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Inhalt

Georg Satzinger / Sebastian Schütze	Einleitung und Dank 7
Christof Thoenes	Über die Größe der Peterskirche 9
Nikolaus Staubach	Der Ritus der <i>impositio primarii lapidis</i> und die Grundsteinlegung von Neu-Sankt-Peter 29
Thomas James Dandeleit	Financing New Saint Peter's: 1506 – 1700 41
Jens Niebaum	Zur Planungs- und Baugeschichte der Peterskirche zwischen 1506 und 1513 49
Christoph L. Frommel	Der Chor von Sankt Peter im Spannungsfeld von Form, Funktion, Konstruktion und Bedeutung 83
Hans W. Hubert	Fantasticare col disegno 111
Georg Satzinger	Sankt Peter: Zentralbau oder Longitudinalbau – Orientierungsprobleme 127
Horst Bredekamp	Zwei Souveräne: Paul III. und Michelangelo. Das »Motu proprio« vom Oktober 1549 147
Vitale Zanchettin	Le verità della pietra. Michelangelo e la costruzione in travertino di San Pietro 159
Federico Bellini	La cupola di San Pietro da Michelangelo a Della Porta 175
Christina Riebesell	Guglielmo della Porta's Projekte für die Ausstattung von Neu-Sankt-Peter 195
Kaspar Zollikofer	»Et Latinae et Graecae ecclesiae praeclarissima lumina [...] micarent.« Sankt Peter, Gregor XIII. und das Idealbild einer christlichen Ökumene 217
Sible de Blaauw	Unum et idem: Der Hochaltar von Sankt Peter im 16. Jahrhundert 227
Stefan Kummer	Zur Bildausstattung in Sankt Peter um 1600 243
Hannes Roser	Sankt Peter in den »Sacri trofei romani« des Francesco Maria Torrigio 257
Irving Lavin	The Baldacchino. Borromini vs Bernini: Did Borromini forget himself? 275
Ralph-Miklas Dobler	Die Vierungspfeiler von Neu-Sankt-Peter und ihre Reliquien 301
Rudolf Preimesberger	Ein ehernes Zeitalter in Sankt Peter? 325
Louise Rice	Bernini and the Pantheon Bronze 337
Sarah McPhee	The Long Arm of the Fabbrica: Saint Peter's and the City of Rome 353
Christoph Jobst	Cortona und Bernini in der <i>Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento</i> von Sankt Peter. Altarbild und Sakramentstabernakel im Konflikt? 375
Giovanni Morello	Alessandro VII e Bernini a San Pietro 393
Sebastian Schütze	»Werke als Kalküle ihres Wirkungsanspruchs«. Die Cathedra Petri und ihr Bedeutungswandel im konfessionellen Zeitalter 405
Tod A. Marder	A Finger Bath in Rosewater: Cracks in Bernini's Reputation 427
Elisabeth Kieven	Die Papstgrabmäler des 18. Jahrhunderts in Sankt Peter 435
Johannes Myssok	Antonio Canova: Das Grabmal Clemens' XIII. 455
Werner Oechslin	»Ecco la reverenda fabbrica la più grande e la più ricca dell'universo«. Bewunderung, Kritik und Ekstase in Sankt Peter im 18. Jahrhundert 485

The Baldacchino.

Borromini vs Bernini: Did Borromini forget himself?

Irving Lavin

When I started my life as an art historian half a century ago, there raged two major international debates about rival claimants in wars of attribution, Masaccio vs Masolino, and Jan vs Hubert van Eyck. Those classic, intra-disciplinary conflicts, now largely forgotten, have been replaced in our time by the rivalry between Borromini and Bernini, which embodies not only distinctions between artistic personalities, but also territorial and cultural wars, between North Italy and Rome, between architecture and sculpture.

My purpose today is twofold. First, I intend to end this war once and for all, at least to my satisfaction, and at least in its first engagement, that is, the baldachin of Saint Peter's (Fig. 1). And second, I want to offer some observations about the origin and significance of one of the *baldacchino's* most important innovations.

Some contrasting opinions

Heinrich Thelen (1967), imagined 'artistic discussions' between Borromini and Bernini that resulted in crucial elements of the *baldacchino's* design.¹ (So far as I am aware, Thelen was the first ever to attribute a significant role to Borromini in the *baldacchino's* design, universally ascribed to Bernini theretofore.)

Jennifer Montagu (1971), doubts "the case for what is the major theme of [Thelen's] book, the vital, one might say the dominant role of Borromini in the creation of Bernini's tabernacle."² (Also notes that the claims of Borromini's nephew Bernardo Castelli-Borromini are biased and cannot be trusted.)

George Bauer (1996), supports my (1968) "vigorous defense of the originality of Bernini's work."³

Tod A. Marder (1998): "[...] it is doubtful that Borromini could lay claim to the formal rather than the technical inventions of the superstructure that give the *baldacchino* its character. He certainly claimed none for himself in his notations for Martinelli's guidebook."⁴

Sabine Burbaum (1999): "The finally decisive idea [...] must have arisen after the technical discussions with Borromini about the necessary modifications of the design [...]. Borromini appears to have been primarily responsible for the architectural design of the baldachin, whereas Bernini concentrated on the sculptural decoration. The final form of the crown must have arisen in the dialogue between architect and sculptor, in the repeated discussion about the project and its effect and the resulting corrections."⁵

(1996), 146, n. 4; IRVING LAVIN, *Bernini and the Crossing of Saint Peter's*, New York 1968.

4 TOD A. MARDER, *Bernini and the Art of Architecture*, New York 1998, 38.

5 "Die schließlich entscheidende Idee, die zwangsläufig auf die neue Höhendimensionierung und die Umdeutung in Gebäckstücke folgen mußte, ist schließlich in der Federskizze Berninis aus dem Barberini-Archiv (Abb. 15 [our fig. 13]) faßbar. Das von Thelen als für Bernini typisches Gesprächsnotat identifizierte Blatt muß nach den technischen Diskussionen mit Borromini um die notwendigen Modifizierungen des Entwurfs entstanden sein." Cf. SABINE BURBAUM, *Die Rivalität zwischen Francesco Borromini und Gianlorenzo Bernini*, Oberhausen 1999, 69. – "[...] erscheint Borromini maßgeblich für die architektonische Durchbildung des Monuments verantwortlich, wohingegen Bernini sich auf die plastische Dekoration konzentriert zu haben scheint. Die endgültige Form der Bekrönung dürfte im Dialog zwischen Architekt und Bildhauer, in der wiederholten Diskussion um das Projekt und seine Wirkung und den daraus resultierenden Korrekturen entstanden sein." Ibid., 71.

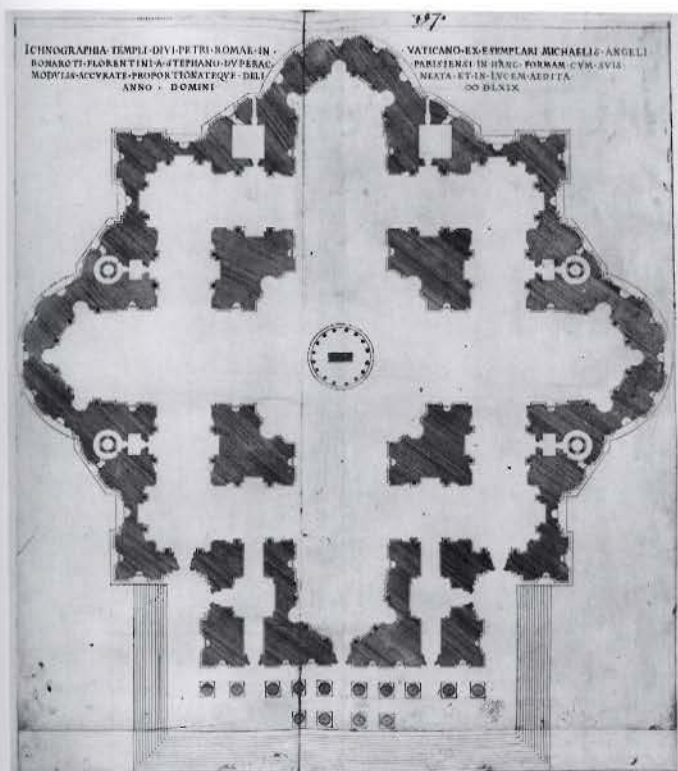
1 "Die genial hingeworfene Federskizze von Bernini (Abb. 35 [our fig. 13]), die nach einer solchen Einbeziehung in den Architekturzusammenhang sucht [i. e. the conjunction of the baldachin canopy with the architectural cornice] und dabei zugleich – wenn auch nur vorübergehend – sogar die motivische Verbindung des Baldachinhimmels mit den Engelfiguren löst, scheint in der Tat während einer künstlerischen Diskussion mit Borromini entstanden zu sein." Cf. HEINRICH THELEN, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Hochaltar-Architektur von St. Peter in Rom*, Berlin 1967, 63.

2 JENNIFER MONTAGU, Review of "Heinrich Thelen, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Hochaltar-Architektur von St. Peter in Rom*, Berlin 1967" and "Irving Lavin, *Bernini and the Crossing of Saint Peter's*, New York, 1968", in: *The Art Quarterly*, 34 (1971), 490–492, cf. 490 f.

3 GEORGE C. BAUER, "Bernini and the Baldacchino: On Becoming an Architect in the Seventeenth Century", in: *Architectura*, 26



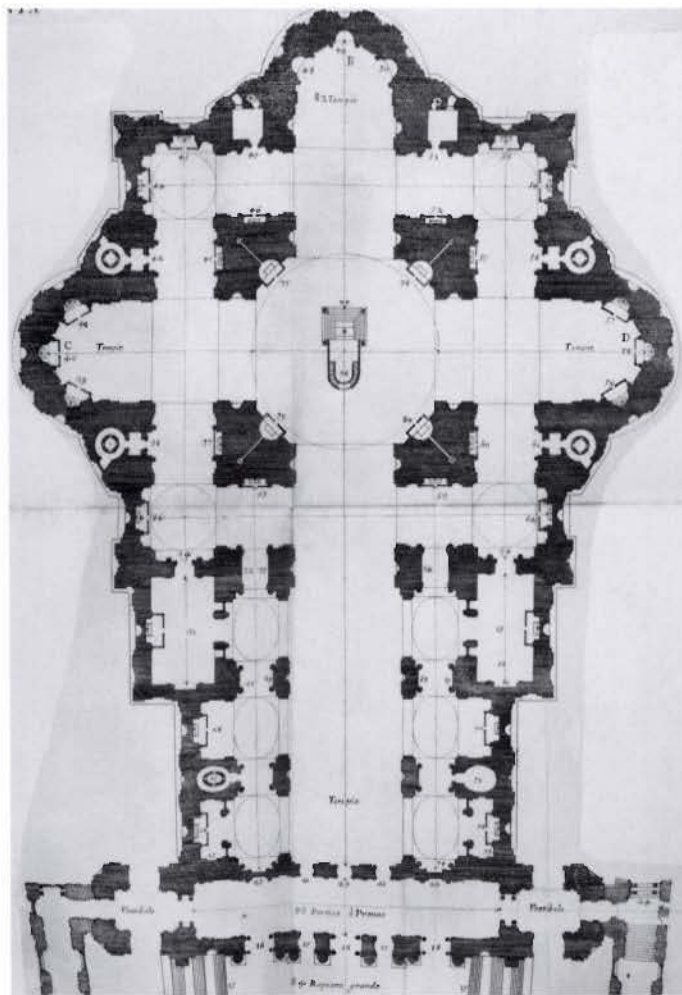
1 View of Baldacchino and choir



2 Etienne Dupérac after Michelangelo, Plan of New St. Peter's

The work on Saint Peter's, especially during the reign of Urban VIII, is one of the best documented projects in the entire history of art. The minute financial records kept by the papal paymasters and accountants are preserved virtually in tact, and have been meticulously researched and published posthumously by the brilliant Polish scholar Oskar Pollak (1893–1915), a childhood friend and correspondent of Franz Kafka, who perished as a combatant in the Austrian army in World War I.⁶ How is it possible to have such widely divergent opinions in the face of such ample and unambiguous documentation? I shall try to respond by reviewing, super-summarily, what might be called the hard evidence – that is, contemporary evidence – in its three forms: payments for work done, drawings that testify to the contributions of both artists, and references to the subject in literary sources. In spite of the acrimonious debates it is interesting that the evidence has never been collected and focused upon in quite this way.

The importance of the issue is obvious to all students of the period since the baldachin, while absolutely saturated with references to tradition, also breaks with tradition in fun-

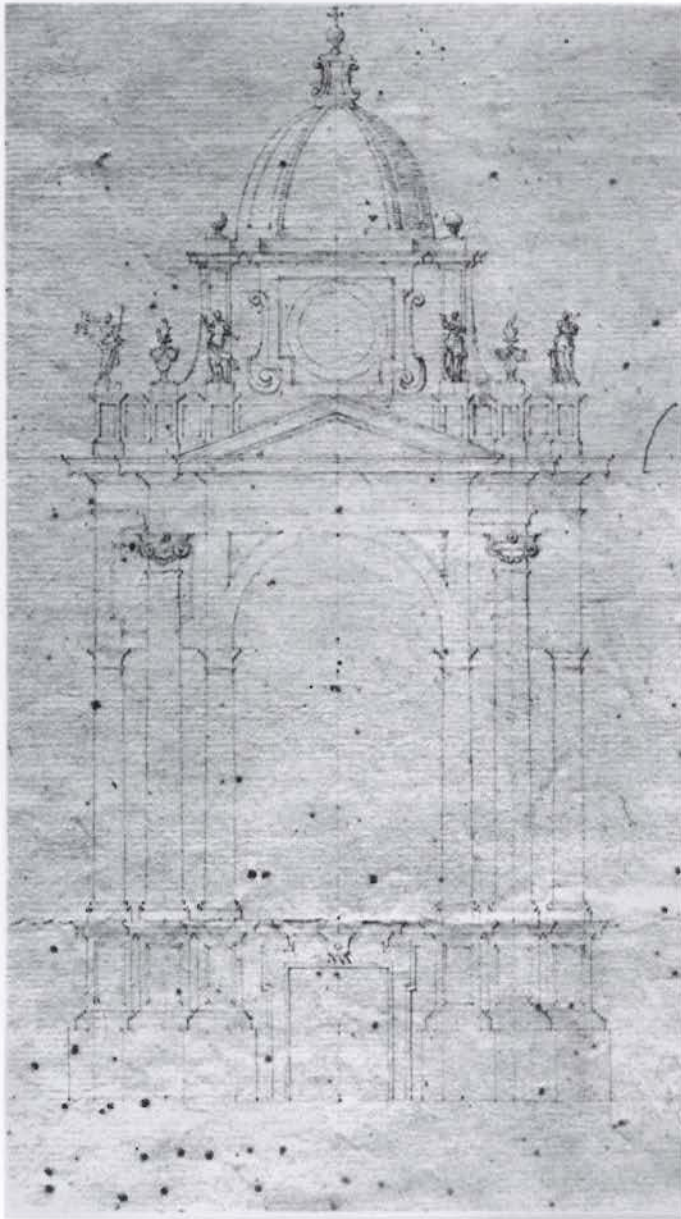


3 Carlo Fontana, Plan of Saint Peter's, engraving, detail

damental ways and inaugurates a new epoch in the history of art. The break took place early in 1624 when the newly elected Urban VIII appointed a young interloper, Bernini, aged 26 and with very little experience in architecture, to carry out the first, most urgent, and most important project of his reign, the completion of a permanent marker for the high altar. It is essential to recognize that this drastic move signifies not only the pope's determination finally to get the job done, after many earlier efforts had failed, but a fundamentally new conception of how it was to be done. The new vision was implicit in that veritable clarion call of the early Baroque issued by Urban at the time, when he was said to have proclaimed in reference to Bernini that his reign would bring forth a new Michelangelo.⁷ Clearly Urban thought of himself as inaugurating a new era, with a new concept and a new design at the

6 OSKAR POLLAK, *Die Kunsttätigkeit unter Urban VIII.*, vol. 2, *Die Peterskirche in Rom*, Vienna 1931; MAX BROD, *Franz Kafka. A Biography*, New York 1960, esp. 54–59.

7 "E come quegli che fin dal tempo che dalla santità di Paolo V eragli questo nobile ingegno stato dato in custodia, aveva incominciato a prevederne cose grandi; egli aveva concepita in se stesso una virtuosa ambizione, che Roma nel suo pontificato e per sua



4 Borromini, *Project for ciborium in crossing of Saint Peter's*, drawing. It. AZ., Rom, 1443 (254 × 160 mm), Albertina, Vienna

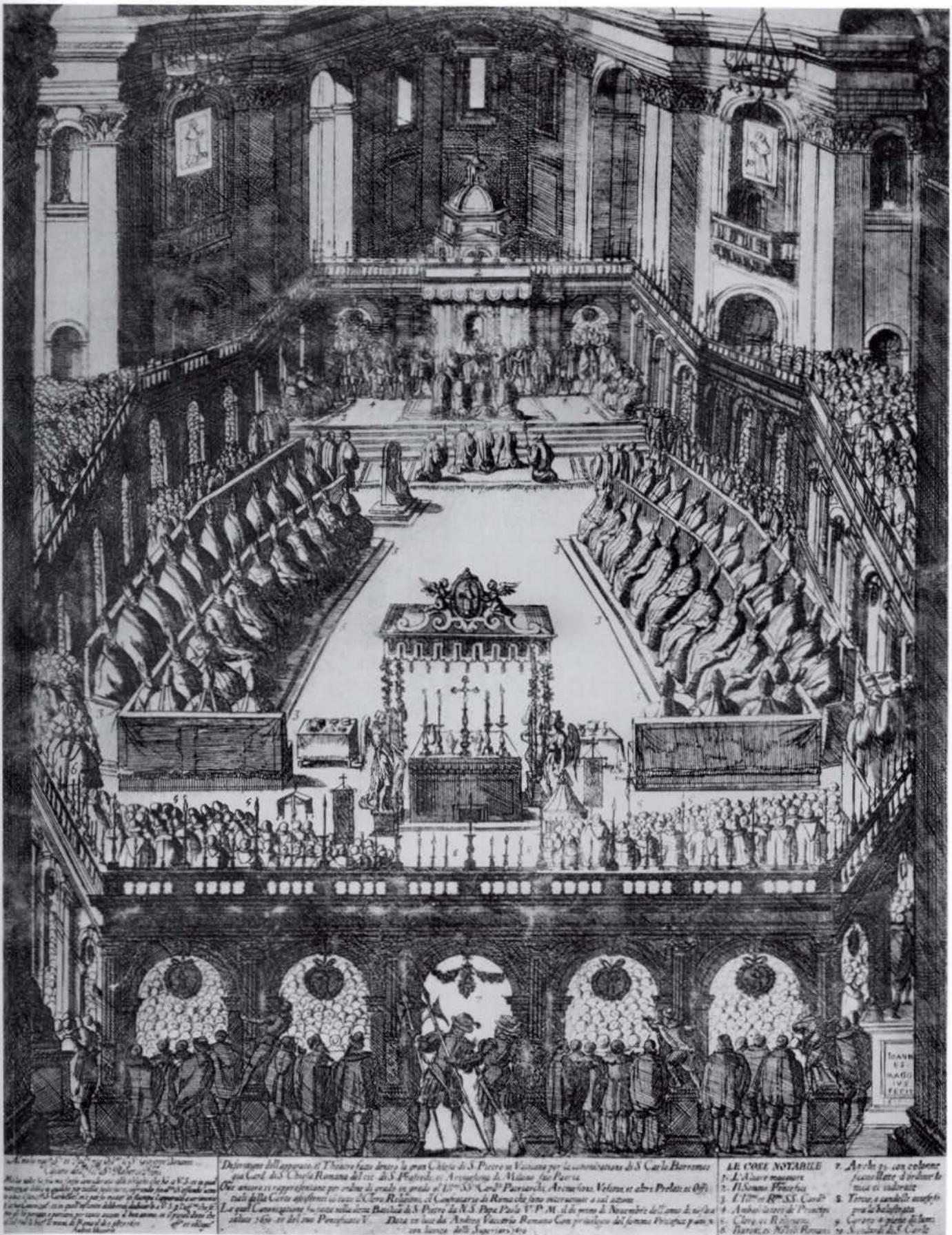
very heart of the church, meaning not only the basilica of Saint Peter but the institution itself. The pope's reference to Michelangelo is normally taken as one of the empty hyperbolic tropes that signaled the new era of Baroque rhetoric.⁸

industria giungesse a produrre un altro Michelangelo, tanto più, perché già eragli sovvenuto l'alto concetto dell'altar maggiore di S. Pietro, nel luogo che diciamo la Confessione." Cf. FILIPPO BALDINUCCI, *Vita di Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, ed. Sergio Samek Ludovici, Milan 1948, 80 f. – "From the time that His Holiness Paul V had entrusted him with this noble genius, Urban VIII had foreseen great things of Bernini. The Pope had conceived the

But the allusion may be understood in a more specific and significant way if one considers, first, the repercussions of the fateful decision taken early in the reign of Paul V to add a nave to the central plan building initiated a century before under Bramante and completed by Michelangelo (Fig. 2, 3). An uneasy marriage of convenience was perpetrated between two traditional church types: the central plan, commemorative and devotional mortuary sanctuary, and the longitudinal basilica that served the ritual and celebratory function of the church. At Saint Peter's the marriage was notoriously awkward and inconvenient, and it produced what can best be described as a chimera, to use a term that will reappear in this discussion.⁹ The second point to recall is that as a young cardinal Maffeo Barberini (elevated 1606; member of the Congregation that governed the basilica at least from 1608) had been vehemently opposed to the construction of the nave, and it is no accident that Bernini's biographer Filippo Baldinucci quotes Urban's proclamation precisely as the introduction to his discussion of the *baldacchino*. In this context, the appointment of Bernini as a new Michelangelo was a verbal confirmation that Urban was intent from the outset to recreate, in the spirit of his great High Renaissance predecessors, an image of the unified, universal church centered on the tomb of the apostles, while affirming the Counterreformatory image of the church as the ultimate goal of the Christian's spiritual pilgrimage.¹⁰ Everything he accomplished at Saint Peter's during his long reign can be understood, must be understood, I believe, in the light of this conflatory goal.

lofty ambition that in his pontificate Rome would produce another Michelangelo. His ambition grew even stronger, as he already had in mind the magnificent idea for the high altar of St. Peter's in the area which we call the confession." Cf. FILIPPO BALDINUCCI, *The Life of Bernini*, transl. by Catherine Enggass, University Park 1966, I.

- 8 CESARE D'ONOFRI, *Roma vista da Roma*, Rome 1967, 172–187; CATHERINE M. SOUSSLOFF, "Imitatio Buonarroti", in: *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20 (1989), 581–602.
- 9 For a discussion of Urban's enterprise in light of the practical and liturgical problems attendant upon the central plan and the final hybrid design of Saint Peter's, some of them never resolved, cf. LAVIN 1968 (as note 3); IRVING LAVIN, "Bernini at Saint Peter's: singularis in singulis, in omnibus unicus", in: *St. Peter's in the Vatican*, ed. William Tronzo, Cambridge etc. 2005, 111–243; greatly expanded, IRVING LAVIN, *Bernini a San Pietro: singularis in singulis, in omnibus unicus*, Rome 2007.
- 10 On Maffeo Barberini's initial opposition to the nave cf. LUDWIG VON PASTOR, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, 40 vols., London 1923–53, vol. 26, 387 f.; HOWARD HIBBARD, *Carlo Maderno and Roman Architecture 1580–1630*, London 1971, 69 f. On the reaffirmation of the centrality of the high altar of Saint Peter's and its repercussions in the furnishings of the basilica, especially the crossing, see the references in n. 9 above. The point was also emphasized by PASTOR 1923–53, vol. 26, 459, 466.



5 Giovanni Maggi, *Canonization of Carlo Borromeo*, 1610, engraving. Coll. Stampe, Vatican Library, Rome

And so it was from the outset with the project for the *baldacchino*, which also created, in its way, a chimeric marriage between two distinct and traditionally mutually exclusive forms of symbolic markers of sacral distinction, one commemorative, monumental, and stationary – the architectural ciborium (Fig. 4); the other ritual, ephemeral, and mobile – the processional canopy carried on staves (Fig. 5).¹¹ The link between them was provided by a third, intermediate type in which an architectural, often columnar, substructure was surmounted by a lightweight, open, often ribbed, superstructure; this was the case with the original Constantinian *pergula* installed at Saint Peter's, which Bernini's *baldacchino* was surely meant to recall (Fig. 6). Given its hybrid nature, there is no proper term for Bernini's work, an art historical hapax legomenon; I have capitalized the Italian word to acknowledge its traditional name, but distinguish it from the traditional baldachin, indeed, from any of its prototypes.

In Bernini's imagination considerations of scale, visibility, stability, and homage to both commemorative and ceremonial traditions ultimately required that these prototypes be conflated, a process that inevitably affected many elements of the design. I shall focus here on only one element of the final design, albeit the most important and controversial, that is, the relationship between the lambrequin with hanging lappets proper to a ceremonial baldachin, and the columns proper to the commemorative ciborium or *pergula* (Fig. 7). The evidence is ample to show that if the genetic hybrid was to be achieved (and, as with the conflation of central with longitudinal plan in Saint Peter's itself, some thought the very idea anathema), this relationship was the crux of the matter. I do not use the word crux idly, since the conjunction was belabored throughout the long agony of the *baldacchino's* gestation. It is important to bear in mind that what became the final solution was not reached only at the end, as is often assumed, but was repeatedly considered from the very beginning. In fact, several of the altar tabernacles in the nave of Old Saint Peter's included traditional entablatures decorated along the lower edges with lappets or scalloped ornaments. Particularly suggestive in our context was the tabernacle of the Sacrament installed in the early sixteenth century by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger for Pope Pius III (Fig. 8).¹²



6 Constantinian Presbytery, Old St. Peter's, reconstruction drawing

The entire monument was displayed beneath a tasseled canopy hung from the entablature of the nave colonnade, and the entablature of the tabernacle itself, fringed along the bottom, was supported by two of the famous spiral columns decorated with vine scrolls symbolic of the Eucharist, said to have been retrieved from the Temple of Jerusalem by Constantine the Great and installed over the tomb of the apostles in the choir of the original basilica.¹³ Inside Sangallo's tabernacle the altar was again covered by a lambrequin – no doubt reminiscent of the canopies carried over the pope as he displayed

11 The high altar of Saint Peter's is covered with a temporary baldachin supported by standing angels on one version of the print showing the beatification of Elizabeth of Portugal, while Bernini's first project for the *baldacchino* appears in a second version. Bernini designed the elaborate installations for the ceremony, which took place on May 22, 1625. Cf. LAVIN 1968 (as in note 3), 10 f.

12 We owe this important observation to PAOLA ZAMPA, "Arredi architettonici rinascimentali nella basilica costantiniana: La cappella del Sacramento", in: *L'architettura della basilica di San Pietro*.

Storia e costruzione, ed. Gianfranco Spagnesi (*Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura*, n.s., 25–30 [1995/97]), Rome 1997, 167–174, esp. 173, and I am grateful to Jack Freiberg for calling Zampa's work to my attention. Other examples may be seen in the reproductions in LOUISE RICE, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's. Outfitting the Basilica, 1621–1666*, Cambridge 1997, figs. 16, 17, 18, 22, 26.

13 The hanging canopy is visible in RICE 1997 (as in note 12), fig. 16. On the spiral columns, cf. LAVIN 1968 (as in note 3), 14–16.



7 Saint Peter's, crown of the baldachin

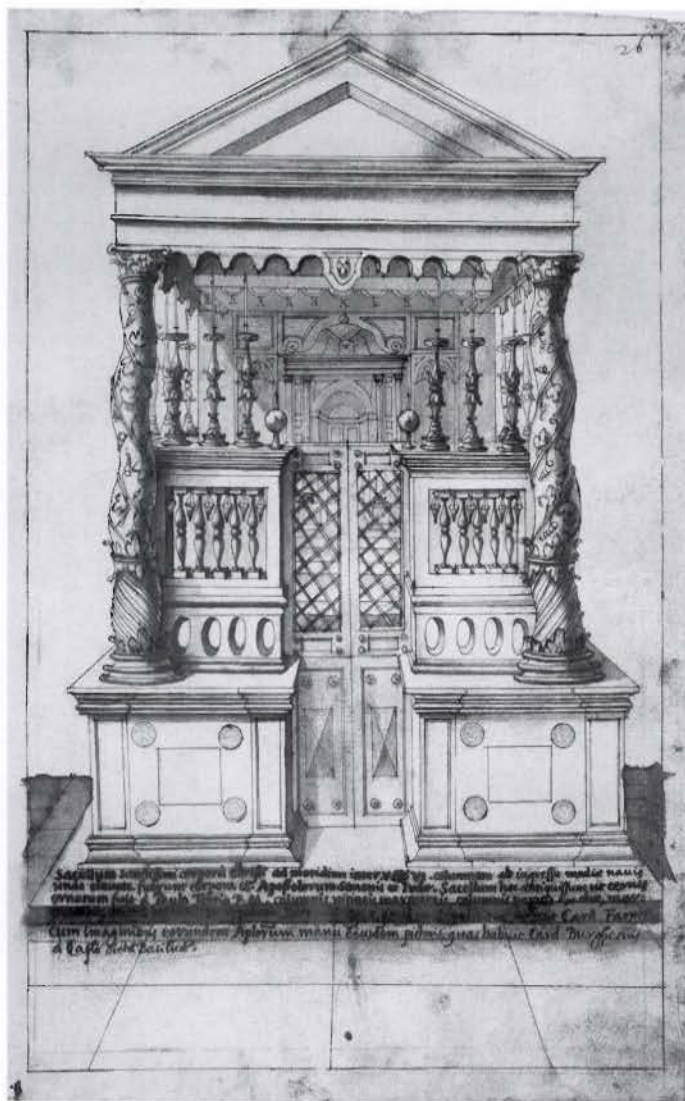
the Sacrament in the traditional Corpus Domini procession.¹⁴ Under Bernini, the architrave and frieze were replaced by rows of tasseled lappets, and the resulting lambrequin-cum-cornice became a *Leitmotiv* and bone of contention in the subsequent development of the *baldacchino*: first it was in (Fig. 9) then it was out (Fig. 10), then it was in again (Fig. 11), then it was out again (Fig. 12), and finally it was in again at last (Fig. 13). Essential to any possible solution was a dual problem of formal syntax: one of support, since a lambrequin, which counters no weight, is formally and mechanically incompatible with the lateral thrusts of a superstructure; and one of con-

junction, since columns can formally and mechanically be braced only by an entablature. Hence the crucial role of the angels, who, as God's minions, always do the heavy lifting.

Payments

The documents make it clear that Borromini was busily employed at Saint Peter's throughout the reign of Urban VIII under Bernini's direction, on a great variety of projects: he is mentioned no less than 37 times in Pollak's index, working as stone mason, marble and wood carver, wax modeler, and as a draughtsman. But never as architect. Only two sets of payments to him concern the baldacchino, very distinctly separate both in time and in character. Between January 30, 1627, and April 4, 1628, Borromini was paid for work as a mason (*scarpellino*) and carver on the foundations of the columns,

14 On the eucharistic significance of Bernini's *baldacchino* and that of the Corpus Domini procession at Saint Peter's, cf. LAVIN 1968 (as in note 3); LAVIN 2005 (as in note 9), 45–55; LAVIN 2007 (as in note 9).



8 Altar of the Holy Sacrament, Old St. Peter's, drawing. Archivio del Capitolo di San Pietro, MS A 64 ter, fol. 22 r, Vatican Library, Rome

on the altar stairs, and on the models of the pedestals of the bronze columns.¹⁵

There follows a gap of three years, until he was paid between April 12, 1631, and January 22, 1633, for work on the crown of the baldachin, designing and carrying out the beaten copper ornaments that cover the superstructure; that is, large scale drawings and carvings in wax and drawings on copper for the carpenters and copper workers (beaters): "large drawings for all the arches [*centine*], plants [*piante*], cornices [*cornici*], foliage [*fogliami*], and other carvings [*intagli*] that go inside the ribs [*costole*] and moldings [*cimase*], and for tracing them on the copper, so that the carpenters and those who beat the copper cannot err."¹⁶

15 POLLAK 1931 (as in note 6), 342 top, Nos. 1122–1125.

16 POLLAK 1931 (as in note 6), 373 f., Nos. 1274–1287.

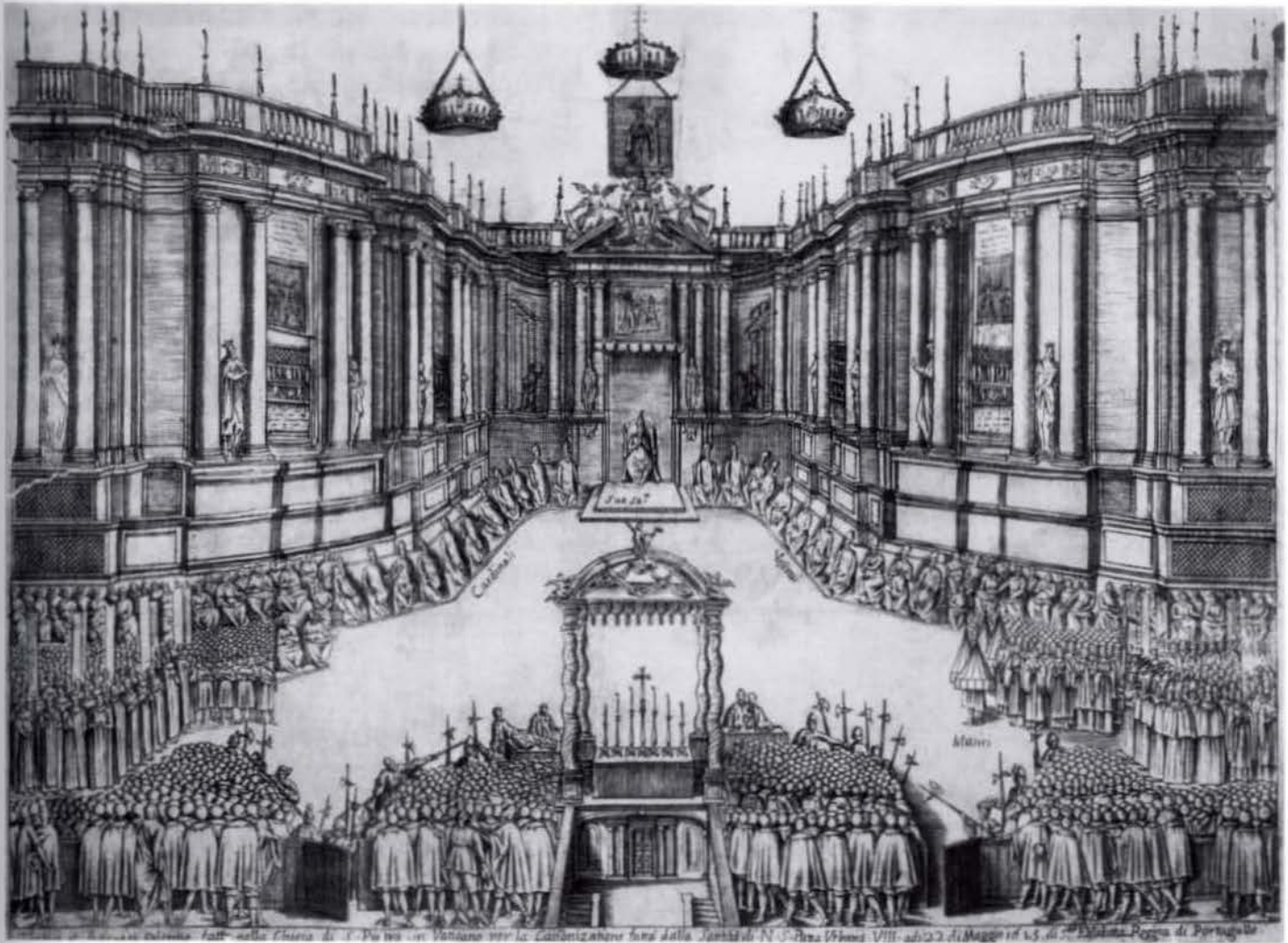
Drawings

Borromini's drawings of the *baldacchino* are also neatly divided into two completely contrasting groups. The earlier group consists of three amazing perspective views of the baldachin, intended no doubt to serve in judging the scale and proportions of the monument, and its relation to the surrounding architecture (Fig. 14). They were made during the design phase of the crown, including full-scale models, and while they show details that appear in the final work there is nothing to suggest that Borromini was trying out new ideas of his own in these contextual renderings. On the other hand, experimentation is precisely what takes place in a series of sketches by Bernini in which he studies a variety designs for the crown intended to diminish its weight, raise its center of gravity, and ensure the stability of the structure (Fig. 12).¹⁷ A crucial step further is then taken in the fulminating sketch by Bernini that returns to the cornice-lappets solution with the undulating curvature of the ribs and the angels standing on the columns (Fig. 13). The second Borromini group consists of three very large wash drawings – no less exceptional in Borromini's oeuvre than the spatial perspectives of the baldachin – for details of the ornaments (Fig. 15). These elaborate and delicately finished sheets, surely the same or similar to those referred to in the documents, were clearly made as demonstration models, perhaps even to be copied as templates for transfer to the sheets of copper that the workmen were then to hammer into conformity with the molds.

Above all, the evidence of the drawings is consistent with the evidence of the documents, that Borromini was completely extraneous to the design process of the *baldacchino*. The evidence of the documents and of the drawings is also consistent with the testimony of Borromini's nephew, Bernardo Castelli-Borromini, that Borromini's talent for making highly accomplished drawings was what first motivated Maderno to employ his young relative and protégé: "he attended to drawing with great diligence and perfection, and realizing this his relative Carlo Maderno gave him work and had him make finished drawings for him."¹⁸ Unlike many, indeed the majority of Borromini's drawings, none of those for the *baldacchino* show the slightest graphic suggestion of trial, error or experimentation.

17 Static considerations were raised with respect to the version with the raised canopy and surmounting figure of the Risen Christ. Cf. LAVIN 1968 (as in note 3), 12, 23.

18 "[...] ateneva a disegnare con grandissima diligenza e polizia et accorgendosi di ciò Carlo maderni suo parente per uia di donna, li daua da fare e da tirare disegni in polito per lui [...]" Cf. BURBAUM 1999 (as in note 5), 278.



9 Canonization of Elizabeth of Portugal, 1625 (decorations by Bernini), engraving. Coll. Stampe, Vatican Library, Rome



10 Medal of Urban VIII, 1626. Medagliere, Vatican Library, Rome



11 Medal commemorating the canonization of Andrea Corsini, 1629. Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



12 Bernini, Studies for the crown of the Baldacchino, drawing. It. AZ, Rom 769 r, Albertina, Vienna

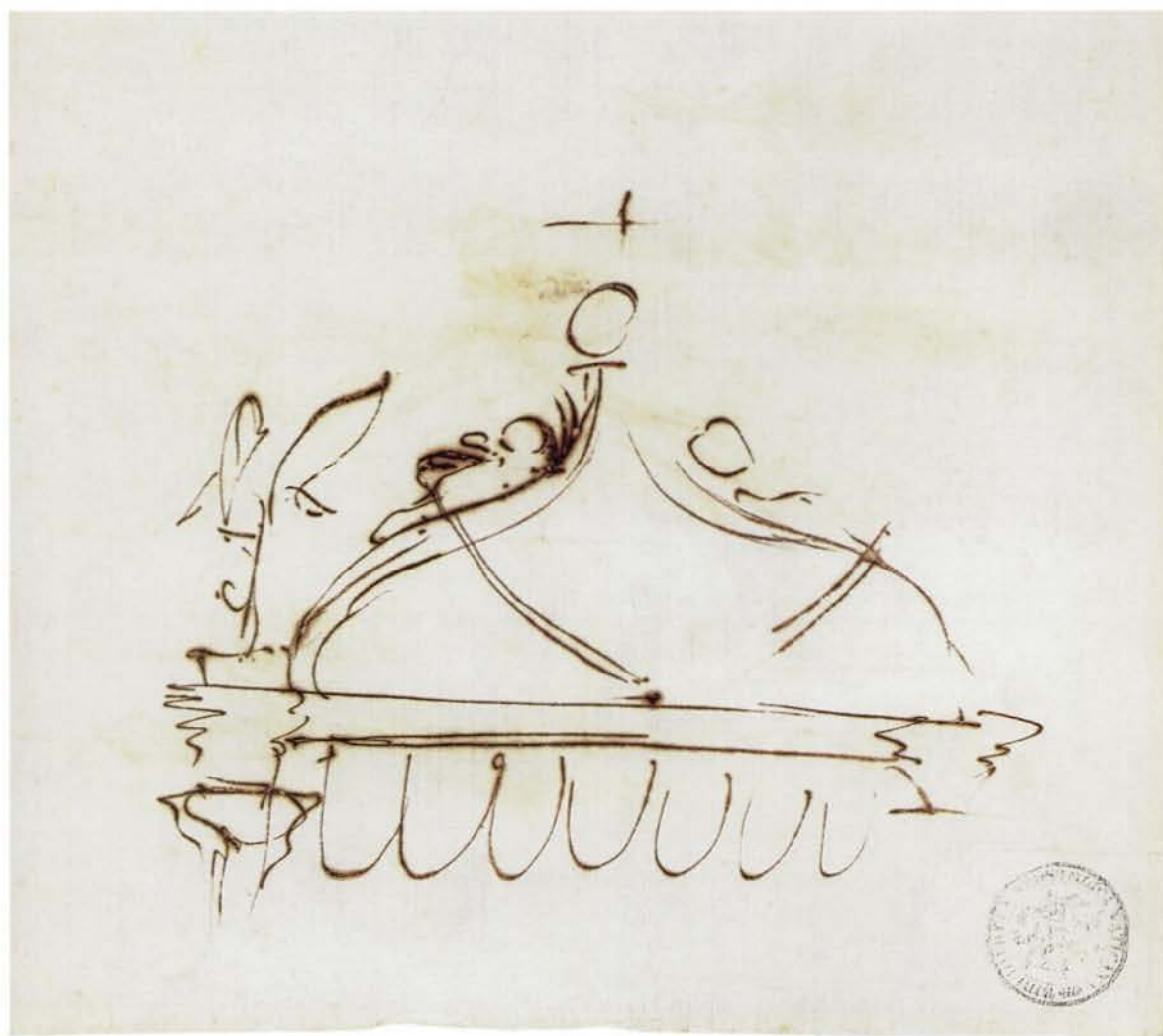
Sources

We have seen that Urban recruited Bernini not simply because he admired his work, but because he had a concrete idea of what the high altar of Saint Peter's should signify, visually and conceptually, in the spirit and under the aegis of Michelangelo. Bernini himself recognized and acknowledged Urban's role in the earliest expression we have of Bernini's view of the genesis of the baldachin design. The idea is attributed to Bernini himself by Lelio Guidiccioni in a literary dia-

logue between Guidiccioni and Bernini, datable to Sept., 1633, "Whose thought do you think the altar was", Bernini asks. "Yours", Guidiccioni replies; "think again", returns Bernini, "and say it was His Holiness's." "Then you are also the object of his praise, which is the origin of yours."¹⁹ The pope's own biographer made the point in no uncertain terms, "The artist was Bernini, who acquired great applause and fame, but the thought and idea was of Urban himself."²⁰ While it is tempting again to dismiss this point as typical Baroque flattery, or to seize upon it as a means of deflating Bernini's reputation for arrogance, I think it should be taken seriously, not as an

19 "G.L.B. Di chi pensate, che sia il pensiero dell'Altar Vaticano, tale qual sia divenuta l'opera? L.G. Vostro hò sempre pensato. G.L. A pensarla meglio, dite di S. S.à L.G. Dunque voi sete pure obbietto di lode sua; la quale è origine della vostra [...]." Cf. CESARE D'ONOFRIO, "Un dialogorecita di Gian Lorenzo Bernini e Lelio Guidiccioni", in: *Palatino*, 10 (1966), 127-134, 133 f.

20 "L'artefice fu il Cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino che in tal lavoro acquistossi grande applauso e maggior fama, ma il pensiero e l'idea fu di Urbano stesso." Cf. ANDREA NICOLETTI; cited after CESARE D'ONOFRIO, *La papessa Giovanna. Roma e papato tra storia e leggenda*, Rome 1979, 244.



13 Bernini, Study for the crown of the Baldacchino, drawing. MS Barb. Lat., 9900, fol. 2, Vatican Library, Rome

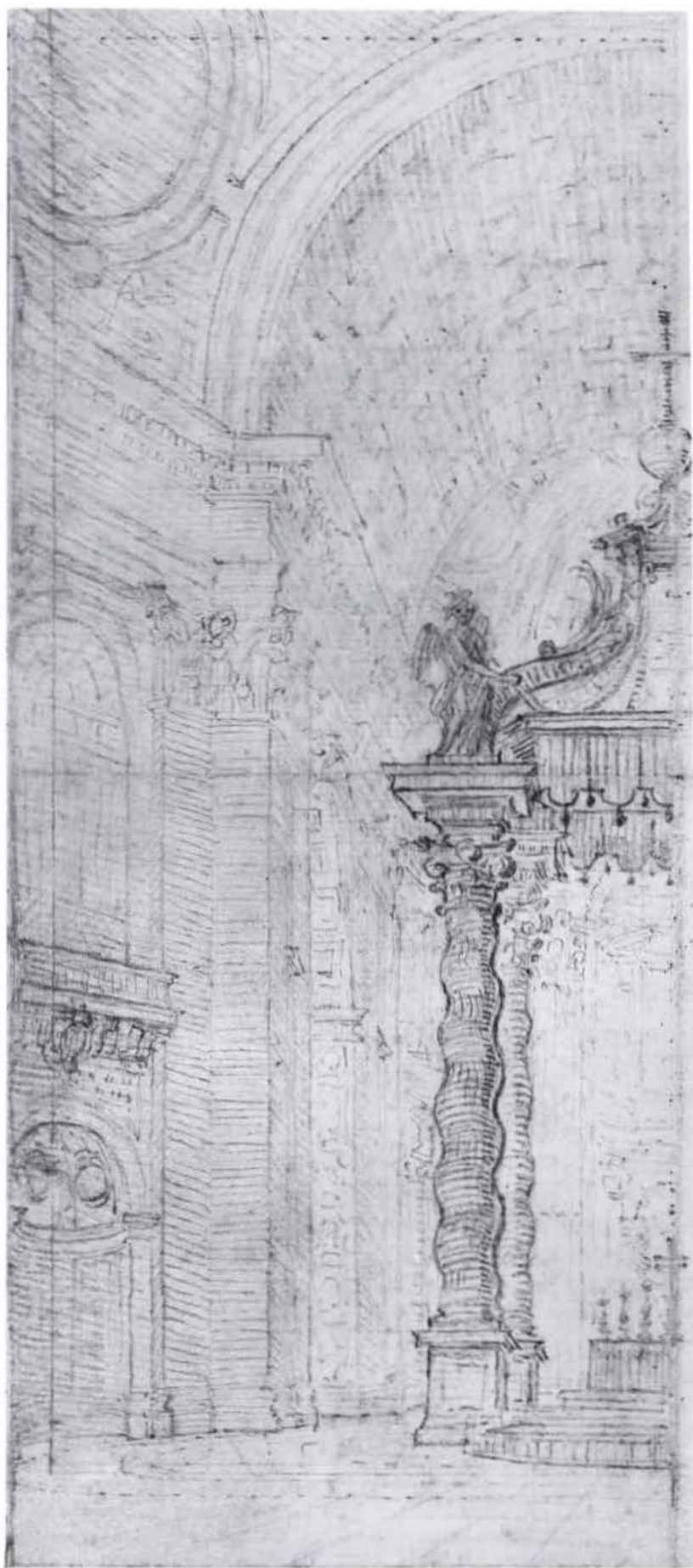
indication of Urban's literal role as a designer, but in the basic view of the monument as the focal point of a newly coherent and unified architectural and ideological concept of Saint Peter's. This was indeed the principle Bernini followed through the entire process of designing the crossing of Saint Peter's and I have no doubt that it was indeed a sympathetic response to the pope's own ideology and ambitions.

Bernini's biographers, Baldinucci and the artist's son Domenico, make it clear that Bernini's own concern was not with the design of the Baldacchino, but with the problem of determining its scale and proportions in the vastness of Saint Peter's. We know from Borromini's perspective drawings and especially from the documents, which record a whole series of models ranging up to full scale that were actually erected *in situ*, that an unprecedented effort was expended to study the problem.²¹ Yet, in the end, despite all this advance planning, Bernini avowed that the baldachin had succeeded well,

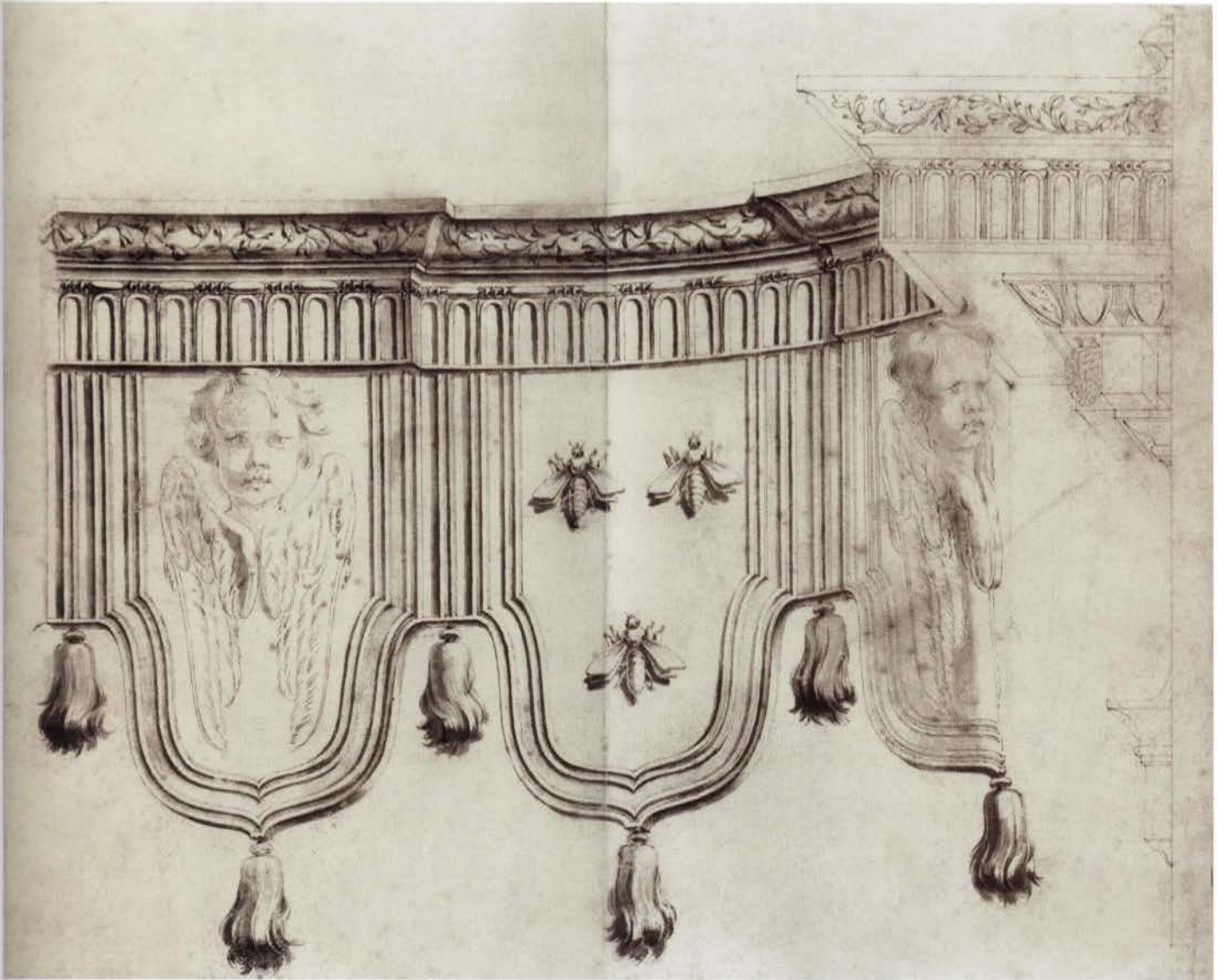
"by chance."²² The observation was an ironic inversion of Michelangelo's famous dictum that the true artist must have the *giudizio dell'occhio*:²³ since there was no precedent for the scale of the project at Saint Peter's, the just measurement and

21 The history of the execution of the *baldacchino*, with special emphasis on the use of models, is the subject of an important essay by George C. Bauer. Cf. BAUER 1996 (as in note 3), 83.

22 BALDINUCCI ed. Samek Ludovici 1948 (as in note 7), 83: "Soleva dire il cavaliere che quest'opera era riuscita bene a caso, volendo inferire che l'arte stessa non poteva mai sotto una sì gran cupola ed in spazio sì vasto, e fra moli di eccedente grandezza dare una misura e proporzione che bene adequasse, ove l'ingegno e la mente dell'artefice, tale quale essa misura doveva essere, senz'altra regola concepire non sapesse." BALDINUCCI ed. Enggass 1966 (as in note 7), 17 (modified IL): "Bernini used to say it was by chance that this work came out so well, implying that under such a great dome and in such a vast space and among such massive



14 Borromini, Perspective study of the Baldacchino in situ, drawing. It. AZ., Rom, 762, Albertina, Vienna



15 Borromini, Design for the cornice-lappets entablature, drawing. RL5637, Royal Library, Windsor Castle

proportion of the *baldacchino* could not be found by artistic skill alone; so that if the artist's ingenuity and intelligence did not find the solution, it must have been found by chance. I suspect that the repetition and insistence upon this overarching act of creative judgment may refer specifically to the selec-

tion process that guided the laborious study mechanism, including the models and drawings such as those by Borromini, through which Bernini's evolving design concepts were envisioned. Borromini's drawings of the *baldacchino*, which portray the project in its spatial and architectural setting, are

piers, artistic skill alone could never determine a suitable dimension and proportion, where the artist's genius and mind could not conceive how the scale should be, without any other rule." DOMENICO BERNINI, *Vita del Cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernini*, Rome 1713, 38 f.: "Onde l'occhio solamente può esserne degno Giudice ' che con riguardare unitamente il Sito, la Mole, la Vastità del Vano, che empie senza ingombrarlo, la Vaghezza de' Rilievi, la Ricchezza della Materia, e tutto ciò che essa/39 é, e la proporzione che fuor di essa nel Tutto s'accorda, rimane appagato, e sodisfatto, mà in tal modo, che tramandandone la specie nel-

l'imaginativa, fà di mestiere, che l'intelletto affermi per verità, ciò che diceva per sua modestia il Cavaliere, Quest'Opera essere riuscita bene a caso, volendo con raro temperamento dimostrare di haverla più tosto per buona, che fatta." [The eye alone can be a worthy judge, and, being satisfied, the intellect confirms as true what the Cavaliere said in modesty, that his work succeeded by chance, meaning that he achieved it intuitively, rather than deliberately.]

23 On the *giudizio dell'occhio*, see especially DAVID SUMMERS, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton 1981, 368–379.



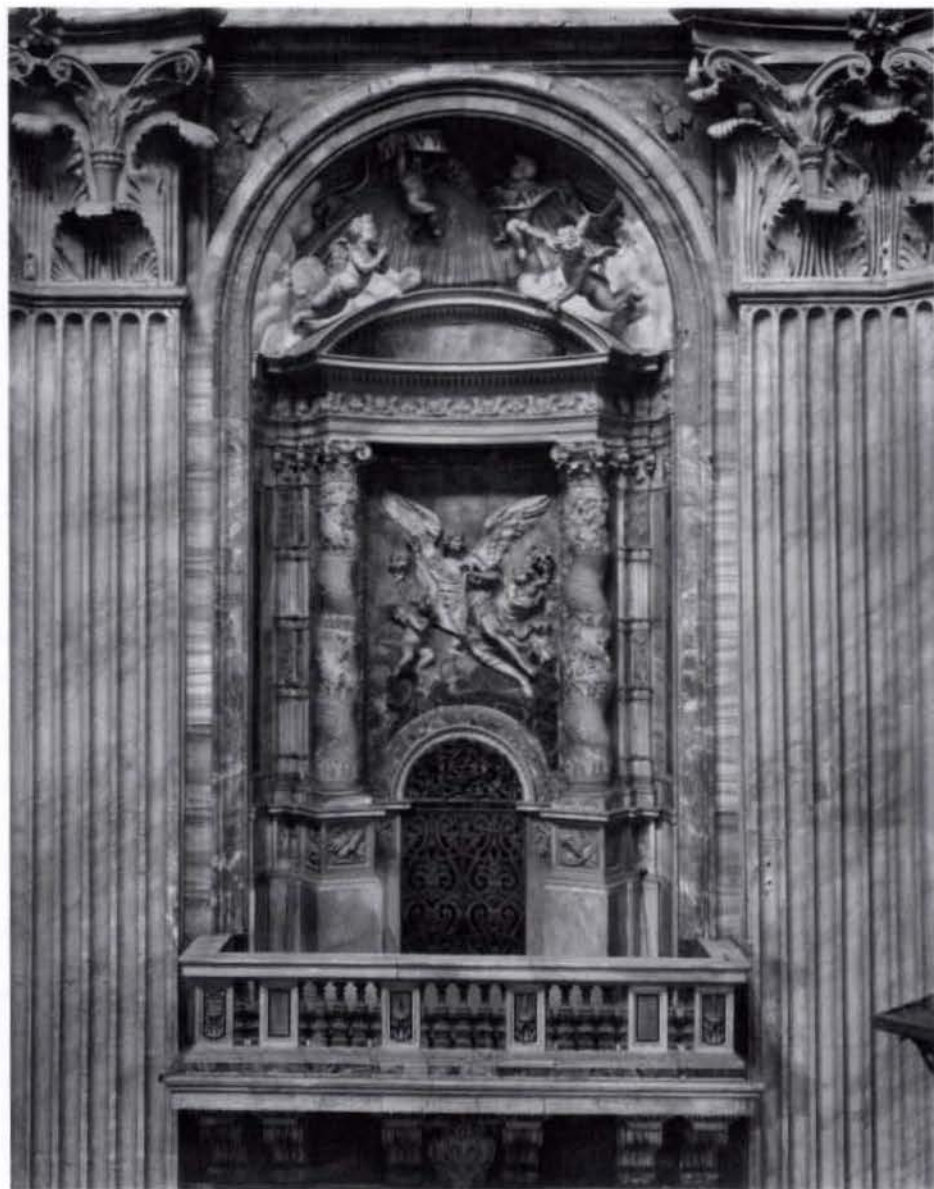
16 View of baldachin and dome

absolutely unique in his oeuvre: for him, a building was an isolated, self-contained ideal.

Borromini's drawings of the *baldacchino* in situ are, on the contrary, brilliant reflections of Bernini's revolutionary concern for what he called the "i contrapposti." Bernini employed this old term in a radically new, contextual way – in reference not to oppositional but to complementary and mutually dependent contrasts.²⁴ "Things do not appear only as they are,

but as they seem in relation to things nearby, which change their appearance. A building will appear larger if it is juxtaposed with others that are small", etc. While Borromini's

24 On Bernini's concept of *i contrapposti*, see IRVING LAVIN, *Bernini and the Unity of the Visual Arts*, 2 vols., New York and London 1980, 9–11.



17 Reliquary niche of St. Veronica

elaborate perspective renderings have no parallel in the corpus of Bernini drawings, many of Bernini's informal sketches show him studying visibility, viewpoints, and relationships, not in terms of mathematical proportions but as he envisioned them to be seen by the viewer.²⁵ Moreover, unlike his predecessors at Saint Peter's, Bernini did not conceive of the *baldacchino* ideologically as an isolated monument, but the focal point of a veritable solar system of memorabilia that came to include not only the four reliquary piers of the crossing but also two papal tombs, of Paul III and Urban VIII himself, flanking the Chair of Saint Peter in the apse; all centered

on the gilded and radiant altar cover and marker for the tomb of the apostles – more durable than bronze, as if to preempt Horace's famous epitome of classical literary achievement.²⁶ More than any other aspect of the design, successful as if 'by chance', Bernini was proud of this contextual significance of the baldachin.

One of the primary documents in the Borromini-Bernini-*baldacchino* story was composed in 1657 by Borromini's great friend and patron Virgilio Spada, in a futile effort to have him reinstated as the architect of the Oratorio of San Filippo Neri. The relevant passage is as follows: "[Cardinal] Barberini told

25 HEINRICH BRAUER and RUDOLPH WITTKOWER, *Die Zeichnungen des Gianlorenzo Bernini*, 2 vols., Berlin 1931, pls. 56 a, 57, 62 b, 63 ab, 69 c, 74 ab, 94 a, 96.

26 For thoughts on the *baldacchino* in its context at Saint Peter's, cf. LAVIN 2005 (as in note 9), and more recently, with much additional material, LAVIN 2007 (as in note 9).

me a few days ago that the Palazzo Barberini [...] was in large part the design of Borromini, and Borromini himself told me the same thing, which at first I did not believe, but in the end I did believe. And even though they greatly disgusted each other, and their love turned to great (mortal) hatred, though for reasons other than architecture, Bernini himself said to me many years ago before the altar of St. Peter's, that Borromini alone understood this profession, but that he was never satisfied, and that he wanted to enclose one thing inside another, and that inside another, with never an end."²⁷

Apart from giving credit to Borromini where it was due, and incidentally offering a profound insight into Borromini's mode of thought and architectural style, Bernini's statement as reported by Spada does not assert, imply, or justify the assumption that Borromini had anything to do with the design of the *baldacchino*. In point of fact, Bernini's statement is a typically ingenious, candid, subtle, and pertinent critique of the intricate convolutions of Borromini's own designs, in pertinent contrast to what Bernini and Spada were looking at when Bernini made the comment: the baldacchino in its setting comprises a remarkable series of series of concentric, concave – not convoluted – curves from the canopy through the entablature of the finial that supports the cross, to the concave frontispieces of the reliquary niches. (Fig. 16, Fig. 7, Fig. 17) Although largely unappreciated, this concerto grosso of concentric rings is crucial, not only visually but conceptually, to the significance of Bernini's whole enterprise in the crossing of Saint Peter's: in a sense, it echoes Urban VIII's fundamental purpose, to reclaim Michelangelo and reaffirm the centrality of the tomb and high altar.

In 1685 Borromini's nephew, Bernardo Castelli-Borromini, composed a biography of his uncle in response to a questionnaire from Filippo Baldinucci who was then preparing his famous compendium of artists' lives. Castelli-Borromini vituperates mercilessly against Bernini, reciting in venomous

detail his arrogance, foibles, and unscrupulous exploitation of others, especially his beloved uncle. Truly a painful and bitter thing to read, and much of the tone and information, innuendo as well as fact, must have come from Borromini himself. Castelli-Borromini is careful to mention various works of carving Borromini did at Saint Peter's under Urban VIII: the cherubs of marble flanking the entrance gates, the cherub at the apex of the above the gates, the cherub at the apex of the arch of the Attila relief by Algardi, the design and invention of the wrought iron gates to the Sacrament chapel, and he includes the story of Palazzo Barberini reported earlier by Virgilio Spada.²⁸ Castelli-Borromini is at great pains to describe how Bernini, 'innocent' of the architectural profession, left all the architectural work at Saint Peter's to Borromini, while taking all the credit (and stipends) to himself – until Borromini, disgusted by this treatment, abandoned Bernini with the famous remark: "it does not displease me that he took the money, but it displeases me that he enjoys the honor of my labors."²⁹

It is indeed a passionate and pathetic lament. But this very fact makes it all the more significant that no mention is made of any specific work of architecture at Saint Peter's under

28 On these works at Saint Peter's see MARCELLO FAGIOLO, "L'attività di Borromini da Paolo V a Urbano VIII (I lezione)", in: *Studi sul Borromini. Atti del Convegno promosso dall'Accademia Nazionale di San Luca*, I, Rome 1967, 57–90.

29 BURBAUM 1999 (as in note 5), 278 f.: "[...] e per dire qualche cosa delli lauori di marmo che lauorò il Borromino nel principio e nel mezzo del pontificato di urbano fra li altri lauori sono di sua mano quelli Carubini di marmo spiritosi e uiuaci che sono dalle parti delle porticelle con pannini e fistoncini – et anche il carubino sopra in mezzo al arco sopra dette porticelle per di dentro intorno a sant piero et anche è di sua mano quel carubino che è nel mezzo del arco sopra il basso rilieuo del attila flagellum dei – fu suo Disegno e suo inuentione la Cancellata di ferro dauanti alla capello del Santissimo in detta chiesa di Sant piero – et il palazzo delli barberini fu tutto fatto con suo disegno et ordine [...] morì poi il maderni e papa urbano in luogho del maderni deputò il Signor. Gio. lorenzo Bernino – famoso Scultore – e questa deputatione del bernino per architetto di sant piero fu perchè il papa quando era Cardinale era statto più uolte a uedere a lauorare di scultura il Bernino nella sua Casa a Santa maria maggiore et per quella conoscenza lo deputò per Architetto di sant piero [...] il quale, trouandosi di hauer hauto quella carica e conosiendosi di ciò inabile per essere egli scultore – e sapendo che il boromino haueua fatto per il maderni la fabrica à Sant piero – et anche per il medesimo haueua maneggiato e seguitato il Palazzo delli Barberini – lo pregò che in tale occasione non l'abandonasse promettendogli che hauerebbe riconosciuto con una degna ricompensa le molte sue fatiche [...] così il Boromino si lasiò uincere delle sue preg[h]iere – e seguitò. e promise [il Boromino] che hauerebbe continuato a tirare auanti le fabriche già incominciate per detto ponteficato come che già egli era informato del tutto – et il Bernini attendeua alla sua

27 The texts of Virgilio Spada and Bernardo Castelli-Borromini are conveniently printed in BURBAUM 1999 (as in note 5), 227–285, whence the passages quoted here are excerpted; *ibid.*, 283: "L'Emminentissimo Barberino mi disse pochi giorni sono che la fabrica Barberina alle 4 Fontane fù in gran parte [gestrichen: opera sua] disegno del Borromino, e me l'haveva detto anche l'istesso Borromini mà [cancelled: non l'havevo creduto] gli l'havevo finito di credere [...]. E con tutto che si disgustassero grandemente insieme, cioè il Bernino e Borromino, e che l'amore si convertisse in grandissimo odio [cancelled: mortale], per altre caggioni però che d'architettura, nondimeno il medesimo Cavaliere Bernino per verità disse a me molti anni sono avanti l'altare di S. Pietro che il solo Borromino intendeva questa professione, ma che non si contentava mai, e che voleva dentro una cosa cavare un'altra, e nell'altra l'altra senza finire mai."

Urban VIII, and in particular that not the faintest claim is made for any role by Borromini in the design of the *baldacchino*. And if ever there was a time and place to reclaim Borromini's contribution, surely it was this opportunity to see it published in a biography by an eminent writer! How is it possible that Castelli-Borromini failed to mention Borromini's contribution to the signature monument of the new era? Did Borromini forget to tell his nephew about it? Did Castelli-Borromini forget to pass it on to Baldinucci?

In 1660–63 Fioravante Martinelli, a learned friend and admirer of Borromini's, was composing a new guide to the monuments of Rome, the manuscript of which is preserved in the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome. The text is carefully written in pen with ample margins, as if Martinelli intended from the beginning that it should be gone over and commented upon by Borromini, which did in fact happen. Borromini served his friend in his usual meticulous and thorough way, writing in the margins with this usual pencil, no less than ninety-two corrections, additions, and suggestions, which Martinelli then copied more or less accurately and completely in ink, leaving Borromini's comments scarcely but definitely discernible. Fourteen of Borromini's comments concern himself and/or Bernini: he was by no means shy in specifying his own contributions to the architecture of Rome in cases where he found Martinelli's attributions wanting or imprecise, and in diminishing Bernini's role, sometimes quite subtly (see Appendix).³⁰ But two instances in particular shed light on his relation to Bernini in our context. One is that the protestations of both Virgilio Spada and Bernardo Castelli-Borromini to the contrary notwithstanding, Borromini in his comment on the Palazzo Barberini makes no claim to authorship, remarking only that it was the work "di molti, e spetialmente" del Bernini.³¹ This is noteworthy to say the least, considering the assertions of both Virgilio Spada and Bernardo Castelli-Borromini. The second instance stands out among all of Bor-



18 Page 201 of Fioravante Martinelli's unpublished guidebook *Roma ornata dall' architettura, pittura e scoltura*. Martinelli's original comment on the Baldacchino cancelled in the center column; Borromini's penciled emendation faintly visible in the left and lower margins, beneath Martinelli's inked copy. MS 4984, Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome

romini's emendations in that it is by far the longest, the most developed, and the most substantial. Indeed, Borromini's wording is not abbreviated in the unusual way of an incidental remark, but elaborately developed in full, grammatical sentences, as if he expected Martinelli simply to replace his own words with those of Borromini, verbatim, which in fact Martinelli did, except for one notable omission (Fig. 18). Along the left and bottom margins, in pencil faintly visible beneath Martinelli's inked copy, Borromini wrote: "It was the thought of Paul V to cover with a baldachin the high altar of Saint Peter's with a richness proportional to the opening made at the Confession and sepulcher of the same. Whence Carlo Maderno presented him with a design of twisted columns; but the baldachin did not touch the columns or their cornice."

scoltura [;] et per l' ['] architettura lassiaua fare tutte le fatiche al boromino [.] et il bernino faceua la figura di architetto di s. Pietro e del Papa, et infatti il bernino in quel tempo in tal professione era inocentissimo [.] tirati che furono del Boromino, a bon termine le fabriche di quel pontificato [.] il Bernino tirò li stipendij e salarij tanto della fabrica di sant Pietro Come del Palazzo Barberino et anche li denari delle misure – e mai diede cosa alcuna per le fatiche di tanti anni al boromino – ma solamente bone parole e grande promisione [.] e uedendosi il boromino deluso e deriso lasiò et abandonò il Bernino – con questo detto [:] non mi dispiacìe che abbia auto li denarij, ma mi dispiacìe che gode l' ['] onor delle mie fatiche."

30 Borromini's corrections concerning Bernini and himself, as transcribed by CESARE D'ONOFRIO, *Roma nel Seicento*, Florence 1969, are gathered in the Appendix, following D'Onofrio's page numbers: 11, 13, 14, 15bis, 57, 67, 69, 80, 105, 158, 189, 220, 232, 282.

31 HIBBARD 1971 (as in note 10), 228, D'ONOFRIO 1969 (as in note 30), 231f.



19 Bernini *Presenting the Design for the Reliquary Niches to Pope Urban VIII*, vault of southwest grotto chapel (dedicated to St. Veronica)

Thereafter, Paul died and the work remained on the design until the pontificate of Urbano VIII, who told the said Carlo to be content that Bernini would make the said work. The Cavalier Celio, perhaps not completely informed, printed that it was the invention of most holy wisdom [that is, of the pope] carried out by the said Bernini. Vincenzo Berti in a manuscript in the possession of Mons. Landucci, sacristan of our father Alexander VII and for his eminent virtues most worthy of a higher post, has written that it was a design of Ciampelli, cousin of the said Bernini, which I am not sure is true; but rather that he did not agree with Bernini about the decorations and other things; and he said that baldachins are not supported on columns, but on staves; [not transcribed by Martinelli or D'Onofrio: and that the baldachin ought not run together with the cornice of the columns] and in any case he wanted to show that the angels carry it; and he added that it was a chimera.³²

Borromini's comment is in some respects cryptic and open to interpretation, but one thing is certain: it is deliberate, painstaking, accurate, and absolutely honest, as was everything Bor-



20 Bernini, *Portrait of a youth*, here identified as Luigi Bernini, drawing. RL5543, Royal Library, Windsor Castle

mini ever did. In fact, it was this deliberative, painstaking, laborious, not to say belabored, quality of Borromini's mind and work that drove Bernini – always quick, facile, impulsive, and elegant in everything he did – absolutely crazy, I am sure. Borromini obviously devoted exceptional care to his comment in this case, even to giving notice when he was uncertain about a point. I find it impossible to believe that Borromini, especially if he was as deeply involved in the design process as some have claimed, did not know who was responsible: either he was being disingenuous or, by his own confession, he was not fully informed and in fact was not sure. Three points are striking. Firstly, Borromini makes it clear that Maderno took an important, otherwise unheralded, step toward the final solution by

32 The passage was transcribed by Thelen in his corpus of early Borromini drawings. Cf. HEINRICH THELEN, *Francesco Borromini. Die Handzeichnungen*, 2 vols., Graz, 1967, vol. I, 98 f.; LAVIN 1968 (as in note 3), II f., n. 53, 47, no. 2; D'ONOFRIO 1969 (as in note 30), 158 [incomplete; see Appendix]: "Fù pensiero di Paolo V coprire con baldacchino l'altar maggiore di S. Pietro con ricchezza proportionata all'apertura fatta alla confessione e sepolcro di d.o Onde Carlo Maderno gli presentò un disegno con colonne à vite; ma il baldacchino non toccava le colonne, ne il lor cornicione: sopragionse la morte di Paulo, e restò l'op.a sul disegno sin al ponteficato di Urbano VIII. il quale disse al d.o Carlo si contentasse, che il Bernino facesse d.a opera. Il Cavalier Celio, forse

non ben informato del tutto, stampò essere inventione di Santiss.o giuditio (cioè del Papa) messo in opera dal d.o Bernino. Vincenzo Berti manoscritto appresso Mons.r Landucci Sacrista di N.ro Sig.re Alessandro VII e p le sue eminenti virtudi dignissimo di grado superiore, ha scritto, esser disegno del Ciampelli cognato del d.o Bernini, il che non sò se sia vero; ma si bene non concorrevà con d.o Bernini circa l'abbigliam.ti et altro; e diceva, che li Baldacchini non si sostengono con le colonne, ma con l'haste, [not copied by Martinelli or transcribed by D'Onofrio: et che il baldacchino non ricora assieme con la cornice dele colonne,] et in ogni modo voleva mostrare che lo reggono li Angeli: e soggiungeva che era una chimera."

bringing together the baldachin and ciborium traditions, without linking them. Borromini's remark does allow for something like Bernini's first project, where the canopy does not touch the columns or their cornices; that, however, would make Maderno responsible for the angels, the objections to which Borromini emphasizes as much as he does Bernini's insistence that they be retained. Borromini evidently referred to Maderno in order to ensure that his mentor be remembered for having suggested bringing the types together, without committing the grave, solecistic breach of architectural grammar by fusing them. The fact that Borromini disapproved of the angels might explain why he did not explain how the canopy was supported in Maderno's project. Secondly, in this light Thelen's suggestion that Borromini withheld his own contribution in order not to diminish that of Maderno, seems gratuitous, to say the least.³³ Virgilio Spada and Bernardo Castelli-Borromini certainly had no such motive for their silence on the fundamental point of Borromini's contribution. Even Fioravante Martinelli, in his original remarks on the *baldacchino* attributed the design to Bernini; and while he took care to qualify the credit by introducing other names, he made no claim for his friend Borromini, to whom he would submit the manuscript for review.³⁴ Equally gratuitous was Thelen's omission from his book-length study of the high altar and *baldacchino* of the criticism duly reported by Borromini that "the baldachin ought not run together with the cornice of the columns."³⁵ The omission misleadingly permits, even encourages in the context of the discussion, the assumption that this feature was among Borromini's own unheralded and supposedly self-abnegated contributions to the design. On the contrary, Borromini obviously repeated the objections to the *baldacchino* because he too disapproved of Bernini's hybrid, indeed chimeric design, including the angels. In fact, the most likely explanation for Borromini's careful but elliptical phraseology is that he wanted to give credit to Maderno for combining columns with a baldachin, but also to make sure that his mentor would not be held responsible for the solipsistic, un-architectural merger of the two. Finally, there is the ultimate question in this, the most conspicuous of all the



21 Giulio Romano and workshop, *Donation of Constantine* (detail showing reconstruction of the Constantinian presbytery based on elements then still extant). East wall, Sala di Costantino, Vatican Palace, Rome

Martinelli corrections, when Borromini was involved as a modeler, as a carver, and indeed as a draftsman, where he names no less than three real or imagined designers of the baldachin – Maderno, the pope, Agostino Ciampelli – and while not hesitating to stake his claim as creative designer in other entries in Martinelli's text: why is there no mention of Francesco Borromini here? Did Borromini forget himself?

My own candidate for Bernini's silent helper with the *baldacchino* is his younger brother Luigi (1612–81), whom Gian Lorenzo's biographers extol for his talents as a sculptor and architect, and especially for his genius – equal if not greater than his brother's – in all things mechanical and mathematical. From recent archival discoveries we now know that his rich library, no doubt partly inherited from Gian Lorenzo, comprised many technical titles; and that in 1627 the brothers' father Pietro Bernini borrowed from the library of Santa Prassede two mathematical works, no doubt for Luigi's benefit.³⁶ Luigi was also nearly as precocious as his brother, whom he was assisting as early as 1626; from 1630 he is documented as a major participant in the work at Saint Peter's, including on the *baldacchino*, where he was appointed superintendent of the works in 1634, even

33 "Seine eigenen, unbestreitbar vorhandenen Verdienste an der endgültigen Gestaltung der Tabernakelarchitektur übergeht Borromini in dieser um 1661/62 verfaßten Randbemerkung geflissentlich, weil es ihm ausschließlich darauf ankommt, die grundlegende Bedeutung der künstlerischen Leistung Madernos, die unter Berninis Ruhm begraben worden war, mit wenigen Worten gebührend ins Licht rücken zu können." Cf. THELEN 1967 (as in note 1), 10.

34 Martinelli's original, brief comment is transcribed at p.158 in the Appendix below, in the center column next to Borromini's replacement.

35 The passage is transcribed in Thelen's catalogue of Borromini drawings (THELEN 1967 [as in note 32]), but it is nowhere cited in his monograph on the *baldacchino*; cf. THELEN 1967 (as in note 1).

36 The inventory of Luigi's books, no doubt partly inherited from Gian Lorenzo, was an important discovery of Sarah McPhee. Cf. SARAH MCPHEE, "Bernini's books", in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 142 (2000), 442–448; with further bibliography on Luigi. – Pietro Bernini borrowed a translation of Euclid and OBERTO CANTONE, *L'uso pratico dell'aritmetica e geometria*, Naples, 1609; cf. BRENDAN DOOLEY, *Morandi's Last Prophecy and the End of Renaissance Politics*, Princeton 2002, 54.



22 Giulio Romano and workshop, Pope Gregory the Great. East wall, Sala di Costantino, Vatican Palace, Rome

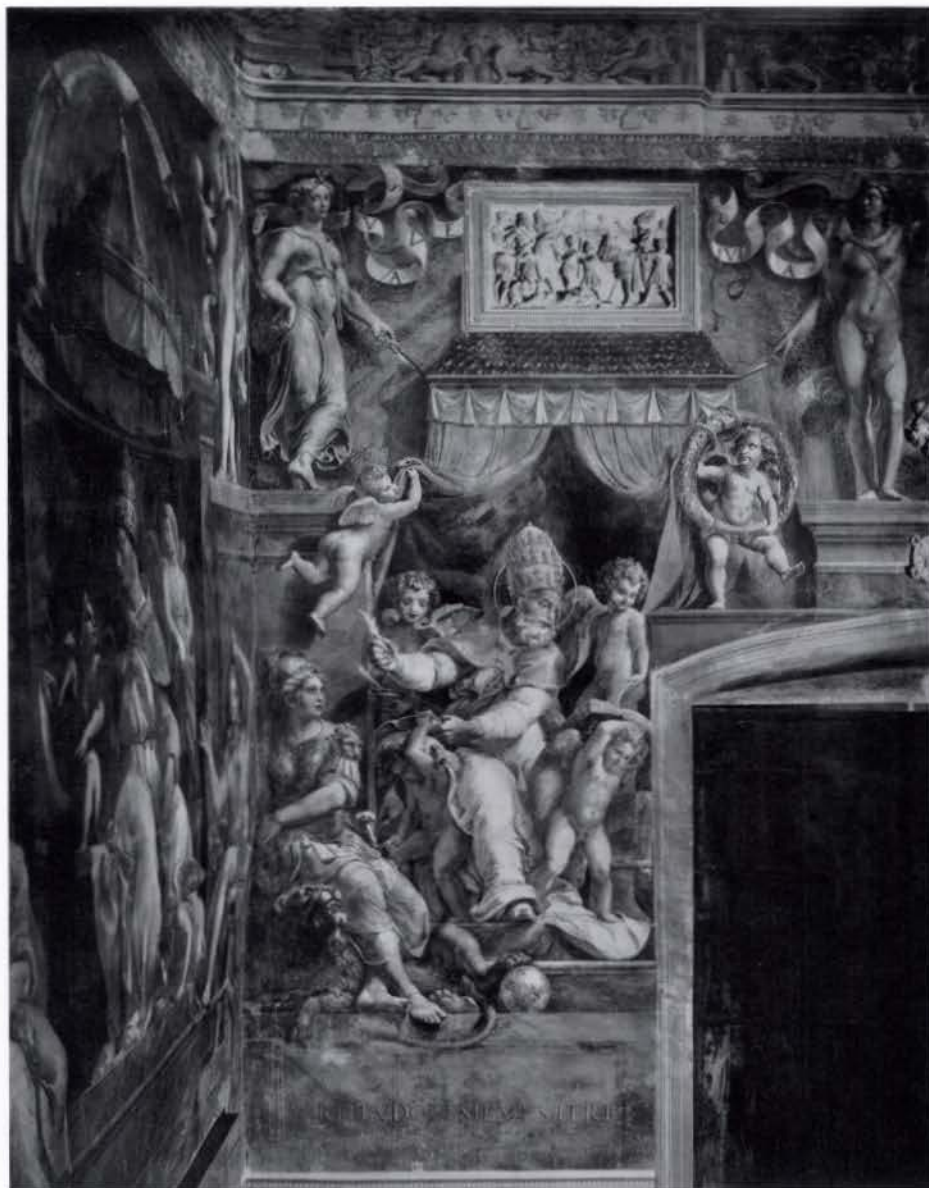
countersigning with his brother authorizations for payments to Borromini. Luigi's contributions were acknowledged in a fresco in one of the grotto chapels beneath the crossing piers high altar, where, so I believe, he is shown accompanying his brother who presents a design of the upper niche to Urban VIII (Fig. 19, Fig. 20).

The Gentle Yoke of Urban VIII

When I first sought to comprehend Borromini's devilishly tortured and ingenious remark, that Maderno had proposed a baldachin that did not touch the columns or their cornices, I suggested that he might have envisaged a canopy suspended from above. There were many precedents for this arrangement, notably the baldachin over the enthroned Pope Sylvester I in the scene of the Donation of Constantine in the

great ceremonial hall in the Vatican, the Sala di Costantino, decorated in the early sixteenth century by Raphael's follower Giulio Romano and his workshop (Fig. 21); appropriately, the choir that appears in the background includes the marble spiral columns the emperor brought from Jerusalem, which Bernini ultimately installed in the upper niches of the crossing piers.³⁷ I now believe, thanks to a perspicacious observation by George Bauer, that we can offer an alternative – and by no means contradictory – explanation. Bauer noted that a salient feature of Bernini's second project for the *baldacchino*

37 Left window wall: "Sylvester"; cf. ROLF QUEDNAU, *Die Sala di Costantino im Vatikanischen Palast. Zur Dekoration der beiden Medici-Päpste Leo X und Clemens VII.*, Hildesheim and New York 1979, figs. 39, 41; center: "Donation of Constantine"; right: "Gregory", *ibid.*, figs. 40, 42; BAUER 1996 (as in note 3), figs. 5 f., JACOB



23 Giulio Romano and workshop, Pope Sylvester I. East wall, Sala di Costantino, Vatican Palace, Rome

had been foreshadowed in the fresco adjacent to Donation scene, representing the isolated figure of Gregory the Great enthroned (Fig. 22). In fact the motif appears in two, and only two, of the series of enthroned popes in the Sala di Costantino, namely, those depicting Gregory and Sylvester, who flank the scene of the Donation scene on the opposite side (Fig. 23). In both cases, the flaring canopy over the pope's throne is suspended from thongs attached to rings held by allegorical figures who stand on flanking architectural platforms. Terracotta narrative relief panels with scenes related to the lives of the two popes are inserted in the wall above the

canopies. The relief above Sylvester illustrates an equestrian meeting of the pope and the emperor, shown scarcely clad and still sporting pagan asses ears (in the foreground below, Jupiter Capitolinus lies fallen clutching his imperial eagle); Constantine is cured of leprosy with a blessing gesture by the pope, while their powers are united in the standard of the victorious cross displayed between them (Fig. 24).³⁸ Bauer noted that the reference to Pope Gregory was appropriate in the context of Urban VIII's project since one of the important acts of Gregory's reign was that he had decreed that masses be celebrated over the body of Saint Peter ("Hic fecit ut super

HESS, *Kunstgeschichtliche Studien zu Renaissance und Barock*, 2 vols. Rome 1967, fig. 7; MARILYN PERRY, "Candor Illaevs": The 'Impresa' of Clement VII and other Medici Devices in the Vatican Stanze", in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 119 (1977), 676-687, fig. 19.

38 QUEDNAU 1979 (as in note 37), 287. Quednau discussed the reliefs in greater detail in: *Raffaello in Vaticano* (exhibition catalogue), Milan 1984, 244 f.



24 Giulio Romano and workshop, Meeting of Constantine the Great and Pope Sylvester, relief. East wall, Sala di Costantino, Vatican Palace, Rome



25 Giulio Romano and workshop, Gregory the Great celebrating Mass, relief. East wall, Sala di Costantino, Vatican Palace, Rome

corpus beati Petri missas celebrarentur").³⁹ This event was illustrated in a relief inserted in the wall above, where the confession at the tomb is shown below the altar, and four of the famous spiral columns are displayed in a row, as they appear before the apse in the frescoed reconstruction of the Constantinian building (Fig. 25).⁴⁰ When the completed *baldacchino* was inaugurated on 29 June 1633 (the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul), it was indeed a reenactment of Gregory's original inauguration of a new Christian veneration of the papacy and the church.⁴¹ However, the frescoes were relevant to Urban in another, no less important, and more personal way, in relation to the basic theme of the Donation of Constantine, which purported to record the first Christian emperor's gift of vast territories to the papacy and hence the foundation of the earthly hegemony of the Church. Although long since discredited as a medieval forgery, the Donation was still deeply significant of the papacy's call for acknowledgement by secular powers of its claim to temporal dominion. This was the underlying theme of the decoration of the Sala di Costantino itself, commissioned and carried out under the Medici popes Leo X and Clement VII. The meaning is made clear by Medici emblems and inscriptions that accompany the frescoes: the banderoles that flutter behind, intertwined with a yoke and inscribed with the famous Medici motto, SVAVE, i. e., the gentle yoke of Medici rule; and the diamond ring, symbol of perpetuity. Taken together the two parts fulfill the overarching conceit of Medicean rule: *Annulus nectit jugum*

suave (the ring unites, the yoke is easy).⁴² Here the allegories sustain the papal canopy through the tie-ring with one hand, while holding aloft the yoke with the other.⁴³

The essence of this reference to the Medicean 'power behind the throne' was carried over into Bernini's design, where heavenly angels replace the 'secular' allegories, and the garlands of Barberini laurel leaves, symbolic of a new era of eternal springtime, replace the Medici tie-rings and yoke (Fig. 26). Bernini's insistence on retaining the angels through the sequence of design changes – of which Borromini evidently disapproved since he quoted the vociferous criticism, and which modern scholars have attributed simply to Bernini's prejudice in favor of sculpture over architecture – may best be explained by this reference to the divine election and beneficent authority of the pope. These were, in fact, the fundamental themes of Urban's conception of his office: his election was signaled by divine intervention; at his coronation he invoked the all-powerful Archangel Michael as patron of his papacy;

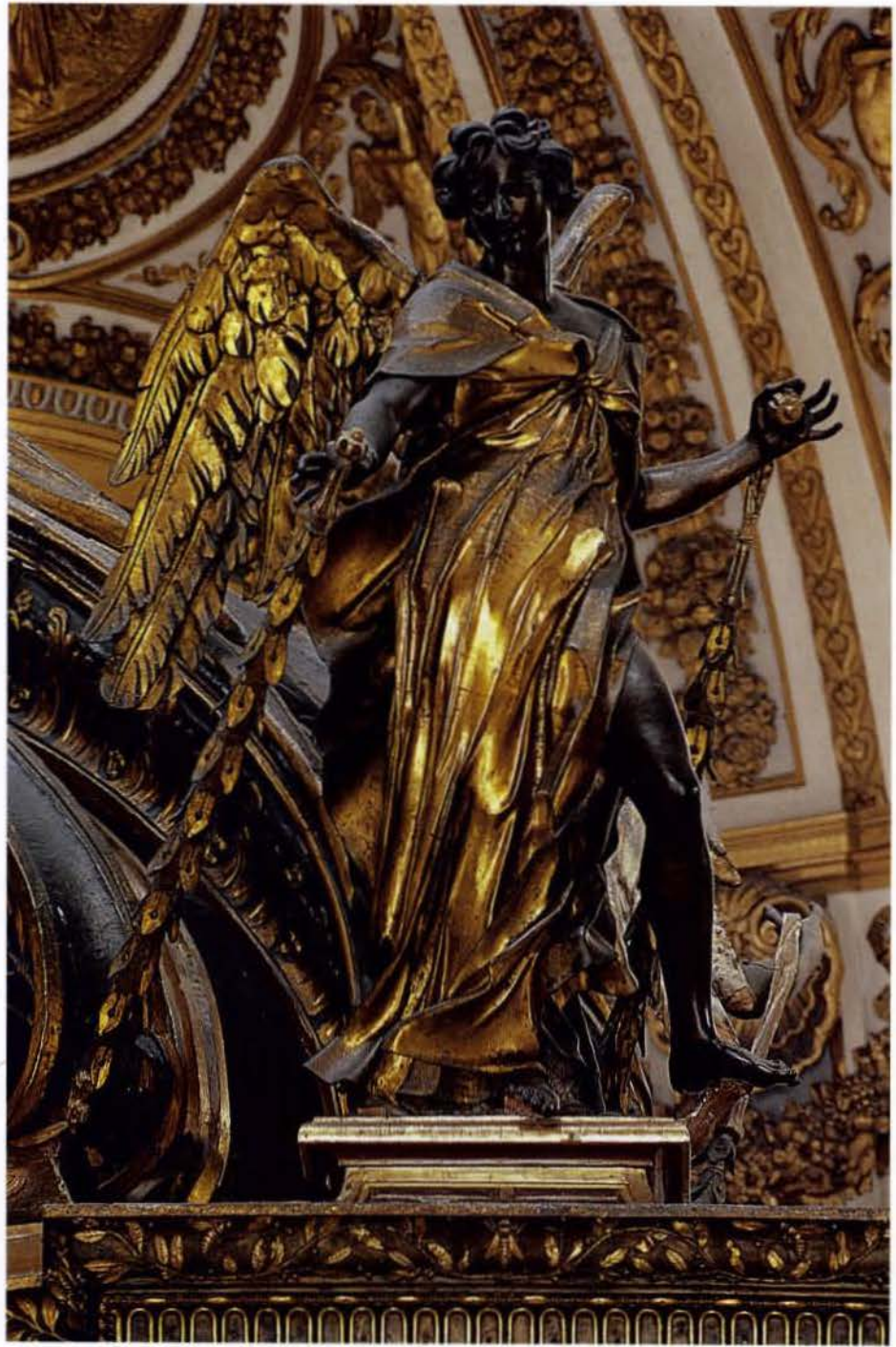
39 BAUER 1996 (as in note 3), 158 f.

40 QUEDNAU 1979 (as in note 37), 303 f.

41 POLLAK 1931 (as in note 6), 421.

42 GAETANO MORONI, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica da S. Pietro sino ai nostri giorni*, 103 vols., Venice 1840–61, vol. 38, 45; JOHN K.G. SHEARMAN, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen, and the Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel*, London 1972, 87; PERRY 1977 (as in note 37), 683–686; JANET COX-REARICK, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art: Pontormo, Leo X, and the Two Cosimos*, Princeton 1984, 36–38.

43 Matthew 11, 29–30: "[...] tollite iugum meum super vos et discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde et invenietis requiem animabus vestris iugum enim meum suave est et onus meum leve est." [Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.]



26 Bernini, Angel bearing laurel wreaths, crown of the Baldacchino

and his choice of his name announced the gentility of his rule.⁴⁴ The angels sustain the *baldacchino* effortlessly through delicate garlands of laurel that are not attached but mysteri-

ously disappear between the ribs and the canopy. This is important work, after all. The *baldacchino* is, after all, a kind of miracle.

44 On the ideology and coherence of Urban VIII's auto-definition, see IRVING LAVIN, "Urbanitas urbana. The Pope, the Artist, and the Genius of the Place", in: *I Barberini e la cultura europea del seicento*, ed. Lorenza Mochi Onori et al., Rome 2007, 15–30.

APPENDIX

CESARE D'ONOFRIO, *Roma nel seicento. "Roma ornata dall'architettura, pittura e scoltura" di Fioravante Martinelli*, Florence 1969.

Marginal emendations to passages in Martinelli's text suggested by Borromini concerning Bernini and himself.

Page Martinelli text

emen-

dation *S. AGOSTINO* [...]

Borromini

11 L'altar maggiore col ricco e pretioso ciborio, o tabernacolo del Santissimo fu fatto fare dal P. Girolamo Ghetti romano, Generale dell'Ordine nel 1627 con disegno di un amico di Santi Ghetti, il quale hebbe la cura dell'opera, et in esso sono due Angeli scolpiti da Giuliano Finelli Carrarino per il* Cav. Bernino.

* **"il tabernacolo fatto con disegno di un amico di (Santi Ghetti) [...]"**: il Martinelli aveva scritto: "con architettura e assistenza di Santi Ghetti, et in esso sono due Angeli scolpiti dal Cav. **Bernino**". Quest'ultima frase è corretta dal Borromini: **"da Giuliano Finelli Carrarino per il C.r Bernino"**.

14 *S. ANASTASIA* [...]

L'altar maggiore è architettura di Honorio Lunghi: ma l'ornamento della tribuna con colonnato è disegno del Cav. Borromino fatto d'ordine del Card. Carpegna all'ora titolare*. Il disegno della facciata col resarcimento della chiesa è di Luigi Arigucci fatto fare da Urbano VIII.

* **"lornamento della tribuna con colonnato è disegno del Cav. Borromini fatto d'ordine del Em.mo Sig.r Card. Carpegna Protettore"**.

15 *S. ANDREA DELLE FRATTE* [...]

Il campanile è disegno, et* inventione del Cav. Borromino, il quale havendo nella cima d'esso posta per suo finimento e per trofeo della beneficenza del fondatore la sua arme in piedi congiunta con leggiadro modo a quella de Frati Minimi si è dichiarato autore di situare in isola simil armi: et al presente si comincia a fabricare la cuppola con architettura del medemo Cav. Borromino*.

* **"et al presente [...] Borromino"**.

* **"detto"; "ma era da Milano"**.

57 *GIESÙ ADORATO DA MAGI*

Questo tempietto della Congregatione de propaganda fide è stato fabricato dal Card. Antonio Barberino, chiamato di S. Onofrio con architettura del Cav. Bernino; e minacciando rovina oltre ad altre osservazioni fatte dalla Santità di Nostro Signore Alessandro VII è stato di suo ordine fatto l'altro artificio con disegno del Cav. Borromino*.

* e minacciando [...] ecc., sembra suggerimento del Borromini.

. GIOVANNI NEL LATERANO [...]

69

Il cornicione che ricinge il detto tempio del Battisterio con il suo fregio è stato fatto fare dalla Santità di Nostro Signore Alessandro VII con disegno del Cav. Borromino*.

* "Il cornicione [...] Borromino".

S. MARIA MAGGIORE [...]

105

L'incoronazione del Papa di sopra è di Pietro padre del Cav. Bernino*; à man destra è d'Ippolito Butio Milanese, à man sinistra di Gio. Antonio Valsoldino. Li termini sono scarpellati dal detto Pietro.

* "è di Pietro Bernino scultore (?)" ; suggerimento non accettato dal Martinelli.

S. PIETRO VATICANO [...]

158

Il Ciborio con colonne di metallo istorte a vite dell'altar maggiore è disegno del Cav. Bernino, et il getto è di Gregorio de Rossi Rom.^o. Ma il Cav.re Celio scrive essere inventione di santissimo giuditio messo in opera dal d.^o Cav.re. Vincenzo Berti manoscritto appresso monsig.^{re} Landucci sacrista di N. S.^{re} ha lasciato scritto esser disegno del Ciampelli cognato di d.^o Bernino.

S. PIETRO VATICANO [...]

Fù pensiero di Paolo V coprire con baldacchino l'altar maggiore di S. Pietro con ricchezza proportionata all'apertura fatta alla confessione e sepolcro di d.^o Onde Carlo Maderno gli presentò un disegno con colonne à vite; ma il baldacchino non toccava le colonne, ne il lor cornicione: sopraggiunse la morte di Paulo, e restò l'op.^a sul disegno sin al ponteficato di Urbano VIII. il quale disse al d.^o Carlo si contentasse, che il Bernino facesse d.^a opera. Il Cavalier Celio, forse non ben informato del tutto, stampò essere inventione di Santiss.^o giuditio (cioè del Papa) messo in opera dal d.^o Bernino. Vincenzo Berti manoscritto appresso Mons.^r Landucci Sacrista di N'ro Sig.^{re} Alessandro VII e p le sue eminenti virtudi dignissimo di grado superiore, ha scritto, esser disegno del Ciampelli cognato del d.^o Bernini, il che non sò se sia vero; ma si bene non concorrevà con d.^o Bernini circa l'abbigliam.^{ti} et altro; e diceva, che li Baldacchini non si sostengono con le colonne, ma con l'hasta, [omitted by D'Onofrio: et che il baldacchino non ricora assieme con la cornice dele colone] et in ogni modo voleva mostrare che lo reggono li Angeli: e soggiungeva che era una chimera.

- 218 *PARTE SECONDA – COLLEGII [...]*
DELLA FABRICA DELLO STUDIO ROMANO
APPRESSO LA CHIESA DI S. GIACOMO DE
SPAGNOLI ...

In segno della nobiltà della fabrica di questo Studio sono state gettate medaglie d'oro, d'argento, e di metallo d'ordine del Papa, con l'impronta della sua imagine, e nel rovescio la faccia del teatro con l'alzata della cappella, col suo tempietto e finimento superiore, e delli portici laterali disegnata dal medesimo Cav. Borromino, al quale i virtuosi della sua professione devono restar molt'obligati per haver insegnato di fabricare edifitij reali senza demolire le sue parti nobili; e di nobilitare picciolissimi [SEE NEXT]

- 220 siti con fabriche sontuose, magnifiche, e copiose d'ordine e di ornamenti come hà fatto nel primo insegnamento à S. Giovanni in Laterano, et nel 2° in S. Carlo alle quattro fontane; nella cappella della Sapienza; e nell'altra, che hora v'è facendo al Collegio de Propaganda fide oltre al tempietto sotterraneo nella chiesa di S. Giovanni de fiorentini con l'altare maggiore sopra*.

* "et il tempietto [...] sopra".

- 231f *PALAZZI [...]* *De Barberini* à capo delle case raggiustato con architettura di molti, e spetialmente del Cav. Bernino*. Vi sono pitture di Raffaello, del Correggio, di Andrea del Sarto, di Giulio Romano, del Parmigianino, e d'altri.

* "et altri".

- 282 *FONTANE [...]* *IN PIAZZA NAVONA ...*

Il detto Innocenzo X con suo chirografo diede la fontana di mezzo al Cav. Borromino, quale condusse l'acqua, e scoprì il pensiero di condurvi la guglia, et ornarla con un piedestallo à guscio nel quale fossero scarpellati quattro historie di basso rilievo, e con quattro fiumi più celebri del mondo*, e con altri ornamenti al P. Vergilio Spada, qual poi fu data al Cav. Bernino ad istanza della Signora Donna Olimpia Pamfilia, e con suo disegno è stata aggiustata nella forma che si vede.

* Il Martinelli aveva scritto: "et ornarla con le quattro parti del mondo figurate in quattro fiumi"; tale frase fu cancellata e sostituita a margine con l'altra: "con un piedistallo [...] mondo"; per tale importante modifica tuttavia non si vede affatto la matita del Borromini, il quale certamente la suggerì a voce.