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DIVINE WRATH AND INTERCESSION
IN PIETRO DA CORTONA'S FRESCOES IN THE CHIESA NUOVA

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The iconography of the two great ceiling decorations painted by Pietro da Cortona in the northern part of the Chiesa Nuova (Figs. 1–5) has never been adequately studied. Writers on the church as well as on Pietro da Cortona, even the more recent ones, have generally referred to the fresco in the cupola (Fig. 2) as representing “The Trinity in Glory” and “The Glorification of the Instruments of the Passion”, while the subject of the fresco in the tribuna (Fig. 5) has been indicated as “The Assumption of the Virgin”¹. Such common subjects, so characteristic of Baroque ceiling decorations, appeared to have required no further study.

Elise Staedel was perhaps the first modern writer to have correctly interpreted Cortona’s two frescoes as representing a single iconographic program. According to her the two frescoes together represent the Holy Trinity receiving in Heaven the ascending Virgin. Staedel also claimed that the fresco in the cupola actually represented the intercession of Christ on behalf of humanity. She, however, has failed to explain why the Assunta should be received in heaven by a pleading Christ². More recently, Giovanni Incisa della Rocchetta has independently suggested a more consistent interpretation of the frescoes, namely that the fresco on the vault of the tribuna could just as well represent an intercession by the Virgin³. Inci-

sa’s laconic remarks have remained, like Staedel’s, a voice crying in the wilderness.

A hitherto unpublished description of Cortona’s two frescoes, of which only an unfinished copy has survived at the Biblioteca Vallicelliana (Appendix) indicate that already Cortona’s contemporaries interpreted his frescoes in the cupola and the tribuna of the Chiesa Nuova as a single theme: the intercession of Christ, the Virgin and “all the saints” in favour of Humanity. The opening phrase of this interesting document reads: “Essendo stata intentione di chi havea a dipignere la cupola e la tribuna della Chiesa Nuova d’rappresentare Christo signor nostro la sua santissima madre e tutti i santi in sembiante di pregare [e sup]plicare la divina giustitia ...”⁴.

Any interpretation of the frescoes in the cupola and the tribuna of the Chiesa Nuova as a single iconographic program must of course assume that the two frescoes were commissioned and planned not as independent works but as a single decorative and iconographic whole. Such an assumption may be corroborated by the following documentary evidence.

Three documents from the archives of the Roman Oratorian Congregation provide evidence regarding the roles of the artist and his patrons in the invention of the iconographic program of the frescoes of the Chiesa Nuova, and may prove that Cortona’s two frescoes were commissioned as a single decorative and iconographic project. In September 1646 the Oratorians decided to write to Pietro da Cortona “per veder se vuol dipinger la nostra cupola e la tribuna”⁵. In October the same year Cortona accepts the commission and asks the Oratorians to propose several subjects for the cupola fresco “so that I can choose that which is most appropriate and think on it at my ease”⁶. The Philippine Fathers then asked Cortona to think about a subject for the fresco of the cupola “according to your taste”, “e per facilitargli il pensiero, li poniamo in considerazione, che per esser la nostra chiesa

1 Unless otherwise stated, all the churches referred to are in Rome. E. STRONG, *La Chiesa Nuova*, Rome 1923, pp. 115, 117, 118; among recent authors, see: R. WITKOWER, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600–1750*, Harmondsworth 1958, Fig. 92; P. PARSÌ, *Chiese di Roma*, vol. V, Rome 1970, p. 133; D. GRAF, *Master Drawings of the Roman Baroque from the Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf*, Exhib. Cat., London and Edinburgh 1973, No. 39; K. NOEHLES, *La Chiesa di SS. Luca e Martina nell’Opera di Pietro da Cortona*, Rome 1969, fig. 5; J. BEAN, *17th Century Italian drawings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York 1979, p. 112; G. BRIGANTI, *Pietro da Cortona o della pittura barocca*, Florence (2) 1982, pp. 248, 261; F. HASKELL, *Patrons and Painters, A study in the relations between Italian art and society in the age of Baroque* (2) 1980, p. 77; N. TURNER, A Drawing by Cortona for the Chiesa Nuova, *The Burlington Mag.* vol. CXXII, 1980, No. 926, p. 341; M. GREGORI – E. SCHLEIER (ed.), *La pittura in Italia, Il Seicento*, Venice 1988, fig. 648.

2 E. STAEDEL, *Ikongraphie der Himmelfahrt Mariens*, Strasbourg 1935, pp. 215–217.

3 G. INCISA DELLA ROCCHETTA, Pietro da Cortona ed i Padri dell’Oratorio, in *L’Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri*, vol. XXVI, Nr. 5, 1969, p. 87. L. KUGLER, *Studien zur Malerei und Architectur von Pietro Beretini da Cortona, Versuch einer gattungsübergreifenden Analyse zum Illusionismus im römischen Barock*, Essen 1985, pp. 79–80, contains a hint about the “fürbittende Geste” of Christ. See below n. 38.

4 “Whereas he who painted the cupola and the tribuna intended to represent Christ our Lord, his most saintly mother and all the saints in prayer beseeching Divine Justice ...”.

5 Archivio della Congregazione dell’Oratorio di Roma, Libro VI dei Decreti, C-1-7, p. 261; cit. in Incisa (n. 3), p. 81. “It shall be written to Sr. Pietro da Cortona ... to see whether he would paint our cupola and tribuna.”

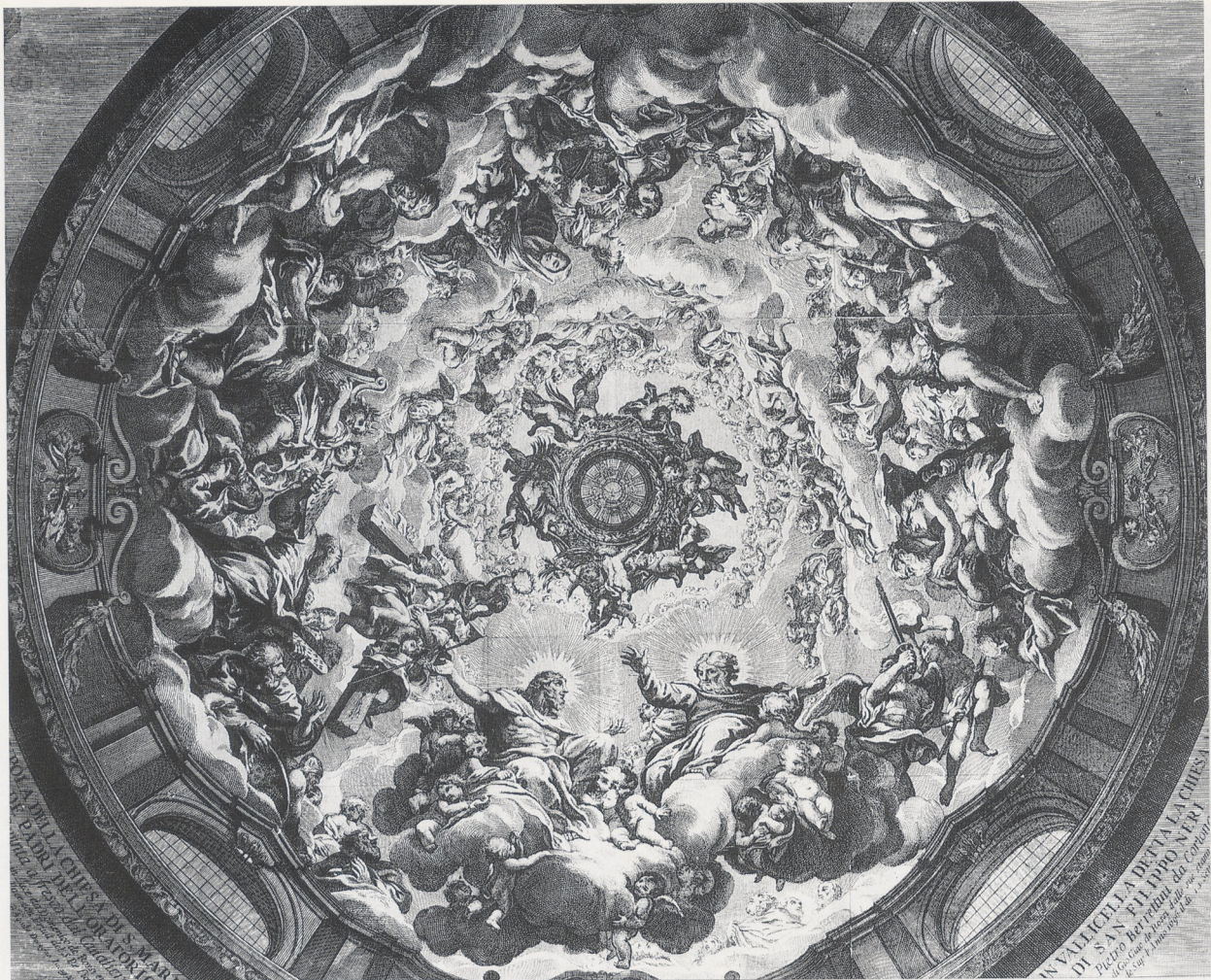
6 Archivio della Congregazione dell’Oratorio, Copialettere B-III-16, fol. 809 r–810 v; Incisa (n. 3), pp. 81–82.



1. Chiesa Nuova, view of the cupola and tribuna from the centre of the nave



2. Chiesa Nuova, view of the cupola from below



3. Francesco Aquila, view of Cortona's fresco in the cupola of the Chiesa Nuova, etching



4. Pietro da Cortona, *The Intercession of Christ* (detail of fig. 2)



5. Pietro da Cortona, *The Intercession of the Assunta*, Chiesa Nuova

dedicata alla Beata Vergine ci parebbe a proposito che l'opera tendesse in honore di lei. Et ... le avvisiamo che potrà facilmente darci casoche la preghiamo di dipignere seguitamente anco la tribuna ..., si che nel determinare il pensiero della cupola potrà haver riguardo al concetto della tribuna⁷.

Another contemporary document shows that the frescoes in the cupola and the tribuna, although executed in different periods, were initially planned and designed at the same time. In November 1647 Pietro da Cortona informed Cardinal Francesco Barberini that he had begun working on the cartoons for both frescoes⁸.

7 Archivio della Congregazione dell'Oratorio, Copialettere B-IV-26, pp. 217–218, Incisa (n. 3), p. 82 "And to make it easier for you to think about this matter, we propose for your consideration, that since our church is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, it might be fit that the work would be dedicated to her. And ... we inform you that very likely we may ask you to paint later also the tribuna ..., so that when you consider the subject of the cupola you may think on that of the tribuna as well".

8 Briganti (n. 1), p. 249. For the dates of the execution of the frescoes, see Incisa (n. 3), pp. 82, 84, 87; Briganti, pp. 249, 261.

Moreover, it has been convincingly demonstrated that the two frescoes were designed in such a way that the main scene of the fresco in the cupola, two of the prophets painted on the pendentives and the entire fresco of the tribuna could be viewed together from a single point located in the exact centre of the nave of the Chiesa Nuova (Fig. 1)⁹. Last but not least, there is the iconographic evidence. The peculiar iconographic scheme of the cupola fresco (Fig. 2) in which the Trinity is exclusively surrounded by Old-Testament figures, has no precedent in the whole history of ceiling decoration¹⁰. These figures,

9 Stadel (n. 2), p. 217; W. SCHÖNE, Zur Bedeutung der Schrägansicht für die Deckenmalerei des Barock, *Festschrift Kurt Badt zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, Berlin 1961, pp. 164–172, pl. 14, fig. 1; K. NOEHLES, Zu Cortonas Dreifaltigkeitsgemälde und Berninis Ziborium der Sakramentkapelle von St. Peter, *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. XV 1975, p. 180, n. 42.

10 Pasquale Marini's fresco in the cupola of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte is the only other Baroque ceiling decoration known to me in which the heavenly scene is exclusively surrounded by Old-Testament figures. See M. D'ONOFRIO, *S. Andrea delle Fratte*, Rome 1971, pp. 44–46, fig. 16.



however, acquire their true meaning only when considered as part of an iconographic program that includes “all the saints” referred to in the opening phrase of the old description of Cortona’s frescoes, which further on explains how “all the saints” are divided between the two parts of the ceiling decoration: “in una parte cioè nella cupola figurare i santi del vecchio testamento, nell’altra che è la tribuna quelli del nuovo”¹¹.

11 “In one part (of the decoration), that is in the dome, appear the saints of the Old-Testament, in the other, the Tribuna, those of the New Testament.” This division has sometimes been overlooked: Parsi (n. 1), p. 133; Graf (n. 1), No. 39.

Our second source for the interpretation of Cortona’s frescoes are the inscriptions below the figures of the four Prophets (Figs. 6, 8–10)¹². The prophets painted on the pendentives of the cupola are the so-called Major Prophets, whose images frequently appear in altarpieces and frescoes dedicated to the Virgin. In several fourteenth and fifteenth century works these four prophets are accompanied by inscriptions quoting verses from their prophecies regarding the Immaculate Conception and the

12 The inscriptions have rarely been quoted by writers on Cortona’s frescoes in the Chiesa Nuova. See, Strong (n. 1), p. 119; Stadel (n. 2), p. 216 (inexact transcription).



Nativity of Christ¹³. A more recent antecedent of Cortona's four prophets are those painted on the pendentives of the Cappella Paolina in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore¹⁴. The inscriptions on the plaques below Cor-

tona's four prophets have, however, no parallel in the whole history of art. They read: SUCCENSAM/ EGO/ VIDEO/ IEREM(IA) (Figs. 1, 2, 6) NE/ IRASCARIS/ DOMINE/ SATIS/ ISAI(AE) (Figs. 1, 8); REVERTERE/ AD

¹³ For some characteristic examples in art, and for the traditional texts appearing in the inscriptions, see Y. HIRN, *The Sacred Shrine* (1912), London 1958 (2), pp. 238–239; H. W. VAN OS, *Marias Demut und Verherrlichung in der sienesischen Malerei 1300–1450*, The Hague 1969, p. 41 (n. 17); F. MAZZINI, *Affreschi Lombardi del Quattrocento*, Milan 1965, p. 427, pl. 310.

¹⁴ For the iconographic program of the Cappella Paolina, see F. NOACK, *Kunstpflege und Kunstbesitz der Familie Borghese*, in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 50, 1929, 196–197 (the inscrip-

tions contained in the original document (ibid, n. 11) are omitted); E. MÂLE, *L'Art religieux après le concile de Trente*, Paris 1932, pp. 24–37; for the four prophets and the inscriptions (the "Hebrew" inscriptions referred to by Mâle are actually pseudo-script), see pp. 35–36. The original (?) draft and a copy of the iconographic program of the pictorial decoration of the Cappella Paolina (identical with the other copy in the Fondo Borghese of the Vatican Archives, published by Noack (see above), are in the Biblioteca Vallicelliana, where they are erroneously included in Cod. Vall. o.57-2. Nr. 50 (fol. 373–375 r, 377–378), as a project for the Chiesa Nuova.



VAGINAM/ TUAM/ EZECH (Fig. 9); EXAUDI/ DOMINE/ PLACARE/ DOMINE/ DANIEL (Fig. 10)¹⁵. All four inscriptions appear to have one theme in common: they refer either to the wrath of God or to intercession in favour of his chosen people; Jeremia sees in his vision “a seething cauldron” symbolising the disastrous invasion of Judaea by the Babilonians, Isaia and Daniel pray to God to calm his wrath, while in Ezekiel’s prophecy the sword of Divine Wrath is ordered to return into its sheath.

The fresco in the cupola (Fig. 2, 4) contains particular symbolic images that allude to God’s wrath. They are

¹⁵ Jeremia I:13; Isaia LXIV:9; Ezekiel XXI:39; Daniel IX:19.

described in detail in our early documentary source: “Dunque nella Fronte della medesima cupola da una parte si vede ... l’eterno Padre sdegnato per i peccati degli huomini ... minacciare e addirare il castigo, e perciò pront’a suoi cenni mostrarsi due Angeli libtrati in aria l’uno con la spada e co’ dardi nelle mani, e l’altro in atto d’avventare (?) un vaso pieno di fuoco in quella guisa che fu veduto da Geremia (Fig. 7), il quale si vedrà dipinto nell’angolo di sotto in atto di amirarlo¹⁶. Our Oratorian

¹⁶ “On the front of the said cupola there can be seen ... the Eternal Father, wrathful because of the sins of mankind ... and threatening punishment, and therefore, ready to obey his commands, two Angels are shown floating in the air; one with the sword and the darts

9. Pietro da Cortona, *Ezekiel*,
Chiesa Nuova



source was thus the first to point out the connection between the symbolic image of wrath depicted in the cupola – the “vaso pieno di fuoco” and Jeremia’s prophetic verse quoted in the inscription below. It was probably this combination of visual and verbal references to divine wrath that led the anonymous writer of the old

in his hands, the other wielding a pot full of fire, like the one that appeared to Jeremia, who can be seen in the corner below, looking at it. On the other side is Christ ... beseeching and sorrowful, showing the Father His wounds and the cross.” For a rare representation of the Biblical vision of the seething cauldron, see our fig. 7 and *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 13, W. L. STRAUSS (ed.), *German Masters of the Sixteenth Century*, New York 1981, Nr. 1 (547), p. 320 (Master N. H. (Nicholas Hogenberg)).

description of Cortona’s frescoes to interpret the main scene of the fresco in the cupola as representing the intercession of Christ¹⁷. However, no reference to any of the other three prophets is made in this document, and the obvious and important connection between the sword carried by the angel in the cupola fresco and Ezekiel’s vision of the sword ordered to return into its sheath, is overlooked. Incisa, the only modern scholar who has noted the two angels of wrath, suggested rather convinc-

17 See above, n. 16. Staedel (n. 2), p. 216, is the only author known to me who has described Christ’s gesture as the showing of his wounds (without, however, referring to any literary or artistic source for her interpretation). Cf. Kugler (n. 3), pp. 79–80.



ingly that Cortona's fresco represents the calming of the wrath of God, who is actually ordering the two angels to desist from destroying humanity¹⁸.

The bible abounds with allusions to all three instruments of God's wrath depicted in Cortona's fresco¹⁹. However, while the sword and the darts (or their iconographic equivalents, arrows, lances and spears) are frequently represented in art as symbols of divine wrath, fire

was generally represented as an attribute of Charity, or, later, of religious fervour and devotion²⁰. Cortona's use of this motif in its sinister meaning may have been inspired also by a recent source: the early illustrated editions of Ripa's *Iconologia*, in which a female figure representing Ira is shown carrying a burning torch and a sword (Fig. 11)²¹.

18 Incisa (n. 3), p. 87. Curiously, Kugler (n. 3), p. 79, refers to "two angels with swords flying towards Abraham".

19 The sword: Ex. V:3; XV:9; XXII:24; Lv. XXVI:25, 33; Dt. XXXII:41-42; Jos. XXIV:12; Par. XX:9; Ps. VII:12; XXXVI:14; Isaia XXXIV:6; Jr. XII:12; XXI:passim; XXV:passim; L:16; Fire - Ps. G, XVII:9; H, passim; Fire and sword - Ezek. XXI:31; Darts,

Spears, Lances: Ps. G, VII; 12, 13; X,3; XXVI:18; XXXVII,3; XLIV:6; LXIII:8; CXLIII:6.

20 Mâle (n. 14), p. 442. CESARE RIPA, *Iconologia*, Siena 1613, I, p. 100, II, p. 187; cf. G. KAFTAL, *Saints in Italian Art, Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting*, Florence 1952, pp. 78, 86, figs. 78, 85; R. KULTZEN (ed.), *Alte Pinakothek München*, Kat. V, Munich 1975, p. 64, fig. 28.

21 CESARE RIPA, *Iconologia*, Rome, 1603, pp. 243, 244 (Fig.), 245. Cf.

Among the numerous biblical references to the sword as an instrument of divine wrath and punishment, the well-known story of David and the Plague as told in the Book of Chronicles is particularly relevant to our subject. According to the biblical story, David chose from among the three great calamities, defeat in war, famine, the plague – offered as his choice of punishment for his sin of numbering his people – the latter, referred to in the biblical story as “gladius Domini”. When David saw God’s angel hovering above Jerusalem with the drawn sword of the plague, he prayed to God to spare the city and God caused the Angel to return his sword to its sheath²².

David’s vision of the angel with the sword of the plague appears in several miniatures illustrating the Biblical text²³. The same scene also inspired numerous symbolic representations of the plague in art²⁴. The best known are those of two miraculous intercession scenes, that are particularly related to our subject: that of St Gregory the Great, during the Plague of Rome (A. D. 590), which gave the Castel Sant’Angelo its present name (Fig. 19), and nearly a thousand years later, that of St Carlo Borromeo during the plague of Milan (1576). Both St Gregory and St Carlo Borromeo were venerated as protectors against the plague. In altarpieces their images frequently appeared in the company of either of the two principal patrons of the plague-stricken, St Sebastian and St Roch. Scenes of their intercession, including the miraculous apparition of the angel putting the sword of the plague back into its sheath were represented in numerous works of art²⁵. The two saints were particularly venerated



11. *Ira*, from Ripa's *Iconologia*, woodcut

by the Congregation of the Roman Oratory of St Filippo Neri. St Gregory is the co-patron of the Chiesa Nuova, while St Carlo Borromeo, one of the most prominent figures of the Counter Reformation, was a friend of St Filippo Neri and a benefactor of the Chiesa Nuova. The sumptuous Spada chapel, the largest in the Chiesa Nuova is an impressive proof of this veneration²⁶.

The story of the miraculous intercession of St Carlo Borromeo in favour of the victims of the plague, though usually ignored by his modern biographers, was accepted by popular belief already in the beginning of the seventeenth century as the central event in the life of the saint. Altarpieces and frescoes depicting this episode were painted for the numerous churches and chapels dedicated to St Carlo Borromeo already in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, both in Milan and the North, and in Rome²⁷. Some of the earliest of these altarpieces were

Mâle (n. 14), p. 380; figs. 240 (the sword is now missing), 241; *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 3.1 Hendrik Goltzius, Ed. W. L. STRAUSS, New York 1980, No. 87 (32) (the figure is brandishing the sword only).

22 I Paralip. XXI, 10–27. The earlier version of the story is told in 2 Sam. XXIV, 13–25, where no reference is made to any instrument carried by the angel. In illustrations to this version the three calamities offered to David’s choice are sometimes depicted as three darts brandished either by God or the Angel (see n. 3) F. WINKLER, *Die flämische Buchmaleri des XV. und XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig 1925, pls. 70, 90.

23 For an illustration of the story as told in Paralip., see P. DURIEU, *La Miniature Flamande*, Bruxelles – Paris 1921, pl. XLII.

24 For symbolical representations of the plague, related to the story of David and the angel of the plague, see W. L. STRAUSS (ed.), *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 13, German Masters of the Sixteenth Century (Commentary), New York 1984, no. 1301, p. 271, Erhard Schoen; “Pestilentia”, in Hertel’s edition (1758–60) of *Cesare Ripa’s Iconologia, Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery*, ed. E. A. MASER, New York 1971, p. 134.

25 For the intercession of St Gregory and the apparition of the angel sheathing the bloody sword of the plague, see *Jacobi a Voragine Legenda Aurea*, ed. TH. GRAESSE, Dresden 1846, Cap. XLVI, pp. 190–192; Cap. CXLV, p. 644; *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*, Trans. by G. RYAN and H. RIPPERGER, New York, 1969, pp. 179,

180, 580. For the connection with the story of David, see R. CRAWFURD, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art*, Oxford 1914, pp. 61, 78–94, and partic. 92. For this subject, see also E. KIRSCHBAUM und W. BRAUNFELS (ed.), *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. VI, Freiburg-Basel 1974, cols. 437–441. For a representation of St. Gregory in the company of Saints Sebastian and Roch. See below n. 54. For St Carlo Borromeo see below, n. 27.

26 For St Gregory as co-patron of the Chiesa Nuova, see Strong (n. 1), pp. 46–49, 71–72, 77. For the Spada Chapel, see Strong (n. 1), pp. 112–114.

27 For St Carlo Borromeo in history and art, see Mâle (n. 14), pp. 87–91; Kirschbaum (and Braunfels (n. 2)), vol. VII, 1974, cols. 273–275; G. ALBERIGO (et al.), *Il Grande Borromeo tra Storia e Fede*, Milan 1984. For representations of the miraculous apparition of the angel with the sword of the plague, see Kirschbaum, vol. III, 1971, col. 409, Kirschbaum and Braunfels, vol. VII, col. 274; Alberigo



12. *Andrea Comodi, San Carlo Borromeo interceding for the plague stricken, San Carlo ai Catinari, Rome*

painted by Andrea Comodi, Pietro da Cortona's teacher and friend, during the second decade of the seventeenth century. His *St Carlo Borromeo interceding on behalf of the*

passim; V. CRIVELLI (et al.), *Carlo Borromeo, Presenza nel Ticino*, Lugano 1984, pp. 89 (Fig. 4), 193 (Fig. 4). For representations of St Carlo Borromeo as a "Plague-Saint" in the Company of St Sebastian, see Crivelli, p. 180, Fig. 1; J. CUISENIER (et al.) ed., *Saint Sébastien, rituels et figures* (exhib. cat.), Paris 1983, No. 129; F. ZERI, *L'inchiostro variopinto*, Milan 1985, pp. 133–134. A striking example is Maratta's work for the high altar of the church of SS. Ambrogio e Carlo al Corso, on the lower right of which appears St Sebastian with the three arrows of the plague. For these, see below n. 36.

plague-stricken in Milan, painted for the High-Altar of the church of San Carlo ai Catinari (fig. 12), one of five versions of the same subject painted by him, was certainly well-known to Pietro da Cortona, who later painted a new altarpiece for the same church, representing St Carlo Borromeo in another scene of the plague of Milan²⁸.

²⁸ For Comodi's altarpiece in San Carlo ai Catinari (now in the sacristy), see Alberigo (n. 27), pp. 265, 288 (n. 2), pl. 248; G. PAPI, in *Il Seicento Fiorentino, Arte a Firenze da Ferdinando I a Cosimo III*, Florence 1986, vol. I, pp. 144, 145. Two earlier versions are in the church of Soriso (Novara), dated 1613, and in Cortona, painted in

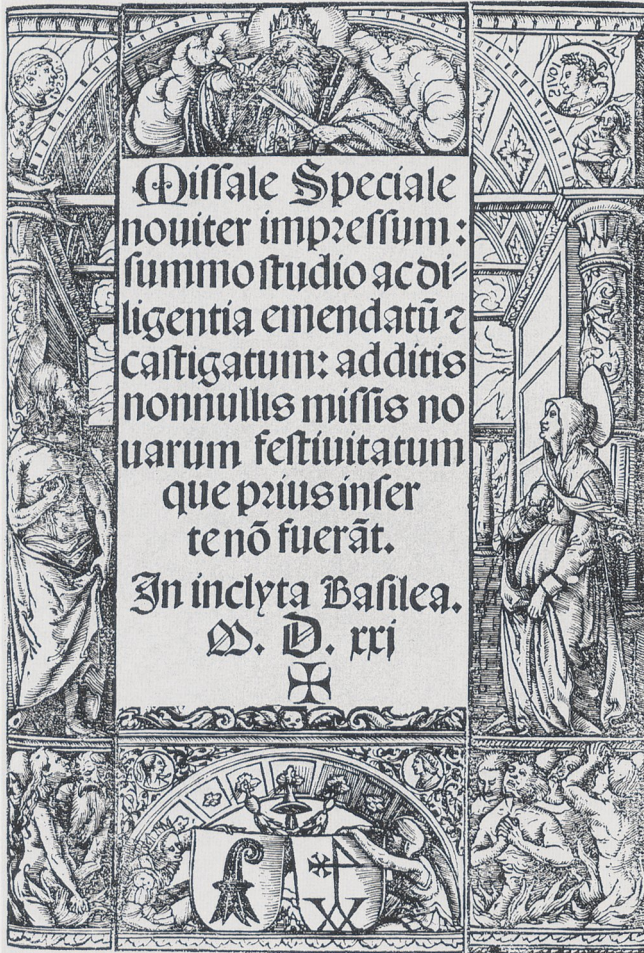
13. Benedetto Bonfigli, *The Virgin of Mercy Protects the city of Perugia against the Plague*, Perugia, San Francesco al Prato



1614. Other versions are in Fano (on loan from the Museo di Palazzo Venezia, Rome) and the lost altarpiece of the Barnabite church in Florence. For an earlier dating suggested for the San Carlo altarpiece, see Briganti (n. 1), pp. 268–269 (also for Cortona’s painting for the same High-Altar (1667)). Comodi’s composition was closely imitated in an altarpiece attributed to G. F. Guerrieri at the cathedral of Fabriano. A. Emiliani, *Giovan Francesco Guerrieri da Fossombrone*, Urbino 1958, No. 9, pp. 75–76, fig. XIV. Comodi’s altarpiece is described by GIOVANNI BAGLIONE, *Le Vite de’ pittori scultori et architetti*, etc., Rome 1642, p. 334: “In S. Carlo alli Catinari sopra l’altare . . . fece egli questo (quadro) del santo che hoggi (1642) vi si vede in atto di orare per la peste, con un angelo che rimette la spada in segno, che alla preghiera di Carlo Iddio s’era placato.” A similar description is given by Baglione, p. 405, to his own altarpiece

The image of the sword, either symbolising Divine wrath and *Justitia* when brandished by God the Father, Christ or an angel, and – *Misericordia*, when sheathed, already appeared in fifteenth and early sixteenth century “Plague-Pictures”, in which the *gladius Domini* is usually identified, as in the story of David, with the plague. Characteristic examples are Umbrian processional banners

in Santa Maria dell’Orto (Alberigo, fig. 239, cf. fig. 135). For the life of Comodi and his relations with Pietro da Cortona, see Papi in *Il Seicento Fiorentino*, vol. III 1986, pp. 60–63.



14a. Hans Holbein the Younger, *Christ and the Virgin intercede for the Souls in Purgatory*, title-page of the *Missale Speciale* (Basle 1521), woodcut



14b. Luca Giordano, *S. Gennaro intercedes for the plague-stricken*, Naples, S. Maria del Pianto

(Fig. 13)²⁹. The same motif appears in devotional prints and paintings, like the so-called “Epitaph” of Ulrich Schwarz by Hans Holbein the Elder and in his son’s printed title-page of a prayer-book (Fig. 14), in both of which it is God the Father who is shown sheathing the sword of Divine Wrath³⁰.

Thanks to the new cult of St Carlo Borromeo as a “Plague-Saint” the rich iconographic tradition of the sword of the plague was revived in the beginning of the

seventeenth century, and it persisted even in the eighteenth³¹.

Cortona’s angel with the sword painted in the cupola of the Chiesa Nuova, as well as the inscription quoting

29 W. BOMBE, *Gonfalon Umbri*, in *Augusta Perusia*, vol. II, 1907, 1–2, pp. 2–5; F. SANTI, *Gonfalon umbri del Rinascimento*, Perugia 1976, pl. I, XIV, XV, XX, XXXI. For the iconography, see also R. CRAWFURD, *Plague Banners*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 6, 1913, p. 37–48; G. SCHILLER, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst*, vol. 2, Gütersloh 1968, p. 240, Fig. 804 (cf. Santi, pl. XXXI); *Venezia e la peste, 1348–1797* (exhib. cat.), Venice 1979, pp. 260–261.

30 Bombe (n. 29), pp. 6–7; G. GOLDBERG, *Staatsgalerie Augsburg, Altdeutsche Gemälde*, Augsburg 1967, pp. 51–55, fig. 23, pl. III. Schiller (n. 29), vol. 2, p. 240, fig. 802. See below n. 53.

31 In seventeenth and eighteenth-century Plague-Pictures the image of the angel sheathing the sword was universally accepted as symbol of the calming of God’s wrath and the cessation of the plague, not only in Italy, but also in the other Catholic centres of Europe. The same image also appeared in representations of intercessions of other saints. See Mâle (n. 14), pp. 387–379; *Il Seicento Lombardo* (Exhib. cat.), Milan S.D. (1973), No. 105, fig. 121; *Venezia e la peste* (n. 29), pp. 264–265; E. A. MASER, *Drawings by Michael Rottmayr* (Exhib. cat.), Chicago 1980, No. 12, (pl. II); C. WHITFIELD and J. MARTINEAU (ed.), *Painting in Naples 1606–1705; From Caravaggio to Giordano* (Exhib. cat.), London 1982, No. 101–102 (the object clasped by the angel’s left hand in Mattia Preti’s famous Plague-Picture (No. 101) has been interpreted by other authors as a scourge, another symbol of divine wrath and of the plague; B. S. MYERS and T. COPPLESTONE (ed.), *The History of Art* (1965), London (2) 1985, p. 650, pl. 30; Alberigo (n. 27), *passim*.

Ezekiel's verse on the pendentive were probably inspired by this revival of the traditional theme.

Like the sword arrows, darts, spears and lances appeared in literature and art not only as symbols of God's wrath but also of its most terrible manifestation – the plague³². After the Black Death arrows became the common attribute of St Sebastian, the principal patron of the plague-stricken³³. Even before the Black Death, the Plague of Rome was described by Honorius of Autun and later in the *Legenda Aurea*, as a shower of Arrows falling from heaven. As such it was frequently represented in plague-Pictures (Fig. 13)³⁴.

Another important Mediaeval source for the symbolic darts carried by the angel in Cortona's cupola fresco (Fig. 4) was the monastic legend of the Vision of St Dominic. In his vision St Dominic saw Christ brandishing three lances (or darts) symbolising three kinds of punishment of the sinning world, and the Virgin interceding in favour of the menaced sinners and recommending Saints Dominic and Francis as indomitable fighters against sin. This legend became widely known already in the late-thirteenth-century thanks to its inclusion in the *Legenda Aurea*. Several decades later, illustrated copies of another popular devotional book, the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, provided both patrons and artists with the earliest painted images of the scene. Thus, from the fourteenth century onward the legend of the Vision of St Dominic inspired numerous altarpieces, frescoes, devotional paintings and prints³⁵.

In the fifteenth century a new iconographic development took place in Plague-Pictures: the three darts of divine wrath of the Vision of St Dominic now derived their symbolic meaning from the three calamities offered to David's choice and thus came to represent the plague alone³⁶.

The three darts of the plague frequently appeared in combination with the other symbolic images related to the plague and to divine wrath: arrows shot from bows by God and his angels, the shower of falling darts and the

sword³⁷. In some of these Plague-Pictures the interceding Virgin is accompanied, as in Holbein's woodcut (Fig. 14a) or his father's painting in the Augsburg State-Gallery, by Christ as her counterpart, thus representing together a double-intercession scene³⁸. As we have seen, in the anonymous Oratorian description, the iconographic program of Cortona's two ceiling frescoes in the Chiesa Nuova was interpreted, precisely, as representing a double intercession scene.

The literary source that inspired this interpretation was probably a passage from the *Libellus de laudibus Beatae Virginis*, written in the middle of the twelfth century, or rather a close variant of this passage, erroneously attributed to St Bernard and quoted in the chapter dedicated to the Ascension of Our Lord in the widely read *Legenda Aurea*: "... securum accessum habes, o homo, apud Deum, ubi mater ante filium et filius ante patrem, mater ostendit filio pectus et ubera, filius ostendit patri latus et vulnera: nulla ergo poterit esse repulsa, ubi tot sint caritatis insignia³⁹." The double intercession theme, further popularised by the text and illustrations of the *Speculum humanae salvationis* was later represented in numerous devotional paintings, prints and plague-pictures in which it was frequently associated with the same symbols of divine wrath that appear in Cortona's fresco: the sword (Fig. 14) and the darts⁴⁰.

In the double intercession theme, as in the pictorial and scriptural use of references to the instruments of divine wrath, the iconographic program of Cortona's frescoes thus follows a long-established tradition, which, as we have seen, sometimes is also related to the subject of the plague.

In the early pictorial representations of the double intercession, the depiction of the particular pleading gestures of the two intercessors – the ostentatio uberis of the Virgin and the ostentatio vulneris of Christ – usually followed faithfully the description in the *Legenda Aurea* (Fig. 14a). However, in the cupola fresco of the Chiesa Nuova (Fig. 4) Christ's rhetorical gesture does not resemble the traditional images of the showing of the wounds, nor does the praying gesture of the Virgin in the fresco

32 A. RONEN, Gozzoli's St Sebastian Altarpiece in San Gimignano, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, vol. XXXII, 1988, 1–2, passim. See also P. PERDRIZET, *La Vierge de Miséricorde*, Paris 1908, pp. 107–136, passim.

33 Ronen (n. 32), passim.

34 Perdrizet (n. 32), pp. 107–127; Santi (n. 29), passim; Ronen (n. 32), pp. 96–98; see also J. VĚGH, The Particular Judgment of a courtier, *Arte Cristiana*, vol. LXXIV, 1986, No. 716, pp. 303–314.

35 *Legenda Aurea* (n. 25), p. 470; Golden Legend, p. 417; J. LUTZ and P. PERDRIZET (ed.), *Speculum humanae salvationis*, vol. I, Leipzig–München 1907, Ch. XXXVII, p. 76, vol. II, 1909, pl. 73; Perdrizet (n. 32), pp. 128–136; Ronen (n. 32), pp. 91–97, 110–111.

36 Perdrizet (n. 32), pp. 134–136; passim; Ronen (n. 32), n. 63–65.

37 Santi (n. 29), pl. I, XIV–XVI; Schiller (n. 29), vol. 2, fig. 801.

38 See our n. 30, 39, 40, 53.

39 *Legenda Aurea* (n. 25), p. 326; Golden Legend, p. 293. For Ernaldus' text, see Pat. Lat. vol. CLXXXIX, col. 1726.

40 Lutz and Perdrizet (n. 35), vol. I, Ch. XXXIX, pp. 80–81; vol. II, 1909, pl. 77, 78, 135, 138. For the double intercession theme, see Perdrizet (n. 32), pp. 237–252; Kirschbaum (n. 25), vol. II, 1970, col. 346–352; Ronen (n. 32), pp. 98–107, 112; J. Věgh (n. 34), pp. 303–314.

of the tribuna (Fig. 5) recall those of the uncovering of her breast.

In Cortona's cupola fresco the traditional intercession scene is transformed into a glorious heavenly vision of the Son engaged in a dramatic *sacra conversazione* with God the Father, while the pleading gesture of the Virgin in the tribuna fresco (Fig. 5) could also be interpreted as a dramatised version of the traditional praying attitude of the *Assunta*⁴¹. Growing criticism regarding the apparent lack of decorum in the pleading gestures of Christ and the Virgin in traditional double intercession scenes and the rise of the idealistic Grand Style that culminated in Roman High Baroque painting, precisely in the art of Pietro da Cortona, seem to have been the principal causes for the gradual abandonment of the realistic ostentatious gestures in works illustrating Ernardus' text, which led to the complete transformation of the representation of this scene in the seventeenth century⁴². It was apparently this transformation of the double intercession scene in Cortona's frescoes that caused misinterpretation of the subject as merely representing the Trinity in Glory and the Assumption of the Virgin by modern writers. Even the interpretation in the old description of Cortona's fresco in the cupola as representing "Christo ... in atto supplichevole e pietoso mostrando al Padre le sue piaghe e la Croce", though essentially correct was probably derived from an acquaintance, either with the double intercession in its older, traditional form, or with the literary sources regarding this theme, rather than from a direct contemplation of the fresco⁴³.

The same is true regarding the reference to the cross and the other Instruments of the Passion which, though not mentioned in Ernardus' *Libellus* and its derivations, frequently appear in pictorial representations of the double intercession theme⁴⁴.

Luca Giordano's Plague-Picture painted for a church in Naples (Fig. 14b) in about the same time as Cortona's frescoes on the pendentives of the cupola and in the tribuna of the Chiesa Nuova, is, like Cortona's frescoes, a Baroque variant on the traditional themes of divine wrath and intercession. Giordano's altarpiece represents the intercession of St Gennaro in favour of the plague-stricken in Naples, and above – a variant of the double intercession scene, as well as the symbolic image of the angel sheathing the sword of the plague⁴⁵. The cross is here borne not by the angels, but by Christ himself, who is bent under its burden as on the way to Calvary⁴⁶. However, the posture and praying gesture of the interceding Virgin is identical with that of Cortona's *Assunta* in the tribuna fresco.

It has been noted that a crown and palm branches, both attributes of the Assumption of the Virgin, are carried by angels in the apex of the vault of the tribuna (Fig. 5) and by putti in the cupola (Fig. 4), who also carry a lily branch, another attribute of the Assumption of the Virgin⁴⁷. These attributes, however, do not necessarily contradict the interpretation of the fresco in the tribuna as representing the intercession of the Virgin; rather, they complement it. For, the intercessory power of the Virgin was always believed to derive from her Assumption and Coronation as Queen of Heaven. Hence the frequent references made in religious literature and art to the intercession of the Virgin in favour of humanity, either as *Assunta* or as Queen of Heaven⁴⁸.

p. 243. For depictions of this motif (particularly, the cross) in double intercession scenes, see Perdrizet, pl. XIX 2; Lutz-Perdrizet (n. 35), vol. II, pls. 135, 138; Schiller (n. 27), vol. II, fig. 799, 801 (cf. also fig. 793–795); J. KNIPPING, *Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands, Heaven on Earth* (2nd ed., trans. From the first Dutch ed. 2 vols. Hilversum 1939–42), vol. II, Nieuwkoop–Leiden 1974, pls. 259–261; Puglisi (n. 42), fig. 31. R. ENGGASS, *The Painting of Baciccio*, University Park, Pennsylvania 1964, fig. 45. For a correct interpretation of the subject, see Haskell (n. 1), p. 82.

45 Whitfield and Martineau (n. 31), No. 66 (Fig. on p. 174). I am grateful to prof. Nicola Spinosa, Soprintendente per i B.A.S. di Napoli, for the photograph of Giordano's painting.

46 While the intercession of the Virgin is clearly expressed through her praying gesture (for a similar gesture in an early fifteenth-century double intercession scene, see Ronen (n. 32), fig. 29), the function and meaning of the figure of Christ in Giordano's Plague-Picture appears to be rather ambiguous: since God the Father does not appear in the scene, it is not clear whether Christ is joining the Virgin's prayer, or is only paying attention to her prayer. For another probable double intercession scene by Giordano, see O. FERRARI and G. SCAVIZZI, *Luca Giordano*, Napoli 1966, vol. 2, pp. 70–72, vol. 3, fig. 118–119.

47 Staedel (n. 2), p. 216.

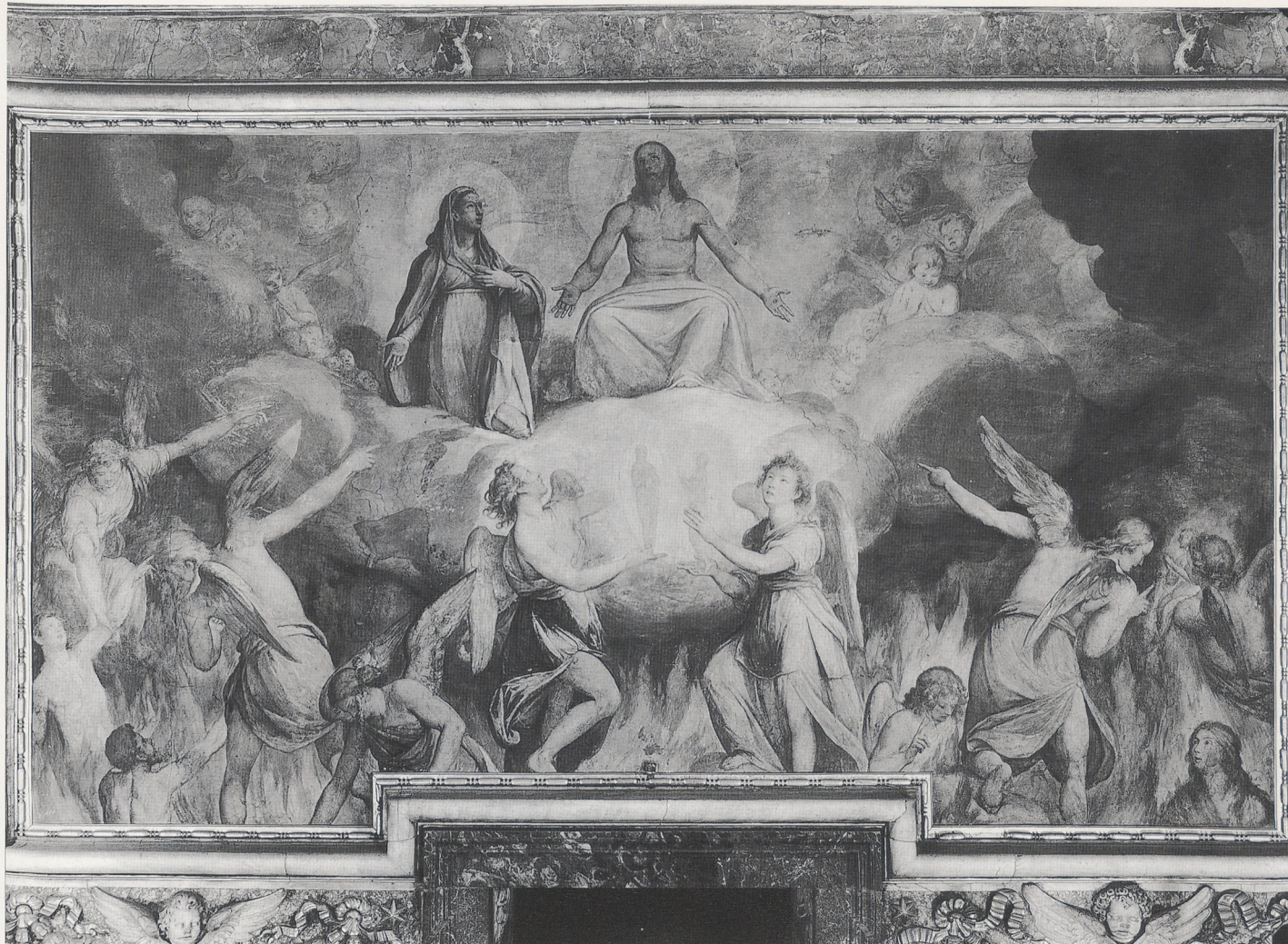
48 Ronen (n. 32), p. 101–102. In a late-fifteenth century woodcut-illustration of a French Book of Hours the Crowned Assunta is represented as intercessor, showing her breast as in the double

41 For traditional representations of the Assunta, see van Os (n. 13), passim; Schiller (n. 29), vol. 4.2, 1980, pp. 143–146, 713–15, 722, 723, 726–7, 743, 776.

42 Perdrizet (n. 32), pp. 239–240, n. 1; Kirschbaum (n. 25), vol. II, 1970, col. 347. For some examples of "chaste" or decorous depictions of the double intercession scene before Pietro da Cortona, see A. PARRONCHI, Due appunti sul Foschi, *Antichità Viva*, vol. 7, 1968.2, pp. 4–9, fig. 8. Prof. Parronchi has kindly drawn my attention to his article and put the photograph at my disposal; C. PUGLISI, Early works by Francesco Albani, *Paragone*, vol. 32, 1981, No. 381, p. 35, Fig. 31 (inexact caption); A. VENTURI, *Storia dell'Arte Italiana*, vol. IX.7, Milan 1934, fig. 409. See also our fig. 15.

43 Staedel (n. 2), p. 216, has been the only modern scholar to interpret Christ's gesture in Cortona's fresco as the showing of the wounds. She, however does not refer to any source that may have led to her interpretation. Cf. above n. 3.

44 On the meaning and importance of the Instruments of the Passion in the context of the double intercession theme, see Perdrizet (n. 32),



15. Federico Zuccari, *Christ and the Virgin intercede for the Souls in Purgatory*, Chiesa del Gesù, Cappella degli Angeli

Cortona's fresco in the tribuna of the Chiesa Nuova could therefore best be described as representing the intercession of the *Assunta*⁴⁹.

The interpretation of Cortona's two frescoes as representing not only the intercession of the *Assunta* but also that of Christ, may be corroborated by a relatively recent precedent: Federico Zuccari's painted decoration of the Cappella degli Angeli in the Church of the Gesù⁵⁰. The fresco on the left wall (Fig. 15) shows the intercession of

the Virgin and Christ in favour of the souls suffering the fire of Purgatory. This became one of the favorite themes of Counter-Reformatory doctrine and iconography⁵¹.

Significantly, St Gregory the Great, the co-patron of the Chiesa Nuova was venerated and represented in art, frequently in company of the Virgin, as intercessor in favour of the souls in Purgatory. Since fire is the principal attribute of Purgatory, the double reference made to this rare symbol of divine wrath in Cortona's frescoes at the Chiesa Nuova may have been intended also as an allusion to the fire of Purgatory⁵². Moreover, in Holbein the Youn-

intercession scenes. Lutz-Perdrizet (n. 35), pl. 138. See also Perdrizet (n. 32), p. 247; Mâle (n. 14), p. 61, n. 5; van Os (n. 13), n. 15; Cuisenier (n. 27), No. 120.

49 The fresco is referred to by Noehles (n. 5), p. 180, n. 42 as "The Intercession of the Virgin before the Trinity".

50 The pictorial decoration of the Cappella degli Angeli has received little scholarly attention. For the dating (about 1594), see, M. Fagiolo and M. L. Madonna (ed.), *Roma 1300-1875, La città degli Anni Santi*, Atlante (Exhib. Cat.), Milan 1985, p. 218, A. XI.3. For the iconography, see Mâle (n. 14), pp. 60-62.

51 Mâle (n. 14), pp. 59-65; Kirschbaum (n. 25), vol. II, 1970, cols. 16-20.

52 For St Gregory and the Virgin as intercessors in favour of the souls in Purgatory, see n. 51, 55, and GREGORY-SCHLEIER (n. 1), fig. 125. Fire is also one of the attributes of two protectors against the plague: St Anthony the Abbot and St Vincent Ferrer. See Kirschbaum (n. 25), vol. V, 1973, cols. 207, 212, 214 (for this saint see



16. Federico Zuccari, *The Assunta and the Trinity*, Chiesa del Gesù, Cappella degli Angeli

ger's woodcut (Fig. 14a), the theme of the Souls in Purgatory is associated not only with the double intercession but also with the sword of divine wrath⁵³. We may therefore assume that in the ceiling decoration of the Chiesa Nuova the Virgin and Christ intercede not only in fav-

our of the living but also in favour of the souls of the dead⁵⁴.

Zuccari's fresco in the Gesù represents a "decorous" version of the traditional double intercession scene. The posture of the Virgin is still the same as in some earlier

also Mâle (n. 14), pp. 377–378); Kirschbaum-Braunfels, vol. VIII, 1976, col. 562; O. PUGLIESE (ed.) et al., *Venezia e la Peste* (n. 29), pp. 227–228; P. KRISTELLER, *Holzschmitte im Königl. Kupferstichkabinett zu Berlin* (2nd series), Berlin 1915, p. 26, pl. LXI.

53 H. REINHARD, G. SCHMIDT (et al.), *Die Malerfamilie Holbein in Basel* (Exhib. Cat.), Basel 1960, No. 363, fig. on p. 299. See above, n. 30.

54 In the two lateral reliefs of Luigi Capponi's marble dossale in the church of San Gregorio Magno, St Gregory is represented interceding in favour of souls in Purgatory, while the presence of SS Sebastian and Roch indicates him also as protector against the plague. For illustrations, see V. MOSCHINI, *San Gregorio al Celio*, Rome S. D. (1926), p. 36, figs. 8–9. Schiller (n. 29), vol. II. p. 241, fig. 805. See above, n. 25.

17. *Ciro Ferri, A soul redeemed from Purgatory presented to the Trinity, drawing. Coll. Duke of Devonshire*



“chaste” variants of this theme, and it even retains a faint allusion to the traditional gesture of the showing of the breast, while the gesture of Christ is a dignified variant of the gesture of displaying the wounds⁵⁵.

A drawing in the collection of the Duke of Devonshire,

55 See above n. 42. Variants of the gesture of the Virgin in Zuccari’s fresco appear in several seventeenth century intercession scenes. See for example, Guercino’s *Intercession of St Gregory and the Virgin in favour of the Souls in Purgatory*, Mâle (n. 14), fig. 29 (cf. 14, 30); *The Virgin Interceding (and Christ Mediating?)* by Giacinto Gimignani see U. V. FISCHER, *Disegni di Giacinto e Ludovico Gimignani nelle collezioni del Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe* (Exhib. Cat.),

sometime attributed to Cortona, but probably by his close follower Cirro Ferri (Fig. 17), represents a later variant of the same subject of Zuccari’s fresco. Below the characteristic Cortonesque Trinity receiving a redeemed soul, are the souls in Purgatory (loosely sketched and hardly visible), and on the right – the interceding Virgin, or St Gregory (?)⁵⁶. In this drawing, as in the ceiling decoration

Rome, 1979; Nr. 29, fig. 15 (p. 33). For a precedent for the gesture of Christ in Zuccari’s fresco, see Knipping (n. 44), vol. II, pl. 261.
56 Chatsworth Cat. No. 590; Noehles (n. 9), p. 180, n. 40. The souls in Purgatory have been overlooked by both.



18. Pietro da Cortona, *The Assunta interceding before the Trinity*. Formerly Coll. Duke of Devonshire

of the Chiesa Nuova, the traditional subject is translated into Cortona's Characteristic Baroque Idiom. The oval fresco on the ceiling of the Cappella degli Angeli (Fig. 16) represents the *Assunta* ascending to Heaven, there to be crowned by the Holy Trinity. The meaning of the Virgin's gesture is evident also here, for her right hand, stretched towards the tormented souls depicted on the wall below (Fig. 15) repeats the commending gesture of the Virgin in the lower fresco.

A drawing by Pietro da Cortona, formerly in the collection of the Duke of Devonshire (Fig. 18), showing the Virgin ascending to Heaven and welcomed by the Holy Trinity, has been correctly interpreted by Noehles as representing the Trinity with the interceding Virgin⁵⁷.

57 Chatsworth Cat. 596; Noehles (n. 9), p. 180, fig. 5. The drawing was sold in 1984; N. ANNESLEY and F. RUSSEL, *Old Master Drawings from Chatsworth* (Christie's auction catal.), London 3 July 1984, p.

19. Giovanni Battista Ricci, *The Procession of St Gregory*, Chapel of St Gregory (Cappella Salviati), San Gregorio Magno



This drawing may therefore be considered as a connecting link between Zuccari's ceiling-fresco in the Gesù and Pietro da Cortona's two frescoes in the Chiesa Nuova. However, it is not Zuccari's ceiling fresco alone, but rather the combination of the mural and ceiling frescoes of the Cappella degli Angeli (Figs. 15, 16) that actually

constitutes an antecedent of the iconographic program of Cortona's two frescoes.

As we have seen, in accordance with the old description of Cortona's frescoes, the Old-Testament Patriarchs painted in the cupola, and the New-Testament and later saints appearing in the tribuna represent together "tutti i santi", i.e.: all the categories of saints who join Christ and his mother in their prayer. Now, it is precisely in the prayer of the *Letania Maior* (The Greater Litany, or Litany

13. Dr. Richard Harprath has kindly brought this catalogue to my attention.



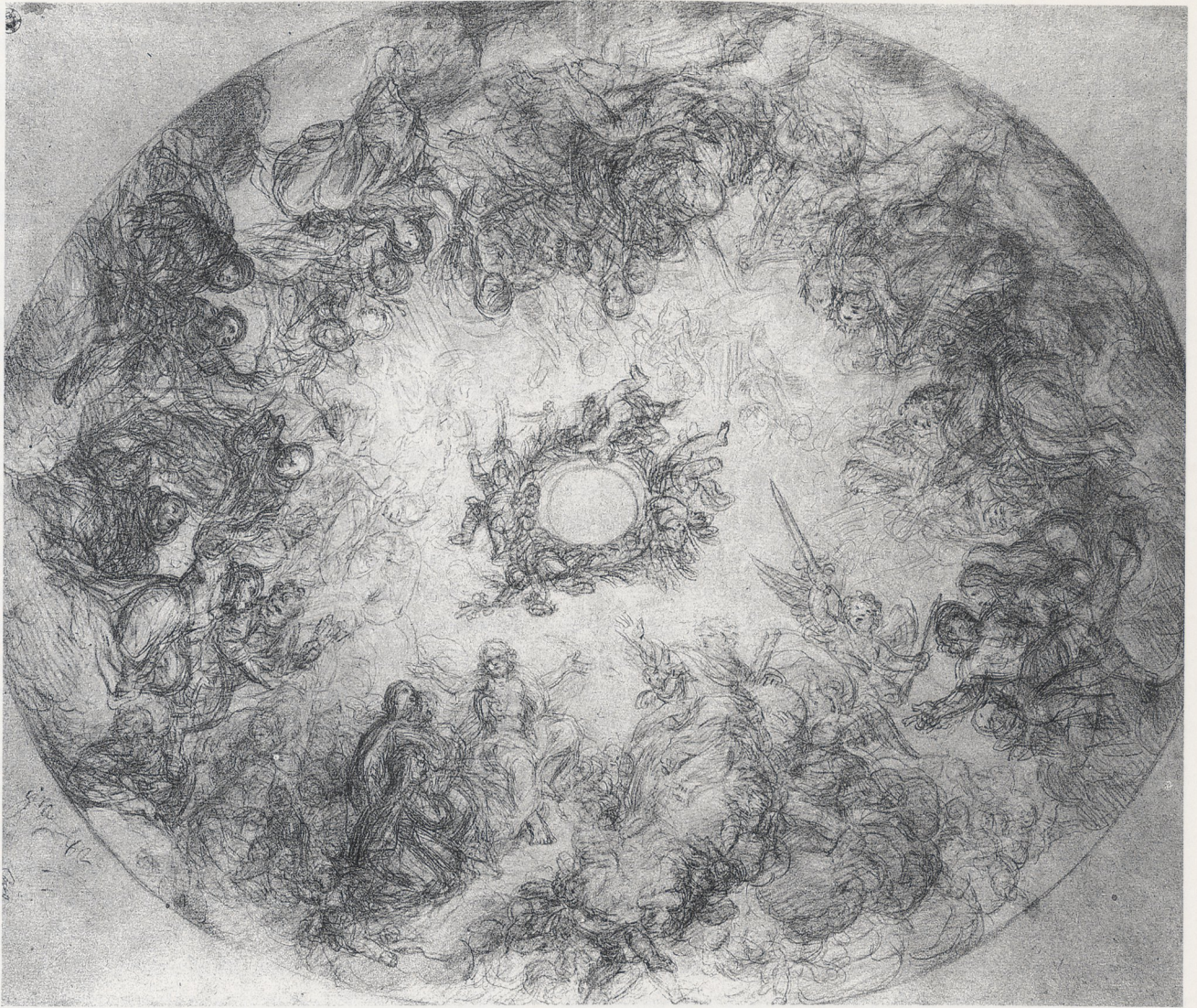
20. Giovanni Battista Ricci, *Deesis with Saints and Patriarchs, Chapel of Saint Gregory (Cappella Salviati), San Gregorio Magno*

of Saints) that the Virgin and “all the saints” are invoked to intercede in favour of sinning humanity before God and Christ⁵⁸. The *Letania Maior* is believed to have been instituted by St Gregory the Great who recited it on the occasion of the plague of Rome, when he was leading the procession in front of the Castel Sant’Angelo, invoking

58 For the Litany of Saints and works of art inspired by it, see E. HALL and H. UHR, *Aureoloa super auram* (etc.), *The Art Bulletin*, vol. LXVII, 4, 1985, p. 600, n. 119. For “All-Saints pictures” by Titian and Van Oostsanen, that include the Trinity and the Virgin, probably as intercessor, see E. PANOFSKY, *Problems in Titian, mostly iconographic*, London 1969, pp. 63–71, Figs. 73, 78.

the intercession of the Virgin: “Ora pro nobis, Deum rogamus”⁵⁹. This relationship between the invocation of “all the saints” and the procession of St Gregory is clearly apparent in Giovanni Battista Ricci’s decoration of the Salviati (St Gregory) Chapel in the church of San Gregorio al Celio, which represents the Procession of St Gregory (on the left wall; Fig. 19), and the Litany of Saints (on the ceiling; Fig. 20) as two integral parts of a single iconographic program. The *Letania Maior* is represented

59 *Legenda Aurea* (n. 25), p. 192; *The Golden Legend*, p. 180; see above, n. 23. and Perdrizet (n. 3), p. 135.



21. Ciro Ferri, *The Intercession of the Assunta before the Trinity*, Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett

as the intercession of the Virgin and the Baptist before Christ, forming a *Deesis* surrounded by “tutti i santi”, who are divided, as in Cortona’s two frescoes into two groups corresponding to the two main categories: the patriarchs of the Old Testament (above the *Deesis* group) and the New Testament and later saints (on the other side)⁶⁰.

Here then we have another demonstration of the multiple connections existing between the iconographic program of Cortona’s frescoes in the Chiesa Nuova, St Gregory and the plague.

Pietro da Cortona’s fresco in the cupola of the Chiesa Nuova does not merely represent the “Glory of the Trinity”, nor that of the Instruments of the Passion, and

the fresco in the tribuna does not merely represent the Assumption of the Virgin. The two frescoes viewed together represent a single iconographic program whose main theme is the intercession of the Virgin and Christ. The choice of this theme was certainly inspired by Counter-Reformatory doctrine of salvation through the intercession of the Virgin and the saints. This ideology, essentially deriving from a long-standing devotional tradition, responded not only to human fears and hopes regarding the Life to Come but also to fears regarding a more immediate manifestation of Divine Wrath – the plague, which was dreaded in the seventeenth century no less than in the late Middle-Ages⁶¹.

61 For the successive waves of the plague during the seventeenth century, and for Plague-Pictures commissioned and donated ex voto on the occasion of the plague, see Mâle (n. 14), pp. 375–380; Venezia e la Peste (n. 29), passim. E. NAPPI, *Aspetti della società e dell’economia napoletana durante la peste del 1656*, Naples 1980; Whitfield-Martineau (n. 31), pp. 175, 209–10, 252–253.

60 For a reproduction of Ricci’s ceiling fresco, see A. GIBELLI, *Memorie storiche ed artistiche dell’antichissima chiesa abbaziale dei SS. Andrea e Gregorio al Clivio di Scanio sul Monte Celio*, Rome–Siena 1888, Tav. V (p. XX).

In translating the traditional formula of the double intercession scene into a High Baroque idiom Cortona inevitably made its meaning somewhat ambiguous. It is therefore mainly through the inscribed verses on the pendentives and the symbolic images of Divine Wrath depicted in the cupola that the theme of intercession in Cortona's ceiling decoration can be correctly understood. Nevertheless, it was precisely this High-Baroque idiom, brought to perfection in the art of Pietro da Cortona, that made the frescoes of the Chiesa Nuova one of the most influential works of art of the seventeenth century.

Cortona's fresco in the cupola of the Chiesa Nuova had a great following in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries⁶².

However, none of the paintings inspired by the iconography and style of Cortona's fresco includes the angel with the two instruments of Divine Wrath that appears in Cortona's fresco.

The only exception known to me is not a painting but a hitherto unpublished drawing in the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett.

The drawing, a sketch for an oval ceiling decoration (Fig. 21) is attributed in the museum's catalogue to Ciro Ferri, Cortona's pupil and follower⁶³. It is evidently inspired by Cortona's frescoes at the Chiesa Nuova, not only in style, composition and the design of individual figures, but also in iconography. In Ferri's drawing, however, only the first of Cortona's two angels of wrath is represented, brandishing the sword in his right hand and a dart in his left. The third instrument of Divine Wrath is this time not fire, but the Apocalyptic scythe held in God's left arm⁶⁴. The crown and the lily (?) carried by

one of the putti hovering around the opening of the lantern (another iconographic detail derived from Cortona's cupola fresco) identify the kneeling figure as the interceding Virgin⁶⁵. The Litany of Saints is here divided, as in Ricci's fresco in San Gregorio Magno (Fig. 20), into two groups of about equal size: the Old-Testament Patriarchs on the right, and the New-Testament and later saints – on the left.

Ciro Ferri is known to have been involved twice in projects for the pictorial decoration of oval domes: in St Peter's and in San Nicola da Tolentino. Significantly, in both churches he succeeded his master, Pietro da Cortona. In St Peter's all the six bays of the the aisles of Maderno's nave, which serve as vestibules for the side-chapels, have oval domes decorated with mosaics. The first of these mosaic decorations were commissioned from Pietro da Cortona. After his death he was succeeded by Ciro Ferri, who completed the paintings of the cartoons for the mosaics of the Chapel of the Crucifixion (or the Pietà) on the right side of the nave and began working on the cartoons for the decoration of the Chapel of the Choir on the left side (which he did not finish)⁶⁶.

In the church of San Nicola da Tolentino Ferri painted the fresco in the oval cupola of the Gavotti Chapel⁶⁷. Although the subject of Ferri's Berlin drawing (Fig. 21) does not correspond to any of his oval-ceiling decorations, the drawing may represent a rejected project, either for one of the chapels of St Peter's or for the Gavotti Chapel.

Menabuoi (Maestri del Colore 198), Milan 1966, pl. XII; C. DANTI (ed) et al., *Donatello e la Sagrestia Vecchia di San Lorenzo, temi, studi, proposte di un cantiere di restauro* (exhib. cat.), Florence 1986, pp. 18 (Fig. 3b), 28 (Figs. 1–2). In later periods the scythe was supplanted by the sickle. Some Plague-Pictures contain, besides the usual symbols of divine wrath, other pictorial references to the Book of Revelation: the Millstone (Rev. XVII, 21), the Apocalyptic Lamb; Schiller (n. 29), vol. II, Fig. 801; G. CECCHINI, *La Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria in Perugia*, Rome 1932, no. 135, pp. 92–93.

65 The upright figure behind the Virgin is probably a penitente or an alternative design for the figure of the Virgin.

66 For the mosaic decorations of the vestibules of the six side-chapels in the nave of St Peter's, see F. DI FEDERICO, *The Mosaics of St Peter's*, University Park (Penn.) 1983, pp. 15–26, 59–61, 68–72. For Ferri's cartoons, see pp. 16, 59–60, 68–69.

67 D. BRUCE WILLIAM, *The Drawings of Ciro Ferri* (Doct. Diss.) Ann Arbor 1982, pp. 29–30.

62 Among the numerous ceiling decorations inspired by Cortona's cupola fresco there are also intercession scenes, like Gauli's double-intercession scene in the cupola of the Gesù (n. 44; Haskell (n. 1), p. 82), and Giacinto Gimignani's fresco in San Crisogono (n. 55). See also E. HUBALA, *Johann Michael Rottmayr*, Vienna 1981, figs. 318, 450.

63 Berlin Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett, Katalog der Zeichnungen 16714.

64 Rev. XIV, 14–19. The scythe appears in several depictions of this scene in Italian art from Giotto to Donatello: L. TINTORI and E. BORSOOK, *Giotto and the Peruzzi Chapel*, New York 1965, pl. 68–69, 73; B. BERENSON, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, Florentine School*, vol. I, London 1963, pl. 351; L. CASTELFRANCHI VEGAS, *Giusto de'*

APPENDIX

A fragment of an anonymous description of the frescoes in the cupola and the tribuna of the Chiesa Nuova

This document, although known to some modern scholars, has never been published before⁶⁸. It is probably a copy of a lost draft written by a member of the Oratorian Congregation shortly after the completion of the frescoes. The document is unsigned and undated. It ends abruptly before arriving at the description of the fresco in the tribuna, which is referred to only in the long opening phrase. Curiously, the name of the artist is not mentioned. The description includes a detailed list of the Old-Testament figures depicted in the cupola fresco. However, it does not correspond exactly to what actually appears in the fresco: some important figures, like David, are omitted, while several among those mentioned in the description do not exist at all in the fresco or cannot be identified, because no clear indication of their attributes or location in the composition is provided. The now missing figure of "Caleb armato" can be seen near Joshua (Fig. 4, to the right, wearing a steel helmet), in old photographs (Fig. 2) as well as in copies of the fresco: an engraving by Francesco Faraone dell'Aquila (Fig. 3) and an oil painting at the Wadsworth Atheneum⁶⁹.

Biblioteca Vallicelliana, Rome, Cod. Vall. 0.57-2, nr. 50, fol. 379-380r. Essendo stata intentione di chi havea a dipignere la cupola e la tribuna della Chiesa nuova d'rappresentare Christo signor nostro la sua santissima madre e tutti i Santi in sembianze di pregare (e sup)plicare la divina giustitia, per maggior chiarezza et intelligenza stimo bene spartire l'pensiero e in una parte cioè nella cupola figurare i santi del Vecchio testamento, nell'altra che è la tribuna quelli del Nuovo. Dunque nella Fronte

⁶⁸ Noehles (n. 1), p. 5, n. 21, quotes the beginning of the opening phrase of this document as a proof for his thesis that Pietro da Cortona was the sole inventor of the iconographic program of the cupola fresco in the Chiesa Nuova. But, see above, and n. 5-7.

⁶⁹ For the other copy, see C. C. CUNNINGHAM, A Modello for Pietro da Cortona's cupola of the Chiesa Nuova in Rome, *Wadsworth Atheneum Bulletin*, Ser. 5, N. 9, 1961, pp. 18-21, fig. 7 (cf. fig. 8). The attribution of the painting to Cortona is not convincing. For the Biblical figures, see Strong (n. 1), p. 118, who, however, confuses Caleb with Joshua.

della medesima cupola da una parte si vede assiso altament' sopra una nuvola attorniato da moltitudine Angeli l'eterno Padre sdegnato per i peccati degli huomini con volto maestoso e severo mniacciare e addirare il castigo, e perciò pront' a suoi cenni mostrarsi due Angeli librati in aria l'uno con la spada e co' dardi nelle mani, e l'altro in atto davventare un vaso pieno di fuoco in quella guisa appunto che fu veduto da Geremia (Fig. 7), il quale si vedrà dipinto nell'angolo di sotto in atto di amirarlo⁷⁰. Dall'altra parte è Christo Signor nostro sedente alla destra in una nuvola parimente circondata da angeli in atto supplichevole e pietoso mostrando al padre le sue piaghe e la croce sostenuta da un gruppo di Angeli e accompagnata da altri che portano chi la lancia e chi la corona di spine. Nella sommità poi del lanternino si scorge fra gli Angeli lo Spirito santo, donde si spargono splendori per tutta la cupola. Or cominciandosi da Adamo, Eva, e Abele segue appresso Noè col modello dell'arca e l'ulivo nelle mani e con la sua posterità da lungi. Indi si vede Abramo col suo figliuolo Isac, al lato del quale è Giacob fanciullo dinanzi a Sara e Rebecca. Dopo Abramo immediatamente si scuopre in distante Melchisedek coronato. Sotto di questo à collocato Giob e poco più innanzi sotto la nuvola che fa trono al Padre eterno apparisce il patriarca Giuseppe vestito di porpora con altri lontani. Di qui trapassando alla destra di Christo comparisce Mosè col fratello Aaron e in distante Hur e Nun. A piedi di Mosè giace Giosuè col sole nello scudo e vicino di lui Caleb armato. Seguentemente si veggono altri giudei Samuel, Gedeon e Sansone. Seguono appresso i maccabei Matatia e figliuoli. Ognun e giuntamente la madre de sette giovanetti pur maccabei. Vedosi fuor d'ordine un coro di gloriose donne Ester Giudita Susanna et altre. In faccia parimente fuor ordine sotto la novola seggio di Christo si scorge Tobia col figliolo. I bambini poi che di sopra cingono il lanternino tra loro d'età alquanti differenti sono figurati gl'Innocenti i quali confirmi canta la chiesa scherzano fra palme e corone.

⁷⁰ See above, n. 16.

Abbildungsnachweis: Albertina 3; Alinari 1, 2, 5, 6, 8-10, 13; Anders, Berlin 21; Courtauld Inst., London 17, 18; Sopr. beni art e stor., Napoli 14 a; Sopr. beni art. e stor., Roma 15, 16, 19, 20; Vasari, Roma 12.