Rome in the Age of Bernini

VOLUME I

From the election of Sixtus V to the death of Urban VIII

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CHAPTER 1

Sixtus V and Clement VIII
(1585–1605)

Few popes have meant so much to the city of Rome as Sixtus V. His pontificate lasted a mere five years—from 1585 to 1590, when Queen Elizabeth I was on the throne in England, Philip II in Spain and John III in Sweden—but they were five years of feverish activity. Sixtus built the Acqua Felice, the aqueduct terminating in the famous fountain with its statue of Moses, as well as some of the most important roads in Rome which provided the core of later urban developments and left their mark on the city for many centuries. He built the new Lateran Palace and that part of the Vatican which is still the papal residence today, as well as the new wing of the Vatican Library. Sixtus' administration of the Papal States was extremely efficient: he battled successfully against the brigands who had become a menace throughout the land and ruled his subjects with a rod of iron; he encouraged trade and commerce; he established industries and prohibited begging; and when he died his successor inherited gold reserves amounting to more than three million scudi. Over and above all this he completely reorganised the papal Curia, giving it a structure which has barely changed since. Few if any popes can have done so much in so short a time. And posterity has praised Sixtus V for the efficiency of his government, although the effects were not always as good as he intended. Nevertheless it was during his reign that many of the foundations were laid for the age in the history of the Eternal City which is generally called the Baroque. Thus, if we are to understand the world in which Bernini worked, we must first look back to the Rome of Sixtus V.

In Rome this pope has become a legend; he emerges from the many anecdotes that are told about him as an implacably stern and forceful ruler. A famous story about the conclave of 1585 tells how Sixtus pretended to be weak and ill, hobbling around with the help of a stick to catch the votes of the cardinals who hoped for a short pontificate; then, once he was elected, he cast away the stick and rose before the conclave in full majesty. It is only fair to add that historians reject this story; hypocrisy of such a kind would have been quite foreign to Sixtus' straight-forward nature.

Felice Peretti, Cardinal and Pope

Felice Peretti, as Sixtus was called before he became pope, was the son of a poor gardener in the little town of Montalto in the Marche.1 Later in life he
used to speak with some pride of his simple origins and would recall how he tended the swine, collected firewood, and harvested chicory in the fields. He was only twelve years old when he took his vows as a Franciscan monk, which was not unusually young for the times. His superiors quickly recognised his gifts and arranged for him to study at various universities in northern Italy. He became known as an outstanding preacher in the strict spirit of the Counter-Reformation; he was elected Prior of the Frari in Venice, and became consultor to the Venetian Inquisition. As a result of his unusual zeal and competence, and his enormous capacity for work, he was quickly promoted and became Procurator of his Order. In 1570, when he was almost fifty, Pius V made him a cardinal. As pope he retained his youthful drive and efficiency, but also the explosive temperament that many people feared. His appearance was not particularly impressive, but although he lacked obvious charm he radiated vitality. And the eloquence of the preacher apparently never quite left him: he loved making long speeches, and his frustrated listeners sometimes grumbled because it was impossible to silence a pope. Severe and implacable Sixtus remained; in this he was a typical representative of the Counter-Reformation spirit which had predominated in the Roman Catholic Church since the Council of Trent. In fact there always seems to have been something of the stern inquisitor about him, even if he never went to the same extremes as Paul IV Carafa (1555–1559); on the other hand he lacked the stamp of holiness that marked the pious Dominican monk Pius V Ghislieri (1566–1572), who was later canonised.

Even as pope, Sixtus V lived in conditions of ascetic simplicity; in the conduct of his court he was remarkably economical and spent what was for those times very little money. Only one of his relatives, his sister Camilla Peretti, received any significant financial support as a result of her papal connections. While still a cardinal, the pope had made himself responsible for Camilla’s grandchildren, Michele and Alessandro Damasceni, and it caused hardly any stir when the newly elected pope gave Michele the right to the name Peretti di Montalto, at the same time making him head of the Papal Guard and governor of Borgo Leonino, although the boy was only eight years old. This kind of nepotism was only what Sixtus’ contemporaries expected. But several members of the Sacred College did object when, at the beginning of the pontificate, Alessandro was made a cardinal. It had long been customary for each new pope to appoint one cardinal from among his kin, thus ensuring himself of a trustworthy colleague and ally in the Sacred College, and like his predecessors Sixtus V regarded this type of nepotism as quite inescapable. But Alessandro was only fifteen years old, and to appoint so young a man was contrary to canon law. Fortunately Cardinal Montalto, as Alessandro came to be known, proved to be wise and diligent, an asset to the Sacred College during this and succeeding pontificates. He also became renowned for his liberality, which may have been why he was held in great affection by the Roman populace.

Sixtus V as Temporal Ruler

Sixtus V’s immediate predecessor, Gregory XIII Boncompagni (1574–1585), had not been a bad pope from the purely ecclesiastical point of view, but as temporal ruler of the Papal States he failed altogether to preserve respect for justice and the law. Robbers were ravaging the countryside, and people were not safe from attack even within the city of Rome. The robbers had formed armed bands and were threatening to reduce the country to anarchy. It was estimated, probably with some exaggeration, that there were twenty thousand bandits in the Papal States alone.

Sixtus V immediately set about tackling this scourge, employing both severity and cunning. To anyone delivering his accomplices into the hands of justice the pope promised amnesty and even some monetary reward. In this manner he managed to disperse the robber bands with the help of the ancient strategy ‘divide and rule’. The Romans trembled before a pope who showed no mercy and paid no heed to lineage or social rank, and who ruthlessly
punished the feudal lords and barons traditionally linked with the bandits in common cause. On capture, robbers faced immediate execution. In those days executions were held in the piazza adjoining Ponte Sant'Angelo, and the severed heads were displayed on the bridge as a dreadful warning to passers-by. Sometimes, said the Romans, there were more heads on the bridge than melons in the marketplace. It took Sixtus V two years to wipe out brigandage, but once he had achieved it, the Campagna was quieter and more peaceful than it had been within living memory. A medal struck to honour the pope as peacemaker bore the inscription PERFECTA SECURITAS, and it shows a man sleeping under an olive tree with an open purse by his side.  

The severity that Sixtus employed in this campaign needed no justification. But many of his contemporaries were disturbed by his equally harsh attacks on various other abuses. Violence and robbery were not the only crimes punishable by death; incest, abortion and pederasty carried the same penalty. But the cardinals managed to prevent him extending the death penalty to adultery. Sabbath-breakers risked being sent to the galleys, and rumormongers were liable to have their tongues cut out. No crime could ever be written off, and it was a popular Roman joke that the pope would punish St. Peter, if he could, for cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant.

There was one group of Romans—the prostitutes who swarmed in the streets—which was more than ever Sixtus could cope with—or perhaps he felt it would be unwise to interfere too much. Pius V would have liked to banish le cortigiane, who gave the Eternal City a bad name, but when this proved impracticable he tried—though with little success—to isolate them in an area of their own near Ripetta, the harbour area on the Tiber. Sixtus V went one step further; he ordered le cortigiane off the main streets of the city and forbade them to go abroad after Ave Maria, that is to say after sunset.

Reports about the number of cortigiane in Rome vary enormously, and most of the figures mentioned owe more to imagination than to fact. We are told for instance that in 1591 when the cardinal-camerlengo actually set about banishing all the prostitutes, he was foiled by the huge numbers involved—there were 13,000 of them. This figure is extremely doubtful, as are all similar estimates from that time. Exaggeration was common, so that the numbers of flood victims, or of pilgrims to Rome in Holy Year, or of recruits to the ranks of the brigands, were often doubled or even trebled. By the seventeenth century, however, the population of Rome was being counted at regular intervals, and these census figures provide a sounder basis even as regards the number of meretrici, as the prostitutes were also called. Thus in 1600 there were said to be 604 meretrici in a population of 109,729, of which 46,956 were women. This means that there were 63,133 men—a surplus of males that was typical of Rome, with its large male-dominated ecclesiastical sector. Thus, about forty of the seventy cardinals who then constituted the full Sacred College lived in Rome, and several of these had more than a hundred servants, all men—lackeys, coachmen, cooks, secretaries and so on. Added to which there were the clerks who served the Curia. Presumably the
presence of all these males, most of them unmarried, provided at least one explanation of the presence of so many prostitutes.

Ecclesiastical Administration

Sixtus V was just as single-minded and efficient when it came to the administration of the Church. As early as 1586 he took an important step when appointing one of the first cardinals of his reign; henceforth, he decided, there should be no more than seventy cardinals—a regulation that was not rescinded until the time of John XXIII.

One of the most important acts of Sixtus' pontificate was the reorganisation of the Curia. This was incorporated in the apostolic constitution Immensa aeterni Dei of 1588, composed by the pope himself and presented in a long speech to the cardinals in consistory. In this Bull, Sixtus established fifteen congregations, of which six were to deal with the temporal administration of the Papal States while the other nine were to constitute the supreme council of the Catholic Church. Of some of the congregations had already existed as more or less temporary institutions during the preceding pontificates; Sixtus now reorganised the whole central administration of the Church. The foremost of the congregations was the Congregatio Sanctorum Inquisitionis, the Inquisition—later known as the Sant'Uffizio or Holy Office—whose task was to safeguard the purity of the Catholic Faith, and whose president was the pope himself. Among the other congregations, to mention but a few, was one for implementing the decisions of the Council of Trent, another for the appointment of bishops, another for dealing with rites and canonisations, and one concerned with the religious orders. Each congregation was headed by a group of cardinals, who were originally intended to move between the different bodies and not, as became the practice, to remain permanently in one place. The congregations survived with very few changes until the beginning of the present century when Pius X reorganised the jurisdiction of the Curia; after the Second Vatican Council a radical reform was introduced with the apostolic constitution Regimini ecclesiae universalis of 15 August 1967. Some congregations were completely altered and given new names, and Sixtus V's original stipulation about limiting the length of service in the congregations has at last been put into practice.

As a result of the reform of the Curia, greater power was concentrated in the hands of the pope. Previously no pope could make important decisions without the approval of the cardinals, who assembled regularly to vote in consistory. But after Sixtus' reform the consistory was summoned on exceptional occasions only. Obviously it was very much easier for the pope to impose his will when necessary on a congregation of six or eight cardinals, rather than on the whole College. Thus Sixtus V put an end to the ambition of the cardinals to act as a sort of oligarchy alongside the popes, an ambition which had been growing continually stronger during the previous century.

During the five years of his reign Sixtus V was impelled by a passion for building: he commissioned monumental palaces and churches; he ordered modern streets to be built, straight and broad—and all with the express purpose of enhancing Rome in her role as the centre of Catholic Christendom. At the same time he seems to have had little marked personal aesthetic taste. At any rate he was quite unschooled in aesthetic matters; nor had he any real interest in literature. He remained essentially a priest and theologian, and even as pope continued to devote himself to learned theological studies.

It was natural that this scholarly pope should turn his attention to the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. This famous papal library had been established by Sixtus IV in two rooms on the floor below the Borgia Apartments. It was unquestionably the foremost library in Italy already in the sixteenth century, but the original premises were cramped, dark and damp. For this reason Sixtus V had a new library wing built, of which we shall have more to say later.

The pope showed special favour to scholars who devoted their time to the Bible, the early Fathers of the Church, and the history of the Early Church—favourite subjects during the Counter-Reformation when great efforts were being made to consolidate the prestige of the Roman Church by emphasising its unbroken tradition in just this way. Sixtus had a printing press established in the Vatican, forerunner of the famous Tipografia poliglotta of today, for the particular purpose of printing the works of the early Fathers and in general serving the Church in its efforts to maintain the purity of the Catholic Faith. Administratively the printing press was associated with the library.
Sixtus realised the necessity of creating employment for the poor in Rome. This was no easy matter, since the city was almost entirely unproductive; neither commerce nor industry came naturally to the Romans, and even the modest wool industry which had existed during the later Middle Ages had ceased. However, there was a huge demand for fabrics of various kinds in Rome at the time, particularly silk imported chiefly from Florence and Naples. This was because of the fashion for magnificence and splendour which led prelates and nobles alike to rival one another according to Spanish custom, decking out their numerous retainers in costly liveries. The pope therefore established a wool-weaving mill near the Fontana di Trevi; the raw material was available in plenty from the great flocks of sheep on the nearby Campagna. He also tried to start a silk industry, and had warehouses and workshops set up near the Baths of Diocletian and next to the Villa Montalto. To provide the raw material, the peasants were instructed to plant mulberry trees and cultivate silkworm, while silk weavers and other experts were summoned from Venice. Sixtus reckoned on a good yield, since the raw material was being produced at home, and he had great plans for selling and exporting the finished goods. A hundred years before Louis XIV he was arguing along the same lines as Colbert and to some extent anticipating eighteenth century ideas of free trade.

For the wretched beggars who now plagued the streets of Rome, however, there was no hope of employment. There were far too many of them. So Sixtus built a poorhouse, near to the Ponte Fabricio, with room for two thousand people. All vagrants had to live there, and begging on the streets was forbidden. The boys in the poorhouse were taught handicrafts and were even allowed to learn to read and write. The girls were only taught to sew. Sixtus V spent 30,000 scudi on building the poorhouse, a sum which included the cost of expropriating the earlier buildings on the site. This seems a lot of money, particularly when we remember that he spent very little more—about 32,000 scudi—on building his new Lateran Palace. It was also very much more than he invested in the wool-manufacturing firms. The institution received an annual maintenance grant levied by means of a tax on firewood. But as soon as Sixtus was dead, the beggars reappeared on the streets. This may have been because the annual grant was not big enough, but it was certainly also a result of the bad harvests and subsequent famine at the beginning of the 1590s.

Rome’s only major industry, if we can call it that, consisted of the vast building operations that far exceeded anything in any other city at the time. From the end of the sixteenth century, and culminating in the 1660s, these operations gave employment to thousands of people as masons, stone-cutters, carpenters, joiners, as well as providing work for many artists. We lack detailed records of contemporary wages—much research remains to be done in this field—but according to approximate estimates, a building labourer in Rome was paid sufficiently well to be able to save a little; master masons were particularly well paid, and we know that they often owned property. But minor artisans—not to mention farm labourers—were much less prosperous;

Material Welfare and Economic Policy

With his remarkable energy Sixtus V also tackled various ways of caring for the material welfare of his subjects. And strong measures were certainly needed. The poor of Rome, already numerous, were multiplying as more and more people left the Campagna and the big city attracted immigrants from the surrounding countryside. The decline in agriculture and the resulting depopulation of the Campagna were among the biggest problems of the Papal States towards the end of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth. As late as 1575 enough corn was still being grown there to provide a surplus for export. But this was the last period of prosperity. Towards the end of the sixteenth century cultivation on the Campagna fell off alarmingly. One reason for the decline was that, because of the restrictive agricultural policy generally prevailing and the heavy taxes imposed on the countryside, it proved more profitable to use the land for grazing. Added to which, brigandage made the countryside unsafe and interfered with cultivation. At the same time the decline in the productivity of agriculture was in itself one of the main reasons why so many peasants abandoned their land and attached themselves instead to one of the many robber bands.

One of those whom Sixtus supported was Cesare Baronio, a member of the Oratory founded by St. Philip Neri and approved by Pope Gregory XIII in 1575. For over twenty years, encouraged by St. Philip who set great store by historical studies, Baronio had been collecting material for a comprehensive history of the Church. In 1588 the papal printing press produced the first of the twelve volumes of Baronio’s great work Annales ecclesiastici which, despite a few shortcomings revealed by modern source criticism, is still a goldmine of information regarding early medieval church history. It was also one of the first works of its kind, for which reason Baronio can be called the father of ecclesiastical history. It was a great source of pride to Sixtus V that the revised text of the Vulgate Bible, on which work he had been proceeding ever since the Council of Trent, should finally be published during his pontificate. As a cardinal he had been involved in a similar undertaking, an edition of the writings of St. Ambrose. He now intervened personally in the work on the Bible and wanted to settle certain tricky questions of interpretation on his own authority, although he was in direct conflict with the experts. Fired by the same enthusiasm he showed in everything he undertook, he managed to produce in four years what the special papal bible commission had been working on for forty, and in 1590 he was able to publish the Bible edition known as the Sixtine Vulgate. But immediately after his death that same year the edition was withdrawn so that his arbitrary interventions in the text could be corrected. A few years later, in 1592, Clement VIII published the Vulgata Clementina which remained current until 1579, when it was replaced by the Nova Vulgata as the official Latin version of the Bible in the Roman Catholic Church.
even so, many of them also appear to have been able to save. In other words, because of the very extensive building enterprises, there was more economic activity and even security in Rome at this time than is often thought. In fact there was a fairly substantial lower middle-class representing quite a considerable economic capacity.¹⁶

But there was a negative side to the building industry. The enormous sums spent by the pope and the cardinals, and even to some extent by the aristocracy, on building churches and palaces for themselves represented investment in non-profit-making enterprises, and they far exceeded the comparatively insignificant sums invested in the new wool and silk weaving shops. It is easy to criticise Sixtus V for this lack of foresight. The weaving industry would certainly have supplied more employment and a much higher yield in the long run. But it must be pointed out in Sixtus’ defence that all his own and his successors’ attempts to establish a textile industry were doomed to failure from the start. At the time we are talking about—between the 1580s and the middle of the seventeenth century—cloth manufacture in all Italian towns was declining alarmingly, mainly because of competition from England and the Netherlands.¹⁷ Wool production in Florence fell by half during the first three decades of the seventeenth century, while even more remarkable was the decline in Genoa’s formerly substantial silk industry.¹⁸ Thus, during the seventeenth century building was the only industry able to provide any wealth for the lower middle class.

Another negative aspect of Sixtus V’s economic policy was—contrary to what is often claimed—his gold reserves. On his death Gregory XIII had left a not inconsiderable cash reserve, and Sixtus V’s goal was to increase it, thus providing security—or so he thought. He was above all extremely economical in the conduct of his court, introducing a system of detailed control of expenditure. By the end of the first year of his reign, and despite the large sums spent on building and roadworks, he was able to set aside one million gold scudi, which were placed for safekeeping in one of the innermost vaults of Castel Sant’Angelo. This was a colossal sum, far surpassing the annual revenues of the Papal States. The following year it was possible to put aside a further million gold scudi, and when Sixtus died in 1590 there was a cash reserve of three million gold scudi and over one million in silver. This meant that the pope was the wealthiest of the European princes, and he has been much praised by posterity for his foresight. In 1586 Sixtus decreed in a Bull that the gold reserve should be used for extraordinary expenditures only, among which were to be counted the defence of Italy against the Turks, the defence of the Catholic Faith against heretics if any Catholic kingdom were threatened, and the supply of corn to the Roman populace in case of famine. But in none of these instances was more than half the reserve to be used. This fund of gold lasted for several hundred years; even as late as the French Revolution there was still one million gold scudi in the ancient money chests in the Castel Sant’Angelo.¹⁹

In the long run, however, Sixtus’ economic policy was to prove utterly misguided, and modern economic historians have rejected any idea of the pope as a great financial genius. To create his gold reserve he resorted to the most dubious methods; most of the money was acquired by means of state loans, monti, which accounted for two and a half million gold scudi. The first monti had been raised earlier in the sixteenth century to finance the struggle against the Turks. Anybody in Rome with money to spare was now persuaded to invest in Sixtus V’s monti by buying what were known as luoghi di monti or shares, usually of 100 scudi each with an annual interest of five to seven per cent. These were the equivalent of our modern government bonds. There were two kinds of monti, namely monti vacabili which yielded slightly higher interest but lapsed when the holder died, and monti non vacabili which yielded slightly less interest, generally five per cent, but which lasted for ever and could be inherited or sold.²²

The unhappy result of all this was that Sixtus had to impose further taxes and issue new monopoly concessions in order to be able to pay the interest on his monti. Concessions of this kind thus became increasingly common, and soon there were monopolies for practically everything, from selling soap and mining alum in Tolfa to towing barges on the Tiber or selling snow.²¹ This last commodity was used by Romans in their food cellars instead of ice, and during the winter it could be obtained quite easily from the Alban Hills. Furthermore Sixtus V resorted to a device dear to the Renaissance popes who had preceded him, namely the sale of offices. Indeed, more offices were sold under Sixtus V than under Alexander VI, the pope who is generally accused most fiercely of this particular offence. The system certainly existed in other countries—in Spain for instance and its vassal state, the Kingdom of Naples, as well as in France—but hardly to the same extent as in papal Rome. And it was regarded everywhere as a necessary evil rather than an immoral abuse. To mention but one example, Cardinal Caetani had to pay 50,000 scudi in 1588 to obtain the important and powerful post of camerlengo.²²

As it turned out, the effect of the gold reserve on the stability of the papal finances was unfortunate. It has been estimated that the gold which was stored away corresponded to no less than three-quarters of all the gold imported from America to Spain during the period 1581-1590. There was also a danger in withdrawing so much gold mint from circulation: the price of gold rose steeply as a result throughout the late sixteenth century—while the value of silver was falling the whole time—and this reinforced the price increases that particularly in Rome reached a peak in the first decade of the seventeenth century. There was also another very serious—perhaps we could say moral—side to the question, in that savers were persuaded to invest in monti instead of in manufacture or agriculture. Those who had money in sufficient quantities tended to regard monti vacabili as a kind of life annuity, making it unnecessary to work since it was quite possible to live happily at the government’s expense. At the same time the poor received help and enormous sums were spent on poorhouses; cheap corn was distributed, poor girls were provided with dowries, and Romans in general enjoyed many similar “social
Early Building Activities

When Sixtus V became pope Rome was divided for administrative purposes into thirteen rioni, a system that dated back at least to the twelfth century and may have been older still, although it was not the direct successor of the regiones system of antiquity. Monti was always reckoned as the foremost of the rioni, not only because it was the largest in area—although very sparsely built—but because it also had the honour of including the cathedral of Rome itself, the basilica of S. Giovanni in Laterano. This rione stretched from the area north of the Baths of Diocletian to the Appian Way. The other rioni succeeded it, always in the same order. Rione II was Trevi, which took its name from Trivium, the crossing of three streets in front of the Fontana di Trevi where the Acqua Vergine terminated. Rione III was Colonna, where both the Column of Marcus Aurelius and the Pantheon were to be found. Campo Marzio was Rione IV and it included the northern part of the ancient Campus Martius and stretched as far as the Porta del Popolo. Rione V, Ponte, was so called because it lay immediately south of Ponte Sant'Angelo; this was the region where the banking firms had established themselves during the fifteenth century. Between the Palazzo della Cancelleria and Piazza Navona lay Rione VI, Parione, and along the Tiber was Rione VII, Arenal. Rione VIII, S. Eustachio, covered the area south of the Pantheon, while Pigna, Rione IX, stretched from the Pantheon to the ruins of the Imperial Forum. The name of Rione X, Campitelli, derived from the Capitolium, which lay within its boundaries. Next came Rione XI, Sant'Angelo, which took its name from the little church in the ruins of the Portico of Octavia. The Jews' ghetto, established by Paul V in 1555, was also in the rione. The large Rione XII, Ripa, extended all the way from the Tiber Island to the Colosseum and the Baths of Caracalla, and was the most thinly populated of all the rioni. At the beginning of the fourteenth century Trastevere had been included as part of the city of Rome for the first time; it became the thirteenth rione but retained much of its special character. Borgo Leonino, the area between Castel Sant'Angelo and the Vatican which formerly came direct under papal authority and which at the beginning of the sixteenth century was part of Rione Ponte, was included in Rome proper in 1586 as Rione XIV. The rione which benefited most from Sixtus V's urban development programme was Rione Monti, which included three of the hills of Rome: the Quirinal, the Esquiline and Oppio.

Already before becoming pope Sixtus V had been interested in building. On the Esquiline Hill, immediately to the east of S. Maria Maggiore, he had planned a villa, named Villa Montalto after his family. As a sincere Franciscan he had been accustomed to living in ascetic poverty, and as Cardinal Peretti his personal habits remained those of a poor monk. At the same time he expected—and was expected—to live publicly in a manner appropriate to his rank. Few of his contemporaries would have seen any contradiction in this.

The core of Villa Montalto was a three-storey cubic building with pilasters between the windows and an open arcade on the ground floor; it was a casino, not really intended as a residence but simply as a place for short visits particularly during the hot season. The casino was surrounded by a large garden with long, straight walks between shady cypresses and dotted with fountains and antique sculptures. Close to the casino building were the customary giardini segreti, sequestered gardens of a more private kind, where square flowerbeds flaunted their rare and costly blooms. The cardinal—who as a boy had tended his father's plot—had personally supervised the planting of these flowers. It was important in the history of Rome's urban development that this villa with its monumentally designed garden was the first of its kind in any of the hilly parts of the town; it gave new prestige to the area, which until then—apart from the Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore—boasted only a few ancient ruins, one or two other Early Christian churches, and a few private vineyards and allotments.

At about the same time that Cardinal Felice Peretti was building his casino, Pope Gregory XIII was having a villa built on the Quirinal. This was destined to be a full papal residence, and the villa was planned from the start on an even grander scale than Villa Montalto, although the garden was at first less
splendid. As pope, Sixtus V acquired this villa, and we shall see later how he expanded the original plans.

This part of the Quirinal which Gregory XIII chose for his residence was commonly known as Montecavallo, because of the antique sculptures of Castor and Pollux with their horses which stood before the ruins of the Baths of Constantine. The area had been included in Pius IV’s plans for urban development. During the 1560s Pius had built a long straight road from Montecavallo to the city gate which Michelangelo had been commissioned to design in 1561. This street, called Via Pia in honour of the pope, followed the ancient Alta Semita, of which there were still visible remains at the time, and corresponded to the Via Veneti Settembre of today.

For his villa Peretti had employed the still little known architect Domenico Fontana, born in Melide near the Lake of Lugano in 1543. Fontana arrived in Rome at the beginning of the 1570s, working at first as a stucco-worker, and we know nothing of his training as an architect. In 1574 he was engaged by Cardinal Felice Peretti to create a tomb for pope Nicholas IV in S. Maria Maggiore and only a few years later we find him starting to work on the Villa Montalto. Fontana then remained in Peretti’s service when his patron became pope. The architectural consequences of this choice—which was based on papal favour rather than on any conscious aesthetic preference—were to be considerable: first, thanks to the pope’s favour, Fontana’s nephew Carlo Maderno was summoned to Rome and given a chance to show what he could do, and he in turn was joined later by another distant relative, Francesco Borromini.

As the popes began to show an interest in the Quirinal and several villas with gardens were built in the neighbouring areas, the hill gained a reputation as Rome’s new fashionable quarter. But it had one disadvantage: it had no water. Gregory XIII had decided to build a new aqueduct and plans had been projected by a certain Matteo Bertolini from Città di Castello, but at the time of Gregory’s death the work had not yet begun. Immediately after his accession Sixtus V ordered a start to be made. The idea was to use an ancient aqueduct from the time of Alexander Severus, and the pope bought from the Colonna family the springs where the aqueduct began at Pontone Borghese twenty kilometres east of Rome. He also appointed a special congregation headed by Cardinal Alessandro de’Medici. Supervision of the work was entrusted to Bertolini, who was apparently so afraid of not being ready at the time set by the enthusiastic pope, that he rushed the work and was careless with the levelling. When the water began to flow after only one year, no more than a trickle reached Rome. The pope was understandably furious; Bertolini was dismissed and replaced by Domenico Fontana, assisted by his more technically experienced elder brother Giovanni. More than two thousand men were employed; at one point the labour force was even double this size. The pope frequently visited the site, inspecting progress and urging the workers to greater efforts. In October 1589 the aqueduct was completed; it was named Acqua Felice after the pope. The poet Torquato Tasso, eager to ingratiate himself with Sixtus, described in elevated stanzas how the water rose from the darkness into the sunlight, to gaze upon the world-renowned city of Rome as it had once appeared to Augustus himself.

On the spot where the aqueduct ended and its waters were distributed to the town, Domenico Fontana built a monumental fountain with three arches supported on marble columns and crowned with a grandiose inscription to the glory of Sixtus V. It lay close to Via Pia and an open place was created before it. This was a direct allusion to the aqueducts of ancient Rome, which terminated in fountains of this kind and which were generally provided with similar dedicatory inscriptions. The new fountain was decorated with two reliefs: on the left the sculptor Giovanni Battista della Porta has depicted Aaron leading the Jews to a Well, and on the right the scene is Gideon leads his Soldiers and People over the Jordan. This last was the work of two sculptors, Flaminio Vacca and Pietro Paolo Olivieri. Between the reliefs stands a colossal statue of Moses striking the Rock. It was typical during this period of Counter-Reformation zeal to decorate with biblical motifs fountains that had clear affiliations with antiquity. The Moses was not very successful; it is clumsy and ill-proportioned, and was violently criticised at the time. A common story claims that the sculptor, Prospero da Brescia, took his life in despair, but this is a later fabrication. The sculptor is now known to have been Leonardo Sormanno and Prospero da Brescia was his assistant.
Urban Development

All this time, while stamping out brigandage with unrivalled energy, reforming the Curia and building new aqueducts, Sixtus V was also embarking on a programme of urban development without parallel in any other European city. Several new streets were to cross the sparsely populated parts of the town inside the Aurelian Wall on the Quirinal, the Esquiline and the Oppian Hills.32

The first to be built was the long straight thoroughfare from S. Maria Maggiore to Trinità dei Monti on Pincio, which was begun in the summer of 1585 and which was open to traffic by the autumn of the following year.33 It was named Via Felice after the pope; the modern name Via Sistina—for the piece of road at the Trinità dei Monti end—first appeared after 1870. The road runs absolutely straight and without regard to the nature of the terrain from the apse of the basilica, over the Quirinal and steeply down the north side of the hill, to rise gently towards Pincio at the other end. Via Felice was also extended beyond S. Maria Maggiore as far as S. Croce in Gerusalemme—making a highway of almost three kilometres.

From the area by S. Maria Maggiore a road was built leading to the basilica of S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura, and another—Via Merulana—which Gregory

XIII had planned to run from S. Maria Maggiore to the Lateran, was now completed. From S. Maria Maggiore Sixtus also started building the present Via Panisperna in the direction of Trajan's Column, but the last link had to be abandoned, partly because the level dropped so steeply but also because the mighty ruins of Trajan's Forum lay in its path. A similarly straight road led from the Lateran to the Colosseum, replacing the old medieval thoroughfare. A street was also planned from the Colosseum towards the Quirinal Palace—the present Via degli Annibaldi and Via dei Serpenti—but this was not built until later.34

It was easy to carve out these avenues and to build them broad and straight, since they ran largely through areas which had been almost destitute of houses since the early Middle Ages. In the sixteenth century the landscape consisted of little besides gardens, vineyards and allotments, and the ubiquitous ancient ruins. Now everything changed, and the streets opened the surrounding areas for new building. Substantial tax relief and other privileges were granted to people prepared to live there.35 But the settlement of the hilly areas was to take much longer than Sixtus V could ever have anticipated, and for centuries the Romans continued to live in cramped proximity with one another in the
ancient and swampy area of the Campus Martius as they had been doing ever since the Middle Ages.

But the developments projected by Sixtus V were even more extensive than this. For instance, one avenue was to lead from the Lateran to S. Paolo fuori le Mura and another, in the opposite direction, to S. Croce in Gerusalemme; yet another was to run from the Colosseum to the Circus Maximus and the Aventine. Nor was the pope content with planning roads through areas that offered no obstacles; he was also considering an extensive reorganisation of the street network in the ancient, densely populated areas around the Tiber. Thus a highway was to lead from S. Andrea delle Fratte, at the time still an insignificant little chapel, to Via della Scrofa, cutting across the Corso at a right angle and forming the base of a triangle with Via di Ripetta and Via del Babuino. Sixtus planned a road to run from the Baths of Diocletian to S. Vitale, corresponding to the eastern stretch of the present Via Nazionale, which was not actually built until the 1860s. At Ripetta a bridge was to have been built over the Tiber, from which a road would have crossed the swampy and completely unpopulated prati—the meadows round Castel Sant'Angelo—to somewhere near the Belvedere in the Vatican. Prati has since become the name of this area, which was not developed until after 1880.

A contemporary source tells us of other plans even bolder than these, among them a street from the Palazzo della Cancelleria to the Gesù, possibly extending as far as Trajan's Column, and another from Porta Salaria to Ponte Sisto. Both these would have involved extensive expropriations and would have been very costly to carry out. But who would have been able to restrain Sixtus if he had lived long enough? In any case, the striking similarity between these plans and those which were put into effect after 1870 surely suggests that Sixtus V was far ahead of his times.

Sixtus also intended to build a canal from the Aniene to the Baths of Diocletian, but for this enterprise—as for many of his road projects—time ran out too soon. It would have been possible to transport by this canal all the travertine from the Tivoli area which was needed for the vast building programme; it would also have made it easier to supply water to the unpopulated, hilly parts of the town. But Sixtus launched many other measures intended to bring new life to these areas. A cattle market which had formerly been held once a week in the Campo dei Fiori was transferred to the broad open space by the Baths of Diocletian; so was an annual market which was of great importance to the whole of the surrounding Campagna. The open space in front of the exedra of the Baths was also cleared, but it can hardly be honoured with the name of piazza since no buildings surrounded it.

A great deal was done to restore and generally improve the existing streets in the older districts of Rome. Thus is was decreed that all wooden extensions projecting over the street and hindering the traffic should be removed, and people were forbidden to hang their washing out across the streets.

There were also plans for regulating the Tiber and preventing the frequent floods. It was recognised that the bridges hampered the free flow of the water, particularly the Ponte Sant'Angelo which at that time had only three arches. Sixtus now planned to deflect some of the water round the bridge and the Castel Sant'Angelo by means of a system of broad moats, and a new river bed was to run straight into this system starting from the river bend beneath Monte Mario and crossing the prati. After the floods of 1589 the pope even reconsidered certain plans that had been discussed in the 1560s during the pontificate of Pius IV, whereby the Tiber was to be drawn off in a completely new river bed circling the city of Rome from the Ponte Milvio to Magliana below Trastevere. It was estimated that even the more modest plans for moats round Castel Sant'Angelo and the canal across the prati would cost at least 200,000 scudi. This was too much for the papal finances, however, and nothing had come of any of the plans by the time Sixtus V died. No mention was ever made of building quays along the river inside the town.

The most of the new avenues built during Sixtus V's reign radiated from S. Maria Maggiore and formed an abstract pattern paying no attention to the lie of the land. The system undeniably recalls the ideal towns of the Renaissance, which may indeed have provided prototypes. If the whole plan had been realised, there would have been several similar points with avenues radiating from the Colosseum, the Lateran, Trajan's Column and so on. In other words many of Rome's major monuments, Christian and classical, would have been connected by straight thoroughfares. Sixtus V's grand plan was to establish convenient links between all the main basilicas, so that Rome could function efficiently as the greatest place of pilgrimage in the Christian world. The idea of the pilgrimage to the Seven Churches had recently been revived by St. Philip Neri and his followers, and it was not uncommon for the pope and several of his cardinals to be seen among the pilgrims. But this was not all. There was a deeply felt ambition during the Counter-Reformation to emphasise the dignity of Rome as the capital city of Catholic Christendom, and this gave a religious dimension to Roman urban development that was unique to the city. The impact of the new roads on communications was immediate, and persons of high rank now began to travel by coach instead of riding on horseback.
There were many conservative features in Sixtus V's development programme; his prototypes were traditional, stemming from Renaissance thinking. The first long, straight thoroughfare had been built in 1499 by Alexander VI, running from Castel Sant'Angelo across the Borgo Leonino to the main entrance of the Vatican Palace. Some years later Julius II built the Via Giulia, another absolutely straight road. Three avenues radiating from Porta del Popolo had been built during the first half of the sixteenth century: first Via di Ripetta along the Tiber—originally intended to be the main thoroughfare in this area—and then Via del Babuino completed under Paul III and leading to the Piazza di Spagna. Thus an entirely new and influential pattern had emerged with a system of three radiating avenues; in the present case it was the Corso, the Via Flaminia of antiquity, that provided the main central highway. Paul III later had the system repeated on a smaller scale on the southern side of Ponte Sant'Angelo. Thus Sixtus V had models close at hand for the pattern of roads round S. Maria Maggiore. Legally and administratively, too, the ground was already prepared: Sixtus' immediate predecessor Gregory XIII had issued a Bull in 1574, Quae publice utilia, which regulated in detail the right to expropriate buildings "for the common weal" when new roads were to be constructed or new palaces built. This Bull was based in turn on statutes laid down by Sixtus IV in the 1480s.

The novelty of Sixtus V's urban developments was that whereas earlier roads were limited to the flat area around the Tiber, the new ones cross the hilly regions; regardless of the steep inclines, they cleave their way up and down the ancient hills. But the chief innovation was the monumental scale on which everything was planned and carried out. If Sixtus V had lived a few years longer, he would probably have transformed the whole of Rome according to his projected town plan. No other European city could boast anything remotely like this. Although its population was little more than 90,000, Rome led the field in urban development: Paris may have been three times as large, but it was still astonishingly rural and hardly looked like a capital city at all, while London with its 100,000 inhabitants was simply a chaotic conglomeration of small villages.

Sixtus V's roads determined the evolution of Rome for several centuries. Within the area bounded by the Aurelian Wall they provided the skeleton of a logical street network, and later popes had no need to initiate any major alterations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, since Sixtus V had been so far ahead of his time. Indeed, he largely determined the way the town developed and the way its traffic was organised until the grand projects under Mussolini and the development explosion after 1950.

Sixtus V is generally given personal credit for this extensive road programme, probably with justification. But some at least of the honour should certainly go to his favourite architect, Domenico Fontana. Sixtus, with his boundless energy and visionary flair, was presumably behind the basic conception. But Domenico Fontana, who was not originally trained as an architect and was certainly not to be compared with geniuses such as Leon Battista Alberti and Bramante, was nonetheless the man who put the papal ideas into practice. The traditional and conservative elements included in the development programme are also typical of his own architecture, as we shall see later.

Linked to the concept of the long, straight road or avenues was the idea of erecting an antique obelisk surmounted by a cross to provide a dramatic focus at the far end of a thoroughfare. Sixtus introduced this system with the obelisk that now stands in the Piazza of St. Peter's. This massive granite obelisk, brought to Rome by Caligula from Heliospolis and set up in Nero's circus, was still standing just south of the Vatican Basilica when Sixtus V became pope; it was the only one of the many ancient Egyptian obelisks in Rome which had not been toppled by earthquakes in the course of the Middle Ages. Already in the 1450s Nicholas V had wanted to transfer it to the open place in front of the basilica; this had proved impossible for technical and other reasons. Since then nobody had dared to undertake the daunting task of moving the stone colossus. Sixtus V, who never shirked anything difficult, appointed a commission; architects and technicians were invited to submit suggestions for tackling the problem. Domenico Fontana produced by far the best idea and obtained the commission. He was given wide powers to obtain all the necessary materials, in particular great quantities of strong timber for the scaffolding round the obelisk; some of the beams were so heavy that it took seven pairs of oxen to transport each one. On 30 April 1586 the obelisk was carefully laid in a horizontal position. Work stopped during the summer on account of the heat, but when the cooler weather arrived the obelisk was pulled on rollers and dragged up an earthen ramp into its new position, which meant moving it a distance of about 250 metres. On 10 September it was finally raised on its pedestal with the help of forty winches, a hundred and forty horses and eight...
hundred men. The picturesque story of the workman who saved the whole enterprise by shouting "Water on the ropes" at a critical moment seems, however, to have been a legend concocted later.

The transport of the obelisk was a technical achievement that aroused justifiable excitement at the time, and the pope recompensed Fontana accordingly: the architect was raised to the nobility and given generous financial rewards. An awning was put up in the piazza and the men who had brought the transport of the obelisk to a successful conclusion were supplied with bread, sausages, cheese and two barrels of wine. Later, in 1590, Fontana published a beautifully illustrated book, Della trasportazione dell'obelisco, in which he describes the undertaking in detail and compares his own method favourably with others that had been suggested.

A year later two recumbent obelisks were unearthed in the Circus Maximus. One of these, carved in rose granite and decorated with hieroglyphs, was raised in front of the transept of the Lateran Basilica at the furthest point of the new highway from S. Maria Maggiore. At 32.5 metres it is the tallest obelisk in Rome; unlike the Vatican obelisk, however, it had been broken into three parts, so that the task of re-erecting it, completed in 1588, was a very much easier affair. It is also the oldest obelisk in Rome: it had been erected in the sixteenth century BC by Thutmose III before Amon's temple in Thebes. Augustus wanted to bring it to Rome, but had to abandon the idea which was technically too difficult for him—some say there were religious obstacles—and it was not until 357 AD, under Constantius II, that the transport was effected with the help of a specially built vessel, the largest anyone had ever seen. The second obelisk in the Circus Maximus had also been broken; it was also smaller, being only 27.3 metres high. It had once stood in Heliopolis and had been brought to Rome in the time of Augustus. Sixtus V had it re-erected in the Piazza del Popolo immediately in front of the city gate, which was also the main point of entry into Rome. Two years earlier he had erected a smaller obelisk in front of the apse of S. Maria Maggiore, which had once stood in front of Augustus' mausoleum and which had been found buried nearby.

Another of Sixtus' projects at this time concerned the placing of a statue of St. Peter on Trajan's Column, and two years later another of St. Paul on the Column of Marcus Aurelius. To obtain metal for the statue of St. Peter the pope had several antique bronzes melted down, and even an early medieval door from S. Agnese fuori le Mura. Once the statues were in position, the columns were to be ceremoniously consecrated, and from the ritual that accompanied this act we learn a great deal about the attitude in Rome towards antique monuments of this kind during the Counter-Reformation. Thus the pope quoted St. Jerome, reminding the people that these splendid monuments were woven with the sorrows of slaves and captives; their splendour had ministered to pride and vanity, they glorified the brutal spirit of war and lust, giving expression to forces hostile to God. But, ran the pope's message, even as man is purified in baptism and taken up into the mystical body of Christ, so
inscription on the pedestal tells of victory over the heathen through the cross of Christ.\textsuperscript{53} Thus this obelisk, which was known to have been dedicated to the sun in antiquity, came to symbolise redemption through Jesus Christ; indeed it was sometimes perceived as a symbol of the cross itself.\textsuperscript{54} This special devotion to the cross was presumably a typical Franciscan feature of Sixtus V’s faith.

Other antique monuments were also used by Sixtus V to adorn the new Rome. On the Quirinal, in front of the entrance to the Baths of Constantine, the much admired pair of statues of Castor and Pollux with their horses were moved to provide a background focus to Via Pia. Sixtus had a fountain built in front of the statues, but the obelisk—which also came from the site at Augustus’ mausoleum—was not placed there until 1782.

It was an aesthetic innovation to place an obelisk or a sculpture at the furthest point of a thoroughfare. The effect is twofold. The monument gives the road a definite visual focus that emphasises its direction and the goal towards which it leads; at the same time the traveller is aware that the road grows wider and abuts into an open place where the lofty stone finger provides an ideal central point—marking no particular direction but incorporating all directions within itself.\textsuperscript{55}

This approach to the monuments of antiquity was typical of Sixtus V and of his age. Monuments were regarded as interesting only if they had an aesthetic value of their own—as in the case of statues and obelisks—or if they could be exploited in the service of modern urban development by adding to the glorification of Rome. Once when Sixtus was about to demolish Cecilia Metella’s tomb on the Appian Way, because he wanted to use the stone for some other project, the Romans did protest, however, even sending a delegation to the pope. The citizens were told that Sixtus intended to respect the beautiful monuments but not the ugly ones.\textsuperscript{56} That such monuments could have an irreplaceable historical and archeological value was an idea quite foreign to the times. Unfortunately Sixtus included among the ugly monuments the last remains of the Septizonium, once a splendid three-storey façade with columns and cascading fountains in front of the Palatine at the end of the Appian Way. The Septizonium was ruthlessly demolished; its blocks of travertine and columns of rare marble were used in several of Sixtus V’s new buildings.\textsuperscript{57} At the end of Sixtus V’s pontificate, Domenico Fontana was engaged on a project which, in accordance with the wishes of the pope, would transform the Colosseum into a wool-weaving shop with workshops and dwellings for the craftsmen in the surrounding arcades. Workmen had already begun to cart away the earth round the Colosseum when Sixtus died; there had not been time to make any alterations to the monument itself.\textsuperscript{58}

### Palaces

One of the most exacting of Sixtus V’s enterprises involved the building of the new Lateran Palace. In 1585, when he became pope, the medieval Patriarchium
Gaspar van Wittel, called Vanvitelli (1653–1736): View of the Lateran; from left to right, the Scala Santa, the Lateran Palace with the obelisk erected in 1588, the Basilica of St. John Lateran, with Sixtus V's loggia, and the Baptistry. Colonna Collection, Rome. (ICCD.)

or pontifical residence at the Lateran had been in such disrepair for so long that it was quite uninhabitable. The greater part of this palace dated from the sixth century, but its two famous triclinia, the Aula magna and the Sala consili with twelve apses, were built in the reign of Leo III (795–816). Sixtus V regarded it as one of the ugly monuments which he had no call to respect, and he had no feeling for the historical and aesthetic qualities of the picturesque collection of buildings, halls, loggias, courtyards and chapels. According to our modern scale of values it must have been the most interesting as well as the biggest medieval palace in the western world. But we can hardly blame Sixtus V for thinking otherwise; to him it appeared unworthy of the prestige of the Holy See. The whole mighty conglomeration was demolished at the beginning of his pontificate, and in its place Domenico Fontana built a palace of enormous dimensions in record time: it was practically finished by the summer of 1589. Rooms and loggias were filled and overfilled with murals by artists such as Cesare Nebbia, Baldassare Croce and Paris Nogari. The limp forms and drab colours in their work—produced at top speed to satisfy Sixtus—are far from attractive.

The only part of the medieval Lateran Palace which was allowed to survive was a much revered chapel, the Cappella di S. Lorenzo, also known as the Sancta Santorum. In front of this Fontana installed the famous Scala Santa, once the main entrance to the Patriarchium, which pious tradition revered as the steps from the palace of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem which Jesus ascended on his way to be tried. The chapel and the staircases were enclosed in a building provided with an open portico on the ground floor. This portico was walled in during the nineteenth century, but although the building thus lost its special character it is still possible to perceive its strict and satisfying proportions.

Façade of the Lateran Palace, engraving by Ferrerio (Photo: Bibliotheca Hertziana.)

In front of the northern side of the Lateran Basilica's transept Fontana built a loggia with two tiers and five bays. In April 1588 Sixtus entered the newly completed loggia to pronounce the blessing, which he did in such ringing tones that his words were said to be audible in every corner of the piazza. The loggia with its harmonious proportions and deep shadowy arcades providing a backdrop to Via Merulana is not without beauty, but this is enhanced by the proximity of the Lateran Palace: the impression of space in the loggia arcades and the play of light and shadow provide a contrast to the unshaded and massive walls of this great cube-shaped building.

Unfortunately, and inexplicably, in the course of this enterprise Sixtus V demolished a venerable early Christian monument, the Oratorio della Santa Croce, dating from the fifth century AD, which stood at an angle to the front of the baptistry. It was built in the shape of a Greek cross, with a little atrium in front; inside were two remarkable Byzantine bronze doors, a series of magnificent mosaics and a floor of rare marble. There was no-one in Rome, wrote a contemporary chronicler, who did not regret this loss.

Fontana wrote of the new Lateran Palace with unconcealed self-satisfaction in his book Della trasportazione dell'obelisco, and there is no mistaking his pride in having erected such a great building in such a short time. The palace is certainly impressive. But there is no denying its rather unimaginative repetition of well-known themes from earlier sixteenth-century buildings. The influence of the Palazzo Farnese is obvious; the two upper storeys have the same traditional windows with heavy frames and large pediments, alternately triangular and segmental. A porch with rusticated columns and topped by a balcony provides a central focus which unites the whole façade, and this is perhaps the most successful invention. Only the façade next to the loggia belongs to the original building period; the other two were not completed until the beginning of the eighteenth century. But these long rows of windows resting on their bands of travertine emphasise the horizontal nature of the building and leave on the spectator an impression of great weight, which is
View of St. Peter’s and the Vatican Palace c. 1600. The dome of the basilica is finished but the new façade and nave have not yet been built. Drawing by anonymous artist. Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 136, Extrav., fol. 27, Wolfenbüttel. (Photo: Bibliotheca Hertziana.)

Salone Sistino in the Vatican Library, interior. (Anderson.)

further underscored by a frieze and cornice immediately above the windows of the upper floor. Added to which the cornice is disproportionately small. These features were criticised already in Fontana’s day.

The Lateran Palace was never again a papal residence of the same rank as the Vatican; the interior arrangements were altogether too impractical. For over a hundred years from the beginning of the nineteenth century it was a museum, but its collections have now been transferred to the Vatican and are displayed in the new wing of the museum completed there in 1971. After a radical restoration during the 1960s the Lateran is now the seat of the Vicariato di Roma, the diocesan administration for the city of Rome.

The Lateran Palace had just been started when Sixtus V also commissioned Domenico Fontana to add a completely new series of buildings to the Vatican Palace.63 The pontifical residence, equipped at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the medieval Vatican Palace, which in turn had been rebuilt and extended several times during the fifteenth century, was dark and impractical. Gregory XIII had a wing built at right-angles to the loggia façade which Bramante had designed at the beginning of the sixteenth century as a kind of screen overlooking the papal gardens. Sixtus V’s wing—which was really a whole palace in itself and which still houses the papal residence today—was located at the other end of Gregory XIII’s wing, thus transforming the former garden into a palace courtyard. Work on Sixtus’ palace did not begin until 1589, and the pope died before it was finished. With its enormous cubic shape towering above the Piazza of St. Peter’s this building closely resembles the Lateran Palace; it has the same heavy window frames in the traditional sixteenth-century style, but the proportions of the palace are even less attractive.

Sixtus V also commissioned Domenico Fontana to build the new library wing in the Vatican, which can be regarded as a monument to the scholarly interests of this pope. Unfortunately, though, the new wing cut ruthlessly across Bramante’s magnificent Cortile del Belvedere, leaving a lower and an upper cortile instead of the original long garden terrace with its ramps.64 However, the library was certainly needed, since the Vatican’s unique collection of manuscripts and books had been housed since 1475 in damp, dark premises under the Borgia Apartments. The new library has cruciform vaulting and is divided into two aisles by a row of pillars. The books are kept in wooden cupboards or presses along the walls and round the pillars. Walls and ceiling are decorated with frescoes painted at great speed by Nebbia and Giovanni Guerra. Artistically they are rather dull, but they combine to give the library a uniform and typically sixteenth century character. Since they also include many views of Rome, they provide a valuable documentation of the city’s history.65

As a papal summer residence, the Villa Montalto was really far too small,
and in 1586 the pope gave it to his beloved sister Camilla. Gregory XIII’s villa on Montecavallo, on the other hand, was much more suitable for the pope. Gregory had built his villa in a garden owned by the Carafa family, rented by Cardinal Luigi d’Este, and let by the latter to the pope. The villa which Gregory’s architect Ottaviano Mascalino built for him constitutes the heart of the present Quirinal Palace, corresponding to the short northern end of the cortile. It consisted of a casino with a loggia in two storeys with five-arched arcades between two projections—a typically Roman style of aristocratic villa, stemming from Peruzzi’s Villa Farnesina built at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The villa had an imposing tower-shaped belvedere, from which the Italian flag now flies above the president’s palace. Inside Mascalino built a monumental staircase with columns inspired by Bramante’s spiral stair in the Vatican. Mascalino also had plans for constructing a cortile in front of this building, bounded by two fairly low wings with colonnades along its sides. These two wings were to link the building with another wing which was intended to run along Via Pia opposite the original villa.

Sixtus V bought the casino and the garden from the Carafa family in 1587 after the death of Cardinal d’Este, and two years later Domenico Fontana had the new plans prepared. They involved revising and extending Mascalino’s design. Fontana, too, intended to build a great cortile in front of Gregory XIII’s villa, but it was to be more magnificent than Mascalino’s and noticeably more symmetrical. Mascalino had only just begun to build his wing along the west side of the cortile, and the work was now continued by Fontana according to the new plans. On the outside the window frames are simple, their triangular pediments in line with mid-century palace architecture. Nevertheless, this palace facing the open space on Montecavallo is not altogether like its predecessors: it has only two storeys instead of the three that most Roman palaces then boasted; it is also considerably longer in relation to its height and the belvedere is clearly visible above it.

Although there was no time to complete the extensive plans for the Quirinal Palace during the lifetime of the pope—and his successor was to introduce further alterations—Sixtus loved to stay there during the summer when the fresh ponentino breeze on Montecavallo was so much more pleasant and healthy than the damp air of the Borgo Leonino and the Vatican, where malaria was not uncommon when the weather was hot.

The Cappella Sistina in S. Maria Maggiore

As Cardinal Peretti, Sixtus V had started to build a chapel in S. Maria Maggiore to house the basilica’s most precious relic, a copy of the cave of the nativity with the crib at Bethlehem, which had been venerated in the basilica possibly since the fourth century. During the thirteenth century, when the crib was believed to be authentic, the whole scene had been placed in a little oratory decorated by Arnolfo di Cambio. Work on the new chapel started
some months before Peretti was elected pope; it was outside the right aisle of the basilica. After the cardinal had become pope, the plans were changed. The chapel was now built in the shape of a Greek cross with very short arms and a lofty, well-lighted dome. In other words it was designed as a small centralised church with the altar in the middle; in front of the altar was an open crypt or confessio. Into this crypt Fontana moved the entire thirteenth century chapel, encasing it in iron bands and chains and raising it by an ingenious system of winches. It was a great technical achievement, in the same class as the transport of the Vatican obelisk, and Fontana has left us a description of how it was done.71

The dome of the chapel rises, markedly pointed, above an octagonal drum. The only articulation is provided by the heavily pedimented windows. Instead of pilasters the lantern has a series of up-standing volutes which make it look rather like a crown. This became a pattern for many seventeenth-century Roman domes. Otherwise the exterior architecture of the chapel is simple, articulated by pilasters in the lower storey and above this by simple pilaster-strips. The interior is richly decorated with marble in a variety of colours; much of this was taken from the Septizonium and the medieval Lateran Palace. The pilasters are worked in multi-coloured marble intarsia with geometric patterns and Peretti’s heraldic charges, the star and the mount. The wall is divided into large panels of marble and fresco, while further frescoes

separated by richly gilded strips of stucco-work decorate the vault. Sculptured festoons with putti in white marble link the capitals. The frescoes are of indifferent quality, the work of minor Mannerist artists;72 as usual Sixtus was eager above all to see the whole project finished as quickly as possible.

The pope made this chapel—called the Cappella Sistina after its founder—into a funerary chapel for himself and his predecessor, Pius V, whose memory he greatly venerated. Domenico Fontana designed two similar tombs on opposite sides of the chapel, occupying a whole wall each. They have four columns each in verde antico; the statues of the popes are flanked by niches with reliefs illustrating their major achievements. The statue of Pius V, who was canonised in 1712, is by Leonardo Sormanno, while Sixtus V is by Valsoldo. Sixtus is portrayed in a kneeling position, according to the accepted iconography: the man or woman who instituted a memorial chapel was usually represented in this way.73 Here, moreover, he is kneeling to the relic of the crib and the Sacrament, which are preserved in the chapel. Pius V, on the other hand, is shown seated on his throne. Neither of the papal statues are great works of art, nor are the reliefs with their stiff, rather wooden figures and confused compositions; again, they are the work of contemporary Mannerist artists. As an architectural whole, however, these tombs are not without certain merits, and they represent a style in sepulchral monuments that was both a development of earlier prototypes and an inspiration to future Baroque sculptors.
The Cappella Sistina can probably be taken as an example of Sixtus V's personal taste, as well as a good illustration of Domenico Fontana's architectural style. We find the same severe dignity here and in the palaces built by this architect. There is no mistaking Fontana's dependence on artists such as Bramante and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, and it is also obvious that he had studied Serlio's and Vignola's architectural treatises. But we cannot deny that his buildings are so correct in their proportions, so careful in their detail and ornament, that the overall effect tends to be dry and uninspired. His architecture points not forwards but backwards, as in some ways his urban development also does. Nonetheless Domenico Fontana can be regarded as the ancestor of the Roman Baroque. He received most of the commissions—and certainly the most important—during Sixtus V's pontificate. And these were by no means few. But he could never have managed to make plans and designs or models as well as supervising all the work, if he had not had a large team of assistants. One of the most active of these was his nephew, Carlo Maderno, from Capolago on the Lake of Lugano; and with Maderno—who became his successor—the true Roman Baroque begins.

Further Work on St. Peter's

While Domenico Fontana was thus engaged elsewhere, the building of St. Peter's continued. Although the basilica had been under construction since 1506, it was still far from finished. In front of the new domed church started by Bramante, continued by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and adapted with fundamental alterations and simplifications in its design by Michelangelo, half the nave of Constantine's fourth-century basilica still stood. It was screened by a wall from the building behind, so that church services could be held there. The atrium of the old basilica was also still in place, as well as other buildings—among them the two-storey fifteenth-century benediction loggia—facing the open place in front. Inside the new domed church and under the open sky Bramante and Peruzzi had built a little temporary chapel over the apostle's tomb, and this chapel still housed the apse and high altar of the old basilica.

The huge office of works connected with the building of St. Peter's was an extensive organisation, known as the Reverenda Fabbrica di San Pietro. It had its own administration and its own chief architect, a post which since the death of Vignola in 1573 had been held by Giacomo della Porta. Under his direction the western arm of the church, i.e. what became the new apse, had been built during the period immediately before Sixtus V's pontificate; the vault was in the process of being constructed at the beginning of Sixtus' reign. Curiously enough the apse had been saved until last, because every architect since Bramante had been compelled, whether or not it fitted their plans, to allow for the choir started by Nicholas V in the 1450s. Paul III had finally promised Michelangelo that the choir—which had been completed by Bra-
mante and Peruzzi—would be pulled down and the western arm built according to his plans and in line with the other cross-arms of the new domed church. Thus the new apse was not built until twenty years after Michelangelo’s death, when Della Porta faithfully followed the master’s model and drawings. In fact it exactly matches the pattern of the southern cross-arm which was built during Michelangelo’s lifetime.76

When Michelangelo died, the dome was also unfinished. The artist left a large wooden model—which still exists—but only the drum had actually been built. The vaulting had been delayed because of technical problems. When the apse was finished, Giacomo della Porta turned his attention to this exacting task. Work began just before Christmas 1588 and about eight hundred men were employed. They worked frenziedly for two years, including night shifts; they even had special permission to work on Sundays. The last stone was placed in position in the dome on 14 May 1590 to the sound of bells from all the churches in Rome and a salute from the cannon of Castel Sant’Angelo. Only the crowning lantern now remained to be built.

In building the dome Giacomo della Porta deviated somewhat from Michelangelo’s wooden model. He raised the attic above the drum inside and introduced lunettes, which meant that on the outside he increased the height of the dome by giving it a steeper profile, at the same time making the ribs narrower. It appears that the dome is 8.2 metres higher than Michelangelo had intended. There has been much discussion among architectural historians about the possible reasons for these changes. Nowadays most experts agree that Giacomo della Porta was responsible for them himself, and that they cannot have been based on any instructions which Michelangelo may have left.77 The reasons seem to have been purely aesthetic: it was hoped to prevent the almost hemispherical dome planned by Michelangelo from appearing flat and ponderous from below. However, one result of the increase in height was that the dome was very much heavier and its strength greatly reduced, and there were problems of subsidence and cracking later. Having said this, it has to be acknowledged that the dome—perhaps just because of Della Porta’s elevation—is one of the great architectural achievements in Rome. Its simple yet elusive form suggests an upward surge while destroying nothing of the majestic dignity for which Michelangelo had striven.

At the same time Giacomo della Porta erected the two smaller cupolas on either side of the great central dome, thus abandoning an earlier suggestion probably stemming from Vignola.78 Della Porta’s cupolas are more plastic in form and reveal a livelier play of light and shadow, but they also reflect the same emphatic lift as the greater dome with its bold extra height.

Much remained to be done, particularly in the interior, before St. Peter’s would be finished, and two major problems still needed solving at the time of Sixtus’ death: what was to be done with the nave of Constantine’s basilica and how was the façade of the new church to be designed? St. Peter’s continued to present succeeding popes with their major building challenge.

Death of Sixtus V

During the last year of his life Sixtus was much weighed down by various grave questions of foreign policy.79 He had been deeply disturbed when the Spanish Armada was destroyed off the coast of England in 1588. Nevertheless he entertained considerable respect not unmixed with admiration for Queen Elizabeth. He is supposed to have said that if she had only been a Catholic he could have done great things in Europe with her help, since even as the female sovereign of half an island she had roused fear in Spain and France and respect everywhere. In fact Sixtus may never have despaired altogether of Elizabeth’s conversion, although he had excommunicated her for the execution of Mary Stuart, who was regarded by Rome as a martyr for the Catholic Faith in England and Scotland.

Sixtus never seems to have entertained the same hope as regards Henry of Navarre. Henry was declared unfit as a Protestant to ascend the throne of France and was excommunicated by the pope. At the same time Philip II of
Spain set his mind on forcing Sixtus into an anti-French alliance, and to this end sought any means that came to hand. Olivares, the Spanish ambassador in Rome, was encouraged to exert pressure in the most flagrant and shameless of ways. But Sixtus was unwilling to support the already powerful might of Spain more than he had to, and was determined that Philip should not exploit the papal interdicts for his own political ends. He refused Philip a grant from the gold reserves in Castel Sant'Angelo, although the king tried to disguise his anti-French policy as a religious campaign against the Huguenots. Sixtus never allowed himself to be seduced by these spurious claims; in his view the balance in Europe depended on France remaining a major power despite her internal religious conflicts. Politically and militarily Sixtus wielded far less power than the Spanish king, but his spiritual authority was so great that Philip could do nothing against it; in the long run the victory in this struggle was the pope's.

Disastrous harvests in 1589 and 1590 destroyed any hope of developing agriculture in the Campagna as Sixtus had planned to do. The poor harvests had fateful consequences for the Papal States—and indeed for the whole of the Mediterranean area—and peasants abandoned their land to join the bands in such great numbers that the movement almost amounted to a peasants' revolt. Thus Sixtus V lived to see banditry flourishing anew, adding to the shadows that darkened the last year of his life.

These heavy cares must have hastened the deterioration in Sixtus V's health. He had apparently never expected to live long, which was one of the reasons for the feverish activity he displayed in almost every field from urban development and building to publication of the Bible during the five years of his reign. Throughout the exceptionally hot summer of 1590 the pope suffered continually from fever, and was dejected and distressed by the insults of Olivares. Broken by illness and anxiety, he died in his palace on the Quirinal on 27 August 1590.

Sixtus V had succeeded, with the help of Domenico Fontana, in changing the face of Rome in a remarkably short time; indeed, his great avenues had given to the city a new dimension. Not all the pope's plans were realised, but many features such as the obelisks, the Acqua Felice, the Lateran Palace, and the new palace wing and library in the Vatican became part of the lasting picture of Rome; other substantial legacies were the new organisation of the Curia and, for good or ill, the gold reserves in Castel Sant'Angelo. If he had lived longer, the care that Sixtus devoted to the material welfare of his flock might also have borne fruit. But many of his measures proved impermanent, perhaps being too dependent on his personal supervision.

The Successors of Sixtus V

The conclave that opened ten days after Sixtus V's death was dominated by the powerful Spanish party among the cardinals. After a week of repeated ballots, and by no means unexpectedly, Giambattista Castagna, who had been papal nuncio in Spain and enjoyed Philip II's favour, was elected. He took the name Urban VII.

In September 1590 the heat was still unpleasant and unhealthy and Urban therefore wanted to move into the Quirinal immediately, but his court opposed the idea that he should leave the Vatican, against all custom, before his coronation. No coronation ever took place; three days later the pope had contracted malaria, and a week later he was dead. His pontificate had lasted only twelve days. The Romans were deeply disappointed, for Urban had already made himself popular by generous donations to the poor from Sixtus V's gold reserves.

During the long and difficult conclave that followed, many candidates were suggested. The supporters of Cardinal Simoncelli tried to advance their candidate's cause by spreading abroad a prophecy attributed to a twelfth-century Irish bishop called St. Malachy. This prophecy, which is still often quoted today, consists of short motes and characterising all the popes from Celestine II in 1143 to the end of the world. Some may appear quite pertinent—well-known examples are Pastor angelicus for Pius XII, Pastor et nauta or, "shepherd and seaman" for John XXIII who was formerly the patriarch of Venice—where others can only be made to fit the relevant pope indirectly or by making far-fetched interpretations that could equally well apply to the predecessors or successors of the pope concerned. Recent research has unanimously rejected Malachy's prophecy as a fraud perpetrated by Simoncelli's electors.

Nicolò Sfondrato, who was elected pope on 5 December 1590 and took the name Gregory XIV, was a saintly and pious man, a close friend of St. Philip Neri. Unfortunately he lacked any skill in managing the temporal affairs of the Papal States, which he put entirely into the hands of his nephew, Paolo Emilio Sfondrato, who was made a cardinal. The choice of this man for such a trust was a mistake, since he immediately set about exploiting his position for the sole purpose of achieving the greatest possible personal gain.

Since the autumn of 1590 Italy had been ravaged by a severe epidemic, probably a virulent influenza, which had reaped thousands of lives. Exceptional weather conditions with fierce heat in summer and long winter rains had prolonged the bad harvests, and people were dying of hunger in their thousands. The Romans knew that the pope lost sleep in his anxiety for their welfare. He tried to import grain and negotiated with the Hansa towns of Lübeck and Danzig; he granted safe conduct to Protestant merchants who would bring grain into Rome. But the problem of providing food was aggravated by the ravages of the brigands, and the papal troops were sometimes forced to engage in battles with the robber bands.

After much hesitation Gregory XIV decided to range himself on the side of Philip II against the French Huguenots. He planned to contribute 300,000 scudi from Sixtus V's reserve fund and to dispatch a papal army which he had hastily recruited mainly from Switzerland. This put the French Catholics in a
precarious position, but just as the situation seemed to be deteriorating, Gregory died. It was 15 October 1591.

His successor was elected in a uniquely short conclave lasting only two days. Gian Antonio Facchinetti took the name Innocent IX. He was a scholar, a student of Plato and deeply learned in theology—so deeply that his works were never published. But he immediately proved himself capable also of acting firmly and adroitly as the ruler of the Papal States. He wasted no time in tackling a variety of problems; the regulation of the Tiber, the provision of food, brigandage, and the completion of St. Peter's. He even returned to Sixtus V's prudent financial policy. Innocent IX promised to be one of the best rulers that the Papal States had enjoyed for a long time. Philip II waited uneasily to see what stance the new pope would take in European politics. But Innocent IX died unexpectedly on 30 December 1591, after a reign of two months, struck down by a severe chill which he caught on a pilgrimage to the Seven Churches of Rome. His death deeply affected the Roman people and they mourned him as a father.

These three extremely short pontificates had fateful consequences for Rome. Gregory XIV had been too weak, and his predecessor and successor had reigned too briefly, for anything of lasting value to be achieved. For over eighteen months there was nobody with the power or authority to maintain law and order in society or to combat the bandits.

Nor was anything of importance achieved in the cultural sphere during these three pontificates. Gregory XIV would have liked to devote himself to building, but had no time. The only lasting monument of his reign is to be found in music: he was a close friend of Pierluigi da Palestrina, who dedicated a mass to the pope as well as his great choral work the *Magnificat*.

Clement VIII and the Aldobrandini Family

The conclave which met in January 1592 to choose Innocent IX's successor proved to be one of the most dramatic in the history of the Church. At first the powerful Spanish party in the College of Cardinals appeared to control the situation, and it was fully expected that their candidate, the strict and highly gifted Cardinal Santori, would be elected pope. When he was found to lack one vote in the decisive ballot, however, there was a serious deadlock, and many of the cardinals were even afraid of a schism in the Church. Only after long negotiations were the Spanish party and the opposition able to agree on a compromise candidate—Cardinal Ippolito Aldobrandini, who took the name Clement VIII. He was by no means as keen a man of action as Santori, but he was an expert in canon law; moreover he had been papal legate to Poland, mediating peace between the emperor and Sigismund of Sweden, and was therefore familiar with foreign policy problems. He was extremely conscientious—even pedantic—in all he did, and as he became older he also became increasingly slow and irresolute. Aldobrandini had been a very close friend of St. Philip Neri, who had predicted his election, and it was this popular religious leader who had inspired the new pope's simple piety. The two men remained close friends. Clement VIII continued to live the ascetic life of an ordinary priest; he was strict in the observance of fasts; every morning he celebrated Mass, often shedding tears, and every evening Cesare Baronio came to hear his confession. He retained many of his old habits: once a month he would visit the Seven Churches of Rome on foot; sometimes he would even sit in St. Peter's and hear confessions for several hours. He kept a strict eye on the papal court: luxurious raiment was forbidden and the liveries of retainers simplified, and all court functionaries were enjoined to take communion from...
the pope’s own hand at least once a month. Thus the severity which had marked the preceding decades still reigned in the papal Curia and in ecclesiastical circles; otherwise, however, the religious impulse of the Counter-Reformation had already lost much of its impact.

The pope’s two nephews, Pietro Aldobrandini and Cinzio Passeri, who had already adopted the name Aldobrandini, became his closest colleagues and were given major positions of trust corresponding to that of a modern secretary of state. In the autumn of 1593 they were both made cardinals. Cinzio’s brother Gian Francesco was made Gonfaloniere di Santa Romana Chiesa, or chief military officer for the Papal States; he was also granted widespread fiefs, mainly in Emilia, which brought him substantial revenues. As head of the Aldobrandini family he became progenitor of one of Rome’s wealthiest and most aristocratic new dynasties.

Cinzio had accompanied the pope—then Cardinal Aldobrandini—on the legation to Poland, and was therefore put in charge of relations with Poland, as well as with Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. He was regarded as predominantly pro-Spanish. But he was also temperamental and unbalanced; he antagonised several of the foreign ambassadors, and indulged from the outset in keen rivalry with his cousin. The pope recognised Cinzio’s drawbacks as a diplomat and subsequently curbed his advancement, while showing Pietro Aldobrandini every sign of trust and favour. Pietro was only about twenty-two years old; his appearance was insignificant and his health poor. But unlike the forty-year-old Cinzio he proved supremely well fitted for his task, being both wise and gifted in practical affairs. He had studied with the Oratorians under St. Philip Neri’s personal guidance, and had been deeply impressed by the saint. He came to exert considerable influence on the pope’s foreign policy, and was later put in charge of relations with France and Spain. Ultimately he was entrusted with practically everything that would normally have come within Cinzio’s brief.

Already before becoming pope Clement VIII had enjoyed the company of authors and scientists, and he continued to devote much time to his scholarly interests. His immediate adviser on theological matters was the learned Jesuit, Roberto Bellarmino, one of the foremost defenders of the Catholic Faith, frequently involved in controversy with Protestant theologians, who were generally confounded by his brilliant arguments. Gigli calls him martello et confonditore della Heretic, “Hammer and adversary of the heretics”. Both Bellarmino and Cesare Baronio were made cardinals, Baronio already in 1596 and Bellarmino in 1599. They accepted only as an act of obedience, and both continued to pursue their erudite studies in the history of the Church and theology, living very simple ascetic lives, giving their revenues to the poor and contenting themselves with the bare minimum necessary to subsistence. Roberto Bellarmino, who was known for his amiable and charitable disposition, took a particularly keen interest in the poor. When he died in 1621 there was barely enough money left to pay for even a simple funeral. The cause of his beatification was introduced almost immediately, but was not concluded until

1929 under Pius XI. Canonisation followed in 1930, and in 1931 St. Roberto Bellarmino was declared a Doctor of the Church. Clement VIII had also been eager to make his old friend Philip Neri a cardinal, but in this he did not succeed; St. Philip turned aside every such suggestion with a joke.

Both the pope’s nephews, now cardinals, shared their uncle’s learned and literary interests. Pietro surrounded himself with writers, one of whom was the poet Giambattista Marino, while Cinzio had a regular following, almost an academy, which included Battista Guarini who wrote Pastor fido, one of the first pastoral poems in the history of literature. Torquato Tasso was invited to Rome by Cinzio Aldobrandini in 1592; the poet spent many years there, revising his great poem Gerusalemme liberata and writing a new work, Gerusalemme conquistata, which was far less successful. Cinzio nonetheless interested himself personally in the publication of the new poem which was widely distributed and published in several editions during the seventeenth century, even being translated into various Italian dialects. It became a popular epic, and its heroes and heroines are often portrayed in music and painting. Tasso suffered from melancholy in his old age; he finally retired to the monastery of S. Onofrio, where he died on 25 April 1595.

Foreign Policy

The year after Clement VIII’s accession Henry of Navarre was converted to Catholicism, but Clement was unwilling to absolve him from the ban of the Church. Acknowledging Henry’s right to the French crown would mean
breaking with his predecessors’ pro-Spanish policy; slow and cautious as he was, Clement did not want to take such a step rashly. But the French Catholics supported Henry, and he was crowned king of France in 1594. Among the French clergy the old antagonism towards Rome flared up anew, but its members were disappointed in their hopes that Henry IV would follow an anti-papal policy. After prolonged deliberations Clement gave in, and in 1595 he affirmed officially in a solemn ceremony in St. Peter’s that Henry IV had been absolved and received into the Catholic Church. Three years later, when Henry IV made peace with Philip II at Vervins, the pope acted as mediator. These two events were considered important enough to be portrayed in relief on Clement’s funerary monument in S. Maria Maggiore.

During the later years of his rule Clement VIII became increasingly estranged from Spain. One reason was that the new Spanish king, Philip III, set himself above the privileges of the Church even more than his predecessor had done, trying to use the whole establishment as an obedient tool. He even exploited the Spanish Inquisition for his own political ends, and Clement—like many of his predecessors in the Holy See—protested repeatedly against the extreme severity of the Inquisition in Spain and objected strongly that he was not allowed access to the records of its proceedings.

Clement VIII’s pontificate clearly marks a turning point in relations with Spain; Rome and the papal Curia managed by means of skilful diplomacy, not least on the part of Pietro Aldobrandini, to free themselves successively from the previously strong Spanish influence which had reached a peak during the 1590s. For some years before he died Clement had been considering the formation of a league together with Florence, Venice and France against Spain, but the negotiations dragged on due to the pope’s indecisiveness, and nothing had been achieved by the time he died in 1605.

In his dealings with England, Clement VIII showed great wisdom. He did not altogether reject Philip III’s claim to the English throne, but when James I became king after Elizabeth’s death in 1603, Clement gave the English Catholics permission to support the new king, thus enabling them to remain loyal subjects of their country.

Clement continued his predecessor’s efforts to reconcile the dissident Orthodox churches to Rome. He tried to come to an agreement with the Russian ruler Boris Godunov, only to make the bitter discovery that Godunov was ultimately more hostile to the pope than he was to the Turks. In Poland and Germany, on the other hand, the Catholic Church succeeded in regaining much of what it had lost to the Protestants, who were now definitely on the defensive. Catholic missionaries won many successes outside Europe, mainly in the South American Spanish colonies and Asia, where the Jesuits were conducting various successful missionary operations. In China the Jesuit Father Matteo Ricci won many disciples, and was enjoying his greatest successes during the reign of Clement VIII. Ricci was profoundly receptive to Chinese culture; he became an outstanding sinologist and passed the mandarin examination. He even succeeded in converting several members of the imperial family to Christianity. In this period of religious wars Clement VIII set a good example by trusting more in missionaries than in arms; he refused to listen, for instance when the Duke of Savoy wanted to take Genoa by force of arms, although the city was the major stronghold of Calvinism in Italy.

Generally speaking, the Catholic Church had now entered upon a new epoch: the period of open conflict with the Protestants and the struggles of the Counter-Reformation were more or less over; since the Church had regained several of its old positions and won new territory, it was ready to move on in a spirit of triumph. This new spiritual climate was to leave a strong imprint on official ecclesiastical art.

Administration of the Papal States

It was during a period of rising prices and famine throughout the Papal States that Clement VIII became pope; banditry was also flourishing as in the years before Sixtus V. It was estimated that in the Papal States alone there were no less than fifteen thousand bandits and robbers, despite the frequent executions. Once again the Ponte Sant’Angelo displayed rows of severed heads that fouled the air.

Clement VIII certainly wished to remedy the prevailing evils, but he was neither as clever nor as decisive as Sixtus V. Nor did the military weakness of the Papal States make it any easier to control the general lawlessness. Foreign observers were often amazed by this situation, but Clement hated the thought of military action and had no interest in recruiting the standing army that would have been necessary to keep order in the country. He also lacked any sense of the value of money. He could think of no other way of increasing the revenues of the Holy See than by resorting to further munti, with the result that the national debt continued to grow. In 1592 it was twelve million scudi—an unheard of sum for the times—and two-thirds of the state revenues went towards paying interest on these munti.

Nor did Clement realise that one of the fundamental causes of the deterioration of the Papal States was the way they were administered. The various loosely linked provinces had long been governed by legates and presidents; in the larger towns there was usually a governatore or sometimes a legate, and in the smaller ones a podestà. These officials had generally been laymen—apart from the legates, who were cardinals—but from the time of Sixtus V it had become customary for all positions in the administration of the Papal States to be filled by priests. It is fairly obvious that these men, lacking any training for the task and, often, any experience of administration and finance, were quite unable to grapple with the problems. The Papal States consequently continued to deteriorate, while the temporal power of the clergy increased correspondingly. This in turn roused in the ordinary people a feeling of hostility towards these all-powerful and often incompetent priests, which may have been one of the chief causes of the wave of anti-clericalism that swept Italy in
the succeeding centuries. Another disquieting factor was the lack of continuity in the upper echelons. The Papal States were an elective organisation, and their ruler had absolute power; but most popes were already elderly and often ill at the time of their accession. Throughout the seventeenth century the average length of the pontificates was only nine years, and hardly any popes continued the civil administration policies of their predecessors. Thus, after every papal election, new officials took over all the key administrative posts.

Splendour and Decline of the Noble Families

In a predominantly clerical society the tone was naturally set by high-ranking prelates and cardinals; these men also commanded the greatest financial resources. Although popes such as Gregory XIV and Clement VIII lived simple, even ascetic, daily lives, they would nevertheless appear in full pomp and majesty when representing the Church; ceremony was never waived. And the cardinals took for granted that a magnificent appearance was appropriate to their status.

Most of the noble families imitated the fashion set by the prelates and the popes’ relations, assuming luxurious habits which did not always match their economic capacity; the bourgeoisie then set about lapsing the nobles. There were three major calls on the resources of the aristocracy: to build a family palace, to own a carriage, and to provide their daughters with dowries. The carriage in particular was an important status symbol in Clement VIII’s Rome. In the mid-sixteenth century cardinals were still expected to ride on horseback about Rome, transport by coach being considered quite unworthy of their ecclesiastical dignity. But by 1580 there were complaints of traffic congestion caused by the growing number of carriages, which even cardinals were now using. And this was of course one reason why Sixtus V’s straight highways were so badly needed; the highways also had to be wide enough to allow for the six horses which many carriages required. Some private palaces were also becoming short of space for the necessary stables and coach-houses. Only a few years later records show that there were 883 carriages distributed among 675 owners, 129 of whom lived in Rione Ponte, the old bankers’ district, but only two in Rione Ripa. The Spanish ambassador had four carriages, as did the wealthy cardinals Farnese and Altemps, while the emperor’s ambassador had three.

The luxury enjoyed in the wealthiest circles was also reflected in the ladies’ dresses, which were becoming increasingly extravagant. Ambassadors’ wives and women of distinguished family would appear on ceremonial occasions covered in jewels from top to toe and draped in the costliest of materials and embroidery. Clement VIII strongly disapproved of these novelties and all the ostentatious luxury which the Romans so loved to display; he issued repeated instructions for the suppression of extravagance and vanity, but in vain.

In order to maintain their extravagant ways, the foremost noble families ran into debt. Many of them were ultimately forced to sell large parts of their inherited feudal lands. Deepest in debt at the beginning of the seventeenth century was the Montalto family, whose members wanted to maintain the life style they had enjoyed in the days of Sixtus V, and the Duke of Sermoneta, head of the ancient house of Caetani, who owed about 300,000 scudi on an annual income of 24,000.97

Clement VIII did at least see that all the debtors paid proper interest on their loans. In 1596 he issued a Bull decreeing that if interest payments were overdue, even entailed estates must be sold. Thus Colonna was compelled to sell Nettuno to the pope—who had plans for converting it into a port—and Savelli sold Castel Gandolfo, which later in the seventeenth century became the pontifical summer residence.

The Trials of Beatrice Cenci and Giordano Bruno

Two famous trials that took place during Clement VIII’s pontificate—the Beatrice Cenci case and the trial of Giordano Bruno—have brought discredit on this pope.

Beatrice Cenci belonged to an old aristocratic Roman family. Her father Francesco Cenci was in debt up to his neck and had therefore taken his family from their gloomy palace in Rome and settled with them in his castle, Petrella, in the Abruzzi Mountains. There Francesco, who was a brutal and passionate man, appears to have tyrannised his family without restraint. Two of his sons fled with the help of the castle bailiff, a man named Salvetti. It was later discovered that this man, who was already married and the father of a family, had amorous relations with Beatrice, then twenty-one years old and widely renowned for her beauty. Francesco punished her with great severity, upon which the outraged girl decided to murder her hated father. She conspired to this end with her stepmother Lucrezia and her brother Giacomo, who had married against their father’s wishes, and with Salvetti himself. An assassin was hired, and Francesco was killed. The guilty conspirators were caught almost immediately and taken to Rome to stand trial. According to the custom of the time they were subjected to torture, during which Salvetti died. Beatrice and Giacomo and their stepmother were all condemned to death and executed on 11 September 1599. Beatrice roused the sympathy and admiration of the Romans with her beauty and courage on mounting the scaffold. When she was carried to her grave in S. Pietro in Montorio, they revered her almost as a martyr. They believed that she had fought to protect her virginity against her father’s incestuous attacks; that she had been, in other words, the victim of legal murder. Her story was subsequently romanticised by writers such as Stendahl, Alexandre Dumas the Elder, and Shelley. The legal proceedings had taken place behind locked doors, and the records were kept secret, so that nobody knew exactly what had happened. Not until recently were the records rediscovered, and it therefore became possible to throw new light on this dreadful story and to set Beatrice Cenci in her true context.98

Her case provides an illustration of the moral decadence prevailing among
the Roman aristocracy of the time; the spiritual regeneration of the Counter-Reformation appears to have left no mark upon them. Similar crimes were also committed in other noble families during Clement VIII's reign and his reason for refusing to pardon Beatrice was presumably that he wanted to make an example of her. Thus a certain Paolo Santacroce murdered his mother for personal gain; he managed to escape justice, but a brother who had consented to the murder was executed. And a terrible fate haunted another family, the Massimi, on a scale that recalls classical tragedy: after losing his first wife, Leilo dei Massimi married a Sicilian woman of dubious reputation, who was subsequently murdered by the four sons of her husband's first marriage; the second of these sons, Marcantonio, then got rid of his elder brother for the sake of the inheritance, but was caught and executed; the third son fell in the war against the Turks, and the fourth was the victim of a jealous intrigue.99

The trial of Giordano Bruno illustrates instead the intolerance of the age and the severity of the Inquisition. Giordano Bruno was a Dominican monk who clashed with his superiors over certain philosophical ideas; he left the Order and took up a position in open opposition to the Church. The philosophical system which he constructed had very little in common with Christianity, and it was always dangerous during the Counter-Reformation to express doubt—publicly and in writing—about the Trinity and the Incarnation. To Bruno the value of religion was exclusively moral: faith was the rough ignorant masses, and in the Christian cult he saw only superstition. Reason, he declared, should bring us to knowledge of an immanent godhead, a godhead that permeated an infinite, uniform universe in which the driving force was love; nor was the idea of other solar systems and inhabited planets excluded. In this bold cosmology, a development of Copernicus' view of the universe, lay the real originality of Giordano Bruno in the history of ideas. Otherwise, however, he confused the concept of God with the idea of the universe, and wavered between a kind of non-religious mysticism and pantheism. He expressed all these views in writing, as well as teaching them at the various universities he visited during his long wanderings in Europe.100

Giordano Bruno visited Venice on the invitation of the Doge, but his ideas so upset his host that he found himself summoned before the court of the Inquisition. At first Bruno seems to have been anxious for a reconciliation with the Church and to have been prepared to retract some of his most troublesome heresies. In the meantime, however, his expulsion to Rome had been ordered. After hearings before the Roman Inquisition that dragged on for seven years, Bruno decided to hold to all his theses; although Cardinal Bellarmine—who was a member of the court—tried to persuade him to submit. Finally, as was customary, he was delivered into the hands of the secular court, which had to pass sentence of death. As an unrepentant heretic and renegade he was burnt at the stake in the Campo dei Fiori on 17 February 1600.

This trial must be considered in its historical context. It was an age of religious intolerance in all European countries; in Protestant countries such as England or Sweden anyone suspected of being a Catholic priest could be tried for treason, and Calvin's followers in Geneva treated people of other persuasions with appalling cruelty. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Inquisition behaved with severity towards such a man as Giordano Bruno.

The Roman Inquisition came under the pope, who presided over a congregation of eight cardinals. During Clement VIII's pontificate two of these were Jesuits, namely Francisco de Toledo and Roberto Bellarmino. After Toledo's death Bellarmino was the sole representative of his Order. Contrary to popular belief the Jesuits were not much involved with the Inquisition. Instead it was the Dominicans who had been prominent in the various courts of the Inquisition ever since the thirteenth century when their Order was founded.101

The task of the Inquisition was not only to watch over the Faith, but generally speaking to supervise anything to do with ecclesiastical discipline. Only the most notorious and dangerous heretics were delivered to the supreme Roman court, and only those who refused to recant and repent ended their lives at the stake. Those who publicly retracted their views—a public act of faith called autodafé—might be given a prison sentence or even freed immediately. But far fewer heretics were being burnt in Rome than in Spain at the same time, and in the Protestant countries many witches were facing death at the stake. In England under Mary Tudor about 300 protestors were executed, and under Elizabeth I 200 catholics died for their faith. During the five years of Sixtus V’s pontificate, on the other hand, the Roman Inquisition passed only five death sentences, of which two for crimes that had nothing to do with heresy; in 1595 five heretics were executed in Rome, in the following year seven, and in 1597 only one.102

The Acquisition of Ferrara

One of the few political successes over which Clement VIII could rejoice, was the incorporation of Ferrara into the Papal States. Duké Alphonso d'Este died in 1597, and since he was childless he had willed the dukedom to his cousin Cesare. But Cesare was illegitimate, and the pope therefore refused to acknowledge his rights; Ferrara was, at least nominally, a papal fief. Cesare immediately let it be known that he intended to claim his inheritance by force of arms. For once Clement acted promptly and, much to the general surprise, hastily recruited an army of twenty thousand mercenary soldiers and seven thousand knights, which took the field under the supreme command of Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini as papal legate. The campaign never really got under way. Cesare was abandoned by his allies and soon realised that he would have to yield. Ferrara was promptly incorporated into the Papal States, which brought the northern boundary of the pope's lands to the river Po. Cesare was allowed to retain the towns of Reggio and Modena. Later in the spring of 1598 Clement VIII journeyed into Ferrara with a retinue of cardinals and the greater part of the Curia. The enormous expense of this triumphal
journey through the Papal States, which were still suffering the after-effects of the previous years of hardship, was a source of despair to the papal treasurer.

Flooding of the Tiber

In Rome the year 1598 ended in catastrophe. The pope returned from Ferrara on 19 December after an unusually rainy autumn, and for several days the rain continued unabated. On Christmas Eve the Tiber began to rise above its banks so quickly that panic broke out. Many people managed to escape on to hilly ground, others took refuge in the Castel Sant’Angelo or simply climbed on to the roofs of their houses, while the swirling muddy water rose to a level it has never reached since and probably never had before. It flooded the Piazza di Spagna, the Capo le Case and the old Trevi fountain; it covered the Piazza Venezia and reached the foot of the Capitoline Hill; only Montecitorio and the stronghold of the Orsini family, the Montegiordano, and rather surprisingly the Piazza Farnese, were left as islands in the surrounding flood. At S. Maria sopra Minerva the force of the water broke down the doors and filled the church to a height of over three metres. In this and many other churches innumerable precious works of art were spoilt or destroyed. Worse than this, though, was the damage to the graves which disgorged their dead under the impact of the water. The Romans spent a terrifying Christmas night, and no midnight mass was held.

Not until the day after Christmas did the waters begin to recede, leaving behind a thick layer of mud, huge quantities of rubbish and an abominable stench from the rotting corpses that had been washed out of their graves. For the next few days chaos reigned. Countless buildings were damaged and many old dwelling houses collapsed. The outer arches of the Ponte S. Maria, which had been reconstructed by Gregory XIII, were destroyed, leaving only the central span. The remains of this bridge, which stand just below the Tiber Island, are known to this day as the Ponte Rotto or ‘broken bridge’. Perhaps the most alarming feature of the disaster was the loss of huge stocks of grain, wine, oil and other necessaries stored in cellars. Reports of the number of the dead varied considerably; about fourteen hundred is probably a fairly accurate figure. Many died of hunger and privation, not during the flood itself but in the period immediately afterwards.

There was further flooding, though less serious, in 1600 and again the following year. Plans for regulating the Tiber, which had been under discussion during Sixtus V’s pontificate, were again considered, and further attempts were made to discover the cause of the floods. The old rather wild proposals for digging a new river-bed from Ponte Milvio and round the Vatican were aired again. But all the plans were rejected on either economic or technical grounds.

Building Activities during Clement VIII’s Pontificate

Clement VIII regarded the completion of St. Peter’s as one of the most important tasks he had to tackle. He reorganized the Reverenda Fabbrica, which was previously only a kind of committee, establishing it as a congregation known as the Congregazione della Reverenda Fabbrica di S. Pietro. The exterior of the dome was covered with lead and ribs in gilded bronze. During Clement’s first years as pope the lantern was finished, and the gilded cross that crowns it was placed in position on 18 November 1593, having first been solemnly blessed by the pope.

The important task of decorating the inside of the dome had first been entrusted by the Congregazione to Cristoforo Roncalli, known as Pomaran- cio, but on Clement’s express wish the commission was given instead in 1603 to Giuseppe Cesari, better known as Cavalier d’Arpino. This artist was among the last of the painters usually referred to as the Mannerists; a pupil of Federico Zuccari, he was a skilful draughtsman with little feeling for colour, and far too dependent on the often very mediocre assistants he had to use in order to cope with all the commissions that came his way. On the inside of the dome, in the sixteen spaces between the ribs, he has portrayed Christ with the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist—a traditional motif since the early Middle Ages—together with the twelve apostles and angels, and the saintly popes.
whose relics are preserved in the basilica. A large team of assistants transferred Cesari's cartoons to mosaic, a task which took many years. The four Evangelists in the pendentives of the dome were based on cartoons by Cesare Nebbia and Giovanni de' Vecchi.107 The iconological programme in the dome and the altarpieces in the surrounding chapels illustrating scenes from the life of St. Peter had been devised by Cardinal Baronio, a prominent member of the Reverenda Fabbrica. It followed as far as possible the traditions of the early basilica.108 Thus the old Early Christian and medieval iconographic themes were used again, but in entirely new forms. In choosing mosaic for the decoration in the dome, as in the Cappella Gregoriana earlier and thenceforth in St. Peter's as a whole—all the altar 'paintings' in St. Peter's are actually copies in mosaic—conscious reference was being made to the tradition of Constantine's basilica and of the Early Christian Church in general: mosaic was not only a more lasting medium than fresco painting, it was also thought to be more splendid, a material appropriate to the sanctuary over the tomb of the apostle.

When the western cross-arm or new apse was built for Sixtus V, it became possible to lay the floor throughout the basilica. This was done at the level fixed by Antonio da Sangallo in 1543, which was 3.20 metres higher than the level first intended by Bramante.109 There was thus room for a crypt on the level of the old basilica, known as le sacre grotte. A subterranean confessio was also to be built in front of the high altar, with access to the little niche which since early medieval times had marked the spot where the apostle was buried.

The position of the high altar was now decided. Michelangelo had wanted to place it directly under the centre of the dome. But Clement VIII determined that it should be a few metres further west, exactly above the old basilica's high altar and the actual tomb of the apostle.110 Thus purely aesthetic considerations had to give way to the weight of tradition. Clement consecrated the new high altar himself; its mensa consists of a single huge block of marble taken from Nerva's forum. On grounds of piety, however, the new high altar encased the old altar of Calixtus II dating from 1123. And over the whole construction a provisional wooden tabernacle was erected.

During the work in le grotte many objects from classical and Early Christian times were discovered, the significance of which was not fully realised at the time. They came from the late Roman necropolis which was not properly excavated until the 1940s. The most valuable find was the magnificent marble sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, one of the finest Early Christian sarcophagi ever found.

The pilasters in the chapel under the smaller southern dome between the cross-arms, Cappella Clementina, were decorated under the supervision of Giacomo della Porta in a variety of marbles including green verde antico, brown porta santa and the warm brown-black africano; these were all set in patterns between raised bands of white marble in accordance with the contemporary taste for motley marble incrustations. This was also an allusion to the chapel under the northern side of the dome, Cappella Gregoriana, which

Gregory XIII had decorated. There was similar marble ornament, as we have seen, in Sixtus V's chapel in S. Maria Maggiore. In the Cappella Clementina, Clement wanted to preserve the relics of St. Clement I, who was the object of his special veneration. The mosaics in the pendentives of the dome, representing the Fathers of the Church, are the work of Pomarancio. For the sandrels above the arch leading into the chapel from the transept of the basilica, Camillo Mariani carved two marble virtues, Prudence and Hope; two more virtues, Justice and Strength, over the arch leading from the central nave, were the work of Ambrogio Bonvicino.111 Similar sculptured ornament had been added to the arches in the Cappella Gregoriana in the 1580s, and further additions were later to be made by Bernini and his workshop over all the arches in the nave. Work on the Cappella Clementina was finished by 1601, the date we can read on its marble floor.112

The new St. Peter's had no façade as yet, and part of the Early Christian nave was still standing; what had remained of the old apse, on the other hand, had been destroyed when Clement VIII built the new high altar and demolished the temporary chapel that had been standing under the dome for almost a hundred years. Clement postponed any decision between pulling down the Early Christian nave or finding some other way of combining it with Michelangelo's domed church, as recommended by Cardinal Baronio among others.
Frescoes and sculptural decorations in the transept of the Lateran Basilica. (Anderson.)

At the same time the transept of the Lateran Basilica was being rebuilt under the supervision of Giacomo della Porta. It was decorated with frescoes by a number of artists, superintended by Cavalier d'Arpino; his own contribution was the pretentious yet rather vapid Ascension on the short wall opposite the entrance. A series of apostles is painted high up between the windows, but it is almost impossible to see them. Under these are enormous historical paintings with scenes from the life of Constantine and the history of the Lateran Basilica, the work of Cesare Nebbia, Giovanni Battista Ricci, Paris Nogari and Cristoforo Roncalli. The magnificent gilded and coffered ceiling was executed from designs by Taddeo Landini.\textsuperscript{113}

The great sacramental altar in the transept by Pier Paolo Olivieri contrasts massively with the variety surrounding it; in fact it is far too big in relation to the fourteenth-century Gothic high altar, which piety demanded should also be left in place. Its great temple pediment is borne up by four colossal gilded bronze columns, and the whole construction expresses just that Roman gravità or dignity which the later Mannerist artists strove to achieve. It was also typical of Counter-Reformation ideology, to emphasise the Real Presence and thereby the cult of Christ in the Sacrament of the altar. The little bronze tabernacle itself, a work of Pompeo Targone, is set in an aedicule of marble columns, and seems to be overwhelmed by the weight of this vast temple architecture.\textsuperscript{114} As a whole the transept of the basilica is perhaps one of the most characteristic creations of Late Mannerism in Rome, but it is undeniably overloaded with its gaudy variety of glaring colours and gild, of crowded ornaments and endless sculptural details.
S. Andrea della Valle, nave. (Anderson.)

While Giacomo della Porta was busy completing the dome of St. Peter's the new church of the Theatine Order was founded. This was S. Andrea della Valle, one of the biggest churches in Rome. The Theatine Order was a typical representative of the Catholic reform movement which had started to make itself felt even before the Council of Trent. The members of the Order devoted themselves to the care of souls and the fight against heresy, as well as the care of the sick. Their foundation dated back to 1524, which made them older than the Jesuits although they enjoyed very much less success than the latter, perhaps because of their ascetic severity. The Theatines' patron at the end of the sixteenth century, Cardinal Gesualdo, now undertook to pay for a church. Plans were first drawn up by the Order's own architect, Father Francesco Grimaldi from Naples, but these were later radically revised by Giacomo della Porta who was engaged by Gesualdo. The Theatines had little say in the final decision. Building began in 1591, but when Gesualdo left for Naples as archbishop in 1596, Pier Paolo Olivieri was appointed to supervise the building; he was closely connected with Giacomo della Porta, and occasionally also made use of Francesco da Volterra. Later Olivieri was sometimes referred to erroneously as the architect of the church, whereas in fact he was only the builder. When Gesualdo died in 1603, the church was still far from finished; only half the nave and two side chapels were complete.

Nonetheless, in the parts of S. Andrea della Valle which had been constructed, Giacomo della Porta revealed his new ideas on the design of church interiors. His starting-point was Vignola's Gesù, but he reduced the paired pilasters between the chapels to clustered pilasters, or rather one pilaster flanked by two half-pilasters, and a further innovation compared with the Gesù is that the vertical thrust of these members continues through the entablature; they are then linked across the vault by transverse arches. Compared with the Gesù the nave is also much higher in relation to its width.

The most important point, however, is that the chapel apertures are higher and broader and the chapels themselves better lit. All this combined to produce a new spatial experience with the emphasis on an upward thrust; this can be compared with the same sort of upward surge that Della Porta had introduced into the great dome and the two smaller domes of St. Peter's. This interplay between the solidity of the paired pilasters and the vertical accents, together with the impression of space, has its roots in Roman tradition and its inspiration in Michelangelo's architecture, but it also represents something essentially new, something that points forward to the more dramatic spatial solutions of the Baroque. In this context Giacomo della Porta's nave in S. Andrea della Valle was among the most important examples of design in Roman ecclesiastical architecture at the end of the sixteenth century.116
Like his immediate predecessors, Clement VIII preferred to live on the Quirinal during the hottest months of the year. When he remained in the Vatican during the summer of 1599, the entire papal court fell ill of the fever. Work on the extension of Gregory XIII’s palatial villa had virtually come to a stop when Domenico Fontana left Rome, and Clement now interested himself mainly in its garden.\(^{112}\) This stretched north of the villa itself in a wide terrace. Flowerbeds were planned and fountains made, for which the Acqua Felice conveniently provided the water. Among the various inventions was a water organ housed in a cave as big as the apse of a church; it was decorated with stucco reliefs and the kind of coarse mosaics that were commonly used for fountains. The actual machinery of the organ, which was quite unique of its kind, has apparently survived. Unfortunately, though, it no longer works.\(^{118}\)

Cardinal Baronio, whose own retreat was a villa at Frascati, advised the pope to take refuge in the Alban Hills during the unhealthy Roman summer. It was at Frascati that Pietro Aldobrandini had built a magnificent villa from designs by Giacomo della Porta. Its high façade and unusual broken tympanum, which make it look like some enormous household dresser, dominate the terraces and ramps on the slope that faces the town. During a journey of inspection at Frascati in September 1602, Della Porta suffered a heart attack and died. Carlo Maderno took over the job and a few years later the garden was finished, with a magnificent columned exedra and underground halls and fountains to provide a cool shelter from the heat of the summer.

During the last few years of his life Giacomo della Porta had also been engaged on finishing the Campidoglio from Michelangelo’s designs and models. He was succeeded by Girolamo Rainaldi as architetto del popolo romano, as the architect was called who worked for the city authorities, and Rainaldi completed the Senators’ Palace. Della Porta, however, had already altered Michelangelo’s preliminary sketches for the façade.\(^{119}\) Instead of two storeys of equal height, he gave the façade a single row of large windows with a row of mezzanine apertures under the cornice; this alteration was dictated by the great hall for public ceremonies that was constructed in the palace. Its interior was decorated with frescoes by Tommaso Laureti and Cavalier d’Arpino, among others, with scenes from the history of ancient Rome. Opposite the Palazzo dei Conservatori, just as Michelangelo had planned, Rainaldi began to build a façade on exactly the same pattern. This building was often referred to as the Palazzo Nuovo. Clement VIII laid the foundation stone in 1603.\(^{120}\) Behind the façade, which was really just a kind of screen, a museum was later built to house the collection of antique sculptures which had been donated by Pope Sixtus IV to the city of Rome in 1471. However, the building was not finished for fifty years as the city authorities were short of money.

Carlo Maderno had been assistant to his uncle Domenico Fontana in the days of the latter’s glory under Sixtus V. He had helped to move and re-erect the obelisks and had taken an active part in the work on the Quirinal and Lateran Palaces, although in the second of these it is not possible to identify his contribution exactly.\(^{121}\) After Sixtus V’s death in 1590, Domenico Fontana fell from favour. Many people had become jealous of his numerous successes.
He was even accused of embezzlement, with the result that he left Rome for Naples in the spring of 1594. About a year later Francesco da Volterra died, and Carlo Maderno was asked to take over his commissions as well as Fontana’s. From this time Maderno emerges as an independent architect.

In 1598 Maderno was commissioned to build a palace for Asdrubale Mattei, who belonged to an old Roman family; he later became Marchese of Giove and of Rocca Sinibalda. The palace was constructed in three stages over a period of almost twenty years, from 1598 to 1616. The high, rather unadorned façades with their simple window frames, reminiscent of Fontana rather than Della Porta, are conservative in spirit. A new feature, however, is the beautifully wrought brickwork that was never stuccoed; this seems to have been in conscious imitation of antique brickwork, and may later have inspired Borromini in the main façade of the Oratory. The layout of the palace in three wings round the courtyard, follows a local Roman tradition which can be traced back to the fifteenth century. There is a two-storey loggia on one side only with pilasters and arches while the upper floor has blind arches. The main stairway, asymmetrically placed at one end of the ground floor loggia, gives access to the first-floor loggia, which leads to the main hall. This is lit by windows in two storeys as a salone all’italiana. Opposite the two-storey loggia in the courtyard there is a single-storey loggia, forming a kind of bridge...
between the two wings on either side. The central arch originally framed a niche fountain but has since been opened to give access to the second courtyard. The façades of the courtyard are adorned with a rich collection of classical statuary: busts, reliefs and sarcophagi belonging to the Mattei family. Maderno probably designed the settings for these, and indeed the arrangement of the whole display. It was a common practice in Rome to display a family collection of antiquities in a palace courtyard, but this was the first time that the collection was deliberately created at the same time as the architecture. There is no doubt that Mattei wanted to emphasise his Roman ancestry by showing off his classical treasures in this rather ostentatious manner.

The Mattei Palace is also famous for its stairway, decorated with fine stucco-work which seems to be copied closely from classical models. However, stucco-work of a very similar design had been made for the stairway of the Palazzo dei Conservatori in 1575, and it is very probable that Maderno was familiar with this; in fact he may even have worked on it together with Domenico Fontana, who was paid for stucco decorations there in 1572. The Mattei stuccoes, which were not executed until the 1620s, were the work of an artist named Donato Mazzi, and whether or not Maderno was responsible for their design is not known. He would in any case have designed the perspective arch at the entrance to the stairway—the kind of design which we shall find later in the upper loggia of the façade of the Palazzo Barberini.

Both Domenico Fontana and Francesco da Volterra had been engaged on restoring Cardinal Rusticucci’s titular church, S. Susanna. In 1597 work began on the façade, following designs by Carlo Maderno, and this was completed in the summer of 1603. Maderno followed the traditional Roman type of façade in two storeys, with five bays on the lower storey narrowing to three bays in the upper. The outer bays on the lower storey are quite plain, with simple pilasters, but the inner bays are enlivened with niches and statues. The central bay is differentiated by almost free-standing columns; in the middle two more columns, projecting somewhat further from the wall, carry a triangular gable and form a great aedicule above the entrance. The façade increases in articulation in three steps towards the centre, a movement which can be seen clearly in the entablature between the storeys. The columns are sunk into the wall, so that they appear to be outlined by deep shadows. In the upper storey the columns are replaced by pilasters, but the window aedicule is borne on small columns and is further emphasized in that the central projection is echoed in the entablature. If this façade is compared with earlier examples of the same type, for instance the façade of the Gesù, we can see that
Maderno has created a more powerful plastic articulation, and a stronger concentration to the centre. The façade is thus easier to perceive as a whole, more coalesced, at the same time as it is enlivened by the play of light and shadow, which seems to add a veil of air and space to the actual stone.

It is quite possible that Maderno was consciously alluding to Vignola’s rejected suggestion for the façade of the Gesù, dating from the mid-sixteenth century. 126 This suggestion was well known, since Vignola had let Cartaro make a beautiful engraving from his model, and was in fact superior to the façade actually executed by Della Porta and Giovanni Tristano. Thus S. Susanna’s façade has traditional roots; what is new is the heightened drama, which makes it so attractive. With good reason it is generally known as Maderno’s masterpiece.

The church of the Oratorians, S. Maria in Vallicella, better known in Rome as Chiesa Nuova, had been begun by Matteo di Castello in accordance with St. Philip Neri’s own instructions, but it had been extended and altered after 1583 by Martino Longhi the Elder. The façade had been started by Fausto Rughesi, but left unfinished. It now fell to Maderno to complete it, and in doing so he introduced some alterations in the upper storey, among other things volutes closely resembling those on S. Susanna.127

When Giacomo della Porta died only a few months after the façade of S. Susanna was finished, Carlo Maderno was appointed, together with Giovanni Fontana, to be chief architect of the Reverenda Fabbrica di S. Pietro, where great tasks awaited him.

Painting during Clement VIII’s Pontificate

At the very beginning of Clement VIII’s pontificate the new wing of the Vatican Palace, begun by Sixtus V, was finally completed. Domenico Fontana had been replaced by other architects, first by Taddeo Landini and later by Giovanni Fontana and Giacomo della Porta. Together these architects had created the great cornice of the palace, and by altering the original plan, had allowed for a large audience room which occupies the two upper storeys and which was given the name Sala Clementina.128 For the important job of decorating the walls and ceiling of the Sala, the brothers Giovanni and Cherubino Alberti from Borgo Sansepolcro were engaged in February 1596.129

Giovanni Alberti had painted the ceiling in the sacristy of the Lateran Basilica a few years before. This was covered with two low groined vaults, and with the help of illusionistic architecture and perspective foreshortenings, which were his speciality, Alberti succeeded in creating an impression of greater height. By painting four roundels and a square aperture in the middle he makes it look as though the columns are silhouetted against the open sky. This kind of decorative painting with illusionistic perspective—known as quadratura—had certainly been seen in Rome, where Peruzzi had painted his illusionistic perspectives in the villa Farnesina in 1516 and Raphael employed similar techniques in the loggia of the Vatican a few years later, but its subsequent stronghold had above all been Bologna, where mathematicians taught all the subtleties of perspective drawing.130 Gregory XIII, a Bolognese himself, had sent for two of his compatriots, Tommaso Laureti and Ottaviano Mascarino, to paint in the Vatican. With them quadratura painting returned to Rome.

The Sala Clementina is covered with a great flat vault. Round this Giovanni Alberti has painted a balustrade seen in perspective from below and columns which appear to rise against the open sky, where St. Clement is being received into the celestial sphere by the Holy Trinity and angels bearing the papal insignia. There, too, are the Aldobrandini heraldic charges: the stars and the bend, battled on both sides, all so brilliantly drawn in perspective that they seem to float freely in space.131 The Martyrdom of St. Clement—the saint was thrown from a boat into the sea with an anchor chained to his neck—appears on the entrance wall as a great marine painting by the Flemish master Paul Brill. The back wall is painted as a columnar hall, opening in illusionistic perspective like a stage, where St. Clement is being baptised.132

In a prominent position over the door at one side leading to the papal apartment there is a curious allegory, The Science and Art of the Quadratura.133 This consists of two superimposed transparent globes, one of which is formed by the Aldobrandini stars and the other by the battled bends. These globes are derived from certain pseudo-astronomical instruments used in the sixteenth century, here representing the universe.134 On the top globe a
putto holds up the papal tiara, and on a banderole we can read the words UNDIQUE SPLENDENT. A woman dressed in the royal purple stands beside the globes holding a pair of compasses, a square and a plumb-line, all instruments used in perspective drawing. She thus represents Prospettiva. She is gesturing towards heaven, whence she receives her inspiration, while her
right hand with the instruments rests on the shoulder of a man kneeling at her side. This figure represents Ars; he is holding a large book, indicating that he can read Nature like an open book. He wears the dress of an ancient hero, except that instead of the lion's hide he has an oxhide over his shoulder, since the ox is the symbol of Labor. He is accompanied by a dog, the symbol of Fidelitas. This Ars—actually a portrait of the artist Giovanni Alberti—is both heroic and humble, and his three attributes are those most befitting an artist in post-Tridentine Rome.

This allegory is set in a configuration of virtues on the walls and ceiling. The usual cardinal virtues—with Spiritus instead of Caritas—are placed in the niches and windows painted in illusionistic perspective on the walls. These were executed by the considerably less gifted Cherubino Alberti in collaboration with Baldassare Croce. In the vault we can see Religio, Clementia, Benignitas, Iustitia, Abundantia and Caritas, all alluding to the good government of Pope Clement, which seems a little ironical in view of the grim severity that actually prevailed.

The decoration of the Sala Clementina was finished in 1602, the date on its dedicatory inscription. While firmly rooted in mannerist painting and the erudite sixteenth-century tradition of perspective drawing, this was the first example—and a triumphant one—of a continuous quadratura covering both ceiling and walls in a large hall. Alberti's frescoes must have had considerable influence on Roman decorative painting during the following century. This hall, which was more easily accessible then than it is today, was the main audience room of the papal palace. The vault foreshadows solutions achieved by Andrea Pozzo at the end of the seventeenth century in his famous vault in S. Ignazio.

New directions in painting can also be glimpsed in an altarpiece painted by Federico Barocci for the Oratorians in the Chiesa Nuova. A painting of the Visitation had already been commissioned from this artist in 1582. It had so enraptured St. Philip Neri that he is said to have fallen into an ecstasy before it. More than ten years later Barocci made his second painting for the Chiesa Nuova, a Presentation of the Virgin commissioned in 1593. Barocci belongs chronologically to the generation of the Mannerists, and he often makes use of the type of composition that Taddeo Zuccari in particular had evolved. But he also endows his pictures with greater clarity and stability and, above all, with a deeper emotional content. In the Presentation of the Virgin Mary is portrayed as a small child kneeling before the high priest who receives her into the temple as a serving-maid.

The psychological focus of the action, the Virgin's bowed head and the priest's outstretched hand, are at the centre of the picture, exactly where the diagonals intersect. The figures in the foreground—a woman with doves in a basket and a group of young men on the right leading a sheep and a calf—are reminiscent of the Mannerists' repoussé figures so often copied from Raphael or Michelangelo. Here, however, they belong to the iconography of the picture—the animals are to be sacrificed in the temple—and are certainly drawn from life. It was through his studies from life, and his meticulous preliminary studies for the composition of every picture, that Barocci freed himself from Mannerism. Innumerable drawings from his hand have been preserved—no fewer than forty-seven drawings are known just for his Presentation of the Virgin. Barocci's way of handling colour was also an innovation. Since the High Renaissance colour had been regarded in Rome chiefly as a complement to drawing. But Barocci built up his pictures in carefully studied colour tones; he even claimed that a picture should be una piena musica, and he succeeded in something that few artists have mastered, namely combining such colours as yellow, green and violet in harmonious accord. Thus he imparts to this altarpiece a radiance, a feeling of tranquil joy and passion, that was typical of his art and which also reflects the profound and moving piety of St. Philip Neri and his Oratorians.

Since it is now known that the Presentation of the Virgin did not arrive in Rome until 1623 when it was unveiled in the Chiesa Nuova, it is uncertain how much influence it may have had on contemporary Roman painting. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that when Peter Paul Rubens was painting...
his *Madonna with Saints* for the high altar of the same church a few years later, he must have been impressed by Barocci’s rich and gleaming colour.

**Annibale Carracci**

Just before the Sala Clementina was finished, Annibale Carracci had started painting the gallery in the Palazzo Farnese, a task which was to occupy him until 1604. The Palazzo Farnese had been completed by Giacomo della Porta in 1589. That same year the old Cardinal Alessandro Farnese—often known as “the great cardinal”—died; he it was who had paid for the building of the Gesù and built the family’s villa at Caprarola. A year later another member of the Farnese family, Odoardo Farnese, had obtained a place in the Sacred College. The young man, brother to Ranuccio Farnese, Duke of Parma, was only twenty years old when he became a cardinal and took up residence in the family’s palace in Rome. The great hall and gallery were still awaiting decoration, and Odoardo immediately made plans to have frescoes painted in the hall to glorify the military deeds in Flanders of his father Duke Alessandro. At first he intended to get the commission for the frescoes to the brothers Alberti, but for some reason unknown to us the brothers Annibale and Agostino Carracci were summoned from Bologna in 1594 before the Alberti had even made a start. First Annibale alone decorated a smaller room, the *camerino*, with scenes from the life of Hercules, a courteous allusion to the virtues of the young Odoardo, since the Farnese family liked to look upon...
1624 celebrate the irresistible power of love in a manner that borders on the mischievous. When love enters the stage, they seem to say, the plans of the gods and the strength of heroes are reduced to naught. In a series of panels, which do not form any connected account but simply portray a number of episodes, we see how gods and heroes behave when driven by love. We see Juno in dalliance with Jupiter, Aurora seducing the young Cephalus, and Polyphemus, frustrated of his passion, hurling rocks after the fleeing Odysseus; Diana descends to earth to receive from Pan that white wool that later unites her with him; Paris receives the golden apple from the hand of Mercury. Venus is loved by Anchises; Jupiter in the guise of an eagle bears Ganymede up to heaven, while Apollo carries off young Hyacinth as his lover. In the great central panel a youthful Bacchus leads the beautiful Ariadne in a triumphal procession, surrounded by satyrs and bacchantes: it is the triumph of profane love. In each of the four corners of the vault two putti—or amorini—are locked in struggle with one another. Small round panels in grisaille, painted to look like bronze medallions, demonstrate the possible fruits of love in violence, hate and tragedy: Europa is carried off by the bull, Apollo flays the wretched Marsyas, Pan pursues Syrinx and Orpheus loses Eurydice.

Ever since the seventeenth century scholars have been discussing what these frescoes really represent. Giovanni Bellori was first in the field with his Vite. There must surely, he wrote, be a double meaning here; the whole ceiling was to be regarded as an allegory of the victory of heavenly love over earthly carnal lust. Art historians have agreed with this, partly because it seemed unthinkable that a prelate of the Church such as Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, who was a serious-minded young man, would have tolerated paintings of such worldliness and sensuality as these appear to be. But Annibale Carracci would probably have found the complicated iconography that later scholars have tried to read into his paintings quite irrelevant. The pictures describe just what they seem to describe; they show that when love seizes hold of men, not even the plans of the gods can prevail against it. It should be remembered that the palace was the residence of the whole Farnese family; the cardinal was presumably unable to decide anything without consulting his brother Ranuccio. In 1600 Ranuccio married Margherita Aldobrandini, a marriage which had apparently already been planned in 1597 when work on the gallery began, so we are probably justified in connecting the decoration of the gallery and its mythological love scenes with the impending wedding. Finally—and this must have been important—the gallery was intended to house part of the Farnese's famous collection of antique sculptures, and the classical mythology of the ceiling had to accord with the statuary for which the niches in the walls
were planned. Indeed, the figures in the vault can be regarded as a counterpart to the sculptures below, as a kind of painted sculpture gallery. At the same time it is of course difficult to ignore the fact that the very existence of such painted mythological love scenes suggests a relaxation of the severity of the Counter-Reformation spirit which had ruled for so long.

When Annibale Carracci painted the Farnese Gallery, he already had considerable experience from the Academy which he and his brothers Agostino and Ludovico had founded in Bologna, the Accademia degli Incamminati, but it was first in Rome that his style was perfected and in Rome that it achieved maturity. Annibale made the sketches for the gallery’s frescoes on his own; his brother Agostino joined him later but was not involved in the preliminary stages. From the twenty or so drawings that have survived it can be seen that Annibale first experimented with a frieze-like composition, but since this would have been awkward in a room with a vaulted ceiling, he decided to restrict his illustrations to the actual vault itself. These were then co-ordinated with the pilasters, stuccoes and niches on the walls that were executed immediately after the ceiling paintings were finished. But, unlike Giovanni Alberti’s solution in the Sala Clementina, Carracci did not create a quadratura painting as one might have expected him to. Such a treatment of the ceiling would have been difficult to adapt to the long narrow shape of the gallery, which did not allow a single viewpoint. Instead he worked out a decorative system of his own. This was new, but the inspiration for it came from various sources. One of the prototypes which must have made a deep impression on him already in Bologna, was Pellegrino Tibaldi’s Ulysses fresco in the Palazzo Poggio. In this ceiling the main scenes are contained in pictures enclosed in trompe l’ceil frames. These quadri riportati as they are usually called, are combined with illusionistic architectural painting, a true quadratura. Thus, between the pictures in the corners, columns have been painted which seem to rise towards the open sky above. Tibaldi found the idea for this system of decoration in Raphael’s loggias in the Vatican, a much admired model which had considerable influence on many artists who left Rome after the sack of the city in 1527. Like Raphael’s loggias and Tibaldi’s Ulysses fresco, the Farnese Gallery corners also reveal views open to the sky, but there is no illusionistic architectural painting here, no columns rising in silhouette against the sky, only a balustrade. But it is obvious that Annibale Carracci had also studied Michelangelo’s ceiling frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. From them he has taken the firm architectural division of the vault by means of a kind of fictitious architecture, in which the frames and arches appear to be executed in stone, dividing the surface of the ceiling into panels for quadri riportati. This architecture is combined with atlantes and herms, painted to represent sculpture and inspired by the Sistine Ceiling’s “caryatid putti”. His ignudi—heroic naked youths wearing rich garlands between them—are also a heritage from the Sistine Ceiling. Many Mannerist artists had shown their dependence on Michelangelo before this. Thus in his great ceiling in the Palazzo Ruspoli, Jacopo Zucchi copied the figures of the Sistine Ceiling almost exactly, but without Michelangelo’s firm composition, without the combination of fictitious architecture and picture panels. But although the ignudi of the Farnese Gallery are also clearly inspired by the Sistine Ceiling, not one reproduces the stance or the face of any of Michelangelo’s athletic youths; they simply enjoy the same type of male beauty. The same freedom vis-à-vis the prototypes applies to the bronze medallions. Annibale had obviously also studied antique
sculptures: the composition of the Bacchanalian procession, for example, appears to be inspired by an ancient sarcophagus relief, but it has a dancing rhythm that is all Annibale's own.

In the past art historians have often called the Carracci brothers eclectics, but this is now accepted as unjust. However obvious the models, it is never a question of direct borrowing or imitation in the way of many Mannerists. Annibale never follows his models slavishly; he transforms them in his own personal manner. Renaissance theorists such as Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo recommended artists to study the work of older masters, and there were no cries of eclecticism then.

The first composition achieved by Carracci in this ceiling was combined with a powerful illusionistic effect. Thus some of the atlantes and herms are painted with cracks and damaged corners to heighten the impression of reality; some youths sit looking at the spectator and others at the neighbouring pictures, and all are painted in warm colours that suggest living flesh. They are, in fact, painted as men of flesh and blood, thus set apart from the "stone" sculptures and the figures in the quadri riportati. Moreover a very skillfully executed treatment of light adds further to the illusion, so that shadows suggest that the painted architecture, the frames and the ignudi are lit by the real windows of the gallery. But despite this marked fidelity to nature—surviving drawings suggest studies from life—Annibale's heroes and gods and ignudi on this ceiling are still idealised figures, elevated above everyday reality. In spite of this blend of naturalism and idealism Carracci has also achieved a kind of warmth, an almost sensuous way of rendering the human body that was unlike anything produced during the sixteenth century. And it is a sensuality that accords well with the content of the pictures.

The intricate interweaving of different levels of reality, of illusionistic architecture and warm, tangible, "living" figures, together with the skillfully attuned light and airy atmosphere which sets off the shimmering tones of pink, grey, green and pale blue—all this went far beyond the High Renaissance models and foreshadowed the seventeenth century. Here Roman monumentality, gravitas, and idealism join with a skilfully applied palette of North Italian inspiration and with an earthy sensuality that is Annibale Carracci's own, to create in the Farnese Gallery something that is essentially original and fresh. It is the dawn of the Roman Baroque.

When the ceiling frescoes in the gallery were finished, around 1600, Annibale was commissioned to decorate the walls. This kept him occupied for the next four years, but here the new style was somewhat less successful. The two great frescoes on the short walls, Perseus liberating Andromeda and the Battle of Perseus and Phineus, symbolised—as Bellori pointed out—the triumph of virtue over unbridled carnal lust. Even the small frescoes on the wall between the pilasters over the niches are associated with this iconographical scheme. These pictures acknowledge that love's true victory is achieved through virtue, through the curbing of sensual passion with the help of reason and piety. Thus over the entrance to the gallery we find the symbol of chastity, the Virgin with the Unicorn.

Stucco artists worked on the gallery walls, probably under Annibale's supervision, while the iconographical programme for the walls was being formulated. Annibale began to paint the walls in 1603, and the two big frescoes on the short walls were ready the following year. The whole gallery was then complete. But much of the work on these frescoes was delegated by Annibale to his assistants, in particular Domenichino, who painted parts of the Perseus and Andromeda and the whole of the Virgin with the Unicorn. Among other pupils who worked with Annibale were Giovanni Lanfranco, Sisto Badalocchio, and probably also Antonio Carracci. The spectator in the gallery will be struck by the difference in style between walls and ceiling: in the ceiling, light warm colours predominate; the walls are largely grey and gloomy. The murals are rather stiff and cold, lacking the grace and rhythm of the frescoes in the vault.

Annibale Carracci's interest in nature and his assiduous drawings from life led him to a detailed study of human expressions and gestures; his aim was to reproduce the attitudes, gestures and expressions appropriate to any particular emotion, action or mood. His penetrating observations would often result in a concentration—sometimes an almost mischievous exaggeration—of the most characteristic features of his models, so that among the drawings he left behind are some which have been called the first caricatures in art history.
During Annibale's last period, after the completion of the Farnese Gallery, idealism—or what Posner calls hyper-idealism—becomes the dominating mood. A refinement and intensification of these anti-naturalistic elements can thus be found in the Assumption of the Virgin. This altarpiece, which must have been executed between the autumn of 1600 and the spring of 1601 for Clement VIII's treasurer, Tiberio Cerasi, was designed in conscious rivalry with the pictures Caravaggio was painting at the same time on the side walls of the same chapel in S. Maria del Popolo, namely the Crucifixion of St. Peter and the Conversion of St. Paul. Annibale's composition is crowded—the iconography of the subject demanded a great many figures—and there is barely room for the apostles' gestures of amazement at the miracle; at the same time the Virgin is frontal, hierarchic, and yet manifestly close. The folds of the drapery are stiff; there is no natural play of light on the mantles which have neutral surfaces recalling painted metal. Heaven, on the other hand, is painted in those typical, warm Venetian colours pertaining to Carracci's North Italian style. The apostles' gestures and expressions are also carefully studied. Here and in the idealised anti-naturalist colours in which the figures are draped, there is more than a suggestion that Annibale had studied Raphael's Transfiguration, one of that artist's most admired paintings.

This combination of idealism and naturalism which is typical of Annibale Carracci's style, is particularly happy in his landscapes. Although landscape painting represents a small proportion of his finished output, many drawings from his hand testify to his great interest in landscape and its great variety of form in trees, bushes, flowers and endless details. Annibale's landscape painting developed relatively late, during the 1590s, as can be seen from some paintings done before he came to Rome and some drawings from the same period. These already reveal the qualities which would later enhance his landscape compositions. Carracci's landscapes are always composed of different elements studied from nature in various places, on the Campagna with its ravines and streams and views of distant mountains, or from the Alban or Sabine Hills. Despite the study of nature that they betray, his landscapes are always imaginary—what we usually call ideal landscapes. The lovely Landscape and River Scene in the museum in Berlin-Dahlem, probably painted about 1593, shows that his style had reached maturity. The predominant characteristics are order and balance. The trees are ranged at the sides to frame the scene; in the middle a cluster of buildings is grouped round a tower, which provides a kind of compositional axis; a bridge leading
from the tower is reflected in the calm waters of the middle ground. The bridge is parallel to the picture plane, preventing the spectator’s eye from sliding away towards the distant hazy blue mountains.

After 1600, when Annibale’s style had evolved and matured in the Farnese Gallery, his landscape style also continued to develop. One of his ideal landscapes from this period, the Landscape with St. Mary Magdalene in the Galleria Doria-Pamphili in Rome, is strictly and systematically constructed in what can be described as a series of platforms, where the mountains and streams resemble massive building blocks. But his most perfect landscapes are those he painted for the chapel in the Palazzo Aldobrandini on the Corso, now in the Galleria Doria-Pamphili. We know that the palace was purchased in 1601 by Pietro Aldobrandini from the Duke of Urbino, and we can assume that the lunettes in the chapel were created immediately after 1604. Of the lunettes only two are Annibale’s own work, namely the Flight into Egypt and the Entombment; the others are the work of his compatriot, Francesco Albani. The Flight into Egypt has details from the Campagna with a ravine and a stream in the middle ground, and a town in the centre dominated by a domed building reminiscent of the Pantheon. The Holy Family is just leaving the river under the shadow of the trees in the foreground, which stretch out their arms as though in protection. Views of a bay and the distant hills are partly obscured by the arrangements of trees and the town, and are not directly involved in setting the mood of the picture. All Annibale’s landscapes have this air of peaceful solemnity, almost of melancholy. The mood is created by a solid structure, often with an architectural theme that stresses the centre, and by framing trees or rocks. The hazy mountains are always there, but they suggest no dizzying vision of those distant horizons which were later to be such a typical feature of Claude Lorrain’s landscapes.

Domenichino’s ideal landscape style was first adopted and developed by Domenichino, his most important Roman pupil. The attractive little fresco of the Virgin with the Unicorn over the entrance door in the Farnese Gallery was executed by Domenichino from a cartoon by Annibale Carracci. Here the composition with its framing vegetation, its little group of trees in the middle and its distant mountains is clearly Annibale’s, as are the colours in a limited range of blues and greens. The picture was included in the Gallery as a symbol of chastity in contrast to the surrounding illustrations of carnal lust. In style, too, this fresco is noticeably chaste.

Even before Annibale Carracci began to work in this mode, Roman landscape painting had received important impulses from the North Italian range and treatment of colours and from a general northern—chiefly Netherlandish—feeling for nature. The man who first introduced the Venetian palette to Rome was Girolamo Muziano from Brescia. As a result of his warmer range of colours and his serious Venetian dignity he had a beneficial effect on academic Roman Mannerism, of which the foremost representative was Federico Zuccari. Muziano’s influence was felt particularly during Gregory XIII’s reign, when he supervised the decoration of the Cappella Gregoriana in St. Peter’s and painted altarpieces with lyrical landscape backgrounds. Of the Flemish painters who introduced a profound feeling for nature into painting in
Rome, the best known was Paul Brill from Antwerp; his palette was influenced in turn by Muziano. Brill’s output was substantial and included monumental works as well as small easel paintings with a picturesque mixture of Roman ruins and northern, sometimes Alpine, mountain landscapes. Another major contribution of Nordic lyricism to the evolution of Roman landscape painting was made by the German artist Adam Elsheimer. We shall return to him and to Domenichino’s mature landscape style in another context.

**Caravaggio**

When Annibale Carracci was engaged on painting the Farnese Gallery, Caravaggio received his first official commission in Rome. This artist’s real name was Michelangelo Merisi, but he was usually known as Caravaggio, after his birthplace in northern Italy. He arrived in Rome in 1593, when he was twenty years old. He was already an accomplished artist by this time, and had behind him a period of Mannerist training in the workshop of the Milanese painter Peterzano. He had also absorbed decisive impulses from many North Italian painters: from Giulio and Antonio Campi he had acquired his famous tenebroso, and from Savoldo and Moretto he had learnt how to paint materials of every kind, from satin with its shimmering reflections of light to all the softness of velvet.

Caravaggio’s first years in Rome were hard; he worked for a short time in the workshop of Cavalier d’Arpino, who was later to become his enemy. Two paintings in the Borghese Gallery, the *Young Bacchus* and the *Boy with a Basket of Fruits*, probably date from this period.

Caravaggio’s success was assured when he was discovered by Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte. He became attached to the cardinal’s *famiglia* and lived in his home, the Palazzo Madama. It now seems certain that Cardinal del Monte and his entourage had a more profound influence on Caravaggio than has generally been realised. The cardinal was a highly distinguished prelate of an old and aristocratic Florentine family, who represented the archduke of Tuscany in Rome. He was described by his contemporaries as an intellectual of great learning; he had his weaknesses, but no vices. He was deeply involved in the study of the natural sciences, including alchemy, and was attracted by the new currents of thought with their emphasis on empirical investigation. He was also interested in literature and the arts; his extensive collection of paintings probably made a deep impression on Caravaggio. It has even been suggested that the cardinal’s interest in the physical world may have helped Caravaggio to “a conception of the pictorial act as being a moment of awareness and verification of one’s experience of nature.” It is certain, at any rate, that the cardinal also showed great personal friendship for Caravaggio, giving the artist his protection in times of trouble and remaining tolerant of his somewhat eccentric behaviour.

Cardinal del Monte commissioned Caravaggio to paint several pictures for him, including such well-known works as the *Concert of Youths* (*Musica*), now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The *Bacchus* in the Uffizi and the extraordinary *Boy bitten by a Lizard* in the Longhi Collection in Florence were also probably painted at this time. However, despite much recent research there is still some uncertainty about the chronology and even the attribution of Caravaggio’s early works.

The story of how Caravaggio obtained the commission to paint the Contarelli Chapel is rather involved. It is also interesting in that it tells us a good deal about Caravaggio’s own situation and about the conditions under which artists often had to work in Rome in those days. The French Cardinal Mathieu Cointrel, known in Rome as Matteo Contarelli, had acquired the chapel in S. Luigi dei Francesi, the church of the French colony in Rome, as a funerary chapel for his family. In 1565 he had asked Girolamo Muziano to paint three scenes from the life of Saint Matthew there, namely the calling of Matthew, his martyrdom, and his writing of the gospel. When the cardinal died in 1585, nothing had yet been done. A few years later, in 1591, his executor, Virgilio Crescenzi, drew up a contract with Cavalier d’Arpino, who was commissioned to paint the calling and the martyrdom of Saint Matthew, as well as some frescoes in the vault showing other scenes from the life of the evangelist. The contract, which has survived, is of great interest; a special appendix contains a detailed description of the iconography of the pictures that the Cavaliere was to paint, i.e. the altar painting with the angel dictating the gospel and, on the walls, the calling and the martyrdom of Saint Matthew.

Several years passed, however, and the pictures were never executed, although
some preparatory drawings are known. All that the Cavaliere produced were the frescoes in the vault. The priests in the church complained to Clement VIII that the cardinal's heirs were not pursuing the project, and the pope ordered the Reverenda Fabbrica to intervene. The Cavaliere withdrew and the commission was given to Caravaggio instead, apparently on the recommendation of Cardinal del Monte. According to the new contract of 1599, Caravaggio accepted the instructions included in the contract agreed with Cavalier d'Arpino eight years before, but there was no mention of any altar painting; in fact this was to have been replaced by a sculptural group, commissioned already in 1596 from a little-known sculptor, a protégé of Contarelli by name Jacob Cobaert. Caravaggio finished his two paintings very quickly, in less than a year. Cobaert's sculpture was refused soon after he had finished it, and in 1602 a contract was made with Caravaggio for an altar painting of Saint Matthew and the Angel. But this picture, finished in the same year, was also refused: it was considered incompatible with decorum, added to which the angel appeared to be altering the text rather than dictating it and Saint Matthew's dirty foot jutting aggressively out towards the spectator was thought to be in the worst of taste. The picture was bought by Vincenzo Giustiniani. Later, together with other pictures in Giustiniani's collection, it was taken to Berlin where it was destroyed in the Second World War. The same year—and in an extraordinarily short time—Caravaggio painted his second version of Saint Matthew and the Angel which now hangs above the altar.

Caravaggio's North Italian training and his dependence on the Mannerist tradition can be seen here as clearly as in all the works of his youth. Unlike Annibale Carracci, Caravaggio painted ad boc, in other words direct on to the canvas, apparently without any preliminary sketches; figures in the Cappella Contarelli may be painted from life, but later Caravaggio appears to have painted everything from memory. This was certainly the case after 1606, when he left Rome and betook himself to southern Italy and Malta.

In the Calling of St. Matthew, the expressive drama of the picture depends on the contrast between Christ's summoning gesture and Matthew's reaction
as he looks up from counting at the table and sees the Lord. This effect is reinforced by the empty area above and between them, and by the contrast of light and shadow. For contemporary spectators it must have seemed strange, perhaps even distasteful, that against all the accepted rules of iconography, Jesus is half obscured by the man who is showing him the way. But Caravaggio often made free with the rules in this way.

The Martyrdom of St. Matthew is a picture of violence. A soldier with drawn sword has just dragged the evangelist from the altar and thrown him down, preparing to kill him immediately; the people around are expressing their horror. In this picture Caravaggio’s method is obviously not very naturalistic, although he is often described as a naturalistic artist. The arm of the soldier holding the sword is too long; the man half lying in the foreground to the left is wrongly put together—his trunk and thigh do not really fit; and the angel reaching down from his cloud to offer Matthew the martyr’s crown is so strongly foreshortened as to seem all arms and legs. But these distortions are there to heighten the drama: the soldier’s arm is long in order to emphasise the central action, and the convulsive twisting of the recumbent man expresses his terror. At the same time this man clearly functions as a repoussoir figure of the kind the Mannerists habitually employed to create an effect of depth in their pictures by a series of abrupt reductions in size. What is new in Caravaggio is the violent momentum of the action and the intensity of the mood. The composition is like an explosion, in which shadows and accents of light scatter forcibly outwards. In fact even the light is unnatural; it flickers, creates sharp shadows and contrasts—shadows which in Caravaggio’s painting are like dark impenetrable holes. Or, as Wittkower has so strikingly put it, darkness in his pictures is where light is not. It is these deep shadows contrasting with brighter parts which create the atmosphere, what we call Caravaggio’s tenebroso or chiaroscuro. The chapel was finished in 1602, when the second version of the Matthew was completed.

Light in Caravaggio may also have a symbolic meaning, as the Conversion of St. Paul can illustrate. This painting, like the Martyrdom of St. Peter, was executed according to a contract drawn up on 24 September 1600 for Clement VIII’s treasurer, Tiberio Cerasi, for a funerary chapel in S. Maria del Popolo. Saul has fallen from his horse, and the vision of the risen Christ—which we cannot see—stuns and blinds him. Light completely envelops him. The spectator sees nothing but this light, whose supernatural character and iconographical role is indicated by a few sparse rays in the top right-hand corner. At the same time completely realistic highlights fall on the horse’s hindquarters—a detail that Caravaggio must surely have studied from life, for the warmth and softness of the horse’s hide is almost tangible. The artist may also have had a live model for Saul’s powerfully foreshortened body, which adds greatly to the sense of depth. On the other hand this picture, too, contains several unnaturalistic features, such as the muscular legs of the groom which seem to belong to the horse rather than the man leading it by the bridle.

The Martyrdom of St. Peter on the opposite wall in the same chapel has an equally intense effect on the spectator, achieved by means of an almost aggressive proximity, for the picture focuses exclusively on Peter and the three men struggling to raise his cross; where this is taking place is irrelevant—the only background is darkness.

It is interesting to note that Caravaggio’s patron in this chapel, Tiberio Cerasi, commissioned an altarpiece at the same time from Annibale Carracci, namely the Assumption of the Virgin which we have discussed above. It was perhaps in conscious opposition to Caravaggio that Carracci emphasised the anti-naturalistic, ideal element in his painting. But it is also reasonable to suppose that at some point the two artists may have met in order to coordinate their work; a certain accord in the proportions and scale of the figures suggests this. As we tend to see things nowadays, however, Carracci does not gain from the comparison that the spectator cannot help making in this chapel. Caravaggio’s soft, warm colours and his powerful intensity, engage us more deeply. The beauty of Carracci’s painting lies in the lyricism
of the heavenly vision. The naturalistic Caravaggio, we may suddenly recall, never once painted the sky.

The same dramatic intensity can be found in the *Supper at Emmaus* in the National Gallery in London. This picture was probably painted in 1602, thus being contemporary with the Contarelli altarpiece, and not in the later 1590s, as was formerly believed. The scene is depicted with great power: Christ is deeply absorbed in the sacred act of breaking the bread; his hands seem to be making a sacramental gesture which contrasts with the violent reaction of the disciples, as they suddenly realise that the stranger who had accompanied them was in fact the risen Lord. The National Gallery *Emmaus* should be compared with the picture on the same subject in the Brera in Milan. Here the reactions are less violent but the religious feeling is more intense, heralding the paintings Caravaggio executed in his last years, after he had left Rome. The powerful gesture in the London *Supper at Emmaus* was a special device, often found in Mannerist painting, to draw the beholder into the orbit of the picture. The same purpose is served, for example, by the foreshortened body of Saul in the *Conversion of St. Paul* in the Ceresi chapel, by the foot in the first version of *St. Matthew and the Angel*, or in the second version, by the precarious position of the stool which looks as though it could land at our feet at any moment. Very similar to these pictures is the *Entombment* in the Pinacoteca of the Vatican. This picture—commissioned by a private individual and executed in 1602–1604—was originally in the Cappella Vittrici in the Oratorians’ church, Chiesa Nuova. Here we have a heavy stone slab jutting out below the group. The outstretched arms of the young woman are in marked contrast to the sorrowful mood of the picture. In the *Madonna di Loreto* in S. Agostino, the Virgin is as tangibly real as the two pilgrims who fall on their knees before her in amazed reverence at the vision that has been vouchsafed them. The light falls sharply, cutting her off from them; but there is also a marked distinction between the classical beauty of her face and the natural, earthly appearance of the poor pilgrims—peasants, perhaps, or simple people of the streets, whom the artist has portrayed. If we are to believe Passeri, Caravaggio actually used a young Roman woman called Lena as
model for this classically beautiful Virgin, and this led to a public brawl between Caravaggio and the woman's betrothed.\textsuperscript{175}

In the \textit{Madonna dei Palafrinieri} in the Borghese Gallery, which was painted for a chapel in St. Peter's, there is a strange lack of religious feeling, which conflicts with the conventional approach to a sacred subject. The Christ Child is seen stamping with the aid of his mother on a ghastly slippery serpent, symbol of Evil, while St. Anna-portrayed as an ugly toothless old hag—looks on. The \textit{Madonna dei Palafrinieri} was turned down, and it has generally been assumed that the reason was its apparently non-religious mood. This may in fact have been a contributory factor. But it has also been pointed out that the picture was painted for an altar belonging to the Society of Palafrinieri, or papal grooms, and that private societies were no longer to be allowed to set up altars in St. Peter's. It was placed temporarily in the present chapel of St. Michael the Archangel where it remained until 1620 when it was removed and acquired by Scipione Borghese.\textsuperscript{176}

The same down-to-earth atmosphere is to be found in the \textit{Death of the Virgin} in the Louvre, where the content of the picture seems to be reduced simply to the death of an old woman. The painting was executed in 1605–06 for the Barefoot Carmelites in Santa Maria della Scala. It was refused by the fathers because it lacked decorum, or as Mancini later said "One can see how much wrong the moderns do: if they decide to depict the Virgin, our Lady, they portray her like some filthy whore from the slums."\textsuperscript{177}

All these paintings contain strange contradictions. There is a contradiction between the convincing tangibility of the figures and the unnaturally sharp contrasts of light, between sensitivity and brutality, between rapid brush strokes painted direct on to the canvas and the firm, underlying structure of the figures. And there is a contradiction between closeness and intimacy on
Caravaggio:
The Entombment. Pinacoteca Vaticana. (Anderson.)

the one hand and a certain predilection for the horrible and gruesome on the other. Caravaggio often found his models among simple people—craftsmen, beggars, peasants or street boys—or among the beautiful Roman women of his acquaintance. Nevertheless it is strange, as Wittkower has pointed out, that this humanised, popular approach was not understood by the simple people themselves; it appears to have been appreciated only by certain artists and connoisseurs.178

Caravaggio is often compared with Annibale Carracci. The one is said to have been a revolutionary in art, the other a conservative academician. But this description of the two artists is obviously superficial. There were, as we have seen, many major innovations in Annibale Carracci’s art, and much that was traditional in Caravaggio’s. Carracci has often been dubbed an idealist and Caravaggio a naturalist, and yet, as we have also seen, it was Carracci who most conscientiously studied from life, and who did it systematically. Caravaggio, on the other hand, also studied live models, but only intermittently, and later appears to have preferred painting from memory.

Contemporary experts and collectors knew this, and understood that in both these artists there was what they called maniera together with natura.

And they also saw that the difference between the two artists lay in the proportions of these two ingredients: in Carracci the maniera dominated, while Caravaggio tended more towards natura. Many broad-minded and cultivated people took a liberal view, and collected the works of both the masters. Among them were Cardinal Francesco del Monte, the Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani and the brothers Asdrubale and Ciriaco Mattei. Tiberio Cerasi, who commissioned works from both these very different artists for his family chapel, provides one of the best examples of this attitude. But there were other connoisseurs who would have nothing to do with any artists except Carracci and his school. This group included the cardinals Odoardo Farnese and Pietro Aldobrandini and the latter’s secretary, the highly cultivated Monsignor Giovanni Battista Agucchi.179

Annibale Carracci, with his experience from the Accademia degli Incamminati in Bologna behind him, continued consistently to teach the young
artists who were his assistants in Rome. Caravaggio, however, was a man of quite different temper who worked according to his own special methods. His *ad hoc* technique without preliminary sketches, and his characteristic intensity and *tenebrosa* were not readily taught. Nevertheless a succession of artists working in Rome in the ten years or so after Caravaggio left the city were clearly inspired by his work. Foremost among these were Orazio Gentileschi and Carlo Saraceni. The latter, born in Venice and seven years Caravaggio’s junior was among the close friends of Adam Elsheimer, and like the German artist he painted small landscapes breathing an atmosphere of magic, which have often been confused with Elsheimer’s own rather rare works.

However, the painter who associated himself most closely with Caravaggio was Bartolommeo Manfredi, a contemporary of Saraceni’s from the region of Cremona. He even exhibited the same bad habits in his personal behaviour as the eccentric and unruly Caravaggio. And in his paintings he seems to have picked on the crudest elements in Caravaggio’s naturalism. Later followers included Giovanni Serodine and the French-Italian painter Valentin. But the most important of Caravaggio’s followers was the Dutch painter Gerhard Honthorst, who was born in Utrecht in 1590. The nocturnal scenes he painted with Caravagesque *tenebrosa*, for example the *Mocking of Christ* in S. Maria della Concezione, led the Romans to nickname him Gherardo delle Notti, Gerhard of the Nights. He did not reach Rome until 1610, when Caravaggio was already dead, and returned to his own country ten years later. He was the chief means by which Caravaggio’s *tenebrosa* came to the notice of artists such as Rembrandt.

In the ten or twenty years immediately following Caravaggio’s death, none of his followers received any of the major commissions in Rome. Nevertheless his influence was a significant factor, and it is important to remember that Adam Elsheimer was not the only artist to be strongly influenced by his work; his influence was also felt by Peter Paul Rubens, who was in Rome at the same time. Without the impact of Caravaggio’s style, Rubens’ art would not have evolved as it did. Caravaggio’s influence was also carried into the Netherlands by several artists inspired by various aspects of his art. In Naples the situation was different, since Caravaggio spent several years there himself, leaving behind him two important altarpieces. In particular his *Flagellation* in S. Domenico Maggiore is said with justification to have determined taste in Naples for a whole generation. The most notable of the artists who followed in Caravaggio’s footsteps was Giovanni Battista Caracciolo, known as Battistello, who has been called the founder of the seventeenth-century Neapolitan school.
The Cappella Aldobrandini in S. Maria sopra Minerva

Thus the main epoch-making artistic creations of Clement VIII's age were the result of commissions from private individuals or prelates of high rank, and they were admired by artists and collectors from far and wide. Although several of them had a considerable impact on art in Rome, they did not represent the official taste; the pope engaged neither Caravaggio nor Carracci for the decorations in St. Peter's or the Lateran Basilica.

The best testimony of Clement VIII's personal taste is perhaps the chapel which he had prepared as a memorial chapel for his parents in S. Maria sopra Minerva. As was customary in any major commissions at the time, the chapel is the result of collaboration between several artists, some quite outstanding and others less gifted. Several of them were later to be engaged in official commissions for Clement's successor in St. Peter's entrance portico and in the Cappella Paolina in S. Maria Maggiore. It was in 1600 that Clement VIII decided to renovate and decorate this family chapel as a funerary chapel chiefly for his parents. Giacomo della Porta had made preliminary plans for the actual architecture, as well as for the tombs and the rich marble decoration in warm, dark colours for the walls. He was succeeded by Carlo Maderno, who created the altar. Of the sculptures, the Apostles Peter and Paul were the work of Camillo Mariani and a Prudence for one of the tombs was by Ippolito Buzi. The effigy of the pope's father, Silvestro Aldobrandini, was executed by Nicholas Cordier, who came from Lothringen and worked in Rome for many years. The likeness was much remarked, and in 1605, the same year that he died, the pope commissioned from Cordier the effigy of his mother as well. Strangely enough his parents were not depicted dead. Instead they are reclining, resting on their elbows and gazing towards the spectator; Silvestro Aldobrandini, who had been a famous lawyer, is leaning on a pile of books. The pose is reminiscent of certain Etruscan tomb sculptures. Nicholas Cordier also made a sculpture of St. Sebastian for one of the wall niches, which is perhaps the best work in the chapel. It is possible that Cordier re-carved a sculpture of the Risen Christ by Michelangelo, which the latter had left unfinished in 1516; in which case this would have been a first version of the Christ in S. Maria sopra Minerva which was formerly thought to be lost. 184

Clement VIII inspected the chapel personally a couple of times and supervised the disposition of the statues. In 1603 he ordered a painting for the altar by Federico Barocci, depicting the Last Supper. 185 He gave personal instructions for this picture. In the autumn of 1603 he sent for the Duke of Urbino's ambassador in Rome and gave him details about the size and lighting of the chapel to be passed on to Barocci who was staying in Urbino at the time.
Several months later Barocci submitted two sketches. The pope declared, among other things, that the artist should alter the position of Christ’s arm so that the spectator could see more clearly that he was distributing the Sacrament to the apostles, because it had to be absolutely clear that this represented the institution of the Sacrament. In the spring of 1604 further sketches arrived in Rome, and this time the pope commented that there ought to be some lamps in the picture, so that the spectators could see it was night-time. Since Barocci was then ill for a while, the picture took longer than had been expected. Clement died in 1605 and never saw it completed; it did not arrive in Rome until 1609 when it was placed in position in the chapel.

The ritual element in the picture is emphasised as Christ holds up the bread, which is in the shape of a host: during the Counter-Reformation it was very important to emphasise that the Last Supper was in fact the first mass. In other ways the composition is unusually complicated for Barocci. The usual Man-