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Author(s): Franca Trinchieri Camiz

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FRANCA TRINCHIERI CAMIZ

Death and Rebirth in Caravaggio's *Martyrdom of St. Matthew*

The three canvases Caravaggio painted for Cardinal Matteo Contarelli's burial chapel in the church of San Luigi dei Francesi, in Rome, constituted his first public commission. These paintings, dedicated to the cardinal's patron saint, the apostle and Evangelist Matthew, were highly innovative in style and brought the artist both artistic success and social prominence, as confirmed by Giovanni Baglione's comment that "This work ... made Caravaggio famous, and the paintings were highly praised by wicked people."¹ Their fame seems to have persisted even after the emergence of the more classically idealized style of the High Baroque. On the occasion of an apostolic visit to San Luigi on 16 November 1626, it was recorded that the images on the walls of the Contarelli Chapel were painted by "manu insignis Pictoris Michaelis Angeli de Caravagio."² Apostolic visits were essentially inspections of church buildings, their furniture, and all liturgical objects, and artists' names were rarely recorded.³ As no other artist who had worked for San Luigi, for example Domenichino, is mentioned in this account, the singling out of Caravaggio appears all the more noteworthy.⁴

The Martyrdom of St. Matthew (1599–1600) stands out among the chapel paintings for a viewer approaching from the nave or the side aisles [Fig. 1].⁵ This is due partly to the picture's position on the right wall, and partly to Caravaggio's particular method of heightening the illusion of the dramatic

event through intensely modeled figures set in a darkened background. The thematic importance of this painting, however, has not been sufficiently appreciated, and consequently it has been less favored than its pendant, *The Calling of St. Matthew*. The difficulty in reading the *Martyrdom* has also influenced the evaluation of its stylistic significance. It has been described as being closer to "traditional compositions" and therefore "less important as a document in the career of Caravaggio the revolutionary."⁶

One problem is that *The Martyrdom of St. Matthew* deviates substantially from the traditional iconography of the subject. Various literary sources, both medieval and later, state that Matthew was killed in Ethiopia because he converted and consecrated as a bride of Christ a young virgin, Iphigenia, the daughter of the former king and the betrothed of King Hirtacus.⁷ Iphigenia and soldiers are usually the supporting players in paintings of the martyrdom. Two Roman examples, more or less contemporary with Caravaggio's painting, that conform to this iconography are Girolamo Muziano's canvas of 1587 for the Mattei Chapel in the church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli [Fig. 2], and the fresco painted in 1599 by an unknown artist on the nave wall of the church of Santi Nereo e Achilleo [Fig. 3].⁸ Even the instructions that Caravaggio inherited from a previous contract with Cavalier d'Arpino specified that Matthew



1) Caravaggio, «The Martyrdom of St. Matthew», seen from the nave of San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome.



2) Girolamo Muziano, «The Martyrdom of St. Matthew», Mattei Chapel, Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome. Photo: Cindy Stollhans.

... be killed in a temple by the hand of soldiers and we think that it will be best to show him in the act of being killed, either fallen after having received some wounds, or in the act of falling but not yet dead; and in that temple should be a large number of men and women, old and young and babies in variety largely praying, and shown dressed according to their station and nobility, [seated] on benches with rugs and other furnishings.⁹

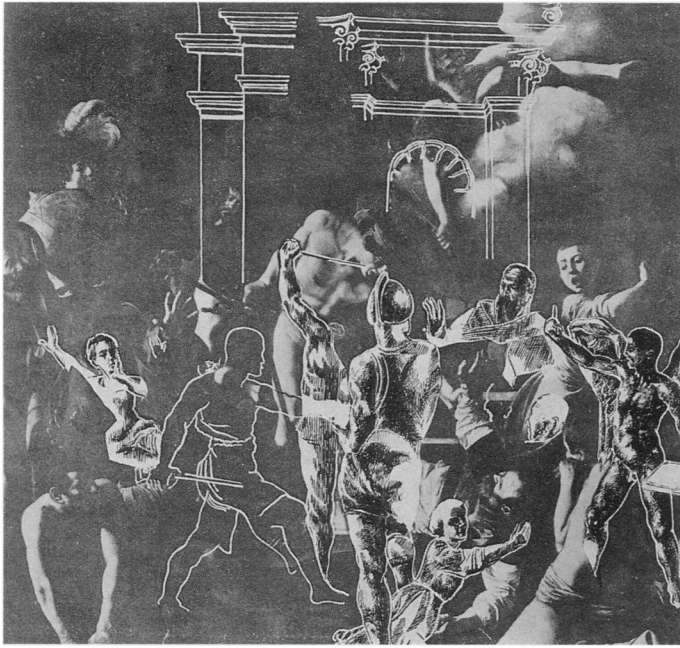
In Caravaggio's picture [Fig. 4], women and babies have been excluded, the murderer is a handsome nude, and no benches are visible. X-rays have revealed that Caravaggio actually painted more than one version of this *Martyrdom* [Fig. 5].¹⁰ His reworking of the canvas is usually attributed to his dissatisfaction with the small scale of his first figures and his desire to intensify the dramatic



3) Anonymous 16th-century painter, «The Martyrdom of St. Matthew», Santi Nereo e Achilleo, Rome. Photo: Istituto Centrale per il catalogo e la documentazione, Rome.

impact of the tragic scene.¹¹ These are valid observations. What art historians have not noticed, however, is that the earlier versions also differ considerably in some of their iconographic details.

The first version [Fig. 5] appears to be more traditional, as two female figures, one of whom may be Iphigenia, can be discerned, and Matthew is being attacked by armed men, one wearing a helmet. Caravaggio's final version, on the other hand, eliminates most of the expected narrative details of the known *historia*. G. P. Bellori complains that "the composition and movements in the painting are insufficient for the narrative though he remade it over twice,"¹² and some modern scholars have expressed the opinion that Caravaggio's attitude was "unhistorical," or even "anti-historical."¹³



5) Caravaggio, «The Martyrdom of St. Matthew», outline of earlier version as shown by X-rays.

A similar departure from traditional narrative becomes apparent when one compares the two paintings of *The Conversion of St. Paul* which Caravaggio executed in 1600–1601 for the Cerasi Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo. In the earlier version (now in the Odescalchi Collection, Rome),¹⁴ we note the presence of Christ, an angel, a soldier, and a landscape—that is, narrative details traditionally associated with the subject which were then left out in the painting in the chapel. By reducing descriptive particulars, Caravaggio clearly achieved a more personal and innovative interpretation of his subject matter.

A major change in the final version of *The Martyrdom of St. Matthew* is the inclusion of three male figures, draped in loin-cloths, in the foreground [Fig. 6]. Most critics of this painting consider them purely decorative “nude repoussoir figures” that recall Mannerist precedents, or *ignudi* in the manner of Michelangelo.¹⁵ There are many examples of such figure types in earlier sixteenth-century art. It is also possible to see these figures as compositional devices which form, with the figure of the executioner as the apex, a triangle framing Matthew and forcefully enhancing the focal center of the drama. But such an interpretation leaves some questions unsolved. Caravaggio uses



6) Caravaggio, «The Martyrdom of St. Matthew», detail. Photo: Cindy Stollhans.



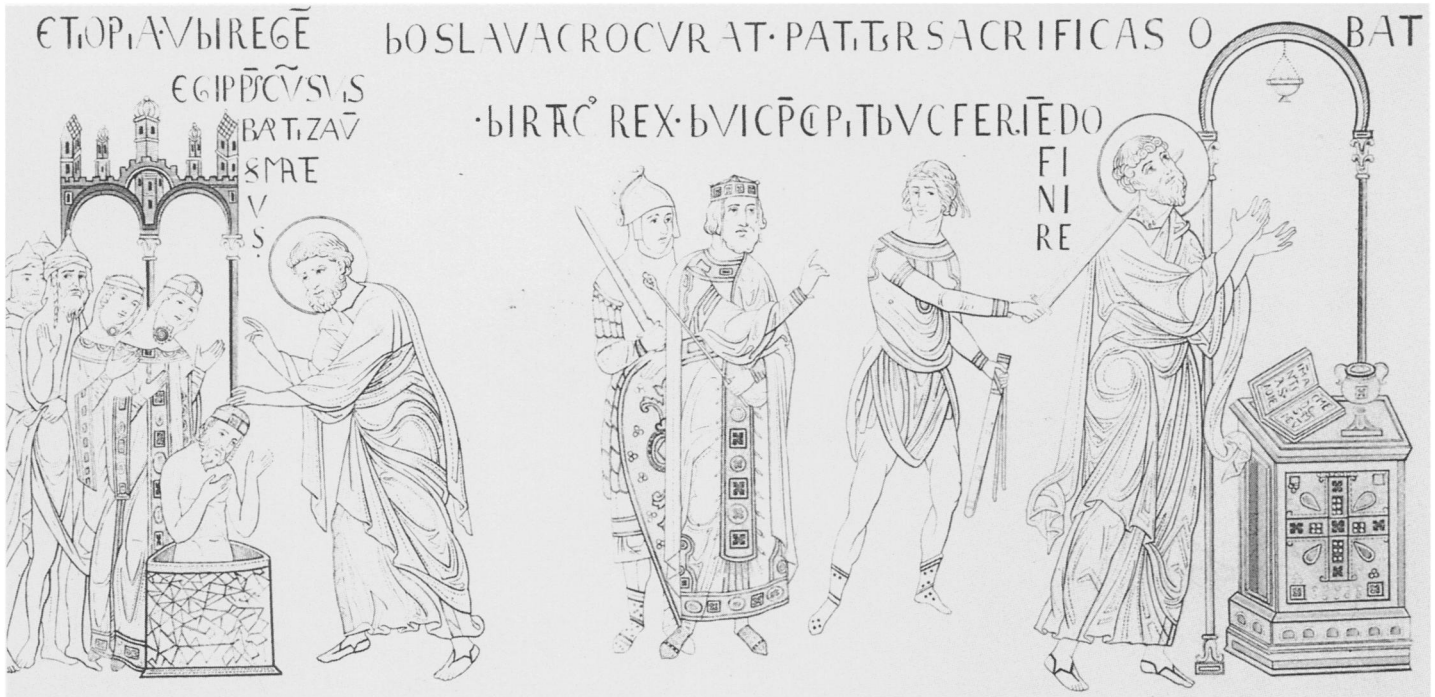
7) Mosaic dome of baptistery, San Marco, Venice. Photo: Alinari, Florence.

repoussoir figures in this painting alone,¹⁶ and they are, moreover, awkward additions which do not connect easily with the rest of the picture. Finally, as Jacob Hess points out, "... why should Caravaggio have gone backward and made use of that favourite requisite of Mannerists' history painting?"¹⁷

In his report following the cleaning of the Contarelli pictures in 1966, Giovanni Urbani labels these male nudes "neophytes."¹⁸ Maurizio Marini goes further by suggesting that these neophytes are seated on the steps of a baptismal or lustral pool, the water of which can no longer be made out because of the worn surface of the painting.¹⁹ If nothing else, this interpretation provides a logical explanation for the strange void in the foreground of the picture, the nudity of the figures, and the presence, on the right,

of a blanket to protect them from the chill of cold stone steps. The deforming qualities of water could then also justify the awkwardness of the reclining neophyte's foot and the distortion of the lower edge of Matthew's chasuble [Fig. 6]. Moreover, the fleeing figure with a dismayed or even horrified face, usually thought to be the artist's self-portrait, is actually seminaked [see his leg and thigh in Fig. 4], as if meant to be identified as a neophyte as well.²⁰

This baptismal hypothesis has not been widely accepted. Howard Hibbard, for instance, objects that "a pool never existed in the nave of a basilica," and suggests that Caravaggio perhaps meant to show benches, as called for in the contract. He adds that "since the figures were to be dressed according to their so-



8) «St. Matthew Baptizing» and «The Martyrdom of St. Matthew», south aisle mosaic, San Marco, Venice. From *Mosaici non compresi negli spaccati geometrici nell'interno della Basilica di S. Marco in Venezia, Venice (1881)*, IV, pl. XLVII.

cial station, the nudes are perhaps slaves or others seeking salvation.”²¹ In another interpretation, Giulio Carlo Argan proposes that these figures might be the gravediggers of Matthew’s tomb.²²

I submit that there is, on the contrary, considerable evidence in favor of the baptismal setting. From late antiquity onwards, the biography, or *vita*, of an apostle was understood not as a description of individual personality but as a revelation of his role as a successor and imitator of Christ.²³ Pictorial narrative sequences in any chapel dedicated to an apostle therefore focused on representative moments that clearly underlined this role. In the Brancacci Chapel in Florence, for instance, the apostle Peter is exalted as a redeemed sinner and disciple who performed miracles, healed, preached, converted others, and was martyred.²⁴ Traditional literary and pictorial accounts of the life of Matthew follow a similar pattern.²⁵

The most obvious reference to the apostolic mission is the act of baptism in accordance with Christ’s command—as indicated, interestingly, in the Gospel of St. Matthew: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and

make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” (28:18–20). The thirteenth-century mosaic dome of the Baptistry in San Marco, Venice [Fig. 7], offers a very clear pictorial example of this legacy, with Christ encircled by all his apostles, who are depicted in the act of administering baptism. Directly beneath Christ’s left foot, Matthew is identified by the inscription “A[N]TICA ETIOPIA”. Matthew’s most notable converts in Ethiopia were the king, Eglippus, his wife, Eufenessia, and their daughter, Iphigenia. Several images painted before the Contarelli Chapel depict Matthew baptizing the Ethiopian royal family.²⁶ Another mosaic in San Marco even portrays the murder of Matthew adjacent to Matthew baptizing the king and queen [Fig. 8].²⁷ In this instance, the executioner is young and handsome and wears a fillet tied round his head, very much like the comparable figure in Caravaggio’s picture.

Significantly, *Matthew Baptizing the Ethiopian King and Queen* was one of the six scenes originally requested by Cardinal Contarelli in a contract of 1565 with Girolamo Muziano, the first



9) Girolamo Muziano, «St. Matthew Preaching», Mattei Chapel, Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome. Photo: Cindy Stollhans.

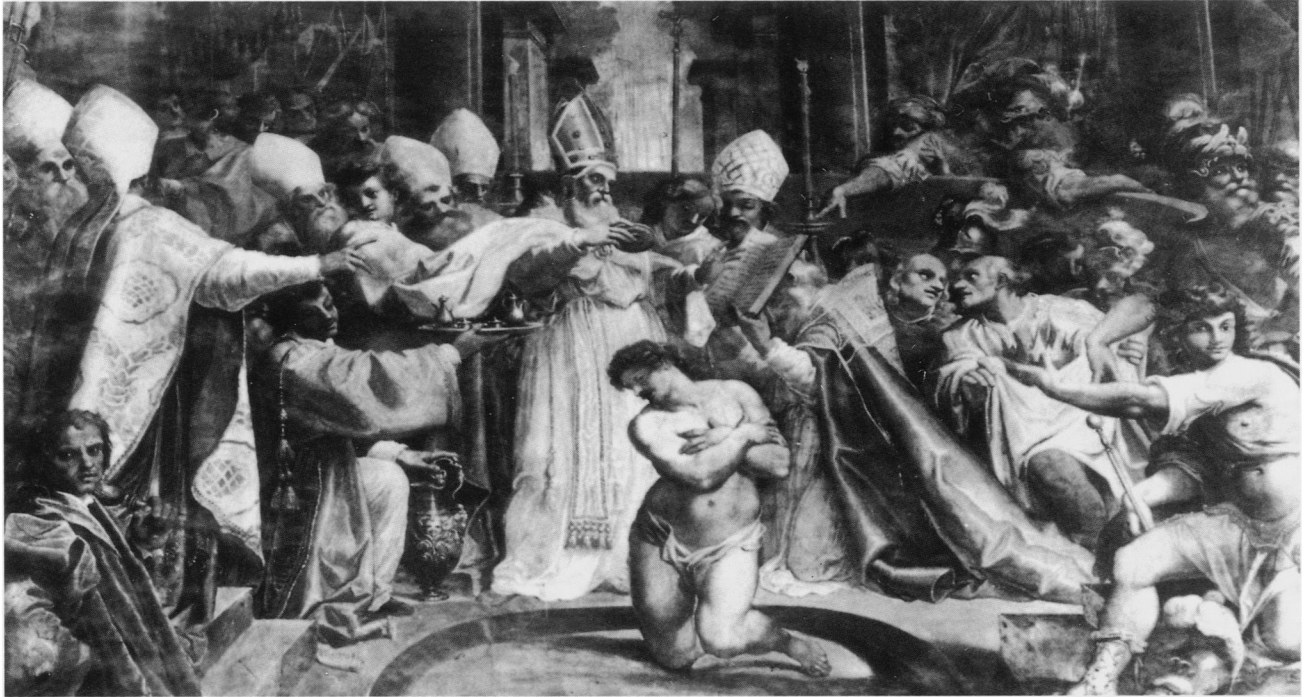
artist commissioned to paint the chapel. The other scenes were to be Matthew's calling, his martyrdom, his writing the Gospel in the presence of an angel, four prophets, and other events still to be determined.²⁸ For some unknown reason, Muziano did not actually paint in the chapel. A second contract with Cavalier d'Arpino, dated 1591, called for a scene referring to Matthew's healing powers (*The Resurrection of the King's Daughter*), and substituted for the baptismal scene a *historietta* depicting Matthew preaching.²⁹

Public preaching was considered essential to initiating conversion, and therefore was strongly linked with the act of baptism. In the Brancacci Chapel, the two scenes of *Peter Preaching* and *Peter Baptizing the Neophytes* are placed on either side of the altar at the same level. In Muziano's Mattei Chapel paintings, a preaching scene [Fig. 9] contains the reference to conversion in a sequence that includes *The Calling of St. Matthew*, *The Resurrection of the King's Son*, and *The Martyrdom of the Apostle*.³⁰ When, in 1599, Caravaggio was contracted to complete the Contarelli Chapel, he was instructed to paint only a *Calling* and a *Martyrdom*.³¹ Thus, a scene related to conversion, either preaching or baptism, was lacking in the Cantarelli Chapel, and

Caravaggio, or the cardinal's heirs and executors, may have thought that a reference to baptism in the *Martyrdom* was necessary to reestablish the sequential logic of Matthew's life.

Returning to the picture itself, we note that the void in the lower part of Caravaggio's *Martyrdom* resembles the elliptical piscina with descending side steps depicted in another painting of 1599, Cristoforo Roncalli's *The Baptism of Constantine* in San Giovanni Laterano, Rome [Fig. 10]. This fresco refers specifically to the Lateran Baptistry,³² a venerated building that is still extant. The space in Caravaggio's picture, on the other hand, is less clearly defined. It might suggest a baptismal chamber or chapel of the kind that once existed in many churches throughout Italy but are no longer found today.

St. Charles Borromeo's *Instructiones fabricae et suppellectilis ecclesiasticae* (1577), a handbook of rules for the building of churches and for specific liturgical ceremonies, informs us that two types of baptismal ceremonies prevailed in the latter half of the sixteenth century: that of the Ambrosian rite and that of the Roman. Milan, where Caravaggio was born, practiced the Ambrosian rite, which retained the early Christian form of baptism by immersion, while the Roman rite preferred aspersion, or the



10) Cristoforo Roncalli (Il Pomarancio), «The Baptism of Constantine», San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome.
Photo: Fototeca Biblioteca Hertziana, Rome.

sprinkling of water on a person's head, as is seen in Roncalli's fresco. The Roman rite used baptismal fonts rather than *piscinae*; but even in this case, Borromeo instructions specify that

[a] baptistery should be in the center of the chapel. It should be eleven cubits wide (4.80 m.) and deep enough so that the descent to it from the floor of the chapel consists of at least three steps. By the descent and moderate depth it should bear some resemblance to a sepulcher. At the bottom of the steps there should be a circular space with a diameter of seven cubits and sixteen runes (3.34 m.). The baptismal basin into which the water is to flow should be located in the middle of this space.³³

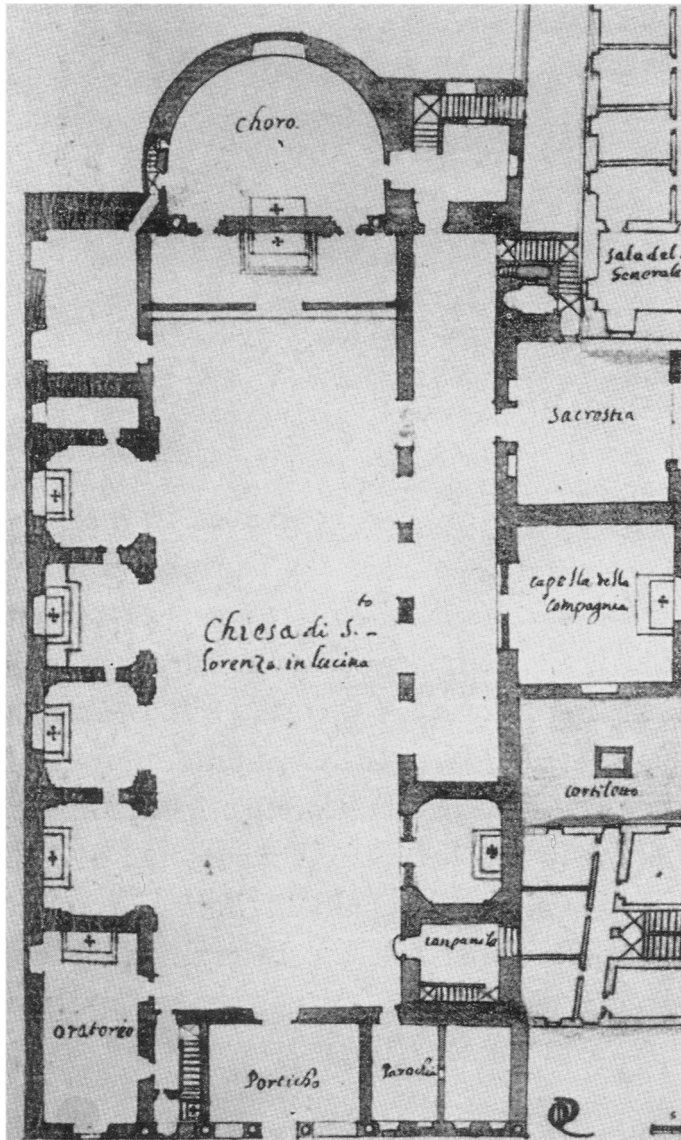
A later book of instructions, Marcello Cavaglieri's *Il Rettore Ecclesiastico*, describes a baptismal space as

- 1 ... a separate chapel with its altar situated facing the Baptizer and readily prepared to use in celebrating holy Mass....
- 2 In the middle of the chapel let there be the site for the baptismal font in a manner that denotes as much as possible the

mysterious shape of a tomb, and that means that it should be so deep as to descend into it from the chapel's pavement by means of three steps. 3 This space which is to remain empty in the pavement, should be ample in diameter and visible, as appropriate to the proportions of the structure of the Chapel; but never so small, that even after the Font has been placed in it, that it cannot have enough space to comfortably hold the Baptizer and godparents and that means a diameter from the edge of the font to the last step of two and half *palmi*....³⁴

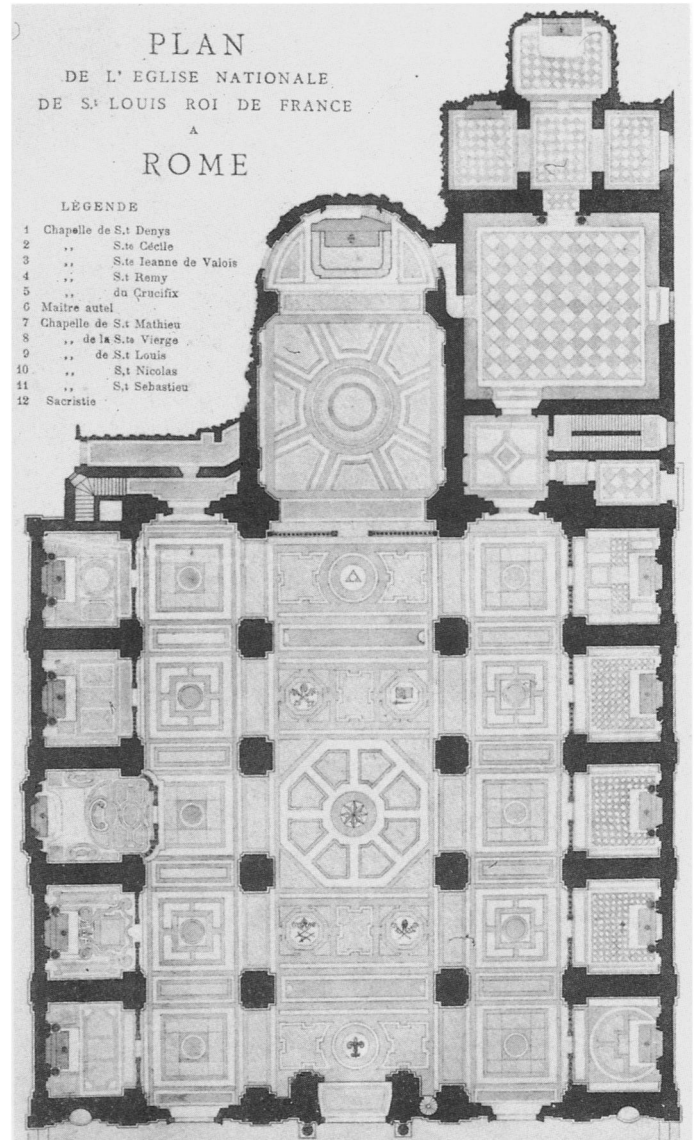
These instructions were followed as late as the nineteenth century, in a baptistery in the Roman basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, which has a font surrounded by steps leading into a circular opening.³⁵

With few exceptions, the baptismal chapels described by these liturgical handbooks were later transformed or remodeled, or their function changed completely. The Roman church of San Lorenzo in Lucina is a case in point. The level of this church was preserved from early Christian times up until 1596 or 1598, when the pavement was raised by 1.60 m. to street level.³⁶



11) Anonymous, plan of San Lorenzo in Lucina, Rome, 1631–41. From R. Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, II, fig. 135.

Recent excavations have revealed that the early Christian level also included what appears to be a baptismal pool,³⁷ located directly beneath the “Cappella della Compagnia [del Sacramento]” [Fig. 11], which no longer exists.³⁸ This chapel served as the church’s baptismal area until 1721, when a new baptistery was built on the other side of the nave. Until this date then, it is



12) Ground plan of San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome. From M. D’Armailhacq, *L’Église Nationale de Saint Louis des Français à Rome* (1894).

probable that the pool was visible as the sepulcher-like cavity specified by Borromeo, thereby reinforcing an important continuity with the church’s early history.

More significantly, San Luigi also once had a baptismal chapel. The first chapel to the right of the entrance, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, served as the church’s baptistery until

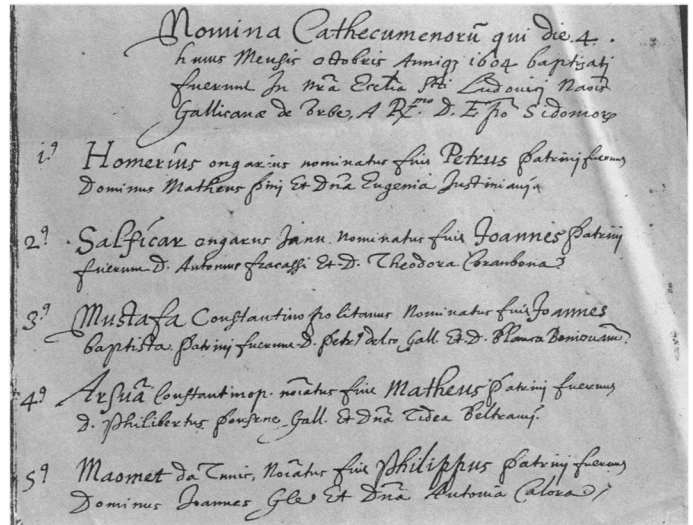
1840. It is difficult to know exactly what this space looked like, but the report based on an apostolic visit in 1564 refers to the need to install there a marble basin.³⁹ The record of the 1626 visit reveals further that the chapel was equipped with a stone altar in which were inserted the "necessary relics."⁴⁰ The baptistery was dismantled in 1841,⁴¹ and only the present circular design of the marble revetments of the chapel floor [Fig. 12] can provide a possible clue as to its original shape and size.

The Counter-Reformation attached great importance to conserving, restoring, and reviving Early Christian antiquities.⁴² Caravaggio was undoubtedly familiar with the early baptismal ritual⁴³ and its architectural setting. The placement of the altar next to the baptismal area,⁴⁴ and the steps descending into a cavity, both features of *The Martyrdom of St. Matthew*, were essential parts of actual baptisteries existing in his own time. Moreover, the exclusion of women in Caravaggio's final version of the painting could also be explained by the fact that in the ritual of baptism *per immersionem*, women were baptized separately from men.

Interpreting the male nudes in the lower part of the painting as adult neophytes or catechumens, we may be reminded of an important institutionalized event in Rome in the late sixteenth century: the frequent public baptismal ceremonies staged for Jewish and Muslim converts. In the *Avvisi di Roma* we learn, for instance, that on Holy Saturday in 1599, "a few Jews and 5 Turks" were baptized in the Lateran Baptistery with "much pomp and approval."⁴⁵ The *Avviso* of 22 May 1599 specifies that Pope Clement baptized in the Lateran "7 Jews" of the Carcosa family,⁴⁶ and the entry of 2 October states that in the Chiesa Nuova, "6 Jews 4 males and two females" were baptized.⁴⁷

Baptismal ceremonies were conducted with great pomp, reflecting the Counter-Reformation's missionary zeal. Conversion was certainly one of Pope Clement VIII's major political concerns. He encouraged missions in the Mediterranean area and in the Orient. On 14 August 1599, he instituted a new congregation of cardinals, *De propaganda fide catholica*.⁴⁸ He also adopted a highly repressive policy against Jews, tolerating them only that they might convert. The bull *Caeca et obdurata* of 6 February 1593 expelled Jews from the papal territories, allowing them to settle only in major cities like Rome, Ancona, and Avignon, where they could be "tempered from their evil doings by the terror of punishment and [where] ... now and then others will more easily recognize the light of truth."⁴⁹

As a result of the pressure to convert, neophytes constituted a significant presence in late-sixteenth-century Rome. A first step in the process of conversion was the segregation of potential converts by housing them in the Casa dei Neofiti, near the church of San Giovanni Battista in Mercatello, at the foot of the Capitoline Hill.⁵⁰ The Collegio dei Neofiti, on the other hand,



13) *Liber IV Baptisatorum Anno 1601–50 for San Luigi dei Francesi, Archivio del Vicariato, Rome, folio 37.*

was founded by Pope Gregory XIII (1572–85) for converts who had already received baptism and wished to pursue their studies in theology under the guidance of the Jesuits. The *Collegio*, which in 1601 housed 70 students, was located in the old convent of St. Catherine behind the Pantheon,⁵¹ only a few blocks away from the church of San Luigi. Even Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte, Caravaggio's protector while working on the *Martyrdom*, sponsored a neophyte who took on his name.⁵² Significantly, the rector and congregation of San Luigi also prepared neophytes for baptism.⁵³ The parish records clearly indicate, in bold writing [Fig. 13], the names of ten Muslim males (Hungarians and Turks) baptized in San Luigi on 4 October 1604, and those of two Jews and three Muslims on 2 July 1605.⁵⁴

Active conversion was highly appropriate for a church that served French Catholics. The fact that France was still in part Protestant or heretical troubled Pope Clement VIII deeply, and he considered King Henry IV's conversion to Catholicism in 1595 a major diplomatic success for himself.⁵⁵ The intensity of the pope's desire to convert others in France is made explicit by his bull *Hortatio pastorali ad episcopi regni Galliae...* (20 August 1599), in which he directed all French bishops to give this mission their full attention.⁵⁶ The pope's instructions to papal nuncios travelling to Henry IV's court also include passionate exhortations to "procure the conversion of heretics and the increase of the catholic religion with every study and with all possible energies...."⁵⁷ In a letter sent to the French court on 20 October



14) Siciolante da Sermoneta, «The Martyrdom of St. Catherine», Cesi Chapel, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. Photo: Alinari, Florence.

1603, Cardinal D'Ossat wrote, "... heretics abominate the ceremonies of the Catholic Church and in particular those related to baptism, such as the exorcism, the salt, the saliva, the oil, the chrism, the lighted candle, the container for the chrism, and other things...."⁵⁸ Conversion of all non-Catholics was central to Counter-Reformative Rome; Caravaggio's allusion to baptism in the scene dedicated to the apostle Matthew may well have reflected the pressing urgency of this contemporary issue.

One of the major appeals of Caravaggio's paintings rests precisely in his sense of actuality in the conception of his subjects. His artistic choices involved a careful and strongly focused realism in highly selective but significant details. Matthew's vestments may serve as example. Muziano depicted Matthew [Fig. 2] wearing an archaic chasuble reminiscent of those worn in the early Christian Church. In Caravaggio's painting [Fig. 4], on the other hand, Matthew wears a contemporary Roman chasuble with shortened arm coverings that came into use only in the latter part of the sixteenth century.⁵⁹ Yet he is barefoot, as would be expected of an apostle. In this manner Caravaggio brings the symbolic and distant past into the present. Not only is Matthew's chasuble contemporary, but it is also black (though with a gold cross decoration and green lining), and black is the liturgical color prescribed for mourning.⁶⁰ Thus he is dressed as if he were a priest celebrating a funerary mass. This detail of apparel may have commemorated Cardinal Contarelli's funeral and memorial masses, and may also have served as a premonition of the death of the apostle. Caravaggio has also carefully rendered the altar with its gradine holding the two lighted candles prescribed for low masses (one partly covered by the cloud), liturgical glass vessels for wine and water, and the cross decoration on the altar's antependium. These particulars remind us that the cardinal had been an extremely generous patron of San Luigi, richly endowing his chapel to provide for liturgical vestments and altar equipment,⁶¹ as well as two daily memorial masses.⁶² By depicting the apostle as a contemporary priest celebrating the liturgy for the dead, Caravaggio has combined the symbolism of Matthew's martyrdom with the reality of the ceremony celebrated daily to commemorate the cardinal's death.

The fully-garbed (albeit barefoot) figure of Matthew contrasts with the semi-nudity of his executioner. From the fifteenth century on, executioners, or the tormentors of Christ and the martyrs, were often depicted as naked or seminaked figures so as to be readily identifiable as pagan forces antithetical to Christianity.⁶³ A fourth-century description of a painting of the martyrdom of St. Euphemia refers to "a number of executioners, stripped down except for their short tunics, [who] are beginning their work...."⁶⁴ Sixteenth-century martyrdom scenes also exploited this dichotomy between nudity and full dress as, for example, in Siccilante da Sermoneta's *Martyrdom of St. Catherine*

of 1572 in the Cesi Chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome [Fig. 14].

As Caravaggio's handsome murderer is wearing a loincloth very similar to those worn by the men in the foreground, he seems to be one of them. As a result, these figures [Fig. 6] have been interpreted as collaborators of the executioner.⁶⁵ Yet they do not seem to be actively involved, and one appears to be recoiling in horror at the event. It seems more likely that Caravaggio intended his murderer as a pagan, belonging to the same non-Christian world from which neophytes are summoned to receive Christian baptism.

The possibility that the murderer could be both a recipient of baptism and the instrument of Matthew's death, while disturbing, could also be instrumental in the contracting and combining of two separate moments of the apostle's life into one intense compositional focus, a narrative device which would be highly original.⁶⁶ In a larger sense, it would indissolubly link the sacrament of baptism to the act of martyrdom which the Church conceived as a "second baptism" by blood. Tertullian describes the connection as follows:

"For he had come" by means of water and blood just as John [I, V:6] has written; that he might be baptized by the water, glorified by the blood; to make us, in like manner, called by water, chosen by blood. These two baptisms He sent out from the wound of his pierced side in order that they who believed in His blood might be bathed with the water; they who had been bathed in the water might likewise drink the blood.⁶⁷

Martyrdom cycles contemporary with Caravaggio's painting include baptism scenes which emphasize the analogy between the life and death of a martyr and that of Christ.⁶⁸ In Matthew's case, this analogy is even more specific because his death, unlike that of other apostles, occurred "at the foot of the altar where he had consecrated the body of Christ ... while praying with open arms...."⁶⁹—that is, celebrating mass, which in itself implies participating in and renewing Christ's Passion and death.⁷⁰ Moreover, Caravaggio has shown Matthew's blood flowing into the baptismal pool,⁷¹ that tomblike cavity in the foreground, further linking symbolically the Eucharist to death and baptism. This association is reinforced by Caravaggio's compositional device of vertically aligning the altar, the dying apostle, and the baptismal opening to create the thematic core of his painting.

Baptism and death had always been closely connected in the minds of the early Christians, and baptisteries occasionally contained tombs.⁷² St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans clarifies this:

Do you know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried

therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (6:3–4)

Inherent in the sacrament of baptism, therefore, is the sense of a mystical death which implies a spiritual cleansing of sin, a hope of regeneration and resurrection, and the promise of eternal life itself.⁷³ The theological association of baptism, death, and rebirth seems to find its iconographic counterpart in the placing of the baptismal area at the bottom edge of the painting, not very distant from Cardinal Contarelli's tomb under the pavement of the chapel.⁷⁴

The dark space can be seen also as the tomb of the martyred apostle. By joining, both physically and symbolically, burial and spiritual renewal, Caravaggio has given the picture immediate relevance to its context within a burial chapel.⁷⁵ The theme of the earlier fresco in the chapel's vault, Cavalier d'Arpino's *St. Matthew Resurrecting the King's Daughter*, was itself eminently suited to convey the hope of salvation in a mortuary setting.

Caravaggio completed the chapel's spiritual message with allegories that imply both the remission of sin, as in *The Calling of St. Matthew*, and the miraculous promise of eternal life inherent in the *Martyrdom*, in which the apostle's brutal death is rewarded by an angel with a trophy of victory, the palm of eternal glory.⁷⁶ By choosing a baptismal setting for this subject, Caravaggio paid tribute to a very important concern: the hope of spiritual rebirth through baptism and death. The early Christian writer Prudentius did the same in his homage to a baptistery built on the spot where two Christians had been martyred:

This is a spot chosen of Christ for raising tried souls to heaven through blood, and for cleansing them with water. Here too mercy flows in the limpid fount and washes away old stains in its new stream. The earth drinks in sacred drops of water or of blood and ever wet streaming to the glory of God.... When you pass from here you will have been raised up through Christ's wounds, each as he is able, one by the sword, another by water.⁷⁷

I have greatly benefited from the exchange of thoughts and ideas with friends and colleagues; therefore, I should like to express my gratitude to Priscilla Albright, Jack Freiberg, Ursula Pace, and Carolyn Valone. Special thanks go to Pamela Starr, to the anonymous reader for *Artibus et Historiae*, and to my sister, Camilla Trinchieri, for suggestions that have substantially improved the text. I would also like to thank the Pii Stabilimenti della Francia a Roma e Loreto for permission to publish photographs of Caravaggio's picture.

¹ G. Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori, et architetti...* [Rome 1642], as cited in H. Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, New York, 1983, p. 353.

² "In Navi, quà esta Cornu Evangelis Pa est Cappella sub Invocatione Sancti Matthei constructa, et dotata a bo: mem: Matteo Card.li Contarello. Habet Iconam cum Imagine eiusdem Sancti, qua simul eum Imaginibus in ritraque pariete huius Cappella existentibus sunt depicte manu insignis Pictoris Michaelis Angeli de Caravaggio." *Acta Sacrae Visitationis Apostolicae S.D.N. Urbane VIII*, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Armadio VII, folio 227 verso.

³ See L. Fiorani, "Le visite apostoliche del Cinque-Seicento," *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma, Studi, documenti, inventari*, IV, Rome, 1980, pp. 53–148. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Fiorani for his advice on the importance of apostolic visits.

⁴ Caravaggio's name does not come up in the records of visits to other churches where he had worked, such as San Agostino or Santa Maria del Popolo.

⁵ See A. Moir, *Caravaggio*, Milan, 1982, p. 21, figs. 43, 45.

⁶ Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 102.

⁷ See G. Talamo Atenolfi, *I Testi medioevali degli atti di S. Matteo Evangelista*, Rome, 1958, p. 70; J. de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, New York, 1969, pp. 563–64; A. Gilio da Fabriano, *Le Persecuzioni della Chiesa descritta in cinque libri*, Venice, 1573, pp. 444–47; *Breviarum Romanorum* [September 21], Rome, 1606, p. 931; and L. Marinelli, *Vite de' Dodici Heroi di Christo et de' Quattro Evangelisti*, Venice, 1617, p. 49.

⁸ For the Mattei Chapel see J. E. L. Heidemann, "Observations on Girolamo Muziano's Decoration of the Mattei Chapel in S. Maria in Aracoeli in Rome," *The Burlington Magazine* CXIX (1977) pp. 686–94; and *idem*, *The Cinquecento Chapel Decorations in S. Maria in Aracoeli*

in Rome, Amsterdam, 1982, ch. 3. For Santi Nereo e Achilleo, see A. Zucari, "La politica culturale dell'Oratorio Romano nelle imprese artistiche promosse da Cesare Baronio," *Storia dell'arte* XLII (1981), p. 179, nn. 34, 35; and A. Herz, "Baronio's Restoration of SS. Nereo ed Achilleo and S. Cesareo de' Appia," *The Art Bulletin* LXX, no. 4 (1988), pp. 590–620.

⁹ Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 297, n. 56.

¹⁰ See L. Venturi, G. Urbani, "Studi radiografici sul Caravaggio," *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, CCCXLIX, 1952, Memorie, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, series VIII, vol. V, pp. 37–46; and M. Cinotti, G. A. Dell'Acqua, *Caravaggio*, Bergamo, 1983, 61B, pp. 530–31.

¹¹ See Venturi-Urbani, p. 39; and see also D. Mahon, "Contrasts in Art-Historical Method: Two Recent Approaches to Caravaggio," *The Burlington Magazine* XCV (1953), p. 220.

¹² G. P. Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, Rome, 1672, as cited in Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, pp. 365–66.

¹³ See, e.g., H. Röttgen, *Il Caravaggio: ricerche e interpretazioni*, Rome, 1974, p. 233.

¹⁴ See Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, fig. 74.

¹⁵ See W. F. Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, Princeton, 1955, p. 112; G. A. Dell'Acqua, M. Cinotti, *Il Caravaggio e le sue grandi opere di S. Luigi dei Francesi*, Milan, 1971, p. 24; *idem*, *Caravaggio*, p. 532; and Hibbard, p. 106.

¹⁶ D. Mahon, "Egregius in Urbe Pictor: Caravaggio Revisited," *The Burlington Magazine* XCIII (1951), p. 232, n. 90.

¹⁷ See J. Hess, "The Chronology of the Contarelli Chapel," *Kunstgeschichtliche Studien zu Renaissance und Barock*, Rome, 1967, p. 236.

¹⁸ G. Urbani, "Il restauro delle tele del Caravaggio in S. Luigi dei Francesi," *Bollettino dell'Istituto Centrale del Restauro* XVII (1966; ed. 1968), p. 56 and fig. 32.

¹⁹ M. Marini, *lo Michelangelo da Caravaggio*, Rome, 1974, p. 29; see also F. Bardou, *Caravage ou l'expérience de la matière*, Paris, 1978, p. 79; Moir, *Caravaggio*, p. 94; and M. Marini, *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, "pictor praestantissimus"*, Rome, 1987, p. 42, n. 210, and p. 441.

²⁰ This unusual detail has been noticed only very recently by S. Rossi, "Un doppio autoritratto del Caravaggio," *Caravaggio. Nuove Riflessioni, Quaderni di Palazzo Venezia* VI, 1989, pp. 151–52, n. 5.

²¹ Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 106 and p. 297, n. 56.

²² G. C. Argan, "Caravaggio e Raffaello," *Colloquio sul tema Caravaggio e i Caravaggesti*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome, 1974, p. 21.

²³ See H. Delehay, *Le leggende agiografiche*, Florence, 1910; *idem*, *Sanctus. Essai sur le culte des saints dans l'antiquité*, Brussels, 1927, p. 105; and C. Goldstein, *Visual Fact Over Verbal Fiction: A Study of the Carracci and the Criticism, Theory, and Practice of Art in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 17.

²⁴ See E. Borsook, *The Mural Painters of Tuscany*, Oxford, 1980, p. 64.

²⁵ This pattern essentially consists of Matthew being called by Christ, preaching, baptizing, resurrecting the king's daughter (or son), miraculously putting to sleep two magicians turned dragons, and being martyred; see *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. E. Kirschbaum, Rome-Freiburg-Basel-Vienna, VII, 1974, 598–99. See also the works cited in n. 7, above, as well as G. Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting*, Florence, 1952, pp. 725–30; and *idem*, *Iconography of the Saints in the Painting of North East Italy*, Florence, 1978, pp. 730–35.

²⁶ For Pietro da Rimini's fourteenth-century St. Matthew Chapel in Santa Maria in Porto Fuori, Ravenna (destroyed in World War II), see F. Bisogni, "Problemi iconografici Riminesi. La cappella di S. Matteo in Santa

Maria Porto Fuori," *Paragone (Arte)*, CCCXI (1976), pp. 39–48, fig. 2b; for Il Bergamasco's nave frescoes of 1558–59 in San Matteo, Genoa, see P. Rotondi, "Note sul Cambiaso e sul S. Matteo a Genova," *Arte Lombarda* I (1964), pp. 122–23, fig. 6; and for a 1554 chasuble, see M. Calberg, "Les broderies historiées de l'abbaye d'Averbode (XV^e siècle)," *Révue Belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* XXIII (1954), pp. 152–53, fig. 11.

²⁷ See O. Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice: The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Chicago, 1984, I; II, fig. 360, pl. 80.

²⁸ See Dell'Acqua, Cinotti, *Il Caravaggio e...S. Luigi dei Francesi*, F6, p. 146; and Marini, *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio*, p. 428.

²⁹ See Röttgen, *Il Caravaggio*, pp. 17–20; Dell'Acqua, Cinotti, pp. 146–47; and Marini, p. 428.

³⁰ The Mattei Chapel was an important precedent for Caravaggio; see Heidemann, "Muziano's Decoration of the Mattei Chapel," p. 594. It should be noted that Muziano's *St. Matthew Preaching* includes figures, standing or seated in a sunken area, that are very similar to figures in Caravaggio's *Martyrdom*.

³¹ See Röttgen, *Il Caravaggio*, n. 2; Dell'Acqua, Cinotti, *Il Caravaggio e...S. Luigi dei Francesi*, F20, p. 150; and Marini, *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio*, p. 432.

³² See J. Freiberg, *The Lateran and Clement VIII*, diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1988, pp. 135–45.

³³ E. C. Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's "Instructiones fabricae et suppellectilis ecclesiasticae"*, translation with commentary, diss., Syracuse University, 1977, pp. 250–51.

³⁴ "1 Il Battistero sia situato in una cappella appartata... col suo altare situato a dirimpetto del Ministro battezzante, formato e provveduto all'uso, di celebrarvi la santa Messa.... 2 Nel mezzo della Cappella, sia adattato al sito per lo Fonte Battesimale in maniera, che denoti al possibile la misteriosa forma di un sepolcro, che è a dire profondo, cosichè dal pavimento della Cappella vi si discenda per tre gradini, ed almeno per uno, di mezzo palmo, e poco più d'altezza, e di un palmo di larghezza. 3 Lo spazio, che deve rimaner vuoto nel pavimento sia per diametro ampio, e patente, quanto comporterà proporzionalmente la struttura della Cappella; ma non mai tanto poco, che collocatovi nel mezzo il Fonte, non vi rimanga pur anche spazio commodamente capace del battezzante, e de' padrini, che sarà dalla estremità del fonte alla estremità dell'ultimo gradino per diametro almeno due palmi, e mezzo." *Il Rettore Ecclesiastico Instruito nelle regole Della fabbrica, e delle Suppellettili...*, Naples, 1693, pp. 17–18.

³⁵ This church was reestablished as a parish church in 1820; the new baptistery was built in 1825 and inaugurated in 1827; see D. Taccone-Gallucci, *Monografia della Patriarcale Basilica di S. Maria Maggiore*, Rome-Grottaferrata, 1911, p. 106.

³⁶ See R. Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, Vatican City, 1962, II, fig. 135, pp. 164, 173, 183.

³⁷ This hexagonal piscina is readily visible today even though it has only in part been cleared out. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Elena Bertoldi for having elucidated the important archeological work being done under the present pavement of San Lorenzo.

³⁸ In 1858, when new chapels were built in San Lorenzo, the Chapel of the Sacrament was destroyed; see Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum*, p. 165. The chapel is described in the record of the apostolic visit of 20 May 1628: "Sequitur Capella sub Invocatione Sancti Ioannis Baptistae in qua festivis diebus ad maiorem Populi commoditatem conteneatur Sanctissimum Eucharistia Sacramentum.... In ista Capella congregatur Societas Sanctissimi Sacramenti, quae tenetur bis hebdomada Celebrari facere pro animi eiusdem Cardinalis dicta Capella fundatoris. In eadem adest fons baptismalis intus, et exterius decenter ornatus, ac necrijs omnibus instructus, penes quem adest sacrarium sufficienti clausura munitum. desunt tantum Cancelli." *Acta Sacrae Visitationes* (see n. 2, above), folio 404–404

verso. A “Cappella del Battesimo” is mentioned as the third chapel, right after the one built by C. Rainaldi, in O. Pancirolo, *Roma Sacra e Moderna...*, Rome, 1725, p. 247.

³⁹ The visit was on July 7: “Deinde visitavit fontes quos ordinavit d. renovari absoluta fabrica vel tempore comodiori quo fieri potent quibus voluit d. provideri de vase marmoreo amplo et p[er] medium concavi dividi locum aque a loco sacrarij ita ut media pars serviat pro sacrario altera neso aque baptismale et regatur ut s[opr]a.” *Liber visitae Ecclesiarum urbis 1564–1570*, folio 23, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Armadio I. The sacrarium is a receptacle within the font which drains the water running off the infant being baptized. See Voelker, *Charles Borromeo’s “Instructiones...”*, ch. 20, pp. 282–84, figs. 9–11.

⁴⁰ “Ultima est Cappella sub invocat[io]ne Sancti Joanni Baptistae, quae habet Iconam cum Imagine d. Sancti aliqua ex parte refect[io]ne gentem. Mensa est lapidea cum lapide sacro inserto ut supra elevando atque tegendo habet reliqua necessaria. In hac Cappella, in die festivitatis d. Sancti convenit Societas Aurificum, quorum sumptibus cantatur missa solemnis, nescitur tamen an hoc fiat ex devot[io]ne vel obligat[io]ne. In hac eadem Cappella adest fons baptismalis, qui fuit repertus honorifice tentus, eget tamen papilione, ac clave bene curatus retinenda.” *Acta Sacra Visitations*, folio 228 verso. The *Decreta* included in this visit were published by X. Barbier Montault, “Saint-Louis-des-Français,” in *Œuvres Complètes*, I: *Inventaires Ecclésiastiques*, Rome, 1889, pp. 178–80.

⁴¹ D. C. Fea, *Descrizione di Roma e suoi contorni*, Rome, 1824, III, 543, describes the baptismal font as being “too simple” for French “magnificenza.” In 1825 a new font was placed in the chapel; it was sold in 1841 to the church of Erringham (York) in England; see M. D’Armailhacq, *L’Église Nationale de Saint Louis des Français à Rome*, Rome, 1894, p. 101. In the church archives are documents concerning the sale of the font (Liasse 290/fasc. 17). I thank Olivier Michel for this information.

⁴² See Marini, *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio*, p. 92, n. 211. See also G. Wataghin Cantino, “Roma sotterranea. Appunti sulle origini dell’Archeologia cristiana,” *Ricerche di Storia dell’arte* X (1980), pp. 5–14; and Herz, *Baronio’s Restoration...*, p. 593.

⁴³ Still in the eighteenth century, Pope Benedict XIII preferred baptism by immersion, as indicated in a diary entry for 26 May 1725: “[the pope] si trasferì al Gran Battistero Constantiniano detto S. Gio. in Fonte; ed ivi Sua Beatitudine, fatta con la consuete solite Cerimonie, la Benedizione al medesimo Fonte, ed a 10 Catecumeni presenti il Catechismo, solennemente per immersionem battezzò i medesimi [my italics].” *Diario Ordinario*, no. 1218, Rome, 1725, p. 3.

⁴⁴ St. Charles Borromeo also prescribes that an altar be placed in a baptistery: “Provided there is sufficient space in this [baptismal] chapel only one altar should be erected. It should be 2 cubits away from the east wall, enclosed, served, furnished and decorated in the style of other altars...” Voelker, *Charles Borromeo’s “Instructiones...”*, p. 248.

⁴⁵ *Avviso*, 12 April 1599, Biblioteca Vaticana, Urb. Lat. 1067, folio 262 verso.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, folio 327 verso.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, folio 618 verso. Earlier in the year (2 January 1599), the *Avvisi* refer to the baptism of “5 hebrei” in St. Peter’s, *ibidem*, folio 73. A “Donna turca con 2 figlioli” and “36 altri maometti” are mentioned as being baptized in St. Peter’s during the Holy Year of 1600, for which event a medal was coined; see T. M. Manni, *Istoria degli Anni Santi*, Florence, 1750, p. 170.

⁴⁸ “Mercordi N.S. introdusse una nuova Cong[regazione] De propaganda Fide Catholica et vuole che si facci ogni mercore inanzi a S. Sta li Cardinali sono questi S. Severina, Fiorenza, Borromeo, Baronio, Visconte, Antoniano, Bellarmino, Ald[obrandino] et S. Giorgio.” Letter dated 14 August

1599 from Cardinal Del Monte to Ferdinand Grand Duke of Tuscany, Archivio di Stato, Florence, Fondo Mediceo del Principato, 3760, folio 1002; see also L. Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, St. Louis, 1933, XIV, pp. 266–68.

⁴⁹ K. R. Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy 1555–1593*, New York, 1977, p. 26.

⁵⁰ For the conversion and baptism of Jews, see E. Rodocanachi, *Le Saint-Siège et les Juifs. Le Ghetto à Rome*, Paris, 1891, ch. 13, ch. 19; Stow, ch. 10; W. H. Rudt de Collenberg, “Le Bâptême des Juifs à Rome de 1614 à 1798 selon les régistres de la ‘casa dei catecumeni,’” *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* XXIV (1986), pp. 91–231, 25; (1987), pp. 105–261.

⁵¹ See C. Fanucci, *Trattato di tutte le opere pie dell’alma città di Roma*, Rome, 1601, pp. 152–53.

⁵² Del Monte reported about “Francesco Maria del Monte, Romano, neofito, perche io l’ho tenuto a battesimo” in a letter to the grand duke of Tuscany dated 19 August 1606 (AS Fondo Mediceo del Principato, Florence, 3762A, folio 115). It is not known when the baptism actually occurred.

⁵³ See D’Armailhacq, *Saint Louis des Français à Rome*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ *Liber IV Baptisatorum Anno 1601–1650* for San Luigi dei Francesi, Archivio del Vicariato, Rome, folio 37–38.

⁵⁵ Pastor, *History of the Popes*, XIII, ch. 2. For the importance of Henry IV’s conversion for Caravaggio’s *Calling of St. Matthew*, which exemplifies a sinner being redeemed, see M. Calvesi, *Le Realtà del Caravaggio*, Turin, 1990, pp. 279–84.

⁵⁶ *Bullarum Privilegiorum Diplomatum Romanorum Pontificum*, Rome, 1753, CCII, pp. 255–58.

⁵⁷ “Procuri la conversione degli heretici et l’augmento della religione cattolica con ogni studio et con tutte le forze...” Letter to Gaspare Silingardi, nuncio, February 1599. See K. Jaitner, *Die Hauptinstruktionen Clemens VIII für die Nuntien und Legaten an den Europäischen Fürstenthöfen 1592–1605*, Tübingen, 1984, p. 579, letter no. 73. See also letter no. 54, dated 10 May 1596, to Alessandro de’ Medici.

⁵⁸ “... les heretiques ont en abomination les ceremonies de l’Eglise Catholique, et particulièrement celles du baptesme, comme l’exorcisme, le sel, la salive, l’huile, le cresse, la chandelle ardente, le cresseau, et autres choses...” *Lettres du l’illustrissime Cardinal D’Ossat evesque de Bayeux au Roy Henry le Grand 1594–1604*, Paris, 1641, p. 776.

⁵⁹ See L. Richeome, *La peinture spirituelle ou l’art d’admirer, aimer et louer Dieu*, Lyon, 1611, p. 473; G. Braun, *I Paramenti Sacri Loro uso storia e simbolismo*, Turin, 1914, p. 93.

⁶⁰ “... una pianeta negra da morti” is listed in a 1630 inventory of “San Nicolo in Piazza Navona della natione lorenese”; see P. Violette, “La Decoration de l’église de Saint Nicolas-des-Lorrains 1623–1870,” *Les Fondations Nationales dans la Rome Pontificale, Collection de l’École Française de Rome*, LII, Rome, 1981, p. 506. A 1618 inventory of San Luigi mentions five black chasubles; see Barbier de Montault, “Saint-Louis-des-Français,” p. 146. Barbier de Montault also specifies, p. 2, that Roman chasubles have their cross decoration on the front while French ones have it on the back.

⁶¹ The 1618 inventory also describes vestments for the St. Matthew chapel bearing Cardinal Contarelli’s coat of arms; see Barbier de Montault, p. 150, no. 192, and p. 153, no. 223.

⁶² “Altare [in the St. Matthew chapel] est privilegiatum pro defunctis Vig[e] Brevis fe: record: Gregorij XIII quod fuit ostensum.... Habet in redditibus Scuta Centum singulis annis ex relicto q[ui] fati Card[inalis] excursus etiam disposit[io]ne. Subiacet oneri duarum missarum quotidianarum....” *Acta Sacra Visitations*, p. 237, folio 227 verso. Contarelli’s will also specifies a yearly endowment of 100 scudi for daily masses celebrated by two priests; see Cinotti, Dell’Acqua, *Caravaggio*, p. 236.

⁶³ See, e.g., Filippino Lippi's *Torture of St. John the Evangelist* on the left wall of the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, Florence (Borsook, *Mural Painters of Tuscany*, fig. 152); or Sebastiano del Piombo's *Flagellation of Christ* in San Pietro Montorio, Rome. Almost all the executions in the martyrdom frescoes in Santi Nereo e Achilleo are clad in loin cloths; see Zuccari, "La politica culturale," fig. 44.

⁶⁴ Asterium of Ameseia, "Description of a Painting of the Martyrdom of St. Euphemia," in C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972, p. 39.

⁶⁵ L. Venturi, *Caravaggio*, Novara, 1951, as cited in Cinotti, Dell'Acqua, *Caravaggio*, p. 532; see also Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 106.

⁶⁶ The forcefulness of this device can be seen by comparing Caravaggio's *Martyrdom of Cavalier d'Arpino's St. Lawrence Among the Poor and the Sick* (1588), known only through a *bozzetto* and a copy, which simultaneously portrayed a sequence of four different narrative moments: (from right to left) Lawrence healing a widow's head ailment, restoring a blind man through baptism, washing pilgrims' feet, and indicating the poor and sick as the treasures of the Church. See H. Röttgen, *Il Cavalier D'Arpino*, exhib. cat., Rome, 1973, nos. 1, 3, pp. 68–71. This fresco was painted on the right wall of San Lorenzo in Lucina, hence very close to the baptismal chapel discussed earlier. In fact, water, baptism, and healing are very much the thematic focus of this painting. Three male nudes are shown prominently in the foreground of the composition; they represent the poor and sick but could also, perhaps, imply neophytes. For Caravaggio's method of contracting space and time, see Argan, "Caravaggio e Raffaello," pp. 20–21.

⁶⁷ Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325, vol. XI: *The Writings of Tertulian*, I, 25.

⁶⁸ In the Roman church of Santi Nereo e Achilleo, the inner periphery walls bear the martyrdom scenes, while the inner nave walls depict baptismal scenes, one of which was published by Herz, *Baronio's Restoration*, fig. 15. In Santa Prisca, Domenico Passignano's altar painting *Peter Baptizing St. Prisca* of 1600, in *Roma 1300–1875: L'arte degli Anni Santi*, cat., ed. M. Fagiolo, M. L. Madonna, Milan, 1984, p. 415, no. X.8) hangs next to frescoes portraying the saint's martyrdom.

⁶⁹ "... perchè ai piedi dell'altare ove egli aveva consacrato il corpo del Cristo, là appunto trionfasse nel martirio apostolico, giacchè mentre era in preghiera a braccia stese, un milite mandato da l'Irtaco vibratogli un colpo di spada lo fece martire di Cristo..." Talamo Atenolfi, *I Testi medioevali...*, p. 79.

⁷⁰ See Calvesi, *Le realtà del Caravaggio*, p. 38. The Martyrdom of St. Matthew is included in a sequence of images dedicated to the mystery of the Eucharist in two fifteenth-century Holy Sacrament altars. See M. Lisner, "Andrea Sansovino und die Sakramentskapelle der Corbinelli

mit Notizen zum alter Chor von Santo Spirito in Florenz," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* no. 2 (1987), pp. 235–36, fig. 21; D. Brumori, "L'altare marmoreo di Andrea Ferucci nella Cattedrale di Fiesole," *Arte e Storia* XXXII (1913), fig. on p. 302.

⁷¹ See Marini, *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio*, p. 42.

⁷² R. Krautheimer, *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art*, New York-London, 1969, p. 137. In Rome, the seventeenth-century baptistery in San Lorenzo in Lucina, discussed earlier, contained tombs; "Ad pedes huius Altaris [in the chapel dedicated to John the Baptist] adest sepulchrum bo: me: Cardinalis Morinelli," *Acta Sacra Visitationes*, folio 404. This chapel is particularly interesting in that it was used as a baptistery and burial place, as well as for exhibiting the Holy Eucharist, kept in a gilded wooden tabernacle (see n. 38, above).

⁷³ Krautheimer, *Studies...*, p. 136. The Early Christian baptistery of Santa Tecla in Milan displayed a Latin epigram: "... in the light of the Risen Christ, who opens the closed doors of death, and calls the dead out of their tombs, while those that recognize themselves as sinners, he frees from their ugly sins and washes them in the flowing waters of the purifying font..." A. Paredi, "Dove fu battezzato Sant'Agostino," *Recherches Augustiniennes* IV (1966), p. 16. For a description of the baptistery, see M. Mirabella Roberti, "Il Battistero di Sant'Ambrogio a Milano," *ibidem*, pp. 3–10.

⁷⁴ San Luigi parish book records note that on 28 November 1585, Cardinal Matthew Contarelli "fuit sepultus in hac eccles[ia] in sua capella" (*III Liber Defunctorum 1601*, folio 173).

⁷⁵ Calvesi, *Le Realtà del Caravaggio*, considers the importance of salvation through divine grace for the Contarelli Chapel, but does not underline its significance in either a baptismal or a burial context. For mortuary iconography in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century chapels, see Borsook, *Mural Painters of Tuscany*, pp. 15, 123–24, and relevant bibliography; studies of Roman sixteenth-century chapels have not examined this specific aspect.

⁷⁶ Literature on martyrology has emphasized the importance of the sense of victory and triumph inherent in martyrdom scenes. The martyr is the champion of God, worthy of admiration, and the winner in the struggle with the brutal forces of paganism. see H. Delehaye, *Les Passions des Martyrs et les genres littéraires*, Brussels, 1921, p. 238; A. Herz, "Imitators of Christ: The Martyr-Cycles of Late Sixteenth Century Rome Seen in Context," *Storia dell'arte* LXII (1988), pp. 53–70; and L. Holm Monssen, "The Martyrdom Cycle in Santo Stefano Rotondo," *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiae Pertinentia*, N.S., vols. II, III (1982–83).

⁷⁷ Prudentius, *Crowns of Martyrdom*, Loeb Classical Library, London-Cambridge, 1953, vols. II, VIII, pp. 219–20.