del Duomo. His reluctance to build his reputation in the shadow of his great cousin has been repeatedly recorded. Moreover, the Milanese economy stagnated after his death, and few paintings were commissioned after the holocaust.

The artists creating the St. Charles cycle, the quadroni, are the most renowned in seventeenth-century Lombardy: Gian Battista Crespi, il Cerano; Filippo Abbiati; Carlo Antonio

Procaccini; Pier Francesco Mazzucchelli, il Morazzone; the rediscovered Paolo Camillo Landriani, il Ducchino; G. B. Rovere, il Fiammenghino, and many others.

Il Cerano's St. Charles visits a Plague Encampment shows the saint in the saddle, because he had traveled some distance to the makeshift huts outside the city (XIII). He blesses the sick, and in the foreground, the distribution of the brocade hangings of the archiepiscopal palace that kept the poor from freezing takes place. The cardinal had personally supervised the stripping of all usable fabrics in his residence. "He allowed nothing to be kept back but a single change of linen for himself, and a coarse cloth which was used as table cover till his death."¹⁷ Although Giussano speaks of ecclesiastic red and purple cloths, Il Cerano used his artistic license and painted them mostly cardinal red, with a complementary green. Snow on the mountains and brown oak leaves indicate the beginning of winter. The candidate for sainthood is recognizable by his aureole and the sign of a high church official, a metropolitan cross, carried before him. Charity, the woman with her three children kneeling next to St. Charles, represents a rare incidence of symbolism in this late mannerist's work. The background is filled with the sick clamoring to see their pastor, while at the right a corpse is efficiently removed.

A somewhat less talented artist, but an underrated one, is Landriani, who followed the words of St. Charles's advice on

religious art very closely.¹⁸ There is nothing "unnecessary" depicted in St. Charles confirms Adults during the Plague Epidemic of 1576 (VI). This incident is described in detail by Giussano, who devotes a whole chapter to "St. Charles administering the sacraments to the plague-stricken." The Borromean biographer points out the drama, the danger, and the charity of this good shepherd, who, assisted by Father Ludovico Moneta, was moved to risk once more his own life and confirm infected patients with the words:

"It is the will of God."... After confirming all who presented themselves, he perceived a number of people lingering at some distance, who durst not approach...because they considered their cases too bad and the danger too great. "Shall we then," said he, "let them die without the sacrament? Nay, let them come also."¹⁹

The artist clearly differentiated between the two groups of the relatively vigorous, yet already infected patients, and those close to death (fig.44). He used all his artistic powers to show their emotion and longing "for the holy chrism." The archbishop is also seen in the background, in the archaising style of a continuous narrative, confirming the sick in front of the cabane.

The least talented painter, but by no means less important for the iconographic discussion, is Il Fiammenghino. His St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail depicts one of the many religious events staged by the saint (X). Giussano writes: "The holy Cardinal...carrying as before the Holy Nail aloft, his

feet bare and the rope around his neck....The appearance of the city was that of a people whose hearts were full of contrition."²⁰ Most of the male followers and secular officials are dressed in black. The bare-foot clergy wear hoods and ropes like condemned criminals. Women and children had been excluded from the procession because they were always quarantined before the men, who out of necessity had to forego some of the protective measures. The style of the painting is as severe as the solemn mood it expresses.

Tanzio da Varallo worked in the tradition of the Lombard capitol in a strong Counter-Reformational flavor. His St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim, documented as painted before 1616, may very well have been the first Catholic depiction of a layman's communion (XX). It has been suggested that the young artist had heretical tendencies.²¹ He came from the German-speaking north and could have been familiar with Protestant catechisms illustrating communion scenes much like that Cranach print discussed earlier (fig.36). Be that as it may, it is very unusual that the "chalice-like" ciborium and "patene-like" communion plate, held by two different people, appear in such close proximity. It creates almost the impression that the Eucharist is served in both forms. A word of caution needs to be added: the painting leaves no doubt of the correct administration of the sacrament because the host is held right above the

ciborium. Also, communion plates were customary in Catholic Lombardy. Tanzio's altar painting is undeniably impressive in its monumental severity and quiet grandeur. The recipient is characterized as a person of low station, and yet he received the full attention of the cardinal and his clergy, demonstrating the simple man's dignita cristiana and that the Catholic Church considered the poor to be close to God.²²

The Roman painter Giacinto Brandi must have introduced the mother-and-child motif into Milan in his St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim (XXI). The date for this altar painting for Santa Maria della Vittoria is not certain but assumed to belong to the 1660's since the scene is reminiscent of Mignard's Roman altar painting of the same title (XXII).²³ The style still shows manneristic tendencies. At best, one can describe this work as problematic.

Rather undistinguished is the altar of St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a dying Man for San Calimero (XXIII). The unknown Italian artist used the formula usually reserved for the depiction of the Last Communion of St. Jerome. Since the recipient is almost naked, the subject probably refers to the most popular anecdote told of the 1576 epidemic. It speaks of a man who was thought to have died and who was placed erroneously among corpses ready for burial. St. Charles recorded the story:

I wish to give an example of an extraordinary desire for Holy Communion...The sacerdote in charge of the plague victims of Santo Gregorio, taking as usual the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist to his wards, passed...there in an instant the man rose kneeling in the midst of the dead, full of the ardent desire not to be deprived of the holiest provision in his imminent transit..." Oh, Father, for the love of God, give me once more the Holy Sacrament!" ...the priest quickly went to console him...and he having received it with great emotion and reverence...passed from this life to a better...24

The incident was later told as having happened to the archbishop himself, hence the change of subject to St. Charles administering the Eucharist. (The communicant holds in his hand one of the communion plates which were in use in the Lombard region.)

This brief analysis of Lombard plague scenes demonstrates that Charles Borromeo's writings did, in fact, influence a number of artists. The quadroni are an excellent example of his spirit of reform. Their influence on art has not yet been fully studied because until a few years ago they were rather inaccessible. Recent scholarship has pointed out that individual works seem to reflect the saint's theories on art. Their close adherence to the texts and their uncommonly severe style seem closer to Charles's austere life style than to Federico's sophisticated taste. I believe that this is the reason why that the cycle of narrative scenes had only limited followers in Lombard art. Moreover, the catastrophic interruption by the 1630 plague and the economic ruin following the epidemic affected the art of painting in the Lombard region.

BOLOGNA AND EMILIA

The papal capital of Emilia, Bologna, an intellectual and religious center, hosted briefly the Council of Trent in 1547-1548. The old university town, which has been characterized as liberal and primarily interested in science and nature, owed its reputation to Cardinal Paleotti (1566-1597), who dominated the spiritual life of Bologna and its religious art, an intellectual who at times dared even to oppose papal ordinances. The city was permeated by an aura of "una unamita vera."²⁵

Paleotti was the author of the most extensive discussion on the art of the Riforma Catolico. His Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane was drafted in 1582 and was published in 1594. Paleotti emphasized that religious art should never contradict the doctrines of the Church; that its function was "to serve, edify, and move." He also wrote that art needed to instruct, but should reflect the visible world which reveals a divine plan, and he gave the painters the much heeded advice, *dipingere al vivo*. The cardinal appealed to artists to consider themselves preachers, because the tangible world depicted on the canvas was often more effective than the spoken word. The saints must be true to life in order to successfully encourage the faithful to imitate. Time and action must be clearly defined and the artist has to consider his

audience, like a preacher who wants to win over his congregation to himself and his faith, in the hope of gaining divine grace. The cardinal suggested that personifications of the virtues should be portrayed by a person whose features are familiar to the viewer.

Although art historians have only been able to prove in a single incident that Annibale Carracci, the most prominent of the Bolognese artists at the time, actually observed the cardinal's written directions (for the depiction of Christ's sealed tomb), there cannot be any doubt that Paleotti exercised a great influence on the formation of the new baroque style.²⁶ His treatise did not inspire a style but a concept. Plague paintings seemed to be well-suited to express all these ideas and to instruct the faithful in the teachings of the Church.

Some of the earliest and most intellectual examples of religious narrative paintings can be found in Bologna. They were important ecclesiastic commissions to commemorate St. Charles Borromeo after his canonization. Lodovico Carracci, Annibale's uncle, got a commission from Rome to paint for the Abbey Church of Nonantola, c. 1613-1619, St. Charles baptizes an Infant in a Plague Encampment (III). The aged artist worked at that time in an austere mode. The picture reflects the spirituality of the Reformed Church and the seriousness of the subject. It adheres closely to Giussano's text, and refers to an incident of a girl born black ("tutte nera come carbone") because of her skin's

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discoloration from the disease.²⁷ In the painting, however, the color of the child is not dark, for such abnormalities would have been against the rule of "decorum." The orphan owed her life to the saint who had the child nursed back to health. The same author mentions the girl again in the accounts of the posthumous miracles (St. Charles heals her deformed son).²⁸

The altar painting not only adheres closely to the written source but also takes great care to observe all other directions given by the Church: The saint is dressed as a cardinal; his insignia of power, the metropolitan cross, is turned toward him; and he performs his "spiritual work of mercy" surrounded by his eight faithful followers, a number also specified in his biography.

The goat in the foreground refers to the corporal works of mercy of the cardinal archbishop who had cared for the orphaned children like a father. He provided for the best possible nourishment for the newborn infants. (Wet nurses often refused to take on infected children. In the eighteenth century special papal indulgences would be available to the brave women who cared for sick infants.) A seventeenth-century engraving treats a similar event more like a genre scene (fig.98). A child is actually sucking from the she-goat's udder. Such realism would have been uncalled-for in an altarpiece. In Carracci's painting the scene is characterized as a plague encampment by a view of the city walls. The motif of a man holding his nose while gazing at some corpses

indicates that Raimondi's Il Morbetto must have been known in the Carracci Academy (fig.7).

The man protecting himself from plague vapors appears in both the altar painting and the left lateral in St. Charles's Chapels in San Paolo Maggiore. These plague scenes were commissioned by the cardinal-legate Benedetto Giustiniani and created by Carracci's student, Lorenzo Garbieri. Dated c. 1611, the commission must represent one of the earliest celebrations of the saint's canonization.²⁹ The altar painting St. Charles adores a Plague Cross conflates two events: the procession of the Holy Nail during the epidemic and the erection of crosses in commemoration of the outdoor-altar sites, after the threat of the epidemic had subsided (II). The Bolognese artist must have been familiar with the quadroni, either in the original or in prints. He used Cerano's St. Charles blesses a Plague Cross as his main visual source (fig.90).

Garbieri's canvas convinces, inducing the viewer to become part of this touching scene. His realism derives from the fact that he used "nature for his model"--just as Paleotti had suggested. The accuracy in depicting such a stone cross (held together by metal rims) can be verified because a number of such old stone markers are still preserved in San Petronio (fig.99).³⁰ Garbieri avoided all superfluous, mannerist details. The appearance of a little lap dog, such as the one depicted by Cerano, might have been mistaken for

St. Roch's attribute, and had to be excluded from the scene. (All theologians forbade incidental animals to be included in religious scenes.)

Despite the realistic details, the painting exudes a certain sentimentality. The figures portray some of the virtues expounded by St. Charles. The saint emphasized that children are to be educated by their parents in Christian doctrines. This is seen on the left-hand side of the canvas. A woman is guiding a child to fold the hands in prayer. Filial love is expressed by a young girl, who weeping clings to an older person. A young man on the right performs an act of mercy by burying the dead. At the top of the painting, God's hand, holding a flaming sword is visible in a burst of light. This is a rare example of early baroque symbolism. No other divine figure appears in this realistic plague scene.

St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a plague-stricken Priest, too, is devoid of a divine vision (V). The lateral painting illustrates another passage described by Giussano: St. Charles making good his promise to assist his clergy in the hour of their death. He is shown in the process of administering the host to a priest kneeling devotedly before him. On the right-hand side, the acolyte mentioned in the story has already expired. Again two scenes are treated as a single event:

It was reported to the Cardinal that he (parish priest) had caught the infection, and he immediately presented himself at his bedside, and perceiving his

case to be desperate, bade him to prepare himself for receiving the last rites, which he would administer himself, assuring him that he would not lose sight of him as long as he was alive. The following day he returned to give him Holy Communion and Extreme Unction, and with this intention said Mass that morning in the church of San Raffaele, and gave Communion to the priest's acolyte, who died of plague...31

The narrative is presented in a very dramatic way, telescoping some of the action of the lengthy description quoted partially above. Yet, the informed viewer would have had no difficulty in recognizing the "episode of San Raffaele."

St. Charles receives an Infant from a Woman by Florio Macchi depicts a scene that may go back to the quadroni (XXIV). However, Fiammenghino's drawing St. Charles receiving Orphans, was apparently never executed (fig.100). The motif of the mother handing over her child to the cardinal's safekeeping appears frequently in baroque art.

Since Bologna had not produced an indigenous plague patron, a variety of saints are depicted in art. Not all of them are well known. For example Bl. Reniero has little historic backing and is often confused with another beato by the same name. Cavedoni, another student in the Carracci academy, quotes in his The Bl. Riniero comforts a Plague Victim (XXV) the sick man on the cart from Annibale Carracci's St. Roch distributing Alms (fig.101). Cavedoni's Bl. Riniero, a monk, consoles the sick and points toward a small scene in the background. The double-bar of

the Metropolitan cross makes it clear that he is referring to St. Charles. Although Malvasia does not give a date for the commission destined for the hospital church Santa Maria della Vita, the rich drapery may indicate that it belongs to Cavedoni's late works. The artist's whole family had been wiped out during this devastating epidemic of 1630. Therefore, one might assume that this painting is closely connected to the artist's life story. He is reported to have born his personal tragedy with "pious resignation."³²

Giovanni Valesio, who died in 1630, possibly a victim of the epidemic, executed one of the decorative frescoes for Bologna's oratory of San Rocco St. Roch and Angels attending a Plague Victim, datable before 1621 (XXVI). The young saint is recognizable by his attribute, the pilgrim staff. St. Roch kneels in the foreground of a hospital ward, surrounded by a number of angels, all characterized by their wings. One of them points towards heaven to indicate that the saint's thaumaturgical powers are a gift from God. Another angel assists with a tray of ointments. The victim looks trustingly up to the saint; his wife holding a sleeping infant, raises her eyes to heaven. The visionary scene is divided by a curtain from the other plague victims in the hospital ward. Although the whole scene tries to satisfy the requirements of the Council, its proto-rococo prettiness makes it less convincing than the more realistic plague scenes discussed

earlier. This painting is part of a series depicting St. Roch's life story in the Oratory of San Rocco and is possibly quite unrelated to an epidemic. Another episode was painted by Pietro Desani St. Roch healing Cardinal Britannicus in Rome (no illustration available).

The tension between the horrors of a plague scene and the painting's decorative function becomes even more apparent in Carlo Cignani's work in San Michele in Bosco. St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague is set in a richly framed oval medallion (XXVII). It seems to convey the power of the pope more than the horrors of the plague. The angel appearing over Castello Sant' Angelo traces his origin directly to Zuccaro's influential Bolognese altar painting of the same subject (fig.87).

In the 1660's life drawing is still part of the Bolognese tradition. I believe Cignani's drawing of a studio model, his head neatly propped on a pillow, relates to the plague victim in the fresco (fig.102). In the painting the nude is decently dressed in tattered clothes, and his muscular arm is posed differently.

Two plague paintings now found in museums have never been discussed in literature. The first is attributed to a Bolognese artist Aureliano Milani who worked in Rome after 1719 (XXVIII).³³ The large altar painting, datable in the first half of the eighteenth century depicts most likely St. Cajetan, a popular

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Theatine plague saint. Though tonsured, his forehead is covered by the characteristic fringe of forward-combed hair. He is bearded and wears a black cassock with high collar and a wide-sleeved surplice, and a red stole. His sainthood is recognizable by his halo. The dying woman in the foreground seems part of a family unit. Her young daughter rests in her lap. Supported by an older man, possibly her father, the woman contritely receives the Viaticum. (The motif suggests the knowledge of print after Mignard's St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim) One of the two acolytes who had accompanied the priest ponders the corpse which is being dragged away by a rough looking warden. The background is arranged in the typical vertical perspective developed in Bologna in the previous century. The rats in the foreground are a quote from Poussin's Plague at Ashdod (fig.62). The whole canvas conveys a realistic picture of a plague ward, straw-stuffed mattress and all. A fire is burning upstairs to help clean the air from contagious vapors. Behind every bed hangs a crucifix, an innovation first introduced by St. Charles during the 1576 epidemic.

Despite the realistic description of the scene, the artist included symbolic figures: an angel with a sword defying the figure of "pestilence" who is seen pouring the torpid air over a fortified city (Naples?). This too reminds one of a print after Mignard Plague in an ancient City (fig.103). The grandiose

altarpiece seems to be a pastiche of a number of plague prints. Yet it shows a remarkable, progressive, and classicizing style reminiscent of the realistic religious genres in the style of Benedetto Luti (IV). The altar painting is typical of Bolognese baroque in as much as there exists a tension between the harsh realism of the narrative and the idealism in the beauty of the heroine.

The second painting that has been ignored by plague literature is only labeled: Unknown Italian Artist, seventeenth century. St. Roch and Plague Victims has much in common with the plague wards depicted in Bologna (XXIX). However, the artist shows his thorough knowledge of Rubens's print St. Roch (fig.89). A distinct northern influence is found in the dramatically gesticulating figures below a Rubenesque arch. The saint resembles the descending Savior in the altar of Alost. This is significant for the painting's interpretation because St. Roch has frequently been compared to Christ. In the upper hall stand a priest at the bedside of one of the victims. Although the somewhat irrational background architecture shows vestiges of mannerism, the vision of angels holding a cross and the dead mother with child would warrant a date in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Domenico Maria Canuti's painting Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting the Victims of the Plague of the 1660's has been

discussed with Venetian art (XVII). However, the characteristics of Emilian art become even more obvious in context with other examples of this region. The saint, a grandiosely conceived figure in a white Olivetan habit, dominates the composition. The plague ward shows the typical vertical perspective which accommodates a three-storied view describing the religious life in a hospital. Although the Blessed Tolomei represents the corporal works of mercy, all the background scenes are concerned with the administration of sacraments.

One of the most important and influential Bolognese paintings dates from the eighteenth century. Giuseppe Maria Crespi painted his first version of Bl. Bernard Tolmei comforting the Victims of the Plague around 1735 (I). Numerous copies and variants attest to its popularity, which is surprising because the threat of an epidemic had become already a thing of the past.³⁴ Crespi owes some of the elegant handling of the colors and the deeper stage depicting a scene before the city walls to his Venetian visit. The genre-type approach to religious art is typical for the early eighteenth century. Although the setting is fourteenth century, the people are dressed in contemporary costumes, and the religious ceremonies reflect the customs of the day. The priest walking in solemn procession under the umbrella, delivers the sacrament to the sick who await him with eager anticipation. Brother Bernard holds one of the small crosses while

he comforts the dying. Such crosses appear frequently in eighteenth-century plague scenes and reflect the custom of the Sterbekreuz. Some of the victims are obviously too sick to receive the Viaticum; for them the religious comfort and intercession by Bl. Bernard is of foremost importance.

A workshop version of Crespi's Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting the Victims of the Plague (XXX) changes the iconography. The bell-ringing acolyte is replaced by a skeleton-ministrant clad in surplice and carrying a lantern. The custom of including a glass-covered light in the procession was started in 1725 (roughly ten years before the painting was conceived) by Pope Benedict XIII. He passed the decree that there should always be a lantern carried ahead in case wind blew out the torches that accompanied the priest carrying the Blessed Sacrament.³⁵

Emilia produced many plague scenes. Their diversity in iconography and complexity in styles reflects the general state of art in Bologna. There is a recurring compositional trend: the vertical perspective in narrative scenes. It was first developed by Lodovico Carracci in his famous fresco decorations for the cloister of San Michele in Bosco. This important Benedictine Church displayed miracles of St. Benedict. Although most of the paintings are destroyed, some have survived in engravings (fig.104), and I believe that it was the influence of this artistic monument that gave Canuti (and possibly even Rubens) and some of the minor

masters a formula for organizing religious scenes. Another regional trend appears to be the dichotomy between realism and idealism that dominates the Bolognese school in the baroque period.

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FLORENCE AND TUSCANY

Boccaccio makes Florence the scene for his introduction to The Decameron. He describes the horrors of an epidemic and the inability of people to cope. His description of the disease's symptoms have helped identify the Black Death as bubonic plague:

not as it had done in the East Countries....death followed thereon, by bleeding at the nose. But here it began with young children, male or female, either under the armpits, or in the groine, by certaine swellings....black or blew spottes, which would appeare...ignorance in the Physitians could not comprehend from whence the cause proceeded... How many valiant and comely young men, whom Galen, Hippocrates, and Aesculapius (if they were living) could not have been reputed any way unhealthful; were seen to dine at morning with their parents and friends, and familiar confederates, and went to sup in another world with their Predecessors?...Hallowed ground could not suffice, for the great multitude of dead bodies...to make use of great deepe ditches, wherein they were buried by hundreds at once, ranking dead bodies along in graves, as Merchandize are laide along in ships, covering each after other with small quantity of earth, and so they filled at last up the whole ditch to the brim...Citizen fled after another, and one neighbour had not any care of another, Parents, nor kindred never visiting them...with such terrour, that one brother forsooke another...Fathers and Mothers fled away from their owne Children...finding no charity among their friends.³⁶

The 1348 epidemic reduced Florence's population of 90,000 by half. In later years the city did not experience the same magnitude of disaster, although Florence and the Tuscan region were frequently hit with smaller outbreaks of the plague. Judging

by historic documents, the bureaucrats of the sanitation department worked with a surprising efficiency, reaching even the smallest villages and trying everything in their power to prevent the spread of pestilence. In the summer of 1630 the plague devastated all of upper Italy. A study on Monte Lupo, a castello thirty kilometer away from Florence, tells about the violation of sanitary rules when a plague procession was formed by the parish priest and some the people of the surrounding small towns. What was unusual in this incidence was that a Dominican friar, the manager of the local pesthouse, informed the secular authorities of this transgression. Almost daily correspondence with the health magistrate in Florence and the recordings in Libro dei Morti (1629-1839) in Monte Lupo give insight into the proceedings during this epidemic.³⁷ During the same epidemic in Milan, Federico Borromeo--possibly against his better judgment--organized a procession that had disastrous consequences. Similar moral conflicts were experienced in the city of Florence. The prior of San Marco felt called upon to organize a public demonstration to appease God. However, he had to make great concessions to the sanitation department: only a few government officials (headed by the Grand Duke) and some members of the clergy, observing precautionary measures, were allowed to form a procession bearing the relic of St. Anthony of Florence.³⁸ It has puzzled art historians for a long time that the Black Death and later

epidemics were not recorded in Florentine monuments, and, even seventeenth-century plague paintings are limited to only a few examples. A number of factors might have contributed to this state of the arts. A general stagnation in painting made itself felt in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries following the unprecedented glories of Renaissance art and may have had some influence on the plague-scenes production. (However, one should not forget that seventeenth-century Florence's most impressive achievements were in drawing and that the gifted printmaker Stefano della Bella came from this region.) The role Florence played in the formation of the baroque style is still under investigation. It must remain pure conjecture that the policies of the Medici had anything to do with this lack of interest in plague subjects. Although Charles Borromeo's mother was a Medici, there is no special interest in this religious figure in Florence.

Andrea Comodi is one of the artists whose iconographic inventions have long been underestimated. St. Charles interceding for the Cessation of the Plague is known to have existed in numerous versions and copied by other artists (XXXI). He is also said to have painted the subject of St. Charles bringing the viaticum to plague victims. At any rate, the realism of his nude plague corpses in the altar painting in Fano is startling and is probably based on life-study drawings.³⁹ The realistic depiction of his victims may have been the reason that the version painted

for San Carlo ai Catinari, which will be discussed with the Roman works, was covered on the left-hand side with decorative stucco.

Rutilio Manetti painted in 1610 a series of fresco decorations in Siena's San Rocco. The first of the two scenes discussed shows St. Roch washes the Foot of a Plague Victim (XXXII). The baroque artist bases his design on an indigenous tradition. This act of mercy was prefigured in what I would consider the first hospital scene, the Pellegrinaio fresco by Domenico Bartolo Care of the Sick (fig.104). It is located in Siena's Santa Maria della Scala and predates Tintoretto's St. Roch by a hundred years. Although dated 1447 it comes close to the religious sentiments expressed in the post-Tridentine scenes: the priest's attendance of the dead and dying, the giving of alms, as well as tending to the physical needs of the diseased. Bartolo's influence on plague scenes is limited to Manetti's invention.

The second scene by Manetti shows a papal procession with a statue of St. Roch (XXXIII). The artist characterizes it as a plague scene only by the patronage of St. Roch and the corpses lying in the foreground. It probably goes back to the St. Gregory iconography and the quadroni.

In the city of Florence, only one plague painting survives. It came originally from the cloister of San Antonino (no illustration available). Although the fresco is not dated, St. Anthony administering the Sacraments must have been executed

before 1631, the year Dandini died (of plague?). Its subject is St. Anthony (1389-1459), who had been archbishop of Florence. He was canonized in 1523 and is generally depicted in a Dominican robe. St. Anthony of Florence enjoyed great support as plague patron. He is the very saint whose relics had been borne in procession "very early in the morning on December 5, 1630 through selected streets," curing, according to a nun's testimony, 400 people.⁴⁰

The only known eighteenth-century plague commission was sent in 1735 to Florence by the Bolognese painter Giuseppe Maria Crespi. Abbot Corsi who had commissioned a pair of small copper panels which represented two Olivetan plague patrons, Francesca Romana and Bernardo Tolomei probably showed interest in the fourteenth-century founder of the Olivetan order because Bl. Bernard Tolomei was a candidate for canonization "at various times during the mid-eighteenth century."⁴¹ St. Francesca Romana placing the Infant Christ in the Arms of her Confessor is lost, its pendant Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting the Victims of the Plague has been recently discovered (I). The importance of this work for the plague iconography has been already mentioned.

ROME and LATIUM

Baroque Rome, the papal residence, plays a dual role in the development of religious art. While the city was tightly controlled by the Holy See and its doctrines, it was also cosmopolitan and attracted scores of artists from other Italian regions and even foreign countries. This accounts for the diversity of styles in the Eternal City. Most paintings are more characteristic of their time period than of their Roman ambience. In this metropolitan environment, artistic achievements gained instant recognition, and iconographic inventions were quickly copied. Famous designs or paintings were engraved and thereby disseminated. This is true for the Raphael-Poussin and the Mignard traditions, which were fully discussed in the chapter on iconography.

Roman plague paintings consist of altarpieces, modelli for frescoes, and religious cabinet paintings. Papal patronage was never involved in plague scenes. Episodes from the lives of exemplary persons were commissioned by religious orders to promote former members into the rank of saints. Art was a popular medium to direct the public's attention to their charitable deeds.

Few of the religious plague paintings can be attributed to a specific epidemic. Although Rome experienced this scourge in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was spared for the next fifty

years. The worst epidemic took place in 1656, after the election of Fabio Chigi as Pope Alexander VII (1655-1667).

One of the major controlling agents in Roman art was the Academy of St. Luke, founded in 1577, under papal jurisdiction. Its members had to adhere strictly to the teachings of the Council of Trent. Art was created for the glory of God. In 1627 Pope Urban VIII renewed and elaborated the statute's rules against depiction of false dogma. The Catholic Church was adamant in its position that none of the works of religious art should cause them embarrassment in the eyes of other faiths. Piety was of foremost importance, and the rule of decorum was invoked at all times. For plague pictures, this meant that the victims had to be decently dressed and could not display the characteristic disfiguring pest bubos. Roman paintings generally are traditional, observing all the requirements of piety, legibility, and decorum.

Many of the works discussed are by famous artists and were created over a period of almost two centuries: Orazio Borgianni, Pietro (Berrettini) da Cortona, Pierre Mignard, Lazero Baldi, Andrea Pozzo, and Benedetto Luti.

The earliest Roman baroque plague paintings relate to the 1610 canonization of Charles Borromeo. In 1613, Orazio Borgianni, one of the few native Romans, painted St. Charles accepts the Care of an Infant during the Plague of 1576 (IX). This altar painting for San Adriano on the Forum, one of the oldest and

most important churches in Rome, enjoyed official acceptance and gained Baglioni's favorable comment "bel lavoro."⁴² The subject of the painting is taken from the accounts of St. Charles's life which tell how the "father of the city" and his devoted staff collected plague-infected or orphaned children. A drawing by Fiammenghino (fig.100) may have been the original source for this popular motif.

Borgianni's composition is dominated by St. Charles, his attendant, and the man kneeling in front of him. The narrative is supported by gestures and glances that the main protagonists exchange. The saint accepts the child with a loving smile. The young man looks trustingly up to his spiritual father in whose capable hands he has just unloaded his burden. The bystander, dressed in black Spanish costume, testifies to the saint's superhuman charity, defying words of caution again and again, always risking his life and his dwindling fortune for the good of his flock.

The plague victims in the right background are decorously dressed, for it was common knowledge that the archbishop had sacrificed all his worldly belongings to clothe the poor. The background landscape of a steep mountain has no relationship to the Milanese landscape. It does, however, bear some resemblance to the Sacro Monte of Varallo depicted in one of the quadroni (fig.106). St. Charles made a pilgrimage to this sacred site that

reproduced Christ's tomb and his road of passion in a small town in northern Italy to give thanks for the cessation of the plague.

Less obvious to the modern viewer is the connection with a small independent scene in the left background. It is never mentioned in the literature. I propose that it represents St. Adrian, the patron of the church for which Borgianni produced this altar painting. The saint has been invoked against the plague since the seventh century, when his relics had been transferred from Constantinople to Rome. His biography is sketchy. According to the Biblioteca Sanctorum, he was one of the Roman martyrs who died in A.D. 290 in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. As an officer of Emperor Maximianus, he and his wife, the sainted Natalia, tended orphans of those Christian martyrs who had died in the arena. After Natalia converted her husband to Christianity, Adrian died a cruel death for his faith. His wife built a mausoleum in Byzantium, where she spent the rest of her life in prayer. In the painting, he is seen wearing a halo and a short antique tunic; St. Natalia wears a classical gown. She carries one child in her arms, and another is nursed by a goat. The tomb-like structures that make up the background might give more information on the specific incidents depicted which I presume was based on apocryphal writings now lost.

The much-reduced scale in the background scenes shows vestiges of mannerism. It stresses the analogy between the

charitable deeds of the early Christian martyrs as foster parents and St. Charles, the latest member in the community of saints, by corresponding poses. Furthermore, the analysis of the painting reveals that most details have their origins in the Milanese quadroni. Although the scene is not readily understood by modern scholars, it fulfilled all the requirements of clear pictorial narration the Church had published as guidelines. The quotes from the well-known St. Charles cycle and the probably equally familiar life of St. Adrian would have clarified the meaning for the seventeenth-century viewer.

San Carlo ai Catinari was one of the three churches dedicated to the new saint.⁴³ The patronage and the circumstances surrounding the commissions for the high altar painting are typical for the state of affairs in seventeenth-century Rome. The church belonged to Milanese Barnabites. In 1611, one year after St. Charles's canonization, it was completely rebuilt. Although its construction lasted about fifty years, its clergy commissioned, probably as early as 1620, not just one, but two, St. Charles altar paintings. Both were eventually rejected. The painting by Andrea Comodi still exists. It would be hardly worth mentioning except for the fact that it represents an example of Roman censorship. St. Charles interceding for the Cessation of the Plague has survived in a number of versions. The Fano altar--discussed in Florence--shows realistically painted nude corpses

which had been either omitted or were later obliterated in the Roman altar (XXXI).⁴⁴ It also includes an early example of a plague angel flying above the saint's head, sheathing his sword in a reconciliatory gesture.

Equally instructive is the study of the competition in the 1650's for the high altar which involved Mignard and Cortona. It gives insight not only into the artistic milieu of the middle of the century in Rome but also into its religious trends and factions within the Church.

Pierre Mignard must have submitted a number of sketches and eventually a modello for San Carlo ai Catinari one year after the Roman plague epidemic of 1656 (XXII). The circumstances that surround the commission are shrouded in mystery; we know only that the painting was never executed and that Mignard returned to Paris in 1657. Cortona painted the extant altarpiece St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail in 1667 (XIX). It has been suggested that the Catinari competition was held in the middle of the Jansenist controversy and that Mignard's work was rejected on religious grounds. Jansenist tendencies came close to heresy in seventeenth-century Rome.⁴⁵ (On the other hand, since we are not quite sure of the date of departure, the artist may have left Rome for fear of contagion.)

The reason for Mignard's rejection must remain in the realm of conjecture (XXII). The saint distributing communion to the

dying plague victims had been depicted before (Tanzio da Varallo, Saraceni and others). What could be construed as offensive was, I believe, the woman seated humbly on the ground in a gesture of submission to her faith. She resembles the depiction of St. Mary Magdalene. Poussin's drawing The repentant Mary Magdalene is a Roman example by an Italianate French artist, picked at random to demonstrate the similarity in pose and expression (fig.107). This female saint is associated with penitence. She is the symbol for confession.⁴⁶ The Jansenists had accused the Jesuits of expediency and advocating "frequent communion" without proper preparation of self-examination and penitent attitude. Mignard's design express the grim reality of the hour of death which moved the plague victim to remorse and made the recipient worthy of the sacrament. (Besides, only members of the congregation whom the priest knew to be practicing Catholics were allowed to receive the viaticum.) Therefore, to the politically sensitive Papal City, Mignard's painting may have smacked of Jansenism.

The preparatory drawing for Mignard's Roman altar shows some divergences from the modello (fig.108). First the putti swinging the censer (prayers floating to heaven) are missing. The acolyte in the foreground supports a fumigation device in his left hand and a torch in his right. This must have been altered on the advice of a cleric, because in the painting the boy is holding the

bell, called for by the Rubric. The number of torches has been increased to the customary two. Finally, a number of changes are aesthetic in nature: the architecture is cropped to make the building more impressive, and the child's position is no longer parallel to the mother's body, but lying at a right angle across her lap.

Still, it was Mignard's seemingly rejected design that influenced plague iconography for over a hundred years. Even in Rome its impact could be felt because of the design's dissemination in print. Versions by Poilly, Audran, Abraham Bosse, and many by lesser-known printmakers exist. Poilly had to correct his first state of his St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim (fig.93). Because of the engraving's reversing process it showed the saint serving communion with the left hand. Such a break with ordinances specified in the Rituale Romanum was unacceptable. It did not keep connoisseurs from snapping up this limited edition as rare collectors' items. In the second state, the saint strikes a somewhat different pose (fig.109). He does not extend his arm toward the woman. Mignard's engravings became universally known. Most paraphrases, however, prefer the originally extended hand because it linked St. Charles closely with the communicant (fig.52). Because of the proliferation as a print this image was destined to spread like wildfire through-out Europe and represent the very ideals of the Counter Reformation in the

countries north of the Alps.

Cortona's design for San Carlo St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail is free from controversial innuendoes (XIX). Plague processions were a Roman theme; Pope Gregory was shown in San Pietro in Vincoli (fig.85). Cortona displays no interest in the earlier iconography or style. His interest is divided between two designs from the quadroni, Fiammenghino's St. Charles leading the Procession of the Holy Nail (X) and the late mannerist Filippo Abbiati's version of the 1610 Archbishop Charles Borromeo's first Entry into Milan (fig.110). Cortona exploits the mannered depiction of a windblown baldachin for his narrative purposes. During epidemics people prayed for wind to clear the miasmatic air from the atmosphere. The Golden Legend describes how the icon carried before St. Gregory "had cleansed the air." (A Wind Mass against the plague was held daily in Vienna's cathedral well into the twentieth century). The burst of wind on the canopy and the almost extinguished torch flames would indicate that the saint's prayers had been answered. Cortona balances the tension between the steadfast pace of the ecstatic saint carrying the relic and the agitated movement around him. The motion of the flickering lights and the wind movement in the drapery contribute to the religious fervor of the procession in which even the elements seem to participate. The crowd expresses the same frenzy.

In Cortona's preparatory sketch, the group of the mother presenting her child is not included (fig.111). It must have been a later addition to the painting to heighten its emotional content. The original drawing lacks the influence of the quadroni. Although the subplot is missing, the rest of the design has reached a fair amount of finality in this drawing. The figures surrounding the canopy, outlined in pen and ink, correspond to the painting. It shows a solemn account of the historic event when the cardinal archbishop had walked "barefoot in rapt contemplation of the passion of Christ as his biographer describes:

Round his neck he bore a rope like the halter of a condemned criminal; in his hand he carried a crucifix on which he kept his eyes fixed throughout the whole way. He considered himself to bear upon his shoulders the burden of the sins of the people...this was in imitation of holy King David...his people, who, as he passed along, made the streets re-echo "Mercy!" As the canon and clergy wore garb of penance of their own, the appearance of the city was that of that of a people whose hearts were full of contrition.⁴⁷

Although Cortona invoked artistic license and changed the penitent saint's clothes to the vestment of a cardinal, such changes were condoned and welcomed by the Church because it made the scenes more impressive.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, Charles Borromeo lost some of his popularity in Rome. A number of new religious figures were considered for canonization or advanced in the process toward beatification. All these saints shared an

interest in charitable deeds. All had risked and some had lost their lives while tending plague victims.

St. John of God, the founder of the hospitallers, was canonized in 1690. At that time, the order commissioned Lazero Baldi to paint the sacristy ceiling of San Giovanni Calibita nell'Isola Tiberina, a church adjoining a hospital (XI). The modello St. John of God nurses a Plague Victim shows the saint changing the bandages of a thigh bubo--not a suitable subject for a church (probably the reason why this scene is shown in a sacristy, while the church features St. John of God in Glory). Since the Portuguese saint was only a lay brother, the administering of the sacraments had to be relegated to an ordained priest. A member of the hospitallers, wearing the black habit, is seen on the right hand side of the painting administering the Extreme Unction while another priest enters the sickroom under the protection of a baldachin. This signifies that the Eucharist had been brought into the hospital ward. In the foreground a mother and child lie dead among other plague victims. Although there is depth in the architecture, the perspective has some of the vertical stacking that was customary in the Bolognese school at the beginning of the seventeenth century which makes the design suitable for the oblong format of the sacristy ceiling.

A painting, also dated in the 1690's, is attributed to Padre Andrea Pozzo (no illustration available). It shows Camillo de

Lellis, whose nursing motto, "The body before the soul, the body for the soul, body and soul for God" seems to have such universal validity for the baroque period. The scene takes place in a makeshift hospital in the Diocletian Thermes and commemorates the plague that had raged in Rome a century earlier. (It could also have been commissioned to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Compania dei ministri degli Infermi in 1591.) When the painting was executed Camillo de Lellis was neither canonized nor beatified. The final steps for his canonization were taken in 1746 when Pierre Subleyras painted his famous work St. Camillo evacuates a Hospital during an Inundation of the Tiber (fig.112). It is an example of the characteristic Camillian habit, black with a blood-red cross on the chest. Although it does not show a plague epidemic, it is in part beholden to the realism first developed in plague scenes.

In the eighteenth century the monopoly of Roman art began to wane. Fewer and fewer important artists or patrons were found in the city. Benedetto Luti, Subleyras's teacher, although a native of Florence had become one of the most famous artists in Rome. The innovative religious cabinet painting St. Charles administers the Extreme Unction is considered his masterpiece (IV). It was commissioned by a foreign potentate, Prince Johann Wilhelm Schonborn, a house that had equally close connections to Rome and to the Habsburg rulers. The sacramental scene represented

Emperor Charles VI's patron saint and the commission must have been related to the plague epidemic of 1713 in the imperial capital of Vienna.

In the eighteenth century, renewed interest in liturgical pictures manifested itself first in Rome. Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni commissioned Giuseppe Maria Crespi to paint the celebrated series of the Sacraments. The painting depicting Confession predates Luti's St. Charles by one year.

The eclectic character of eighteenth-century Roman art is best demonstrated in Luti's work. He quoted from the most competent sources:

The influence of classical models--Raphael, Poussin, Mignard is evident in the clear and lucid organization of Luti's principal and secondary figures, in the solidity and definition of individual forms.⁴⁸

Some of Luti's influence can be detected in the altar of the Bolognese painter Aureliano Milani (XXVIII). The real heir to Luti's modified classicism was of course to be Pierre Subleyras.

Although Luti paraphrased Mignard's motif he chose an innovative subject in his St. Charles administers the Extreme Unction. A more traditional eighteenth-century variant of Mignard's St. Charles by Giuseppe Antonio Pianca can be admired outside Rome in the parochial church of Agona (XXXV).

Religious cabinet paintings and the trend toward secularization becomes apparent in Plague Scene on the Piazza

del Popolo commissioned by Cardinal Antonio Zondadari (fig.113). The artist of this still-unpublished painting is unknown and the canvas belongs to a series of eight works, one of which is dated 1727. Some depict episodes from the patron's life others were intended to link Zondadari with his illustrious ancestors of the house of Chigi.⁴⁹

Pope Alexander VII's nepote, Cardinal Flavio? Chigi, is shown before his family's church, Santa Maria del Popolo, visiting a plague encampment. The papal crest crowns the city gate, the time is probably 1656, when Fabio Chigi was pope during a major Roman epidemic. The time can be confirmed by a dated engraving that shows the same stockade gate indicating the state of quarantine (fig.114). The cardinal points to a man who has raised his arms to heaven in prayer as if communicating the good example to a woman who is kneeling before him. The foreground is taken up by the customary plague family. The mother is supported by her attentive husband and comforted in her final hour by a Capuchin monk who holds out the crucifix to console the dying woman.

The series is painted in the narrative tradition, recalling highlights in the lives of saints or those soon to be canonized. In the final analysis, the eight Zondadari paintings go back to the Charles cycle. However, these paintings were not intended as preparation for sainthood. The secularization of the plague subject

had progressed to a point where the formula was used to record historic events of an illustrious family.

Summing up the Roman plague paintings of the seventeenth century, one can safely say that the papal city was one of the most important centers for the development of plague iconography. Raphael, Poussin, and Mignard had created their influential works in Rome. Most narrative scenes were commissioned by individual charitable orders to promote their saints.

The early eighteenth century saw a number of new canonizations, and it is quite possible that Crespi's two plague paintings, originally done for a Florentine Olivetan abbot (I), should have found their way to the Eternal City because of the depiction of Francesca Romana.⁵⁰

The revival of the Council's spirit is found in a trend toward greater realism and is paralleled by renewed interest in reformation within the church. It is also characteristic of secularization in the era of the Enlightenment. At that time papal influence dwindled and Rome seemed to have exhausted its creative powers as well as its monetary sources. Foreign artists and foreign patrons appear more frequently on the scene than in the previous century.

NAPLES AND SOUTHERN ITALY

In the seventeenth century the Spanish Crown ruled Naples, which was by far the largest city in Italy and the largest in Europe after Paris. As the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies since 1266, Naples was known for its predilection for devotion (bella devotione), its spectacular religious ceremonies, and for its cruelty.⁵¹ The city was divided between the very rich and a large population of the plebeian class. The Church recognized the necessity for corporal works of mercy which relieved some of the worst social problems without finding a solution.

Neapolitan seventeenth-century art has traditionally been divided into two periods. The caesura is attributed to the 1656 plague epidemic and its far-reaching consequences. Southern Italy had only minor epidemics during the early 1600's. The plague of Palermo in 1624 was famous because at that time the remains of St. Rosalia were found in a cave and she became one of the most renowned baroque plague intercessors. In 1646 Naples had a bout with the dreaded disease, but it was not until the fateful year of 1656 that Naples "was struck by a plague of unprecedented violence; one can reckon that 60 percent of the population were killed."⁵²

The first half of the seventeenth century was characterized

by the expression of an austere religious spirit and somewhat provincial art. The cycle depicting the life of St. Charles Borromeo by Antonio de Bellis shows the spirit of the Council of Trent which emphasized the spiritual well-being of the poor and the sick. It also attests to a special affinity between the Milanese and Neapolitan clergy. Two years after St. Charles's canonization, Federico Borromeo had sent a relic of his famous cousin to Naples.⁵³ Since the cycle is documented before 1640, we know that the choice of St. Charles was not related to a specific epidemic. The didactic decorations for San Carlo alle Mortelle show interest in the sacraments and theology. The two paintings that portray plague scenes have been discussed at great length in the introductory essay.

Despite the expressed religious fervor, Naples was in need of catechetical instructions. Superstitious customs had to be stamped out, and the masses of illiterate citizens educated. In fact, there seems to have been a major controversy on confession in progress during that time. Although details of this liturgical dispute are not known, it is curious that St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim by Bellis is one of the few paintings that depict the sacrament of penance, albeit in a very archaic form (VII).⁵⁴ The two plague victims receiving the sacraments are dressed while the rest of the infirm show their feverish upper body exposed.

St. Charles blesses a Plague Victim expresses much of the religious spirit of Milan's great pastor (VIII). The style of the paintings is austere and stiff. The artist may have been influenced by the quadroni, although his iconography is quite innovative. The circumstances surrounding the paintings in San Carlo alle Mortelle would definitely merit further study.

The traumatic year of 1656 introduced an emotionally charged art. Works after the cataclysmic event show important changes; they are revolutionary both in style and subject. The situation in the city needs to be explained. The plague hit the southern seaport in spring, with some deaths already reported in January. It had probably been brought in by Spanish soldiers from Sardinia. Some of the disaster might have been prevented had the news not been suppressed by the governing Viceroy for months. On June 10 the Eletti della citta decided to have protective plague images, such as the Immaculate Conception, SS. Rosalia, Gennaro, and Francis Xavier, painted over their seven city gates. By October the epidemic appeared to have receded, and finally, on the December 8 feast of the Immaculate Conception, thanks was given by the whole city that the threat of the infectious disease had passed. 250,000 Neapolitans, more than half of the city's entire population, had died. Some of Naples best known artists had succumbed. The banks, surprisingly, had kept operating without any interruptions. Their meticulous records are of great value for

art historians.

Cardinal Ascanio Filomarino and a number of Neapolitan artists had taken refuge in the Certosa di San Martina--today only accessible by cog-railway. The cardinal's commission Thanksgiving after the Plague shows the view from the monastery (fig.58). The fresh mountain air and isolation from the overcrowded city proved helpful. Three painters who had lived through this holocaust recorded some of the harrowing experiences: Luca Giordano, Micco Spadaro, and Mattia Preti. They painted the only realistically conceived scenes in the seventeenth century. Against all rules of decorum, their corpses show symptoms of the bubonic plague, bloated bodies, and unceremonial nudity. Rome and the pope were far away.

Mattia Preti introduced the Raphael-Poussin plague iconography to the South. He used the motif of the sick mother and child in at least one of his apotropaic plague scenes. Although his paintings over the gates have been destroyed (there is one faded example left) two of his modelli are preserved (fig.32). They document the harrowing scenes which proved to have universal influence--lasting well into the nineteenth century. The fame of Naples and its expressive art becomes comprehensible once one realizes that for centuries painters entering the city would have been greeted by these works reflecting a fellow artist's personal experience of an epidemic. Nothing else in Europe matched such

a statement.

Preti, the artist who first recorded the recent disaster in monumental fresco, saw his popularity soon fade. His fame was eclipsed by the youngest of the triumvirate, Luca Giordano. In the 1660's Giordano synthesized some of Gargiulo's and Preti's experiments and raised the artistic quality to such a level that Wittkower rightfully proclaims the second half of the seventeenth century as the period when "Naples emerged as an art center of primary importance."⁵⁵

In contrast to Milan's economic ruin, Naples prospered after the plague. The port recovered with surprising speed and began a new and successful chapter in its history. The Neapolitan school of art quickly gained international recognition. A number of minor artists continued to paint plague scenes for the next fifty years. Many of them follow Micco Spadaro's tradition of secular disaster paintings such as Piazza Mercatello in Naples during the Plague of 1656 (fig.33).⁵⁶ Others are closer to Giordano's visionary concept of The Virgin and St. Gennaro intercede for the Victims of the Plague (fig.36). Only two works below fit into the category of religious narrative subjects.

Giacomo del Po gained some recognition as engraver of plague scenes. He also proved himself as a painter. His Plague Scene of Sorrent in 1656 for the Church of San Antonino shows the visionary appearance of the churches patron saint (XXXVI).

The bishop's crozier would indicate that he is St. Anthony of Florence. Although the artist was only four years old when the disaster struck, the scene renders a lively description of events during an epidemic. A priest holding a cross, not a plague saint (because he lacks the obligatory halo), rushes to the side of a woman expiring in the arms of her husband. The scene is dramatic and its movement suggests Cortona's high baroque style. Giacomo del Po utilizes the Mignard motif, although the woman does not receive communion.

Angelo Solimena created for the Duomo of Sarno an impressive plague painting in 1698. The scene does not describe the recent epidemic but depicts St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague (XXXVII). However, he transposes the early Christian event into baroque Italy. The original iconography of the papal procession is enriched with the seventeenth-century plague motif of the dead mother and child in the left foreground, and on the right a priest serving the viaticum to a dying man. The victim is surrounded by his loving family and clergy. One of the acolytes carries an expressive Christ-on-the-cross. The pope's eyes are fixed on the banner of the Virgin waving briskly in the wind. Above them, in a dramatically lit cloud bank the plague angel sheathing his sword flies over Castello Sant'Angelo, an impressive, two-story round structure. The flickering light emphasizes the angel, the Virgin, and the sacrament of the

Eucharist. Emotional fervor pervades the entire scene. Neapolitan art has achieved high baroque characteristics, though belated and altered by the realism inherent in the southern region from the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Solimena's work gives much information on the epidemic and shows more interest in the human condition concerning the victims of the disease. The bloated corpse of a baby, first seen in Pietro Testa's Plague print of 1631 (fig.92), is in danger of being devoured by a dog (fig.103). However gruesome the scene, it must be considered idealized. None of the bodies littering the foreground shows skin lesions. Nor does the painting illustrate the total breakdown of society. According to historical documents, the little humane treatment plague victims would receive came from the dedicated Catholic clergy and less from their families or friends. In the name of efficiency, the health department tore families apart, separating them by sex and state of health. This would have left them without emotional support from their loved ones. The circumstances experienced in an overcrowded city are unimaginable. The citizens were in constant danger of robbery, extortion, rape, and other acts of brutality by the plague workers often hired from the ranks of galley slaves or prison wards. Still, Angelo Solimena's scene conveys hope to the faithful: the saints, the pope, and the clergy will help every one of the unfortunate to overcome this miserable life and become an eternal member of the

overcome this miserable life and become an eternal member of the
Church.

NOTES CHAPTER III

1 San Carlo Borromeo, John Headly and John Tomaro, London/Washington, 1988, 24.

2 The breeding ground for Jansenism was prepared in France by a Dutchman, Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638) and a Basque friend, Duvergier de Hauranne (1581-1643), better known as Abbe de Saint-Cyran. Jansen became aware of Augustinian ideas of grace in 1619 while working in Louvain and converted his friend Saint-Cyran to similar views. Jansen started writing on this topic in 1627 before he became bishop of Ypres in 1636. Two years later in 1638 he died prematurely and leaving his opus on St. Augustine unfinished. Augustinus was published posthumously in September 1640. It discusses St. Augustine and the heretic movement of the Pelagians. Jansen assumed a pessimistic stand point on how men were inclined to sin. The restoration to Grace through Christ was essential for salvation, but his views suppressed the freedom to act on their own salvation, recognizing only the most rigidly Augustinian ideas on predestination. Augustinus was immediately accused of removing the possibility of free will, and renewing the controversy of Calvinist ideas. It was condemned by the Inquisition in August 1641 and again by a bull of Urban VIII in 1643.

3 San Carlo Borromeo, 165.

4 Martina Fleischer, "Leinwandbilddekorationen Venezianischer Kirchen vom 16. bis ins 18. Jahrhundert. Venezianische Malerei und Gegenreformation," Vienna, 1986, 2. The author remarks in the introduction that during these three hundred years, increasing differences with the Holy See became noticeable. She compares the reports on the Venetian art of the first Apostolic Visit in 1581 with the one twenty years later, 20-22.

5 The scene of St. Roch heals the animals (Tintoretto school) in the Chiesa di S. Rocco has had no impact on later art.

6 Venezia e la Peste: 1348-1797, Venice, 1979, 221.

7 Ibid., 269.

8 The subject of the Last Supper is common in post-Tridentine Venice. "Der Sühncharakter des Messopfers und das Bussakrament, die in dogmatischer Hinsicht Teile der Rechtfertigungslehre (justificatio) sind, und ihre liturgische

Entsprechung in der Beichte als Reinigung vor der Einnahme der Kommunion haben, werden in Themen wie "Fusswaschung" oder dem "Fest im Haus Simon" verdeutlicht und erhalten in Venedig teilweise eine besondere Bedeutung." Fleischer, 31-32.

- 9 Venezia e la Peste, 256.
- 10 Rodolfo Pallucchini, La pittura veneziana del Seicento, Milan, 1981, 112.
- 11 John Spike, "The Blessed Bernard Tolomei Interceding for the Cessation of the Plague in Siena: A rediscovered Painting by Giuseppe M. Crespi," The John Paul Getty Museum Journal, 15 (1987) 115.
- 12 A date of 1701, after Sebastiano Ricci returned from Rome, is most convincing. The subject itself is Roman (St. Gregory in San Pietro in Vincoli). Ricci's Ascension ceiling in the Sacristy of SS. Apostoli (Rome) is dated 1701--Blunt, Guide to Baroque Rome, New York, 1982, 17. The Venetian artist quotes in Padua from Bernini's Urban VIII and Cortona's altar in S. Carlo ai Catinari St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail.
- 13 J. Abel, Costumes of Prelates of the Catholic Church, Baltimore, 1926, 37.
- 14 A. Wright, Federico Borromeo and Baronius: a turning point in the development of the Counter-Reformation Church, Reading, 1974, 14.
- 15 P. Cannon-Brookes, The Age of Federigo Borromeo, Birmingham, 1974, 17.
- 16 A. Dianmond, Cardinal Federigo Borromeo as Patron and as Critic of the Arts and his Museaeum of 1625, Diss. University of California 1974, 72.
- 17 G. Giussano, The Life of St. Charles Borromeo, 2 vols., London, 1884, I, 389.
- 18 M. Mojana, "Paolo Camillo Landriani detto il Duchino, pittore 'Carliano'," Arte Cristiana 73 (1985), 35-49 (especially 36).
- 19 Giussano, I, 423-424
- 20 Ibid., 392

- 21 Cannon-Brookes, 83. "No documents have been located concerning his early years before the 'laissez passer' of 11 February 1600 issued to Tanzio and Melchiorre to leave Valsesia and travel to wherever they needed to go to earn a living as painters, and to travel to Rome for the Jubilee of Pope Clement III. In the document they are described as 'juvenes bonae vocis' and as 'probos et frugi juvenes et Christi fidelis.'... Tanzio came from a German speaking village and had probably... "Zwinglian leanings."
- 22 W. Boschloo, Annibale Carracci in Bologna, The Hague, 1974.
- 23 Brandi painted in Rome's SS. Carlo e Ambroggio plague frescoes before 1677; they are large but not very interesting and there are no illustrations available (Blunt, 26).
- 24 Giussano, I, 383.
- 25 Boschloo, 121, 123.
- 26 Ibid., 149.
- 27 G. Feigenbaum, "Lodovico Carracci: A study of his late career and a catalogue of his paintings," University of Princeton, 1984, 125-126. The author emphasizes that this particular scene implies St. Charles's post-humous miracle performed on the girl's son. The patron, Abbot Alessandro Mattei wrote from Rome about the increasing devotion to the newly canonized saint, "et ogni giorno il Sig.re Iddio ne dimostra infiniti miracoli."
- 28 Giussano, II, 503-504.
- 29 Feigenbaum, 175-177.
- 30 The four stone columns in S. Petronio are probably much older than the sixteenth century and not plague related. They stood originally at the city gates. Such markers of sacred sites existed since the early Christian period.
- 31 Giussano I, 392-393.
- 32 The Age of Corregio and the Carracci, Washington/New York/Bologna, 1986, 408.
- 33 In the museum's catalogue Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien Verzeichnis der Gemalde, Vienna, 1973, the painting is entered

under #1624, M. Franceschini? St. Aloysius von Gonzaga (?) bei den Pestkranken. According to the museum records, Stephen Pepper reattributed the painting to A. Milani.

34 Spike, 112-113.

35 Ibid., # 4, 111-112. Prof. Spike doubts that a skeleton could precede a Eucharistic procession. He sees it as a contradiction in terms. Since the original iconography did not include this death image, I see no reason to doubt Merriman's earlier interpretation: "what probably is represented is the bringing of the Eucharist to both the plague victims and St. Bernard Tolomei, who is prominently placed at their side."

I would go even further by saying it seems to be the preparation for Bernardo's last communion as the venerated lay brother looks ahead at the priest.

36 G. Boccaccio, The Decameron, "The induction of the Author," 18-27.

37 C. Cipollo, Faith, Reason, and the plague in seventeenth-century Tuscany, Ithaca, 1979.

38 Ibid., 7-9.

39 Il Seicento Fiorentino, 2 vol., Florence, 1987, I, 144. There seems to be some doubts on Comodi's authorship of the Fano altar--it is possibly a later copy. Since I have not seen the paintings I have to reserve judgment.

40 Cipollo, 9.

41 Spike, 116.

42 Hermann Voss, Die Malerei des Barock in Rom, Berlin, 1924, 465.

43 Blunt: San Carlo ai Catinari, Milanese House of Barnabites (21), San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Discalced Spanish Trinitarians (22). SS. Carlo e Ambrogio al Corso, Confraternity of the Lombards, planned in 1610 (25).

44 see # 39.

45 Claud Boyer, "Un cas singulier: le 'Saint Charles Borrmeé' de Pierre Mignard pour le concours de San Carlo ai Catinari," Revue de l'art, 64 (1984), 26.

- 46 J. B. Knipping, Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Nertherlands: Heaven on Earth., 2 vols., Niewkoop, 1974, 319.
- 47 Giussano I, 392.
- 48 E. P. Bowron, "The Paintings of Benedetto Luti," New York University, 1979, 167.
- 49 A. Clark, Studies in Roman Eighteenth-Century Painting, Washington DC, 1981, 56.
- 50 Spike, 113.
- 51 Painting in Naples 1606-1705 from Caravaggio to Giordano, Washington/London, 1983, 28.
- 52 Ibid., 30.
- 53 Ibid., 35.
- 54 see Chapter I # 38.
- 55 R. Wittkower, Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750, Harmondsworth, 1980, 462.
- 56 The secular paintings are discussed in J. D. Clifton's dissertation, "Images of the Plague and other contemporary Events of seventeenth-century Naples," Diss. Princeton 1987.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRANSALPINE REGIONS

Religious plague paintings of the transalpine regions, although not numerous, are a significant part of this investigation. They give answers to the important questions who, what and where commissioned such scenes. An understanding of the circumstances under which these works were created are essential because the answers are indicative of the countries' political allegiances and religious preferences during an era of reform and turmoil. Religious plague subjects, as pointed out earlier, were restricted to the Catholic regions of Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia. Created almost exclusively by Italian-trained artists, the comparisons with the southern prototypes are of great value for this study. Close resemblances of motifs, as well as diverging characteristics, reveal much about regional traits in the arts. The comparisons highlight the influence exercised by the Roman Catholic Church on religious art outside Italy.

SWITZERLAND

Although one might think that the mountains should have functioned as natural barriers against the plague, even the most isolated Alpine villages had been ravaged from 1348 to the 1640's. During the religious conflicts of the seventeenth century, the years of 1620-1642 were characterized by war, famine, and pestilence: "triplici Rhaetiam flagello, belli sc. famis et pestilentiae iustus Dominus..."¹ wrote a Capuchin monk in 1635 in his chronicle about this devastating era.

Switzerland was an important political buffer zone between Italy and northern Europe. It was the birthplace of two Protestant reformers, Calvin and Zwingli, and it bordered on Lutheran Germany as well as on Calvinist (and later Jansenist) France. Moreover, the religious history of Switzerland is closely related to that of Italy because parts of the southern Canton of Tessin belonged to the Archdiocese of Milan.

The Swiss region figures prominently in this inquiry, and Charles Borromeo is the key figure in the investigation. The mountainous territories, particularly in remote places, were in desperate need of reform because of the immoral conduct of the priests. St. Charles gained his title "Protector Helvetiae" by supporting the Church in the northern regions of his diocese by frequent official episcopal visitations to counteract the grave

danger of a further spread of heretic views and by founding a Swiss seminary in Milan to improve the education of the clergy.

The southern part of Switzerland responded first to post-Tridentine images. Religious art was under heavy fire by the reformers. Therefore, the ideas of christianus pictor and the programs of ars ad propaganda fidem, which were expressed in most plague monuments, needed to be defended. The importance of works of mercy for personal salvation was of particular interest to people who were surrounded by Protestants who tended to believe in the principle of fide sola and in predestination. The subject of communion for laity in the single form of the host, the importance of upholding all seven sacraments--including ordination, which in the Catholic Church meant celibacy--were of vital interest in this war-torn region.

At least three St. Charles cycles, commissioned during the early part of the seventeenth century, are still extant in Swiss churches: St. Charles in Furth, Assumption of the Virgin in Sagans, and St. Roch in Soazza. The wall decorations recall the iconography of the quadroni, which existed in prints. Unfortunately, there are no illustrations available.²

Episodes of St. Charles's life, described in old chronicles and depicted in the quadroni, can be verified in rural Switzerland. For example, plague crosses commemorating the sacred sites of outdoor-altars (similar to the ones used by the archbishop in

Milan) can still be found in front of the St. Charles Chapel in Cresciano (possibly built before his canonization) in 1608 (fig.115). In Furth, the inscription of the most noteworthy events explain: "In der Zeit der Pestilenz richtet er Kreuze auf. Administriert die Sacramente unverletzlich."

Swiss plague paintings present a didactic message and can be construed as Counter-Reformatory measures. Such scenes were commissioned primarily after the middle of the sixteen-hundreds, when peace had once more returned to the land. Charles's involvement in saving the Catholic regions is often celebrated in altar painting. They frequently show variations of Mignard's work. The primitive version of the 1660s, by a local painter, is preserved in the St. Sebastian's Chapel in Baden (XXXVIII). An additional St. Charles altar was commissioned in 1716 for the Capuchin monastery of Schlupfheim where a Luzern artist, Sebastian During, continued the seventeenth-century tradition (XXXIX). The history behind this work is particularly interesting because During's painting replaced an Entombment altar. This earlier painting had originally come from Milan as an exchange for a St. Charles relic (even during his lifetime, any hair the archbishop left behind was already venerated as sacred).³ The Schlupfheim commission reminds one that the memory of the saint's visitations in Switzerland was alive for centuries to come.

There are no iconographic changes in the eighteenth century

altar painting, however, During softens the features of St. Charles and the female communicant is depicted with greater sensitivity.

Although the early Swiss examples lack sophistication and style, they are valuable documents of the Counter Reformation. By the time the famous Rococo decorations of abbeys such as St. Gallen and Einsiedeln were created, plague and the fight against heresy had become topoi of the distant past and therefore excluded from these programs.

FRANCE

The religious history of France is complex and riddled with politics. The Gallican Church practiced its separatist movements from Rome long before the year 1000. When Henry IV abjured Calvinism in 1593, it was out of political convenience, not religious conviction, that the royal house once more declared allegiance to the pope. The Edict of Nantes (1598) guaranteed tolerance to Protestants, but this law was repealed by Louis XIV in 1685, ending a hundred year-long conversion process. In the seventeenth century France plays an important role in Church history. The discussion how much of French Jansenism was due to political controversy and how much of it was due to never-resolved, reformatory tendencies will probably never be known. The influence of Charles Borromeo, recently reassessed, was stronger in France than in Italy: "from 1650 to 1850 all France is confessed according to Borromeoan principles...what we have taken too easily in the period to be Jansenist can sometimes better be understood as part of the general Borromeoan envelopment."*

French baroque artists had a fascination with death and a predilection for morbid subjects, a tradition which started in the Middle Ages with the danse macabre. Although plague subjects first developed in Italy, northern artists, particularly the French,

infused new life into the iconography at every stage of its evolution. One cannot overlook the fact that Poussin and Mignard were French. Other French artists continued the Italian tradition after their return to their homeland: Charles Lebrun, Eustache Leseur, and others show the popularity of the subject. Unfortunately much of their work was lost during the French Revolution.

In the eighteenth century, some of the concerns over irreligious behavior were voiced by Marseilles's Archbishop Belzunce during the 1720 epidemic. He regretted most that "the infinite numbers of unworthy and sacrilegious communions" might have brought on the plague. Although he speaks of a merciful God, he asks his congregation to consider their sins and expresses hope that a new day of obligation, the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, will make his flock better Catholics. Gerome painted the invocation scene in 1854 (fig.116).

Belzunce's sermon described the horrors of the conditions in Marseilles:

We have seen the streets of this great city bordered on each side with dead bodies half corrupted, with infected clothes and effects...that we scarcely knew where to put our feet....all the doors of the churches obstructed with heaps of putrid corpses, some of which the dogs were even devouring...abandoned by their dearest friends, cast inhumanly from their

houses into the streets...how many times,...these expiring victims stretch out their trembling hands towards us, to evince their joy at beholding us once more...ask for our benediction and absolution of their sins, with tears and sentiments of the most perfect faith, penitence, and resignation!...*

A letter from the papal secretary is enlightening. In it Gregory IX expresses his admiration for the brave pastor who "is ready to lay down his life for his flock by visiting the sick struck by the plague," and the pontiff offers the "treasures of the Church" to improve the lot of the people. His secretaty writes:

...do hereby grant a plenary indulgence for all their sins, to all those of the faithful of both sexes [!] the diocese of Marseilles who shall be infected with the plague, which we pray God however not to permit...all ministers of the Lord who shall administer the sacred sacraments to persons infected....Likewise to the physicians and surgeons who labor at their cure....To the midwives who shall deliver of women afflicted with plague and to their nurses who shall give suck to their children. To those who shall conduct the sick to the hospitals...and those who shall transport to the grave....In short, to all the faithful of both sexes who shall administer in any way to the necessities of their brethren afflicted with plague. To those....who exercise any part of spiritual or temporal charity toward them; provided that, being truly and sincerely penitent, they receive the holy communion once a week, and recite the Chaplet or the third part of the Rosary...or the seven Penitential Psalms.

We also grant plenary indulgence....and remission of sins to those struck with the plague if truly penitent, have confessed themselves and received holy sacrament; or, if this is not been possible, have with contrite hearts, invoked the name of Jesus, and resigned themselves wholly to him....we grant indulgences to all priests...and shall say mass for the repose of the souls in purgatory....Rome September 15, 1720.*

One of the few surviving examples of eighteenth-century plague altars is Lemonnier's St. Charles carrying the Viaticum to the Plague Victims (IX). His design combines Cortona's motif of the baldachin with Mignard's dying woman and child. She represents the ideal of penitence described in the papal indulgence: her rosary is wrapped around her wrist and she shows a "contrite heart."

Judging by the numerous French engravers who have copied Mignard's design, the fact that only one French painting survives can be explained only by the great losses of religious art during the French Revolution. The task of reassessing French baroque plague paintings is helped by literary evidence and by nineteenth-century plague subjects painted in France long after the threat of the disease had ceased to exist.

The lost altar for the Church of St. Louis in Versailles St. Roch in a Plague Hospital healing by laying on Hands executed by Francisque Millet refers to the thaumaturgical powers of the French kings. Fortunately this painting is recorded in the Salon livret of 1761. With this canvas we are missing one of the most important links to Jean Gros's Napoleon in the Pesthouse of Jaffe exhibited in the salon of 1804. Napoleon's intentions of comparing

himself with the Old Regime becomes obvious because he takes the place of the saint.

Within Western art France occupies a unique position in regard to the plague subject. It is the only country where plague paintings were plentiful throughout the nineteenth century. The reasons behind this continuous interest were France's ports. Open to Asia and Africa, these commercial centers prolonged the threat of a potential epidemic. That the disease concentrated in the south confirms the theory that the harbors were to blame. In fact, cholera and yellow fever made their entrances through the same ports and devastated not only the cities but also the countryside. Not surprisingly Marseilles's Sanitary department commissioned a number of plague paintings.

In the post-Napoleonic era, the religious art had a revival and was government-supported. The decorations for a Jerome Chapel in St. Severin was a public commission executed in a neo-gothic style. Jean-Leon Gerome's Archbishop Belzunce during the Plague in Marseilles (fig.116) may have been intended as an analogy to the cholera outbreak of 1854 when 143,000 people died in Paris alone. Gerome has revived a number of the old motifs. The woman presenting a child to Belzunce is a quote from Cortona's St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail (XIX). The plague

angel sheathing the sword is one of the oldest motifs in plague imagery. The other angel holds a heart in reference to the introduction of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Christ.

In summary, the answer why France produced scenes of plague long after the threat of the disease had ceased to exist is complex. France had a long tradition of religious plague paintings, the extent of which we can only speculate. They fulfilled real functions in church decorations. The centralization of French art by exhibiting in the Salons gave the artists a common forum. This tended to prolong established traditions and affected their choice of subjects. The nineteenth-century plague pictures conveyed a pertinent message because France was still vulnerable to epidemics; and last but not least, what had been reduced to a mere cliché elsewhere in Europe was raised to new heights by the French Romantic Movement.

THE NETHERLANDS

During the Reformation in the Low Countries, Lutherans, Anabaptists, and Calvinists came in conflict with the Catholic Church. The final political separation of these war-ravaged regions was completed in 1648: the northern provinces achieved then independence, while the southern provinces remained under Spanish control until 1714, when Austria took over the regency.

The Catholic restoration made the Spanish Netherlands "one of the most Catholic regions in the world."¹⁰ Religious orders such as the Capuchin were active in the Low Countries. The Society of Jesus also was very powerful but few, if any, plague paintings were commissioned by Jesuits. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Jansenist movement found many followers. It was suppressed in the eighteenth century, but its influence had chilled the fervor of the Catholic restoration considerably.¹¹

Most of the plague paintings belong in the period of the Counter Reformation. Rubens created his St. Roch altar for the Church of St. Martin in Alost in 1623, but it can hardly be called a narrative scene. The engraving after the altar painting and its influence on plague iconography has been previously discussed (fig.89). Cornelis Massys produced a print after Raimondi's II Morbetto (fig.7), which must have popularized Raphael's design

even further in the northern regions, and, in 1670, Abraham Bosse engraved several plague subjects (fig.52).

The veneration of St. Charles started in the Low Countries in 1647. Charles Borromeo confraternities existed in Ghent and in Antwerp. Jacob Jordans, a Protestant, painted his St. Charles interceding for the Plague Victims for such a confraternity of Antwerp's St. Jacob's Church (fig.117).¹² Its architectural division follows Rubens's Alost design. However, St. Charles kneels in the terrestrial zone, next to him leans the metropolitan double-bared cross (St. Charles is never depicted with a crozier). He and the Virgin intercede for mankind before Christ. In the foreground a woman has expired; another female, holding her breath, is trying to save the little orphan. Next to dead mother lies a sheep. Sheep skins signified plague in Cesare Ripa's description of Peste. It could indicate as well that Jordans was familiar with the prints after Raphael Il Morbetto (fig.7). Jordans seems unaware of the Church's interdict to include incidental animals.

The "Golden Age" of the seventeenth century produced numerous Netherlandish artists. The prolific Rubens epigones are responsible for some of the grandest creations of narrative plague scenes: Gaspard de Crayer, Jan Quellinus II, Jacob van Oost, and Victor H. Janssens painted such scenes in the years between 1650-1690.

Gaspard de Crayer's St. Macarius intercedes for the Plague

Victims c. 1650 shows the Bishop of Ghent in his splendid liturgical vestments (XL). He is recognizable by his white beard. According to Vita antiqua he had predicted that his death would divert the plague from the city. The foreground is filled with sick, some mendicants, and the faithful imploring God to end the epidemic. One beggar wears the characteristic white bandage of the communicable disease as he extends his hand to receive alms. (A good Catholic has to fast, pray, and give alms.) In the background a procession is visible.

For the Chapel of the Beguinage in Malines, Jan Erasmus de Quellinus created his St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim (XLI). The subject was appropriate because the Beguines were a semi-religious order dedicated to the care of the sick. The canvas shows the archbishop "giving aid on earth."¹³ It is one of the few examples where St. Charles is portrayed with a beard. The northern artist was obviously not familiar with the authenticated likeness of the saint nor with his ordinance that all the priests in Milan had to be clean-shaven. However, there are no mistakes in the theological issues: the chalice-like ciborium dominates the composition, and the host is the spiritual focal point. The recipient of the sacrament is propped up on some cushions. At her feet lies a young woman; she and her child are both dead. The pose of the infant is reminiscent of Mignard's design. Since the painting is dated c. 1660, it would

make it one of the earliest responses to the French master's invention.

Typical for the Netherlands is the use of symbolism. The "brevity of life" is expressed with a bundle of straw on which the unfortunate group rests. Neither the mother nor her child lived long enough to receive the sacraments. It is quite likely that the loose stalks of grain in Rubens's St. Roch represent a similar symbol. However, Quellinus's painting leaves no doubt of its interpretation because an identical sheath with the inscription of "vanitas" is depicted in a sixteenth-century print of Dance around Dame World (fig.118).

A straw bundle figures prominently in the foreground of Honore Victor Janssens's St. Charles interceding for the Plague Victims (XLII), originally painted for a Carmelite church. Compared to Jordans's agitated baroque design, to which Janssens is clearly beholden, the altar painting of c. 1690 seems almost classicistic. Idealization is achieved in the "heroic" bodies--decently covered--visible below the kneeling saint. Janssens represents a victim in the prime of his life. The viewer has to deduce that he suffers from the bubonic plague by the characteristic pose of the arm which a nurse examines; all skin blemishes are omitted.

One of the most aesthetically pleasing plague paintings is the altar for an unknown location by Jacob van Oost the Younger. St. Macarius administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim is dated

1673 (XLIII). Although the liturgical color for communion per modum viatici is white, except in the Ambrosian rite where it is red, the artist chose the latter.¹⁴ Cardinal red is most commonly used in plague paintings because it makes for dramatic contrast and also implies the liturgical color for martyrs.

Except for minor liberties taken with liturgical colors, inclusion of animals, and the bearded features of Charles Borromeo, most of these Netherlandish paintings follow the requirements of the Church to the letter. Apart from style, the only differences from plague paintings produced in Italy are the use of hidden symbolism in northern art and the appearance of female nurses. Rubens's compositional influences are more apparent here than in the South, but the Flemish artists were also well-versed in the designs produced in Italy.

GERMANY

The Protestant schism divided Germany, Luther's birthplace, into a country of two faiths. Although the Habsburgs, and with them the office of Holy Roman Emperor, were Catholics, a portion of the seven electorates were Protestants. The three princes of the Church that ruled the archdioceses of Cologne, Mainz, and Trier remained with Rome. The secular electors of Saxony, Palatine, and Brandenburg (roughly the area of East Germany), favored the Reformation. The principle that made this political system work was called the law of cuius regio eius religio, which gave the ruler the right to choose his religion and the subjects the obligation to follow. Needless to say, it was a source of constant problems and disturbances.

Because the majority of the German-speaking population was Lutheran, religious art is found only in some of the important Catholic centers. In the era after the Thirty-Year War it was difficult for artists to support themselves with religious images. Christophorus Storer, "Alemaniae Apelles," was one of the few local artists who returned from Milan to dedicate his art solely to the Church. He traveled extensively and created several altar paintings in Catholic enclaves in the German region.

One of the most important Counter-Reformation statements

was destroyed when Storer's Borromeus altar burned during an air raid in World War II. His St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim for Wurzburg's Carmelite Church was signed and dated 1667.¹⁵ This plague painting is of special significance because it represents the polemic subject of communion in single species in a predominantly Protestant region and because it remained the only known religious, narrative plague scene in seventeenth-century Germany.

One of Storer's preparatory drawings for this sacramental subject still exists (XLIV).¹⁶ Although the sketch St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim was probably done ten years earlier and not intended for the Wurzburg location, it gives some indication of how closely the Italianate artist had emulated the southern prototypes. St. Charles rushes from the left to serve communion to a man kneeling devoutly before him. The two main figures are framed by the torches of the acolytes, which heighten the drama of the scene. On the right-hand side lie a group of less fortunate victims. Still, they are not completely abandoned by their fellow man.

The emotionally charged scene stands in great contrast with the serenity expressed in Luti's St. Charles Borromeo administering the Extreme Unction painted half a century later (IV). The clarity of the anti-baroque idiom helps underline the narrative part of the painting. The Roman work emphasizes the

correct observations of the ceremony. Every detail corresponds to the text of the Rituale Romanum (already discussed with the theological issues). It represents the interest of reform within the Church in the time of Enlightenment. This important liturgical scene was later copied.¹⁷

AUSTRIA

"Baroque" Austria consisted of two independent political entities: the principality of the Archdiocese of Salzburg and the Habsburg's core regions in the southeast. Most of the important baroque monuments exist, even after Emperor Josef II's reform acts (1780-1790) and two World Wars. Because the area is historically important and well researched, Austria will be presented as the "test case" for all the northern countries.

The Austrian population, today, is 90 percent Catholic. This was the result of aggressive policies implemented by the Habsburg rulers who considered religious intolerance a virtue. The Counter-Reformation movement in the arts was delayed by the Thirty-Year War and the threat of the advancing Turks (repelled in 1683 from the imperial capital of Vienna). Most seventeenth century altar paintings were executed by foreign artists trained in Italy. A school of indigenous Austrian painters did not form until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Since Austria was predominantly Catholic, religious art is more plentiful than in the neighboring Germanic countries. The city with the closest ties to Italy was Salzburg. It was ruled by prince-archbishops, and around 1600 at least two important political figures were blood relatives of Charles Borromeo. Salzburg could boast of the first complete Counter-Reformation art program

in its ancient cathedral. Rebuilt in 1628, it showed stylistic and spiritual affinity to Italian architecture. The concetto for the decoration was developed by the ruling archbishop in 1652. It included one of the first St. Charles chapels outside of Italy.¹⁸ The altar painting St. Charles prays for the Plague Victims is dated 1655 (XLV). Since native Austrian painters were not available, the German Protestant Johann Heinrich Schonfeld was invited as the most qualified candidate for the job of creating the large altarpiece. He introduced some of the Italian iconography in the North. The altar shows a severe style and portrays the saint with his sharp profile and clean-shaven cheeks. St. Charles willingness to risk his life is indicated by the palm of martyrdom the angel holds above the saint. The artist refers to his charitable nature by dressing the corpse of the poor woman on the right in rich purple brocade which she could have gotten only from the archiepiscopal-palace curtains donated by St. Charles during the winter months of 1576 (fig.119). Her child clings pathetically to her breast and a man with the white bandage of sanitary helper gently tries to pry the baby away from its mother. Schonfeld may have seen Poussin's Plague at Ashdod in Rome (fig.120). The virtuoso surface quality of the paint belies the otherwise tenebroso Italian style of the German painter.

One of the best-known of the Austrian artists was the Venetian-trained Johann Michael Rottmayr. In 1721 he created a

large altar St. Charles intercedes for the Plague Victims (XLVI) in the Kollegienkirche, Salzburg's baroque jewel. It was the church of the Dominican University, and the altar was part of the theological program. Rottmayr painted in the foreground a variation of Mignard's woman receiving communion. The background opens toward a view of the city and the saint is seen floating toward heaven before a triumphant Christ. A plague angel sheaths his sword above a crowd of people praying and pointing toward the vision of the intercessory saint. Although not all the action remains in the terrestrial zone, the artist shows interest in realism on the human level.

Rottmayr had treated the theme of plague before. (He also painted the fresco decorations in the two Viennese plague votive churches: Peterskirche and Karlskirche.) None of the earlier examples has the genre-quality that makes this Salzburg painting so successful. The vignette of a real plague scene may in part be inspired by Luti's innovative version of St. Charles administers the Extreme Unction (that in the final analysis goes back to Mignard) that Rottmayr must have seen in the Schonborn palace in Pommersfelden (IV).¹⁹ This encounter with a more realistic trend may have helped update his belated Austrian high-baroque style.

Rottmayr's earliest plague altar was created in 1704 for Vienna's Dorotheakirche, a church that enjoyed imperial patronage

but was not a votive structure.²⁰ St. Augustine intercedes for the Plague Victims follows the high baroque composition of votive altars and reflects the pathos that Rottmayr had absorbed during his stay in Venice (fig.121). The old man clutching his heart in a gesture of devotion resembles one of Negri's figures in the Plague Scene in Venice in 1630 in the Scuola di San Rocco (fig.122).

The ricordo for the votive altar Maria Hilf for Laibach's (Ljubljana) Deutschordenskirche, which Rottmayr executed in 1715 for the dowager empress, is indicative of the situation in the Habsburg satellite states of Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Bohemia (fig.123).²¹ The altar has never been recognized as a plague commission, although its iconography and its inscription would indicate that a connection with the recent Viennese epidemic of 1713 existed (the construction of the Karlskirche began in the same year). Rottmayr quoted Poussin's pall bearers of Phocion's Funeral (fig.94), often seen in the background of prints after Mignard's St. Charles (fig.93). From the same source, Rottmayr paraphrased the sick woman supported by a man. The mother cradling her child in her arms is faintly reminiscent of the motif in Cortona's St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail (XIX). All of the symbols indicate a plague subject. Moreover, the appearance of a popular icon of a Virgin with Child and the inscription on the back of the altar which refers to "Wiener Such" leave no doubt about the nature of this commission.²²

The inquiry into the situation in Austria turned up a few important facts. First, religious narrative plague scenes were a rare subject; only a few examples existed. They were, however, found in the most prestigious religious institutions: Salzburg's Cathedral and Kollegienkirche; and Vienna's Dorotheakirche (although the altar cannot fully qualify as narrative painting). Second, these scenes did not appear in plague votive churches, but in places of worship that combined religious and secular powers. Finally, the Laibach plague altar proved that imperial involvement was found primarily in German-speaking religious orders and regions.

HUNGARY

Hungary had been part of the Habsburg Empire since the early 1500s. The area was characterized by nationalistic movements and strong Protestant inclinations, and Calvinism as well as Lutheranism found widespread acceptance, particularly among the Magyars. Protestantism helped its cause by allying itself with anti-Habsburg nationalistic movements.

The Balkan states and the Hungarian plains had occasional bouts with the plague well into the nineteenth century. At the end of the Turkish wars Emperor Charles VI decided to erect "einen immerwährenden Pestkordon."²³ This law was put into effect in 1728. The barrier stretched from the Carpathian Mountains to the Adriatic Sea. It consisted of 1,900 km of watch towers and quarantine stations to control the spread of the plague (fig.123). In 1770, the period of retention at such way stations for travelers and their wares coming from the east, was twenty-one days under normal circumstances and forty-two in a time when plague cases were reported. The cordon employed 5,000 to 11,000 men and was in effect until 1873.

Because there was a greater risk of infection in the "east-block countries," plague motifs probably lingered longer in that region than in the west. The idea of the head of state being responsible for his subjects' health, first expressed in King David's

"remorse," may have been behind the imperial involvement of some of these paintings. Even if the patrons were only local gentry, like the Esterhazy, they always proved to be "kaisertreu."

The inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the only surviving Hungarian example of a narrative plague painting, Johann Zirckler's St. Charles Borromeo administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim, is indicative of the situation in Austro-Hungarian satellite states (XLVIII). The importance of the city of Papa (a sleepy imperial garrison town of around 20,000 inhabitants) can be better appreciated when one studies its history.

During the Reformation the building of a Protestant seminary in 1531 made Papa "the spiritual center of Transdanubia."²⁴ The Turks occupied the territory from 1594 until 1683, not without the support of the Hungarian nobility who preferred the "infidels" over the rigid rule of the Catholic "foreigners." After the victory over the Turks by the imperial troops, the old gentry lost their power (and heads), making room for a new hierarchy more sympathetic to the Catholic faith and the Habsburg's political goals. The Catholic restoration lasted until the end of the eighteenth century, when Emperor Josef II proclaimed religious tolerance in 1781.

The church program of St. Stephen in Papa shows little

interest in religious tolerance. Since the decorations belong to the 1780's it seems almost a conscious defiance of the wishes of the emperor. It is a rigid Counter-Reformational statement: Allegorical figures representing Prayer, Fast, and Almsgiving; the three religious cardinal virtues of Faith , Hope, and Love are painted on the ceiling. A typological comparison referring to the sacrament of the Eucharist is represented in the Old Testament story of Abraham and Melchizedek. St. Stephen, the church's patron, figures prominently in the decorative cycle, including his martyrdom and the saint's miracles. Two subjects are rather unusual: the saint being dragged into a synagogue (directed against the large Hungarian jewish population) and the appearance of the saint to the mother of King Stephen. All the artists working in this church had come from Vienna.²⁵ They represented the best of their generation in Austrian art.

Johann Zirckler plague altar St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim of 1785 is a provincial copy of Mignard's design. The artist must have worked with one of the many prints because every detail is recorded: the bell of the acolyte; the rosary of the dying woman; the angel swinging the censer; and the men from the archbishop's retenue are engaged in giving alms (fig.108). Zirckler was quite inventive in the view of a long row of palazzi and the arcades of Milan's hospital. The two men removing a corpse wear contemporary dress, knee

breeches and wide-brimmed hats. The style, not the sentiments expressed are Josephinisch.

BOHEMIA

Bohemia frequently was ruled by Germans. Prague's "Golden Age" was celebrated when it became the Empire's capital under the auspices of the Luxemburg line. In 1344 its archdiocese was created, and its Czechoslovakian-German university was founded only four years later. The theology professor Johann Hus instigated some nationalistic reform movements. There were strong separation tendencies from the established Church. Hus was burned as a heretic in 1415, and after his death he became the martyred spiritual leader of his country. The tension between the Hussites and Catholics grew under Maximilian I, when the Habsburgs gained the Bohemian crown through a political marriage. Bohemia remained with the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918. During the Reformation the nationalist party strove for independence from Rome. Bohemia played once again an important role under Rudolf II (1576-1612). It was still a significant political center when in 1618 the Fenstersturz incident in Prague ignited the Thirty-Year War. The decisive battle on the White Mountain outside of the Bohemian capital crushed all hopes for an independent, nationalistic, and tolerant Czech state. With the severe punishments of the Bohemian nobles, the Catholic supremacy, at least on the surface, was restored and, after the Peace of Westphalia, the reconstruction of the Catholic faith and

art began.

One of the few internationally known Czech artists was Carel Scretta. He returned from Venice as soon as the political circumstances allowed and was commissioned by Max-Antonius Cassinis in 1647 to carry out the decorations and high altar for the Church of SS. Mary and Charles Borromeo. The adjoining hospital served the community until 1783. Jesuits had founded the church for the Catholic population, but it drew little support from the Czechs and eventually became a meeting place for foreign workers, artisans, and merchants. (Although there were some Czech members, it served primarily an Italian congregation.) St. Charles Borromeo visits a Plague Hospital commemorated the thirty-year anniversary of the founding of the Italian hospital (XLVIII). The painting expressed, "The charitable care of the sick by the Church."²⁶

Significant for the situation in Prague must have been the final choice of subject and Scretta's form of presentation of the altar. Two drawings exist (which probably were not created for the broad-formatted painting), but both of them show visionary scenes, customary after the 1630's in Italy (fig.124). The drawings illustrated shows a large hospital ward with the Madonna appearing in the clouds. Such visionary images may have found some opposition in Prague. In any case, the final version, the Virgin, the co-patroness of the church, is presented in the icon.

Below her picture kneel a few saints, among them St. Rosalia. An inscription behind the simple crucifix identifies the patron. The painted altar is placed in a niche behind the realistically conceived sick ward. Women, who are seldom seen in Italian post-Tridentine hospital scenes, represent in Scretta's painting the main nursing staff. The members of St. Charles's entourage appear portrait-like; the man behind the saint is considered a self-portrait of the artist. The whole scene is impressive in its austere realism.²⁷

A few other Bohemian plague altar paintings have recently come to light. They belong to the eighteenth century and are often executed by artists of Germanic extraction, which is indicative of the commissioner's political affiliation such as Josef Wickart, a Viennese artist who died in 1730 in Bohemia. He completed in 1721 for a Jesuit Church Maria Schnee in Olmutz (Olomouc) an altar painting St. Charles Borromeo administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim (XLIX). The saint holds a richly decorated ciborium in one hand and the host in the other. The sick in front of him look toward the archbishop, mesmerized.

A similar scene, though closer to Mignard's forever famous composition, was painted by Caspar Sambach for the Pilgrimage Church Sloup near Brunn (L). Although the iconography--and iconology--are routine, the modello's style is unusual. The verve of the brush strokes and the expressive exaggeration of the young

woman's haggard face, which she lifts toward St. Charles, is remarkable. The saint holds the chalice-like vessel in his left hand and extends the communion wafer with his right. It almost touches her lips, creating an unprecedented tension and a sense of longing. The spirituality of the scene is further enhanced by St. Charles's emaciated figure, that conveys the toil and exhaustion the archbishop endured during the epidemic. The realism of the scene is emphasized by the shelf of medical supplies which is frequently included in plague scenes. Sambach, however, uses the architectural element to serve as frame and repoussoir element. The vertical support is darkened by the contre-jour effect of the two large torches held by the young acolytes. Although the altar is provincial, the artist succeeds in reviving the old cliché, imbuing the subject with special expressive powers.

Bohemian plague paintings appear in partly German-speaking towns that spread throughout the Habsburg Empire (Brunn, Olmutz). St. Charles seems to function as an "official" representative of the Catholic Church.²⁸ None of these paintings are indigenous Bohemian works of art. With easier access to eastern Europe, a few more unpublished plague pictures might surface. I doubt, however, that they would significantly alter the findings already discussed.

What is unusual in Bohemia is the appearance of Jesuit

patronage for St. Charles altar paintings. (Prague and Olmutz were both commissioned by this order.) The Society of Jesus generally preferred to advance their own saints, and since they did not have any famous ordained plague patrons in their ranks, the subject of administering the Viaticum during an epidemic is rare in Jesuit art. But, they have at times substituted "The First Communion of St. Aloysius of Gonzaga" for similar reasons. The subject is related to the St. Charles iconography because the Archbishop of Milan was known to have celebrated the first Eucharist of the young prince, who later abdicated and gave his life tending plague victims in the Jesuit novitiate in Rome; he died in 1591 before being ordained. In the representation of this Aloysius-topic the chalice-like ciborium commonly forms the focal point of the composition.

It is interesting that the polemic subject of communion in one form survived for centuries and made its way to the United States. The Italian artist Constantino Brumidi painted for the Washington Jesuit church St. Aloysius (five minutes from the Capitol) a canvas for the high altar. It depicts The First Communion of St. Aloysius (fig.125).²⁹ The artist was inspired by a work of the same title by the Lombard Francesco del Cairo (1607-1665), illustrated in the Acta Sanctorum. Brumidi's painting depicts famous members of the congregation (along with a self portrait of the artist). What is important for this discussion is the

fact Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Douglas, portrayed as the Gonzaga parents, lived in a marriage of two different faiths.³⁰ The altar painting, however, emphasizes the Catholic rite of the host served from the ciborium. The didactic meaning of the sacramental act had not changed over the centuries.

NOTES CHAPTER IV

- 1 R. Seiler, Zur Ikonographie der religiösen Pestdenkmaler des Kanton Graubunden, Zurich, 1985, 21.
- 2 Antonio Tempesta and Peter de Jode produced large prints commemorating the 1610 canonization (they show numerous small scenes from the quadroni surrounding St. Charles's portrait.) An early seventeenth-century series of crude illustrations after the quadroni is signed by Alberto Romeo. These engravings were responsible for some of the Swiss decorative cycles.
- 3 "Die Kunst um Karl Borromeus," Festschrift A. Schmidt, Zurich, n.d., 98. A nineteenth-century copy of Mignard's St. Charles is in Mels.
- 4 San Carlo Borromeo. Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastic Politics in the second Half of the sixteenth Century, ed. J. Headly & John Tomaro, London/Washington, 1988, 22.
- 5 J. B. Bertrand, A histroical Relation of the Plague at Marseilles in the Year 1720, Farnborough, 1973, 355-362.

Jansenism in Italy was discussed in Chapter III # 2. Jansen and

Saint-Cyran never intended to cause a schism. The widespread spiritual movement was concerned with a reform within the Church and directed against Jesuit casuistry. The defense of ideas on Penance and the Eucharist by Antoine Arnauld in his De la frequente Communion (August 1642) and by F. Hallier's Theologie morale des Jesuites (1643) prolonged the controversy in Rome and in France. What was being discussed and rejected was not frequent communion itself, but Arnauld insisted on "a full realization of the solemnity of the sacrament and the necessity for complete spiritual purgation before its acceptance." (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 654.) In Paris, Jansenism was viewed more in the light of an attack on monarchical absolutism. In 1649 Jansen's ideas were reevaluated and by the initiative of Mazarin condemned not only in Paris but also in Rome in 1653. The controversy was renewed in 1661 by Louis XIV personally because he considered Arnauld's follower in the Porte-Royale as a threat to the unity of his kingdom which a few years later led to deportation of twelve nuns from the monastery. Because of tremendous public support of Jansenism a compromise was finally reached in 1668 with the French king and with the pope. Jansenism gained public approval, nonetheless, Arnauld had to leave France and died in Brussels in 1694. Jansenism spread throughout Europe and influenced religious life even in the eighteenth century. By and large it meant a more austere and

maybe more sincere concept of religion. Bishop Belzunce speaks of the unworthy communions implying that not enough penance had been done by his parishioners. "God the avenger of guilt, shall not be able in these times of dreadful mortality to make us turn our eyes

inward upon ourselves, and, in the anguish of our souls, take a retrospect of our past lives; such a retrospect as shall lead us finally to have recourse to the mercy of the Lord, whose hand, while yet extended over us severely, holds out at the same time, for our encouragement, that pardon which he will not, however, grant but to our sincere repentance and amendment." Bertrand, 355.

6 Ibid., 355-362.

7 Ibid., 366-367.

8 It is interesting to note while there is no communion scenes in Bishop Belzunce during the Plague in Marseilles it was paired with The Last Communion of St. Jerome. The artists says about these paintings in G. Ackerman, The life and work of Jean-Leon Gerome, London/New York, 1986, 43: "everywhere there is a dryness and even hardness. This is the defect which I sought to correct myself, and if I have diminished it, I have not been able

to rid myself of it entirely. In the other picture...the scene is well composed, the subject clearly expressed-that is all I can say of it."

- 9 Pierre Delaunay's Plague in early Christian Rome was discussed on page 77. The Livret quotes the text from La legende doree. It has been repeatedly stated that Gericault's Raft of the Medusa drew on all the achievements of the Plague tradition (Lorence Eitner, The Raft of the Medusa, and K. Berger, Gericault und sein Werk, 75). His teacher, Guerin, had painted plague scenes. Artists of the late-eighteenth century and nineteenth made pilgrimages to Naples to absorb the expressive realism of the gruesome subject.
- 10 The New Catholic Encyclopedia, II, 243.
- 11 Jansenism see # 5.
- 12 J. B. Knipping, Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands; Heaven on Earth, 2 vols., Niewkoop, 1974, 262.
- 13 Ibid., 140.
- 14 Rev. James O'Kane, Notes on the Rubrics of the Roman

Ritual, New York, 1882, 331.

15 I am grateful to Prior P. Paulus Stemmler, OCD, who did not rest until he verified the title of the altarpiece, destroyed March 16, 1945, in the guidebook Kloster und Kirche der unbeschulten Karmeliten zu Wurzburg: ein Gedenkblatt zum dreihundertjahrigen Jubileum, Wurzburg, 1927, 41-42.

16 F. Thone, "Der Maler Johann Christophorus Storer als Zeichner," Munchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst, 13 (1938/9), 212-234, especially 221, 227.

17 H. Bach, Karl Borromeus, Cologne, 1984, 49.

18 A. Hahl, "Die Bildprogramme des barocken Domes-ein Versuch einer thematischen Interpretation," Der Dom zu Salzburg, Grosser Kunstfuhrer, Salzburg, 1980, 24.

19 Luti's St. Charles is recorded in the Schonborn collection. Rottmayr painted frescoes in the Schonborn Palace of Pommersfelden in 1717. E. Hubala, Johann Michael Rottmayr, Vienna/Munich, 1981, 118.

20 Ibid., 181. and E. Hubala, "Rottmayrs Altarbilder in der

- ehemaligen Dorotheakirche in Wien," Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte 33 (1980), 163-173.
- 21 Hubala, 1981, 247. The Madonna looks like the venerated Cranach-Icon in Innsbruck's Cathedral.
- 22 Rottmayr has used some of these motifs individually in other paintings. Collectively they make a good case for a plague theme.
- 23 H. Schmolzer, Die Pest in Wien, Vienna, 1985, 148-152.
- 24 A. Papp, Ungarn, Budapest, 1971, 15. After the Counter Reformation the region became the property of the Esterhazys.
- 25 Kunstfuhrer durch Ungarn, Valer Nagy, Budapest, 1974, 191-192. The most famous artists were F. A. Maulbertsch and J. A. Messerschmidt.
- 26 G. Pazaurek, Carl Scretta 1610-1674, Prag, 1889, 75.
- 27 I am grateful to Mrs. Maria Krofta for translating the Czech texts. Narodni Galerie V Praze "Karel Skreta," 90-91, 203. Scretta's St. Nicolo da Tolentino distributes Plague-Breads, 1630,

now in Vienna's Dom-Diozesanmuseum. Manfred Koller wrote on the restoration of the painting in, "Zwei Gemälde von Karel Skreta und Johann Kupezky in Wien," Umeni, 32/2 (1984), 353-354. The iconography has not been discussed previously. What is depicted is apparently a unique subject of Austeilung der Pestbrote durch den hl. Nikolaus von Tolentino, c.1631. (Pestbrot=eulogia is blessed bread, not consecrated Eucharistic wafers which were distributed against the plague.)

28 Charles Borromeo, the "official Habsburg saint," seems to have served a similar purpose as the plague monuments of the eighteenth century in the eastern countries of the Empire (G. Schikola, "Das öffentliche sakrale Denkmal in den Habsburgischen Ländern." Polnische Studien, Poznan, 1981.

29 Brumidi utilized a print after Francesco de Cairo St. Charles administers the First Communion to Aloysius of Gonzaga in the Acta Sanctorum. I believe that Brumidi saw the original in the Brera before he left for the States in 1852, because he utilized the original high format of the painting.

30 I am grateful to Father Anderson for sharing his research with me. The saint's parents are represented by Stephen Douglas and Adele Kalis.

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CONCLUSION

This analysis of narrative religious plague imagery of the baroque period has resulted in copious proof that the Council of Trent did indeed influence the arts. The mainspring of this Tridentine movement, however, cannot be found in the Church's theoretical art treatises, but rather in its theological writings. Innovative trends in the reformed Roman Catholic Church, and its catechetical teachings gave plague scenes their original *raison d'être* in Italy. The reason for portraying plague subjects in northern regions was that their polemic message had a truly Counter-Reformational spirit. The plague scenes are important because they depict the sacraments, a neglected subject in the Catholic Church--and at this time, a controversial one because of differing interpretations in the Catholic-Protestant arenas of belief. Furthermore, plague scenes translate stories of exemplary clergymen into pictorial terms, thereby contributing to the defense of their sacerdotal status. Historians have long recognized this issue as an important part of the post-Tridentine theology, but its appearance in the visual arts was never discussed.

The optimistic philosophy that developed after the Council is expressed in the change in plague iconography. The paintings no longer show death or relate miracle healings of the physical

body. Rather the new subjects elicit hope that even the poorest of the poor, under the most adverse conditions, can attain the glory of heaven. The positive attitude is expressed in the active part each individual can take in achieving salvation. Free will compells the clergy to their charitable acts and to ignore the dangers of the disease. In plague paintings, the saints are not suffering their martyrdom passively; they are not victims, but the religious figures are in control of their own and their congregation's destiny.

The comprehensive treatment of plague iconography establishes a chronology which will prove helpful in dating future discoveries of plague subjects. The settings for the paintings developed from the sixteenth-century Venetian hospital tradition. Tintoretto's St. Roch of 1549 created the stage on which the drama would unfold (fig.20).

The narrative aspects, the formation of an Ereignisbildes, depended largely on the influence of the quadroni. Their close adherence to bibliographic texts had no precedents in art history. The forty canvases portraying the most significant episodes in the life of Charles Borromeo can be viewed as, "un unico gran libro figurato da leggere pagina per pagina."

Legibility was one of the major concerns of religious baroque art. The narrative plague scenes eventually were reduced to a few stock motifs, which became necessary because the depiction of

plague symptoms had to be suppressed in order to comply with the Tridentine rule of decorum ("decoro del corpo, e lornamento del vestito"). Reducing the description of a scene to stereotypes made them easily understood even by unsophisticated viewers, provided they had been exposed to some religious instructions.

The most characteristic plague motifs were the hope-inspiring angel sheathing his sword, the mother-and-child surrounded by plague victims, and one or more persons engaged in some charitable activity, all the while protecting themselves against the plague vapors. In addition to the secular figures, members of the clergy were always present. In fact, they dominate the scenes. The sources for all of these motifs are found in famous compositions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

To reiterate, the key dates of the inception of special plague motifs include Raphael's design for Raimondi's print *Il Morbetto*, of c. 1513 (fig.7). This work provides the first plague symbol: the person protecting himself against the dangers of contagious vapors. In this capacity it appeared first in the Bolognese school soon after St. Charles's canonization in 1610. The motif would be repeated ad infinitum as Raphael's invention became totally integrated into baroque art.

Federico Zuccaro can be credited with the creation of the plague angel signifying the end of an epidemic. His Bolognese

altar painting St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague, of c. 1581, provided the motif of an angelic host in the sky (fig.87). He represents a ray of hope in an otherwise depressing image of destruction.

The date 1631 was a watershed for plague iconography. One can date plague paintings by the inclusion of the dead or dying mother and child as having been created after Poussin's The Plague at Ashdod (fig.120). This group, too, becomes a cliché.

Another important date in the iconographic development is the year 1657, when Mignard's St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim first introduced a female communicant (XXII). It became the most popular subject for plague altars in the north.

The celebrated case of Mignard's rejected design and ultimate vindication by the print media proved the importance of the role of graphic arts in the history of plague iconography. Dissemination of ideas by way of engravings proved vital in the case of the quadroni, Raimondi's Il Morbetto, Rubens's St. Roch, Poussin's Plague at Ashdod, and Mignard's St. Charles. These compositions survived in numerous printed versions contributing to their fame. Plague paintings that were not reproduced in prints never obtained much of a following.

Baroque plague iconography, stereotyped as it might be, gradually changed over the years. In Italian art, three phases are

distinguishable. Around 1600, plague scenes emphasized spiritual life on earth, in keeping with the Catholic Reformation and Counter-Reformatory tendencies. A greater interest in visionary experience made itself felt in the third decade of the seventeenth century, usually identified as Church Triumphant. Then, in the late seventeenth century, a return to a more realistic genre-type approach to plague scenes can be observed. These movements correspond to philosophical trends, and find their counterparts in contemporary plague literature.

A down-to-earth attitude toward religion characterizes early seventeenth-century works such as Landriani's St. Charles confirming Adults in a Plague Encampment (VI). The Church was committed to implementing reforms discussed by the Council, and miracles and visions do not appear in these early plague scenes, which adhere closely to literary descriptions of events and show an unprecedented austerity of style. These traits are paralleled in the accounts of Charles Borromeo's unerring faith; at his command were held plague processions, against all secular authoritative rulings. The saint's only concern for his parishioners' health was to save their souls.

The sudden resurgence of plague epidemics in the 1620s and Urban VIII's personal experience with the disease sparked a renewed veneration for St. Roch which may have influenced changes in religious attitudes. Perhaps the paralyzing experience

of epidemics helped render the spiritual atmosphere closer to that of medieval piety and total acceptance of God's Will than previously. The trial of Galileo, for example, reflected this anti-scientific attitude of the Church. Cipollo's Faith, Reason, and the Plague in Seventeenth-Century Tuscany describes the moral dilemma experienced by the clergy in 1630. Processions, the intercession of saints, and their visionary appearances in high baroque art are well documented. Cortona's altarpiece St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail (XIX) is an appropriate representative for that time. To the modern viewer, the charming censer-swinging angel seated on a cloud seems incongruous in a scene describing the horrors of an epidemic; to the seventeenth-century faithful, he represented the messenger from a better world.

The waning of epidemics coincided with a more scientific minded approach to medicine. Toward the end of the seventeenth century innovative medical thinkers such as the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher had pointed the way to acceptance of the fact that infections were a process, caused by not-yet-discovered natural sources, to which the virtuous as well as the wicked succumb, regardless of their religious attitude. At that same time, the outlook of the clergy changed. The Church, assuming a more reasonable attitude, no longer insisted on plague processions. In 1681, the physician Habersack praised the Bishop of

Wienerneustadt for his "hochvernunftig" decision to forbid mass gatherings even for religious purposes such as sermons and processions. Reason had resolved the moral dilemma between religious duties and medical obligations. The dawn of the Enlightenment was also characterized by reform movements within the Catholic community. Although the sphere of influence of Church-historians such as Muratori cannot be traced to any specific trend away from overzealous (at times characterized as superstitious) Catholicism, the change in the general attitude emphasizing the values stressed by the Council of Trent, is reflected in art. Luti's 1713 commission St. Charles administers the Extreme Unction has, despite an increase of realism, a dignity of its own (IV). Here, religious expression no longer depends on the depiction of supernatural forces.

The survival of plague commissions, limited primarily to nineteenth-century France, undoubtedly has its roots in the Catholicism of the French Restoration period. The iconographic tradition of plague imagery continued even in the ambience of an increasingly secular world. The subject was pertinent because of the frequent attacks of epidemics caused by French colonialism. Paintings such as Gerome's Bishop Belzunce during the Plague in Marseilles (fig.116) served as as liturgical images in connection with its pendant The Last Communion of St. Jerome (fig. 47). Moreover, Gerome's paintings functioned as church decorations.

Over the centuries, plague scenes showed different levels of verism. The depiction of realistic plague symptoms began in the fifteenth century and lasted until the Council's Decree on the Arts (1563) requested decorous religious paintings. After the second half of the sixteenth century, the symptomatic bubos are omitted and scantily dressed plague patients banned from religious plague paintings. In baroque paintings, to satisfy the demands of "decorum," the medical aspects are suppressed except for a very brief period after the Neapolitan epidemic of 1656. Artists who had experienced the plague firsthand revived the realistic approach and rendered the skin lesions with clinical interest and accuracy. These large Neapolitan scenes, in turn, influenced the realism expressed by Gericault, and because of his achievements, plague paintings represent an important milestone in nineteenth-century European art.

The extended use of the plague vocabulary and its implied symbolism is nowhere better documented than in the drawing of George Richmond, a nineteenth-century Englishman (fig.126). The sketch titled Plague shows a penitent man. He wears a rope around his neck and sackcloth covers his head. The figure holds a bell and light, the attributes of an acolyte or secular plague attendants (I). Behind him, on the floor, cowers a mother with her infants, one alive, the other dead. On the left-hand side, a pair of bare legs become visible. They convey, pars pro toto, the

anonymity of the corpses during an epidemic and as such they appear in earlier plague scenes (fig.100). Above the man's sorrowful countenance are the sketches of three small figures: The creature on the right is reminiscent of Ripa's allegory of Pestilentia as an old hag with hanging breasts (65); in the center appears an animal-like creature; and on the right, a small, but classical nude--possibly a soul--makes its ascent toward heaven. Romantic plague images retain much of the earlier visual language and they even convey some of the same religious sentiments yet the function of such imagery remain an enigma.

Religious baroque plague scenes, on the other hand, were create for two distinct purposes: didactic and polemic. The Italian works of c.1600 were primarily intended to educate the masses in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The iconology of the paintings hints at many doctrinal points found in the newly issued catechisms: the revival of all the sacraments that had fallen into disuse, the importance of holy images, and the invocation of saints during an epidemic. They also expressed the importance of charitable works and self-sacrifice by the clergy.

Documentary evidence for persons commissioning narrative scenes is far from complete. However, while votive paintings were much more likely to be commissioned by laity, examples of established provenances point toward clerical involvement and patronage. The narrative scenes could be called "ecclesiastic

portraits:" first, because they showed the clergy's mission in the world, and, second, because they appeared originally after Luther and other reformers had attacked the priesthood's prerogatives.

Although the paintings served different functions, they were didactic works intended to catechize rather than to serve as devotional images and they were never carried in a plague procession. They often were commissioned as "image makers" for exemplary religious figures who had not yet been canonized by the Church and whose orders, the Olivetan, Theatins, and others were interested in spreading the fame of their founders. Individual religious orders liked to commission such works because they depicted "their" saints. Absent from the list of patrons are the pontiffs and the Jesuits in Italy. A study into papal relationship with Borromean reforms and Jesuit reaction to this historic figure might lead to a better understanding of the different political trends within the Church.

The plague images north of the Alps had a messianic message. This becomes apparent in their choice of polemic subjects: Communion for the laity in the single form of a host, intercessory saints, good works, and the importance of Catholic clergy. These paintings illustrate the words of Cardinal Sadolet, who claimed that "the Catholic Church is a safer way to salvation."

Numerous plague paintings were commissioned in the

Habsburg Empire. Except in Flanders, the depiction of Charles Borromeo dominates, and the altarpieces, by their placement and patronage, also seem to bear a political message. Imperial Catholicism used this imagery to stamp out nationalistic-Protestant independence movements in Eastern Europe.

While I cannot claim to have a complete list of religious narrative paintings, I am convinced that new discoveries would not significantly alter the assessment of this inquiry. The handful of unpublished works, here discussed for the first time, have only confirmed and not revised my hypothesis that most of these plague paintings served didactic and not devotional functions.

One important scientific area--the sociological--could not be accommodated in this discussion: specifically questions related to society's attitude toward the poor have been omitted. Numerous plague chronicles hint at a distinct difference in treatment of the destitute in Protestant and Catholic countries. Since "good works" smacked of Popism, the Protestant institutions were run by the state rather than by the clergy. Moreover, English descriptions of London's devastating experience of 1665 contain prejudiced remarks against the poor, who were regarded as a threat to society because they brought disease "onto themselves" by their dirty and crowded living conditions. Sentiments such as these made it unlikely that their countries would have embraced imagery that was sympathetic to the poor.

Catholic religious plague images have a positive message. The Church will take care of all of its members' physical and spiritual needs with its dedicated nursing orders and its self-sacrificing priests. Statistics show that the number of male clergy actively involved in tending the sick far exceeded the death toll in cloistered nunneries. These statements seem impressive, even to modern students, once they recognize that they were not merely pious propaganda but based on historic records. It will be left to sociologists to determine how much overall difference the spiritual and physical care of the Church made in a time of an epidemic.

Plague paintings need to be recognized as important historic documents of the years in European history when the bubonic plague was rampant. However, religious plague scenes were not intended as documentaries of life during an epidemic. The relationship between the written word and deliberate idealization in the visual arts needs to be clarified, as plague scenes do not accurately describe the conditions experienced by the people. The paintings created an positive image of family support which did not correspond with plague wards' practices to separate patients. Plague surgeons and doctors are only depicted in genre pictures. The religious scenes presented the Catholic clergy in their liturgical paraments, which, according to Church bulletins they were ordered to abandon for hygienic reasons. The depiction of the administration of the sacraments, too, was carefully orchestrated

in their prescribed rituals. Folk art, on the other hand, have a more journalistic approach to reality because they include interesting detail of dress, use of utensils to avoid contact, and pipe smoking as a preventive measure. None of these base habits were depicted in church paintings.

The documentary value of the plague scenes lies in the preservation of Church customs and the mode of administering the sacraments after the Council. These rites were observed uninterruptedly for close to three hundred years, but were forgotten after Vatican II. Literary sources allow us to verify that in religious plague paintings the liturgical customs closely adhered to the Rituale Romanum.

The interpretation of the plague paintings' iconology has been corroborated by the use of documents, books on theology, and modern medical reports. One without the others would have made it impossible to separate facts from fiction. These findings, in turn, allow us to penetrate deeper into the baroque mentality that created works that address questions how to face suffering and adversity. The Church provided the answers, judging from its sermons addressing the scourge, that a merciful God sent epidemics to give humanity a reprieve to mend its sinful ways. He sent pestilence as a warning, rather than as a punishment. Throughout the centuries the Church recommended the same remedies: sacraments, celebration of masses, prayers for the dead,

and a moral life.

This inquiry contributes some insight into the meaning of religious baroque art. The works give testimony to venerated traditions as well as ideas that changed during a period that shifted, in contemporary perception, from the complete submission to God's Will recognizable in the Middle Ages to a more scientifically oriented attitude toward illness. As was pointed out in the beginning, the emphasis on miraculous healing of the physical body--before the Council--changed to a more spiritual attitude which shows the acceptance of death in the hope of life-everlasting. Plague scenes reflect the period's Roman Catholic Church practices, its view on the relationship among body, soul and God, its efforts to influence the ethics of its faithful; but, most important, they mirror the Church's philosophy on the ultimate questions of life and death.

APPENDIX

ST. ANTHONY OF FLORENCE (1389-1459) May 10

St. Anthony, a Dominican monk, became abbot of San Marco in 1436 and was named archbishop of Florence in 1446. His life's story is illustrated in numerous scenes in the frescoes of the chiostro di San Antonino (now part of San Marco). One of these episodes depicts St. Anthony and Cosimo de Medici inspecting the reconstruction of San Marco. The archbishop was canonized by the Medici Pope Leo X (1513-1521) in 1519.

Dandini, Pietro (1646-1712):
St. Anthony administers the Viaticum to Plague Victims
17th century. Florence, San Marco (chiostro di S. Antonino)
no illustration

Po, Giacomo del (1652-1726):
Plague Scene in Sorrent in 1656
1687, Sorrent, S. Antonino
XXXVI

BLESSED BERNARD TOLOMEI (1272-1348) Aug. 21

Giovanni di Mino Tolomei, now known as Blessed Bernard Tolomei, was born into a well-to-do Sienese family. The young man studied law, but after an illness he converted to a more spiritual life. He retired to solitude with two other young Sienese nobles. In 1319 they formed a Benedictine community which eventually became the Olivetan order of which brother Bernard became abbot in 1322. The brothers were dedicated to the care of the sick. During the plague epidemic of 1348 the abbot left the monastery to nurse the people of his native Siena. Bernard Tolomei paid with his life for his last heroic act of charity and was accepted as martyr in the Martiriologio Romana. His cult was established early and was officially recognized in 1644. The Olivetans wear a white habit with a cowl collar. The feast day of August 21 was prescribed in 1680 and Bernard was beatified in 1768.

Canuti, Domenico Maria (1626-1684):
Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting the Victims of the Plague
1666, Padua, S. Benedetto, now Museo Civico.
XVII

Crespi, Giuseppe Maria (1665-1747):
Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting the Victims of the Plague
c.1735, now Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum.
I

Crespi, Giuseppe Maria, school (1665-1747):
Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting the Victims of the Plague
Vienna, Gemaldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste.
XXX

ST. CAJETAN OF THIENE (1480-1547) Aug. 7

Born in Vicenza, the saint came in 1516 to Rome, where he was ordained. He founded, with the future Pope Paul IV, the Theatine nursing order. During the Sack of Rome in 1527, Cajetan left for Venice. Later he lived in Naples where he worked for the reform of the clergy and instructed the people in their faith. The Theatine habit differs from most religious orders: members wear a black coat with a high collar, white stockings and rather mundane looking shoes. While serving Communion, St. Cajetan wore a white linen surplice with wide sleeves. St. Cajetan was beatified in 1629 and canonized in 1671.

Milani, Aureliano (1675-1749), attributed to:
St. Cajetan? administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim
after 1719. Original destination unknown, now Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches Museum (formerly attributed to Marc Antonio
Franceschini (1648-1729) St. Aloysius of Gonzaga? administers the
Viaticum to a Woman
XXVIII

ST. CAMILLO DE LELLIS (1550-1614/16) July 16

Camillo was orphaned early in life. He came to Rome in 1571, where he was treated for a foot disease in the hospital of S.Giacomo degli Incurabile. While working there he was "converted to God" under the influence of Philip Neri. Camillo studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1584. Five years later he founded the Compagnia dei ministri degli infermi under Pope Sixtus V. The brothers of "the ministry of the sick" or Camilliani took the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They were devoted to the care of the sick and dying, particularly plague victims. The order's habit was black with red crosses on the chest. Camillo was beatified in 1742 and canonized in 1746. For that occasion Pierre Subleyras painted his masterpiece St. Camillo rescues the Infirm during the Inundation of the Tiber. Although the painting is not a plague painting, it follows the tradition of plague hospital scenes.

Pozzo, Andrea (1642-1709), attributed to:
St. Camillus gives his Rosary to a Plague Victim
Vatican Museum in Rome. (Bibliography B.S. III, p. 717).
no illustration

ST. CHARLES BORROMEIO (1538-1584) Nov. 4

Charles Borromeo was born into an old, aristocratic family. He was related to a number of ruling princelings throughout Europe. At the age of seven, he received the tonsure as sign that he was destined by his parents to enter the clergy. He studied law, and in 1560 he was called to Rome where he became cardinal and secretary to his uncle, Pope Pius IV. He acted as a liaison officer between the papacy and some of the Council members until 1563. When his older brother, the family heir, died, great pressure was exerted on Charles to continue the house of Borromeo, but he decided against it. Toward the end of the Council's session, the young and very worldly nepote experienced a spiritual revival; he was ordained (in those days cardinals were not required to be priests) and elected Archbishop of Milan, in 1563. In 1565 St. Charles started his reforms in the ancient diocese. Zealous to implement the newly established rules of the reformed Church, and born with an unusual gift for diplomacy and organization, the saint became a model bishop of the post-Council era. Milan was ruled by the Spanish crown, and Charles faced the dual task of working with political reactionaries in Madrid and in Rome. Charles Borromeo was frequently in difficulties because he insisted on the almost-forgotten independent rights of authority as archbishop. An assassination attempt, by some of his political

opponents, almost killed the young reformer. During his nineteen years as head of the Milanese church, St. Charles competed with the spirituality of Calvin's Geneva congregation. He revitalized the faith in one of the oldest Christian bishop's seats, and, although he had helped to fashion the Roman Catechism in 1566, he insisted on separate Milanese rites which are still in effect. In the arts he is most often depicted as the saint who never abandoned his ministry and brought the sacraments to the sick and dying at the risk of his own life. Charles was known to have sacrificed his personal belongings as well as his physical strength to fight the plague epidemic of 1576-1577. He was not yet fifty years old when he died. The canonization process was started in 1602. In 1610, when he was officially declared a saint, Rome ruled that he had to be depicted as a cardinal to suppress his somewhat controversial anti-central Roman policies. Generally he is wearing a rochet and scarlet mozzetta; St. Charles is depicted wearing his biretta rather than the customary wide-brimmed cardinal's hat.

Rovere, Giovan Battista della; Fiammenghino (n.d.):
St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail
1602, Milan, Cathedral.

X

Landriani, Camillo (1560-1618)
St. Charles confirms Adults during the Plague Epidemic of 1576.
1602, Milan, Cathedral

VI

Crespi, Giovanni Battista, il Cerano (1575/6-1632):

St. Charles Borromeo visits a Plague Encampment
1602, Milan, Cathedral
PLate XIII

Garbieri, Lorenzo (1580-1654):
St. Charles Borromeo administers the Viaticum to a plague-stricken Priest
c.1611. Bologna, S. Paolo Maggiore
V

Garbieri, Lorenzo (1580-1654):
St. Charles adores a Plague Cross
c.1611, Bologna, S. Paolo Maggiore
II

Borgianni, Orazio (c.1578-1616):
St. Charles accepts the Care of an Infant during the Plague of 1576
c. 1613. Rome, originally in S. Adriano (in the Forum), now Chiesa della Casa Generalizia dei Padri Mercedari.
XXXIV

Carracci, Lodovico (1555-1619):
St. Charles baptizes an Infant in a Plague Encampment
c.1613/9, Nonantola, Abbey Church.
III

Damini, Pietro (1592-1631):
St. Charles washes the Feet of a Plague Victim
c.1615, Venice, Nervesa della Battaglia, Chiesa arcipretale.
XIV

Tanzio da Varallo (1575/80-1635):
St. Charles Borromeo administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim before 1616, Domodossale, Parochial Church.
XX

Bernardi, Pietro (died in 1623):
St. Charles interceding for the Victims of the Plague
c.1616/7, Verona, San Carlo
XVI

Commodi, Andrea (1560-1638):
St. Charles interceding for the Cessation of the Plague
c.1617. Fano, Cathedral, now Museo Civico.

XXXI

Saraceni, Carlo (c.1560-1620):

St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim

c. 1619, Cesena, Chiesa dei Servi

XVI

Bellis, Antonio de (c.1621/3-1650's):

St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim

c.1640, Naples, San Carlo alle Mortelle

VII

Bellis, Antonio de (c.1621/3-1650's)

St. Charles blesses a Plague Victim

c.1640. Naples, San Carlo alle Mortelle

VIII

Screta, Karel (1610-1674):

St. Charles visits a Plague Hospital,

1647. formerly, Prague, SS. Mary and Charles Borromeo, now
Prague Museum

XLVIII

Schonfeld, Johann Heinrich (1609-1682):

St. Charles prays for the Plague Victims

1655, Salzburg, Cathedral

XLV

Brandi, Giacinto (1621-1691):

St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim

c.1660, Milan, S. Maria della Vittoria.

XXI

Mignard, Pierre (1612-1695):

St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim

c.1656, modello for Rome's San Carlo ai Catinari, now Le Havre,
Museum

XXII

Quellinus, Jan Erasmus II (1607-1678):

St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victims

1660's. Malines, Church of Beguinage

XLI

Cortona, Pietro Berrettini da (1596-1669):

St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail
1667, Rome, San Carlo ai Catinari.
XIX

Storer, Johann Christophorus (c.1611/20-1671):
St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim
1667. Wurzburg, Karmeliterkirche, destroyed.
Drawing for a similar design, dated c.1640-57, Bologna, Pinacoteca
XLIV

Unknown Swiss Artist, 17th century:
St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim
1660's, Baden, St. Sebastian Chapel
XXXVIII

Janssens, Victor Honore (1675-after 1721):
St. Charles interceding for the Victims of the Plague
c.1690, Brussels, Carmelite Church, now St. Nicolas
XLII

Macchi, Florio (n.d.):
St. Charles accepts the Care of an Infant during the Plague of
1576
17th c., Bologna, S. Giovanni in Monte
XXIV

Lanzani, Andrea (1650-1712)
St. Charles visiting the Plague Encampment
17th c., Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana
no illustration

Luti, Benedetto (1666-1724):
St. Charles administers the Extreme Unction
1713, Schonborn collection, now Munich, Museum Schleissheim.
IV

During, Sebastian (1671-1723):
St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim
1716, Schlupfheim, Capuchin Monastery
XXXIX

Rottmayr, Johann Michael (1654-1730):
St. Charles interceding for the Victims of the Plague
1721, Salzburg, Kollegienkirche (modello Salzburg Museum)
XLVI

Wickart, Josef (?-1730):
St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim

1721, Olmutz, Maria Schnee
XLIX

Sambach, Casper (1715-1795):
St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim

c.1750, Pilgrimage Church of Sloup, near Brunn, (modello
Esztergom Museum)
L

Zirckler, Johann (1750-1797):
St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim
1785, Papa, St. Stephen
XLVII

Lemonnier, Anciet-Charles-Gabriel (1743-1824):
St. Charles carrying the Viaticum to Plague Victims
1785, Rouen, Museum
IX

Pianca, Giuseppe Antonio (n.d.):
St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victims
18th c., Agone, Parochial Church
XXXV

Unknown Italian Artist, eighteenth century
St. Charles Borromeo administers the Viaticum to a dying Man
n.d., Milan, S. Calimero
XXIII

ST. GREGORY I, THE GREAT (c.549/50-604) March 12

Pope Gregory was born a Roman patrician and turned his estate into a Benedictine monastery. In 561, when Pope Pelagius I died of plague, Gregory was elected pope much against his own wishes. He organized many plague processions to appease God. While Pope Gregory prayed for deliverance from the pestilence, he had a vision of an angel sheathing his sword as he flew over the Castello Sant'Angelo. This indicated to the saint that God had looked favorably on the procession. Pope Gregory built hospitals, implemented reforms, fought heretics, and raised the general moral standards within the Church. "A Gregorian Mass" is a service for the dead, or rather a series of masses for the release of a specific person's soul from purgatory. He is usually depicted in papal robes of white and gold with a red stole. The hat of the pontiff is also red.

Cignani, Carlo (1628-1719):
St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague
c.1660's, Bologna, S. Michele in Bosco
XXVII

Ricci, Sebastiano (1659-1734):
St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague
c.1701, Padua, S. Giustina
XVIII

Solimena, Angelo (c.1630-1716):
St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague
before 1698, Sarno, Cathedral

XXXVII

ST. JOHN OF GOD (1495-1550) March 8

Born near Lisbon, the future saint was kidnapped as a child. While living as a mercenary, he was wounded. By chance he listened to a sermon by St. John of Avila (1499-1569) and was converted to a more religious life in 1539. He took the name John, became a male nurse in Granada, and dedicated the last ten years of his life to the sick and poor. In 1548 he went to Toledo, where he founded a hospital which would become the nucleus of his new order. In 1584 Pope Gregory XIII called the Hospitallers to Rome and gave them a church with a hospital on Tiber Island. John was beatified in 1630 (a plague year) and canonized in 1690.

Baldi, Lazero (c.1623/4-1703):

St. John of God nurses a Plague Victim

before 1690, Rome, Chiesa S. Giovanni Calibita nell'Isola Tiberina, modello now in the Galleria Spada.

XI

ST. FRANCIS OF PAULA (1436-1507) April 2

Francis entered a Franciscan monastery at the age of thirteen. Two years later he became a hermit and founded a new monastic order. In 1482 Pope Sixtus IV sent the saint to France, to help King Louis XI to prepare for his death and to educate the young crown prince. Saint Francis of Paolo had thaumaturgical powers and was renowned for his charity and humility. He is depicted wearing a black habit. He was canonized in 1519.

Thulden, Theodore van (1606-1669):
St. Francis of Paolo and the Plague Victims of Frejus. c.1630s?
Original site unknown, no illustration

ST. (JOHN) FRANCIS OF REGIS (1597-1640). June 16

Born in the south of France, Jean-Francois became a Jesuit. He studied theology in Toulouse and was ordained in 1631. During a plague epidemic in Toulouse he cared for the sick. Living in the heartland of Calvinism, he converted a number of heretics and later became a missionary. The Jesuits wear black cassocks with a high collar and wide sash. Beatified in 1726, St. Francis was canonized at the request of Louis XV in 1737.

Muratori, Domenico Maria (1661-1744)

St. Francis of Regis among the Plague-stricken.

n.d. Original site unknown, Rome, Galleria Nazionale
no illustration

ST. MACARIUS OF ARMENIA (birth date unknown-1012) April
10

Marcarius's life before he came to western Europe is not well documented. He became bishop in Ghent in 1011. The saint was known for his great charity to the poor and concern for the sick. He prophesied that his own death would mean the end of the devastating epidemic (plague?). Macarius is venerated in the Flemish regions. He is sometimes shown in bishop's regalia, sometimes in the simple clerical dress of a prelate.

Crayner, Gaspard de (1584-1669):

St. Macarius interceding for the Victims of the Plague

c. 1650, Ghent, St. Bavo.

XL

Oost, Jacob the Younger (1637-1713):

St. Macarius administers the Viaticum to a Plague Victim

1673, Original site unknown; Paris, Louvre.

XLIII

BLESSED RANIERO DA BORGO SAN SEPOLCHRO, AREZZO

(14th cent.) Aug. 25?

This Franciscan lay brother is not well documented in history and often is confused and/or conflated with another Raniero personality. He wears a dark habit. (Biblioteca Sanctorum, vol. XI.)

Cavedoni, Giacomo (1577-1660):

Blessed Raniero comforts a Plague Victims
n.d. Bologna, S. Maria della Vita (oratorio).
XXV

ST. ROCH (1350-1379) Aug. 16

Born probably in France into the ruling house of Montpellier, St. Roch abdicated in secrecy. After he divided all his worldly possessions among the poor, he went on a pilgrimage to Rome c.1367-1370, (Pope Urban V). His thaumaturgical gifts were proven during the pestilence in Rome; he saved Cardinal Britanicus with the imprint of the sign of a cross on his forehead. On his return trip to his homeland, he fell ill in Piacenza while nursing plague victims. His miraculous survival and cure in the solitude of the woods is one of the most frequently depicted scenes. (On the other hand, the scene of healing the animals of the woods is neglected after the Council of Trent.) On his return trip to Montpellier, he was falsely accused of spying in Lombardy, where he was incarcerated for five years and died before he could be vindicated. After his death he was recognized as the nobleman he had been and was honored because he had lived in Christ-like, self-imposed poverty. He has been invoked as a plague patron since the end of the fifteenth century. Most of his narrative scenes have developed from cycles depicting his life, following closely his popular biographies. St. Roch is almost always characterized as a pilgrim, often with "Christ-like" features.

Lauro, Giacomo (active around 1600):

St. Roch blesses a Plague Victim
1605, Treviso, S. Nicolo
XII

Manetti, Rutilo (1571-1639):
St. Roch washes the Feet of a Plague Victim
c. 1610, Siena, San Rocco
XXXIII

Manetti, Rutilo (1571-1639)
A Plague Procession in Honor of St. Roch
c.1610, Siena, San Rocco
XLVI

Valesio, Giovanni (1583-1654):
St. Roch and Angels attending a Plague Victim
before 1621, Bologna, Oratori di San Rocco
XXVI

Desani, Pietro (n.d.):
St. Roch and the Cardinal Britanica in Rome during the Time of
Plague
n.d. Bologna, Oratori di San Rocco,
no illustration (ill. Malvasia 135/10)

Unknown Italian artist, 17th century:
St. Roch and Plague Victims
n.d. Original location unknown, now Budapest, Szepmuveszeti
Muzeum.
XXIX

BAROQUE PLAGUE IMAGERY AND TRIDENTINE
CHURCH REFORMS

by

Christine Maria Boeckl

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of The University of Maryland in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
1990

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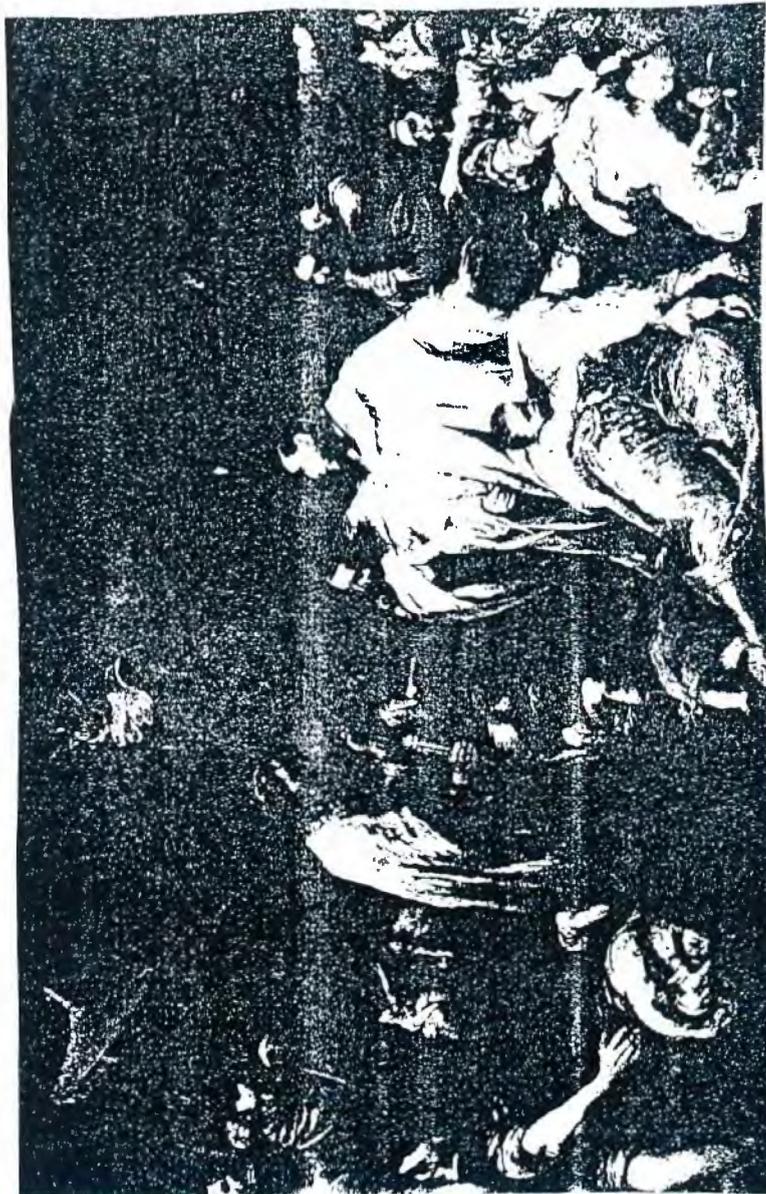
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Professor William Roger Rearick
Professor Arthur Wheelock

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Christine Maria Boeckl
1990

I G. M. Crespi, Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting the Victims of the Plague
c.1735, Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum

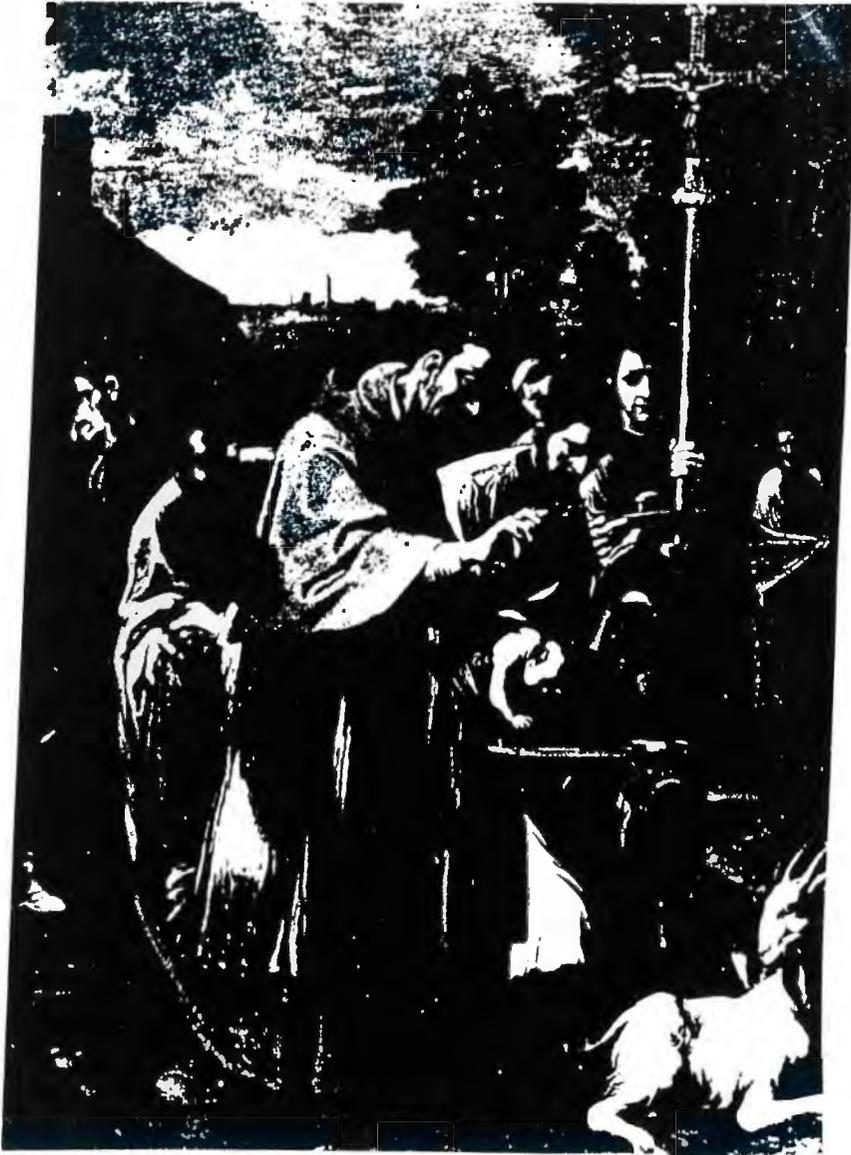


II L. Garbieri, St. Charles adores a Plague Cross -
c.1611, Bologna, S. Paolo Maggiore



III

L. Carracci, St. Charles baptizes an Infant in a Plague Encampment
c.1613/9, Nonantola, Abbey Church



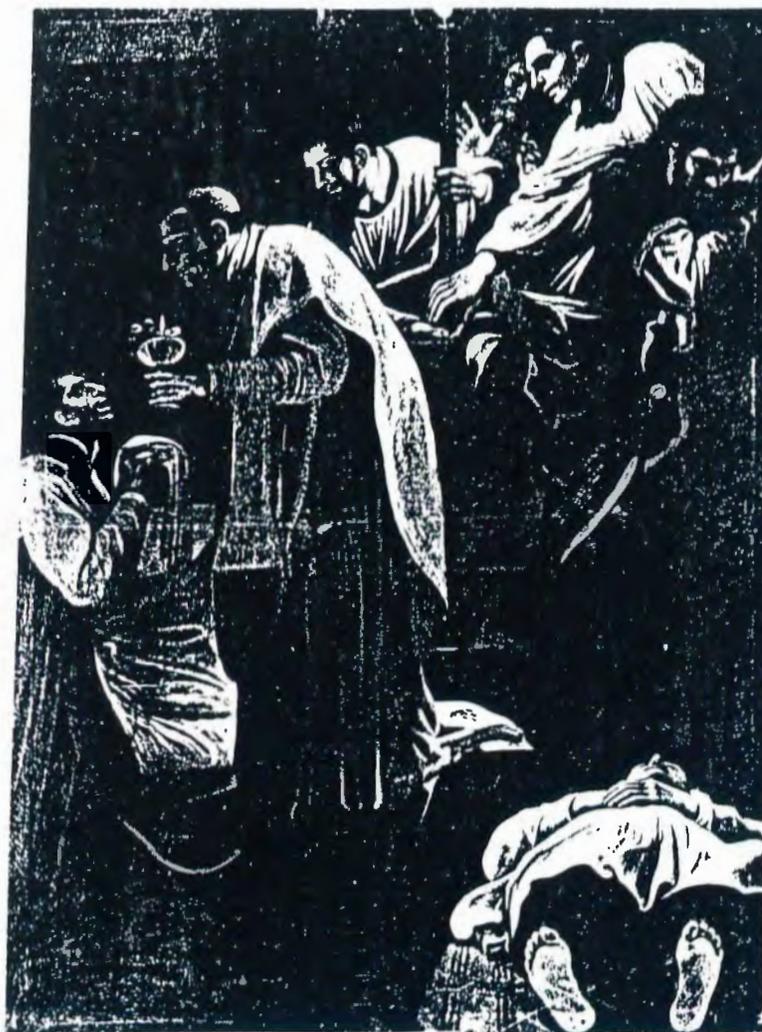
IV

B. Luti, St. Charles administers the Extreme Unction
1713, Munich, Schleissheim



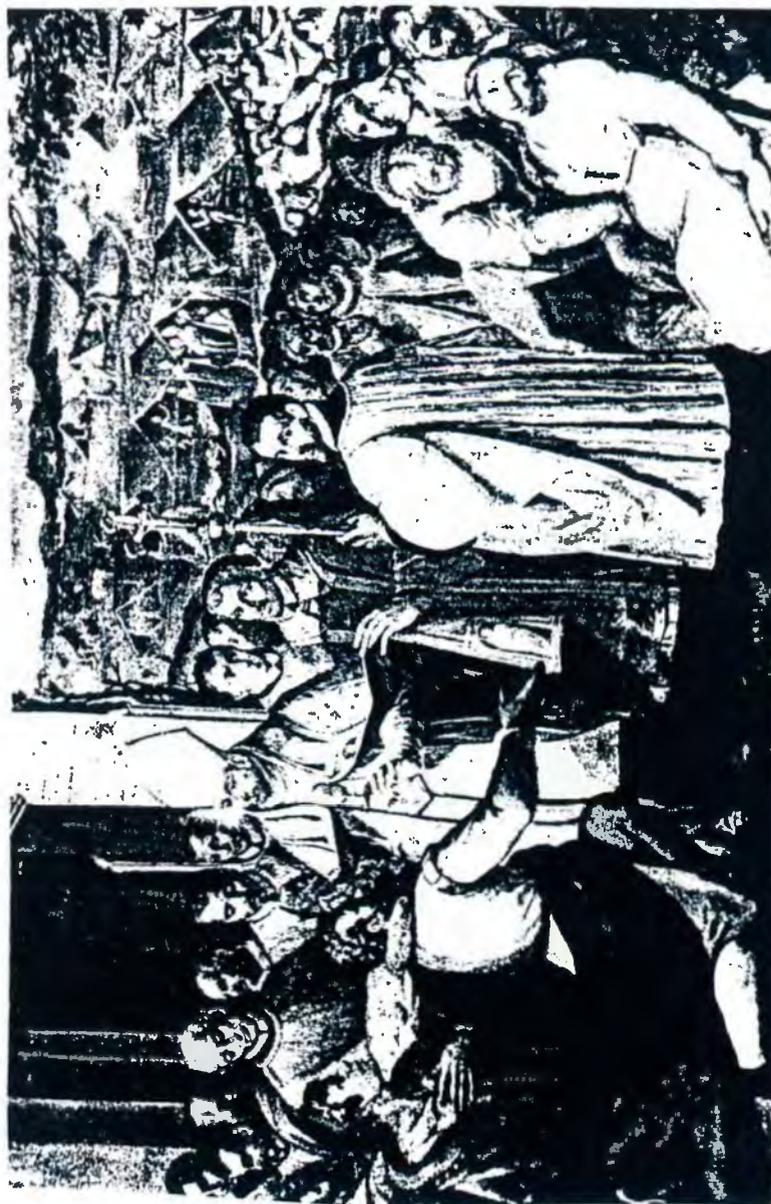
V
a

L. Garbieri, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to plague-stricken Priest
c.1611, Bologna, S. Paolo Maggiore



VI
the

P. C. Landriani, St. Charles confirms Adults during
Plague Epidemic of 1576
1602, Milan, Cathedral



VII
a

A. de Bellis, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to
Plague Victim
c.1640, Naples, San Carlo alle Mortelle



VIII

A. de Bellis, St. Charles blesses a Plague Victim
c.1640, Naples, San Carlo alle Mortelle



IX A. Lemonnier, St. Charles carrying the Viaticum to
Plague Victims
1785, Rouen, Museum



X
the

G. B. della Rover, Fiammenghino, St. Charles leads
Procession of the Holy Nail
1602, Milan, Cathedral



XI

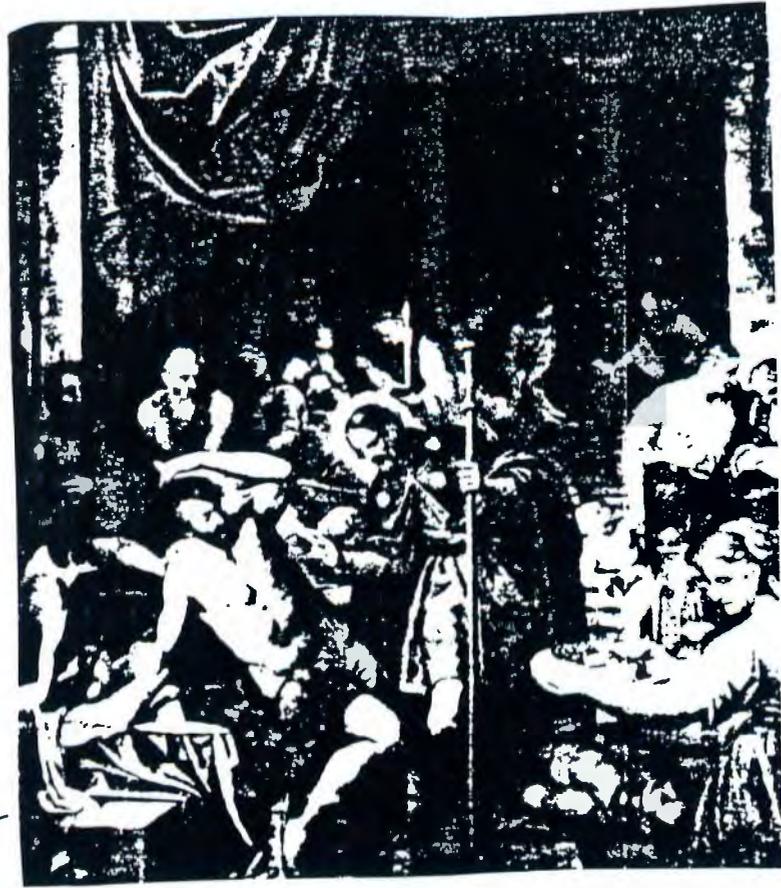
now

L. Baldi, St. John of God nurses a Plague Victim
before 1690, Rome, San Giovanni Calibata, modello,
Galleria Spada



XII

G. Lauro, St. Roch blesses a Plague Victim
1605, Treviso, San Nicolo



XIII G. B. Crespi, il Cerano, St. Charles visits a Plague
Encampment
1602, Milan, Cathedral



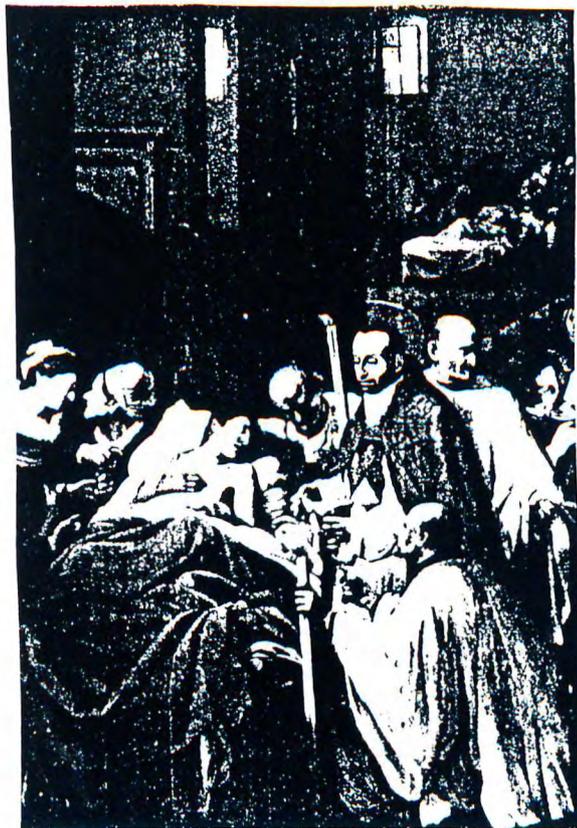
XIV

P. Damini, St. Charles washes the Feet of a Plague Victim
Venice, Nervesa della Battaglia, Chiesa arcipretale



XV
a

C. Saraceni, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to
Plague Victim
c. 1619, Cesena, Chiesa dei Servi



XVI
of

P. Bernardi, St. Charles interceding for the Victims
the Plague
c.1617, Verona, San Carlo



XVII D. M. Canuti, Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting the
Victims of the Plague
1666, Padua, S. Benedetto, now Museo Civico



XVIII S. Ricci, St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague

c.1701, Padua, S. Giustina



XIX
Holy Nail

P. Cortona, St. Charles leads the Procession of the
1667, Rome, San Carlo ai Catinari



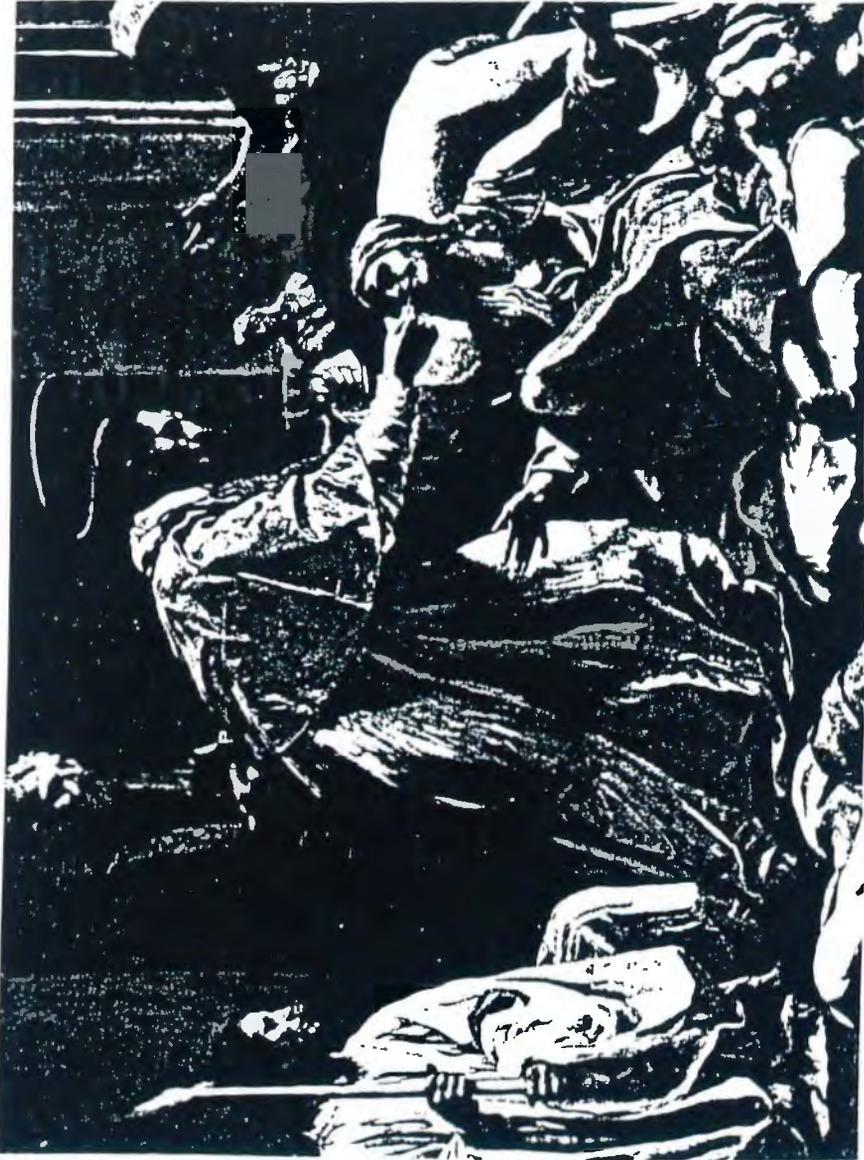
XX
to

T. da Varallo, St. Charles administers the Viaticum
a Plague Victim
before 1616, Domodossale, Parochial Church



XXI

G. Brandi, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim
c. 1660, Milan, S. Maria della Vittoria



XXII
a

P. Mignard, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to
female Plague Victim
c.1657, Rome, San Carlo ai Catinari, modello, now Le
Havre, Museum



XXIII Unknown Italian Artist, St. Charles administers the
Viaticum to a dying Man
18th century, Milan, San Calimero



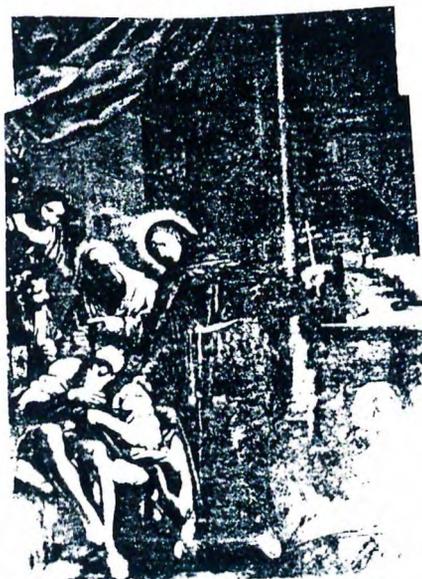
XXIV

F. Macchi, St. Charles accepts the Care of an Infant
during the Plague of 1576
Bologna, S. Giovanni in Monte



XXV

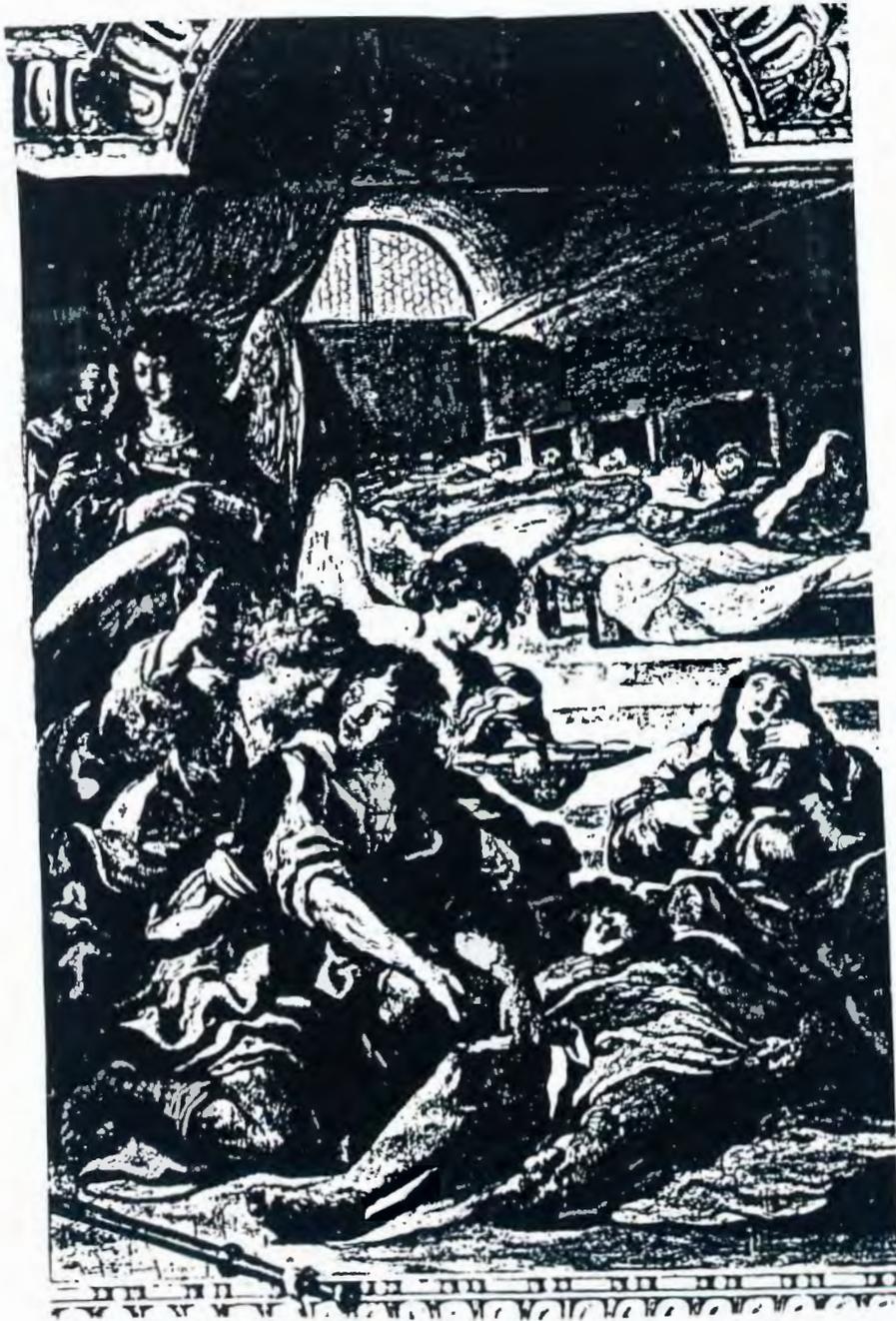
G. Cavedoni, Bl. Raniero comforts a Plague Victim
17th c., Bologna, S. Maria della Vita (oratorio)



XXVI
Victim

G. Valesio, St. Roch and Angels attending a Plague

before 1621, Bologna, Oratori di San Rocco

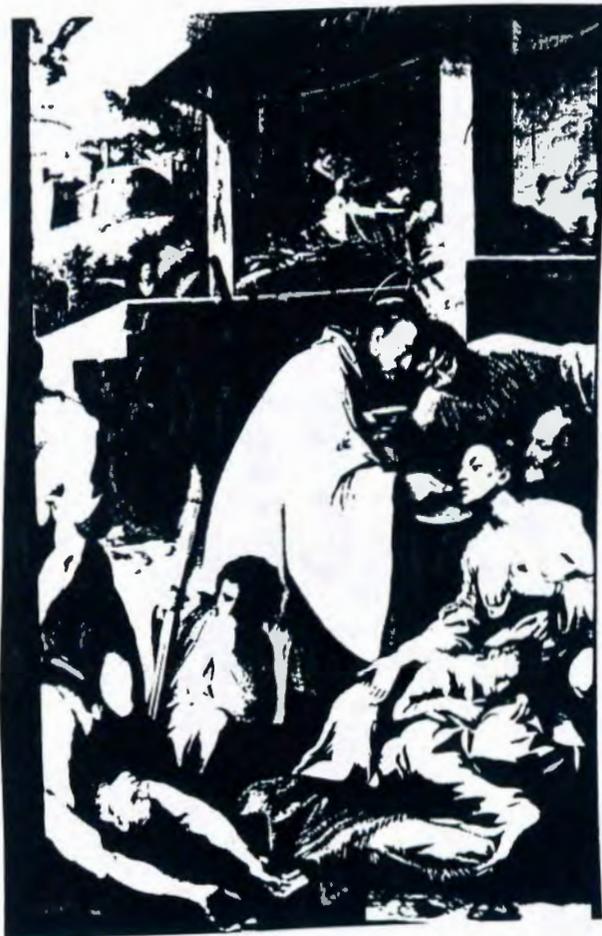


XXVIIC. Cignani, St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague

c.1660, Bologna, S. Michele in Bosco



XXVIII A. Milani, St. Cajetan administers the Viaticum to
female Plague Victim
18th c., Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



XXIX

Unknown Italian Artist, St. Roch and Plague Victims
17th c., Budapest, Szepmuveszeti Muzeum



XXX

G. M. Crespi (school), Bl. Bernard Tolomei comforting
the Victims of the Plague
c.1735, Vienna, Gemaldegalerie der Akademie der
bildenden Kunste

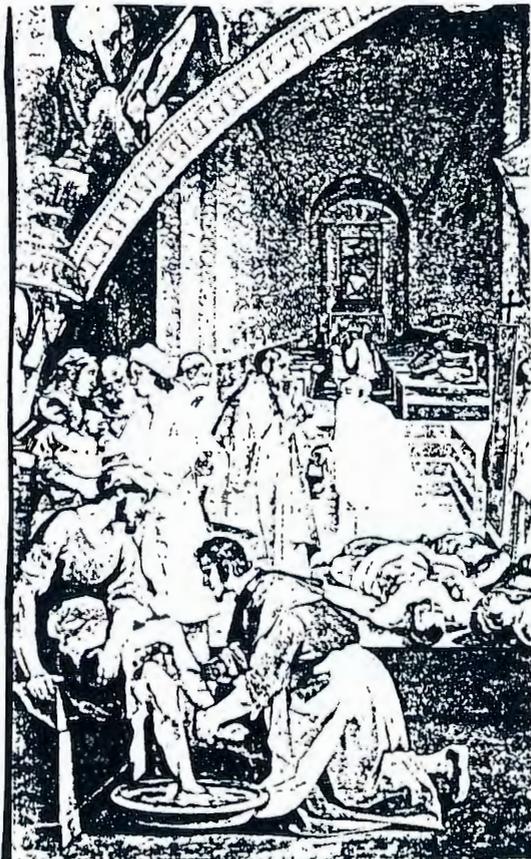


XXXI

A. Comodi, St. Charles interceding for the Cessation
of the Plague
c.1617, Fano, Cathedral, now Museo Civico



XXXIIR. Manetti, St. Roch washes the Feet of a Plague Victim
c.1610, Siena, San Rocco



XXXIII

R. Manetti, A Plague Procession in Honor of St. Roch
c.1610, Siena, San Rocco



XXXIV
Infant

O. Borgianni, St. Charles accepts the Care of an
during the Plague of 1576

c.1613, Rome, S. Adriano (in the Forum), now Chiesa
della Casa Generalizia dei Padre

Mercedari



XXXV
a

G. A. Pianca, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to
female Plague Victim
18th c., Agone, Parochial Church



XXXVI

G. del Po, Plague Scene in Sorent in 1656
1687, Sorent, S. Antonino

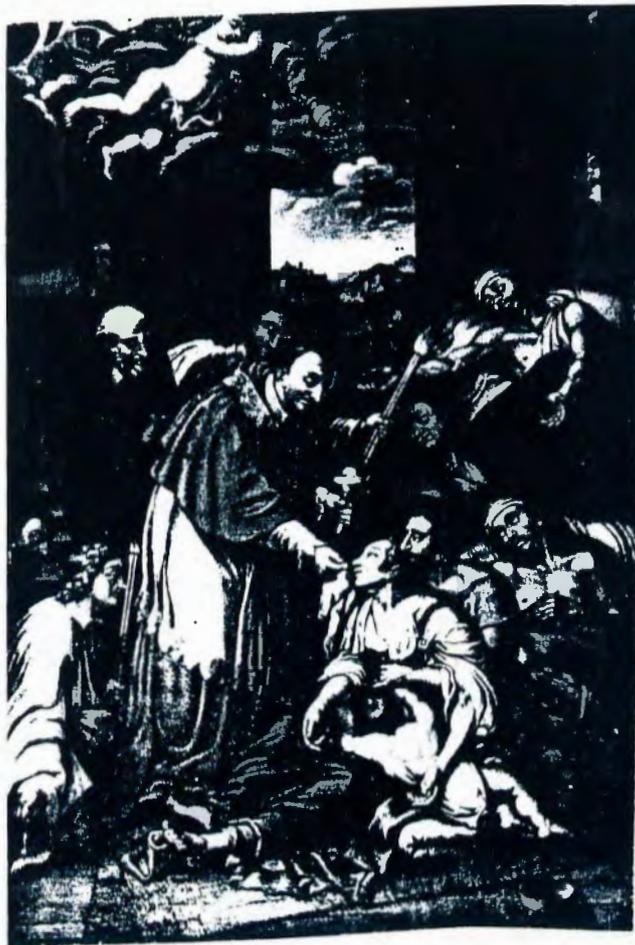


XXXVII

A. Solimena, St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation
of the Plague
before 1698, Sarno, Cathedral



XXXVIII Unknown Swiss Artist, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim
1660's, Baden, St. Sebastian's Chapel



XXXIX

S. During, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Plague Victim
1716, Schlupfheim, Capuchin Monastery



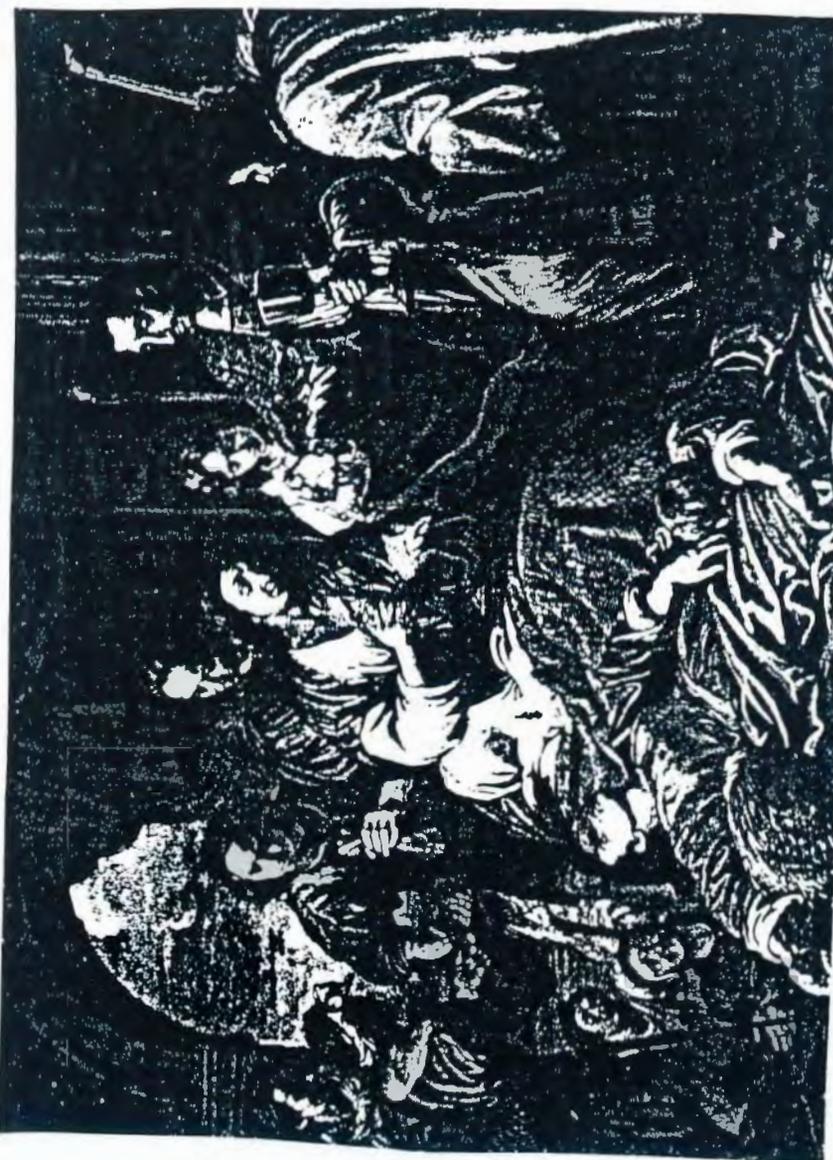
XL

G. Crayer, St. Macarius interceding for the Victims of the Plague
c.1650, Ghent, St. Bavo



XLI
Viaticum

J. E. Quellinus II, St. Charles administers the
to a female Plague Victim
1660's, Malines, Church of Beguinage



XLII

V. H. Janssens, St. Charles interceding for the Victims
of the Plague

c.1690, Brussels, Church of the Carmelites, now St.

Nicolas



XLIII J. Oost, St. Macarius administers the Viaticum to a
Plague Victim

1673, Paris, Louvre



XLIV
a

J. C. Storer, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to
Plague Victim
before 1667, design, Bologna, Pinacoteca



XLV
Victims

J. H. Schonfeld, St. Charles prays for the Plague
1655, Salzburg, Cathedral



XLVI
Victims

J. M. Rottmayr, St. Charles interceding for the
of the Plague
1721, Salzburg, Kollegienkirche, modello, Museum



XLVIJ. Zirckler, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a
female Plague Victim

1785, Papa, St. Stephen



XLVIII

K. Scretta, St. Charles visits a Plague Hospital
1647, Prague, SS. Mary and Charles



XLIX
a

J. Wickart, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to
Plague Victim
1721, Olmutz, Maria Schnee



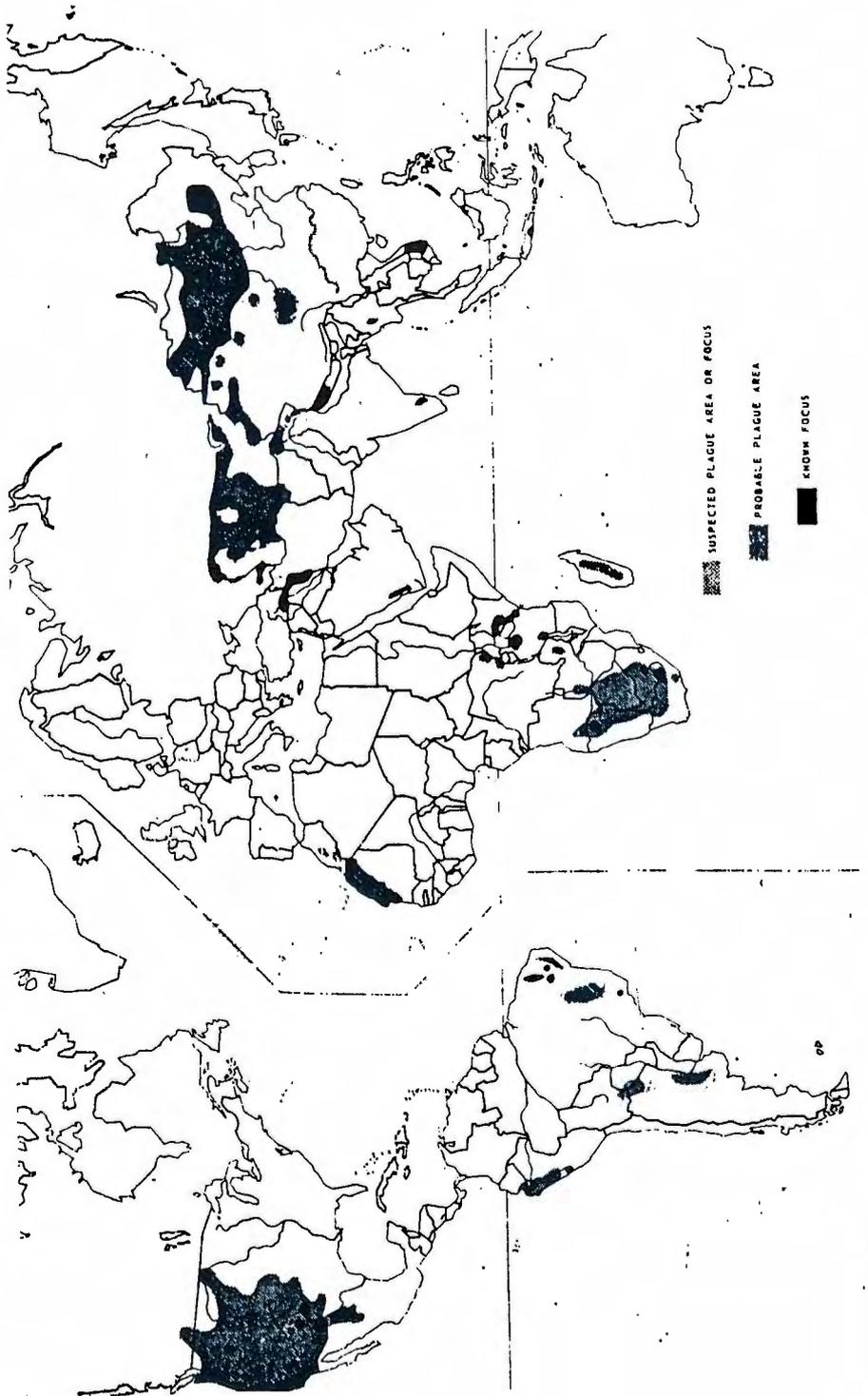
L
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C. Sambach, St. Charles administers the Viaticum to female Plague Victim
c.1750, Sloup near Brunn, Pilgrimage Church



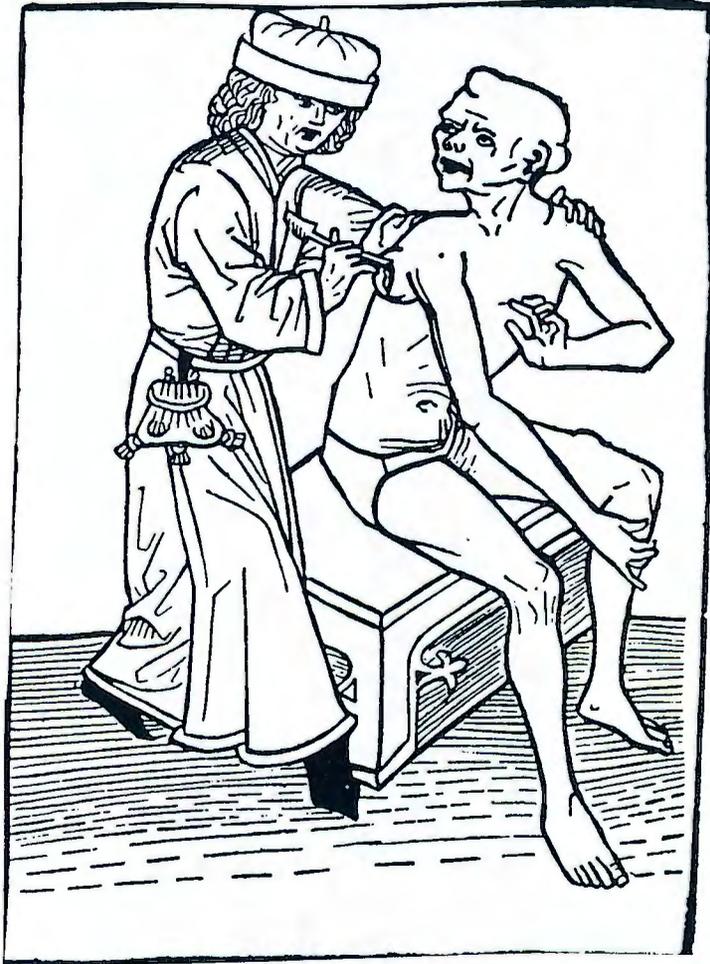
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World Map of Plague Areas, 1974



Plague Doctor performing an Operation, Sebastian's
Chapel, Lansleville, Savoy, 15th century





4
Bayrisches St. Roch. altar wing, German, 1490, Munich,
Nationalmuseum

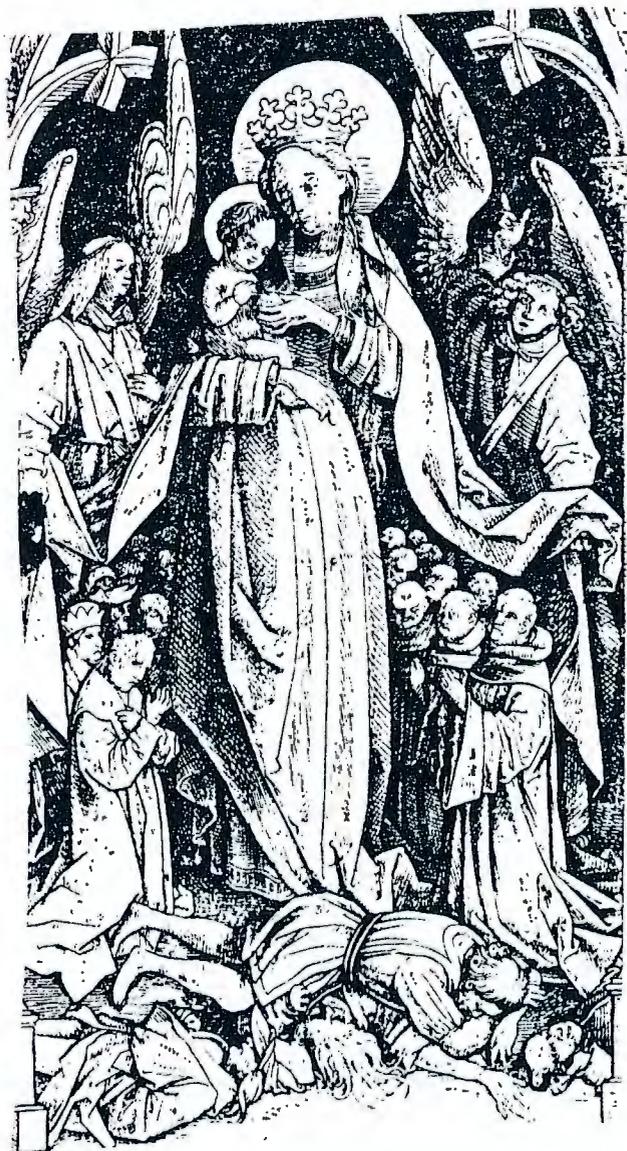


5 St. Roch cured by an Angel, title page of Maldura's
Vita S. Rochi, c.1495



6
Elder,

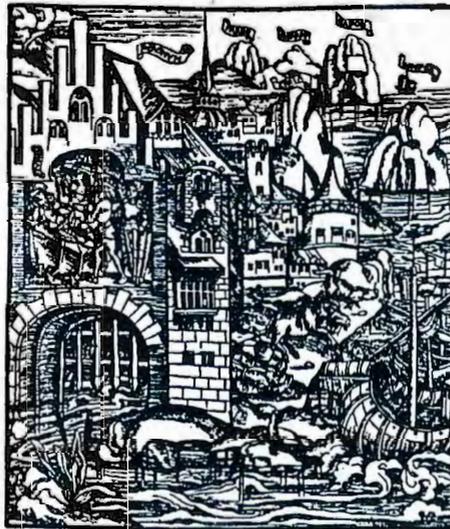
Madonna Misericordia, woodcut, Hans Holbein the
attr., c.1499



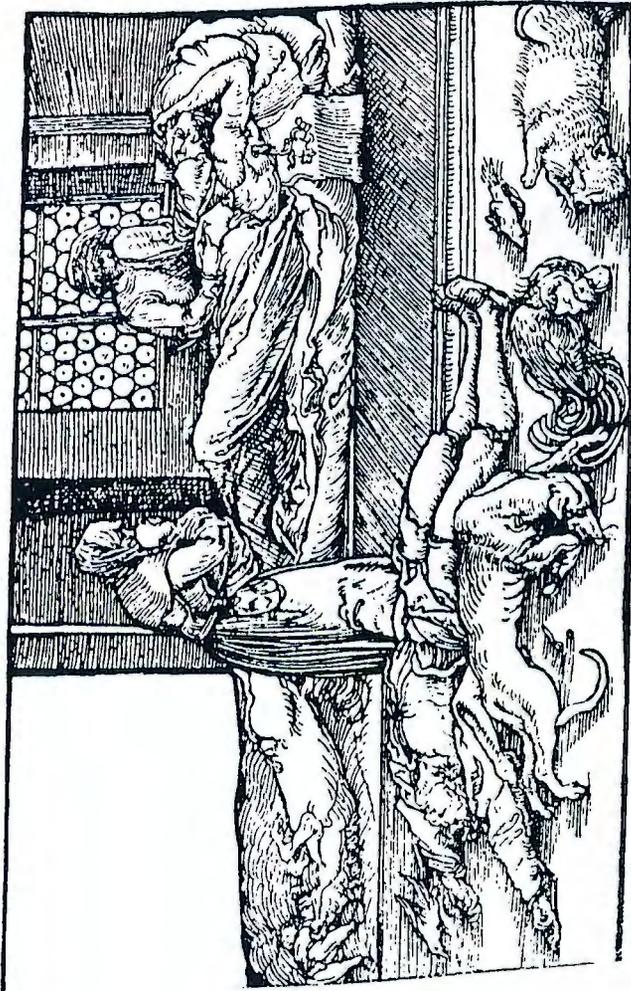
7 The Phrygian Plague or Il Morbetto, Marc Antonio Raimondi after Raphael, c. 1513



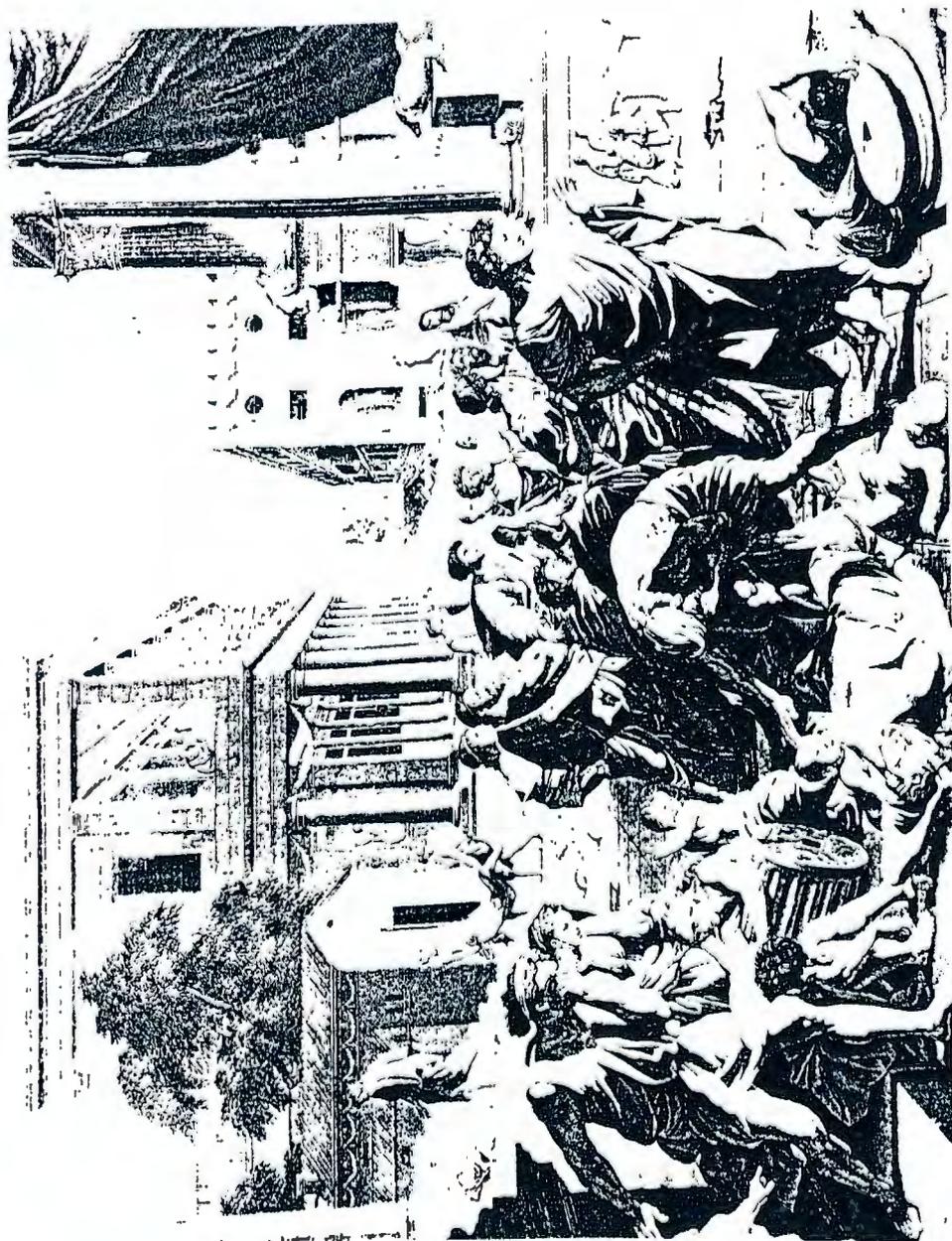
Libet Zentus Cae



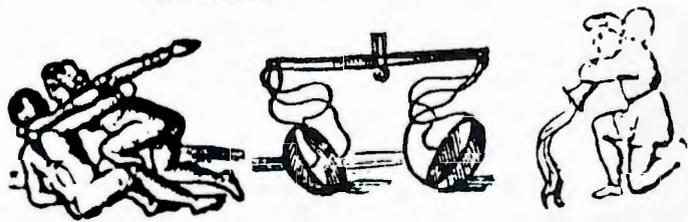
1. *Interdum enim C. dicitur*
 2. *Autem. Et ad eum*
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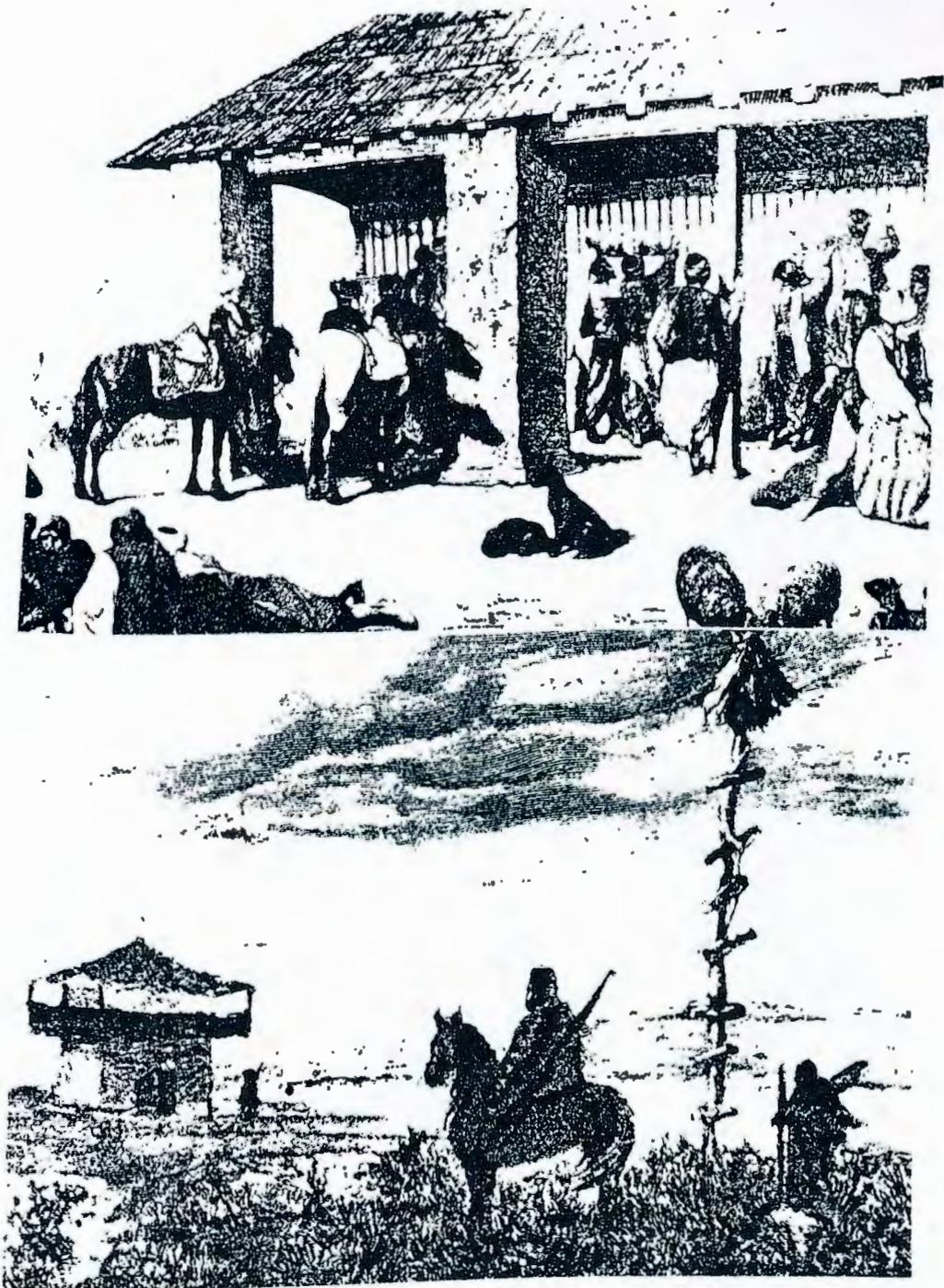






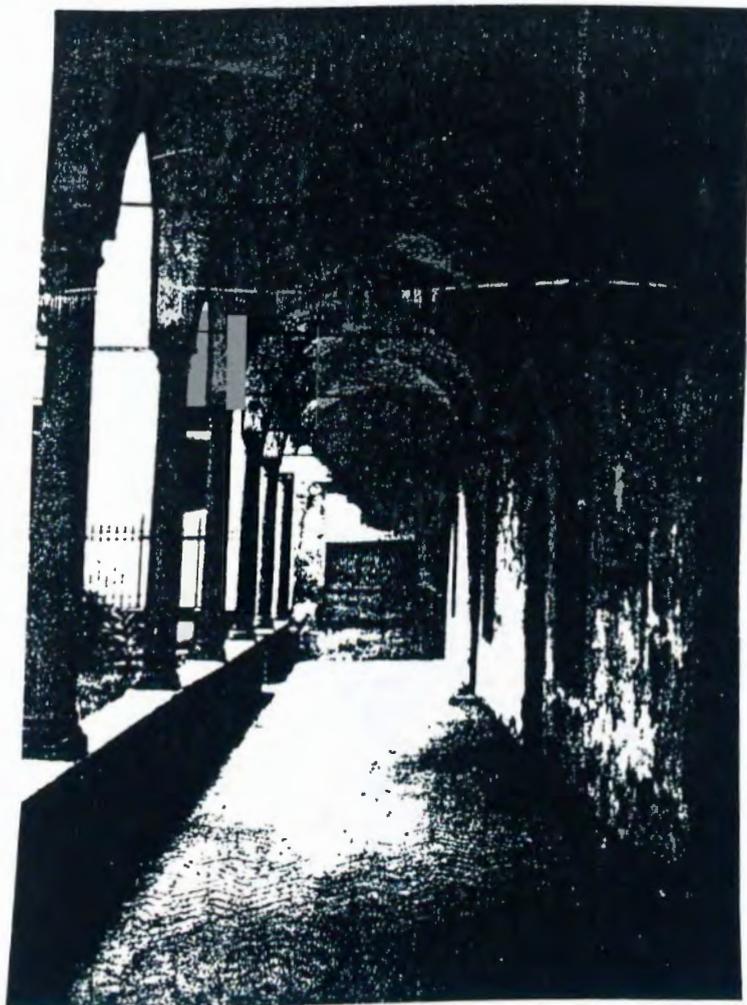
15
c.1870

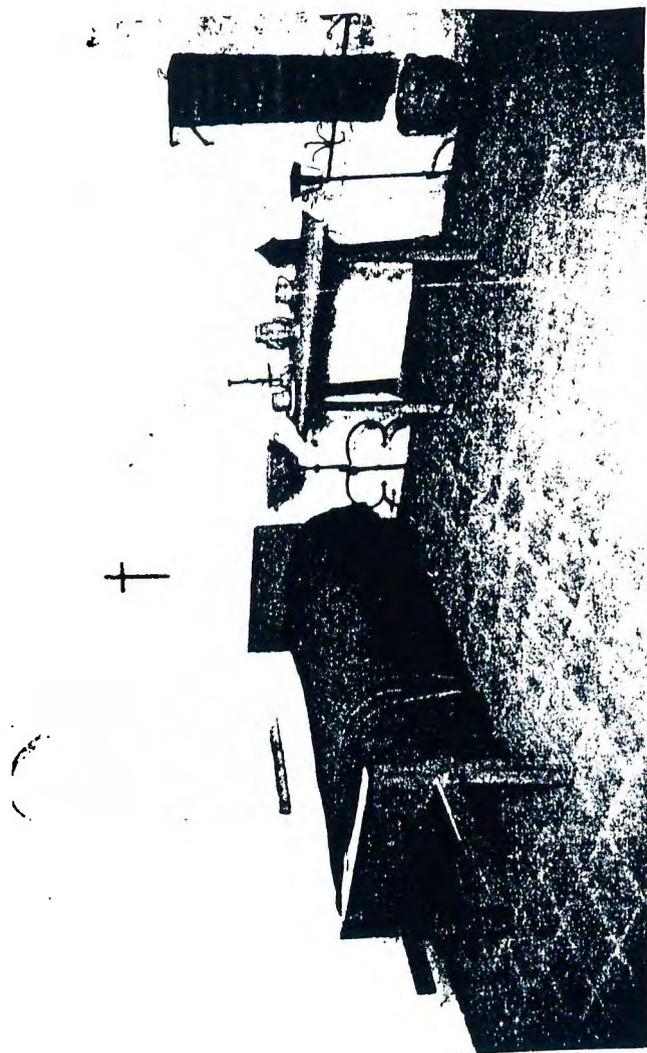
Waystation & Watchtower of the Sanitary Cordon,

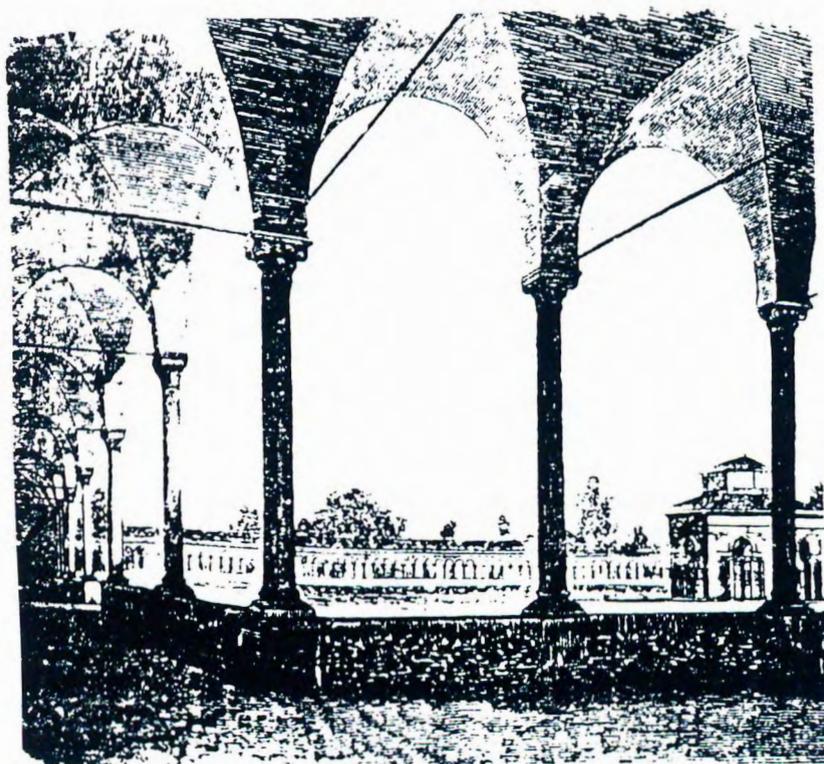


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24
San

Plague Ex-Voto, Domenico Tintoretto, 1631, Venice,
Francesco della Vigna

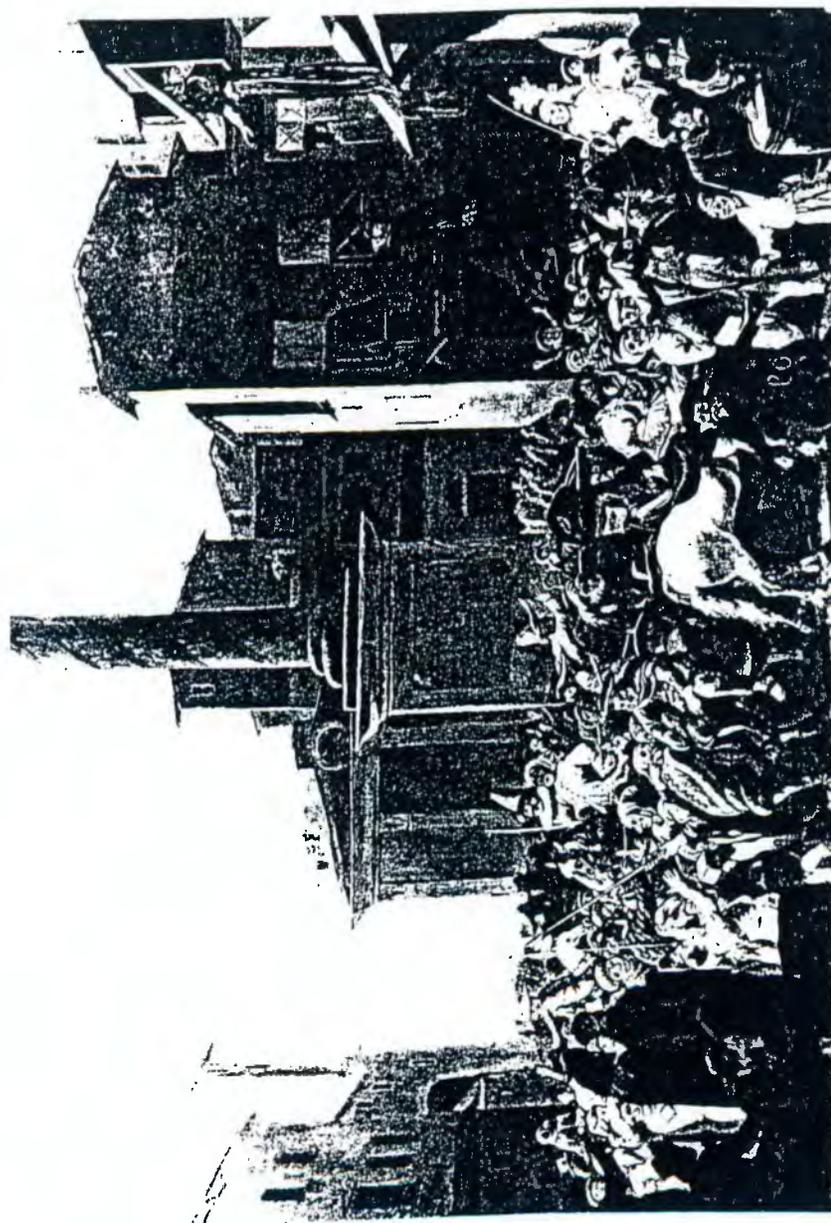




*Alto di modo il suo petto, che vienno
di sopra di materia che si chiama
di questo modo, che si chiama*

27
1656,

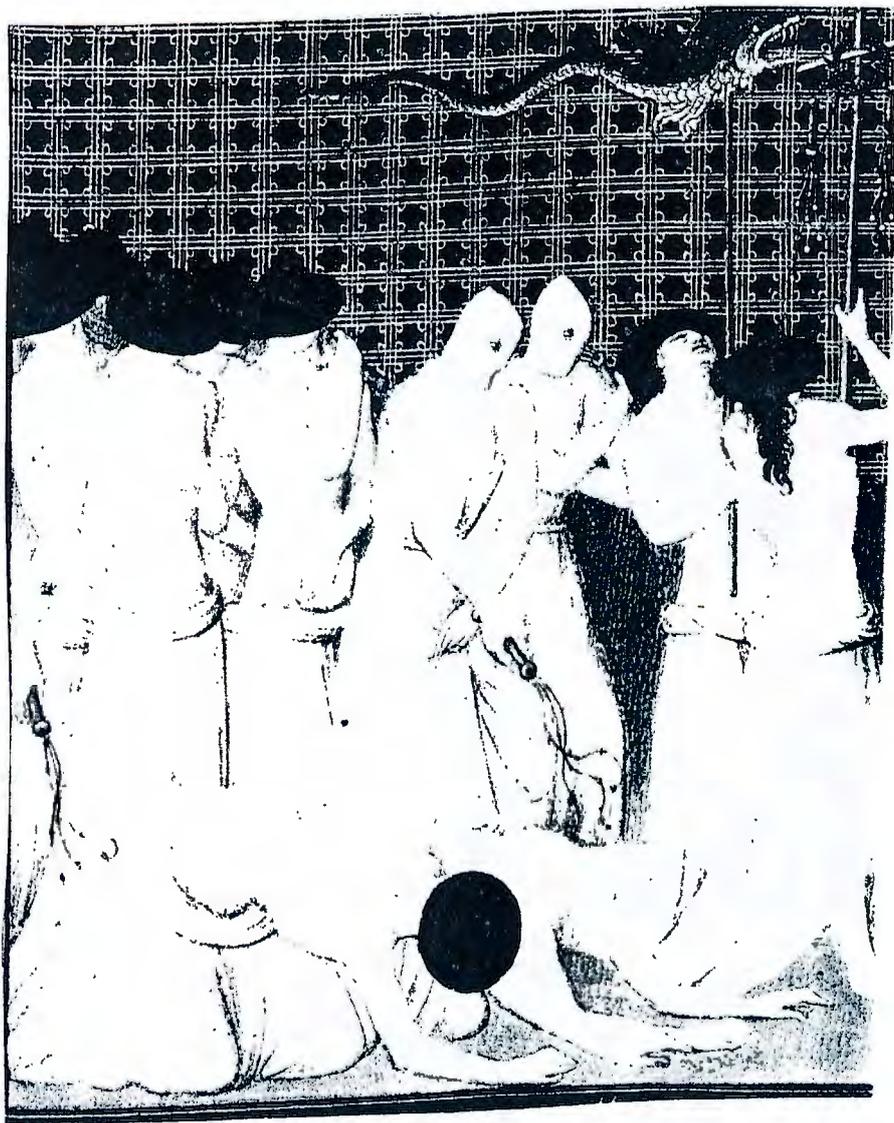
The Carnival in Rome, Johannes Lingelbach, after
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum









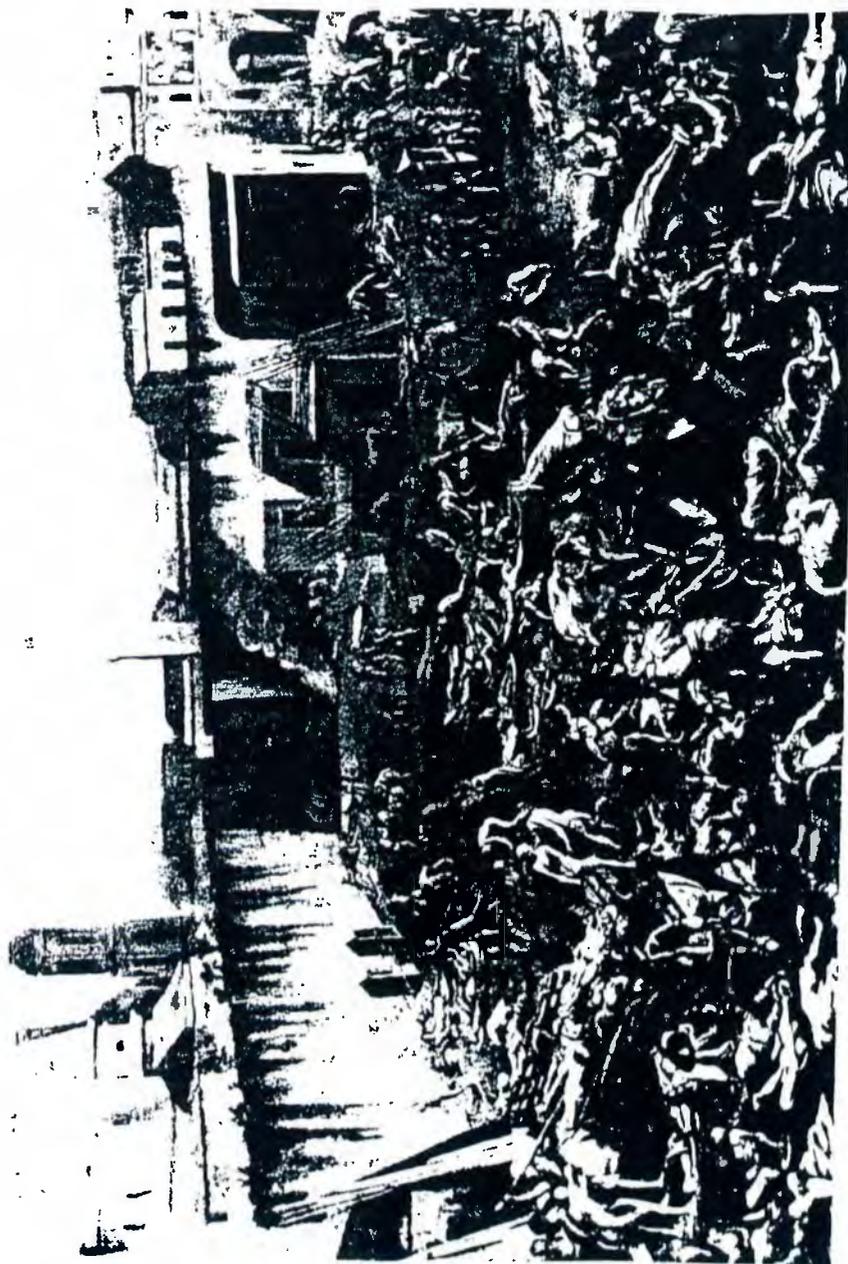


32 Plague in Naples, modelli, Mattia Preti, c.1656,
Naples, Museo di Capodimonte



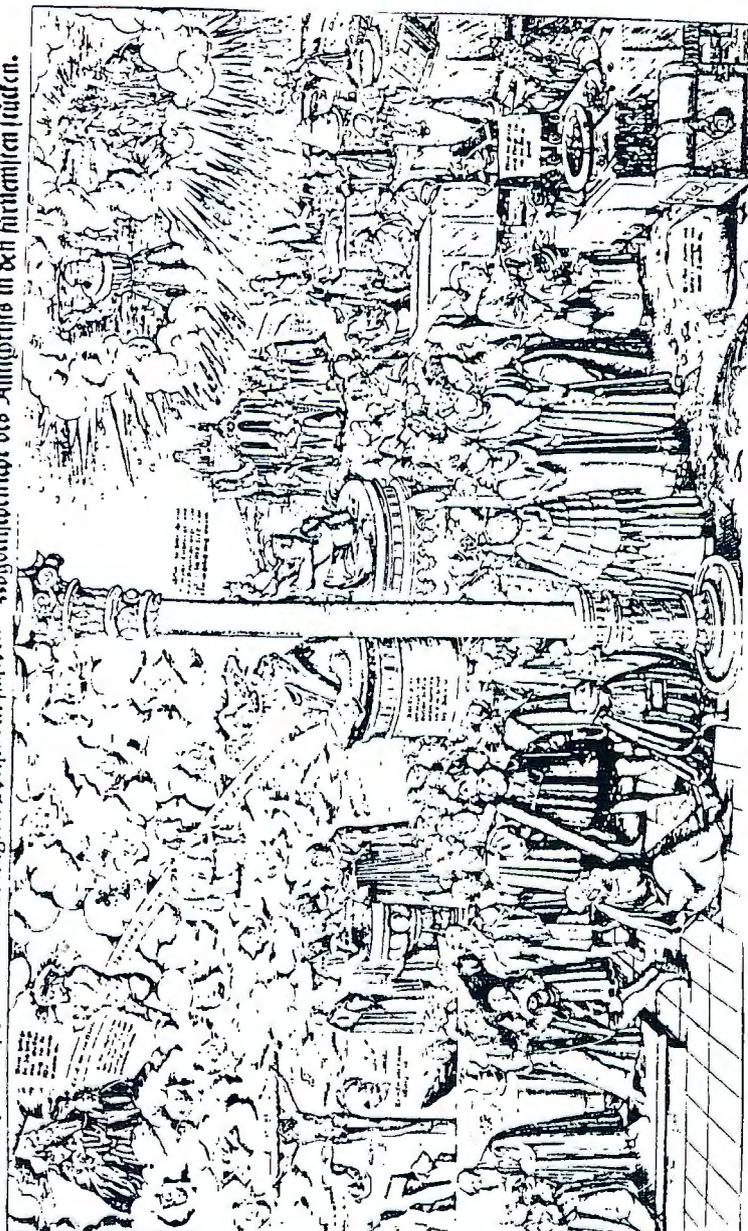
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT
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33 The Piazza Mercatello during the Plague, Micco
Spadaro, 1660's, Naples, Certosa di San Martino

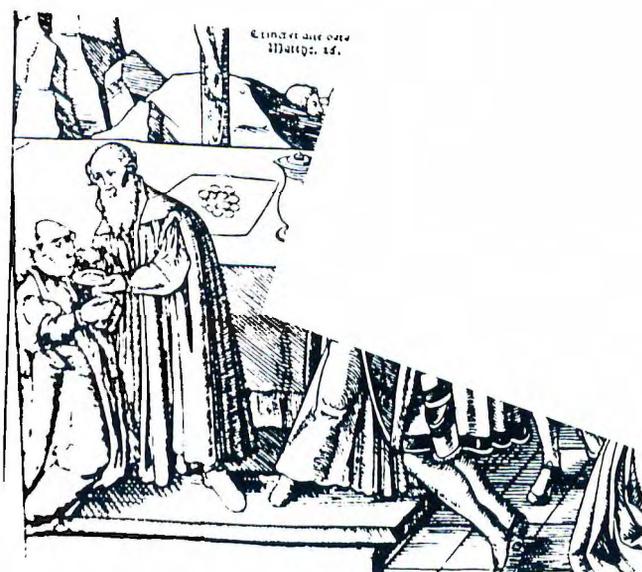


Differences between Lutheran and Catholic Services,
Lucas Cranach the Younger, c.1545

Unterscheid zwischen waren Religion Christi und falschen Abgötzenlehr der Ambrusse in den fürnemsten Städten.



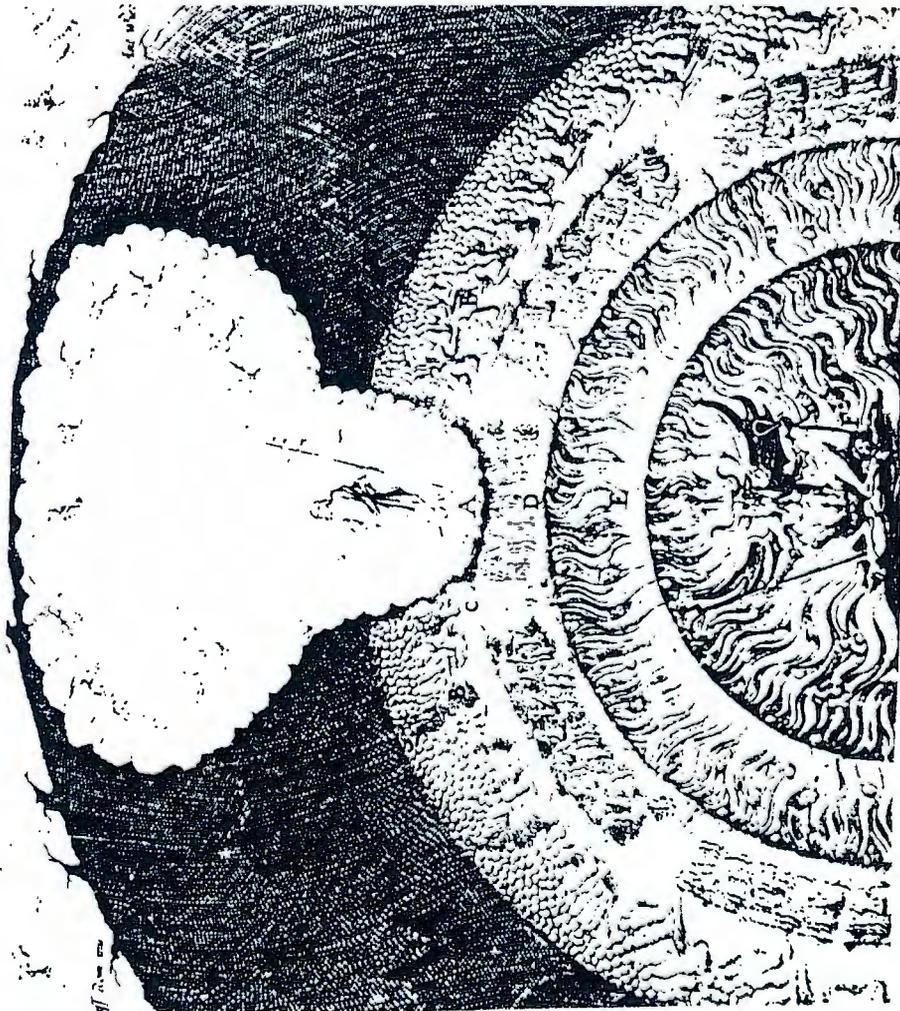




37
A.D.,

Communion of the Apostles, Riha Patene, 565-578
Dumbarton Oaks





39
century

Angel serving the Eucharist in Purgatory, 18th

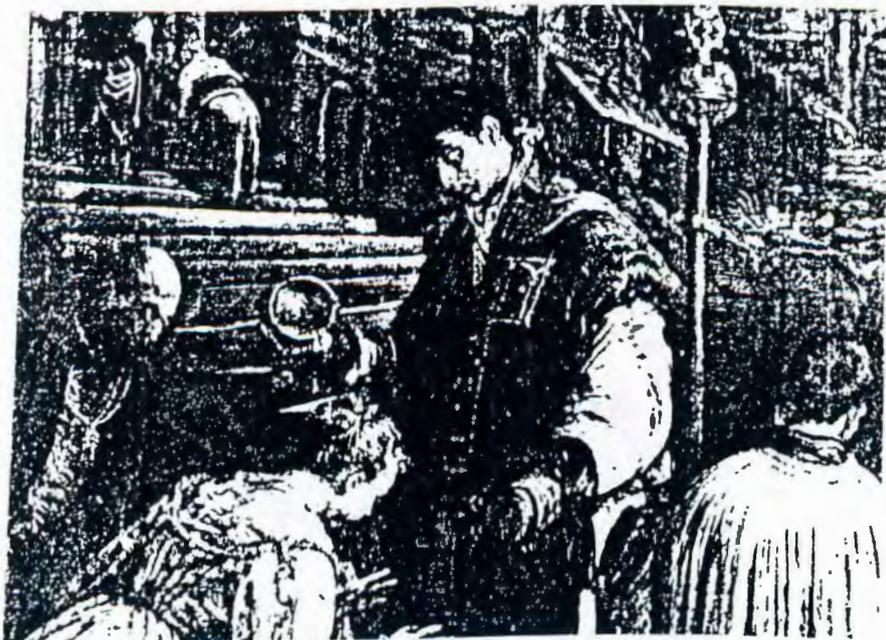


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40 The Virgin and St. Gennaro interceding for the
Victims of the Plague, Luca Giordano, 1662, Naples,
Santa Maria del Pianto





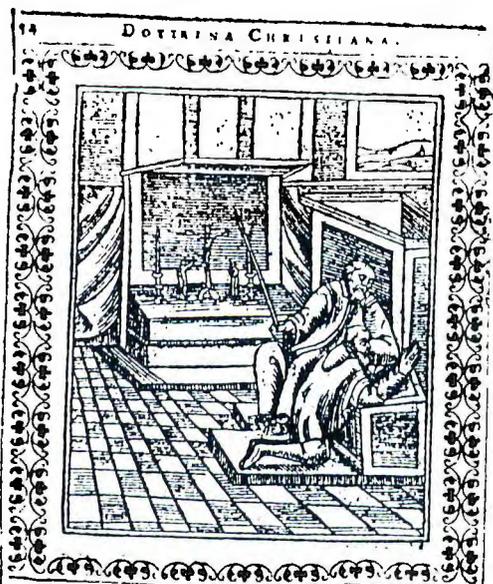


43
c.

Sacrament of Extreme Unction, Breviarium Grimani,
1510-1520



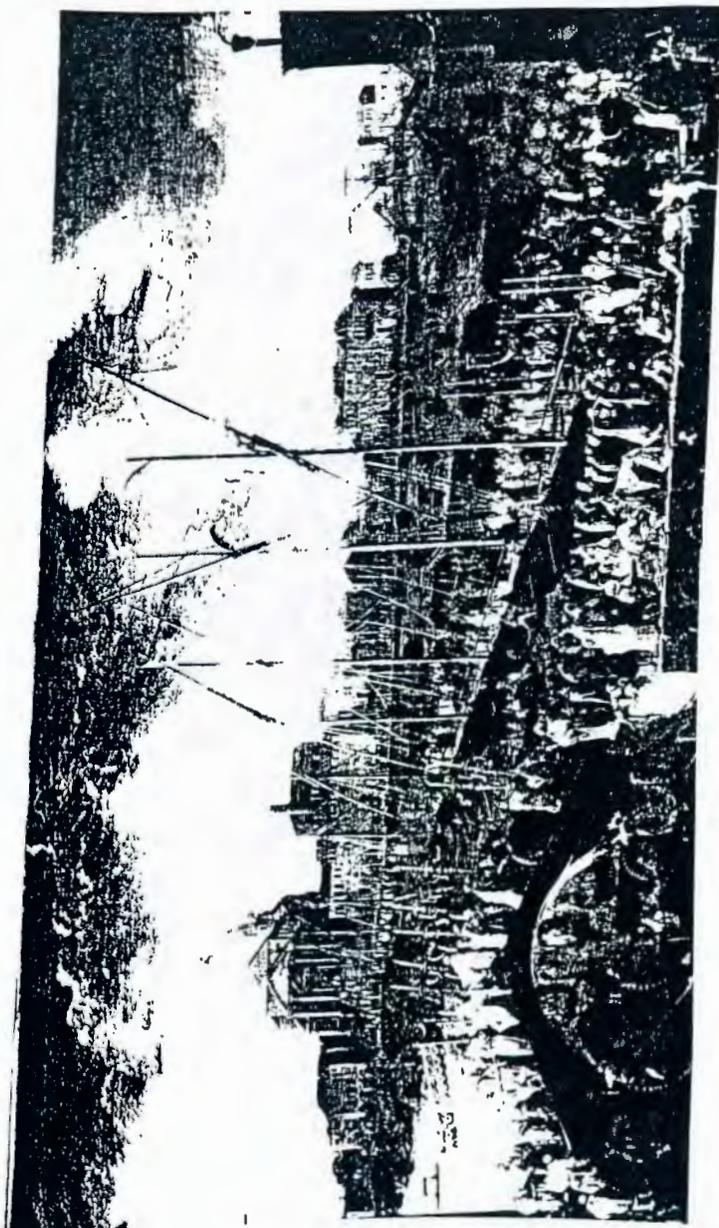




4. La penitenza, ouer confessione.

Per quello Sacramento si sono perdonati i peccati fatti
 dopò il battesimo. & per hen confisati. il. vna prima es-
 faminar hen la confessione. pententia de' peccati
 con deliberatione de non ferre.
 et d'esso la confessione.
 la penitencia. et a. u. l.

La Processione del Redentore, G. Heintz the Younger,
1625, Venice, Museo Correr



47
Paris,

Last Communion of St. Jerome, J. Gerome, 1854,
St. Severin





49
Paolo

The Martyrdom and Last Communion of St. Lucy,
Veronese, 1585-1586, detail, National Gallery of Art,
Washington DC



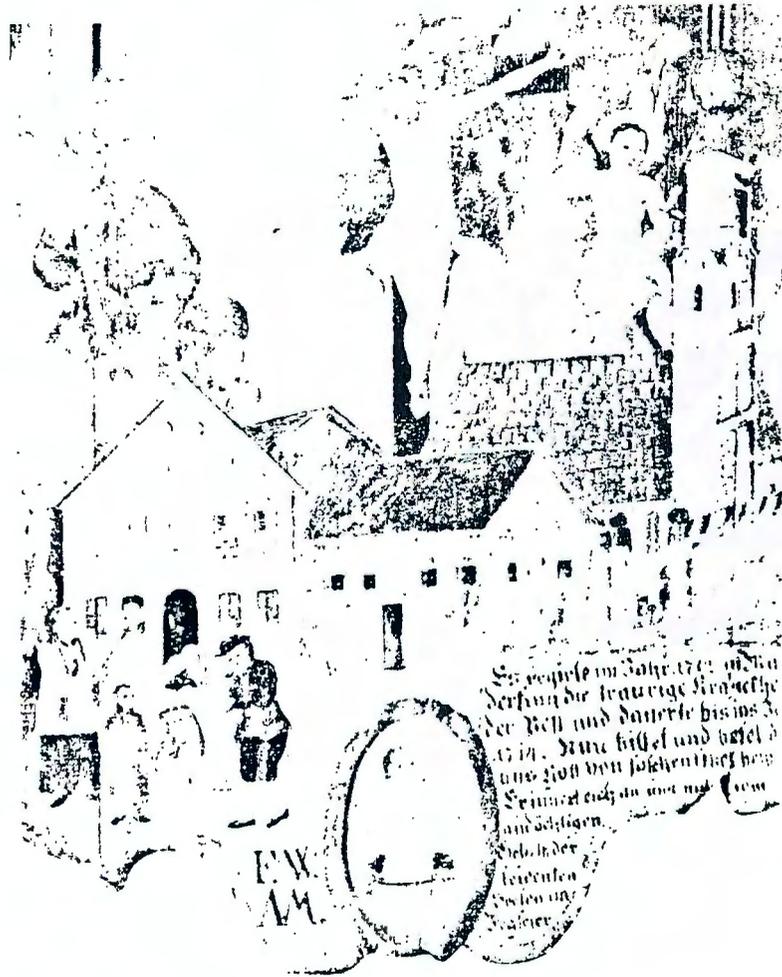




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Plague Ex-Voto, Braunau am Inn, 18th century
& Communion Tongues













60
Romanum

David's Remorse, Maerten de Voss, c. 1606, Missale





62
Louvre

The Plague at Ashdod, N. Poussin, 1631, Paris,

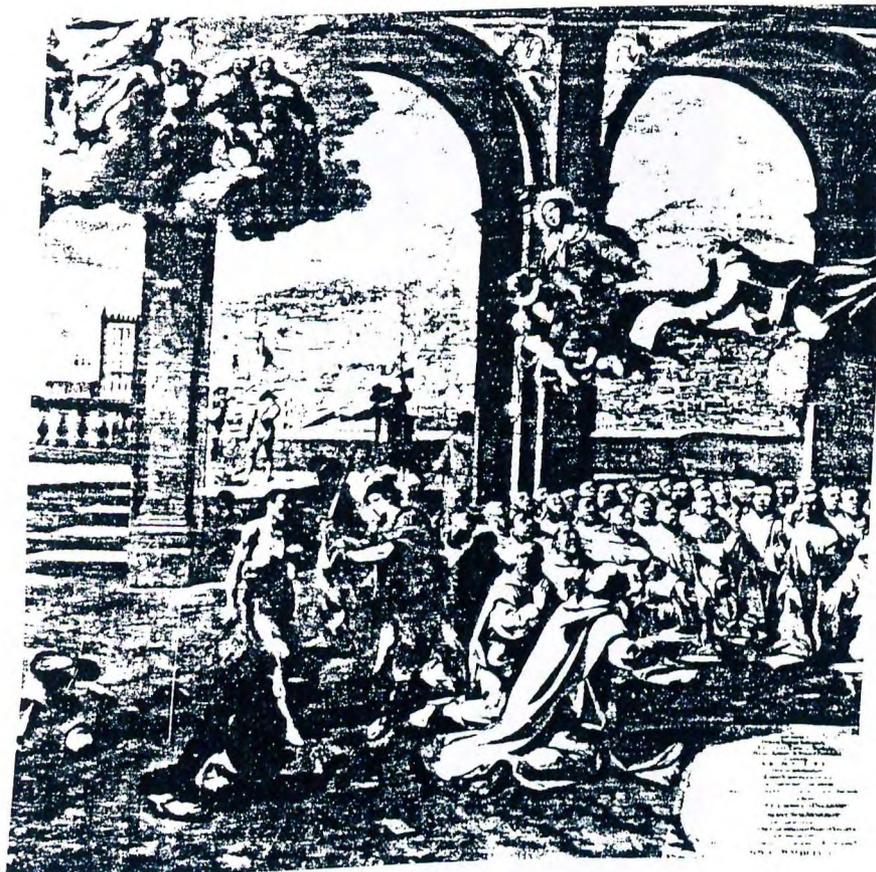




64 Vision of Francesca Romana, Pietro del Po, print
(reversed) after N. Poussin, 1650's



65 Thanksgiving after the Plague, detail, M. Spadaro, 1657, Naples, Certosa di San Martino

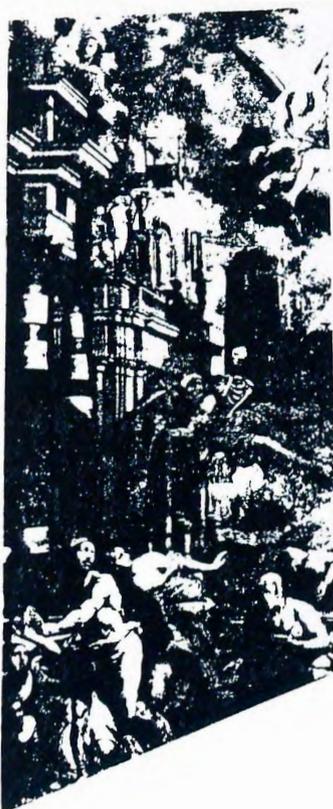


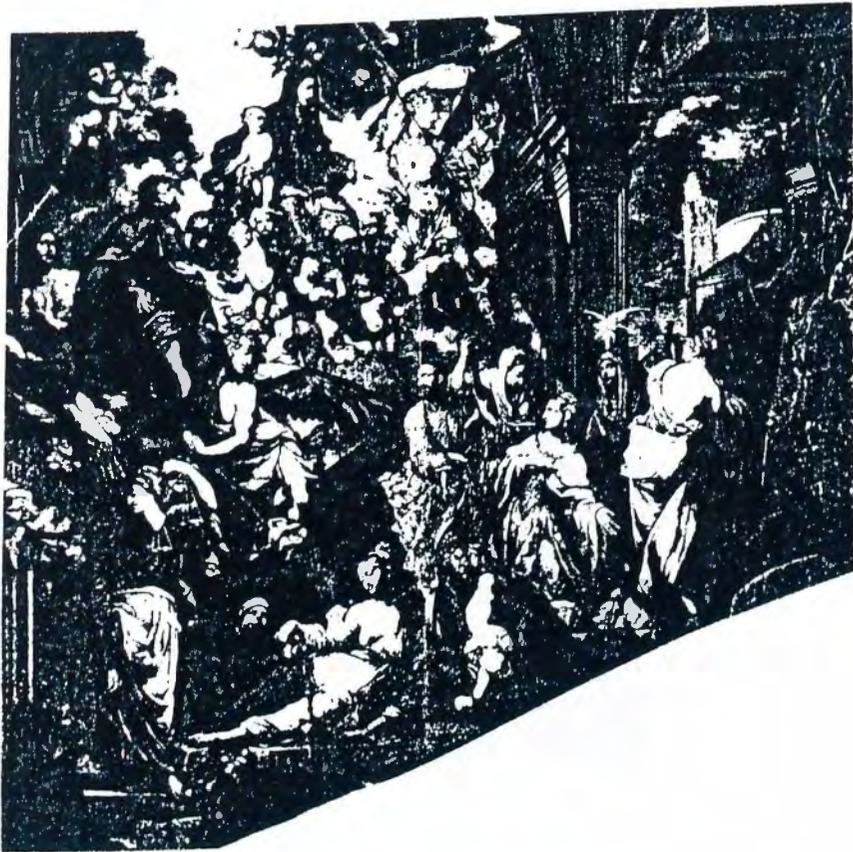
66
Heaven
Venice, S.

The Plague, detail from high altar The Queen of
expelling the Plague, 1670, Josse de Corte,
Maria della Salute



Plague Scene in Venice in 1630, Part I, 1673, Pietro
Negri, Venice, Scuola di San Rocco



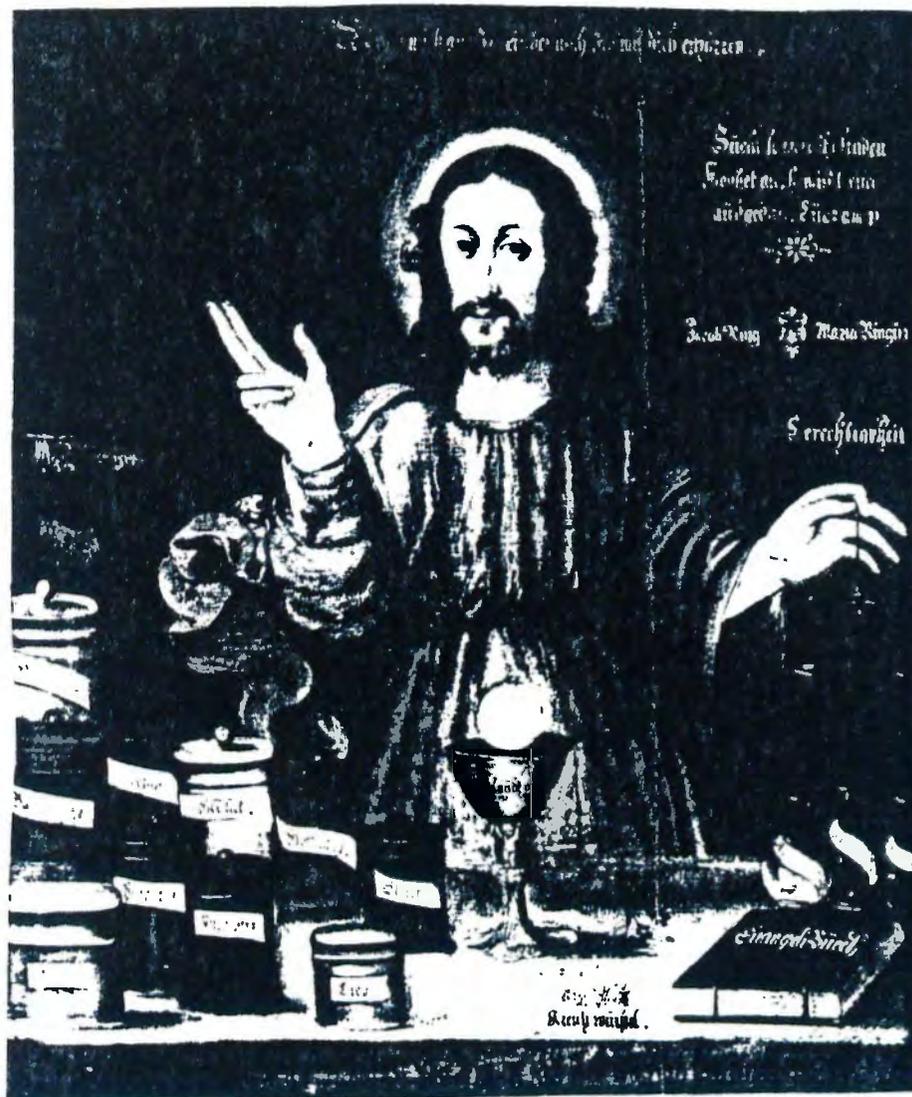




70 Virtues, engraving, Virgil Solis, 16th century



71 Christ as Apothecary, 1658, plague-votive altar, St. Polten, Hospital Chapel, now Museum









75
del

Rosary Madonna, Van Dyck, 1624, Palermo, Oratoria
Rosario



75
del

Rosary Madonna, Van Dyck, 1624, Palermo, Oratoria
Rosario





77 St. Charles interceding before the Virgin, Cerrini,
engraving, 1650





79 St. Rosalia interceding for the Plague Victims,
Maratti, c.1680, Palestrina, Barberini Chapel





81 San Feliciano interceding for Foligno, Gaetano Gandolfo, modello, Rome, Palazzo Barberini



82
Louvre

Madonna and St. Roch, J. L. David, 1781, Paris,



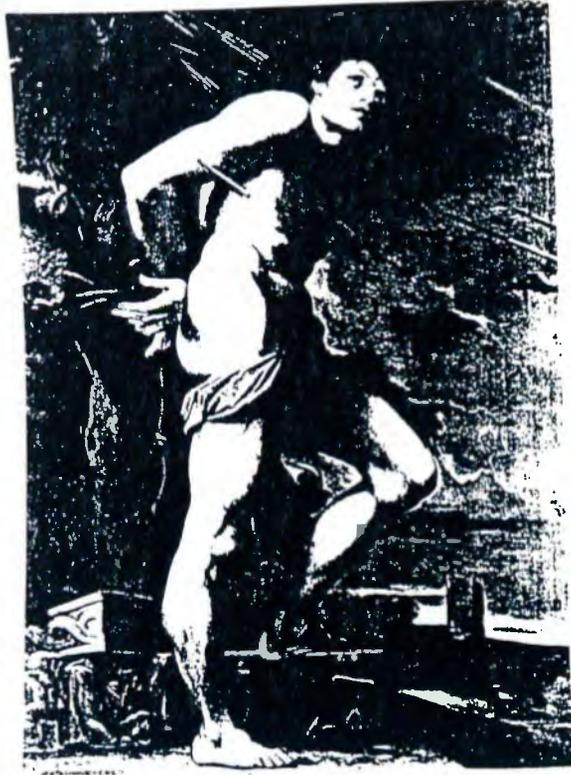


O hailer herre vnd martir sant Sebastian. wie ist
 so groß din uerdienen. Bitte für uns vnsern herren
 ihesum xpm das wir von der plage vnd dem siechtigen ep-
 idemia. vnd dem gälten tode vnd von allen vngewonli-
 chen töden durch din gebet vnd uerdienen beschütet vnd
 beschirmet werden. Amen. Die collecta.

A lmechtiger ewiger got. wir bitten dich das du durch
 uerdienen vnd bitte dieses hailigen martirs sant
 Sebastians. uns vor der plage epidemia vnd dem gälte-
 tode vnd vor allen vngewonlichen töden beschütet vnd
 das so uns mit berürre noch begreiff. durch das uerdie-
 nen dieses würdigen martirs sant Sebastians. Des
 hilf uns der da ruffet in ewigkeit Amen.

• 61 3A. Mat xxix.

St. Sebastian, Lodovico Carracci, after 1600 & Niobe
Sarcophagus, Rome, Vatican



85
1476,

St. Gregory interceding for Rome, unknown artist,
Rome, San Pietro in Vincoli



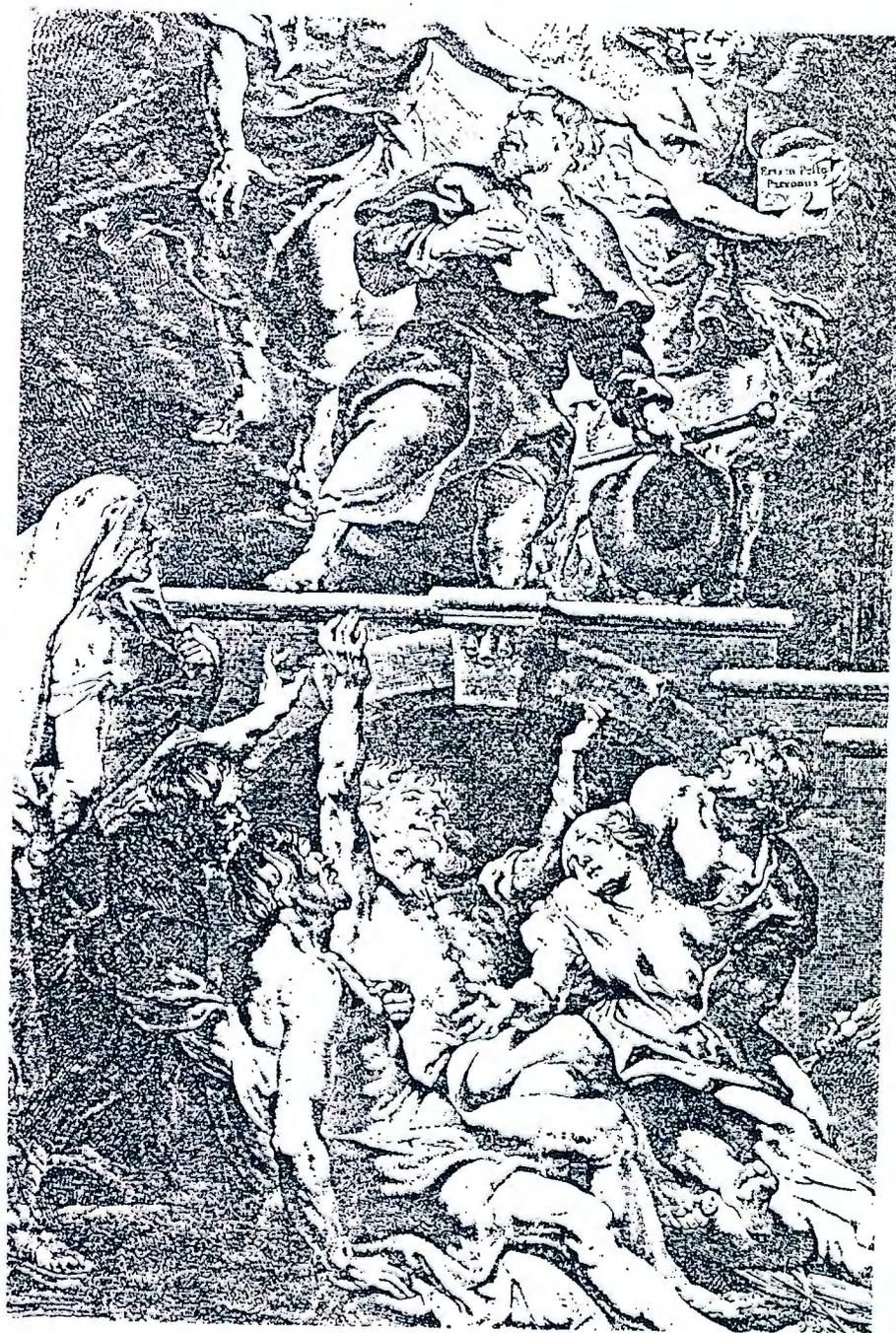


87 St. Gregory interceding for the Cessation of the Plague, F. Zuccaro, 1581, Bologna, S. M. del Baraccano



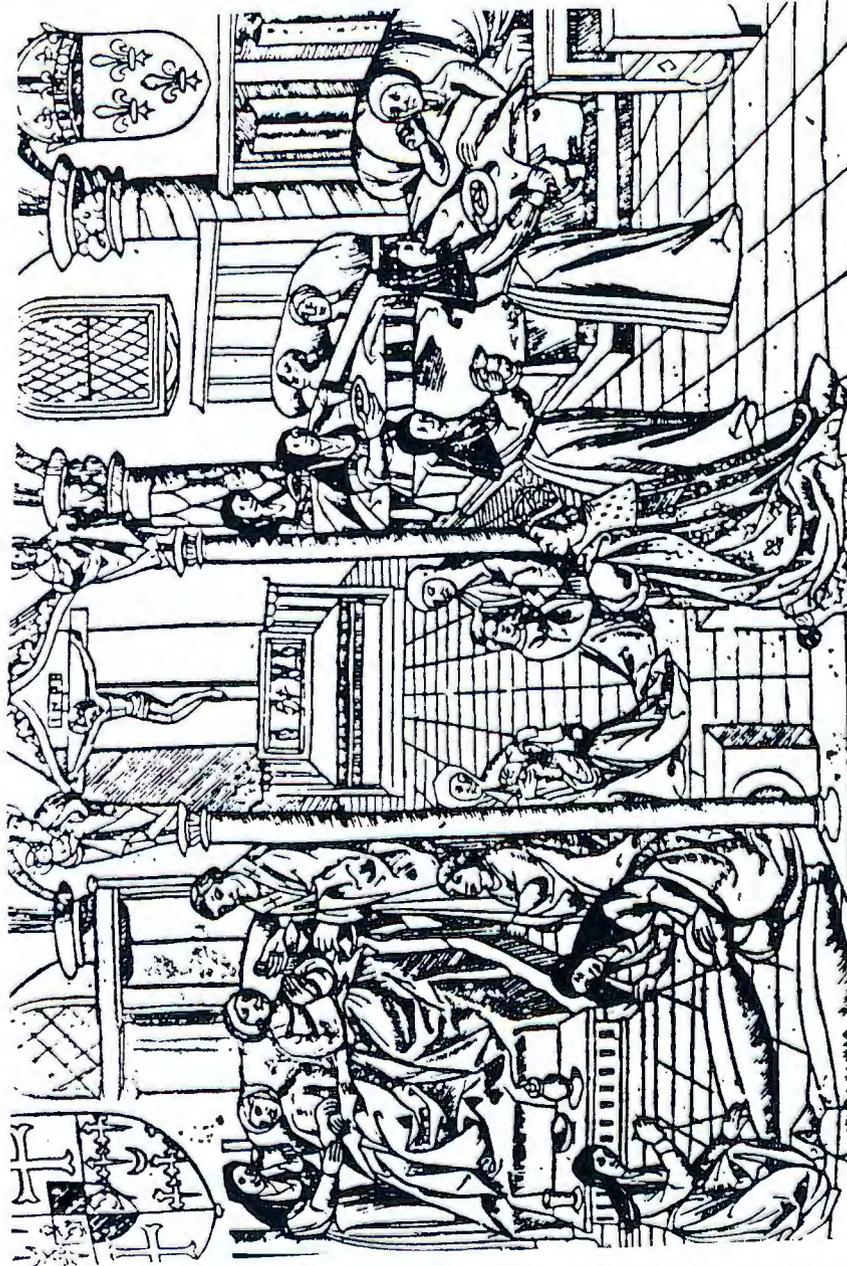
88 Doctor Japyx removes an Arrow from Aeneas's Leg,
Roman painting





90 St. Charles blessing the Plague Crosses, Il Cerano,
1602, Milan Cathedral







93
Plague
first

St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female
Victim, F. de Poilly after P. Mignard, etching
state



94 Phocion's Funeral, detail, N. Poussin, Oakly Park,
Plymouth Collection



95 St. Domenico intercedes before the Virgin for the Cessation of the Plague, L. Ferrari, 1635, Padua, Cassa Risparmio di Padua





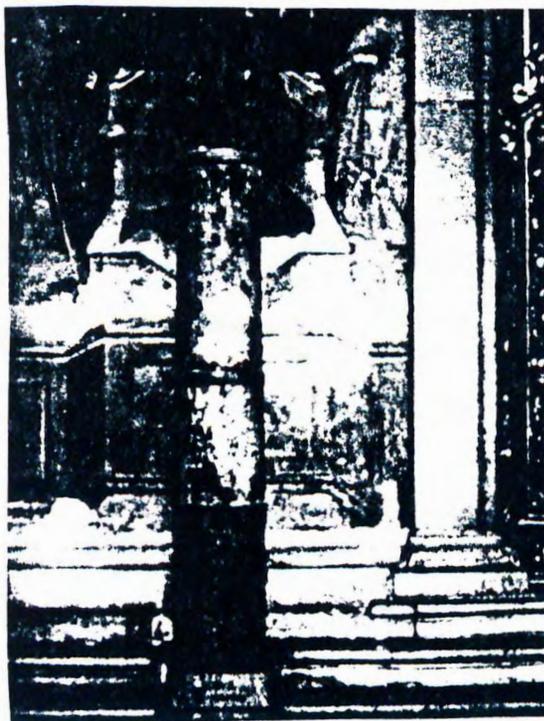
97 St. Roch, Il Morazzoni, c.1611, Bergamo, S.
Bartolomeo



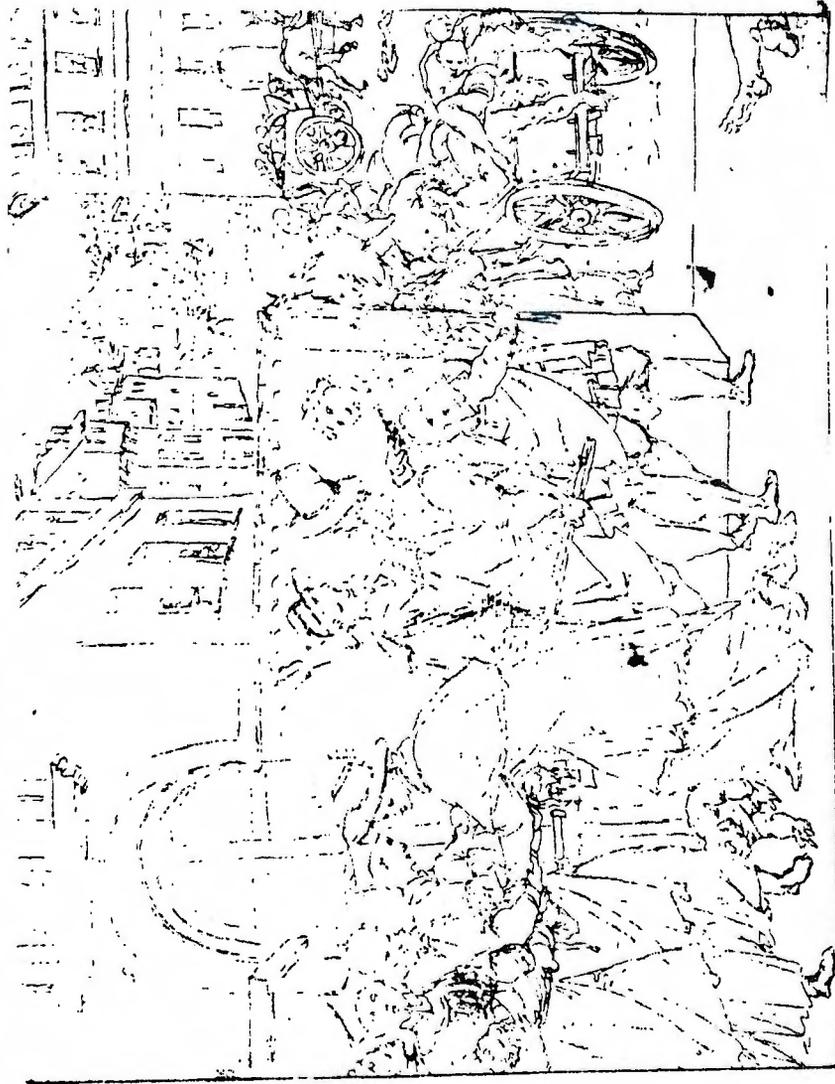
98
century

St. Charles, engraving, B. Franceschini, 17th





100 St. Charles receiving Orphans, Il Fiammenghino, drawing, c.1602, Milan, Cathedral





102 Male Nude, drawing, Carlo Cignani, 1660's, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett



Mignard

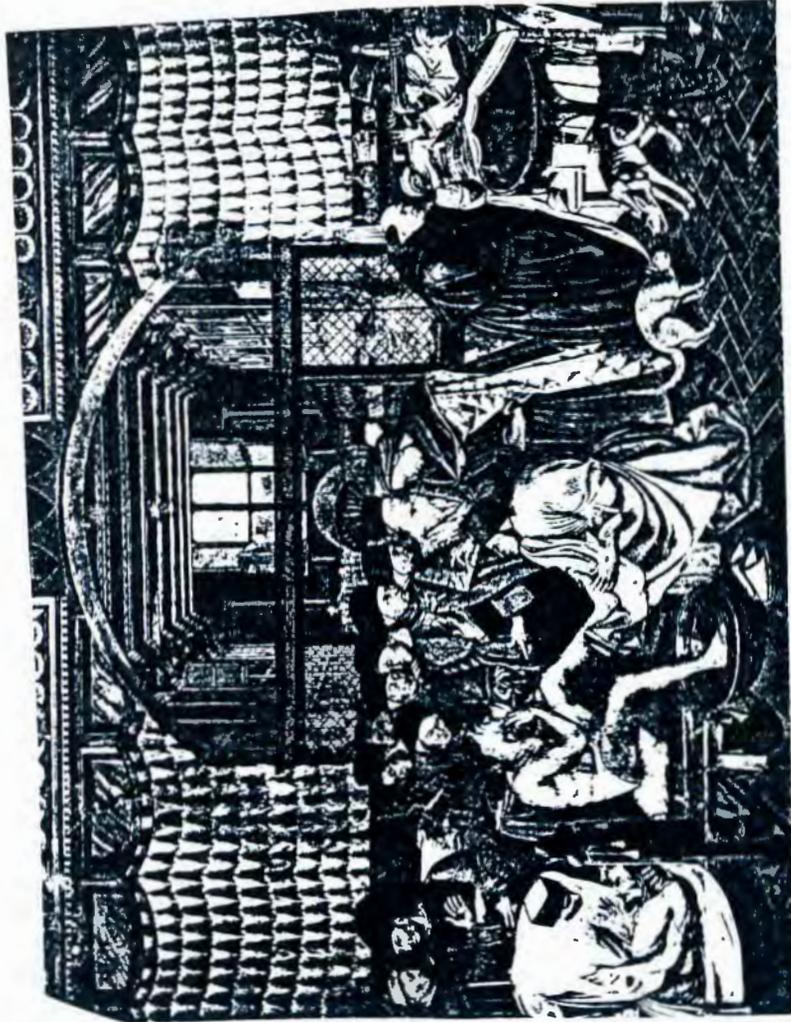


104
Fire

St. Benedict performing the Miracle of the Kitchen

engraving after Lodocico Carracci's decorations for
Bologna, cloister of San Michele in Bosco, 1604





106 St. Charles Pilgrimage's to Monte di Varallo, il
Cerano, 1602, Milan, Cathedral



107
drawing

Repentent Mary Magdalene, N. Poussin, c.1630,



108
Plague

St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female Victim, P. Mignard, c.1657, drawing, Paris, Petit Palais



109
Plague
second

St. Charles administers the Viaticum to a female
Victim, F. de Poilly after P. Mignard, etching,
state



Archbishop Charles Borromeo's first Entry into Milan,
Filippo Abbiati, 1610, Milan, Cathedral



111 St. Charles leads the Procession of the Holy Nail,
Cortona, 1667, drawing, Vienna, Albertina



112
of
Roma

St. Camillo rescues the Infirm during the Inundation
of the Tiber, Pierre Subleyras, 1746, Rome, Museo di

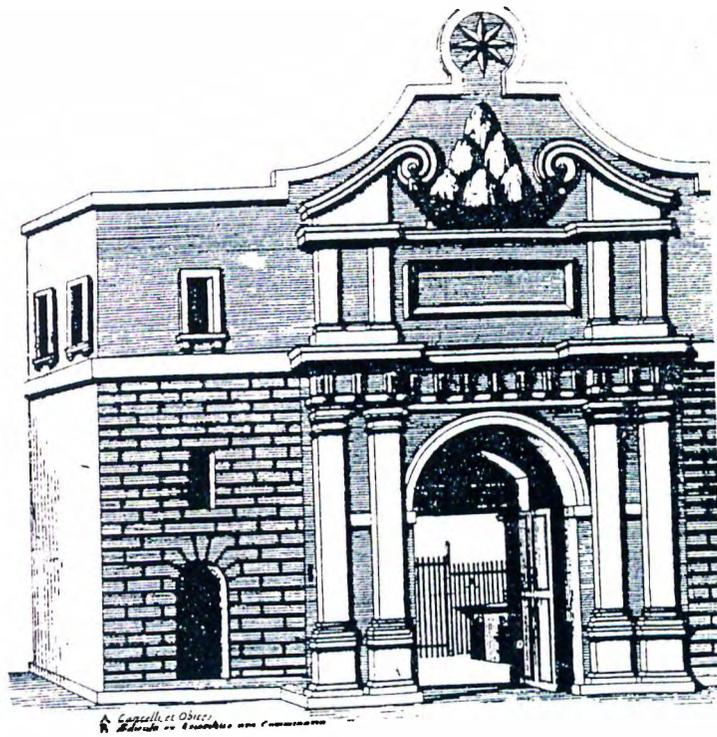


113
1656

Plague Scene in front of Santa Maria del Popolo in

unknown Italian artist, 18th century, Rome, Palazzo
Barberini



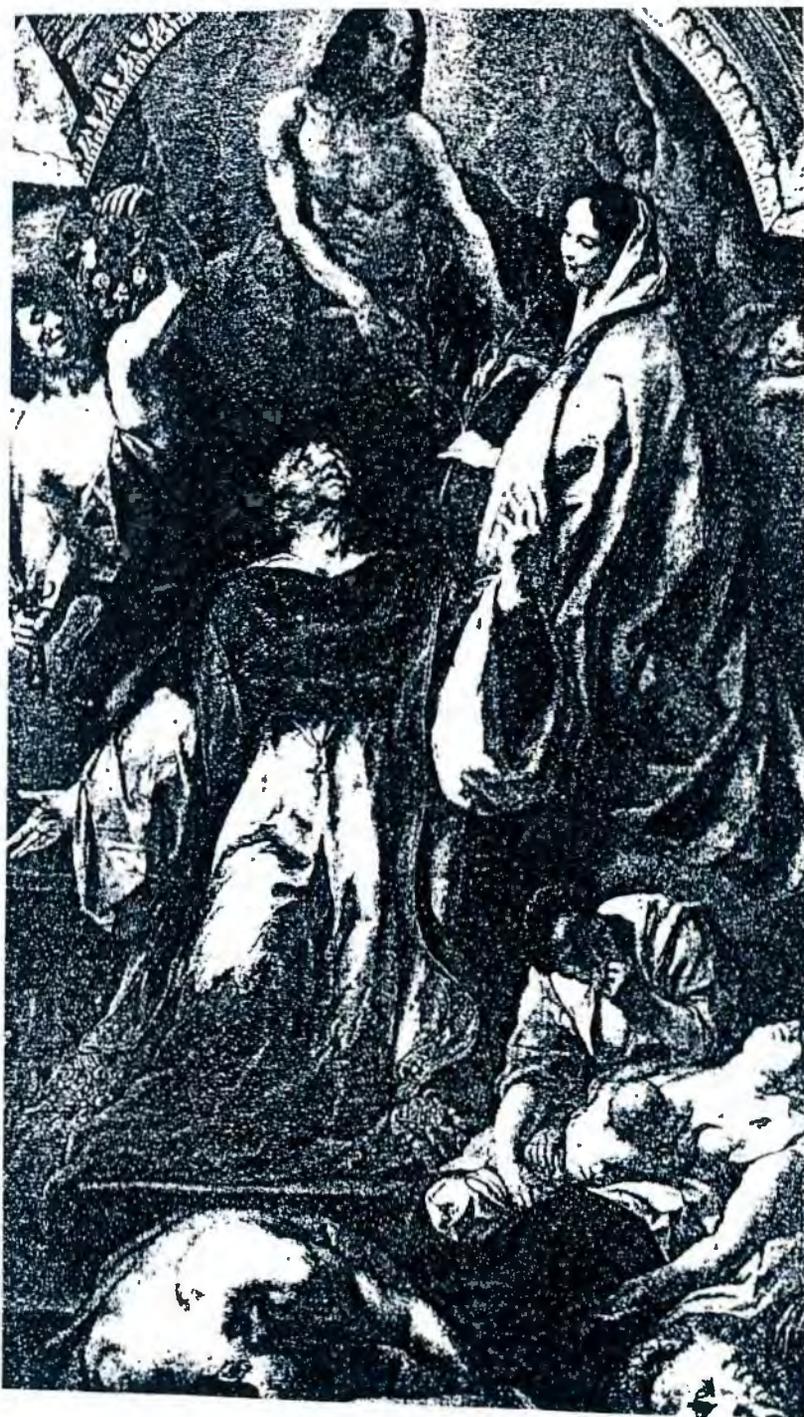




116 Bishop Belzunce during the Plague in Marseilles,
Gerome, 1854, Paris, St. Severin



117 St. Charles interceding for the Plague Victims, J. Jordans, 17th century, Antwerp, St. Jacob







120 Plague Victim with her children, Drawing after N.
Poussin's Plague at Ashdod, Leipzig, Museum der
bildenden Kunst

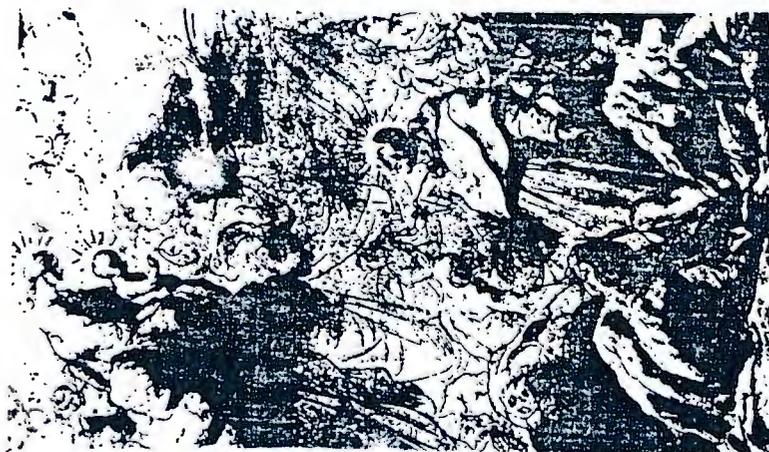


121 St. Augustine interceding for the Victims of the
Plague, J. M. Rottmayr, 1704, modello for Dorotheakirche,
Budapest, Szepmuveszeti Muzeum









125
DC,

St. Aloysius receiving his First Communion from St. Charles, Constantino Brumidi, 19th c., Washington St. Aloysius



126

Figure of Plague, George Richmond, 19th c., drawing,
San Francisco, The Fine Arts Museum of San
Francisco



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