In This Most Perfect Paradise


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B. Schematic map of the Borgo, Rome, in the middle of the fifteenth century, indicating possible interpretations of Nicholas V's program (after Magnuson)
6 Doctrine in the Borgo and at the Basilica

The public buildings on the Capitol were among those that demonstrated in actual architectural form the role of the pope in Rome and in the Church. The Capitol, which had long been the seat of the communal government, now had buildings coordinated with others that as a group visually defined the structure of government in Rome. This structure would remain intact for some time; although it was constantly subjected to minor revisions, what Nicholas first instituted in architecture survives even today. The Capitol still stands for Rome. The Ponte and Castel Sant’Angelo still define a separation between Rome and the Borgo. The Borgo is still more a suburb to the Vatican complex than it is a part of Rome. And St. Peter’s and the Vatican Palace still dominate Rome and still constitute the seat of the head of the Church.

Nicholas’s conception was the determining factor in all subsequent physical development in Rome. Despite minor tinkering with his proposals, the efforts at rebuilding Rome made by later popes followed Nicholas’s sketch. The tinkering resulted both from an increased scale of building operations as time went on and from slight alterations in the conception of the papacy. Thus, under later popes and following the definitions of doctrine laid down at Trent, the divine clemency signified by St. Peter’s was also made evident at the other major basilicas, and the major churches were tied together by a network of streets that spread throughout and beyond the city; but at the same time construction at St. Peter’s was again taken up and the Vatican Palace was expanded. Similarly, under later popes the importance of Rome as the seat of the papacy was increased, at the expense of Rome considered as the home of its citizens; thus, the buildings at the Vatican became ever more important, while the Capitoline project of Michelangelo was brought to completion only very slowly. In the larger framework of the conception of the city of Rome, however, these alterations of Nicholas’s project were inconsequential. Rome gradually did acquire a semblance of the physical structure he had envisaged for it.

The buildings Nicholas built would hardly have inspired his successors to implement his building program. Almost none of the most bulky and substantial physical fabric he hoped to raise ever got above ground level. The most complete element of his project was on the Capitol, and the two buildings there were rather ramshackle. They were also among the less important parts of his building program. They had apparently not been given the highest priority when funds, materials, energy, or talent were distributed. Nonetheless, perhaps because less was expected of them and because they were simpler and smaller, they were useful and serviceable in the form he gave them. They survived without major alteration until their reconstruction was begun more than a century later. Nicholas had made them conspicuous visual elements in
the fabric of the city of Rome, and in that form they exerted their impact on other buildings, on the views made of the city, and on future projects on the Capitol.

The other and more important parts of the project were far less complete. They were more important because they represented higher levels in the hierarchy of the building program, and for that reason more would have been expected of them. They were to be bigger, they were to be built of more dignified materials, and they were to demonstrate a higher level of design competence. They required more time and money than the public, profane buildings on the Capitol, and they were in a less complete state at Nicholas’s death in 1455. Still, even though less of each of them had actually been built, these buildings had a profound impact on future conceptions of the papacy and its buildings and on the many related ideas Nicholas’s program had introduced.

The explanation of how a building project that was so incomplete could exert such a great influence on future practice must be that something other than the buildings conveyed the conceptual and practical intentions they had been planned to perpetuate. A person informed of the project as a part of Nicholas’s comprehensive program for government could convey the idea for a time, but Petrarch’s statement, “When the proof of our actions is gone, only the evidence of our speech will remain,” is a good reminder that a written description could carry into posterity what unbuilt buildings and fond memories could not.

Giannozzo Manetti provided such a description. In the second book of his Life of Nicholas the secretary gave a lengthy and detailed report of the building program, and he claimed that he was reporting the pope’s intentions.1 Manetti’s description has been handled with varying degrees of caution by art historians, for several reasons. His architectural terminology is vague; his seemingly precise information turns out to be inaccurate when compared to what is known from other sources, and it often cannot be coordinated with what was possible; and he fails to distinguish between what was completed, what was begun, and what was apparently only intended.2

These reasons point to serious problems in handling the text, but they do not require censure for Manetti’s efforts. He was a rhetorician, not a chronicler.3 His terminology is vague, but his treatment of buildings as places designed to promote the program of government Nicholas undertook is quite clear, and this was what he was attempting to convey. His precision is often faulty, but some of these faults can be forgiven because he was operating with quattrocento criteria of accuracy and importance, and he was citing information for quattrocento purposes rather than for modern purposes; his text must be carefully interpreted to yield proper results. And in treating the extent of the project’s execution with optimism, he was attempting to produce clear rhetoric. He was also indicating that what Nicholas planned would be built, because what Nicholas planned should be built; therefore, so far as Manetti was concerned, it had been built. Furthermore, at the moment he was writing, it would

1Manetti, RIS, cols. 929–940. An edition based on several additional texts appears in the appendix to Magnuson, 1958; each sentence there is numbered, and future citations to the description will be to its numbered sentences either in the text or in the notes. For a translation of part of the description, see Magnuson, 1954.

2Magnuson, 1958, pp. 59, 98–99, discusses the problem; see also pp. 66–67, and 163 ff. Also Urban, 1963, and Westfall, 1971, for additional observations on the interpretation of the text.

3For the remarks which follow concerning Manetti’s way of operating, see Baxandall, 1971, which appeared too late to be incorporated into the present text. This study does not discuss Manetti or deal with architectural description, but it does provide an insight into the context in which Manetti operated.
not have been clear whether or not Nicholas's successor would continue the project.\footnote{See the exhortation by Giuseppe Brietti to Calixtus III (Brietti, Ricc. Cod. 361, fols. 3r–4r, 12v*), in which the old scribe tells Calixtus that to continue Nicholas's program of government and of building would serve his own purpose of waging war against the Turks. It is undated, but must be from the first months of Calixtus's pontificate. Brietti died in 1457 at age seventy-nine; Forcella, VII, p. 361, n. 734. See also Valla, Oratio, which Professor Charles Trinkaus kindly brought to my attention.} Manetti's attitude here is similar to his failing elsewhere in the Life to attribute any of Nicholas's ideas to anyone other than the pope. Nicholas was head of a hierarchical structure, and what was done under him and for him was done by him. Manetti's description, when used with caution and when assessed and interpreted in the context of external material that allows some control to be brought to bear on it, is an invaluable source for understanding Nicholas's building project.

This is true for another reason as well. Manetti framed his description within the same context in which Nicholas had conceived it. It is a part of Manetti's Life of Nicholas, and it was a part of the program Nicholas had developed for governing the Church. This gives it a special significance, because through Manetti's report it is possible to approach the building program from Nicholas's point of view. An attitude similar to Manetti's had informed the observations of others who mentioned the project when reporting about Nicholas's pontificate. They, too, distorted their reports of actual events for purposes similar to Manetti's, and they will be discussed later.

The pope's secretary and others writing at the time fail to make specific reference to some of the building activity that Nicholas did undertake, activity that is documented and that is mentioned later by others. For example, payment records exist for Nicholas's work at Santa Maria Maggiore, S. Stefano Rotondo, and other churches;\footnote{Müntz, ACP, I, pp. 139 ff.; Magnuson, 1958, pp. 58, 224; Urban, 1961–62.} and he promulgated some bulls from the former church, but only after his death did this work become prominent in his biography.\footnote{See Platina, p. 424 (Life of Nicholas V).} Important as both projects were for the development of construction in Rome, they were relatively unimportant from the point of view that is reported through the sources that give the best insight into Nicholas's conception of the city. That conception, and not all of the building activity or even the contribution of that activity to Renaissance architecture, is the concern here. Therefore, Manetti's report must occupy a central, but not exclusive, position in recovering Nicholas's project for rebuilding the city of Rome, and some of Nicholas's other undertakings may be ignored.

Manetti stated that the pope undertook the building program to make the city memorable and commendable; he attended, Manetti said, to the city's ornament, to the salubrity of its air, and to its ability to instill a sense of devotion (s. 13). The program included five elements that, Manetti makes clear, were considered to progress in a hierarchical order. They move from concern for the practical facilities of the city to a concerted effort at the Basilica of St. Peter, and they stress strength at one end of the scale and devotion at the other. In filling out his description with details, Manetti followed the pope's priorities. He mentioned only enough of the first few elements of the program to convey to the reader some sense of what they included, and he went into elaborate, seemingly hyperbolic detail when he reached the more important elements.

The first part of the project Manetti listed was the repair to public works and buildings throughout Rome that had collapsed and become disused through neglect (s. 14). This could refer to what the commune itself undertook with the administra-
tive latitude Nicholas had given it, which Manetti did not mention (except perhaps obliquely in his reference to healthy air). It could also refer to the fortifications around the city, which were the pope’s responsibility and which Manetti does mention (s. 21). Manetti also stated that the pope had attempted to rebuild and to ameliorate a major portion of the city, apparently referring to the built-up area between the Ponte Sant’Angelo and the Colosseum and extending on into the empty stretches beyond. Indeed, in 1447 and again in 1448, the pope granted building and legal privileges to those who would build in the depopulated area between the Colosseum and the Lateran, probably along the via Papalis, in the rione Monte.8

Manetti did not mention Nicholas’s repairs to bridges and aqueducts,9 or his construction of fountains in the city.10 He was more concerned with those parts of the project that related directly and conspicuously to the major program, and therefore he moved on to the repairs Nicholas had made at the Ponte Sant’Angelo. One landing of the bridge was in Rome, the other in the Borgo, but at this point Manetti mentioned only the work Nicholas had undertaken on the Borgo side of the bridge, even though his subject was the Roman side of the Tiber. His purpose was to show that Nicholas’s project included an element that affected both the Borgo and Rome; in another context he returned to this element.11 It would have been more appropriate at this point to have mentioned the two commemorative chapels and the piazza S. Celso formed in coincidence with them, but because they were incidental to the pope’s carefully planned project, Manetti passed over them in silence here; his only reference to them had been in the context of the Jubilee elsewhere in the Life.

The second element in Nicholas’s project was to rebuild the forty station churches, which, according to Manetti, had been set aside as a special group by Gregory the Great.12 Nicholas did actually undertake a great deal of work at these churches, as well as at the next group Manetti mentioned, the old and revered seven major and minor basilicas. Nicholas devoted special attention to these, Manetti explained; some were to be strengthened, some repaired, some ornamented, and some renovated in a marvelous way (ss. 27–29). These basilicas were the greatest and the most celebrated, he continued, but among them the principal, most marvelous, and most revered was St. Peter’s, the only one of the group Manetti named. This the pope would rebuild from the ground up, along with the palace that was contiguous to it (s. 30).

Manetti has now reached the upper level of the hierarchy, and he slows the pace of his description to reveal a greater breadth in the pope’s plans. He carefully progresses through the Borgo, the third element and one filled with figurative significance, then to the Vatican Palace, the fourth element, and finally reaches the last point of the program in the Basilica of St. Peter (fig. 46).

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7 Manetti’s topographical references are quite vague; s. 22.
8 Pastor, 1949, p. 171. The precedents for this had been established in the Borgo by Martin V and Eugenius IV; see above, chapter I, esp. note 47.
9 See Müntz, ACP, I, pp. 156–159.
10 In August, 1447, he paid for a new fountain at the Maddalena (Müntz, ACP, I, pp. 156–157). In 1453 he opened a new Fontana di Trevi at the outlet of the Aqua Vergine; it carried the inscription: NICOLAVS V PON MAX POST ILLUSTRATAM INSIGNIBVS MONVM VRBEM DVC- TVM AQUAE VIRGINIS VET COL REST 1453. Tomei, 1942, p. 108, points out that this is the first new fountain and first repair to an aqueduct since antiquity.
11 This reference is in ss. 23–26; see also below.
12 Manetti, s. 15; see Magnuson, 1958, p. 58. Nicholas mentioned them himself in his testament; Manetti, RIS, col. 950.
It is extremely difficult to know what the actual condition of the Borgo was during the first half of the quattrocento, and therefore it is difficult to know what actual, physical effect Nicholas's program had on it. Both Martin V, in 1421, and Eugenius IV, in 1437, had attempted to stimulate its development, but so long as the Vatican was not the permanent seat of the pope, the blandishments—such as relief from taxes and immunity from prosecution for past crimes—that these popes offered had little important effect. The Borgo remained nearly unpopulated until there was a reason for establishing a residence there. When Nicholas began to rebuild the basilica and the palace at the Vatican, others apparently became willing to build at its foot in the Borgo. Perhaps to encourage settlement in the Borgo, perhaps to satisfy the demands of new residents, or perhaps simply to make access to the Vatican easier for visitors and pilgrims, a street across the Borgo was paved in 1448. It may or may not have been one of the three streets Manetti mentioned in his description, which will be discussed below. Eventually the population of the Borgo did grow; after he was created cardinal in 1478, Domenico della Rovere built in its center a large palace with a large piazza, and Alexander VI built a major street down its central axis, cutting away a major part of the Meta Romuli, which stood near the Castel Sant'Angelo. The cardinal's palace and the pope's street, along with two other streets, are conspicuous in the earliest clear map of the Borgo, made by Leonardo Bufalini in 1551 (fig. 46), but it is impossible to know to what extent the arrangement of streets that appears there corresponds to what Nicholas intended.

Manetti's treatment of the Borgo is not very helpful for learning what was built there between 1447 and 1455. It implies more than it reveals, but within the context of his entire description and of statements made by others—as well as through careful attention to the way in which Manetti composed his description—the significance of the pope's project for the Borgo can be recovered with some clarity (plan B).

The Borgo had long been considered a special place. Leo IV (847–55) had fortified it as an enclave distinct from Rome in order to protect the tomb of Peter, which had been sacked by the Saracens in 846. In fortifying the Borgo, Leo had founded a city; in the quattrocento it was commonly referred to as the Borgo Leonino. The area at the Vatican was also commonly believed to have been sacred to the divine office. Biondo, writing at the time of Eugenius and constantly stressing the survival of ancient Rome in modern Rome, saw a direct continuity of interest in the area from Nero through Constantine, Symmachus I, Honorius I, Donatus, I, and Nicholas III to Eugenius IV; each of the Christians had devoted attention to the basilica or the palace, or to both, and Biondo gave a special place in the sequence to Leo IV, because he had built the walls, thus founding the Borgo Leonino.

In the middle of the quattrocento the Borgo was considered more important as a fortified papal enclave than it was as the possible site for Peter's martyrdom, or even as the original site of Peter's tomb. Peter's crucifixion was important as an event of significance within the history of salvation, and, like other similar events, it could be understood without critical inquiry into particularities concerning time or place. From Petrarch's understanding of history the idea began to circulate that knowing and representing time and place was an important complement to understanding

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13See above, chapter 1, note 47.
14See above, chapter 4, nn. 79, 81.
15Thus, plan B shows the elements mentioned by Manetti that can be located with certainty and leaves out some things that cannot be precisely located.
significance, as Masaccio and Castagno showed, but this conception did not yet prevail in Rome. It soon would, however. While there was not yet any unanimity in opinion about where Peter had been crucified, new thought was beginning to be given to the matter. Biondo proposed that the event had occurred within the Borgo, while Filarete and Vegio believed in the opinion that would eventually prevail, that while it had not taken place within the Borgo, it had occurred on the Borgo side of the Tiber. 17 Where agreement existed was in beliefs about the construction of St. Peter's Basilica; it had not necessarily been built above the original tomb of the Apostle, but had been raised as an appropriate shrine for his body after it was moved from its hiding place and installed there by Constantine and Sylvester. Manetti did not disturb the Constantinian emphasis on the basilica, but neither did he linger on any of these details. Instead, he emphasized the attention Nicholas gave to the Borgo as a fortified and ordered place, thus coordinating his remarks with traditions attached to the Leonine foundation of the Borgo rather than with traditions associated with the tomb.

Manetti's emphasis on the distinctness of the Borgo from Rome corresponds with the way it appeared to visitors after Nicholas's project was well under way. Views of the area show that there was no question about the distinction made between Rome and the Borgo through fortifications actually built at the junction of the two. One view, made between 1453 and 1465, is a careful assemblage of figurative elements that have been altered to include new construction (fig. 47). It shows an elaborate system of gates, towers, and walls on both the Borgo side and the Campo Marzio side of the Ponte Sant'Angelo. 18 Views that more closely approach vedute and are less indebted to a figurative tradition, and that were produced independently, make the same point. The Bergomensis, Schedel, and Mantua views of Rome, which all derive from the same lost archetype, correspond to what appears in a veduta attributed to the school of Domenico Ghirlandaio and dating from just before the alterations executed by Alexander VI (figs. 34, 45, 75). 19 Two square, crenellated towers, one on either side of the bridge and nearer it than the Castello, flanked a gate structure; walls ran back to the Castello to form a keep. This construction is a natural extension of the castello that Nicholas had made from the Castel Sant'Angelo. It is also what Manetti had described earlier when he had said that Nicholas had added towers and fortifications and had built facilities for warders on the Borgo side of the bridge (ss. 23–26).

This construction was to be considered a small part of the extensive fortification system that protected the entire Borgo; the system would render the Borgo so secure that only birds flying over the walls would be able to enter without the pope's permission (s. 45). In describing the system, Manetti worked figuratively. What he

17 Huskinson, 1969, passim; see above, chapter 2.
18 It is in the Marcanova manuscript in Modena. It shows the angel atop the Castel Sant'Angelo, which suggests but does not confirm the date 1453 as the terminus post quem; the manuscript is dated 1465. The corner towers on the castello are not shown; its base follows an older archetype, but its upper, circular part, with Nicholas's coat of arms, is an alteration of the archetype. A model of the castello has been placed on the roof of the gateway on the Rome side of the bridge, emphasizing with a figurative reference the defensive purpose of the complex; this supplements the battlemented top of the entrance structure on the Borgo side. For the possible artist of the Marcanova drawings see Huelsen, 1907, pp. 6 ff., where Cirico d'Ancona is suggested, and Lawrence, 1927, passim, whose suggestion is more reasonable. Huelsen's criteria (1907, p. 6) would apply well to the characteristics of a figurative archetype that may have been used in Padua by an artist unfamiliar with Rome. For the Marcanova manuscript's history, see Dennis, 1927; for a close copy of the Medena manuscript in Princeton, see Lawrence, 1927.
19 For the first three views, see chapter 5, note 30; For the Ghirlandaio school view, see Codex Escurialensis, Egger, 1905–06, fol. 26", p. 90. See also fol. 30" for a view of the structure from the Borgo.
said about it does little to allow one to reconstruct an actual building project. He said that the plan of the walls would have four sides, that the walls would be crowded with towers, and that they would enclose the Borgo, the Vatican Palace, and St. Peter’s (ss. 44–45). He gave no hint that the topography and extant walls made it impossible to enclose either the Borgo or the palace with walls of which the plan was a clearly four-sided shape. He also found it unnecessary to mention that Nicholas made extensive use of extant construction; by rebuilding walls that dated back as far as the ninth century, the pope had to build only a few stretches ex novo (plan B).20

Manetti said that the walls were built to satisfy three purposes. One was to make it possible to form a level platform. This was necessary, Manetti explained, because the new palace structures within the walls were to be important and great and therefore required a level site, as ancient architects had demonstrated.21 The second purpose was to enclose the palace within walls and to have those walls reproduce the four-sided arrangement of the Borgo enclosures. To make clear their unifying and separating function, Manetti discussed this arrangement at the same time that he described the means of entrance from the Borgo to the palace (ss. 54–57, esp. s. 57). The third purpose was to fortify the palace as a part of the fortification system of the Borgo as a whole (ss. 50–53, and esp. s. 57). To stress the idea that the Borgo fortifications were tied in firmly to the entrance at the Castel Sant’Angelo, Manetti waited until he was describing the walls before he mentioned the four corner towers that Nicholas built at the Castello (s. 45).

To build these fortifications, and to build them with careful design, was to refound the Leonine city, and that was the point Manetti was making. Walls were an important figure for indicating the existence of a place and for demonstrating that, through their construction, a place had been founded and protected.22 Nicholas had designed and built the walls, and Nicholas’s palace, according to Manetti, would protect and perfect the Borgo (ss. 76–77). This would occur in two ways. First, the geometric configuration of the walls around the palace and around the Borgo would be analogous, linking the two indissolubly through design. And second, they would be closely integrated with one another physically, actually sharing some elements in common. Manetti’s rhetorical structure makes these same points. His Borgo description had begun at the Ponte Sant’Angelo, and it had concluded with a description of the walls that terminated at the Castel Sant’Angelo, thus enfolding within the description of the fortifications the description of that which the fortifications enclosed. And that description mingled with the description of the Vatican Palace; after he introduced his description of the palace, he took the occasion to describe the Borgo walls before he continued with the palace description.

His treatment of the walls, therefore, reveals that Manetti was less interested in being a reliable reporter of physical facts and achievements than he was in stressing something else. He wished to convey the figurative significance of his subject, and he wished to use the rhetorical structure of his description as an additional vehicle for conveying the significant content of the pope’s building program. Like Vitruvius and like Taddeo di Bartolo and Biondo’s map-making friend, Manetti did not see the walls as an architectural fabric that was part of a particular topographic situation

20 The new stretches were begun in 1451 at the latest, according to the accounts in Müntz, ACP, I, p. 159. For more information about these walls, see below, chapter 7, and plan C, on p. 128.
21 Manetti, ss. 46–48; compare Alberti, De re aed., I, vii–viii.
22 Braunfels, 1966, chapter II; Bialostocki, 1964; Hale, 1965, pp. 470–471; see also Vitruvius, I, iv–v, who begins his discussion of the building of the city by explaining how the walls are to be laid out and then hardly refers to the walls again, an approach followed by Filarete, 1965, I, IV, and V.
in the Borgo; they were things or signs signifying that the pope's plans for the Borgo included its enclosure. This is particularly clear in the way Manetti handles the description of the inhabited area to be rebuilt within the walls.

The inhabited area, he explained, would extend from the entrance area at the Castel Sant'Angelo at one end and be bounded along one side by the Tiber and along the other by a wall running to the Castello; part of this wall would include a new extension to the great palace tower he describes elsewhere (s. 31). These were extant topographic features; in his description they are unrelated to the system of fortifications he describes at the conclusion of his treatment of the Borgo's interior arrangement, even though the topographic features include elements that would be found in the fortification system. Additionally, the pattern traced by these elements corresponds only in a very vague way to the more precise geometric pattern Manetti had said the fortification system would follow. They also serve poorly in the task he attributed to them, which was that of enclosing the interior, built-up area, because they leave one end of the area, that of the basilica, open. Manetti's point is that the Borgo has an interior arrangement and that it is circumscribed both by extant elements and by a new system of enclosures, but he did not reveal what relationship there might be between the interior arrangement and the exterior enclosures.

Manetti's emphasis in describing the interior of the Borgo is the same as the one that is found in his description of the system of fortifications. Once again, he stressed the order imposed through design in the city that he credited the pope with building at the base of the basilica and palace. The Borgo is to be inhabited by the curia, by which Manetti meant all those connected with the papacy and all those who lived in the area to serve it and their neighbors. In his testament, Nicholas had considered its residents to be the extensions of the members of which he was the head, and he stated that he desired to protect them and to give them their proper dignity.23 Their dignity would be conspicuous in their ordered placement, and Manetti described three streets Nicholas planned for the Borgo that would contribute to the order of the Borgo through the care of their design. The first street is straight; it runs from a piazza at the Castel Sant'Angelo to the piazza at St. Peter's, and it is directed toward the central door of the basilica's five great entrances.24 The second street, also straight and also departing from the same area at the Castel Sant'Angelo, runs along the right (north) side of the Borgo to the entrance of the Vatican Palace.25 Across the Borgo along its left side is another street, and Manetti's description of it is impossibly vague. He said that it tended toward the Tiber and was directed toward an ancient obelisk that stood at that time on the left of the basilica. The street possibly curved, but it certainly terminated before the obelisk, at the new canons' lodgings contemplated for that area (ss. 34-35).

This section of Manetti's description is typical of his operations as a figurative reporter, in that it seems to be clear until one attempts to relate one element to another and to coordinate the combination of elements with the extant topography and buildings. Manetti is never precise enough to allow one to obtain clear urbanistic or topographic information, but he does explain how the design satisfied the demands made on it by the program. Manetti says that in the Borgo there would be an open area at the Castel Sant'Angelo. It would be open at the Castello and joined to the buildings in the Borgo, it would run on one side from the walls directed from the

23 Manetti, RIS, col. 950.
24 Manetti, ss. 32-33. This street might be related to the one mentioned above, chapter 4. See chapter 4, note 79.
25 This street might be related to the one mentioned above, chapter 4. See chapter 4, note 81.
Castello to the palace and on the other side to the Tiber, and it would be produced by clearing the area near the bridge. He adds that from that piazza would run the three streets; these would divide the Borgo into three (sic) areas and have colonnades on each side. But he says nothing about the shape or decoration of the piazza at the Castello, nothing about where the three streets depart from it, and nothing about a regular or irregular pattern of the plan of the streets as they cross the Borgo. He sees these elements not as physical design elements placed in a considered relationship to one another—to expect him to do that would be to expect more of him than the mapmakers were capable of—but as things without which a city was incomplete. He treated them as separate things, introducing them in a sequence that hardly related them to one another, but after they had all been introduced into the Borgo the latter was complete, and he could claim that it had been designed. The streets are the most obvious example of his having thought in this way. They define the areas of habitation on either side and are not seen as defining blocks between their courses; thus, the three streets divide the Borgo into three areas, not into four blocks. These three areas contain three types of residents; that is, the streets order the inhabitants according to their classes and nations. The first, central street has the greater craftsmen—moneymen, drapers, and bakers—the northern street the less important craftsmen, and the one farthest from the palace and nearest Rome and the Tiber has the lowest classes.26 Political, not spatial, divisions still give order, but political divisions are beginning to be established consciously through conscious physical design.

The physical facilities Nicholas intended for the Borgo are very inadequately explained, as is clear in Manetti’s description of the colonnades and buildings along the three streets. The colonnades are, he states, both beautiful and useful. Their beauty is obvious to those inside them in all the seasons of the year, and their usefulness resides in their protecting people from the inclemencies of the weather. Furthermore, the residences that accompany the shops within the colonnades are to be placed above the colonnades, in order to provide sufficient light (ss. 40–43). But what does this mean? That is to say, what architectural form would this combination of colonnades, shops, and residences have?

Manetti is apparently unaware that he is describing a design that is different from traditional shop design in Rome, and that its differences reside in the resolution of several different kinds of problems at once. Traditionally, shops were spread along Roman streets, each separate from the next, with the shop on the ground floor and the residence often crammed into a mezzanine level within the shop. Above the shops would be residences, and they would not necessarily be for the shopkeepers. The shops and their cramped quarters had little or no light, and the occupants practiced their crafts as much in the street as they did indoors. This clogged the streets with benches and other things that the magistrates of streets were empowered to cut down, tear out, and destroy. The activity of the craftsmen was probably as responsible as the carters who figured in the 1446 concordat for impeding pedestrians.

When these buildings were faced with colonnades, as was not uncommon in parts of Italy, including Rome, they were often colonnades of short run and irregular face. They doubtless created as many problems as they provided amenities, and such problems were in the hands of the street magistrates, who could again cut down and cart off offending projections. It would appear that Manetti missed the point of

26Manetti, ss. 37–39. He does not elaborate on their national segregation.
Nicholas’s design, which, as has been argued, is based on traditional practice but which has transformed it from a nuisance into an amenity. The design separates cart from pedestrian traffic, allows pedestrians, if they wish, to mix together with the craftsmen, provides a protected place for that conjunction, and puts the residences above in line with either the front of the colonnade or the shop within the colonnade. The latter seems more probable, because that arrangement would widen the opening to the sky and allow in the greater quantity of light Manetti mentioned. Manetti catalogues the benefits the design would provide—beauty, usefulness, protection from the weather, and good illumination—but he does not indicate that the benefits were integrated into a single solution that resolved the problems inherent in similar, undesigned structures—disorder, encumbered circulation, exposure to the weather, and darkness. That solution accounted at the same time for visual pleasantness, usefulness, solidity, and proper ornamentation, each of which responded to problems of the public and private uses of physical facilities, and some of which also confronted the blasts of fortune. It was, in addition, a solution that was coherently inserted into a larger urban and political structure.

The major elements in Manetti’s Borgo were the entrance, the fortifications, the piazza at the entrance, the three streets with their colonnades, and the entrance areas into the basilica and the palace. In keeping with the unity he saw between the Borgo and the palace, a unity shared by the intimate conjunction of the Borgo and the basilica, Manetti did not draw a sharp distinction between his description of the third, fourth, and fifth parts of the project, which he had named when introducing his description. Without a break he goes on to discuss the palace and then returns to the Borgo to outline Nicholas’s plans for the basilica. He begins his description of the basilica at the piazza in front of it. In following his report it becomes clear that the open space there is not to be considered as distinct from the Borgo, the basilica, or the palace. Instead, it is to be thought of as an urbanistic element that unifies the three and stands at the very center of Nicholas’s scheme for the Borgo.

There is little or no evidence to show what the area was like in 1447 or in 1455. It is also difficult to discover what Nicholas planned there. Manetti’s description is the only surviving direct evidence of Nicholas’s intention, and a deficiency that prevents the text from yielding accurate figures for its dimensions is of little help. This lapse may make little difference, however. Manetti may not have had accurate figures available to him, and even if he had them, he may have used rounded figures or other figures for some purpose now beyond our understanding. It is clear that when he used figures, he used them for a purpose that was more profound than mere description, as will be seen when he gives the dimensions of the basilica. And Manetti

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[29] Magnuson, 1958, p. 78, interprets s. 43 to mean that the openings in the colonnades would be wide enough to allow light into the shops and the residences.
[30] Contrast the interpretation of this description with that of MacDougall, 1962, who objects to Magnuson’s interpretations by stressing the visual unity that uniform colonnades would lend the area. See also Magnuson, 1958, p. 79, n. 28, who mentions what Manetti does not mention, the tradition that there was a roofed-over, colonnaded street running through the Vatican across the Ponte Sant’Angelo to an area just across the river, where it terminated in a triumphal arch. For it, see Thoenes, 1963, part I. 
[31] Manetti, §§ 84, 85, and 121 in Muratori’s text, gives the dimensions of the piazza as 200 by 100 cubits (braccia), but as Pagnotti, 1891, has pointed out, some texts give the dimensions as 500 by 100. The manuscript that Muratori used has not been traced; see Magnuson, 1958, p. 356, n. 23. Magnuson rejects both 500 and 200 cubits and offers no alternative; 1958, pp. 72-77. MacDougall, 1962, pp. 73-74, offers a reconstruction that is not preferable; it is that the 5 x 1 proportion is probably correct, but that the dimension 100 braccia excludes the depth of the portico on each side; for these, see below.
would probably have considered dimensionally accurate figures quite superfluous. His description is figurative, not concrete, and his emphasis is on the program, not on the architectural elements as architectural structures. The result may be, then, that there is no way to recover Nicholas's figures from anything Manetti has to say, and, furthermore, it might be that Nicholas himself never had specific figures available to him for this area.\(^{32}\)

It seems highly unlikely that there is any way one can gain a concrete architectural or urbanistic sense of the piazza from what does survive of Manetti's description. When interpreting his text, one must recall the limitations on Manetti's abilities to describe physical elements and his tendency to use his rhetorical structure for some larger purpose than mere description. When one reads Manetti's description closely, one finds little or no spatial unity. The piazza is little more than the space left over after the elements assembled around and in it have been put in place. Only his references elsewhere to the two streets at the extreme sides of the Borgo allow one to infer that these enter the piazza at opposite ends and define two of its sides. One of the sides would have the canons' residence near it, and the other would be terminated by the papal palace; each of these is related to the piazza, but neither would give definition to it. The canons' residence is not described at all, and the palace is described as a building with a series of elements the visitor encounters as he enters and visits, rather than as a block or a combination of elements integrated into a coherent design that presents a face to the piazza and that forms a backdrop for an open space.\(^{33}\)

Manetti describes the piazza by mentioning elements that are found in it. At the upper end there would be a set of steps and a platform. Manetti gives the platform's dimensions as 75 by 120 cubits,\(^{34}\) which is only a little smaller than the piazza if the text which gives the dimensions as 100 by 200 is considered correct; this is still not a small platform related to a piazza if the texts with the 100 by 500 dimensions are accepted.\(^ {35}\) On the opposite side of the piazza, apparently 200 or 500 braccia (or cubits) away in the direction of the built-up part of the Borgo, was to be a façade of the piazza with colonnades that recall those of the three streets leading through the Borgo (s. 85). Manetti states that this "most ample and ornate area," which the Greeks called a platea, was valued because it affords the most beautiful and rich spectacle of all sorts of beautiful things (ss. 85–86). One of these things is the obelisk, moved from its position at the side of the basilica and placed in the center of the lower, larger piazza, presumably in line with the central door of the basilica and the street of the Borgo, although Manetti simply says "in the middle." It was to be reestablished on its base, with its four bronze lions replaced by four bronze statues of the Evangelists.\(^{36}\) Above them would be bronze statues of persons arranged each according to his dignity, topped by a great bronze figure of Christ the Savior holding a gold cross in his right hand (ss. 86–88). The other of these beautiful things would be the entrance to the basilica.

\(^{32}\)Some ramifications of this argument will be discussed again below, Epilogue.

\(^{33}\)Ss. 31–36, 44–45, 52–57, 101. Manetti gives no indication that the north and south sides of the piazza had colonnades.

\(^{34}\)S. 90. It was, however, only about 30 braccia deep; Thoenes, 1963, p. 137, n. 40. Manetti must have included the steps in his platform dimensions, as it is shown in plan B on p. 102.

\(^{35}\)Concerning the dimensions, see note 31 above.

\(^{36}\)The lions were probably no longer under the obelisk in the mid quattrocento. Their earlier presence would have been known from older sources, however. See Squarciapino, 1962. That Manetti mentioned them again shows the extent to which he depended on material other than what was visible to him when he made his description.
Manetti describes the wall in front of the viewer approaching the basilica in figurative as much as in architectural terms. The steps are of marble, of porphyry, and of emerald colors, a scheme Manetti will repeat later. Beyond them is the small platform discussed above, and beyond that rises a wall punctured by five noble bronze portals and terminated at each end by a tower. The latter are 100 cubits high and built of beautiful marbles; they strengthen the basilica and contain bells that ring out the canonic hours (ss. 90–91). It would seem that Manetti considers these towers as strengthening the basilica in much the same way Torquemada had when he referred to “campanile, sive turrim” as a figure for the defense of the Church rather than as a defensive installation, an idea which would find its way also into Filarete’s ideas about churches.

Conspicuously lacking in this description is any sense of space and any sense of the buildings around the piazza as contributing to the piazza. The basilica is seen as a natural extension of the Borgo, and at the same time the Borgo is a mere forecourt for the basilica; intruding between them is a platea with objects in and around it. Manetti moves consistently toward the basilica; beyond the ample built-up area of the Borgo there would be a broad piazza, then a set of steps, then a platform smaller than the piazza and more broad than deep, and then the five great portals.

A sophisticated sense of space may be lacking in Manetti’s description because the precise details for that area had not been settled by the time Nicholas died. Alternatively, it may be lacking because a sophisticated handling of open spaces treated as things designed had not yet become part of the rhetorical, conceptual, and visual vocabulary of those who were already adept in ancient forms of literary expression, as Manetti was, and in design with ancient architectural elements, as Brunelleschi and Alberti were.

Parts of cities had been designed since the late thirteenth century in Tuscany. Spaces that fronted on important buildings had been manipulated to achieve a preconceived visual result. For example, the piazza around the baptistry and the space in front of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence had been cleared during various campaigns in the fourteenth century. Buildings had also been manipulated in order to give a particular character to the space in front of them. For instance, ordinances were passed in the late fourteenth century that regulated the form of facades up to a height of more than thirty feet along a portion of the street connecting the piazzas at the cathedral and the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence; they were to be remodeled to imitate the form of the (old) Palazzo di Parte Guelfa, which stood in the same street. But these examples cannot be considered to be piazza designs of the same type as that which has been sought by recent interpreters of Manetti’s description, and more importantly, they were not designed in the rigorous style congruent with what Manetti leads us to expect Nicholas wanted. Nicholas was clearly attempting to use an architecture based on the emulation of antique methods of design, and to design with the coherence and integration of elements that Brunelleschi had introduced in his buildings, that Castagno had used in the fictive architecture at Legnaia, and that

37Manetti, s. 85; compare the steps at the gate of purgatory in Dante, Divina Commedia, Purg. IX, lines 76 ff., and the steps to thrones for saints in contemporary paintings.
38Torquemada, Consecrationes, fol. 5°.
39Similarly the next sentences, which refer to walls running back from these towers to the crossing of the basilica, should be thought of as structural rather than as military constructions. Alberti, De re aed., I, viii, refers to the wall between the basilica and the palace, with its chapels, as useful for keeping the hill from sliding down into the basilica. MacDougall’s fortification of Magnuson’s basilica (1962, p. 74) is eminently reasonable.
Brunelleschi's successors would show was possible in piazza design—for example, at Pienza (1458–62) and Vigevano (1492–94). Thus, these late medieval piazzas hardly qualify as designed piazzas according to Nicholas's standards or according to those standards that would gradually be introduced during the quattrocento.

There are only three open spaces in Italy earlier in date than Nicholas's piazzas on the Capitol and at the basilica that could claim to have been designed according to the new criteria, and the claims of each are open to question. Brunelleschi probably did design the space in front of the Ospedale degli Innocenti in this way, but execution dragged on for a century. His piazza for the space between Santo Spirito and the Arno survives only in a meager statement of his intention, and our possible knowledge of a piazza intended for the area between San Lorenzo and his proposed but rejected Palazzo Medici depends upon even more tenuous evidence. To wrest from Manetti's description a piazza with buildings, colonnades, arched entrances, portals, an obelisk, and other elements consciously designed and placed relative to one another with the intention of making a noble space with value in its openness is to draw more from Manetti than is there, and to miss his point as well.

Manetti was unclear in his description, but he was probably intentionally deceptive as well in order to be clear rhetorically. To clarify his report, he indulged in simplification. His account of Nicholas's project is predicated upon stressing the dominance of St. Peter's over the Borgo, the independence of the Borgo from Rome, and the dominance of the Borgo over Rome. As he described the project, therefore, he had the visitor move from Rome through the Borgo and into the basilica. This was to ignore another means of access that was possibly more important and would hardly have been ignored by Nicholas. Pilgrims from the north avoided Rome, as Frederick III had when entering in 1452, by skirting Monte Mario and coming into the Borgo through the Porta di S. Pietro. This gate penetrated the corridoio that formed the wall running from the Castel Sant'Angelo to the Vatican Palace. It is conspicuous in all the versions of Biondo's friend's view of Rome (figs. 29–32, 71–74). Alexander VI rebuilt it and had Bramante install a fountain in the open piazza between the axis of the basilica and the gateway. The pilgrim would enter an area that had been cleared and defined by the construction projects of Boniface IX (1389–1404) and John XXIII (1410–15), with the Borgo on one side and the Vatican Palace on the other. The pilgrim's route and the area immediately within the Porta di S. Pietro remained unaltered until Pius IV (1559–65) rebuilt it. He laid a new street

41 Lotz, 1968, passim.
42 For the Santo Spirito piazza, see Manetti, 1970, lines 1512 ff.; for the San Lorenzo work, see Hyman, 1969. See also the illustration from the early sixteenth century in Krinsky, 1969.
43 Especially important is the movement across the space in ss. 84–85. In contrast to the interpretation suggested here, see Magnuson, 1958, pp. 72–77, and pl. IA, and MacDougall, 1962, pp. 73–74. Both accept a reading of s. 85 to indicate that the axis of the piazza is parallel to that of the basilica. This may or may not be the case; an alternative reading, albeit based on a less usual interpretation of the Latin syntax, which places the long axis across the front of the basilica, would better fit the topography and Manetti's vision of the piazza elsewhere as an element tying together the basilica and the palace (see plan B on page 102). Manetti, for purposes of his rhetoric, had a clear interest in having the long axis parallel; his description proceeds across the Borgo into the basilica, and, as will be seen below, he uses the piazza's proportions in conjunction with those of the basilica. These two uses of the piazza would be better served by having the axis parallel than perpendicular, and there was no reason for him to report accurately on the matter. See also Magnuson, 1958, pp. 77–78, who introduces conjectures about the design of the points at which the streets enter the piazza, and MacDougall, 1962, pp. 73–74, who offers an alternative solution on equally conjectural grounds.
45 Ehrle and Egger, 1935, pp. 87–89.
across the Borgo Pio, which he built as an extension to the Borgo Leonino, and he opened the Arco di Sant'Anna at the head of the street. He also enlarged and rearranged the barracks' area of the Swiss Guards just inside the Borgo Leonino. These were the first extensive alterations to be undertaken in the area since the time of Nicholas V, and Pius's Borgo Pio project was linked by contemporaries with the original project of Nicholas, apparently through the agency of Vasari's discussion of it in the life of Bernardo Rossellino. It seems unlikely that Nicholas would have ignored this entrance, or that he would have sponsored a project that diminished its importance as a means of access to the basilica, but because Manetti was describing the area within a context that stressed the movement through the Borgo to the basilica and to its contiguous and closely related palace, there was good reason for him to distort his description of this part and in the process to obscure Nicholas's complete intentions for the area of the piazza.

One final consideration suggests that Manetti's description has allowed rhetoric and figurative language to obscure the architectonic character of the piazza. The area in front of the basilica and the palace that included all these entrances and exits was highly irregular and probably in excess of 400 braccia square. If there were to be a colonnade around it, and if the colonnade were to describe a rectangle either 100 by 500 or 100 by 200, where would it have been placed, how would the streets and portals had been accommodated, and what would have filled up the space outside its limits (see plan B)? To answer these questions requires a great deal of conjecture; more sensible is the assumption that Manetti was writing figuratively. He simply used dimensions for a piazza that related to those he gave for the basilica in order to indicate that, figuratively, the piazza was an ordered forecourt to the great basilica and therefore an appropriate space in front of it, and that, in addition, the piazza tied together the entrances to the basilica and the palace when approached through the Borgo from Rome.

The pilgrim, no matter how he got into the area in front of it, is now ready to enter the basilica, the most important single element in Nicholas's building project. The pope spent much more here than anywhere else in Rome, which indicates the importance the building occupied in his program. He restored parts of the atrium and completed the restorations of the mosaics on the façade facing the atrium; he shored up and repaired the tilting nave and aisle walls; he destroyed and rearranged some chapels along the church's sides and at its east end; and he undertook the construction of a vast new transept and choir. His intent was to restore and augment, not to replace the entire building. He laid a great deal of masonry beyond the eastern (i.e., west by the compass) parts of the Early Christian bema and apse; although these foundations reached a height of no more than thirteen braccia, and perhaps not even that much, and therefore remained rather inconspicuous, the sheer mass of the material there could not be ignored by any subsequent builder. Paul II added a little to what Nicholas had laid, but the energetic Julius II would profit most from what Nicholas had begun. The outline of the eastern apse and of the related sides of the arms of the great Greek cross church that Bramante began in 1506 was determined by Nicholas's foundations, as is clearest in one of the drawings (Uffizi

46 For Pius's project, see Lewine, 1965, appendix (with n. 129 for reference to MacDougall's suggestion), and idem, 1969, who indicates that little had changed in a century.

47 See Magnuson, 1958, pp. 163–214, and Urban, 1963, passim, for the most recent studies of Nicholas's actual construction.
20A) related to Julius’s undertaking, which shows the Early Christian construction, Nicholas’s foundations, and some of the sixteenth-century work.48

But once again, Manetti did not direct his attention to archaeology and construction activity. His description of the basilica is almost purely rhetorical. In it, he mixes together ornamentation and repairs undertaken by Nicholas and his predecessors and treats the extant Constantinian fabric as if it were all to be built by the pope. He continues to emphasize figurative rather than architectonic elements, and he constantly stresses the place the building occupies in Nicholas’s comprehensive program for the papacy.

Manetti moves the visitor rather quickly through the areas in front of the great Constantinian nave. The platform at the head of the piazza, he reported, was sufficiently ample to hold many people; beyond it stood the five great portals, opening to a vestibule flanked by towers, and beyond it, entered through another five portals, was a second vestibule (ss. 89–91, 94). Following the vestibules would be the atrium. Transit from the second vestibule to the atrium would be made through five portals, with those on each end opening into the useful and beautiful porticoes on the sides of the atrium (ss. 94, 96). The atrium portico on the left would give access to the canons’ residence, and that on the right would stand before the wall that separated the palace from the area of the basilica (s. 97). In the center of the atrium would be the pigna, restored to its former dignity as a fountain supplied with living water brought down from the hills behind.49 In describing the area Manetti does not use the traditional terminology that called it a paradise.50 At the base of the atrium would be an arcade opening directly into the vaulted narthex of the basilica, and, beyond that, the five decorated and ornamented portals of the basilica, including the one by Filarete, would greet the visitor.51

The description culminates inside the basilica. Manetti mentions the nave and east end in the same tone, without differentiating between Nicholas’s intentions to repair and shore up the ancient nave and to replace great portions of the Constantinian fabric with new work. Here, as elsewhere, he treats intention as accomplishment, and he constantly describes the basilica as it would function and as it would be seen, not as it would be thought of by a builder or architect. Manetti reported that the nave with its four side aisles allowed an unencumbered view throughout the church, which pleased him.52 Beyond the nave, a vaulted apse and vaulted transepts would project out from the crossing; had these been built, they would have vastly increased the space of the east end. The crossing would have a dome with a lantern allowing light to be diffused throughout the space.53 The climax of the basilica—and, indeed, of the entire sequence of places from the Castel Sant’Angelo on—would be in the new projecting apse, which Manetti called the “head” and which, he states, is commonly called a tribune.

Having finished the general description, rudimentary as it is, Manetti concentrates

48 For studies of the relationship between Nicholas’s project, the extant building, and later construction, see, in addition to the material in note 47 above, Wolff Metternich, 1967, passim. For old St. Peter’s, see Jongkees, 1966.
49 Manetti, s. 95. Eugenius had already restored the fountain; see Müntz, ACP, I, p. 40, for the dates, 1437 and 1438.
50 See Ehrle and Egger, 1953, p. 58, for a document from 1332; Ehrle and Stevenson, 1897, p. 11, n. 9, for 1488 and 1503. The documents referred to in Müntz, note 49 above, also call it a paradise.
51 Manetti, s. 98; also ss. 99–102 for the entrance. The arcade with ten columns between the atrium and the vaulted narthex already existed, as did much else here. See Magnuson, 1958, pp. 180–185.
52 Manetti, s. 103; there is no evidence in Manetti’s text that Nicholas intended to vault the side aisles.
53 Manetti, ss. 106–109. For a different statement about this light, see below, pp. 118, 124.
on a few specific elements in the basilica. The tribune would be fitted out with seats for all the important persons, and it would be lit by great round windows that would serve also as ornaments (s. 112). The altar, ingenious, beautiful, and loaded with every sort of proper ornament—the only altar he mentions in the basilica—stands at the extremity of the crossing (s. 113), that is, beyond the actual location of the tomb of Peter, which Manetti does not mention, and within the circle of the dome. Beyond that, at the extremity of the tribune, in a position that would be clearly visible to all, would be the throne of the pope (s. 114). Manetti has described the kernel of the concetto that would guide later popes, especially those who patronized Bernini during the seventeenth century.

These elements relate directly to the functioning of Nicholas’s basilica. The other elements Manetti places in the rebuilt east end are subordinate to those he has mentioned. They are included to allow the important elements to function more effectively. He describes this second group as supporting elements rather than as ornament or as parts of the architectural fabric. Windows in the nave would illuminate the individual parts, while those in the crossing would reveal the splendor of the area around the altar (s. 115). The dome’s great, round windows would appear as a “glorious crown”; the dome would allow the rays of the sun to enter and “not only light up individual parts of the dome but also display an example of divine glory to all the devout onlookers.” 54 The windows in the dome would, continues Manetti, resemble those throughout the basilica. The similarity would indicate that the entire structure is a unified whole. The materials of the pavement would be marble, porphyry, and emerald-colored, like those of the steps outside (ss. 117–18). In referring to the colored materials in the pavement, a Cosmati pavement that actually existed, and in reminding the reader that the visitor would have encountered them just before entering the basilica, Manetti is able to call attention to the unity that pervades the basilica from the entrance to the altar and pontifical throne.

Next, in a separate statement, Manetti turns to another important element in the complex:

And lest so great, so fair, so holy, so admirable, and so divine rather than mortal a temple be defiled at all by any burials of deceased popes, he wished that sepulchres of this kind be established and constructed on the left hand outside the chapel. . . .

This area was toward the front of the basilica relative to the apse (s. 119). Manetti is referring here to an extant building, the circular mausoleum known by the names Santa Maria della Febbre and Sant’Andrea. 55 It was used for services by the canons of St. Peter’s, 56 and in 1452 renovations were underway there in conjunction with its

54 Manetti, s. 116. The image is hardly unusual; see Dante, Divina Commedia, Paradiso, X, XI, XII, XIII. It is found in the quadratocco in literature (see Manetti’s “De pompis,” to be cited below, note 64) and in architecture (Brunelleschi’s Medici sacristy and Pazzi Chapel, both in Florence).

55 For these names, and for another circular mausoleum next to this one, see Armellini, 1942, pp. 927–928, 913–915, 933–937, and the note added by Cecchelli to Armellini, 1942, p. 915. See also Krautheimer, 1965, p. 320, n. 47 to ch. 2. This was the mausoleum that was detached from the transept of the basilica.

56 On 23 December 1449 Nicholas transferred the priests attached to S. Vincenzo to the chapter of the canons of St. Peter’s and stated that they were to assist in the services at Santa Maria della Febbre; Coll. Bull. Vat., II, pp. 130–131.
function as a sepulchre. Elsewhere in the description Manetti had mentioned a sacristy in this area (s. 101). He placed it beyond the proposed canons’ residence, but his description seems to suggest that he was referring not to Santa Maria della Febbre but to S. Petronilla, another circular mausoleum also thought to be ancient and attached to the transept of the basilica.

Manetti’s explanation for the pope’s desire to be interred outside the basilica recalls Alberti’s counsel against placing the dead within churches, as has often been mentioned. But Alberti at this time was involved in at least two designs that contradicted the position he had announced in his treatise. At SS. Annunziata in Florence and San Francesco in Rimini, tribunes were being fitted out to receive the mortal remains of the patrons of the buildings. Manetti’s explanation, while vague, suggests that the mausoleum and the sacristy would occupy two separate buildings, but recent Florentine practice shows that the two functions would not have been incompatible in a single centralized building. At San Lorenzo the sacristy served as the sepulchral chapel for the parents of Cosimo de’ Medici, and it, like the tribune at SS. Annunziata and in Rimini, had a centralized plan covered with a dome. The crypt below the crossing at San Lorenzo also became a sepulchre.

Domed, centralized burial spaces recalled not only ancient and early Christian practice but also a conspicuous pontifical tomb in the church itself. The tomb of Boniface VIII, which stood inside the Basilica of St. Peter against the center of the entrance façade, was also centralized in that its altar was covered by a canopy. The brief remark in Manetti’s text is too vague to suggest which, if any, of these predecessors Nicholas was evoking, and the practice of four of his successors, who placed their tombs in centralized spaces, does not clarify the issue. Calixtus III was buried in Sant’Andrea (Santa Maria della Febbre). Pius II and Sixtus IV established their tombs in centralized chapels conjoined to St. Peter’s. And Julius II would later have Bramante and Michelangelo begin to convert the entire Basilica of St. Peter into a colossal centralized mausoleum for himself and St. Peter. But no matter what Nicholas may have intended, after his death his body was placed in a small tomb in the left side of St. Peter’s. Its principal ornament was a glowing epitaph composed by Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, the future Pius II.

Having finished enumerating the various elements that comprise the basilica, Manetti turns to several characteristics of the entire complex. First, he introduces the dimensional relationships that pervade the basilica as a whole. He had given some of the dimensions earlier, but here he repeats the major ones to stress the unity throughout the building—the dimensions for the piazza, for the length of the basilica.

57 See Coll. Bull. Vat., II, pp. 140–141, a document dated 12 July 1453, addressed to Francesco Orsini, prefect of the city of Rome. The pope states that because the Chapel of St. John the Baptist is being removed “pro fundatione et constructione quas circa ampliationem Tribunae Basilicae Principis Apostolorum de Urbe sumptuoso et mirifico opere fieri facerem fucum,” the Orsini Chapel is being removed to Santa Maria delle Febbre. For related payments from 1452, see Müntz, ACP, I, pp. 123–124, and for payments for other works there, see ibid., pp. 121–124. For the Chapel of St. John, Armellini, 1942, pp. 937–938. For later reports about Nicholas’s work at Santa Maria delle Febbre, see Müntz, ACP, I, p. 121, n. 2 (citing Platina) and n. 3 (citing Panvinio).

58 For it, see notes above to Santa Maria delle Febbre. Magnuson, 1958, pp. 190, 206, considers Manetti’s reference to both the sepulchre and the sacristy to be too vague to be useful. He does not refer to the documents concerning the Orsini tombs.

59 Alberti, De re aed., VIII, i.

60 Gardner, 1969, pp. 109 f.

ica, for the breadth of the transepts, and for the height of the vaults and dome. They seldom correspond to the ones he had already given; his purpose is not to render possible a reconstruction but to demonstrate the unity of the fabric. The larger dimension of the piazza, for example, is equal to the distance through the forecourts and nave to the pontifical throne. In citing dimensions he can also make it clear that proportions have been used in designing; they will be repeated once more in a later passage to show the relationship between the basilica and its prototype.

Next Manetti stresses the unity between the basilica and the contiguous papal palace. He first mentions the portal that allows the pope and the prelates to enter from the palace, with proper dignity, directly through a special side entrance (s. 126). The next three sentences are also meant to relate the basilica to the palace and both of these to their prototypes, which will be introduced later in the description, by naming three elements that were common to the buildings and their prototypes—a special staircase, a particular type of roof, and special materials used in their construction. At this point in the description Manetti states that the pope and prelates reach the side entrance of the basilica by means of a marvelous spiral staircase (s. 127), and we are told that the basilica has a lead roof and that it is built of stones brought specially along the river from the small town of Tivoli near Rome to the building site in the Vatican.63

In a certain sense everything that Manetti has mentioned up to this point has been an elaborate stage setting for his final remarks, which concern the content of the basilica. Extensive as his comments had been, up to this point he had acted as a reporter rather than as an interpreter; now he becomes not only an interpreter but also a visitor. He now explains what figurative content and doctrine the design held, and he then concludes with observations about the place of Nicholas’s undertaking in the history of architecture.

Manetti explained the content and doctrine in a special section, which he carefully set aside from his description. He wished to present these comments as the result of his own reflection. Here, and only here in the Life of Nicholas, he claims to have speculated on his own. He states that the similarity between the basilica and the body of man is clearly visible. The vestibules and the tribune correspond to the location of the feet and the head, and the transepts correspond to outstretched arms (ss. 130–34).

This anthropomorphic analogy was not new in either descriptive and interpretative literature or in Manetti’s works. When describing the cathedral in Florence in 1436 he had made a similar comparison and had done so with careful technical language. He had explained that the shape (figura) of the Duomo resembled the form (forma) of man and that the form (forma) of man surpassed the shapes (figurae) of the most perfect things.64 But Manetti carefully revised his earlier version of this traditional anthropomorphic analogy and added a great deal of other material in order to adapt it to his new purpose. In Florence he had said that such an analogy has often been noted; now he points out in general language that these visible similarities are his own conclusions, although others would be able to see them as well. His lan-

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62 Compare: Manetti, ss. 121 with 84 and 85; 122 with 90, 99, and 110; 123 with 99 (see also 160); 124 with 107; and 125 with 108 (see also 161).

63 Manetti, ss. 128–129. Manetti’s purpose for these remarks will be treated below, p. 150.

guarge then becomes technical. He adds that the form (forma) of man is the most noble among all the shapes (figurae) of all animate and inanimate things, that it is similar to the entire created world, and that it "indeed was held by some of the most learned men to have been made in the likeness of the entire world," for which reasons the Greeks call it "microcosm" (ss. 135–136). He then adds, again as he had not in Florence, that Noah had built the Ark to save mankind, that he had built it after the most perfect construction (fabrica) of the human body, and that Nicholas had wanted to imitate that construction in his own divine temple. "The proportion of these dimensions [of the Ark] could not be kept in the form (forma) of our temple; nonetheless, he kept the likeness of the design (lineamentorum) in the shape (in figuris)" (s. 138).

Manetti then concludes his own comments by saying that in his construction Noah had had divine inspiration directly from God. The Ark was the proper model to imitate and copy when constructing a building meant to save mankind, and Nicholas, through reading and study of proper authors, had desired and wanted to imitate that construction in undertaking his own divine temple (ss. 139–140).

Manetti's comments show that he had used the building as a figure for study. He followed the traditional pattern of letting it serve as a point of departure for speculation about doctrine, and he did not examine it as an architec tonic structure. But he did frame his comments as part of his description of the building as a piece of architecture, and he did make some fundamental changes that show that he had an awareness of its architectural character.

The first indication that he was adapting an older convention rather than inventing something new occurs in his reference to the Ark. It was one of the most common figures for the Church, and it allowed him to prepare for the reference a few lines later to the Temple of Solomon, which was often analogous to the Ark when either was used figuratively. He was also following the traditional interpretation that had long referred to the Ark or the Temple when he found the basilica to be similar in one way or another to man and to all created things. Augustine had explained that the Ark, whose three dimensions signify the human body (significant corpus humanum), had many other significations as well, and he indicated that few of them depended upon precise knowledge of the Ark as a physical structure. In this way Augustine had authorized a purely non-architectonic use of the Ark as a figure. An example of such a use is Hugh of St. Victor’s explanation that the three elements of the Ark, which is the Temple of God in man, are locus, materia, and artifex; defining who would be the builder of the home of God, he said, "Ipse artifex eris, cor tuum locus, cogitationes tuae materia" ("You are its builder, you build it in your heart, your thoughts are its material"). This recalls Augustine's reason for condemning those who misunderstood the prophecy to David that Solomon would build the Temple of God. They had failed to recognize that the Temple would be Christ and even man. As he quotes Paul, "For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."88

The elaborations and commentaries of medieval authors wander constantly farther from the architectural figure that had served as their point of departure; similarly, the more the figure was embroidered, the more feeble its impact became. In patristic writings the analogy between the various things referred to by the figure had been

65 See Cornelius, 1930, pp. 3 ff.
66 City of God, XV, xxvi, xxvii.
67 Hugh of St. Victor, De Arca Noe Morali, IV, i, col. 664.
68 "Templum enim Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos"; Augustine, City of God, XVII, viii; 1 Corinthians 3:17.
clear, because the terminology was simple and the argument was pointed. Ambrose had said simply that the Ark was built in the shape (figura) of the human body and had demonstrated that the human body and created things that were made by God were similar because they were both carefully constructed according to their congrua mensura ratiocine.69 Similarly, Augustine had depended only upon the terms figura, mensura, constructio, and signum.70 Hugh’s analogies between the Ark, the Temple, the Church, the body of man, and created things is lost in his welter of other analogies and figurative meanings. He used the term forma to refer to form, but the term figura referred to a non-architectonic and non-formal sign for contemplation as a figure within an allegory to be interpreted literally, allegorically, tropologically, and analogically.71 Manetti used forma as Hugh had, but with the term figura he referred to shape, thus making the thing itself more substantial and concrete as an object of study.

Manetti’s cogitations within the basilica belong to the figurative tradition that includes Ambrose, Augustine, and Hugh of St. Victor, but his means of expressing the results of his reflections give them the impact of the Fathers rather than the complexity of their successors. There are, however, differences even between Manetti’s report about the Duomo in Florence and the basilica in Rome; they are major conceptual differences and may not be adequately explained by an additional two decades of exposure to patristic sources and rhetorical experience. It seems highly possible that they may be attributed to his contact with his friend Alberti. Alberti was equally literate in ancient and patristic writings and had recently completed De re aedificatoria; the new comprehension of architecture that is found there seems to lie behind the sounder understanding of architecture that is found in Manetti’s later description.

Alberti had explained that architecture is design (lineamenta) and construction (structura), and that the operations of the architect must be an imitation of the operations of God as he creates in nature. The stress was on the thing in process of creation, not on the finished, immutable form to be subjected to cogitation. Alberti was writing about how the architect designs and builds. He had considered man only one of the many things that God made and whose construction the architect should imitate in his own operations. This attitude is clear in a passage in which he referred to older sources. The ancients, he said, invented three orders of columns, taking their separate form (modus) and measure (dimensio) from the variety in the bodies of men. From this correspondence, he continued, the commentators of our sacred books have

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69. “Itaque et Deus auctor nostri corporis, naturaeque fabricator astrastruit, et opus ipsum perfectum esse iis sermonibus significatur... ut in iis quoque congrua mensura ratiocine concurrat:...” De Nce et Arca, vi, cols. 387–388.

70. “... Procul dubio figura est peregrinantis in hoc saeculo Civitatis Dei... Nam et mensurae ipsae longitudinis... significat corpus humanum...” “Et cetera quae in eiusdem arcae constructione dicuntur ecclesiasticum signa sunt rerum.” City of God, XV, xxvi.

71. In De Arca Nce Morali, Hugh of St. Victor stressed form, while in De Arca Nce Mystica he stresses figura. In the former work he defines figura: “Figura, res, veritas, ut idem intelligas esse umbaram et figuram, idem corpus et rem, idem spiritum et veritatem. Unde umbra dicuntur illa, quae ante adventum Christi sub lege naturali, et sub scripta lege corporaliter et visibiliter gesta sunt ad praefigurandae ea, quae nunc post adventum Christi in tempore gratiae corporaliter et visibiliter geruntur, quae ideo umbra dicuntur, quia corporalia erant et figura corporalium” (IV, ix, col. 679). In the latter work he uses it in that manner, as, for example: “Si enim arca Ecclesiam significat, restat ut longitudo arcae longitudinem figurat Ecclesiae” (iii, col. 685). And: “In ipsa fronte arcae facio parvam quadraturam ad figurandas quatuor partes mundi...” (iv, col. 686).
come to the opinion that the Ark of Noah was patterned on the shape of man.\textsuperscript{72} In this passage Alberti refers to columns, the noblest ornaments of a building but still mere elements in it, and does not refer to the entire building. He also refers to commentators on scripture, not to scripture itself. Ancient practice and Vitruvius's theory were valuable to Alberti, but the commentators, who wrote of an entire structure based on man's body, were of little use to him. Similarly, an entire building that was made out of elements would serve Alberti as a figure for contemplation, but its individual elements would not. A building would reveal the order that derives from God and that is immanent in the world he creates. This, however, is a slightly different doctrine from the one Manetti coaxes out of the basilica.

Although his approach was different, Manetti was on the track Alberti had set for him, as is evident in his revisions of the original description. In the earlier work on the Duomo in Florence, Manetti had made no pretense of presenting his own ideas or discoveries. Instead, he explained in the preface that it was his intention to describe the ceremonies presided over by Eugenius IV when he had consecrated the building, and that he would do so in as brief a form as possible. In his brevity, he continued, he would imitate the technique of ancient painters who, \textit{pro artis lineamenta}, were able to concentrate on the essential elements of an action without diluting the representation with unnecessary detail.\textsuperscript{73} In what follows, although he describes the cathedral, there is little in his wording that makes the cathedral a concrete, substantial architectonic structure, and, although he describes the ceremony, there is little sense of the activity as an event held within the architectural setting of the great church. Together, these deficiencies vitiate the reader's response to the event as an action that occurred in a setting. In contrast, although in his description from twenty years later he describes no specific event, he has treated the architecture as a part of a larger program of building that the pope undertook as a part of his program for government, and he has placed the pope in the tribune of the basilica, lit by the light from the dome, presiding over the hierarchy of the Church.

A more significant revision also suggests familiarity with Alberti's ideas. In the earlier work, similarities between the body of man, the Duomo, and all created things were to be noted in the relationships of the forms (\textit{formae}) and shapes (\textit{figurae}). These were finished objects that could be examined in sequence as their similarities and correspondences were noted. In the later work, forms and shapes are supplemented by construction (\textit{fabrica}), in the case of the human body, and by design (\textit{lineamenta}), in the case of the likeness of the shape of the basilica to the Ark. The term \textit{lineamenta}, which had been used in the earlier work as a vague term referring to general characteristics of the painter's operations and does not appear elsewhere,\textsuperscript{74} is now used in the sense Alberti had given it in \textit{De re aedificatoria}. Similarly, the human body is now a construction, a thing made rather than a thing finished, a thing that might be studied in its process of fabrication rather than a thing finished and ac-

\textsuperscript{72}Quod ipsum nostri sacrorum interpretes adverterentes, arcam per diluvium factam ad hominis figurationem autamant. '' \textit{De re aed.}, IX, vii, p. 835; Alberti: Leoni, p. 200. Zoubov, 1958, p. 257, cites Augustine, \textit{City of God}, XV, xxvi, as the source, but this would be a source in only a vague way, consonant with Alberti's vague ''sacrorum interpretes,'' a phrase Zoubov mentions. See also Vitruvius, III, i, 1-2, who speaks of symmetry ''ad hominis bene figurati membrorum,'' and of the ''Corpus enim hominis... natura compositi.''

\textsuperscript{73}Manetti, ''De pompis,''' fol. 261'v, Manetti: Battisti, p. 310, reads ''per artis lineamenta.''

\textsuperscript{74}Compare Faccio in Baxandall, 1964, p. 99, and Ghiberti in Krautheimer, 1970, pp. 230 f., and revision, p. xx. The term does not occur in this context in Augustine, Ambrose, or Hugh of St. Victor; for them, it would refer to insignificant aspects of their figures.
cessible through analysis of its extant and unchanging shape or form alone. Manetti’s new sense of the body of man as a construction and of the shape deriving from design seems to be an important indication of his familiarity with Alberti’s theory of architecture. It corresponds to his careful stress in his treatment of the basilica on proportions, on the building materials, and on the response of the building to the specific requirements of those who would use it, indications that recur throughout the description. All this seems to show that Manetti was familiar with his friend’s new ideas about architecture or that he had profited from the same sources and outlook that Alberti had. This familiarity comes to a climax in the section that Manetti attributes to his own discoveries inside the basilica, for here he is able to treat the building as a design, as an architectonic structure that serves as a figure for his own contemplation.

The conclusions he draws from his contemplation, however, could hardly show a more distinct difference of interpretation of legitimate sources for design from those Alberti had laboriously explained. Manetti, not Alberti, believed—and Manetti himself claims uniquely to have discovered—that the design of the basilica is related to the body of man, to all animate and inanimate things, to what the Greeks call a microcosm, and to the Ark of Noah. Manetti makes a case for the appropriateness of these models for the basilica’s design, notes that he had seen them in the design, states that Nicholas desired and wanted to imitate the Ark, and then concludes his thoughts. Significantly, he does not say that, like Noah, Nicholas had had direct inspiration from God in designing the basilica. Nicholas had had to study the proper authors.

After finishing his contemplation, Manetti again becomes a reporter. He now moves on to discuss the place of Nicholas’s building project in the history of architecture. He reports that Nicholas’s works are greater than those of Philo as described by the Greeks (s. 144), and that it ought to be conspicuous to all that they far surpass those of Solomon. Nicholas’s excellence in design is easily seen by comparing his great buildings with the seven wonders of the world, which include the city of Babylon and the Capitol of ancient Rome. Manetti reports that Nicholas, shunning the oracles of Apollo and the writings of Socrates, imitated Solomon, “the wisest of men through the power of God,” and studied what had been written of Solomon’s buildings in sacred literature, which gave him access to the sentences (sententia) of omnipotent God (ss. 155–156).

Nicholas could have found any number of doctrines in Solomon’s writings and in commentaries on them, including beliefs about the figurative correspondence of a basilical church to the Ark, to man, and to the universe. Manetti and Nicholas may have been particularly aware of another of the sentiments of Solomon, who had said that God had “ordered all things by measure and number and weight.” This has become an accepted statement about the structure of the universe, and Augustine had related it to Platonic teaching to show certain similarities between Christian and pagan doctrine. Alberti’s ideas about architecture may have made the pope and the secretary sensitive to the statement. In the terminology Alberti taught, measure and number would stand for lineamenta or design, and weight would refer to structura or construction, which included the moving, lifting, and placing of great weights in the

Manetti, ss. 144–145. Compare Manetti’s earlier compressed reference to the seven wonders and to the works of Philo, which the Florentine cathedral surpasses; “De pompis,” fol. 262; Manetti: Battisti, p. 313. Freezi, in the Quadrivium, compared the church in the domain of Faith (discussed above, chapter 3), to the Capitol, to Ilion, and to the Temple of Zion (1914, IV, xv, lines 7–9).

Wisdom 11:12.

Augustine, City of God, XII, 19.
That Manetti was referring to Solomon as glossed by Augustine and developed by Alberti is suggested by the way he had carefully incorporated into his own description clear references to the dimensions, proportions, and materials Nicholas had used when building the basilica. Even though Manetti did not reach the level of sophistication in handling them that Alberti did, Alberti had perhaps introduced them to him as important considerations in architecture.

Manetti went on to quite specific references to Solomon's writings. He quoted the scriptural descriptions of Solomon's constructions and then pointed out the differences between the basilica and the Temple and between the palace at the Vatican and the one Solomon had built. Nicholas's basilica was superior in its dimensions; it was longer, wider, and higher. It was also superior in other ways; it had three vestibules rather than one, round windows rather than long ones, and vaults and a dome rather than three flat roofs (ss. 160–165). Manetti concluded his description of the basilica and of Nicholas's building program by stating that although Solomon's buildings were great, Nicholas's were greater, just as the religion of Christ is to be preferred and is known to have replaced the divine Law of the Old Testament.

Manetti's description—carefully constructed to reveal the basilica as the dominant element in the entire fabric of Rome, included as a coordinate part of the Life of Nicholas, and imbued with the new attitude toward architecture that he shared with Alberti—corresponds to Nicholas's program for papal government as it may be known from other sources. It therefore gives an insight into that program that is not available elsewhere. It reveals how the buildings built by the pope would have provided moving settings for his actions, and it adds detail to the justification of the building program that Nicholas had himself made to the cardinals on his deathbed.

Laetentur Coeli had defined the pope as successor to Peter, Vicar of Christ, and "head of the universal Church and father and teacher of all Christians." Nicholas made this doctrine conspicuous through building. He ensconced himself in the Vatican at Peter's shrine, where he could concentrate on the sacred affairs of the Church. The Jubilee bull had explained, on the basis of traditional doctrine, that the Jubilee is a special time when God's mercy is specially shown. The Flood, circumcision, the Law, and, finally, grace have been the agencies for saving mankind, and now the pope, celebrated throughout Christendom as the head of the Church, Vicar of Christ, and successor to Peter, is making available God's gift of grace to the faithful. The Jubilee is a special sign of God's mercy; the sacraments are signs of God's gift of grace, which is always available to the faithful. The pope's administering of the Jubilee and of the sacraments are signs of, or figures for, his concern for those of whom he is head, father, and teacher, and the basilica allows him to be seen in this role at all times. No gaudy spectacle would goad the pilgrim into the basilica, but once inside he would be moved by the dignity and the splendor of the place. There he would see the pope, a conspicuous exemplum of the administrator of God's apparatus of salvation, the Vicar of Christ, a man whose love for God allows him to act with charity. As Manetti's description explains, Nicholas is to be visible beyond the altar on his raised throne illuminated by the light flowing down from the dome.

This was the most obvious representation of Nicholas's program for papal government in the design of the basilica, coordinated with it were many subtleties. One of these is the triumph of the Christian religion over pagan religions, which could be shown through the use of classical elements. This was the principal way in which Nicholas's program was a conscious revival of classical, pagan antiquity.

78 See De re aed., preface.
79 Manetti, ss. 170–171. See also below, chapter 7.
did not revive antique architecture; he used it. Antiquity was present in the design, but not as a standard of achievement that haunted the pope or as an object of jealous rivalry. The Church and its pope had long since triumphed. It was legitimate, therefore, to incorporate pagan materials into Christian buildings. Some of the columns Nicholas intended to use in the crossing of the basilica had been hauled over from the ruins behind the Pantheon. The Castel Sant’Angelo, known to have been the Mausoleum of Hadrian, was refitted and reequipped with the angel of the Last Judgment. The obelisk that had stood beside the basilica would have had the urn on top that was believed to contain the ashes of Caesar, topped with Christ the Savior.

Manetti said almost nothing about this spoilage of antiquity, and when he did mention the obelisk, he did not refer to its ancient function but only to its intended Christian use. Antiquity could be plundered and put to better use in a Christian context, and nothing need be said about it. Augustine had sanctioned the operation: the pagans “gave their gold, silver, and clothing to the people of God fleeing from Egypt, not knowing that they yielded those things which they gave ‘unto the obedience of Christ’ (2 Cor. 10:5). That which was done in Exodus was undoubtedly a figure that it might typify these things.”

Nicholas was not the first pope to consider antiquity a legitimate stockpile of material for the use of Christians. From the earliest phase of monumental Christian architecture in Rome, pagan buildings had been plundered by Christian builders. What was new in Nicholas’s construction was the self-conscious attempt to evoke antique forms, even if this meant using antique architectural elements in an archetypal syntax different from the one they had had before or different from the one then prevalent in construction. And the period of antiquity to which Nicholas chose to refer was also self-conscious. His forms were meant to evoke Christian antiquity, that is, the period when the early Church first became established in Rome. This accounts for the simplicity and the monumentality of the basilica’s tribune as Manetti described it. The Early Christian character of the old and revered building Nicholas was rebuilding would not have been violated; instead, it would have been emphasized.

Christian antiquity is also present in another passage in Manetti’s text, although only implicitly. In the works of Ambrose there is a short account of the Ark of Noah that included a statement Manetti might have picked up, although Ambrose had attributed it to Solomon and Manetti might have considered the earlier source to be the proper one when he used it himself. Ambrose had said that Solomon had said, “The wise man has eyes in his head” (Eccles. 2:14); therefore, Ambrose continued, it is proper that he who presides in an imperial council hall should be where he can see all, and, being seen, he sits in greater splendor. Nicholas, according to Manetti, presided over the hierarchy in the part of the basilica that Manetti called the “head” and the “tribune.” The only other worthy sight in the building would have been the single altar between the tomb of Peter and the throne of the pope. Alberti had pointed out that to have but a single altar in a church would be a welcome and beneficial return to the practice of the early Church.

80 See Muffel, 1953, pp. 360-362; for this, and other plunder destined for St. Peter’s that might not have retained its ancient form, see Müntz, ACP, I, pp. 83, 108 ff., 118-119.
81 For the ashes of Caesar, see Rucellai, 1960, p. 72.
82 On Christian Doctrine, 1958, II, xl, 61; see also II, xl, 60. Augustine uses this figure to summarize book II, which deals with the Christian’s exegesis of signs.
83 Wittkower, 1962, I, 1, pp. 5-6.
84 De Nee et Arca, vii, cols. 389-390.
85 De re aed., VII, xiii. See Wittkower, 1962, I, 1, p. 5.
whom the pope replaced as the head of the empire after it had become Christian, and it was placed there to mark the tomb of Peter, the rock on whom Christ had founded the Church and whose successor Nicholas was.

Nicholas would be visibly dominant over the hierarchy of the Church, which would find its properly ordered place in the tribune around him. He would clearly be the head of the Church; the Church’s members would clearly be there at his disposal. Manetti’s description stresses this arrangement, and therefore it must be seen as another point of doctrine that Nicholas intended to make clear through his building project. It corresponds directly to Nicholas’s choice of Peter’s arms as his own; those arms, Nicholas made clear, had been given by Christ to Peter and the popes for the Church and not by Christ to Peter and the Church for the popes. The pope, not a council, handled them.

The keys were called knowledge and the power to judge matters of the soul, and they were therefore superior to arms and corporal judgment executed against the body, the instruments of earthly states. The keys ruled the sword; the head governed the body; the pope as priest presided over the hierarchy, which there in the tribune would include the temporal officers of states under his jurisdiction. Nicholas’s transportation and renovation of the Vatican obelisk would have been a clear visual figure for this point of doctrine, which corresponds to Biondo’s statement: “The princes of the world revere and honor the supreme pontiff, the perpetual dictator, successor not of Gaius Caesar, but of the fisherman Peter, and vicar of the aforementioned emperor.”

Knowledge was the greatest attribute of the pope; it was essential that the successor to the Fisherman, who administered the sacraments through which God gave the gift of paradise, demonstrate his knowledge. It therefore followed that he would design the project. Nicholas used his intelligence as sharpened in his investigations of the most holy authors and sacred books of omnipotent God to conceive and design in mind and spirit both the basilica and the project of which it was a part. When built, it would accomplish Nicholas’s purpose; it would continually confirm and daily corroborate by great buildings, which are perpetual monuments and eternal testimonies seemingly made by God, vulgar beliefs founded on doctrines of learned men. “In this way,” Nicholas had continued in his testament, “belief is preserved and augmented, and in this way it is laid down and held fast by a certain admirable devotion.”

Manetti explained some, but not all, of this in his description. His description of the pope’s comprehensive program is a rounded but not a complete one, but when supplemented with other elements that correspond to its major points, it becomes clear that Nicholas’s program was an extensive and unified whole. It was the first to allow a program for government based upon theological and political conceptions to be consciously, intelligently, and carefully rendered in the architectural design of an entire city. The Borgo dominates Rome; the palace dominates the Borgo; the basilica dominates the palace and the Borgo. The climax of the project is inside the basilica, where, beyond the altar in the well-lit and undecorated tribune beyond the dome, sits the pope, surrounded by the hierarchy, clearly visible to the faithful. In Nicholas’s project, an intelligent theory and method of architectural design has been expanded to embrace an entire city that has been conceived of as a place where men, through their activities, establish order.

C. General plan of the Vatican Palace grounds in the middle of the fifteenth century (after Magnuson and Redig de Campos)

1 curia superior (Cortile del Maresciallo)
2 sala ducale (aula secunda)
3 sala ducale (aula tertia)
4 Cortile del Pappagallo