

## Chapter 3

### THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS

- i -

DURING most of the seventeenth century the many religious organisations which had been formed within the Church to forward the aims of the Counter Reformation acquired increasing riches and influence. Jesuits, Oratorians and Theatines especially occupied important posts in the hierarchy; their churches were extended, rebuilt, decorated and copied; artists eagerly competed for their commissions. By about 1700 the mother churches of these Orders were the most richly furnished in Rome, and they have ever since appeared to travellers as the very embodiment of that Baroque taste which, it is inferred, they deliberately fostered as an instrument of propaganda.<sup>1</sup> The charge, later repeated *ad nauseam*, was first made by an English traveller in 1620.<sup>2</sup> 'In the next place', wrote Grey Brydges, 5th Lord Chandos, in his *Discourse of Rome*, 'the present Colledges, Churches and religious Houses come in turne, in which of late years, those of the Jesuits be of principall reputation where in their chiefe Church lyes buried their founder Ignatius, and his tombe is there to be seene.'

'... Wherein is inserted all possible inventions, to catch mens affections, and to ravish their understanding: as first, the gloriousness of their Altars, infinit number of images, priestly ornaments, and the divers actions they use in that service; besides the most excellent and exquisite Musicke of the world, that surprizes our eares. So that whatsoever can be imagined, to expresse either Solemnitie, or Devotion, is by them used.'

This passage, though it contains an element of truth, is a tribute more to the staunchness of Brydges's Protestant convictions than to his real understanding of the situation. For in fact the patronage of the Jesuits and the other Orders was very much more circumscribed by a large number of complex events than is immediately apparent.

In the first place, their very success effectively put an end to much of the individual flavour that each had been able to contribute to the spiritual and intellectual life of Rome. In their origins they had to some extent been isolated, engaged not only in fighting the heretics but also in resisting some of the more worldly members of the papal court, even at times the popes themselves. They had in fact consisted of relatively small groups of the devout, clustered round some saint or natural leader, propagating ideas that were often looked upon with some suspicion by the hierarchy, and yet

<sup>1</sup> For the whole controversy about the Jesuits and the arts see Galassi Paluzzi, 1951, who, however, does not refer to the book mentioned in the next note nor to other passages to the same effect dating from before the nineteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> [Grey Brydges, 5th Lord Chandos]: *Horae Subsecivae*, pp. 386 ff.

encouraging in their followers an intensity of devotion that sometimes bore fruit in other fields. Thus it has been suggested that the Oratorians may have given some special encouragement to the anti-conformist religious painting of Caravaggio.<sup>1</sup> As the century advanced all that was changed. Even before Guido Bentivoglio came to Rome in 1600, he was advised to get in touch with the Oratorians as they were the most influential members of the clergy.<sup>2</sup> Paul V was friendly with the Jesuits. Gregory XV and his nephew had been educated by them. One of this Pope's most important actions was to decree the canonisation of the two great Jesuits, Ignatius and Francis Xavier, and the founder of the Oratorians Philip Neri—and the occasion was followed by spectacular ceremonies and the commissioning of paintings of the two Jesuits by Van Dyck who was in Rome at the time.<sup>3</sup> Urban VIII followed much the same policy. He at once published the bull of canonisation, and at all times he and his family showed their strong sympathies with the Orders, and especially the Jesuits. In 1639 and 1640 he paid two visits to their church, the Gesù, during the celebrations to mark the centenary of the approval of their statutes, and his nephew Antonio, who was a special benefactor of the Society, had one of these occasions recorded in a picture by Andrea Sacchi.<sup>4</sup> No wonder that the *Imago primi saeculi*, the magnificently produced volume which the Jesuits of Antwerp published to celebrate the centenary, stunned the world with the audacity of its self-satisfaction.

Thus it came about that the Jesuits (and the other religious Orders) were too closely integrated into the very fabric of society to impose any distinct accent of their own, even had that been their intention. Their influence on the arts can be found everywhere—or nowhere. It was a Jesuit, Padre Ottonelli, who pressed Pietro da Cortona's claims on the Barberini when they were having their palace decorated and who later wrote a highly casuistical treatise in collaboration with the artist on the persuasive possibilities of painting.<sup>5</sup> It was another Jesuit, Gian Paolo Oliva, who became one of Bernini's closest and most influential friends. And yet the Jesuits had to wait for decades before they were able to make any progress whatsoever with the decoration of their own churches. For, curiously enough, their triumphant success in every field was for a long time accompanied by an extreme shortage of money which made their church building absolutely dependent on the support of the powerful families who ruled Rome. The whole mechanism of patronage was determined by these families, and their superiority

<sup>1</sup> Friedlaender, p. 123, and the forceful, but not necessarily decisive, rejection of this opinion by G. Cozzi, 1961, pp. 36 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Bentivoglio, 1807, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *La Canonizzazione dei Santi Ignazio di Lojola e Francesco Saverio—Ricordi del terzo centenario*, Roma 1923; and also Redig de Campos, 1936.

On the other hand Leo van Puyvelde, 1939, pp. 225 ff., attributes the two pictures in the Vatican to Rubens and suggests that they must have been painted in 1608 when the beatification of the Saints was being discussed. There is absolutely no documentary evidence for this supposition and much that makes it inherently unlikely.

<sup>4</sup> Pastor, XIII, pp. 610-11. The picture is now in the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica, Rome.

<sup>5</sup> Odomenigo Lelonotti da Fanano e Britio Prenetteri [Gio. Dom. Ottonelli e Pietro da Cortona]: *Trattato*.

was assured by legal as well as by financial forces. For in an effort to encourage the reconstruction of Rome in the middle of the sixteenth century the rich aristocracy had been given the right to expropriate neighbours who had no desire to build and they were even allowed to dispossess unco-operative religious institutions.<sup>1</sup> The patronage of the Orders was deeply affected by this tendency, and the building and decoration of their churches can best be studied as a reflection of the dialectic that ensued from it—the clash, sometimes hostile, sometimes so smooth as to be almost imperceptible, between two different types of patron, one with the spiritual authority that came from having a saint as founder, the other with the money.

But another factor was involved: the limited number of artists of really first-class quality. On the whole the patronage of the popes and their courtiers was mainly directed into far more personal channels than the uncomfortably autonomous churches of the religious Orders. As long as this patronage was really intense, few of the great artists were given many opportunities of working outside St Peter's, the family palace or the titular church. Thus during the reign of Urban VIII neither Bernini nor Pietro da Cortona produced anything significant for the Gesù despite the fact that both men were closely associated with the Jesuits. It was only when this all-powerful source of patronage temporarily dried up that the religious Orders, especially the Jesuits, were able to call on the talents of really great artists. And even then it was recognised by everyone concerned that the claims of secular princes came first: at the very end of the century the Duchess of Savoy, who was most anxious to employ Ciro Ferri for a certain job, wrote that the engagements he would be breaking 'were only with nuns: she did not therefore believe them to be such as to prevent him coming to Turin'.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the decoration of the Gesù, S. Ignazio, S. Andrea della Valle, the Chiesa Nuova and other churches belonging to the principal religious Orders depended on a synthesis derived from conflicting forces which varied greatly in strength at different periods of the seventeenth century. This can best be understood if these churches are studied before, during and, above all, after the reign of Urban VIII.

— ii —

The Gesù, the principal church of the Jesuits, was built for them by the most powerful of sixteenth-century Cardinals, Alessandro Farnese.<sup>3</sup> His assumption of its patronage in 1568 had at first seemed like a wonderful gift from Heaven; it soon became clear that there were many drawbacks. The Cardinal treated the new church as his private property—it used to be said, in a phrase that reveals much about the spiritual confusion of a Renaissance prelate surviving into the Counter Reformation, that he owned the three most beautiful objects in Rome: his family palace, his daughter Clelia and the church of the Gesù. Farnese paid no attention to the wishes of the Jesuits; he employed his own architect Vignola and his own painters. None of this mattered very much as

<sup>1</sup> Delumeau, pp. 238–41.

<sup>2</sup> Claretta, 1893, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> For fully documented history of the church see Pecchiai, 1952.

long as he lived, for his schemes were as grandiose as could be desired. He commissioned Girolamo Muziano to paint *The Circumcision* for the High Altar; Giovanni de' Vecchi began frescoes on the pendentives and the dome, 'very lavish with various adornments and putti'; plans were made for the apse to be covered with mosaics.<sup>1</sup> But when he died in 1589, with the decoration scarcely begun, the effect was disastrous. Not only did work stop immediately, but as Farnese had specifically reserved the adornment of the tribune and the High Altar exclusively for his family, nothing could be done without the permission of his heirs. These showed a total lack of interest in the whole matter and for generations the Jesuits were unable, despite repeated efforts, to carry on with the decoration. They were thus compelled to concentrate on the side-chapels.

These chapels had a great attraction for pious ladies belonging to those older aristocratic families of Rome, such as the Orsini, the Caetani, the Mellini, which were already being submerged in wealth and political importance by the new rich who made up the papal entourage. Some of them introduced their own artists, men like Scipione Pulzone, Agostino Ciampelli and Federigo Zuccari; others paid for the main structure of the chapel, but left the essential decoration in the hands of the Jesuits. Forced back on their own resources, the Society cut down the expense by employing as principal painter one of their own members, Padre Valeriano, whose crudity and clumsiness can be benevolently interpreted as mystery and power.<sup>2</sup> When they moved outside their own ranks and commissioned an established painter their financial weakness became dangerously obvious. Five years after producing a picture of *The Resurrection* Giovanni Baglione was forced to complain to the Pope that he had not yet been fully paid by the Jesuit fathers but was constantly being put off 'with good words and the excuse that they had no funds for the moment'.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the decoration of the Gesù in its early stages, far from reflecting any concerted Jesuit plan, was in fact achieved only haphazardly and with the greatest difficulty. An informed visitor inspecting the church in about 1623 (or even 1663) would have found an element of richness in the display of coloured marbles but a thoroughly old-fashioned atmosphere about the half-completed frescoes and altar paintings.<sup>3</sup> Not a single one of the Bolognese artists who had helped to transform church decoration at the beginning of the century was represented. For all its grandeur, and despite the impression it made on a raw English traveller, the general effect must have been a little bleak.

But the Gesù, which was designed for public worship, was not the only Jesuit church in Rome. They were just as concerned with the more private training of their own novices many of whom would be sent abroad on horribly dangerous missions. In the venerable early Christian temple of S. Stefano Rotondo, which they had been

<sup>1</sup> For the contract with Muziano see Ugo da Como, p. 186; for the frescoes by Giovanni de' Vecchi see Baglione, p. 128; for Cardinal Farnese's plans for mosaics see MSS. in Jesuits Archives, Borgo S. Spirito: Rom. 143, f. 251.

<sup>2</sup> See the brilliant interpretation of Valeriano's style in Zeri, 1957, and the present writer's review, 1958, p. 396.

<sup>3</sup> See the Sacchi painting and the description of 1650 in Pecchiai, p. 104.

allotted by Gregory XIII,<sup>1</sup> a truly Jesuit style was brought into being for the first time. The church was given to the German college, and the rector commissioned from Nicolò Circignani dalle Pomarance a series of exceedingly brutal frescoes designed to illustrate the martyrdoms of early Christian saints mostly enacted under the late Roman empire. They were deliberately painted in great detail (curiously enough a last feeble glimmer of the Venetian High Renaissance lingers in the murderous subjects), the explanation of the torture was attached to each fresco, and the Jesuits took a certain pride in these innovations of subject-matter and treatment.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed they planned to adopt them in the third church that they owned in Rome. This was another early Christian building, S. Vitale, which was given to the Society by Clement VIII.<sup>3</sup> The decoration was directed by a Jesuit painter Giovanni Battista Fiammeri under the immediate control of the General, Claudio Aquaviva, who took a strong personal interest in the scheme and made suggestions of his own.<sup>4</sup> Once again the subjects were almost exclusively concerned with torture, but in the generation that had passed since the decoration of S. Stefano Rotondo the atmosphere had so relaxed that the true nature of the frescoes is not at first apparent. Rather, they give the impression of idyllic pastoral landscapes (in the nineteenth century they were attributed to Gaspard Poussin), and it is not until we have examined them and the inscriptions below with some care that we see that nailed to one tree is a martyr, and that in some distant valley, shaded by hills, is a soldier undergoing the most exquisite tortures. Only in the choir were the painters encouraged to throw off their restraint—here the exact mechanism of how to pull a man to pieces is displayed with the cold, clinical observation that comes naturally to those to whom such sights are familiar.

In practice, therefore, the contribution to patronage made by the Jesuits had been exceedingly limited, however startling. This was largely due to their desperate shortage of funds. The decoration both of another little church, S. Andrea al Quirinale,<sup>5</sup> and of S. Vitale was constantly being held up for this reason, and the correspondence of General Aquaviva is often concerned with the problem of how to raise more money—jewels to be sold, gifts to be solicited and so on.<sup>6</sup> But the very austerity which they were compelled to adopt could, if necessary, be turned to good account. In 1611 a French Jesuit Louis Richeôme wrote a book, which he dedicated to Aquaviva, about the

<sup>1</sup> Armellini, I, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Jesuit Archives—MSS. Rom. 185, f. 25: *Necrologio del P. Michele Lauretano, scritto dal P. Fabio de Fabiis, 16 Agosto 1610*—‘Fu il primo che io sappia che cominciasse a far dipingere nelle chiese li Martirii patiti da S.ti Martiri per la confessione di Christo, con le sue note che dichiarono le persone et le qualità de tormenti, come si vede in S.to Stefano Rotondo; et dopo fù seguitato et imitato da molti altri.’

An anonymous Latin life of the same rector (*ibid.*, Rom. 188, I, ff. 81-82) says that the example he set was followed in other Jesuit churches.

<sup>3</sup> Huetter e Golzio.

<sup>4</sup> See the interesting letter from Aquaviva to Fiammeri of 22 August 1599 published by Pirri, 1952, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> For the history of this which was pulled down to make way for Bernini’s church see the account written between 1606 and 1612 by P. Ottavio Novaroli in Jesuit Archives—*Historia Domus Professae Romae*—Rom. 162, ff. 2-184.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, MSS. Med. 22, f. 143<sup>2</sup>.

paintings in S. Andrea and S. Vitale.<sup>1</sup> Extravagant pomp, he said, was nothing: he had no use for the fake pilasters and columns, or the marble altars with which the Society had pathetically tried to enrich their churches. ‘Car les ordonnances du tableau, ces colonnes Ioniques, couronnées de volutes; ces pilastres, ces corniches et piédestals, & autres peintures, & reliefs, ornements d’architecture ne touchent point votre dévotion. . . .’ Attention must be concentrated exclusively on the subject-matter of the frescoes, which should be read like a sermon, more effective because paint lasted and words vanished. But Richeôme’s was a last, lonely voice from the harsher days of the Counter Reformation, valid more because it justified an unwanted simplicity than because it proclaimed a doctrine that was at all likely to be followed in the more prosperous and relaxed age of Urban VIII.

During the first twenty years of the seventeenth century the contribution made to the artistic life of Rome by the Oratorians was very much more impressive than that of the Jesuits.<sup>2</sup> There was both in their selection of artists and in the inspiration that they provided for them a fineness of taste and a sense of exaltation that for long made them true pioneers among the religious Orders of the Counter Reformation. This is not altogether surprising. Despite their insistence on powerful visual imagery as a help for devotion, none of the Jesuit leaders showed any subtlety of appreciation. St Philip Neri, on the other hand, was a man of the profoundest aesthetic sensibility who responded passionately to painting and music. He naturally attracted to himself many of the most cultivated spirits of the time and he personally took an enthusiastic interest in the decoration of his church. Moreover, the circumstances of its construction were very different from those of the Gesù.

S. Maria della Vallicella was assigned to him in 1575 by Pope Gregory XIII. It lay in the very heart of fashionable and cultivated Rome. It was, however, immediately felt to be too small and was pulled down to be replaced by a larger building of the same name, often called the Chiesa Nuova. St Philip’s early biographers delighted to tell how the saint, with his unlimited trust in divine providence, ordered the destruction of the old church without any idea of where he would get the money from with which to build the new; and how this faith was rewarded by the people of Rome, rich and poor alike, who flooded him with generous contributions. This attractive story is not wholly accurate—there were grave financial difficulties, and Cardinal Farnese, jealous of this potential rival to ‘his’ Gesù, was obstructive—but it illustrates one very significant point about the new church: it did not depend for its construction and decoration entirely on the goodwill of one all-powerful patron. St Philip himself worked in close co-operation with the architect Matteo da Castello whom the Oratorians chose and the church was built on the same general lines as those of the Gesù. The foundation stone was laid in 1575 by Alessandro de’ Medici, Archbishop of Florence and ambassador of the Grand Duke, and at first work proceeded quickly. However, the usual financial

<sup>1</sup> Richeôme, p. 21. It must be remembered that these churches were intended for Jesuit novices and not for the general public.

<sup>2</sup> I have derived this account of the early history of the Chiesa Nuova from two fully documented works which frequently refer back to the original sources: Strong, and Ponnelle and Borden.

difficulties soon intervened, and the Oratorians were now compelled to turn to a patron. Cardinal Pier Donato Cesi was obviously very much under the influence of Cardinal Farnese. He shared his love of art and of splendour and many of his plans were directly based on those of the older and more powerful figure. When, therefore, he agreed to pay for the completion of the Chiesa Nuova, he went out of his way to insist that he should enjoy the same rights as those of Farnese in the Gesù. His arms too were to be set up in the church, and he and his family were to enjoy overriding privileges in the affairs of the Congregation. His terms were accepted, but he interfered little enough in the building of the church and some years after his death in 1586, his brother Angelo Cesi, Bishop of Todi, continued the family patronage.

The Oratorians thus kept the affairs of the Chiesa Nuova largely in their own hands. Martino Longhi the Elder replaced Matteo da Castello as architect and by 1590 the main structure was complete, though the façade by Fausto Rughesi was not erected for another sixteen years. St Philip Neri insisted that the walls and the vault should be merely whitewashed and not decorated with stucco, though whether for reasons of taste or economy is not clear. The chapels were then dedicated to the mysteries of the Virgin, the High Altar being assigned to Her Nativity and those in the transepts to Her Presentation and Her Coronation.

In 1582, well before the completion of the church, the Oratorians had commissioned an altar painting to be placed in the Chapel of the Visitation. For this they turned to Federico Barocci in Urbino. The tender, feminine, almost morbid delicacy of his picture, with its soft, smoky colouring, which reached Rome four years later, made a special appeal to the mystical strand in St Philip's nature. We hear that 'he would sit on a small chair in front of it and all unconsciously be rapt into a sweet ecstasy'. Then the down-to-earth side of his character would reassert itself: irritated by the women who came to gaze at him, he would have them angrily sent away and would do all in his power to conceal the effects of the picture on him. Not surprisingly the Oratorians were anxious to obtain other works by the same artist: they were unsuccessful in getting from him an altarpiece of the *Coronation of the Virgin*, but they managed to commission one of *The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*. Another artist especially popular with the Congregation was Pomerancio, for he had painted St Philip's portrait, as well as an altarpiece showing St Domitilla with a rapt expression, eyes raised and mouth half open, between Saints Nereus and Achilleus in Cardinal Baronio's titular church of that name.

In fact, however, the Oratorians, like the Jesuits, generally allowed the rich families who took over the chapels to be responsible for their decoration, and the result was to change the character of the church and make it difficult for us to speak of a definite 'Oratorian' taste. Many of the new patrons were Florentines, like St Philip himself, often of great culture, and thus it was that the paintings in their chapels were sometimes of high merit. But with their intervention there was introduced a new note—of variety, richness and colour. The same process had occurred many years earlier in the musical performances for which the Oratorians were so famous. 'Some years ago', wrote the

composer Giovanni Animuccia as early as 1563, 'I published my first book of *Laudi* for the consolation of those who came to the Oratory of S. Girolamo. In these I tried to maintain a certain simplicity which I thought suitable to the words themselves, the nature of that place of devotion and to the end I had in view which was only to excite devotion. But the aforesaid Oratory having, by the grace of God, steadily grown by reason of the concourse of prelates and most distinguished gentlemen, it has seemed proper to me in this second book to develop the harmonies and to give variety to the music—composing it sometimes to Latin words and sometimes to Italian, sometimes to many voices, sometimes to fewer, sometimes with one kind of rhyme, sometimes with another; but I have refrained as far as I can from the complications of fugues and other devices so as not to obscure the sense of the words: so that their power, helped by harmony, may the more sweetly penetrate the hearts of those who listen.' In other words, the presence of 'prelates and most distinguished gentlemen' led to the artist relaxing his austerity and relying on more attractive and varied means to touch the emotions of his new patrons.

This inherent conflict between the Congregation itself and the fashionable society that flocked to it is apparent also in the decoration of the church. Alessandro Vittrice, who in about 1601 commissioned a picture from Caravaggio of *The Entombment of Christ* for his family chapel, was the nephew of one of St Philip's closest friends, and it is therefore possible that the Oratorians welcomed the picture. In any case Caravaggio seems to have taken special trouble to produce a somewhat more orthodox treatment than he was accustomed to—the circumstances of the commission have not yet been clarified.<sup>1</sup> The way in which the next great picture entered the church is, however, entirely characteristic of the pressures at work on the Oratorians.

The High Altar had been originally dedicated to the Nativity; its decoration had been promised by Cardinal Angelo Cesi. In about 1605, however, two extremely important events occurred.<sup>2</sup> A majority of the Oratorians, after much debating, decided to move to the High Altar a 'miraculous' image of the Madonna and Child, preserved from the original church, and the money set aside for its decoration was found to have been absorbed in the unexpected expenses of the façade. In 1606 Cardinal Cesi died. At this moment of crisis, when the Oratorians were faced with a situation so familiar to the Jesuits, they were approached by a highly influential cleric, Monsignor Giacomo Serra. He was interested in an artist whom he was particularly anxious to promote, a young Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens.<sup>3</sup> If the Oratorians would agree to Rubens being assigned the altarpiece Serra would pay 300 *scudi* towards its cost, leaving only a bonus to be defrayed by the fathers themselves. Coming at that moment, the offer was very tempting. And yet the Oratorians were cautious. They had never heard of this man, and the thought of giving the main commission in their church to a Flemish artist when there were so many Italians around was clearly repugnant to them. But Serra

<sup>1</sup> Friedlaender, p. 187, and Cozzi, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Jaffé.

<sup>3</sup> Serra was also a patron of the young Guercino—see Mahon, 1947, pp. 67-71.

said that if they did not accept his terms he would give away his money elsewhere, and so, rather reluctantly, they agreed. They laid down stringent conditions. Rubens must show them examples of his work, he must contribute towards the cost of the picture, he must paint exactly what they told him: the Virgin and Child above, and below six saints particularly venerated in the church. All this was agreed to and Rubens painted the picture to their entire satisfaction. He then himself found that the lighting was unsatisfactory, and persuaded the Oratorians to accept a wholly new proposal—a central picture to enclose the miraculous Virgin and Child and two lateral ones, each with three of the six saints. All were to be painted on slate to avoid reflections of light.

There is every reason to believe that the Oratorians were delighted with the result, but it was undeniable that, as had occurred earlier with music, the pressures of 'prelates and most distinguished gentlemen' had wholly altered the nature of their church. Rubens had faithfully interpreted the instructions which had probably been handed to him by the Oratorian historian Cardinal Baronio, but the spirit of the painting was quite his own and, despite his great admiration for both artists, utterly unlike the altarpieces of Barocci or Caravaggio. It blazed with Venetian colour and vitality and radiated an exuberant pathos which was later to prove of crucial importance for the development of Bernini and Pietro da Cortona. Thus quite by accident the Chiesa Nuova became one of the cradles of the Baroque. But an Order which could assimilate within a period of fifteen years masterpieces by Barocci, Caravaggio and Rubens, to say nothing of minor works by other artists, cannot be said to have had a specific and individual 'taste' of its own. And it was not long before important contributions from Guido Reni, Alessandro Algardi and others added to the stature of the church and also proved who were the real patrons within it.

So austere had the Theatines been that the word lingered on as a nickname for special gravity.<sup>1</sup> In building and decorating their church they too experienced the advantages and drawbacks of princely support.<sup>2</sup> In 1582 a legacy from Donna Costanza Piccolomini d'Aragona gave them a palace in the centre of Rome and the little adjoining church of S. Sebastiano—it also obliged them to found a church dedicated to St Andrew, the patron saint of Amalfi of which Donna Costanza had been duchess. Soon afterwards the Neapolitan Cardinal Gesualdo agreed to build them a large new church, but—just as Cardinal Farnese had done in the Gesù—he insisted that his own architects, first Giacomo della Porta and then Pietro Paolo Olivieri, should have complete authority over the man whom the Theatines themselves had proposed for the commission. After the death of Gesualdo in 1603 there was the usual delay, with the church, already planned as 'one of the most magnificent to be seen', by no means complete. Finally in 1608 Cardinal Peretti-Montalto, despising the advice 'not to carry on with a building begun by others', took it in hand and guaranteed the vast sum of 160,000 gold *scudi*. He brought in the best known architect in Rome, Carlo Maderno, and work proceeded

<sup>1</sup> Cozzi, p. 46, and Ponnelle and Bordet, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> Ortolani, and, above all, Hibbard, 1961, pp. 289–318.

quickly enough for the ambitious young Maffeo Barberini to start planning his family chapel a year later, followed soon after by a number of other Florentine families, 'each of whom is straining to make his chapel more beautiful than that of the others so that it will be the most beautiful church in Rome'.<sup>1</sup>

Cardinal Montalto, as was usual in the circumstances, had reserved the main features of the decoration for himself, and he too had grandiose plans. In about 1616 he promised Giovanni Lanfranco, who was then working for him elsewhere, that when the time came he would be entrusted with the entire tribune and dome—by far the largest commission of its kind yet given to a single artist. However, in 1621 Pope Paul V died and was succeeded by Gregory XV, whose nephew Cardinal Ludovisi was the particular patron of Domenichino. That artist, reluctant to miss such a wonderful opportunity, approached Ludovisi and asked to be given the commission instead of Lanfranco. Ludovisi had no rights whatsoever in the church, but, as Passeri succinctly pointed out, he had all the irresistible power that came from his position as papal nephew and he began to apply it to Montalto.<sup>2</sup> The pressure was naturally decisive, and Domenichino was given the job. However, Montalto then made a determined effort to reassert his rights, and insisted that Lanfranco should at least be given the dome. To Domenichino's somewhat unreasonable fury this compromise was agreed upon, and the two artists, by now irreconcilable enemies, shared the commission. The Theatines, it need hardly be said, played no part whatsoever in these decisions.

For all the trouble it had caused, the decoration of S. Andrea della Valle was by far the most important achievement of the Baroque as yet. Lanfranco's dome, which was completed in 1627,<sup>3</sup> was the first of its kind since Correggio's in Parma more than a century earlier and it served as a model to artists for the next hundred years. Light is the centre, radiating out from Christ, its source in the lantern, and gradually filling the whole surface, around which the choirs of saints, martyrs, prophets, apostles and cherubs hymn their praises. Towards that light the Virgin gazes in ecstasy, her arms outstretched both to welcome it and to point out with an expressive gesture the adoring figures on each side of her—St Andrew who sponsors S. Gaetano, founder of the Theatine order, and St Peter with St Andrew Avellino, the Theatine beatified in 1624 when the fresco was probably begun.

Meanwhile Domenichino was at work on his share of the commission. Breaking away from his more classical manner, he produced in the pendentives four monumental figures of the Evangelists, clearly derived from Michelangelo and stored with potential energy, surrounded by putti, traditional emblems and the arms of his reluctant patron. In the apse he portrayed scenes from the life of St Andrew. By 1628, when both artists had completed their tasks, there could be no doubt that S. Andrea della Valle was the finest modern church in Rome and that the Theatines without much effort on their part had far outdistanced the Jesuits and the Oratorians.

<sup>1</sup> *Avviso* of 30 April 1608, quoted by Orbaan, 1920, pp. 107-8.

<sup>2</sup> Passeri, pp. 45 and 148.

<sup>3</sup> Pastor, XIII, p. 965, note 3.

Plate 13



PIETRO DA CORTONA: Glorification of the Reign of Urban VIII

JESUIT PATRONAGE OF THE ARTS

Plate 14

(see Plates 14, 15 and 16)



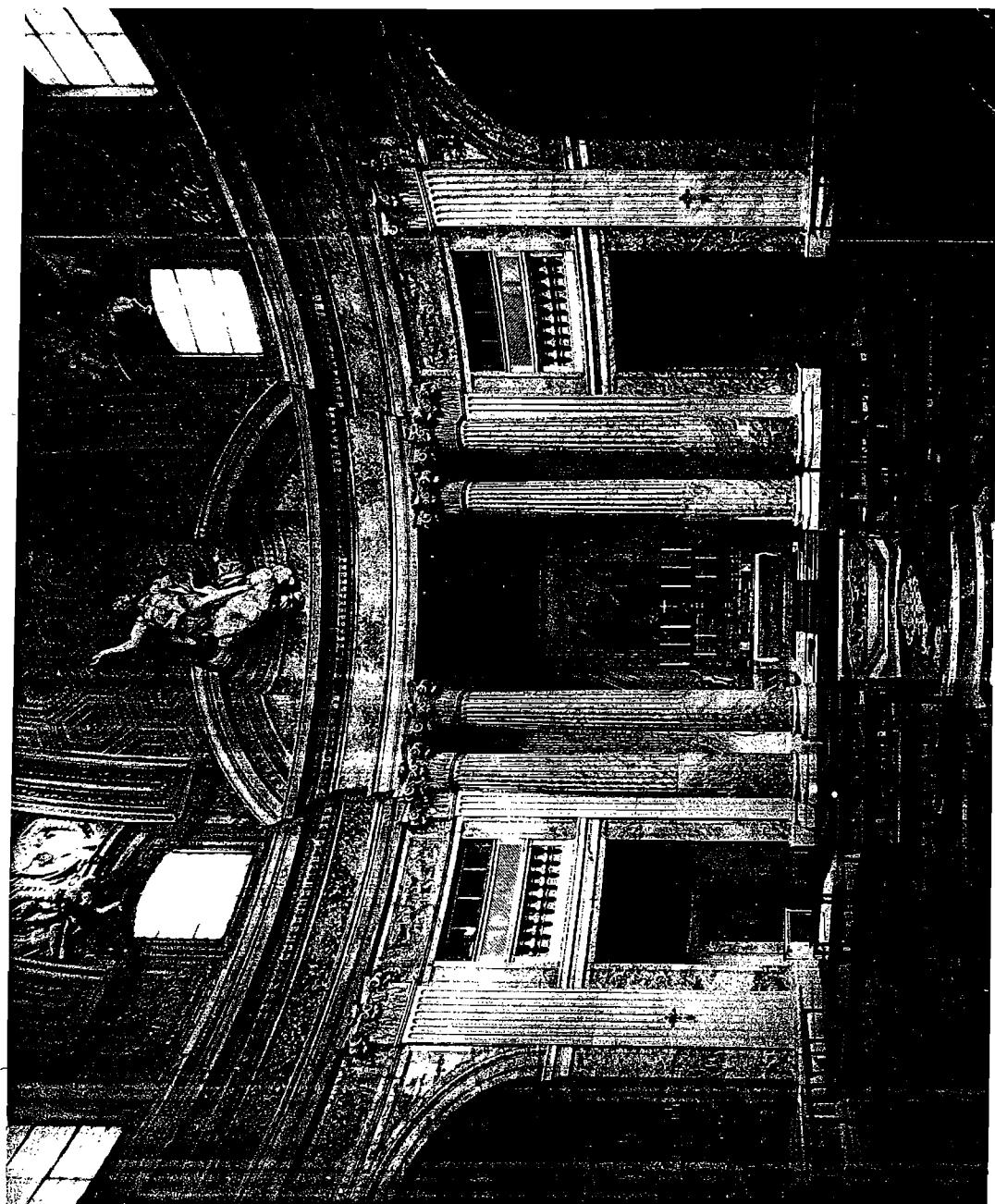
GAULLI: Triumph of Name of Jesus on nave of Gesù

Plate 15



ANDREA POZZO: *Modello* for fresco on vault of S. Ignazio, Rome

Plate 16



BERNINI: Interior of S. Andrea al Quirinale

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It is an ironical fact that for all the general benevolence shown towards the Jesuits by the Barberini it should have been left to the chief rival and bitter enemy of the family to have built a second great church for the Society. Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi was an intelligent and energetic young man who had enjoyed for only two years the privileges and status of papal nephew. He had made the most of them. With the riches poured on him by his uncle Gregory XV he had accumulated vast estates in and around Rome, built up what was possibly the finest collection of antique sculpture ever seen in the city, and patronised the leading artists of his native Emilia to marvellous effect, as is shown by Guercino's fresco of *Aurora* on the ceiling of the *casino* on the Pincio which he had bought from Cardinal del Monte. The Pope was old at the time of his election and in constant ill-health; Cardinal Ludovisi had thus been a powerful figure politically and had acted in the interests of Spain. In the conclave of 1623 which followed his uncle's death he did what he could to prevent the election of Maffeo Barberini. He failed in this aim and paid the inevitable price. After a succession of disputes with the new Pope, he was at one stage ordered to return to his archbishopric at Bologna on pain of being sent there by force. He died after a stormy life in 1632 at the age of 37.<sup>1</sup>

In 1622 Cardinal Ludovisi decided to use a significant proportion of his immense wealth on building a new church for the Jesuits to be dedicated to St Ignatius. His affection for the Society went back to his school days, and he decided that the building, for which he at once laid down 100,000 *scudi*, should be 'second to none for size and beauty'. But his first move was not a success. He had planned it near the novitiate of S. Andrea. The Pope at once objected as he said that the height of the new building would interfere with his view from the Quirinal. So Cardinal Ludovisi moved it next to the Collegio Romano, the Jesuit college in the centre of Rome,<sup>2</sup> and building began in 1626. From now on his difficulties were to be with the Jesuits themselves.

The situation of the Society had greatly altered since the days when they had quietly accepted the instructions of the all-powerful Cardinal Farnese. Indeed, Cardinal Ludovisi himself explained that his admiration for the Jesuits was partly due to 'the power and authority that they have over nearly all princes'.<sup>3</sup> Now he too was to experience this power, though its workings can only be dimly discerned through the inferences and hints of contemporary authors. All sources agree that Cardinal Ludovisi organised a competition for the architect, and that among those who submitted plans was Domenichino, his special protégé. Then the mystery begins. Passeri, the artist's great friend, is strangely reticent<sup>4</sup>: '... and Domenico was among those who competed; but God knows what fate dealt out to him: indeed there is no point in talking of the matter'. Bellori, on the other hand, is much more explicit.<sup>5</sup> He says that Domenichino made

<sup>1</sup> Pastor, XIII, p. 445. For all available information about his collections see Felici.

<sup>2</sup> Jesuit Archives, No. 1238—1<sup>a</sup> theca; *Vita e fatti di Ludovico, Card. Ludovisi d.o S.R.C. Vice cancel. Nepote di Papa Greg. XV scritta da me Antonio Giunti Suo Servitore da Urbino*—Biblioteca Corsini, Rome, MSS. 39. D. 8. <sup>3</sup> *ibid.* <sup>4</sup> Passeri, pp. 66-7.

<sup>5</sup> Bellori, p. 350. Pope-Hennessy (1948, p. 121, No. 1741) publishes a drawing by Domenichino probably connected with his project for S. Ignazio.

several drawings for Cardinal Ludovisi, but that some Jesuits then went to the artist's house 'and told him not to bother about the matter; because they wanted to follow the design of the Gesù. This was the first and most beautiful of their churches and had served as a model for others. Domenico answered that they ought to be pleased to have two models, and that he would suggest an alternative; but it was all in vain.' In the end a Jesuit father, Orazio Grassi, of no architectural experience but celebrated for a controversy with Galileo, was appointed. An eighteenth-century account says that Domenichino withdrew from the whole affair in a fury when Grassi made an amalgam of the two designs that he had submitted, both of which were criticised by the Jesuits.<sup>1</sup> The Jesuit sources, on the other hand, do not mention Domenichino but merely say that Cardinal Ludovisi chose Grassi's plan from a number that had been proposed to him.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that the pressure must have been considerable. Although Ludovisi continued during the few remaining years of his life to show great interest in the construction and insisted on a committee of architects, including the painter Domenichino and Carlo Maderno, closely examining all Grassi's plans, the evidence suggests that he was patron in name and financial aid rather than in any control he might exert. One of his last acts before dying was to leave the Society a further 100,000 ducats.<sup>3</sup>

The Jesuits had taken so much trouble to keep control in their own hands in order to reproduce on a larger scale the essential elements of the Gesù. But the church was intended to serve for the students of the Collegio Romano rather than for the general public, and the patronage of the side chapels was not therefore entrusted to the Roman patrician families but was assumed by the Jesuits themselves. That being the case, money had to be economised, and the Society therefore followed its usual policy in the circumstances. It turned to one of its own members to carry on with the decoration. In this instance the artist was a young Frenchman, Pierre de Lattre, from St Omer who had entered the novitiate of S. Andrea in 1626.<sup>4</sup> Two years later he went to the Collegio Romano, where he remained until his death in 1683. His obituary tells us that he led an exemplary life and that he painted all the pictures that were to be seen at that date in the church and sacristy of S. Ignatio. His name first appears in the account books in 1638 and turns up repeatedly for a dozen years. During that time he frescoed the vault of the sacristy, completed six pictures for the side chapels and painted an imitation altar on the inner wall of the apse. The little of his work that has survived shows him to have been an utterly insignificant artist.

Cardinal Ludovisi had died in 1632, and as usual in such cases his heirs proved reluctant to carry on with the great expenditure that was still needed. In 1640 the first mass could be celebrated in the new church, but it still had no vault. Not for another ten years was it finally opened to the public; even then it was half unfinished and

<sup>1</sup> Soprani, II, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> MS. by P. Gerolamo Nappi (1584-1648) quoted by [Bricarelli], 1924.

<sup>3</sup> Besides the documents in Pollak, 1927, I, pp. 144-58, see *Libro Mastro A* of the church in the Jesuit Archives. See also Hibbard, 1971, pp. 232-4.

<sup>4</sup> Besides repeated entries in *Libro Mastro A* see Galassi Paluzzi, 1926, p. 542.

for another full generation the temple that was to have been so 'magnificent' lay white and bare.<sup>1</sup> Once again the Jesuits had been outdistanced by their rivals.

During the reign of Urban VIII the Oratorians commissioned two works which were of very great consequence for the development of Baroque art—a fresco by Pietro da Cortona on the ceiling of their sacristy and a building adjoining the Chiesa Nuova by Borromini to accommodate the library and the concerts of religious music for which they were famous.

Pietro's small frescoes of *Angels carrying the Instruments of the Passion* and of *St Philip in Ecstasy* (in a chapel in one of the saint's rooms), though in themselves not very important, were of great significance for the future. For they began his close association with the Oratorians which was to lead to his transforming their whole church, and began it at a time when he was already the most fashionable and powerful artist in Rome. Indeed, Pietro was compelled to interrupt his work on the ceiling of the Barberini palace towards the end of 1633 in order to fulfil his obligations to the Chiesa Nuova, and the fact that he was allowed to do so suggests that the Oratorians must at that time have been exceedingly influential at court.<sup>2</sup>

The choice of Borromini as architect for the Oratorio was made by one of the fathers living there, Virgilio Spada.<sup>3</sup> He and his brother Cardinal Bernardino were both protégés of Urban VIII and enthusiastic connoisseurs. In the great sixteenth-century palace near that of the Farnese which Bernardino acquired from the Mignanelli in 1632 there was assembled an exceedingly rich collection of pictures, many of them from Bologna, where the Cardinal had served as legate between 1627 and 1631.<sup>4</sup> Virgilio was more interested in architecture—he himself was a dilettante who many years later helped to design the richly coloured family chapel in S. Girolamo della Carità—and he was a special admirer of Borromini whom he was to employ on certain alterations in the palace and on the construction of an illusionistic colonnade in the garden.

When Borromini began work on the Oratorio in 1637 he had just begun to make an outstanding name for himself. For many years he had been employed on comparatively minor tasks under Maderno and Bernini, but his wholly individual personality and principles made a dispute with the great Barberini architect inevitable. Thereafter he was largely kept away from official commissions until the death of Urban VIII.<sup>5</sup> In 1634 he had been entrusted with the building of a monastery and church for the Discalced Trinitarians who had left their original base in Spain and settled in Rome at the beginning of the century. The site adjoining the Quattro Fontane, very near the Barberini palace, was particularly small and inconvenient, and a great measure of the enthusiastic praise which Borromini received was unquestionably due to the

<sup>1</sup> Jesuit Archives: No. 1238—I<sup>a</sup> theca: *actorum ac diversarum cartarum inscripta: Ecclesia S. Ignatii de Urbe: saec. XVII-XIX, uti infra—Notizie storiche della Chiesa, 1712.*

<sup>2</sup> For the date see Pollak, 1927, I, p. 436, and Briganti, 1962, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> Passeri, p. 262.

<sup>4</sup> For Spada and his collections see Zeri, 1953.

<sup>5</sup> For Virgilio Spada see Ehrle; Blunt, 1979, pp. 205–207.

<sup>6</sup> Though he was made architect of the Sapienza in 1632.

highly ingenious manner in which he solved the problems it posed.<sup>1</sup> However, it was also recognised that the style marked a radical departure from anything that had hitherto been seen in Rome.<sup>2</sup> This originality, as well as Borromini's cheapness, was a cause of special satisfaction to the Scalzi. 'The plan of the church,' they wrote, 'is so exceptional in everybody's opinion that it seems that nothing like it with regard to artistic merit, caprice, excellence and singularity can be found anywhere in the world....' This was written some years later, but in 1637, when Borromini was asked to design the Oratorio, his plans for the Scalzi church were already known, and there can therefore be no doubt that the Oratorians were deliberately hoping for an architect whom their Trinitarian brothers found admirable for his revolutionary qualities.

These qualities found expression chiefly in the façade, where the delicate subtlety of the broken curves matched the emotional tone of the music that was played within. Like Barocci many years earlier, Borromini was able to interpret that particular strain of Counter Reformation sensibility, tormented, attenuated yet sensuously appealing, that was the special contribution of the Oratorians and that had no counterpart in the more rough-and-ready spirits of the Jesuits.

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Thus by the time that Urban VIII died in 1644 only the Theatine church of S. Andrea della Valle contained any considerable painting by the Baroque artists with whom the religious Orders have often been closely associated.<sup>3</sup> The Gesù, S. Ignazio, the Chiesa Nuova all remained largely undecorated and the spectacular enrichment for which they are famous today was carried out only in the second half of the century. The Capuchins alone had been the unwilling recipients of Barberini patronage.

It was the Oratorians who took the next step, although in grandeur of conception, in artistic importance and in devotional innovation they were later to be far outclassed by their Jesuit rivals. Ever since Pietro da Cortona had painted his small fresco on the ceiling of the sacristy the fathers of the Chiesa Nuova had been trying to commission further works from him. But the artist's engagements with such powerful patrons as the Sacchetti, the Barberini and the Grand Duke of Tuscany made it impossible for him to undertake anything else. Now, however, thirteen years later, the situation was quite different: the Barberini were in exile, and Pietro, who had already been working for some years on the decoration of the Palazzo Pitti, was seeking every opportunity to leave Florence. So when in the summer of 1646 the Oratorians renewed their appeal and at the same time asked the Grand Duke to grant Pietro temporary leave of absence, they were in a much stronger position. And after some delays and many promises to continue working for the Medici, Pietro began painting cartoons for the cupola of the

<sup>1</sup> See *Relatione del Convento di S. Carlo alle 4 Fontane di Roma, 1610-1650*, published by Pollak, 1927, I, pp. 36-51. <sup>2</sup> Wittkower, 1958, pp. 131 ff.

<sup>3</sup> That is, of comparable importance to those discussed. There were, of course, other churches belonging to the Orders with frescoes by leading seventeenth-century artists. The most significant was the Barnabite S. Carlo ai Catinari in which Domenichino painted complex allegories of the Cardinal Virtues on the pendentives of the dome (itself painted by a pupil of Guido Reni) for Cardinal Borghese soon after those of S. Andrea della Valle.

Chiesa Nuova in November 1646. Though he had had to convince the Grand Duke that his absence from Florence was to be a short one, the frescoes were not ready till May 1651, and even then he had not completed the four pendentives.<sup>1</sup> Yet the work had not been particularly complicated for the basic problems it posed had all been solved by Lanfranco a quarter of a century earlier, and in his fine *Adoration of the Trinity and Glorification of the Instruments of the Passion* Pietro did little more than produce an elegant variation of the cupola of S. Andrea della Valle. Now once more an all-powerful Pope temporarily put an end to the Oratorians' plans for completing the enrichment of their church. Innocent X after some hesitation turned to Pietro da Cortona to fresco the vault of his family's palace in the Piazza Navona, and not till he had completed this at the end of 1654 was he able to resume work on the Oratorian church. He then painted on the pendentives of the cupola the four prophets who had foretold the coming of the Virgin and the Redeemer—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel; and in the apse *The Assumption of the Virgin*, acclaimed by a number of saints, among whom the most prominent was St. Philip Neri. He began work rapidly, but once again there were long delays owing to the intervention of the Pope, by now Alexander VII. In fact, the whole history of Pietro's relationship with the Oratorians shows how subordinate it was to his commitments with more highly placed patrons. Not until 1664 did he undertake his last and most important commission for the church—the vault of the nave. In this he was required to depict a miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary which had occurred during the construction of the Chiesa Nuova. In recording the event the artist completely abandoned the illusionistic devices which he had used to such great effect on the ceiling of the Palazzo Barberini thirty years earlier. The scene is wholly removed from the spectator in an elaborate frame surrounded by richly gilded coffers, and its self-contained nature is emphasised by the fact that the fresco represents—though on different planes—both the real world of St Philip Neri and workmen and the supernatural world of the Virgin and angels. The worshipper in the church is not required to participate in the drama being enacted above him.

In fact, all Pietro's frescoes for the Oratorians, though sumptuous and finely executed, show a certain lack of imagination. He was a man, as is shown by his work in the Barberini, Pitti and Pamfili palaces, who found greater inspiration in the triumphs of this world than in those of the next. Mysticism did not come easily to him, and the passionate nature of St Philip which had meant so much to earlier artists and writers filled him with goodwill but never lifted him to the heights. None the less, when he had completed his commissions in the Chiesa Nuova, the Oratorians could claim to own the most completely decorated church of any Order in Rome. The whole scheme was eventually concluded in about 1700 when a number of leading artists chosen by the Oratorian scholar and collector Padre Sebastiano Resta painted fifteen oval scenes from the Old and New Testaments which were placed above the arches of the nave and transepts.<sup>2</sup>

Some years after Pietro da Cortona had resumed work in the Chiesa Nuova,

<sup>1</sup> Briganti, 1962, pp. 248-9.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Resta to Giuseppe Ghezzi, dated 28 January 1695, published in Bottari, III, pp. 490-1.

further decorations were undertaken in S. Andrea della Valle. In about 1650 Pope Innocent X's all-powerful sister-in-law, Donna Olimpia, persuaded the Theatines to commission Mattia Preti to paint the apse of their church. The artist divided the wall into three large compartments and depicted scenes from the saint's martyrdom. But by now the frescoes of Domenichino (whom Preti tried to imitate) and Lanfranco of a generation earlier had come to be looked upon as classics, and this combined with the chauvinism of Roman painters led to the denigration of Preti's style and his enforced and embittered departure from Rome.<sup>1</sup>

In 1665 when Pietro da Cortona completed the great scheme which he had begun in the Chiesa Nuova thirty years earlier, the Gesù still looked essentially the same as it had done in 1589, the year of Cardinal Farnese's death. Tapestries specially hung out on ceremonial occasions might temporarily conceal the bleakness, but it was all too obvious that the church had had no share in the great decorative schemes that were so striking elsewhere in Rome. This was not due to want of trying. The Cardinal had reserved the decoration of the tribune and the High Altar for himself and his family, and though he had conceived grandiose plans for it, the work had scarcely been begun at the time of his death. His heirs had proved wholly recalcitrant. Alessandro, the great captain, spent all his life in the north, and his son and grandson had no particular sympathy for the Jesuits.

In 1661, however, a new General, Gian Paolo Oliva, was elected, and under his rule everything was changed.<sup>2</sup> A cultivated man and a great lover of the arts, he showed the stubborn patience and diplomatic finesse required when dealing with difficult patrons. He also had at hand a most unusual and fortunate opportunity. In 1657 a French painter, Jacques Courtois, had entered the Society. Courtois—or Giacomo Borgognone as the Italians called him—had come to Italy from Dijon when still only 15,<sup>3</sup> and had been taken up by Guido Reni and later made friends with Michelangelo Cerquozzi and Pietro da Cortona. He had seen army life and he soon made a name for himself as a painter of battle scenes. In about 1654 his wife died after some years of stormy married life and there were rumours that he had murdered her. Shortly afterwards he decided to become a Jesuit and approached the rector of the Society's college in Siena. He was sent with letters of introduction to the General in Rome, and was there required to prove his good faith by making strange use of his undoubted skill. 'Finally my confessor gave me a small portrait of a woman on copper and told me to change it into something spiritual. I turned it into Our Saviour. . . .' He then took the final vows and spent the rest of his life in the novitiate of S. Andrea and the Casa Professa. The General of the Jesuits at this time was the Belgian Goswin Nickel, but the outstanding personality was already the Vicar, Oliva, and there can be little doubt that it was he who took advantage of the new situation. Borgognone had entered the Society without brushes intending to give up art for ever. Within a year he was painting in the Casa Professa a series of

<sup>1</sup> De Dominicis, IV, p. 27. For the comments of Cassiano dal Pozzo see Lumbroso, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> There is no full-scale life of Oliva, but references to him are frequent in seventeenth-century literature, and many volumes of his Letters and Sermons were published.

<sup>3</sup> Salvagnini.

lunettes and frescoes glorifying the Virgin as well as a number of scenes depicting famous Christian battles. He was also encouraged to go on painting for private patrons and hand over his earnings to the Society. He and his brother Guglielmo painted much for Oliva, but his great masterpiece was to be the decoration of the tribune, upon which the new General had set his heart. To achieve this, however, the permission and financial support of the leading member of the Farnese family, Duke Ranuccio of Parma, were essential, and in 1671 the Jesuits opened negotiations with him.<sup>1</sup> But the Duke was a vacillating man who found it quite impossible to make up his mind. To persuade him of the importance of the decoration that they required the Jesuits sent him their plans for the rest of the church with only the tribune left bare. This, surely, would provoke him into action.

The sketches, however, were not a success. The Duchess did not like them and said that she had in mind an artist of her own 'molto stimato et accreditato' whom she wished to paint the vault. The Duke remained cautious. He reluctantly agreed to spend 30,000 *scudi* on the tribune, but he was thoroughly confused by the Jesuit plans and soon began to think of reasons for delaying them. If the dome was to be painted, he declared, the ribs would have to be removed and this would not be safe. Admittedly he had no authority over this part of the decoration, but he managed to imply that the Jesuits were wrecking the church and lacking in respect to the memory of his ancestor Cardinal Alessandro. He was always professing his anxiety to have the tribune decorated, but whenever pressed he would say coldly that he was 'not ready to do so at present and that this was not the time to begin'. In vain did Oliva insist on the claims of Borgognone—'our brother who is so excellent in things of this kind'—and encourage the artist to make drawings of *Joshua stopping the Sun*.<sup>2</sup> Months and years passed and still nothing happened. In despair the Jesuits proposed moving the remains of St Ignatius from the High Altar to the chapel in the left transept. If the Duke would not agree to the decoration of the tribune, they argued, would he not at least release them from their obligations to him and his family? But by now it was too late. In 1676, with the preliminary sketches made but with no opportunity to achieve his masterpiece, Borgognone died.

This brought the affair to a standstill. It was not merely that the Duke who had been difficult enough about the expense of 30,000 *scudi* would surely be far more so when he also had to pay the painter. It was that the Jesuits had genuinely wanted Borgognone to decorate the central feature of their greatest church. He was, they felt, the one artist capable of carrying out the vast work they had in mind. There was, besides, the undoubted satisfaction that it was a Jesuit who was to undertake this great glorification of the Triumph of the Order of Jesus. The insistence of Oliva and his emissaries that Borgognone should be employed occurs throughout their letters—indeed it marks the first step in a definite Jesuit policy towards the arts since the scenes of martyrdom which they had had painted at the end of the sixteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> Pecchiai, 1952, p. 109, for these and subsequent negotiations.

<sup>2</sup> The subject is the same as that chosen for Carbone in the Jesuit church at Perugia.

During the course of his futile negotiations with the Duke of Parma, Oliva had been looking around for another artist to paint those parts of the church over which the Jesuits had complete authority. He had originally considered three painters, Carlo Maratta, Ciro Ferri and Giacinto Brandi, whose diversity of styles shows that he had no preconceived ideas on the matter.<sup>1</sup> Then he saw some frescoes by the young Giovanni Battista Gaulli in the church of S. Marta and immediately included him in his list of possible painters. Bernini, who had already employed Gaulli on some decorative work of his own, was enthusiastic, and the artist had one further claim of overriding importance. Like Oliva he came from Genoa. In August 1672 a contract was signed between the two men.

Gaulli—or ‘Baciccio’—had been born in 1639 and had already made a name for himself as a brilliant portrait painter. But his only important decorative work had caused him some trouble. The Jesuit confessor of his patron Prince Pamfili had decided that the nudity of his figures on the pendentives of S. Agnese in Piazza Navona were ‘lascivious’ and they had had to be hurriedly clothed.<sup>2</sup> It was a strange beginning for one who was now to be entrusted by the Jesuits with the most elaborate commission in Rome. For Gaulli agreed to paint the entire dome (including the lantern and the pendentives which had already been frescoed by Giovanni de’ Vecchi); the entire vault including the window recesses; and the vaults of the transepts above the chapels of St Ignatius and St Francis Xavier. He was to omit only the vault of the tribune which was being kept for Borgognone. All this enormous area was to be painted and gilded by the artist at his own expense. The dome was to be completed within two years, and all the rest of the work—gilding, painting and stucco—within eight years from then, i.e. by the end of 1682. If the work was considered by experts to be other than perfect Gaulli undertook to correct it without charge. If all went well he was to be paid 14,000 *scudi* as well as all the expenses of scaffolding and so on.<sup>3</sup>

As the work progressed Oliva’s ambitions grew. The dome was ready by April 1675,<sup>4</sup> and four years later the vault was completed. The experts who were invited to a private showing were not enthusiastic,<sup>5</sup> but with the general public it won ‘universal admiration both for the beauty of the painting and for the arrangement of the stucco which makes it still more worthy of applause’. When trying to resume negotiations with the Duke of Parma for the decoration of the tribune, Oliva naturally spoke of Gaulli’s work with the most fervid admiration and pressed home the moral<sup>6</sup>: ‘We have at last,’ he wrote in September 1679, ‘through the grace of God, removed the scaffolding

<sup>1</sup> In fact, as we learn from Pascoli, I, p. 125, Oliva had hoped many years earlier that Pier Francesco Mola, who died in 1666, would undertake the decoration. The account of Oliva’s later plans is also taken from Pascoli, I, p. 200. <sup>2</sup> See *avviso* quoted in *Roma*, XVIII, 1940, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> Tacchi-Venturi, 1935, pp. 147–56.

<sup>4</sup> See *avviso* quoted in *Roma*, XVIII, 1940, p. 238.

<sup>5</sup> See *avviso* of 12 August 1679 published by Pastor, XIV, parte II, p. 26: ‘conclusero tutti che sarebbe bellissima, se fossero pitture meno spropositate et di qualche altra mano’, and further *avviso* of 6 January 1680.

<sup>6</sup> Tacchi-Venturi, 1935, pp. 154–5.

from this church of the Gesù, founded by Your Highness's ancestors for the Society and renowned among the miracles of Rome. . . . Already the parts which remain to be painted and gilded are being prepared, and all that remains is the head of this famous temple, which by special rights belongs to the house of the founder. The very crown of the work depends on the tribune. But, without the special command and generosity of Your Highness, the scaffolding cannot go up nor can the work be completed.' He scarcely dared, he added, suggest that Gaulli be given this further task, although that painter had 'surpassed himself in the work and is considered to be as good as the very best artists'. Ranuccio's reaction was entirely characteristic. He agreed to the employment of Gaulli and offered to pay 3000 *scudi*—exactly one-tenth of what had been asked for. So the tribune and High Altar remained bare and Gaulli merely painted a small fraction of the vault above it and the conch of the apse. Finally in 1685 he completed his work in the church by painting the left transept above the altar of St Ignatius; for, as will be seen on a later page, the chapel of St Francis Xavier was decorated by another artist after giving rise to further difficulties.

The respective parts played by Oliva, Bernini and Gaulli in the frescoes of the Gesù are not known. No programme has come to light, and it is probable that the relations between the three men were so close that more was arranged by the spoken than by the written word. Certainly Bernini's part in the undertaking was stressed from the very first and has been accepted by historians ever since.<sup>1</sup> The share of Oliva can be inferred from a certain complexity in the iconography.

During the 1670s, when the frescoes were being devised and executed, the Roman Church was shaken by the most serious controversy that had faced it since the Council of Trent.<sup>2</sup> Crucially implicated, at the very centre of the whirlwind, was the Society of Jesus and, in particular, its General, Oliva. The trouble had started soon after the arrival in 1664 of a Spanish priest, Miguel de Molinos, who rapidly acquired a wide and exceedingly influential following by preaching two especially appealing doctrines: that communion could be administered daily to the faithful if they required it and that far more stress should be placed on passive contemplation than active meditation. Both of these views—and particularly the latter—were directly opposed to those of the Jesuits, who soon reacted strongly with all the intellectual and political weapons at their command. It is always difficult for the opponents in any serious controversy to distinguish between real questions of principle and more petty motives of jealousy. Certainly the Jesuits, quite apart from the doctrinal issues which divided them from Molinos, cannot have viewed with any enthusiasm his growing prestige in those very spheres

<sup>1</sup> Thus an *avviso* of 1675 (*Roma*, XVIII, 1940, p. 238) reported the occasion as follows: 'hanno li P. P. Giesuiti scoperto la cupola della loro Chiesa . . . dipinta da nuovo con disegno del Cavalier Bernini, a fattura d'un tale Baccici Fiorentino [sic], e da molti virtuosi non viene troppo lodata l'invenzione del primo, come anche il lavoro del secondo'. For a modern examination of the problem see Enggass, 1957, pp. 303-5.

<sup>2</sup> For all this section see the well-documented but very hostile Paul Dudon and also J. de Guibert, as well as the various collections of Oliva's sermons and the account given in Pastor, XIV, parte II, pp. 325 ff.

which had hitherto been subject almost exclusively to their own influences—the aristocratic society of Rome and the papal court itself. This, no doubt, played its part in the violence of their reaction and made them more determined than ever to assert their irresistible power as ostentatiously as possible. Some such consideration must have weighed in Oliva's mind as he took time off from the problem of Molinos to consider the decoration of the Gesù.

Yet, as often happens in complex disputes, the issues were not wholly clear-cut. Both sides were arguing within the same climate of ideas, and in many cases the discussion concerned nuances rather than easily explicable doctrines. A theme especially dear to Molinos—and one, of course, by no means new—was that of the Blood of Christ in which the soul could purify itself of guilt and sin. 'It is certain', he wrote in his *Guida Spirituale*,<sup>1</sup> 'that before the soul is ready to enter into the presence of the divinity and unite with it, it must wash itself with the precious Blood of the Redeemer and adorn itself with the richness of His Passion.' Among those deeply affected by this same concept—though it is impossible to say whether or not he derived the notion from Molinos—was Bernini. 'He would sometimes think very deeply and also talk about a matter of the highest consequence—the belief that he always had in the powers of the Blood of Christ in which, he used to say, he hoped to drown his sins.'<sup>2</sup> And in about 1668 he employed an etcher to reproduce one of his drawings in which the blood streams down from the wounds of the crucified Christ into an eternal, boundless ocean.

It was presumably Bernini who first suggested to Gaulli that he should adapt this theme to the dome of the Gesù. A number of the painter's drawings, almost certainly connected with the project, survive—but were never made use of.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the theme, innocuous when Bernini had first drawn it a few years earlier, had by now become too closely associated with Molinos to be palatable to the Jesuits. Certainly they themselves always avoided the mystical, and the etching taken from Bernini is unquestionably tinged with feelings of passivity and quietism. More likely they realised that, whatever its significance for private devotion, it was wholly unsuitable for the decoration of a dome. In any case, Gaulli's scheme, when finally brought to fruition, was based on a different subject, although it retained links with the Blood of Christ and although it too had been treated by Bernini. This was the *Duplex Intercessio* in which the kneeling Virgin, trampling on a serpent and pointing to Her breast, and Christ, indicating His Cross which is being carried by angels, together appeal to God for mercy for suffering humanity. Below the Cross Adam and Eve join in the supplication, and around this principal scene are groups of saints and kings in adoration.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Book I, chapter 16, verse 117.

<sup>2</sup> Baldinucci, 1948, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> These drawings are in Berlin and Düsseldorf. This whole interpretation of the iconography of the Gesù frescoes is derived from Lanckoronska, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Panofsky, 1927, p. 290. The presence of Adam and Eve is unusual. The figures were, however, generally included in versions of *The Blood of Christ* and thus constitute a link between the two programmes. Admittedly Adam and Eve do not appear either in Bernini's or in Gaulli's drawings of *The Blood of Christ*, but these are in far too early a stage to constitute serious evidence. When Gaulli adapted Bernini's *Duplex Intercessio* (for which see Brauer und Wittkower, plate 128) he put Adam at the foot of the Cross instead of Christ, whose pose he almost exactly retained.

It was usual in Roman churches to fill the triangular spaces below the dome with figures of the Doctors of the Church, the Prophets or the Evangelists. Oliva decided that he would include all three and add to them a group which had not hitherto been represented, the Judges. With miraculous ease the artist solved the problems posed by presenting four figures in a single pendentive and made them sweeping enough to fit in with his grandiose patterns, yet sufficiently individualised to be easily recognisable and never monotonous.

It is, however, Gaulli's fresco in the nave which is the most striking feature of the Gesù, although it was originally to be no more than a prelude to the climax of the tribune (Plate 14). Here the Jesuits were able for the first time to display on a large scale what had for some years been an essential feature of all their visual propaganda through the medium of book illustrations and the like<sup>1</sup>: the theme that theirs was essentially a missionary society concerned more with the winning of this world for Catholicism than with the fate of souls in the next. With the dangerous heresies of Molinos daily gaining ground, the theme was one of ever greater urgency and, as the vault was much more accessible to the general public than the dome, the symbolism with which the message was conveyed could be expressed in much more simple terms. To represent the theme Gaulli ignored the classicising tendencies of his immediate predecessors and returned for inspiration to Pietro da Cortona's daring and revolutionary ceiling in the Barberini palace of forty years earlier. Everything radiates from the golden circle of light which emerges from the Society's emblem IHS at the far end of the vault. The rays plunge out through the circle of cherubs and throw into dazzling relief the ranks of the saints and the blest, the Three Kings who first worshipped the Name of Jesus, the prominent figure of the Church and the House of Farnese holding aloft a model of the Gesù.<sup>2</sup> From these it re-emerges with renewed and searing intensity to strike the damned and the heretics, who are blinded by it and hurtled past the frame of the painting on to the stucco decoration of the vault and, by implication, into the body of the church. The colours are warm and brilliant, and an effect of cosmic drama is established by the contrast between the blues and reds and browns of the figures and the golden glare from the Name of Jesus, Whose triumph the fresco celebrates. To attract the eye of the worshipper to this tremendous spectacle Gaulli devised sixteen figures, which were executed by his followers in stucco and placed in the window niches along the nave, whence they gaze upward in awe. They serve not only to bring into close emotional contact the two realms of matter and spirit but also to emphasise once again the overwhelming power of the Jesuit missionaries, for they represent all those regions—from Ethiopia to Peru, from China to Mexico—where the disciples of St Ignatius had made their presence felt.

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, the frontispiece to Daniello Bartoli: *Della vita e dell'istituto di S. Ignatio . . . Roma, 1659.*

<sup>2</sup> Lanckoronska.

In the apse, which was completed only after the death of Oliva, Gaulli was required to return to the more abstruse levels of theology which had characterised his frescoes in the dome. He revived the subject of *The Adoration of the Lamb* which had been hardly seen in Rome since the mosaics in S. Prassede and S. Maria Maggiore many hundred years earlier. The choice of such an archaic theme may have represented a concession to the original intentions of the church's founder, Alessandro Farnese, for that Cardinal, whose patronage was often marked by strange, mediaeval echoes, had once had the intention of decorating the tribune with mosaics. But there is another possible reason for the choice. In a less mystical and more attractive form it incorporated much of the idea which had originally been proposed for the dome—the glorification of Christ's suffering—and at the same time fitted in more easily with the triumphant tone of the rest of the church.<sup>1</sup> Much of the traditional iconography was used. The Book on the throne is sealed with seven seals, and before it burn seven torches. Twenty-four ancients adore the Lamb; behind are youths with palms and angels trumpeting and lifting up their thuribles to fill them with prayers. The theme appears frequently in Oliva's writings; but, despite all the brilliance of Gaulli's handling, the transference into Baroque terms of imagery, which had been so effective in formalised mosaic, has not proved wholly satisfactory.

Gaulli's achievement had exceeded all Jesuit expectations and he had been generously rewarded by Oliva who showed great patience in dealing with his fits of temperament and angry outbursts.<sup>2</sup> But the contract between them could not be completed, for though the Jesuit missionaries might assert their authority to the ends of the earth, the Society was still not master in its own house. Even at this stage the pressures that had bedevilled Jesuit intentions ever since their early impoverished dealings with Cardinal Farnese could prove irresistible.

The chapel in the right transept was one of the only ones that long remained exclusively under Jesuit patronage. It had originally been dedicated to the Saviour and then to the Resurrection; for it Baglione had painted an altarpiece in 1602.<sup>3</sup> On his canonisation in 1623 the chapel was dedicated to St Francis Xavier and in it was placed a picture of the saint which had been painted by Van Dyck. Towards the end of the 1660s, however, the patronage of the chapel was acquired by Monsignor Negroni, an exceedingly rich and powerful prelate 'tutto spirto e fuoco' who was later made Cardinal.<sup>4</sup> From the first, Negroni showed that he considered himself the final arbiter in his own chapel and that he intended to ignore Oliva's plans for the rest of the church. He commissioned drawings for a grandiose altar from Pietro da Cortona just before the artist's death in 1669, and so high was the projected pediment that the cornice had to be broken. After Pietro's death rival architects were soon writing to Duke Ranuccio at Parma that this was ruining the architecture designed by his great ancestor. But Negroni showed that he had powerful friends, for he caused the arms of Popes Clement

<sup>1</sup> Lanckoronska.

<sup>2</sup> Pecchiai, 1952, p. 129, and Pascoli, I, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> Pecchiai, 1952, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> Cardella, VII, p. 299.

IX and Innocent XI to be carved on the front of the altar and then wrote to Oliva to make sure that the implications of this gesture should be fully understood: 'As I told Your Reverence, I have ordered the stone masons to set to work on a record to the eternal memory of these two Popes whom I venerate.'

But this was only a beginning. Though in later years he was to sit to Gauli for his portrait, Negroni did not wish to have his chapel painted by the artist and he chose instead another Genoese painter, Gianandrea Carlone,<sup>1</sup> and the most famous artist of the day, Carlo Maratta.<sup>2</sup> Very reluctantly and under extreme pressure Oliva was compelled to agree to the change, and from the bitter controversy that followed we can see what rights a patron claimed to exert over the decoration of his chapel.<sup>3</sup>

'Worship of the Holy Relic',<sup>4</sup> wrote Negroni, 'will be open to the public; the rights of the chapel will belong to him who has dedicated it; and its upkeep will be the responsibility of the Jesuit fathers.' Neither the tone nor the substance were conciliatory and the Jesuits were infuriated by Negroni's claims. But the Cardinal remained stubborn. He only wanted the authority that all patrons naturally possessed 'as regards the essential arrangement of the chapel—for instance, neither the picture, nor the capitals, nor the columns were to be altered without his full agreement'. But this was to be the last clash in the long series between the Society and its benefactors.

Many years earlier another great monument to the power of the Jesuits had appeared in Rome. In the rebuilding of their novitiate church, S. Andrea al Quirinale, they were faced not with the tyranny, hesitation or meanness of a rich patron, but with the absolute supremacy of the most gifted and successful architect since Michelangelo. Fortunately he was a man who profoundly shared their ideals and he was given a free hand by the Society.

Bernini's relations with the Jesuits remained very close throughout his life. As a young sculptor one of his first tasks had been to help his father on the monument to Cardinal Bellarmine in the Gesù, and, soon after, he had collaborated with the Jesuits in the production of a superbly illustrated edition of Urban VIII's Latin poems. Since then he had maintained the firmest contacts with the Society. Domenico, his son, claimed that for forty years he went regularly once a week to the Gesù.<sup>5</sup>

When in 1661 Oliva became General, this connection was still further strengthened by the great friendship between the two men. Bernini frequently gave Oliva advice, which was always accepted, on matters of artistic policy, and he also produced a number of illustrations for an edition of his sermons. Oliva made use of the artist to forward his diplomatic ends.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Carbone had painted the tribune of the Jesuit church in Perugia where Negroni had completed his studies—MS. at Gesù in Perugia—Busta 152/1526—5 and 6.

<sup>2</sup> Maratta painted *The Death of St Francis Xavier*.

<sup>3</sup> Pecchiai, 1952, pp. 132–7.

<sup>4</sup> The arm of St Francis Xavier which was kept in the chapel.

<sup>5</sup> Domenico Bernino, p. 171.

<sup>6</sup> Thus he was especially anxious that Bernini should make the difficult journey to France at whatever cost to his health and that Louis XIV should be informed of the pressure he was exerting.

Bernini's relationship with the Society was not confined to friendship with its members and work for its establishments. In France he often visited Jesuit churches, and talked much of his sympathy with Jesuit ideas. Oliva said that he could discuss matters of spiritual importance with the deepest understanding,<sup>1</sup> and all modern historians have commented on the fact that much of his best work seems to fulfil the ideals of the Society. In the novitiate church of S. Andrea which he began to build in 1658 he had his greatest opportunity of doing so. He was well pleased with his achievement, for when many years later he was discovered by his own son in a corner of the church, he said to him: 'My son, this is the only piece of my architecture for which I feel special satisfaction in the depth of my heart, and often when I need rest from my troubles I come here to gain consolation from my work.'<sup>2</sup>

This was at a time when the building was already considered one of the finest in Rome, but as usual there had been many complications before the project could actually be carried out. As the Jesuits had increased in power and numbers, the restricted size of their patched-up novitiate on the Quirinal had become more and more unsatisfactory, until by 1642 they claimed that darkness and humidity made it almost unusable.<sup>3</sup> Two serious difficulties stood in the way of any rebuilding or expansion. The first was the refusal of Cardinal Bandino to sell any of his land which surrounded the novitiate, and the second was the strong objection of the Pope to anything which would obstruct the view from his palace.<sup>4</sup> This had stopped Cardinal Ludovisi founding S. Ignazio on this site as he had wished, and even after the Bandino property had been acquired, the papal interdiction was strictly enforced. In 1649 Cardinal Ceva agreed to build a new church and lodgings, and he chose for the purpose Borromini, the most prominent architect of the day since the temporary eclipse of Bernini.<sup>5</sup> The drawings were made, but Innocent X forbade their being executed. Seven years later, however, the Rector of the novitiate appealed once again to the new Pope, Alexander VII, whose close friend he was. This time he was successful, and after the Pope had satisfied himself that his view would not be disturbed, he strongly encouraged all his entourage to contribute towards the expense. By far the largest sum was given by Prince Camillo Pamfili, nephew of Pope Innocent X, who assumed the patronage for himself and his family. Like all patrons he declared at the outset his intention that the church should 'rival the most magnificent buildings in Rome erected through his munificence'.<sup>6</sup> But unlike many of them (and most unlike his usual self)<sup>7</sup> he carried out these intentions fully until his death in 1665, after which his example was loyally followed by his son. We hear less of financial troubles in S. Andrea than in any of the other churches that have hitherto been considered, and the

<sup>1</sup> Domenico Bernino, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> MSS. in Jesuit Archives: Rom. 164, ff. 193-4.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, Rom. 21, f. 174.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, Fondo di Gesù, N. 865-18.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, Rom. 163, f. 304—'gareggiasse con le più magnifice fabbriche inalzate in più luoghi di Roma della sua liberalità . . .'

<sup>7</sup> For Camillo Pamfili see later, Chapter 6.

spirit of the enterprise, as regards both finance and the authority of the artist, can best be gauged from an episode in 1663 when Prince Pamfili went to visit the work in progress. Finding that the expense was going to be much higher than anticipated, he left 1000 *scudi* on the spot and said: 'You must do whatever Cavalier Bernini orders, even if all my substance should go in the process. . .'.<sup>1</sup>

In fact Bernini's authority was felt at every stage of the building. Each bill, each contract was scrutinised by him and endorsed with his vigorous initials.<sup>2</sup> Workmen engaged on the most menial tasks came under his direct supervision. He was himself the virtual patron of the whole enterprise and refused all payment, including even battle pictures by Giacomo Borgognone.<sup>3</sup> Nor can his assistant Mattia de' Rossi have put much of a strain on Jesuit resources, as he was paid only in wine, the inevitable battle pictures and 'two old majolica plates, which we have never succeeded in selling, painted, it is thought, by Raphael of Urbino or at least someone of that school. At one time they were valued at 50 *scudi*, but this was probably too high an estimate'.<sup>4</sup>

This marvellous church, with its richly coloured marbles and sumptuous decoration entirely subordinated to an immediately striking and simple oval plan, was thus a pure expression of Bernini's genius, unfettered by the instructions of patrons or shortages of money (Plate 16). Yet by comparing it to his other works we can see that its Jesuit destination provided a very special impulse. Nowhere else is the iconography planned so coherently with every element of the decoration symbolising in some degree the dominating figure of St Andrew who rises triumphantly from the broken pediment above the main chapel. And, as later in the Gesù and S. Ignazio, the emotional pressure is such that normal architectural barriers are broken down to link Heaven and Earth in a single unity. Daylight streams in from the lantern above the High Altar and is symbolically identified with the glory of golden rays which radiates from the drum; while spilling down into the chapel is a mass of golden putti—at first only heads and wings and then, as they come nearer the ground, more and more solid. When the sun lights up the gold and white coffers of the dome the effect of divine intervention is far more poignantly communicated than in any fresco.

As soon as the main structure of the church was complete, the Jesuits began to consider the problem of altar paintings. Although Bernini's advice must have been taken, the actual arrangements with artists were made directly by the Jesuits, though they were paid for by the heirs of Prince Pamfili who had died in 1667.<sup>5</sup> Guglielmo Borgognone who was commissioned in 1668 to paint *The Martyrdom of St. Andrew* for the High Altar had already been employed in the novitiate with his Jesuit brother

<sup>1</sup> MSS. in Jesuit Archives: Fondo di Gesù, N. 865-18—'Si faccia quanto il Cavalier Bernino ordinerà, benche' c'andasse tutto il mio. . .'

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, Fondo di Gesù—N. 865—4/6/7/8.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, Fondo di Gesù—N. 865-19.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, Fondo di Gesù—N. 1017, p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, Fondo di Gesù—N. 865-13: Thus Gaulli was paid 100 *scudi* 'per le mani del P. Francesco Scaramuccia quale disse pagarli di denari propri di detto Noviziato con animo di rivalersene dal Signor Principe Panfiglio . . .'

Giacomo. Gaulli was an equally obvious choice. In 1676 he painted the *Death of St Francis Xavier* for the altar dedicated to that saint and was paid 100 *scudi*. He also painted two more scenes from the life of the saint for the same chapel after a series of complicated financial disputes.<sup>1</sup> Negotiations with another artist, Giacinto Brandi, to decorate the Chapel of the Passion with pictures of the *Pietà*, *Christ and St Veronica* and *The Flagellation* were prolonged and difficult,<sup>2</sup> and Carlo Maratta, the best known (and best paid) artist in Rome, took eight years to deliver his altarpiece of *St Stanislas Kostka*.<sup>3</sup>

The last chapel to be adorned was that dedicated to the Madonna. In 1691, twenty-one years after the church had been opened to the public, a Jesuit document complained that it was 'affatto rustica'.<sup>4</sup> It was then taken over by Cardinal Ottoboni, nephew of Pope Alexander VIII, who commissioned altarpieces from Ludovico David of the *Nativity*, the *Adoration of the Magi* and the *Flight into Egypt* and paid for them from the funds left by Prince Pamfili. The latter's heirs reserved the right, which they later assumed, to change the decoration when they decided to embellish the chapel.

With the decoration of the Gesù and S. Andrea al Quirinale either complete or under way only one large problem now faced the Jesuits. S. Ignazio, though open to the public since 1642, still looked a vast white mausoleum, wholly unenticing amid the coloured marvels of other churches. When in 1680 General Oliva summoned to Rome the 38-year-old Andrea Pozzo to remedy this state of affairs his ambitions must at last have seemed fulfilled. For here was an artist of real talent who was himself a Jesuit—a new Borgognone, in fact. Pozzo, who was born in Trent, had entered the Society as a lay-brother at the age of 22, and had enjoyed an enormous success in North Italy, where he had decorated several Jesuit churches, notably at Turin and Mondovi, with spectacular effects of perspective.<sup>5</sup> Some of his paintings had reached Oliva who had shown them to Carlo Maratta. On his advice Pozzo was ordered to Rome. When he arrived after an unhurried journey, Oliva was dead.

The story of what followed was admirably suited to his romantically minded eighteenth-century biographers, and they revelled in telling how the artist with the utmost humility accepted the ordinary lay duties he was given by his superiors, unaware of his talent; how he went through Rome, collecting alms; how one day these superiors were discussing the spectacle they were to put on for the Forty Hours, and saying that economies would be necessary in the stage-sets; how Pozzo volunteered to construct the theatrical apparatus out of rags and used canvas—an offer that was rejected with scorn; how finally it was accepted and the result was a triumph. It is a success story familiar through countless fairy tales. But Pozzo, despite the recognition of his talents, was still faced with many difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> MSS. in Jesuit Archives: Fondo di Gesù—N. 865-13.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, Fondo di Gesù—N. 865-13. For the full text of Brandi's letters to the Jesuit fathers see Appendix I.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, Fondo di Gesù—N. 865-13. For Maratta's dealings with the Jesuits see Appendix I.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, Fondo di Gesù, N. 101, p. 191, and see also Pascoli, I, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> See MSS. Cod. Palat. 565, ff. 120-42, in Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence: Francesco Baldinucci: *Vita del Padre Pozzo*.

He was first required to paint the corridor linking the little rooms where St Ignatius had lived.<sup>1</sup> These had been preserved when the Casa Professa was built adjoining the Gesù in 1602, and converted into chapels. The task of decorating this corridor had been begun by Giacomo Borgognone, and left incomplete at his death. Because of its shape it could not be treated as a single unit, and the artist therefore divided the walls and vault into small scenes, separated by elaborate frames and putti. In them he depicted various aspects of St Ignatius's sojourn in this world and the next, and made such excessive use of his great technical virtuosity that, looked at from the wrong viewpoint, the decoration appears grotesquely distorted.

Just when Pozzo was beginning to be appreciated by the Jesuits, an incident occurred which almost made them lose him. The Duke of Savoy, in whose service the artist had previously worked and who had reluctantly given him permission to obey Oliva's summons to Rome, now called him back to decorate a gallery. Pozzo asked the new General to refuse him permission, but was told that it was his 'duty to satisfy great princes in their lawful demands'. He then appealed secretly to the Pope, above the head of the General, and by him was authorised to turn down the Duke's request. This prince, thinking that it was the Jesuits who had refused permission, wrote another personal letter, and when told by Pozzo of the Pope's intervention, appealed to him also. But the Pope confirmed his instructions to Pozzo, and the Duke was therefore reduced to making life as disagreeable as possible for the Jesuits in his dominions, who, in turn, blamed Pozzo for their difficulties.

The church of S. Ignazio had never been completed owing to financial difficulties and disputes with the Ludovisi descendants. The Rector of the Collegio Romano now determined that if he could not have a real dome, at least he would have something which would fill the awkward gap where the dome had been planned. Various artists and architects were consulted and among those who submitted plans was Pozzo, who proposed to paint in perspective a flat piece of canvas to give the illusion of a dome. On the advice of Mattia de' Rossi, Bernini's successor in S. Andrea al Quirinale and now architect of St. Peter's, his plans were accepted. Though he met with the derision of his fellow-Jesuits, Pozzo claimed that he was as sure of the result as of a proposition of Euclid,<sup>2</sup> and his optimism was at first justified. When shown to the public in June 1685 his device was described as 'very beautiful and ingenious, and it is thought that it will be many years before they decide to build a real dome'.<sup>3</sup> A later writer was quick to point out that being on canvas the dome was bound to darken,<sup>4</sup> and in fact within a few years of being painted it was all but invisible.

For some years after 1685 Pozzo painted frescoes in the tribune and the apse, representing there some of the principal events in the early history of the Society, culminating in Christ's amply fulfilled promise to St Ignatius at La Storta: 'Ego vobis Romae propitius ero.' Both in subject-matter and in treatment these differ greatly from

<sup>1</sup> Tacchi-Venturi: *La casa di S. Ignazio in Roma*, n.d.

<sup>2</sup> Pascoli, II, p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Pastor, XIV, parte II, p. 26. See also Baldinucci MS. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Pascoli, II, p. 256.

Gauli's frescoes in the Gesù: they lack both the theological complexity and the emotional power of the earlier work. In some ways they mark a reaction against the Baroque. Every figure is displayed to the full and the whole composition is given rigidity by a bold architectural framework. That a work so immeasurably different in feeling and style from *The Adoration of the Lamb* was accepted and welcomed by the Jesuits shows either that their taste had changed out of all recognition in the last few years, or that this taste was sufficiently catholic to include anything grandiose without too much concern for its style. On the pendentives Pozzo wished to avoid the subjects usual for this position—the Evangelists and the Doctors of the Church—and to choose something different.<sup>1</sup> And so he painted Judith with the head of Holofernes, David with the head of Goliath, Jael hammering a nail into Sisera, and Samson killing a thousand with a jawbone. Though designed to illustrate the zeal with which heresy must always be thwarted, the Roman populace was less reverent, and the word went around that: 'anyone who wants to buy good meat should go to S. Ignazio, as four new butchers have just opened there!'

'It was', wrote the artist's biographer 'because of the extraordinary reputation acquired through this painting [the dome], not only by Padre Andrea, the artist, but also by the Society, which commissioned it, that the idea was born of painting the entire vault of the same church of S. Ignazio, the greatest task that could be performed by an artist; and although the reverend fathers were agreed to employ Padre Pozzo, yet they moved with considerable caution before undertaking it, so as to consult the famous painters and architects of Rome.'<sup>2</sup> The vault had previously been decorated with stucco work, which the artist ruthlessly destroyed, saying that it was 'more suitable for a kitchen than for a church'. For this step, inevitable, of course, if he was to paint the vault, he was so bitterly attacked that the Jesuits were frightened of going about for fear of receiving some public affront. They considered, therefore, abandoning the work and leaving the vault as it was. But by now it was too late, and in 1688 Pozzo began his colossal undertaking (Plate 15).

In later years the artist himself explained the meaning of his fresco at great length.<sup>3</sup> Essentially it was based on the words of Christ as reported by St Luke: 'I am come to send fire on the earth: but what will I, if it be already kindled?' Adapting this reference from the Church to St Ignatius himself—had not the saint often encouraged his disciples with the words 'Go and set everything aflame'?—Pozzo turned the whole ceiling into a vast celebration of the Jesuit missionaries. '... In the middle of the vault I have painted the figure of Jesus, who sends forth a ray of light to the heart of Ignatius, which is then transmitted by him to the most distant hearts of the four parts of the world. ... From the breast of the Redeemer there emerges another ray which strikes a shield, on which is painted the Name of Jesus, the crown of light. And this means that the Redeemer, having as his purpose the glory of His name, wishes to honour Ignatius. . . .'

<sup>1</sup> Pascoli, II, p. 257: '... volle uscir da tali soggetti, et inventarne altri nuovi. . . .'

<sup>2</sup> Baldinucci MS. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Tietze, 1914-15, pp. 432-46.

This short extract from Pozzo's description makes it clear that he too was following one of the constant features of Jesuit decoration—the impact made on this world by the forces of the next instead of the more usual scheme in which the saints are shown receiving their rewards and rising to eternal bliss.

All this lavish decoration turned the three principal Jesuit churches into the most spectacular in Rome, as they were the first to point out.<sup>1</sup> But even after they had been completed, the very energy that had been employed seemed to encourage further efforts, and in the last few years of the century many new works were undertaken. Among them was the most elaborate chapel ever conceived, dedicated to the founder of the movement which had so signally triumphed.

The chapel in the left transept of the Gesù belonged to the heirs of Cardinal Savelli.<sup>2</sup> Dedicated originally to the Crucifixion, the altar had been designed but never completed by Giacomo della Porta. After the death of the Cardinal, his heirs seem to have taken no interest in the chapel for over a century, and it thus reverted unofficially into the hands of the Jesuits. When Ignatius was canonised in 1622, they moved his remains to this chapel, and above them placed the picture painted for the occasion by Van Dyck. Fifteen years later, the Jesuits were offered a superb urn, modelled by Algardi, in which to place the saint's bones, and at the same time Pietro da Cortona built a new altar to replace della Porta's uncompleted one, the expense of which was presumably borne by the Jesuits themselves. In 1646, the Eighth General Congregation of the Society agreed that a more ambitious monument should be established. They drew up a memorandum which pointed out that St Dominic in Bologna, St Francis in Assisi and St Benedict in Montecassino were all suitably commemorated; surely St Ignatius, who alone of all the saintly founders of Orders was buried in Rome, should also have a fine memorial. In view, however, of the Society's 'extreme poverty and the disastrous times', nothing further was done. Four years after this a vast legacy was left to the Jesuits in Peru, who thereupon planned to build a college in Ignatius' birthplace in the province of Vizcaya. The General of the Society, Padre Nickel, suggested that the money would be better employed in decorating a chapel in the Gesù in Rome. But the Spaniards evidently did not welcome this idea, and soon began to spread rumours that the General wanted the money 'for his own private use'. Again, the matter was dropped.

Meanwhile, vast sums began to pour in from all over Europe for the building of the chapel. When Oliva became General, he was determined to have the monument to Ignatius not in the transept but under the High Altar, as the most spectacular feature of the tribune, which was to be lavishly decorated by Giacomo Borgognone. It has been pointed out that the parsimony and delay of the Duke of Parma made this impossible, and Oliva died, disappointed, in 1681. The four-year Generalship of his Belgian successor, Charles de Noyelle, was too short for much to be done, but under the Spaniard, Tirso Gonzalez, who took over in 1687, the undertaking was again resumed in the transept chapel. But there was yet another problem. The Jesuits were anxious that the

<sup>1</sup> Pascoli, II, p. 260.

<sup>2</sup> Pecchiai, 1952, pp. 259 ff.

building of the chapel of St Ignatius should remain entirely in their own hands. The site officially still belonged to the Savelli, and it needed the mediation of the Holy Roman Emperor to induce Prince Giulio, the head of the family, to give up its patronage in return for special references to the beneficence of his ancestor, the Cardinal.

The Jesuits thus had the money and the rights of patronage with which to build the great altar they planned. But many members of the Society, as well as various architects who were consulted, still thought, as Oliva had done, that the tribune was by far the most suitable position. This, however, was impossible as the Duke of Parma flatly refused permission, and so the Jesuits reluctantly resigned themselves to the left transept.

A competition was organised and caused an uproar. Architects and their patrons, aware that this was the finest opportunity in Rome, jockeyed for position, slandered their rivals and intrigued with gusto. The inevitable choice of Pozzo's plans did nothing to help the situation. Letters, signed and anonymous, poured in on the unfortunate father in charge of the arrangements. The Duke of Parma was told that the church was being wrecked; that in order to economise, white marble was being rubbed with yoke of egg to make it appear yellow; that the whole organisation was a 'confusion of babel'. Pozzo threatened to withdraw; there were endless debates as to whether a statue or a picture inspired greater devotion; more architects were consulted. Finally, in May 1695 after much hesitation, the General, Tirso Gonzalez, made his irrevocable decision and forbade any further criticisms. Pozzo was put in complete charge of the altar.

He chose the craftsmen and organised competitions for the sculptors. To avoid still more intrigues all the drawings and models were exhibited in the Galleria Farnese, and the artists invited to be present. They were then asked to vote, in private, for the one they thought the best, excluding their own. The most important piece of sculpture was, naturally, the statue of St Ignatius, and the competition for this was won by the Frenchman Pierre Legros. While the voting took place crowds waited impatiently in the Casa Professa, and when the decision was announced, French students carried him through the streets in triumph, shouting 'Viva, viva, Monsù Le Gros.' The authorities of the French Academy in Rome, where Legros was a student, were less enthusiastic, and after he had also agreed to make a large marble group of *Religion triumphing over Heresy* to be placed on one side of the altar, he was dismissed for accepting private commissions in defiance of his status as a pensioner of the King of France.<sup>1</sup> He thereupon remained in Rome and became the Jesuits' principal sculptor. However, as if to show that they were in no way concerned to promote one particular style, they chose for the group of *Faith crushing Idolatry*, to be placed on the other side of the altar, the work of another Frenchman, Jean Baptiste Théodon, whose heavily classical lumpiness was a total contrast to Legros' dramatic, Baroque vigour. Two further large figures showing Doctors of the Church were also planned, but because it was 'considered not suitable that [they] should pay court to the Saint', this scheme was abandoned.

Within the altar itself there is much fineness of craftsmanship and complexity of detail. But these more subtle features—such as the bas-reliefs depicting the life and

<sup>1</sup> Baumgarten.

miracles of St Ignatius—are embedded in such a mass of colour and riot of ornamentation that they are easy to overlook. For here at last is that direct Jesuit assault on the emotions that the Protestant traveller from England thought he had experienced nearly a century earlier.

That this policy was now deliberate is shown by other commissions of the time—most notably the gruesome polychrome figure by Legros of St Stanislas Kostka on his deathbed, which was kept in a badly lit room in the novitiate ‘where it powerfully moves those who come to see it’.<sup>1</sup> But to sum up Jesuit art in this way, as did nineteenth-century writers, is wholly inaccurate. All the art of the Baroque had a strongly emotional character, and for much of the seventeenth century the Jesuits were merely trying to follow current styles—often with some difficulty owing to lack of money or patrons. When in the second half of the century they were at last able to employ artists for themselves, their tendency was to stress the doctrinal elements of their beliefs in rather greater detail than was usual in Roman churches. In fact, the powerfully illusionistic art that they fostered in S. Andrea al Quirinale, the Gesù and above all S. Ignazio long after such decoration had vanished elsewhere was prompted by just such considerations. The Jesuits, even when spiritually decadent and attacked on all sides for the corruption of their ideals, were above all missionaries. Their art was therefore worldly in a truer sense than is generally meant by that term. They always aimed to display the workings of God’s grace (naturally through the Society of Jesus) on the human soul and they showed correspondingly less interest in the individual salvation of the already blessed. It was this that gave a logical force to the ceilings of their churches that is lacking in most others. In the Chiesa Nuova we look up and see a private miracle, wholly characteristic of an Order that worshipped the Virgin and St Philip above all else; in the Gesù and S. Ignazio we are witnesscs of a universal theme in whose development we ourselves play an essential part.

<sup>1</sup> For the history of this figure and the very interesting debate among the Jesuits that resulted from a proposal to move it to the church itself see F. Haskell, 1955, pp. 287–91.

In 1697 Padre Pozzo designed an altar in the left transept of S. Ignazio which Legros completed with an appealing bas-relief representing *The Assumption of the Blessed Luigi Gonzaga*. The chapel in the right transept was only completed in 1749 when Filippo della Valle and Pietro Bracci made a marble bas-relief of the *Annunciation*—see Fabrini.

In 1710 Pierre Legros completed the monument to Pope Gregory XV and Cardinal Ludovisi in the same church. Many documents relating to this project are preserved in the Jesuit Archives: *Ecclesia S. Ignatii de Urbe*, 1255.