

Chapter 2

POPE URBAN VIII AND HIS ENTOURAGE

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MAFFEO BARBERINI was born in Florence in 1568 of an old, distinguished and rich family of merchants.¹ He went to a Jesuit school where he showed great enthusiasm for classical literature, and at the age of 16 he was called to Rome by his uncle Monsignor Francesco, who held a number of posts at the papal court. There and at Pisa he continued his education and took a degree in law, although he was mainly interested in poetry, partly stimulated, no doubt, by the reputation of his famous fourteenth-century ancestor Francesco. A plan to marry came to nothing, and instead he began slowly to climb the ladder of papal preferment, making full use of his uncle's prestige and purse. From the first he showed a tenacious and skilful determination to rise, which impressed all who met him. St Philip Neri prophesied that he would one day be a cardinal. His own ambitions may well have been greater.

If so, the Rome of Sixtus V in which he was now living must inevitably have made a deep and lasting effect on him. That ruthless Pope was making the most determined efforts to give back to Rome its position as centre of the world. Lawlessness, encouraged by the ancient feudal families which still dominated the Campagna if no longer the city itself, was pitilessly trampled on, and the Pope was changing the government of the Church from an oligarchy to an absolute dictatorship. At the same time he was submitting the city of Rome to the most drastic treatment it had ever received and was laying the outlines of its future development for over two centuries. Streets were hacked through the clusters of mediaeval houses that still huddled round the nobles' palaces, opening up vast perspectives and joining the main churches across the hills and valleys. Egyptian obelisks, crowned with the emblems of triumphant Christianity, punctuated the squares and told their own story. Grandiose fountains brought fresh water to wholly new residential areas. The palaces and streets and fountains were austere, harsh and strictly functional, but towering over the city one glorious achievement was finally brought to fruition. In 1590 Michelangelo's dome of St Peter's was completed. Shortly afterwards the Pope died. He had reigned only five years, but during that time he had created a new city—Sistine Rome.

As the ambitious young prelate walked past the scaffolding and the gangs of workmen employed by Sixtus's energetic architect Domenico Fontana, he was thus able to see for himself what could be achieved by power, money and ruthlessness. Only one thing was missing—Taste. And of that Maffeo Barberini had plenty.

¹ For the Barberini and Urban VIII in particular see, unless otherwise indicated, Pastor, XIII, and Pecchiai, 1959.

Plate I



VALENTIN: Allegory of Rome

Plate 2

THE BARBERINI PATRONS (*see Plates 2 and 3*)



b. BERNINI: Maffeo Barberini as Pope Urban VIII



a ATTRIBUTED TO CARAVAGGIO: Maffeo Barberini as young prelate

Plate 3



FRANCISC³ S.R.E. CARD. BARBERINVS.

Supri 105 p. 1624. Epius Octavius Leo Rom: pictor fecit.

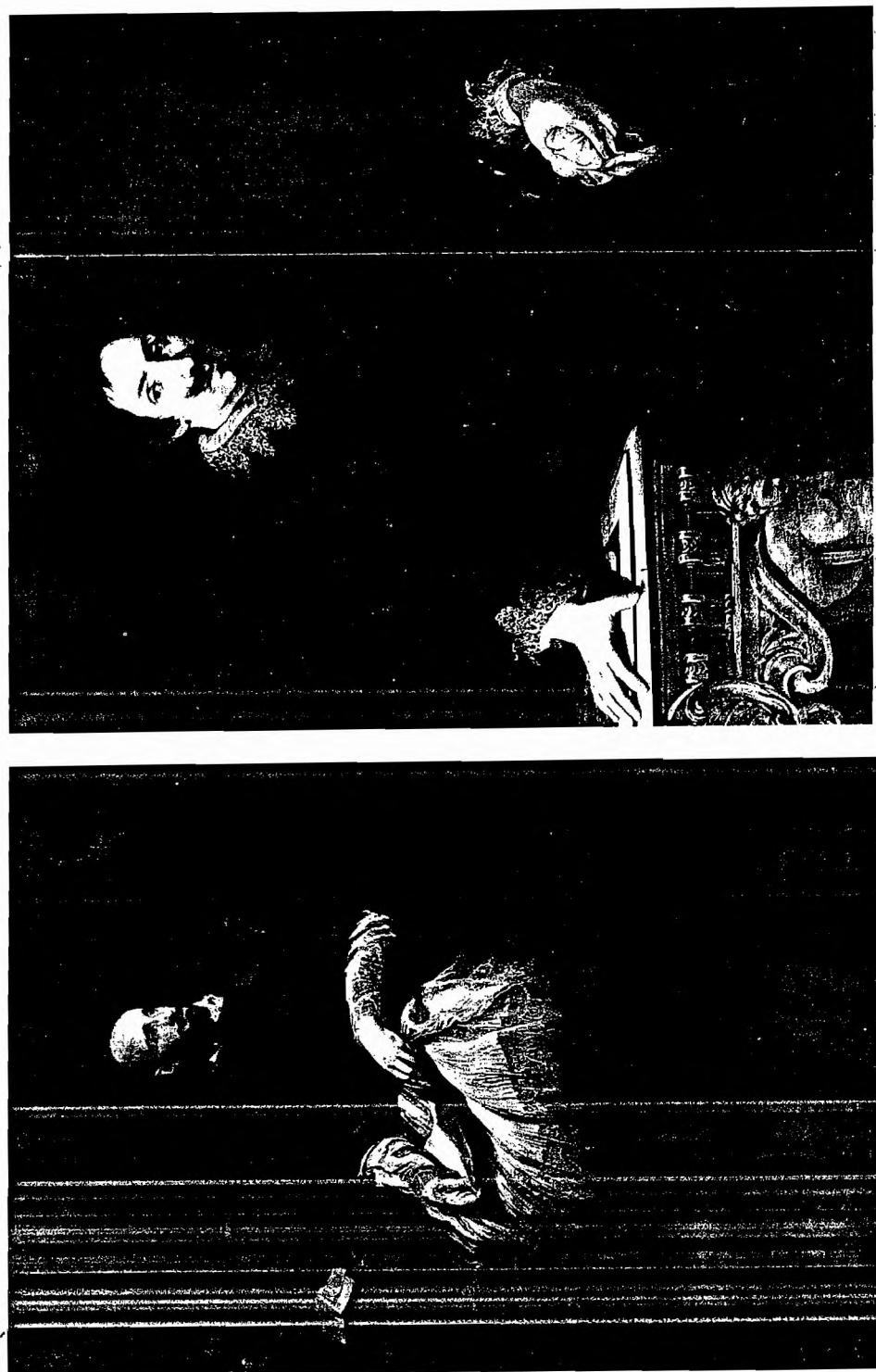
a. OTTAVIO LEONI: Cardinal Francesco Barberini



b. CARLO MARATTA: Cardinal Antonio Barberini

ARTISTIC ADVISERS TO THE BARBERINI

Plate 4



a. VAN DYCK: Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio

b. PIETRO DA CORTONA: Marcello Sacchetti

While his political career made satisfactory progress (by 1592, at the age of 24, he was governor of Fano), he continued to write poetry and began to show a discerning and adventurous liking for the arts. In about 1595 he had his portrait painted by a young painter who was just beginning to attract attention through the patronage of Cardinal Francesco del Monte—Michelangelo da Caravaggio¹ (Plate 2a). The painting which is thought to be this portrait shows us a seated Maffeo Barberini as he turns eagerly towards us, a lively but quizzical expression on his face, his right arm outstretched, while in his left hand he clutches a letter. Maffeo admired this powerful picture enough to return to the same artist (now very much better known) a few years later and commission from him a subject more suited to his talents—*The Sacrifice of Abraham*, ‘who holds the knife near the throat of his son who screams and falls’.²

In 1598 Barberini accompanied Pope Clement VIII on his visit to Ferrara to take over the city, and learnt another lesson which was to stand him in good stead some thirty years later when Urbino too fell into the hands of the papacy. The town was won by a combination of firm diplomacy and unscrupulous pressure, and once there the Pope and his entourage took full advantage of their new prize. In particular the art treasures accumulated by the Este over the centuries were looted, and among the pictures which Cardinal Aldobrandini, the papal nephew, brought with him back to Rome were Titian’s *Worship of Venus*, *The Andrians* and *Bacchus and Ariadne*.³ Curiously enough these pictures attracted little attention in Rome until Maffeo Barberini himself became Pope nearly a quarter of a century later. They then helped to lay the foundations for a wholly new artistic style.⁴

In 1600 his uncle died and left him a fortune variously estimated at 100,000 and 400,000 *scudi*. He was now in a position to have a rich family chapel built for himself, and within four years he was boasting that he had already spent ‘many thousand *scudi*'.⁵ For this purpose he chose the recently begun Theatine church of S. Andrea della Valle, which was much patronised by the Florentine colony in Rome.⁶ His architect, Matteo Castelli, was certainly more worthy than distinguished and he worked in a style that was becoming increasingly common: its effectiveness depended on the use of sumptuously coloured and polished marble as had been introduced by Sixtus V in S. Maria Maggiore and was later to be adopted by Paul V in the same

¹ Longhi, 1963.

² Bellori, p. 208. Mr Mahon dates this picture, now in the Uffizi, 1597–8. Roger Hinks (1953, p. 104) suggests a year or two later.

³ A. Venturi, pp. 113–31.

⁴ Though the Cavaliere d’Arpino copied them (see MS. note in Baglione, p. 372) and Albani must have studied them when he came to Rome in 1601–2. John Walker suggests that it is unlikely that Rubens made copies of the *Worship of Venus* and *The Andrians* during his visit to Rome. His versions of these pictures, now in Stockholm, date from very much later in his career and were probably made from copies by some other artist.

⁵ See his letter to Barocci in 1604 published by Pollak, 1913, p. 5.

⁶ Other chapels belonged to the Strozzi and the Rucellai—Ortolani.

basilica. Maffeo Barberini was, however, among the first to follow the fashion, and in the early years of the seventeenth century the richness and grandeur of his chapel, though smaller than those in S. Maria Maggiore, must have been startling—the more so as the church itself was only half constructed. Moreover, Barberini took a deep personal interest in the decoration,¹ and the final result when completed many years later reflected the fastidiousness of his taste. The quality of the detail is exceptionally high and the harsh, strident and over brilliant colouring of other patrician chapels is notably toned down (Plate 8). He was reluctantly compelled to admit that Federico Barocci was too old to paint an altarpiece, though he implored the artist to send him a picture for his private apartments in the palace he had acquired near that of the Farnese—‘as long as it is by you I do not mind what the subject is’.² Instead he turned to his compatriot, Domenico Passignani, at the time one of the most fashionable painters in Rome. Passignani proposed that the cupola should be adorned with coloured mosaic and gilt stucco ribs, and he suggested a number of artists who would be suitable.³ Eventually, however, he himself was commissioned to cover it with frescoes of the Virtues with angels and in the spandrels Moses, David, Solomon and Isaiah. He also painted the canvases and frescoes in the lunettes with Scenes from the Life of the Virgin, which are certainly his masterpieces.

At the end of 1604 Maffeo Barberini, by now a Bishop, was appointed Apostolic Nunzio in Paris. He had already paid a short visit some years earlier to congratulate Henri IV on the birth of his eldest son, and his return was warmly welcomed in France. His three years there proved immensely important, for they determined the whole of his political outlook. With strong backing from the French he was made Cardinal in 1606 despite the death of his special patron Clement VIII. When he returned to Rome a year later he took back with him great riches (the usual reward of a nunzio who went out of his way to please his hosts), ‘un buffet de vaisselle d’argent vermeil doré pesant environ quatre cens marcs, duquel nous [Henri IV] luy avons faict dons’ and, as his emblem, the bees from the French royal coat of arms. The cultural effects were even more important. Years later, when he was Pope, a Venetian ambassador was to write⁴: ‘He has a special taste for the kind of studies which most appeal to the French, such as polite letters, out-of-the-way knowledge, poetry, an aptitude for languages. . . .’

He had continued, while in Paris, with the decoration of his chapel in S. Andrea della Valle, and had also joined with his brother Carlo in buying and furnishing a palace near the Via de’ Giubbonari to match his new status. In fact, he stayed in Rome only a brief time during which, however, he argued with the greatest cogency against Paul V’s intention to alter Michelangelo’s plan for St. Peter’s and add a nave as proposed by

¹ Besides the evidence in the two following notes, see the draft and completed version of a courteous letter, dated 30 April 1611, from Maffeo Barberini presumably to the architect in which he reproaches him for his absence and refers to ‘mio disegno’ for the chapel—Biblioteca Vaticana: Barb. Lat. 5820, cc. 14 and 17.

² Pollak, 1913, p. 5.

³ *ibid.*, p. 33: Letter of 26 July 1605 addressed to Maffeo Barberini in Paris.

⁴ Barozzi e Berchet, I, p. 174: Renier Zeno, 1621-3.

Carlo Maderno.¹ He then moved out of Rome, first to Spoleto of which he was made Bishop and then, in 1611, to Bologna where he went as Legate—one of the most influential posts in the papal government. After another visit to Spoleto he returned to Rome in 1617 and stayed there for the rest of his life.

In Rome, Cardinal Barberini found the atmosphere very different from when he had last been settled there at the beginning of the century (he had, of course, paid repeated visits to the city in the meantime). Pope Paul V and his nephew Cardinal Scipione Borghese were spending spectacular sums on palaces, churches, chapels, fountains and picture collections, and their example was being followed by a host of courtiers. Their main resources were devoted to St Peter's, which had been radically transformed by the completion of the nave and façade, S. Maria Maggiore where the family chapel outdid that of Sixtus V in richness and colour, and the Quirinal Palace where teams of artists were at work on the decoration of the newly built rooms. Almost equal attention was being paid to the Borghese country houses, both on the Pincio and at Frascati.

The essential change that had occurred in the arts during the pontificate of Paul V was the abandonment of the austere functionalism that had characterised most architecture, painting and sculpture during the previous few reigns. After the beginning of the new century there was a revived delight in the texture of surfaces, the possibilities of enlivening façades through the interplay of light and shadow, a release of emotion through brilliant colour, an enjoyment of the solid body as opposed to the attenuated cryptograms of much late Mannerist painting, the exploitation of new themes such as landscapes and still lives, the re-emergence of the easel picture and lighter pagan subjects, all combined with a striking freedom from dogmatic theory and a readiness to indulge in every kind of experiment. No one played a greater part in the encouragement and enjoyment of these changes than Cardinal Scipione Borghese (Plate 5).

Though well-born, he was a man of few intellectual attainments, and characterised—as the Venetian ambassador pointed out²—by ‘the mediocrity of his learning and a life largely devoted to the cultivation of pleasures and pastimes’. He was generally good humoured, but wholly ruthless in fulfilling his passionate love of art. He obtained 105 pictures—including a number of Caravaggios—by having them confiscated from the unfortunate painter Cavaliere d’Arpino, who was in difficulties with the tax collectors—and this despite the fact that d’Arpino was among the artists whom he himself often employed³; Raphael’s *Deposition* was, on his orders, stolen from the Baglioni family chapel in Perugia and removed by night to his collection; Domenichino was imprisoned because he had the rashness to abide by his contract with Cardinal Aldobrandini, who had commissioned from him a *Hunt of Diana* which Scipione coveted. (Plate 7).⁴ By these and more orthodox means Cardinal Borghese managed to accumulate a wonderful

¹ Pastor, XII, pp. 691-2.

² Barozzi e Berchet, I, p. 158: Renier Zeno, 1621-3.

³ See articles by de Rinaldis in *Bollettino d’Arte*, 1936, pp. 577-80, and *Archivi*, 1936, pp. 110-18.

⁴ For both these instances and a general account of Scipione’s collecting see Paola della Pergola, Vol. I and II, 1955-59.

collection of paintings which, to the modern eye, appears to have been formed on no guiding principle other than an enthusiastic and undiscriminating appetite. Old masters, the Bolognese of every tendency, Caravaggio, Rubens, the elder generation of Mannerists—all were amply represented in his collections. His villa on the Pincio—the ‘delizia di Roma’—set in an extensive park and enriched with niches and statuary like some fantastic confectionary was the centre of the most hedonistic society that Rome had known since the Renaissance (Plate 6). Indeed, astonishing as were Scipione’s actual commissions to Guido Reni (who painted his fresco of *Aurora* for one of the Cardinal’s *casini*), to Bernini and to innumerable other artists, the very example of his way of life and carefree patronage were even more important in bringing about a new era.

In 1621 Paul V died, and after a short conclave was succeeded by the old and ill Gregory XV. Quite suddenly everything changed. The cardinals who had flocked to Scipione’s sumptuous banquets, the artists, retainers and sycophants who had thronged his halls, all deserted him. He was left alone and bitter among the treasures that had testified to his riches and enthusiasms—such drastic changes of fortune were now regular features of the Roman scene.¹ The new Pope and his vigorous young nephew Ludovico Ludovisi monopolised the finest talents, and, inevitably, gave their Bolognese compatriots Domenichino and Guercino complete supremacy. But now there was a definite policy to replace the cheerful chaos of Borghese patronage. Holding the influential post of Secretary of State was Monsignor Agucchi, also a Bolognese.² A man of wide learning and a theoretical cast of mind, he was highly selective in his love of painting and convinced that princes must be guided by men ‘of enlightened knowledge’ (such as himself) in their encouragement of it. He had watched Annibale Carracci at work in the Farnese palace and befriended his young pupil Domenichino. From his contacts with these artists, from his reading of literary criticism, especially Aristotle, and, no doubt from the promptings of his own temperament, he had sketched out a theory of art during a period of retirement from public life between 1607 and 1615. In this he rejected the views attributed to Caravaggio and his followers that painting consisted ‘merely of the imitation of nature’. Rather it must aim at an ideal exemplified most fully in the works of the ancients, of Raphael and of his young Bolognese protégés. Now, in power, he had the chance for two brief years to assert these views. Domenichino was given every encouragement, and Guercino’s painterly exuberance showed signs of modification. A brief ‘classic’ reaction set in after the wide tolerance of the previous twenty years.³ If the immediate results were too few to be very noticeable, the long-term impact was none the less of the greatest importance.

Other patrons besides the Popes and their nephews were active and influential in Rome. The corrupt and sophisticated Cardinal del Monte, representative of the Grand Duke of Tuscany and living in the splendid official residence behind the Piazza Navona, was now (in 1617) an old man of 68—described a few years later as ‘a living corpse . . .

¹ For the temporary disgrace of Scipione see Barozzi e Berchet, I, pp. 158–9, and Memmoli, p. 42.

² For the fullest account of Agucchi and his theories see Mahon, 1947, pp. 111–54.

³ Pope-Hennessy, 1946, pp. 186–91.

given up entirely to spiritual matters, perhaps so as to make up for the licence of his younger days'.¹ At the beginning of the century he had, indeed, lived largely for pleasure—banquets, theatrical entertainment, parties 'where, as there were no ladies present, the dancing was done by boys dressed up as girls'. This side of his life had been reflected in a series of canvases of effeminate young boys by Caravaggio, whose first serious patron he had been and who had lived in his household.² But long after Caravaggio's death and right into old age Cardinal del Monte had continued to explore the studios for new artists of talent. He launched the landscape painter Filippo d'Angeli (Napoletono)³ and shortly before dying he used his overwhelming influence on the Committee in charge of decorating St Peter's to obtain an important commission for the virtually unknown Andrea Sacchi, whom he had employed in his *casino* near the Piazza del Popolo.⁴

The Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani (Plate 17b), the exceedingly rich son of a Genoese nobleman, was meanwhile filling his palace near S. Luigi dei Francesi and the country house at Bassano di Sutri, which he himself had helped to design, with antique sculpture and one of the most remarkable collections of paintings in Rome.⁵ He and his brother Benedetto had been among Caravaggio's most enthusiastic supporters, and Vincenzo continued to employ some of Caravaggio's Northern followers after the master himself had died. In the 'large room with old pictures' in his palace were hung thirteen by Caravaggio—by far the largest group in existence—along with others by the Carracci, the great masters of the Venetian High Renaissance and by Luca Cambiaso, the Genoese painter whose experiments with lighting may well have seemed to anticipate those of Caravaggio. Most of these paintings were religious, but set apart, on the advice of the German Joachim von Sandrart, behind a special curtain, was the one that most appealed to its proprietor—the winged, yet all too human, Cupid sitting on a rumpled bed and scornfully trampling on all those symbols of culture that Giustiniani was so keenly fostering. This remarkable picture, with its sophisticated eroticism, was the only one to suggest that Giustiniani shared Cardinal del Monte's specialised interest in Caravaggio.

Vincenzo Giustiniani showed by the arrangement of his pictures that he placed contemporary art on the very highest level and their variety makes it clear that his taste, like that of all patrons at the time, was wide and catholic. Indeed he even wrote an essay to theorise his eclecticism and show that he was prepared to see the finer points in a number of different styles. And yet his taste, as revealed in his actual collection

¹ Barozzi e Berchet, I, p. 162. See also the many references in Orbaan, 1920, and the avviso of 1624 published in *Roma*, XVII, 1939, p. 270.

² For del Monte and Caravaggio see Friedlaender.

³ Passeri, p. 293.

⁴ Bellori, 1976, p. 541.

⁵ For Giustiniani see the inventory of his pictures published by Salerno, 1960; and also the articles by Paolo Portoghesi, M. V. Brugnoli, Italo Falda and I. Toesca in 1957. The work on the Giustiniani by Carlo Hopf which Dr. Salerno and other investigators have been unable to trace was published in the *Giornale Linguistico*, Genoa, in 1881 and 1882. It is of no importance for the Marchese Vincenzo.

rather than in his writings, was far more clearly defined than that of anyone else of his age. Almost alone, and with the perception that usually comes only from hindsight, he realised the full implications of the artistic revolution that had occurred at the end of the sixteenth century. The elder generation of Mannerists, the Cavaliere d'Arpino, Federigo Zuccari, Passignano and others who still played a notable part in the artistic life of the city, were scarcely represented in his palace, while all his attention was concentrated on the great reformers Caravaggio, the Carracci and their followers.

Giustiniani gave a special welcome to Northern artists in Rome, many of whom lived in his palace. He himself had travelled in the Low Countries during a four-month trip to Northern Europe in 1606, accompanied by the painter Cristoforo Roncalli, known as Pomarancio.¹ The two men had visited churches and private collections and discussed pictures and landscapes with an acuteness and expertise that were quite exceptional at the time. On his return Vincenzo Giustiniani had the broadest and most deeply experienced artistic culture of any man in Rome and indeed Europe—with the single exception of Rubens.

Cardinal Barberini meanwhile maintained a great household and lived splendidly. He moved, above all, in a circle of writers, scholars, scientists and poets, and engaged in a learned correspondence with the Provençal antiquary Peiresc.² He decorated his palace with paintings—by old masters such as Raphael, Correggio, Andrea del Sarto, Giulio Romano, Parmigianino and others³—and he also commissioned modern pictures by Guido Reni, who had worked for him during his legateship in Bologna,⁴ and by Pomarancio from whom he acquired a *Jacob and the Angel*.⁵ A group of Florentine sculptors was completing the decoration of his family chapel in S. Andrea della Valle, among them Pietro Bernini. Maffeo Barberini was quick to appreciate the genius of his son Gian Lorenzo, and he was among the first men in Rome to commission a work from him—a St Sebastian, designed originally for his chapel, but in fact retained in the palace.⁶ But such recognition was as yet of little use: a sculptor as brilliant as the young Bernini soon showed himself to be could only be employed by the most powerful families in Rome, and the Barberini could not aspire to that claim. Above all the reigning Pope Paul V and his nephew Scipione Borghese and then, after 1621, the Ludovisi monopolised Bernini's output. Maffeo had to bide his time and content himself with writing witty moralising epigrams in Latin on the sculptor's group of *Apollo and Daphne* and holding up the mirror for him to carve his own features as *David*. As he did so he must already have been planning that when the moment came he would certainly put the sculptor to more spectacular use than such essentially minor though pleasing works.

¹ See the remarkable journal kept by Giustiniani's friend Bernardo Bizoni published by Anna Banti.

² Biblioteca Vaticana—MSS. Barb. Lat. 6502—Letters from Peiresc to Maffeo Barberini, 1618-23.

³ Orbaan, 1920, p. 237.

⁴ Letter from Guido Reni in Rome dated 15 February 1614—Pollak, 1913, p. 44.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶ Wittkower, 1955, p. 176.

That moment came in 1623. On 6 August, after a stormy conclave, Maffeo Barberini achieved his ambition and was elected Pope, as Urban VIII. He was only 55 and in the best of health. From the first he made it clear that his was going to be the supreme power in the state—‘the only use of Cardinals these days’, wrote the Venetian ambassador,¹ ‘is to act as a grandiose crown for the Pope’. At once he began to surround himself with his relations and friends. Six weeks after his election he made his 26-year-old nephew Francesco a Cardinal; a year later his brother Antonio, a Capuchin monk, received the same dignity, as did his other brother’s brother-in-law Lorenzo Magalotti. Four years later followed the Pope’s younger nephew, Antonio, aged only 19. Antonio’s brother Taddeo was given important political posts, great wealth and the prospect of a rich and aristocratic wife. Most of these men were fond of the arts, and to their patronage Rome owes some of its greatest achievements.

Nepotism was a recognised feature of the papal system—so much so that the ambitious nephew of one *papabile* cardinal was in 1635 to use witchcraft in an attempt to do away with Urban VIII and thus ensure his own fortune.² With jealousies so strong there was much to be said for the Pope employing a close relation as his most intimate adviser. Moreover, wealth and status went hand-in-hand, and the enrichment of the papal family was therefore looked upon as inevitable, if not actually desirable. Indeed status itself was so precarious in view of frequent shifts of power that extreme wealth provided the only ultimate security for those prepared to take office.³ Nor was much distinction made between the papal treasury and any pope’s personal income. Yet despite all this, Urban VIII was universally held by his contemporaries and by his successors to have exceeded all reasonable limits.⁴ The consequences were many, and only a few can be referred to here. The still existing, though already shadowy, self-government of the city of Rome virtually came to an end, and the Senate did little more than propose the erection of monuments dedicated to various members of the Barberini family. And the great feudal clans which had once tyrannised the city suffered irreparable damage. Living on the fixed incomes of their landed estates and participating in the great European wars, they were quite unable to compete with the wealth that poured into the papal court from all over the world and was then consumed in spectacular monuments or great ceremonial occasions. Their disintegration had been going on for a long time: now it reached its climax. In 1624, for instance, the Orsini sold their estates at Monte Rotondo to Carlo Barberini; a year later the Colonna sold their Castle of Roviano to the same buyer. Finally, in 1629, another branch of the family was compelled to sell the principality of Palestrina to the Barberini for 175,000 *scudi*.⁵

¹ Barozzi e Berchet, I, p. 157.

² Rosi, pp. 347-70.

³ See the acute comments of Pietro Contarini, 1623-7, in Barozzi e Berchet, I, p. 207.

⁴ See J. Grisar, S. J., for the most modern study of the subject.

⁵ Pastor, XIII, pp. 260-1. Prince Francesco Colonna’s letter announcing the sale is published by the Abbate Michele Giustiniani, I, p. 116. See also *avviso* of 23 January 1630 in Biblioteca Vaticana—Urb. Lat. 1100.

Their only purpose, henceforth, was to provide suitably aristocratic wives for the upstarts who had taken their place in the government of Rome. After some hesitation, in view of the family's Spanish affiliations, Anna Colonna, daughter of the Contestabile, was chosen as bride for Don Taddeo, the Pope's nephew.¹

When Urban VIII came to the throne the papal states were rich enough. The Venetian ambassadors estimated their income to be two million *scudi* a year, and pointed out that, despite the absence of trade, the city was almost self-supporting, 'being extremely fertile in wheat, wine, oil and all those things which make nations prosperous and esteemed'.² Moreover the pope's financial patronage extended all over Italy, and important posts could be—and were—sold to the highest bidder at large profits.

The new Pope professed himself determined to maintain this wealth. 'He blames those of his predecessors who have consumed the inheritance of the Church in buildings and other things of the kind.'³ It was not long before he followed their example on a vast scale. The aggrandisement and beautifying of Rome had acquired an impetus of its own. To refrain from continuing needed far greater will power than Urban VIII possessed. Nor, despite his protestations to the commercially minded Venetian ambassador, can he ever have seriously thought such a move desirable. As the nation states of Europe increased their power, the prestige of Rome came to depend more and more on the grandeur of her impact. The ambassadors themselves recognised this: 'In Italy,' wrote Pietro Contarini in 1623,⁴ 'the Pope owns a superb state with several cities well worthy of it; and Rome especially, where the Popes usually live in recognition of her having formerly been mistress of the world, both for the ancient survivals of her past greatness and for the modern features which can be seen and which are cared for with perhaps equal attention, is a sort of emporium of the Universe. To Rome people come from every country as they have done at all times to see her splendours; and it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that they come to pay her tribute, as she is as much the motherland of foreigners, as of her own citizens.' Even had the economic situation been infinitely graver, was it not a duty to continue this policy of beautifying the city? Besides, there were other arguments in its favour. One Pope, we are told,⁵ 'used to say that it was public charity to build, and all princes should do so: because it brought assistance to the public and to private citizens, and employment on buildings greatly helped the people'. And so Urban VIII could envisage personal satisfaction and general benefit in the great works he planned.

As Pope, Urban VIII combined three important functions. He was the spiritual director of the Catholic world whose centre was Rome; he was the absolute monarch of one of the richest states in Italy; and he was the proud head of an ambitious family. The nature and scope of his patronage was deeply affected by all three considerations,

¹ See the comments of the Venetian ambassadors in Barozzi e Berchet, I, pp. 153-4.

² *ibid.*, I, p. 228.

³ *ibid.*, I, p. 230.

⁴ *ibid.*, I, p. 200.

⁵ Baglione, p. 4—of Pope Gregory XIII, quoted by Orbaan, 1920, p. xv.

which at times set up insoluble tensions. Yet greatly as they overlapped or conflicted, his patronage can perhaps best be appreciated by looking at them separately.

As a temporal and spiritual leader Urban VIII was faced with a situation whose all too obvious dangers were only surpassed by those more subtle threats which were eventually to undermine the whole status of the papacy. The immediate problem was no longer the Protestant advance which had caused so much trouble to his predecessors: the reconciliation of Henri IV in 1593 and the Battle of the White Hill in 1621 had proved effective barriers—indeed the sense of triumph which so many observers have noted in the style of the mature Baroque, contemporary with Urban VIII, no doubt reflected the impact of these overwhelming victories. The problem lay rather in the traditional enmity between the two great Catholic powers, France and the Hapsburg Empire, whose jockeyings for position and searches for allies frequently threatened the peace of Italy and the security of the papal states. And so the attention paid by Urban VIII to fortifications both in and out of Rome had a far greater effect on his contemporaries than is usually recognised, and was recorded in many works of art.¹ Though he tried to remain neutral, Urban was in fact compelled to lean much too heavily on his alliance with France—a situation that was eagerly turned to advantage by the unscrupulous Richelieu and that helped to reinforce the already strong French aspects of his culture.

But within Rome the situation was more complex and much harder to deal with. The severity of the Counter Reformation had uprooted the gravest evils of the city, but when it was relaxed a much more dangerous spiritual crisis was revealed. The old explanations no longer satisfied: instead, serious scientific experiments as conducted by the Accademia dei Lincei and Galileo, abstruse metaphysical speculations derived from certain materialist strands of Renaissance thought, the astrological theories of deliberate charlatans and a cynical or frivolous disbelief, all emerged from the stifling silence and penetrated to the very core of Roman society, affecting the papacy itself.² In the words of one well-informed but somewhat optimistic French disbeliever, ‘on pardonne à Rome aux Athées, aux Sodomites, aux libertins et à plusieurs autres fripons; mais on ne pardonne jamais à ceux qui mesdisent du Pape ou de la Cour Romaine. . . . L’Italie est pleine de libertins et d’Athées, et gens qui ne croient rien.’³ The reaction was, in fact, a rather spasmodic persecution combined with an often secret indulgence. Above all there was the firmly held belief that by emphasising all the outward forms of orthodox religion it would be possible to win men back to the old ways. The immense stimulus to ecclesiastical architecture and decoration given by Urban VIII was at least partly aimed at stifling doubts within Italy itself—hence the emphasis on ‘persuasion’ which is the other feature of the Baroque that every observer has noted.

¹ Pastor, XIII, p. 865. As, for instance, *The forge of Vulcan* in Pietro da Cortona’s ceiling fresco in the Barberini palace; also one of the tapestries designed for the palace to represent scenes from Urban’s life—see later, p. 60. The Pope’s defence of Rome was also intended to be shown allegorically on one of the walls of the palace—Pastor, XIII, p. 969.

² See below, p. 40, note 3.

³ Gabriel Naudé—quoted by Pintard, p. 262.

The achievement of grandeur, triumph and persuasion so characteristic of the Barberini style was largely due to one man. 'As Urban VIII was a Florentine, the radiance of the Bolognese came to an end.' Thus Passeri many years later.¹ Gian Lorenzo Bernini (we hear from the same, hostile, source), though born in Naples of a Neapolitan mother, was most anxious to stress the fact that his father was a Florentine.² Part of the immense appeal he had for Urban VIII must certainly be attributed to this. During the early years of his pontificate especially Urban again and again showed his determination to give the best jobs to Tuscan artists. Yet he had had plenty of opportunity to see that the quality of Bernini's work was at least as good a recommendation as the circumstances of his birth. 'It is your great good luck, Cavaliere,' he is reported to have said soon after his accession, 'to see Maffeo Barberini Pope; but we are even luckier in that the Cavaliere Bernini lives at the time of Our Pontificate.'³ Action was soon to prove how genuine was the sentiment even if the words themselves are apocryphal. Within a few months Bernini, who throughout the previous reign had been working on decorative sculpture and small-scale busts, was given his first official post and began his first monumental works.

The new Pope's main attention was centred on St Peter's, which he was able to consecrate in 1626. The exterior was now complete. The façade had been erected by Carlo Maderno by 1612, and malicious observers were quick to point out that far more prominence had been given to inscribing on it the name of Paul V than that of St Peter: 'It is not for the Prince of the Apostles that the Church has been built, but for his Vicar, Paul.'⁴ Urban's plans for the interior were fully as grandiose, and even more ambitious. He chose for his special patronage the central area under Michelangelo's dome and by the end of his reign he and Bernini had dramatically established the main decoration of this, the most important part of the church. Yet though the rhythm of work was intense it is unlikely that Urban had started with an overall plan for the whole area. Only after the first great step had been undertaken did the nature of his ideas become fully apparent.

In July 1624, less than a year after Urban's assumption of power, Bernini began work on a gigantic *baldacchino* to replace the one that had been temporarily set above the supposed tomb of St Peter. There were a number of obstacles to overcome, and two in particular caused some trouble: the danger that early Christian tombs would be irrevocably disturbed by the foundations of the new structure and the shortage of bronze for columns that were to rise as high as the Palazzo Farnese, the greatest palace in Rome. The first problem was solved by careful archaeological investigation and the use of artists to record all discoveries; the second by the despoiling of the Pantheon. After nine years the whole project was eventually completed.⁵

¹ Passeri, p. 352.

² 'Cav.re Gio. Lorenzo Bernini Napoletano, o Fiorentino come egli vuole,' wrote Passeri sarcastically —p. 169.

³ Baldinucci, 1948, p. 80.

⁴ P. Romano, p. 41.

⁵ For the documents see Pollak, 1931, II, pp. 306 ff., and Pastor, XIII, pp. 939-47.

Artistically Bernini's highly imaginative *baldacchino* was an immediate success, and contemporaries were all struck by the marvellous way in which it drew attention to itself without impeding the general view of the church. Iconographically it was relatively simple, as was most of the religious art of the period, but a change in conception when work had already been begun shows that the original intention had been somewhat different. It had been planned to crown the edifice with a huge statue of the Risen Christ. At a later stage this was changed to a Cross, and the effect was to dedicate the monument to Christ's passion rather than His triumph. References to St Peter himself and the establishment of the papacy were confined to relatively small angels above the cornice carrying his tiara and keys. But the most immediately striking feature of the *baldacchino* is the use of giant twisted columns, a form much admired by Raphael. The overwhelming religious precedents for these made them ideally suitable as the climax of the greatest Christian church: for the twisted column was supposed to derive from Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, and against one of them, preserved in St Peter's itself, Christ was supposed to have leaned. Moreover, the twisted column, intertwined with vine leaves, formed an essential feature of the screen of many ancient basilicas including that of St Peter's.

Urban VIII probably played a direct part in outlining the iconographical scheme: certainly he made sure that he should be closely identified with it. The Barberini bees crawl up the columns and hang down on bronze tassels from the cornice; the Barberini sun blazes above the rich capitals; an elementary knowledge of botany makes it clear that the leaves on the columns are those of the laurel—another Barberini emblem—and not the traditional vine. From now on their family history was to be indelibly linked with that of the great church. The cost had been enormous—200,000 *scudi* or a tenth of the annual income of the papal states; and the removal, at Bernini's suggestion, of bronze from the Pantheon, a step which led to a bitter little epigram from the Pope's own doctor and the first of the grumblings that were to accompany many of his enterprises.¹

The influence of the Pope in the decorating of St Peter's was obviously decisive, but alterations were nominally controlled by a permanent committee which, when Urban came to the throne, was under the chairmanship of Cardinal Ginnasi. He was by now a very old man, of few gifts, one of the chief partisans in Rome of the Spanish cause, who had himself hoped to be elected Pope during the recent conclave.² In June 1627, a few days before Bernini's columns were unveiled, the committee decided to build special altars in the niches of the pillars supporting the dome.³ Various proposals were made and the Pope, who saw them all, was careful to point out that the committee should choose which one it found most suitable. In fact, as was inevitable, Bernini's

¹ For the origins of the famous epigram 'Quod non fecerunt Barbari, fecerunt Barberini' see Pastor, XIII, p. 868, note 1, and p. 940, note 8.

² Pollak, 1931, II, *passim*. Pastor's statement (XIII, p. 232) that Ginnasi was unpopular with the Spaniards is difficult to understand in view of the document that he himself publishes on p. 1004 and constant reports about Ginnasi's Hispanophil tendencies from the Venetian envoys.

³ Pollak, 1931, II, p. 426.

scheme was accepted and the plan was changed. The altars were to be placed in the crypt and the niches reserved for statues of the four saints whose relics were most venerated in the church.¹ Four leading sculptors were chosen by Bernini for this commission²—and he himself produced one of the figures, St Longinus. A Flemish sculptor François Duquesnoy, who had worked under him on the *baldacchino*, carved a St Andrew which aroused much controversy and was used as a touchstone by all those who were most hostile to Bernini's more decidedly Baroque tendencies. And at the same time as these plans were being put into effect, balconies were built above the niches so that the relics associated with the saints concerned could be displayed on certain feast days and recalled to the faithful by stone reproductions carried by angels.

Only two further direct commissions by Urban VIII for St Peter's need be considered here. At the end of 1633 Bernini with a number of assistants began work on a marble relief, which was intended to be placed inside the church but is now in the portico, representing Christ entrusting his flock to St Peter—the foundation stone, as it were, of papal claims; and at the same time he designed a tomb in the right aisle for the Countess Matilda whose body the Pope had specially transferred from the province of Mantua—that Countess, whose bequest at the end of the eleventh century of all her property to the Holy See had first established the territorial government of the church on a firm basis. To make sure that the implications of this should be fully realised, the principal relief on the tomb showed the Emperor Henry IV kneeling before Pope Gregory VII at Canossa.

When the scheme was eventually complete it was apparent that the Pope and Bernini had given new meaning to the whole church. As Urban in the last years of his life entered through the west door he must, like pilgrims to this day, have been drawn forward irresistibly to the dominating *baldacchino*. Standing there he could see the results of his patronage. All the elements echoed each other in style and theme: a great hymn of praise to the martyrdom of Christ, His Saints and His Apostles unequalled in emotional force anywhere in the world; but also, so fused as to be an essential part of the whole structure, a passionate reminder of the overwhelming glories of the papacy and of his own house.

The work took a large number of years and continued almost until the end of his pontificate, but long before that it had ensured Bernini's prestige in Rome and throughout Europe. Most important of all his authority with the Pope was now absolute. He was given 10,000 *scudi* for his building of the *baldacchino*, honours were showered on himself and on his family and he was made virtually artistic dictator of Rome. It became a standing complaint that to work for the Barberini without his patronage was impossible. 'That dragon who ceaselessly guarded the Orchards of the Hesperides', wrote Passeri³, parodying a poem written in praise of Bernini, 'made sure that no one else should snatch the golden apples of Papal favour. He spat poison everywhere, and

¹ Wittkower, 1955, pp. 192-3.

² Pascoli, II, p. 428 for Bernini's choice of Bolgi.

³ Passeri, p. 236.

was always planting ferocious spikes along the path that led to rich rewards.' Naturally enough his domineering attitude earned him many enemies, but as long as Urban VIII lived his position was impregnable. Indeed the Pope was as keen that Bernini should work exclusively for him as the artist was that no one else should usurp his place. Between 1623 and 1644 Bernini undertook almost no work of any importance other than that commissioned by the Barberini. Unquestionably this was largely because of the pressure of time and the gigantic nature of the papal commissions. But there was another reason. The Pope was not anxious that the great artist he had at his disposal should immortalise anyone other than himself—no doubt he was well aware of the opportunities that had been missed by successive patrons of Michelangelo (whose memory haunted both Urban and Bernini), and realised fully how much glory a commission to Bernini could confer on the patron as well as on the artist. Only very few cardinals or princes could obtain works from him. Just before dying Scipione Borghese, the sculptor's first important patron, had his jovial, acute features recorded in two splendid busts (Plate 5)—but only with special authorisation from the Pope.¹ In other cases the execution at least was often left to assistants. Foreign rulers—Charles I of England and Cardinal Richelieu of France—had to implore the Barberini to allow Bernini to make portraits of them, and permission was only granted as an exceptional favour in return for useful privileges.² Indeed, to stress the diplomatic importance of these occasions the Pope took special steps to stop Bernini working for anyone without his ruling. We hear from the English sculptor Nicholas Stone that when the artist was carving the bust of Thomas Baker (the man entrusted with conveying to Bernini Van Dyck's triple portrait of Charles I) '... it fell out that his patronne the Pope came to here of itt who sent Cardinal Barberine to forbid him . . . for the Pope would have no other picture sent into England from this hand but his Maity'.³

At much the same time as Urban VIII had commissioned the *baldacchino* for St Peter's he had also entrusted Bernini with his first purely architectural work—the reconstruction and decoration of the little church of S. Bibiana. That this unimportant and out-of-the-way church should hold such a vital place in the history of the Baroque is largely due to an accident. During some routine restoration the body of the Saint was discovered, and the Pope took the opportunity of having the church completely rebuilt.⁴ Within a couple of years Bernini had finished the task and also made a statue of the Saint to be placed behind the High Altar—a restrained yet emotional work in which for the first time the combination of sensuality and mysticism which had appeared in so many Counter Reformation paintings was translated into sculpture.⁵

¹ Fraschetti, p. 107, publishes an *avviso* from the Este Resident in Rome dated 8 January 1633 (Borghese died in October): 'Il Cavalier Bernini di commissione del Papa ha fatto in marmo la testa de Cardinal Borghese che ha donato in ricompensa 500 zecchini et un diamante di 150 scudi.'

² Wittkower, 1955, pp. 200 and 202.

³ Wittkower, 1955, p. 201, and Gould, 1958.

⁴ Pastor, XIII, p. 955. For the documents see Pollak, 1927, I, pp. 22-30.

⁵ Wittkower, 1955, p. 186, and for this whole chapter the same author, 1958.

On the same day that Bernini was given his first payment in connection with this statue, another Florentine artist, Agostino Ciampelli, was commissioned to paint on the walls a series of frescoes illustrating the life of the Saint. He was one of the group of 'reformed Mannerists' who had had considerable success in Rome especially in the prosperous Tuscan community, and the commission was therefore a natural recognition of his talents and nationality. He had scarcely been at work three months when a new painter was introduced and much to Ciampelli's disgust given the left-hand wall on which to paint three scenes from the life and martyrdom of St Bibiana.

This new painter, Pietro Berrettini from Cortona, was also a Tuscan and he was brought to the attention of Urban VIII by one of the Pope's closest friends, Marcello Sacchetti (Plate 4b).¹ The two brothers Marcello and Giulio, who came to play crucial rôles in the political and artistic world of Urban VIII, were the sons of an extremely rich Florentine businessman who had moved to Rome towards the end of the sixteenth century and had soon become one of the leaders of the Tuscan community there. Their palace was situated near the Tiber in the parish of S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini, in which church they founded a grandiose family chapel, and within a few years of their arrival they had begun building a villa near Ostia whose finely decorated gallery was considered one of the most beautiful in Europe. Both Giulio and Marcello were devoted to learning and poetry, and it was this which sealed their friendship with Maffeo Barberini. Marcello, who himself wrote Tuscan odes, had travelled throughout Europe and made contacts with scholars in many countries. Among his close friends was the most famous poet of the age, the Neapolitan Giambattista Marino, who returned to Italy from an eight-year visit to Paris in 1623.² Marino spent only a year in Rome before going to Naples where he died soon afterwards, disappointed in his hopes of papal patronage—no doubt the sensuality of much of his verse offended Urban's austere taste. None the less he enjoyed a triumphant welcome in Rome, and he must have been particularly well received by Sacchetti, to whom he had dedicated a pretty song, for the two men shared a passion for painting. Marino had made a collection of his own and had persuaded the young Nicolas Poussin to follow him to Italy. Above all he had written a series of very popular poems on works by leading artists in which he specially singled out for praise their pagan qualities.³ Sacchetti himself painted landscapes for pleasure, and he was always searching for new talent. One day on a visit to the studios he had come across a copy of Raphael's *Galatea*, and seeking out the artist had been overjoyed to find that he too came from Tuscany.⁴ Pietro da Cortona was at once brought within the Sacchetti orbit and met Marino soon afterwards. Significantly one of his first commissions was to copy one of the Titians—a *Holy Family with St Catherine*—which

¹ Ceccarelli, 1946, and, above all, the life of Marcello by Jan Niso Eritreo [G. V. Rossi] in *Pinacotheca*, III, pp. 26–33.

² Borzelli, 1898, pp. 164 ff.

³ For the fullest account of Marino's relations with artists and his collections see Borzelli's rare pamphlet of 1891, and Ackerman, 1961.

⁴ This is the account given by Passeri, p. 375. There are inevitably other versions of the meeting. For this whole section see *Mostra di Pietro da Cortona*, 1956, and Briganti, 1962.

had been acquired by Cardinal Aldobrandini from Ferrara. Marcello had decided views on painting and his encouragement of Pietro to copy Raphael and Titian marks a focal point in the history of seventeenth-century art: that combination of Raphael's freest, most imaginative design with Titian's warmth of colour was the foundation stone on which Baroque painting was established. Thereafter every artist was required to undergo similar training. Pietro was a docile artist who even in his later days of great fame would always ask his patrons for subjects,¹ and here too Marcello's influence was vital. He was a learned man, steeped in classical culture, and a poet, a new type of patron to whom the eager young Pietro was especially welcome. For Pietro could give warm and vivid life to his dreams of the past, could re-create for him all the trappings of antiquity and yet avoid the coldness of a 'classical' artist such as Domenichino. Annibale Carracci had had the same gift, but not since his death had a painter been as fresh, and yet as grand and as serious, in his evocation of the fables of ancient Rome and Greece as was Pietro da Cortona at this stage of his life when he painted for Sacchetti large canvases of *The Sacrifice of Polyxena*, *The Triumph of Bacchus* and shortly afterwards *The Rape of the Sabines* (Plate 10a). In these he moved from dark, and even crude, beginnings to a rich, warm, sun-soaked world of stately, processional figures which were soon adopted by other artists in the Sacchetti orbit (Plates 10b, 11a, 11b). Soon afterwards Marcello employed Pietro on a new and larger undertaking—the decoration of his country house at Castel Fusano near Ostia. Among the team of artists working under Pietro was another who was soon to achieve celebrity partly through the influence of the Sacchetti—Andrea Sacchi.² Once again Marcello chose the subjects—scenes from the Old and New Testaments in the chapel, and tales from ancient Roman history on the walls and ceiling of the gallery. In his successful interpretation of these themes, and his ability to adapt them to a convincing decorative scheme, Pietro da Cortona showed that he had found his true road.

By this time Urban VIII had become Pope and the position of the Sacchetti changed dramatically. Giulio was made a Cardinal in 1626 and thereafter enjoyed a highly successful career in the Church; Marcello became papal treasurer and was given the monopoly of the alum mines at Tolfa which he at once had painted by Pietro. Moreover, he became the Pope's closest friend, the confidant of his most intimate secrets until ill-health compelled him to retire to Naples, where he died. The Sacchettis' influence in matters of taste was decisive—their 'shadow was enough to protect any artist', wrote one chronicler³—and we hear that the brothers 'took pleasure in the success of their favourite [Pietro da Cortona] and never grew tired of promoting his chances'.⁴ So it was that the young Pietro da Cortona joined Agostino Ciampelli in the church of S. Bibiana. To his frescoes he brought the warmth and breadth of his 'grand manner'

¹ See Chapter I, p. 11, note 1.

² Incisa della Rocchetta, 1924, pp. 60–76.

³ *Vita di G. M. Bottalla*—Soprani, I, p. 303.

⁴ Passeri, p. 378. For inventories of the Sacchetti collection, most of which is now in the Pinacoteca Capitolina, see the sources referred to by Briganti, 1957, pp. 5–14.

combined with the attention to classical detail which so delighted the connoisseurs. Henceforward his success was assured and he joined Bernini as the Pope's special artist. A triumphant career lay ahead.

— iii —

Urban VIII was a handsome, cultivated and friendly man liable to fits of extremely bad temper. He retained throughout his life a deep love of poetry and the company of poets. He himself wrote verses in Italian, Latin and even Greek, but he was especially keen to emphasise the religious content of his work and to encourage his friends to abandon the themes of pagan mythology. He devoted many poems to celebrating the beauties of nature and simple country life—in particular as it was lived in the villa he had built for himself at Castel Gandolfo, a stark and sober edifice added on to a mediaeval castle.¹ On occasions he would tell foreign diplomats to talk business with his nephew so that he could confine his audiences to those literary discussions which were nearer his heart.² In general, however, he was efficient, hard working and thoroughly well informed. He combined deep religious feeling with an element of crude superstition, and he dabbled extensively in astrology.³ But his leading characteristics were extreme vanity and overpowering ambition unaccompanied by any compensating strength of will. His rule is disfigured by acts of petty meanness⁴ and a complete failure to achieve that aggrandisement of the papacy which had been his original aim. The society in which he lived was one calculated to accentuate all his defects of character, yet to that society and to those defects we owe some of the most splendid monuments of his patronage. The art of flattery was an essential ingredient of the Baroque. Urban VIII gave it every opportunity for expression.

Within months of his accession the first fine editions of his poems began to pour from the presses of Rome, culminating in a splendid volume of 1631 produced by the Jesuits and illustrated by Bernini. Bernini also made many busts in bronze and marble of the Pope throughout his career.⁵ Nothing gives us a better impression of how Urban VIII saw himself. There is none of the swagger and almost exaggerated elegance with which Bernini treated his royal patrons both at this period and in his later years. Such swashbuckling was quite unsuitable for the Vicar of Christ. After a few years of rule the Pope loses his early sparkle and is thereafter shown as grave, authoritarian and yet somewhat withdrawn from the world. These are images of hieratic dignity designed to portray a man who does not need to stress his right to be a ruler. And in all of them the Pope is shown as exceedingly handsome and aristocratic, his long moustaches and beard

¹ Bonomelli, pp. 41-69.

² Alfred de Terrebasse, p. 40.

³ Urban VIII's astrological pursuits are well documented—see the astonishing material published by D. P. Walker, pp. 205 ff. which shows that Campanella helped him in his researches. The rather sinister spying on Campanella in Paris which was ordered by the Barberini (see Bazzoni) 'to prevent him revealing anything without special permission from His Holiness as he promised before leaving Rome' must certainly be connected with these activities. See also A. Bertolotti, 1878.

⁴ Such as—despite all its deeper implications—his treatment of Galileo.

⁵ Wittkower, 1955, p. 184.

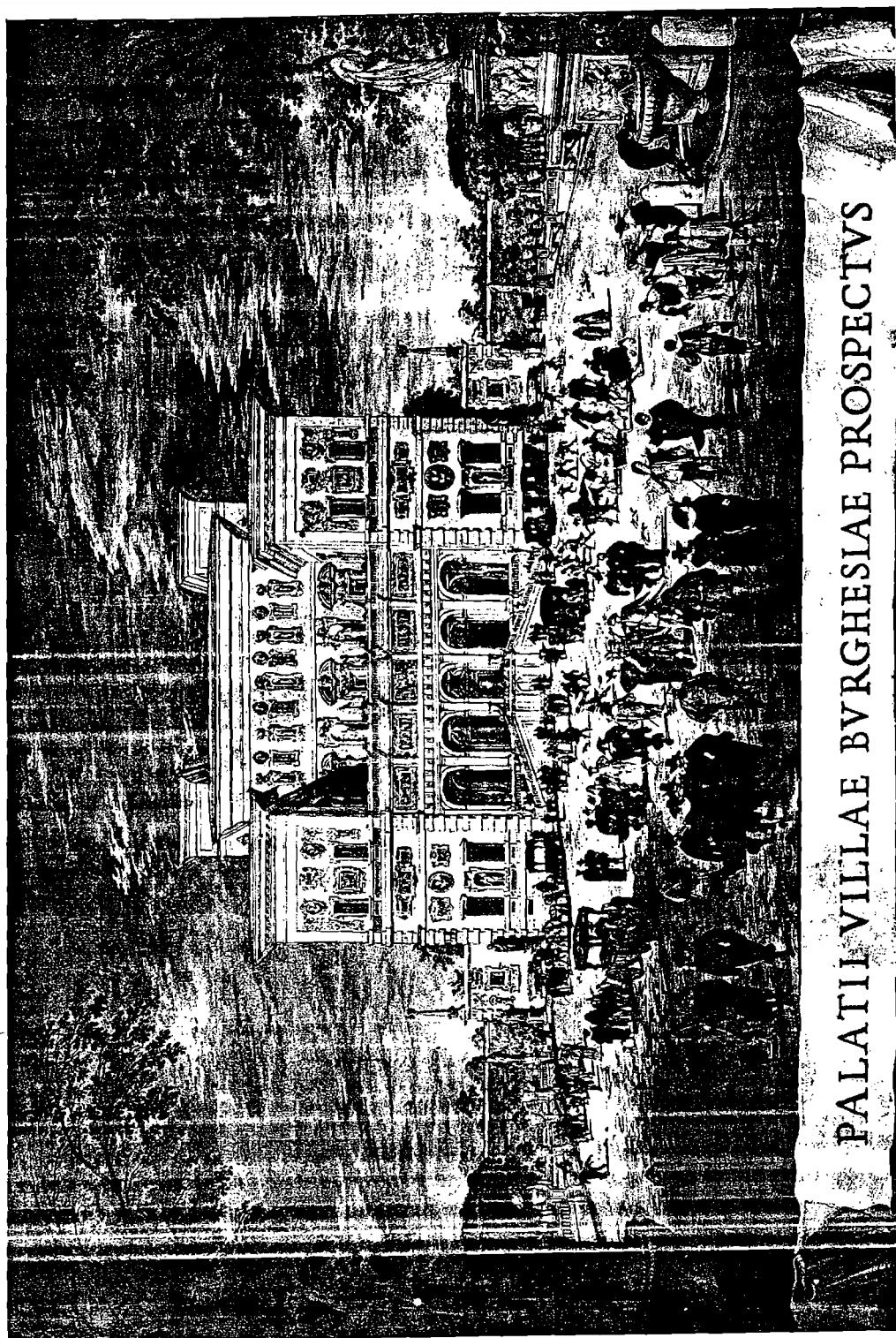
CARDINAL SCIPIO BORGHESE
AND HIS PATRONAGE (*see Plates 5, 6 and 7*)

Plate 5



BERNINI: Cardinal Borghese

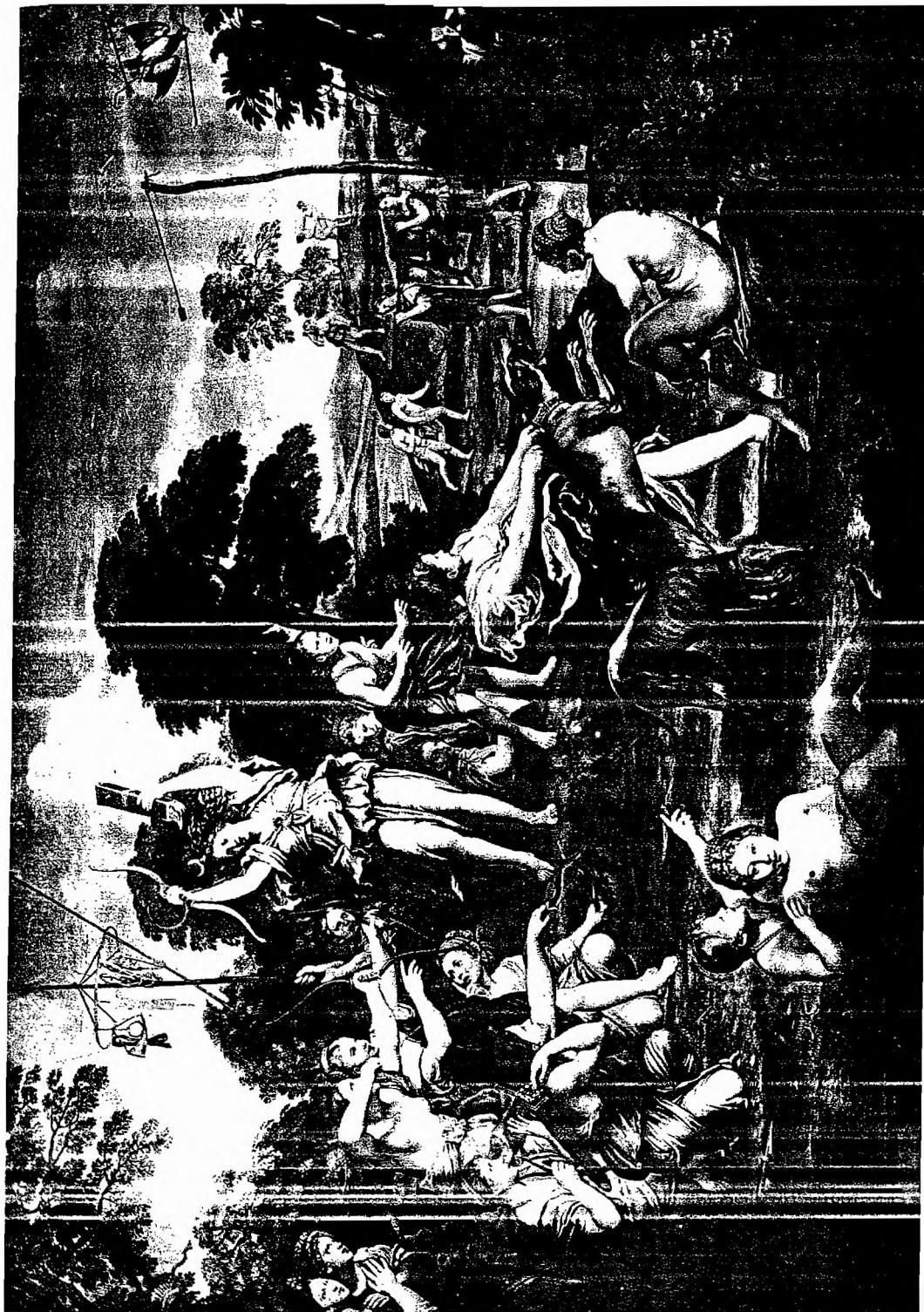
Plate 6



PALATI VILLAE BVRGHESIAE PROSPECTVS

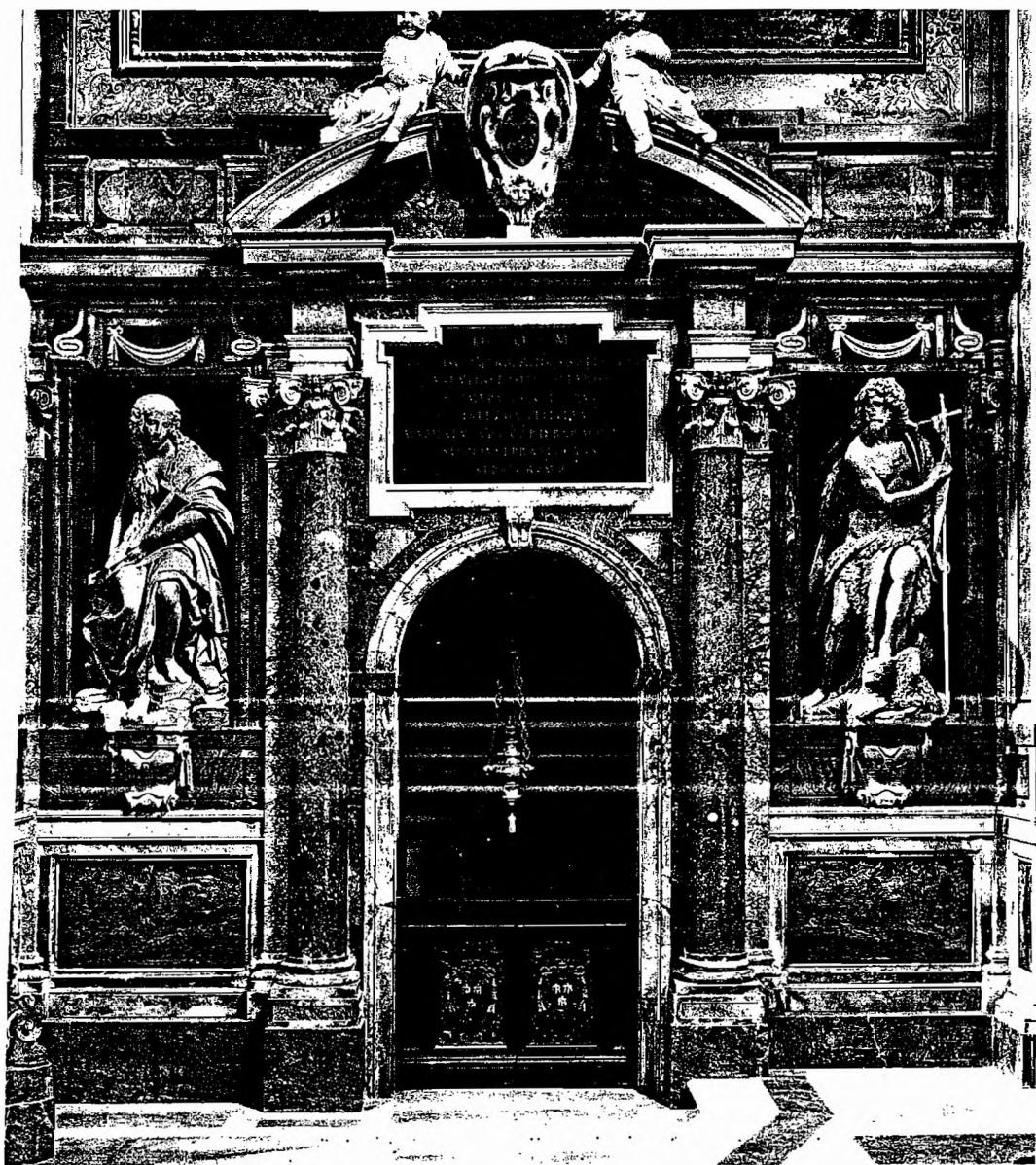
GUGIELMO BAUR: View of Villa Borghese in 1630

Plate 7



DOMENICHINO: Hunt of Diana

Plate 8 BARBERINI PATRONAGE (*see Plates 8, 9, 12 and 13*)



MATTEO CASTELLI: Family chapel in S. Andrea della Valle

beautifully groomed, his firm flesh fitting closely over the bones, his clear eyes sad but alert. The busts convey little of the excitability and enthusiasms of which we know from other sources.

At the same time the Pope allowed, if he did not actually encourage, grander and more public monuments to be erected to himself. As early as 1627 Bernini was commissioned to make a bronze statue which was set up six years later in Velletri.¹ And in 1635 the Roman Senate, by now a wholly anachronistic body, revoked a decree of 1590 by which statues of popes should not be erected on the Capitol during their lifetimes, and commissioned Bernini to make a large marble figure of Urban which was placed in the Palazzo dei Conservatori (Plate 2b). Meanwhile the Pope ordered Bernini to carve busts of the deceased members of his family—his father and mother and the uncle who had first encouraged his ambitions. When his brother Carlo died in 1630 the Pope commissioned a memorial plaque from Bernini and the Senate obsequiously followed suit by ordering the erection of a statue on the Capitol. An ancient torso of Julius Caesar was refashioned by the Bolognese sculptor Alessandro Algardi and Bernini himself provided the head.² Artistically the result is somewhat incongruous; psychologically much more so. Though commander-in-chief of the papal land and sea forces, Carlo had scarcely been a Julius Caesar. A mild and yet efficient businessman, he had, on the accession of his younger brother, been suddenly overwhelmed with such overpowering honours and dignities that they had gone to his head and he had rather strangely tried to cope with the situation by making a Latin synopsis of Machiavelli's *Prince*.³ Even Bernini's genius and an antique torso do not quite carry conviction and the monument is a memorial more to the aspirations of the Barberini than to their prowess.

Urban VIII's greatest commission to record his own glory was that for his tomb which he ordered in 1627 after only three years on the throne.⁴ It was to be built in his own lifetime and prominently placed in St Peter's. Not since Julius II had a pope taken such active steps to perpetuate himself in the greatest church in Christendom, though both Sixtus V and Paul V had had grandiose monuments built for themselves during their lifetimes. Bernini was, of course, entrusted with the work which was supervised by a protégé of the Barberini, the humbly born and rather mean Angelo Giori, who had walked to Rome from Camerino where he worked as a schoolmaster when he heard of the possibilities of preferment.⁵ He was himself an enthusiastic art lover, a keen admirer of Bernini and Sacchi, but above all the special patron of Claude, seven of whose pictures he owned.⁶ The work began quickly; a niche was built on the right of the apse and Guglielmo della Porta's tomb of Paul III, who had summoned the Council

¹ *ibid.*, p. 199.

² *ibid.*, p. 191.

³ Pecciai, 1959, pp. 130 ff.

⁴ Wittkower, 1955, p. 193.

⁵ Feliciangeli.

⁶ These are now scattered all over the world. The most famous are the two great *Seaports* in the National Gallery and the Louvre—for the complete list see Röthlisberger, 1961, p. 153.

of Trent, was moved from one of the central pillars to a corresponding niche on the left of the apse. Soon afterwards the gigantic bronze figure of the blessing Pope was cast. Grander, more dramatically solemn than in any other representation, he sits far above the pilgrim, cut off even from the allegorical virtues well below, his right hand raised in an authoritative gesture that seems as keen to command or to ward off his enemies as to bless. There for eight years the tomb rested while Urban VIII overwhelmed Bernini with commissions designed to satisfy his more immediate ambitions. In 1639 work was resumed. The suave and attractive marble *Charity* accompanied by two putti was carved, followed by the grim, skeletal *Death* emerging from the sarcophagus to record on his scroll the name of *Urbanus VIII Barberinus Pontifex Maximus*. Again work stopped, and in May 1644 the now dying Pope, who carefully examined all these projects, made a final attempt to get the tomb finished in time. It was too late, and *Justice* was only completed in 1647 at a moment, ironically enough, when the Barberini had been driven from Rome for their part in exploiting the resources of the city for their own ends.

The strange confusions inherent in Urban VIII's patronage of religious foundations are even more obvious in his dealings with the church of S. Maria della Concezione.¹ His younger brother Antonio was a Capuchin monk, a retiring and not very intelligent man afflicted with a paralysing shyness, the only member of his family to be genuinely reluctant to accept the inevitable honours and titles that accompanied his brother's accession. Though made Cardinal di S. Onofrio, he continued to live as simply as his new circumstances would allow. In 1626 he decided to have built for his Order a new church and monastery adjoining the estates of Cardinal Ludovisi on the Pincio. A Capuchin architect was entrusted with the task and drew up a plan of extreme simplicity as befitted his Order. Urban VIII, however, was not the man to countenance such austerity and, undeterred by any of the inhibitions of his brother, he soon began to take the scheme in hand. He laid the foundation stone, visited the building and made over large sums for its erection. As it neared completion great figures from all over Europe competed for the opportunity to be associated with such a fashionable church so near to the Pope's heart. The Holy Roman Emperor asked to be allowed to build 'with royal munificence' a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Felice da Cantalice. In Rome Cardinal Magalotti accumulated precious stones and marbles for one dedicated to St Lawrence. Prince Peretti had similar plans. And then the Capuchins themselves intervened. When they heard that 'the Pope planned to have the altars built and decorated with precious stones as was the modern fashion in Roman churches . . . they humbly beseeched him to be pleased to condescend to the simplicity of our state . . . , and not to grant, under the guise of favours, special dispensations and allowances to our Order'. The Pope was moved by their plea and withdrew the permission he had given to foreign princes. But respect for Capuchin austerity was not his only motive: 'he did not think it right that others should play a part in the church . . . and that other princes' arms should be

¹ Passeri, p. 153, and Pollak, 1927, I, pp. 165-72. Above all see the well-documented study by P. Domenico da Isnello.

seen there besides those of his own family'. And so it was agreed that the Barberini only should be responsible for the decoration and that the chapels should be made not of precious marbles but of wood—'though of fine quality and suitable for such princes'.

So far so good—but soon there was further trouble. Cardinal S. Onofrio ordered a dozen candlesticks and two crucifixes, all of wood, and sent them to the church. He had stuck to his part of the bargain, but the Capuchin monks found them 'extremely curious and not like those used by our Order'. So 'with the most humble thanks' they sent them back. This time their protest met with no response. The Pope insisted; and the candlesticks were accepted. The same occurred with the High Altar. Urban VIII himself had had designed a bronze tabernacle and metal candelabra similar to those in his family chapel at S. Andrea della Valle with bronze candlesticks and an 'iron grating, well cast and elegant, adorned with metal or bronze'. So that these could be accepted, he ordered a special dispensation from the rules of simplicity which governed the decoration of Capuchin churches. This was exactly what they had dreaded. Fighting a lonely rearguard action in a society where riches and devotion had come to be treated as synonymous, they once again pleaded for their poverty. The Pope must have been bewildered; he was certainly adamant. The tabernacle had to be accepted, but as a concession he agreed that it should be made of *pietre fine* and not of bronze and that the candelabra could be omitted.

For the altar pictures the Pope and his brother commissioned works by the older generation of artists with whom they had been familiar in their youth—Guido Reni was written to in Bologna and sent *The Archangel Michael trampling on the Devil*, a work whose classical and somewhat mannered grace made it among the most admired of its time¹; Domenichino and Lanfranco contributed other paintings, as did the young Barberini favourite Pietro da Cortona (and his master Baccio Ciarpi) and the still younger Andrea Sacchi. For a new generation of Barberini, the nephews, also took a part in this stage of the decoration.

- iv -

All three nephews of Urban VIII, Francesco, Taddeo and Antonio, played an increasingly important rôle in the artistic life of the city. Francesco was only aged 26 when his uncle was elected Pope and he himself was made Cardinal. Yet his hair was already thin and straggling at the sides, his moustache and miniature beard were growing grey, his expression was serious and a little careworn (Plate 3a). He was universally described as an attractive and gracious character, deeply attached to literature and the arts, though not outstandingly intelligent and distinctly averse from business.² His first crucial political test came early in 1625 when he was sent as special legate to Paris. Richelieu's unscrupulous policies and threatened war with Spain, which would have

¹ Malvasia, II, p. 26.

² Barozzi e Berchet, I, p. 214.

involved Italy, opened up a serious crisis. Francesco Barberini was instructed to propose a general armistice and above all to ensure that no concessions were made to the Huguenots.¹ The mission was a disastrous failure, but for Cardinal Barberini himself it proved of great consequence. He had set out with a brilliant retinue of friends and advisers which included the most cultivated and learned of all Italian art patrons, Cassiano dal Pozzo. They took advantage of their social opportunities and made special visits to examine the art treasures of the Louvre and Fontainebleau.² Everywhere they were received with extreme courtesy, and shortly before their departure they found, on returning to their apartments, a splendid gift sent by Louis XIII to sweeten their disappointment. Already hanging on the walls were seven great tapestries depicting scenes from *The Life of Constantine* woven from cartoons by Rubens.³ Francesco was under strict instructions from his uncle not to accept gifts, and so he turned them down. It must have been a difficult decision for him—too difficult, indeed, to last for long, and soon afterwards he changed his mind and accepted the tapestries. His art collecting had certainly begun well.

But he took back with him from Paris more than a series of masterpieces by Rubens. He was even more struck than his uncle before him by the vitality of French culture, which was now very much richer and more complex than it had been twenty years earlier. Political rebuffs in no way diminished these feelings. From now on, until the end of his days, French writers, scientists, artists and thinkers of all kinds, were welcomed by him and corresponded with him. Indeed, hardly had he returned to Rome in December 1625, after nine months abroad, when he showed the first signs of these sympathies. He bought a picture of *The Capture of Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus* from the young Nicolas Poussin, who had arrived from Paris eighteen months earlier and had been introduced by Giambattista Marino to Barberini's friend Marcello Sacchetti.⁴

Another diplomatic mission followed almost immediately—this time to Madrid. It was an equal failure, and when the Cardinal returned to Rome in October 1626 he was to remain there, immensely rich and influential, indubitably the leading citizen but with little independent power of any real significance. Thereafter riches and influence were used largely to promote the arts, sciences and learning to which he was so devoted. His court became the centre of artistic and intellectual life in the city; he himself began to make an important impact on the great achievements which already marked the new reign.

His first serious opportunity came with the commissions for a whole series of new altarpieces for St Peter's. All over Italy, but especially in Florence and Rome, artists and their protectors were competing with each other for the great opportunities that now arose. The committee was being bombarded with letters; lists were being drawn

¹ Pastor, XIII, pp. 274 ff.

² Müntz et Molinier, 1885.

³ U. Barberini, 1950.

⁴ The picture which was later given away by Cardinal Barberini (perhaps to Richelieu) is now lost—see *Exposition Poussin*, p. 216.

up and amended; discussions were frequent.¹ The most influential member had hitherto been the extremely cultivated Cardinal del Monte, ever on the lookout for fresh talent. During the course of 1624 and early in the next year he had obtained commissions for Simon Vouet and the still virtually unknown Andrea Sacchi.² Now his position began to be eclipsed by the arrival of Francesco Barberini, who joined the committee on becoming Cardinal. Even before leaving for Paris, Francesco had tentatively made his first proposal—the ordering of an important picture to represent *Christ in the Boat calming His Disciples* from the well-established and persistent Lanfranco, who had written to him applying for the task.³ On his return from this diplomatic mission Cardinal Barberini began to take a more decided and adventurous line. This was not altogether easy. The committee was especially keen to get paintings from the older generation of artists, notably the Bolognese, who had so distinguished themselves during the previous reigns. Indeed Cardinal Ginnasi, the chairman, was determined that the most important picture of all should be given to Guido Reni, and he asked the Legate in Bologna to approach the artist.⁴ Francesco Barberini had to content himself with the offer of a smaller picture to Pietro da Cortona. After some months of negotiation and many advance payments Guido came to Rome; but after a short stay he left in a sudden fury brought on partly by what he considered to be the humiliating control that the committee insisted on exerting.⁵ Cardinal Barberini had welcomed him warmly, but he was ready to seize the opportunity offered by the important rearrangement that now became necessary. He at once suggested that the main picture should be given to Pietro da Cortona, and that the one originally intended for him should be given instead to Nicolas Poussin.⁶ The proposal was accepted, and thus through his efforts and those of Cardinal del Monte the three young artists of neo-Venetian tendencies encouraged by the Sacchetti, Cassiano dal Pozzo and the Barberini themselves made their first crucial appearances in the most important church in Rome side by side with world renowned artists of an earlier generation. From now on their triumph was complete, and the Cardinal's introduction of Pietro da Cortona and Sacchi into the Capuchin church being built by his uncles was an obvious and foregone conclusion.

Francesco bought for his own private collection one or two other works by Poussin—a *Samson*, which has disappeared, and *The Death of Germanicus*, a picture in which, despite the magniloquence of individual figures, the composition already seems to anticipate the austerity and classicism which the artist adopted in later years. It was probably just this tendency which discouraged the young Cardinal. On only one further occasion did he approach Poussin—for a second version of *The Capture of Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus*, painted some dozen years or so after the first. Once again

¹ See the many letters from artists and reports of meetings in Pollak, 1931, II.

² *ibid.*, pp. 230-1 and p. 294; Bellori, 1942, p. 47.

³ Pollak, 1931, II, p. 566.

⁴ *ibid.*, 1931, II, pp. 79 ff.

⁵ Malvasia, II, p. 27, and Bottari, I, p. 296.

⁶ Pollak, 1931, II, p. 87.

Barberini almost immediately gave the picture away to a foreign dignitary.¹ For his own taste was diverging more and more from the severity of his archaeologist friend Cassiano dal Pozzo. He himself preferred the more lush and showy. He patronised other French artists, Simon Vouet and Valentin, who lacked the fine restraint that Poussin later developed, and he paid much less attention to Andrea Sacchi, who after an early Baroque manner was increasingly turning to Raphael and Roman classicism for inspiration.

Both Valentin and Vouet had come strongly under the influence of Caravaggio, and the patronage of Cardinal Francesco and his friends, Marcello Sacchetti, Cassiano dal Pozzo and others, encouraged both artists to adopt a more florid, lighter, Baroque style in keeping with the grandiose history paintings that they were now required to produce. Valentin found the break much harder, and a huge *Allegory of Rome* represented rather an awkward attempt to use his Caravaggesque manner on an essentially unsuitable theme (Plate 1).² Vouet's talent was by nature more decorative and by the time he left Rome in 1627 he was already foreshadowing the grand manner which he then introduced into France.³ Both enjoyed highly successful careers through the backing of Cardinal Francesco, culminating in altarpieces for St Peter's.⁴ But their adoption by the Barberini circle effectively put an end to the direct influence of Caravaggio on Roman art.

Francesco's great opportunity to display his patronage and taste on a really large scale came with the decoration of the family palace. In 1625, during the short interval between his embassies to Paris and Madrid, he had bought the palace of Alessandro Sforza, duca di Segni, on the Quirinal. Shortly afterwards, on leaving for Spain, he gave it to one of his younger brothers, Taddeo.

— v —

Taddeo was at once the weakest and the most brutal of the Barberini. He lacked the

¹ *Exposition Poussin*, pp. 74, 216 and 219. The first *Capture of Jerusalem* and the *Samson* have disappeared. The *Death of Germanicus* is now in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the second *Capture of Jerusalem* is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Two other paintings by Poussin can be associated with the Barberini family—the *Landscape with St Matthew and with St John* (Berlin and Chicago), the former of which came from the Barberini palace. Sir Anthony Blunt (*Exposition Poussin*, pp. 100 and 102) suggests that they are the first two of a series of Four Evangelists interrupted by the fall of the Barberini. It is also possible that the *Virgin protecting the city of Spoleto* at Dulwich (*ibid.*, p. 78) may have been painted for Francesco who was Bishop of that city.

On 27 June 1642 Poussin wrote from Paris to thank Cassiano dal Pozzo 'che mi dà occasione di servire l'Eminentiss. Sig. Cardinal Barberino del disegno dell'istoria di Scipione' and asked him to convey his thanks also to the Cardinal 'dell'onore, che mi fa, di ricordarsi di me, e per pregarla di accettare quello per signo di tributo della mia servitù.'—Correspondance, pp. 165-6. This may be related to the drawing at Windsor, apparently from Poussin's studio, of *Scipio and the pirates* published by Blunt, 1945, p. 43.

² This picture, now in the Finnish Institute in Rome, was first recorded in the Barberini inventory of 1631—Orbaan, 1920, p. 506. It was published by J. Thuillier in 1958 and exhibited in *Les Français à Rome* (No. 250), held at the Archives Nationales in Paris, 1961.

³ Vouet's pictures for Roman patrons are discussed by Louis Demonts. In 1624 he was elected Princeps of the Accademia di S. Luca, the first foreigner to hold the post.

⁴ Pollak, 1931, II, pp. 230-4 and 540-1.

intellectual resources of his elder and younger brothers and he was quite unable to cope with the overpowering position that his uncle planned for him. He was only 20 when Urban VIII became Pope, and he was then described as being 'all sugar, all honey'.¹ Within three years he was involved in a street brawl and a savage murder. A papal pardon, phrased so widely that it covered any interpretation put on the events that had occurred, settled that, but the deterioration in his character continued.² He was again and again the centre of trouble and even violence, yet on every such occasion there was someone to comment that it was not really his fault and that his only ambition was to live quietly—if splendidly.³ And indeed only a very strong character could have withstood the temptations that were deliberately put in his way. For it was his rôle to sire a great new dynasty as important as any in Europe—the Barberini. In 1627 he was made to marry a devout and simple daughter of the Colonna, one of the oldest and most aristocratic Roman families. At about the same time he was appointed lieutenant-general of the papal armies under the supreme command of his father, whom he succeeded, and two years later his own nobility was assured by the purchase of the principality of Palestrina. In 1631 he was given the archaic title of Prefect of Rome, a post which had belonged until their extinction to the Della Rovere, the dukes of Urbino. His annual income was among the highest in the whole of Italy.

From the first the Pope was determined that Taddeo should assert his rights as vigorously as possible. The Prefecture of Rome was virtually obsolescent. It was now revived in all its authority. Dubious claims of absolute precedence on ceremonial occasions were strongly pressed—and as strongly resisted. For foreign embassies resented the humiliations which they felt were being imposed on them. The chronicles of the time are filled with accounts of the diplomatic incidents that followed. Torn between his natural laziness and the arrogance that was expected of him, Taddeo alternatively backed out or resorted to violence. Against his inclination he was turned into a public figure.⁴

Such was the man to whom in 1626 Francesco Barberini handed over the palace of the Sforzas, a family which was compelled a few years later to sell its property at Valmontone to the same purchaser. From the first the Barberini intended to have a new palace built on a much larger scale than the existing structure, part of which it was proposed to incorporate into the new scheme.⁵ Taddeo continued to buy surrounding land and approached Carlo Maderno, the leading architect in Rome (Bernini had as yet only restored S. Bibiana), who had already been in the service of the Pope. Maderno or—more likely—some brilliant collaborator or adviser departed completely from the

¹ Barozzi e Berchet, I, p. 153; Renier Zeno, 1621–3.

² The documents published by Pecchiai (1959, pp. 161 ff.) effectively dispose of Pastor's claim (XIII, p. 263) that Taddeo 'brillava per la purezza di costumi . . .

³ See constant reports over the years from the Venetian ambassadors—and this despite the fact that they were the ones most frequently embroiled with Taddeo.

⁴ Giuho Pisano, 1931.

⁵ Blunt's article in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1958, needs to be supplemented by Hibbard's monograph on Carlo Maderno.

tradition of the sixteenth-century Roman palace. The courtyard was abandoned and replaced by a deep forecourt so that the main façade is approached through projecting wings at each end. This façade was then split up into seven bays of arcades three storeys high of which the bottom one forms an open loggia (Plate 9). From being a grim fortress, however grandiose, of the traditional type, the palace now turned into a light, welcoming country-house—indeed precedents for façades of this kind were to be found almost only in the villas scattered round Rome. Yet as a country house it was vast. It was certainly the largest private palace in the city and symbolised the fact that the Barberini were absolutely sure of themselves and of their complete supremacy over all rivals—a supremacy moreover based on money rather than arms. A new era had dawned.

Maderno died in 1629, and was at once replaced by Bernini, who with the help of his predecessor's assistant Francesco Borromini made a few modifications but kept to the main lines of the plan. By 1633—an astonishingly short time—the palace was virtually complete. Already the decoration was well under way.

Of all the Barberini, Taddeo was least interested in the arts. Unlike his uncle and brothers he had no special favourites among the talented group of painters, sculptors and architects who were creating the new Baroque style. There was, however, ready to advise him a family which had long enjoyed a special relationship with the raw, rich and art-loving popes of the seventeenth century. The Bentivoglio came from Ferrara, where they had for centuries been one of the most distinguished families.¹ When in 1598 the city had devolved to the papacy, the principal member Ippolito had made a last desperate attempt to maintain its independence by supporting the rather dubious claims of Cesare d'Este to the succession.² His younger brothers Guido and Enzo saw their duty in a different light. They rallied to the Church's cause and consequently reaped all the benefits that poured from a Pope anxious to appease the local nobility. Guido, a man of wide culture and very real ability, enjoyed an exceedingly successful career in the Church. In 1621 he was made Cardinal after having served as Nunzio in Flanders and Paris over the previous fourteen years—missions which strongly influenced his tastes and political sympathies and provided him with the material for his very popular historical writings. Enzo served for a time as 'ambassador' from Ferrara to Rome—a post specially created by the Pope to satisfy local sensibilities.

Both men were extremely fond of art, and showed a fine and adventurous taste. Early in 1623 Guido had his portrait painted by Van Dyck, who wonderfully rendered the sensitive, alert, powerful and ascetic features of a figure who seems to have strayed from another age, at once tougher and more spiritual, than that of the Barberini (Plate 4a).³ Indeed he surprised his friends at Court by the relative austerity of his life⁴—

¹ Litta. The family originated in Bologna, but an important branch had long been settled in Ferrara.

² Bentivoglio, 1807, pp. 14 ff.

³ The portrait is now in the Pitti. It was painted early in 1623—Bellori, p. 255, and Vaes, 1924, p. 211.

⁴ Jan Nicco Eritreo, II, pp. 34-7.

relative because for a number of years he lived in the great Borghese palace on the Quirinal, decorated by Guido Reni, Tassi, Gentileschi and others which his brother Enzo bought in 1619 and which the family was forced to sell some years before Guido's death.¹ There he amassed a notable collection—there was a Van Dyck *Crucifixion* besides the portrait²—and became one of the first admirers of the young landscape painter Claude Lorrain, whose success was partly assured through his patronage.³ Indeed, he introduced Claude to the Pope, who at once commissioned two pictures of fanciful and genre scenes and then asked for a further two to record his fortifications at Santa Marinella and his country house at Castel Gandolfo—themes which the artist treated in a romantically vague manner rather than literally as Urban had perhaps hoped.⁴ It was no doubt this aspect of Claude's painting that made a special appeal to Cardinal Bentivoglio. Deeply involved in the intrigues of court life, he evidently felt at his ease with artists, especially those who could satisfy his love of colour and poetry. A letter from the Florentine painter Giovanni da San Giovanni who had been sent by Enzo to help to decorate the palace gives us a vivid impression of the Cardinal taking the artist round the ground-floor apartments and exclaiming, 'Giovanni, here on these unfinished vaults I want you to paint sea monsters and sirens engaged in battles in the water.' The artist obliged with three scenes full of vigorous fancy and colour depicting the Rapes of Proserpina, Amphitrite and Europa.⁵

Ever since the beginning of the century the Bentivoglio brothers had been helping succeeding popes with the purchase of the finest old masters and the employment of contemporary artists. Enzo Bentivoglio had shown no hesitation—indeed he had resorted to deliberate trickery—in helping to despoil his native Ferrara for the benefit of Scipione Borghese. In 1608 he had procured some of the finest Dosso Dossi in the Ducal collection for that Cardinal's gallery.⁶ Under Gregory XV he had been put in charge of the decoration of the various Ludovisi palaces.⁷ Now under Urban VIII it was to him that the uncertain Taddeo turned.

¹ The palace was bought by Bentivoglio from the Altemps family in 1619—see Callari, p. 298. The frescoes by Tassi and Gentileschi were painted in 1611 and 1612 when it still belonged to Scipione Borghese, and Passeri is therefore wrong when he writes (p. 125) that they were produced for Bentivoglio. The Bentivoglio sold the palace to the Lante family, from whom it was acquired by Cardinal Mazarin—see Chapter 7, p. 183, note 2.

² Bellori, p. 255.

³ Baldinucci, VI, 1728, p. 354.

⁴ The pictures are now distributed as follows: *Landscape with Rural Dance* (Lord Yarborough Collection); *Seaport* (two versions—Duke of Northumberland Collection and Louvre); *Santa Marinella* (Petit Palais, Paris); *Castel Gandolfo* (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)—see Röthlisberger, 1961, p. 121.

⁵ Campori, 1866, p. 103. The frescoes are described and reproduced by O. H. Giglioli, 1949, who also publishes two other ceiling frescoes in the same palace of the *Death of Cleopatra* and the *Flight of Aeneas from Troy* which he attributes to the same artist and dates 1624. Baldinucci (VI, 1728, pp. 25-7) has a long story of Giovanni da San Giovanni working on a *Carro della Notte* to rival Guido Reni's *Aurora* in the palace and fighting with two Frenchmen who tried to wreck it. He says that Bentivoglio's patronage was responsible for the artist's success in Rome—i.e. before his frescoes for Cardinal Mellino in SS. Quattro Coronati which were painted in 1624.

⁶ Paola della Pergola, I, p. 152, with documents.

⁷ Passeri, p. 350.

One of the artists employed by the Bentivoglio and living in the palace was a young Umbrian follower of Domenichino, Andrea Camassei, who had been suggested to the Marchese by the somewhat elusive landscape painter Filippo Napoletano.¹ There he had decorated a room with scenes from the story of Cupid and Psyche which proved an instant success. The Bentivoglio accordingly recommended him to the Barberini and at about the same time he began working for the Sacchetti. The process was by now a familiar one, and his career seemed assured.

Camassei was at once given two ceiling frescoes to paint in small rooms in the new palace, representing *God creating the Angels* and *Parnassus with Apollo and the Muses, the Fates, and Heroes approaching the Temple of Immortality*. Like so much else in the palace, the combination of subjects was original and complex, but in a very vague way both of them foreshadowed some of the themes of the much larger scheme of decoration that was to follow. For among the hierarchy of angels brought into being by God two classes especially were singled out—those with crowns who protected provinces and kingdoms, and those with sceptres who assisted their rulers, thus symbolising the divine sanction given to the sovereigns of this world. The *Parnassus* contained more obvious references to the Barberini as protectors of civilisation and the arts. Apollo is crowned with laurel and his harp marked with the ubiquitous bee to identify him with the poet-Pope, and the Heroes who approach the Temple of Immortality on one side were soon interpreted as representing his ancestors. Both frescoes, painted in a dignified if flaccid classical style, were much admired, and great hopes were held out to Camassei.² Meanwhile another much finer artist of somewhat similar tendencies was introduced into the palace.

The claims of Andrea Sacchi had already been pressed by Cardinal Francesco Barberini in St Peter's. Now he was given his first large-scale work and was required to fresco the vault of one of the main reception rooms (Plate 12). The theme chosen was *Divine Wisdom*, derived from the Apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, a subject not hitherto represented in art, but which, it was explained, was 'suitable for the majestic palace of the Barberini because it meant that as that fortunate family had been born and chosen to rule the Church in the place of God, so it did so with the aid of divine wisdom which it both loved and revered'.³ There is no indication as to which of the Roman theologians chose the theme—it seems almost inconceivable that the artist himself could have been responsible for such a far-fetched idea. It was, in any case, as Sacchi must have been well aware, the most ambitious project to represent an abstract philosophical concept since Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican Stanze. The Biblical text on which the fresco was based called upon princes 'to honour Wisdom that ye may reign for ever'. In the hands of the artist's advisers this inevitably underwent a significant transformation. Wisdom was majestically exalted—but it was, to a large extent, identified with the particular princes who were required to honour it. For, from the breast of the female figure enthroned in the centre of the composition, there blazes

¹ Besides contemporary sources and Bellori, 1672, p. 360, see Presenzini. Cigoli had already painted scenes from this story in the palace when it belonged to Scipione Borghese.

² Girolamo Teti

³ Incisa della Rocchetta, 1924, p. 64.

forth the Sun itself. This Sun serves a double, punning purpose. On the one hand, it was a conventional emblem for Wisdom and had often been used as such¹; on the other, it was one of the three special insignia of the Barberini family. The other two—the bees and the laurel—feature prominently in the friezes of paint and stucco which surround the main fresco. Sacchi, who always found conventional flattery difficult, treated this cosmic conceit with an intellectual severity that has no parallel in decorative painting of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is for this reason that its true implications have rarely been understood. Barberini-Wisdom, floating above the clouds on which are supported her attributes and manifestations (Eternity, Sanctity, Purity and so on) in the shape of beautiful maidens, is shown ordering Love and Fear to control the bestial passions of Lust and Wrath. The whole ceiling is covered with the fresco, but no attempt is made to represent the scene illusionistically. Sacchi painted his figures with great fluency in cool and subtle colours, mostly blues and greens and greys, but delineated each with the utmost care and did his best to subordinate the rather awkward groups into a composition of almost archaic simplicity. Urgency and passion played no part in his character or in the subject chosen for him, and by missing sublimity he inevitably missed too much.

In fact, his noble and austere fresco was much admired in certain circles in Rome, but within the Barberini family itself it only found one outright champion, Francesco's younger brother Antonio, whose special contribution to patronage will be discussed on a later page. Scarcely had the scaffolding been taken down than work was begun on the decoration of a much vaster setting—the principal reception-room of the palace. The original plan had been to give this room to Camassei, Taddeo's newly acquired protégé, but after his first works in smaller rooms it became apparent that his talents were not of the order required. For the proposals for the great hall were grandiose—indeed the most spectacular that had ever been seen in a work of the kind. The Pope's favourite poet, the Tuscan Francesco Bracciolini, was called in to devise an elaborate programme to the glory of the family, and the ceiling was clearly designed to be the greatest secular record of Barberini ambitions. With the relative failure of Camassei (only relative, for he was continually given minor commissions), one artist obviously stood out above all the rest. Pietro da Cortona's position was firmly established and he had already been engaged on frescoes in the chapel. He was powerfully backed by Cardinal Francesco and also by Jesuit advisers of the Pope. Some time towards the end of 1632 he began work on the great ceiling which he did not complete for another six or seven years.²

The Barberini at this time were at the very peak of their fortunes, and the programme which Francesco Bracciolini drew up and Pietro so brilliantly executed was designed as a hymn to their glory. Bracciolini, a mean character and a bad poet, had every reason to apply his flattery as intensively as possible. As a younger man he had served Maffeo Barberini as secretary for a few years and had accompanied him to

¹ Guy de Tervarant, column 356.

² For the most recent discussion of the fresco see Briganti, 1962.

Paris.¹ Then, at the only critical moment in the future Pope's career, when Clement VIII died in 1605, Francesco Bracciolini hurriedly left him. In 1623 he was distressed to find what a mistake this had been. frantic letters were sent to all the Barberini. 'Now, as an old man and shorn of all pretensions,' he wrote to Urban, 'I only want to embrace Your Holiness's feet and then close my eyes.' Fortunately for him, no one took this seriously and after the publication of his sycophantic *L'elettione di Urbano VIII* he was loaded with honours and privileges. He followed the poem with a long series, dealing with such subjects as the capture of La Rochelle and the conversion of Bulgaria, dedicated to various members of the family. But the Pope had not entirely forgiven him, for he made Bracciolini secretary to his austere Capuchin brother Antonio who in 1627 became Bishop of Sinigaglia. Stranded in this little port on the Adriatic coast, Bracciolini poured out his complaints in letters full of self-pity until he was finally allowed back to Rome. There he and Cortona planned the decoration of the great Barberini ceiling (Plate 13).² In this room it is the Bees and the Laurel, the two emblems which had been relatively neglected by Sacchi, that are made the essential themes of the fresco. In the centre of the ceiling Divine Providence, the sovereign of the Present and the Future, of Time and the Fates, obeyed by all the Virtues, commands Immortality to crown them with a halo of stars as they form an escutcheon borne aloft by Faith, Hope and Charity. Above, Religion, with her keys, and Rome, holding the papal tiara, add their tribute to the reigning family. Four subsidiary themes break through the conventional bounds of the frame and allude in symbolical forms to the virtuous and efficient government of the Pope. These themes appear general enough—the fight against the Vices, the encouragement of learning, the provision of plenty—but interpreters, with or without the help of Bracciolini himself, were quick to give them more specific applications: Abundance stood for young Cardinal Antonio and behind him could be seen the granaries he built; Hercules fighting the Vices was a particular (though hardly very pertinent) reference to Taddeo's administration of Rome. And so through all the allegories.

Pietro da Cortona's ceiling opens a new chapter in Baroque decoration: the whole vast expanse is covered with one single fresco instead of being broken up into separate compartments; the painted 'frame' appears to be deliberately defied by a swirling crowd of figures, whose grandeur and richness of colour awe, almost crush, the visitor with the feeling of his insignificance; writhing masses of raw, red, tumbling giants convey the impression of some tremendous conflict being waged only just above his

¹ Barbi.

² Much light has been thrown on the Barberini ceiling and the varying meanings that it may have had for Pietro da Cortona's contemporaries by a stimulating article by Jennifer Montagu (1968, pp. 334-5). She refers to the interpretation of the iconography given by Rosichino in 1640 (who spoke of the mythological scenes in largely general terms), by Girolamo Teti in 1642 (who claimed that they alluded to specific events in the lives of the Barberini) and by other observers, at least one of whom thought that these scenes might represent the Four Ages. She also suggested that for many seventeenth-century writers the interpretation of pictures was to some extent an end in itself. See also Vitzthum, 1961, pp. 427-33.

head so that he too is inextricably involved in the Pope's strenuous war against the forces of evil.

But the very idea of such a theme was also quite new in papal patronage of the seventeenth century. No artist had been given such complex instructions for at least fifty years, for the Borghese and the Ludovisi had been content to have represented far more general historical and mythological subjects. In fact the ceilings by Sacchi and Pietro da Cortona both reflect the intensely literary interests of the new court which were comparable with those of the Renaissance humanists. But Pietro, in particular, was able to combine these interests with a sense of display such as had hitherto been achieved only in literature. The artistic synthesis that resulted was eagerly adopted by court painters for well over a century, for in his ceiling Pietro managed to incorporate an overall effect whose general meaning was startlingly clear with recondite allusions of great appeal to cultivated and sophisticated visitors. Moreover, the programme which he and Bracciolini devised carried princely flattery to a greater extreme than had yet been seen south of the Alps¹; in this they were very likely encouraged by Cardinal Francesco, who must certainly have seen and been impressed by the early stages of Rubens's allegorical cycle in honour of Marie de Medici and Henri IV in Paris. This novelty was recognised at the time. From Naples Domenichino (who in his youth had himself helped to decorate a cardinal's gallery with themes suggesting the power of all-conquering love) wrote that, from what he had heard, the ceiling sounded more suitable for a secular prince than for a pope.² Despite some modern apologists there will be few to quarrel with his interpretation.

While Pietro was at work on the ceiling of the family palace, Cardinal Francesco began to employ his leading pupil Giovan Francesco Romanelli on the many other obligations which he had undertaken.³ This artist, who retained the colour and mannerisms of his master without his fire or genius, was called upon whenever an altar or ceiling painting was required in one of the churches for which the Cardinal had assumed responsibility. He was also put in charge of the Barberini tapestry works. His painting became increasingly tired and flaccid rather than truly classic, and he never won many admirers other than the Pope and his nephew. But for that very reason he was utterly reliable, and was rewarded with pensions and honours. In 1638 he was made *Principe* of the Accademia di S. Luca 'on the orders of Cardinal [Francesco] Barberini' who entirely controlled that body and who had contributed large sums towards the complete rebuilding of its church by Pietro da Cortona. For a time, indeed, Romanelli's ambitions soared so high that he aimed to supplant his master in the Pope's service.

¹ I cannot accept Pastor's view (XIII, p. 968) that 'la personalità di Urbano VIII passa in seconda linea di fronte all'esaltazione del papa istituito da Dio'. In part this depends on an obvious misinterpretation of the iconography, for it makes nonsense of the theme to suggest that Immortality is crowning Divine Providence rather than the Barberini emblems.

² See his letter of 1 September 1640 to Francesco Angeloni published by Bellori, p. 358.

³ For the relations between Romanelli and the Barberini see Passeri, pp. 305-14, and Pollak, 1913 and 1931, pp. 219-222, 548-9, 560-2, 580-1.

The relations between temperament and aesthetic taste are complex and mysterious. The learned Cardinal Francesco, correspondent and friend of half the scholars of Europe, chose as his favourite artists the richly coloured and extrovert Pietro da Cortona and his somewhat more restrained follower Romanelli. Andrea Sacchi, a reserved and melancholy figure, whose development is marked by an increasing reluctance even to try and compete with his revered Raphael, had to rely for support almost entirely on Francesco's second brother, the impetuous Antonio. Antonio was the youngest of the Pope's nephews, and to the horror of the elder members of the Conclave, was made Cardinal in 1627 when aged only 19. For such a status he seems to have had no qualifications whatsoever beyond greed and ambition.¹ The former was to some extent appeased by the vast income he derived from his many official posts—though it is doubtful whether he ever achieved his aim of earning as much as Cardinals Borghese and Ludovisi; the latter was constantly thwarted by Francesco and the Pope himself, who sent him out of Rome as often as possible.

Antonio was an elegant figure, fatter in the face than Francesco, with alert and gleaming eyes, a neatly trimmed moustache carefully turned up at the ends and thick wavy hair; clearly a dandy and a *bon vivant*.² But he too shared the family enthusiasm for learning and art. His first real opportunity to assert himself in this field came in 1631 with the devolution of Urbino to the papacy. Ever since he had come to the throne Urban VIII had been pressing hard his indubitable claims to the city which was due to be incorporated in the ecclesiastical states on the death of the aged duke Francesco Maria della Rovere whose own heirless son had predeceased him. Urban persuaded the reluctant ruler to hand over all effective authority to a governor named from Rome, and when on 28 April 1631 the sad, lonely old man finally died, immediate steps were taken to gain possession of the State. Taddeo, who inherited the della Rovere title of Prefect of Rome, galloped across the frontier. He was followed soon after by Antonio who became the first Legate.

Antonio clearly hoped to enrich his collection of pictures from the marvellous supply in Urbino as greatly as the Aldobrandini and Borghese had done in Ferrara a generation earlier. This was not to be. Urbino was certainly despoiled—but the bulk of the collection went elsewhere. The old duke had left his private possessions to his daughter Vittoria della Rovere, wife of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. As Antonio arrived in the empty palace which nearly two centuries earlier Federigo da Montefeltre had built and turned into a symbol of Renaissance culture, packing cases loaded with Titians and Raphaels had already left for Florence.³ Little enough remained, but in the *Studiolo* were still hanging on the walls those portraits of ancient and modern poets and philosophers which Justus of Ghent and Pedro Berruguete had painted for the original owner. They were at once removed and sent to Rome. There the Pope issued a special

¹ Apart from Pastor and Pecchiai, 1959, see the report of the Venetian ambassador Angelo Contarini, 1627-9, published by Barozzi e Berchet, I, p. 257.

² See the portrait on p. 73 of Teti.

³ [Gotti, A.]: pp. 102 ff.

decree to justify Cardinal Antonio's action and hand over the pictures to him and his heirs in perpetuity.¹

Cardinal Antonio's most important contribution to artistic patronage was his regular support for Andrea Sacchi, without which, claimed Passeri, 'he would have lived like a beggar'.² Antonio played a part in obtaining for the artist the commissions in the Capuchin church and above all the family palace, and thereafter he was the only one of the Barberini to give him consistent employment. Such steadfast patronage at this stage meant taking an artistic stand which had not hitherto proved necessary, for it was not until the early 'thirties that the divergencies between Pietro da Cortona and Sacchi, both brought up in the Titianesque tradition, became strikingly apparent. But from now on, both in theoretical debates and in his works themselves, Sacchi showed that he disapproved of Pietro's exuberance and complexity. He more and more praised the merits of simplicity and looked to Raphael as his special inspirer. Cardinal Antonio, who gave him a monthly salary and enrolled him into his official retinue some time before 1637, must have been well aware of and have approved this attitude. Sacchi was also an excessively slow worker, and a large proportion of his regular output was painted for this one highly placed patron—mainly canvases for churches, notably the Lateran Baptistry, of which the *modelli* would be kept by the Cardinal in his private collection. He accompanied Antonio on his travels outside Rome and acted as general artistic adviser to him in the decoration of the palace for which Antonio assumed responsibility and in which he lived. When in 1639 the Cardinal organised a great reception in the Gesù to celebrate the centenary of the approval given to the Jesuit statutes, Sacchi designed the temporary decoration of the church and had it hung with tapestries. He also recorded the event in a special picture.

Indeed, the most surprising of Cardinal Antonio's commissions to Sacchi were those on which he employed him, together with a genre-painter, to record various scenes from contemporary Roman life in which he or his family was involved.³ The most significant of these was the great 'mediaeval joust' which Cardinal Antonio organised in the Piazza Navona in 1634.⁴ This had originally been planned as an entertainment for a Polish prince who was due to visit Rome, but when the visit was cancelled, the Cardinal determined to carry on 'as he desired to see revived among the young men of Rome their ancient taste for chivalry, which, owing to the state of the times, was ignored rather than wholly lost'. The Bentivoglio were in charge of the arrangements, and though spectacles of this kind were not rare in Baroque Rome there is a certain irony in the contemplation of this clerical society listening to grandiose challenges that 'Secrecy in love is a superstitious fallacy that assumes either little merit in the lady or lack of spirit in the knight'. None the less this elaborate pastiche of feudal practices met

¹ Pollak, 1927, I, p. 336. These pictures are at present divided between the Louvre and the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino. Other pictures which were taken from Urbino at this time include the so-called Tavole Barberini attributed by Federico Zeri to Giovanni Angelo da Camerino—see *Due dipinti, la filologia e un nome*, 1961.

² Incisa della Rocchetta, 1924, p. 63, and Posse, 1925.

³ Incisa della Rocchetta, 1959, pp. 20 ff.

⁴ Bentivoglio, 1882. For earlier examples of such festivals see F. Clementi.

with delighted approval and Andrea Sacchi painted the culminating moment in the Piazza Navona as well as drawing the illustrations for a book by Cardinal Bentivoglio which described the occasion.

Antonio's joust forms part of a whole series of moves by the Barberini to emphasise the chivalrous past of Rome and, by implication, to associate within it the history of their own family. The elaborate and by now wholly artificial ceremonial with which Don Taddeo was made Prefect of Rome—a scene which Agostino Tassi was required to paint¹—provides a further instance of the same attitude, as does his marriage into the most venerable of Roman families and assumption of feudal rights over Palestrina and elsewhere. At the same time as their lavish consumption of wealth was effectively ruining the oldest families the Barberini were desperately trying to revive the ancient forms for their own benefit.

Meanwhile the palace was being filled with works of art and treasures of all kinds. In 1642 a lavishly illustrated folio volume was published with an ample, though somewhat generalised, account of its contents.² Breathlessly the writer described the rooms filled with paintings by Raphael and Correggio, Titian and Perugino, the Cavaliere d'Arpino, Guido Reni, Lanfranco, Guercino, Pietro da Cortona, Sacchi, Camassei and others; the great allegorical ceilings; the vast collections of antiques; and above all the splendid library which was the special concern of Cardinal Francesco with its Greek and Roman manuscripts, its store of learning accumulated from all over the world, its books of poetry and theology, law and history, music, architecture, astrology and botany—a real Temple of the Muses to which the Cardinal would retire while the rest of the palace resounded with courtiers and foreign delegates.

But the most immediately striking feature of the Barberini palace was the theatre. Operatic performances were given for the first time in February 1632, though it was probably not until a few years later that they were transferred from a large room in the palace to a theatre specially built by Pietro da Cortona which was capable of seating an audience of 3000.³ Jean-Jacques Bouchard, the French 'libertin', was there for the first

¹ Incisa della Rocchetta, 1959, pp. 20 ff.

² Teti.

The Barberini inventories have been published by Marilyn Aronberg Lavin.

An inventory of 1631 was published in part by Orbaan, 1920, pp. 495–513, and of the many travellers' accounts the fullest is that by Nicodemus Tessin the Younger and must date from 1687–8—Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Handskriftsand S.41. I am most grateful to Miss Jennifer Montagu for pointing this out to me and showing me a photocopy. See also Cantalamessa, 1894, pp. 79–101. As from 1935 large numbers of Barberini pictures have been sold either privately or, anonymously, in sale catalogues such as *Preziosa Raccolta di Quadri . . . già appartenuti ad illustri famiglie patrizie*—Galleria l'Antonina, Roma, 16–23 January 1935. I wish to thank Professor Waterhouse for pointing this out to me and for lending me his copy of the catalogue.

³ There is great confusion about this date. Pastor (XIII, p. 972) and Ademollo (1888, p. 10) both say 1634; Blunt (*Journal of Warburg Institute*, 1958, p. 282) implies 1633; Prunières (1913, p. 8) 1632. This latter date, confirmed by Bouchard's evidence and an *avviso* published by Clementi, I, p. 444, is the correct one and the muddle has been caused by the repeat performances given in later years.

Plate 9



GUIDO ABBATINI: Frontispiece of *Aedes Barberinae* with view of family palace

Plate 10

SACCHETTI TASTE (*see Plates 10 and 11*)



a. PIETRO DA CORTONA: Rape of the Sabines



b. PIETRO DA CORTONA: Rape of Helen

Plate 11



a. GIO. MARIA BOTTALLA: Meeting of Esau and Jacob



b. PIETRO TESTA: Joseph sold by his brothers

Plate 12



SACCHI: Divine Wisdom

performance, and he gives a vivid description of the room hung with red, blue and yellow satin, the two young Barberini Cardinals affably greeting their guests and begging them to squeeze closer together to allow more space, the prelates shouting with admiration at the beauty of the pages and castrati who were given the women's rôles...¹

The opera itself was *S. Alessio*, the story of a rich young man who wished to escape from the world. He disguised himself as a monk in his own palace and had to endure the torment of watching his wife and parents mourning over his supposed death. When the strain became too great and he was on the verge of revealing himself God showed him mercy by summoning him to the next world. The libretto of this curious, but affecting, story was written by Giulio Rospigliosi, the most attractive of the poets and art lovers who swarmed round the court of Urban VIII. Like most of the circle he was a Tuscan and his first literary work consisted of a commentary on the eulogistic *L'elettione di Urbano VIII* by his fellow Pistoian Francesco Bracciolini. This was published in 1628 when he was 28.² Naturally enough it won him the favour of the Barberini and thereafter his career was made. He accompanied Cardinal Francesco, whose literary and artistic interests he shared, to Spain. Back in Rome he became the discerning patron of a number of painters, and, in particular, he was able to find a congenial interpreter of his 'morality poems' in Nicolas Poussin. The artist painted three of these, though it is not absolutely certain that they were all for Rospigliosi himself—*The Dance of Human Life*, *Truth uncovered by Time* and *Happiness subject to Death* (or *The Arcadian Shepherds*).³ All these themes, translated by Poussin into works of poignant beauty, reveal a grave, melancholy, yet ultimately hopeful view of man's destiny. But Rospigliosi was almost alone among Roman patrons in showing as great an appreciation for the wistful poetry of Claude as for the grander austerities of Poussin. He owned three landscapes by him and evidently became his close friend, for in his will the artist left Rospigliosi two drawings 'because I have always received good advice from him'.⁴ Many other artists received patronage if not always advice at different stages in his life—Camassei and Lodovico Gimignani, Giovanni Francesco Grimaldi and Mattia Preti; Carlo Maratta

¹ Prunières, 1913, p. 9.

² Beani and Canevazzi.

³ *The Dance of Human Life* is in the Wallace Collection; *The Arcadian Shepherds* in the Louvre and *Truth and Time* has disappeared. The first and last of these were engraved by Jean Dughet and dedicated to Rospigliosi, which seems to confirm the somewhat confused account by Bellori (p. 448) that the subjects were chosen by him. See also Panofsky (1957, p. 305) who is, however, mistaken when he writes that Rospigliosi may have been in contact with Guercino in 1621-3 through the artist's visits to Guido Reni's *Aurora* in the family palace, for at that time the Casino Rospigliosi belonged to Cardinal Bentivoglio—in this connection see letters from Denis Mahon to *The Listener*, 24 August and 14 September 1961. Mahon also suggests (1960, p. 304, and 1962, p. 111) that on stylistic grounds *The Arcadian Shepherds* may be dated 1640 instead of 1650-5, to which period it is usually given. This would also fit in far better with Bellori's account as Rospigliosi was in Madrid from 1644 to 1653 and *The Dance of Human Life* certainly dates from c. 1637.

In the *Nota dei Musei* Bellori mentions that Rospigliosi also owned a *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* by Poussin. See also Richard, VI, pp. 57-62.

⁴ For Claude's will see Röhlisberger, 1961, p. 67. Two of the pictures are still in the Rospigliosi-Pallavicini collection in Rome—*ibid.*, p. 127.

and Bernini. And when in 1667 Rospigliosi became Pope Clement IX, he managed to give striking proof of his love of art though he only survived for two years.¹

Under Urban VIII, Rospigliosi, who was given a number of important posts in the administration, was chiefly known for his poems and the verse dramas he wrote for the palace theatre—at first only religious and then, beginning in 1639 with *Chi soffre, spera* which was seen by Milton, also profane. In fact, however, it was neither the librettos nor the rather indifferent music of Stefano Landi and others which really excited the public, but the singers and, above all the spectacle.²

Bernini was of course in charge of the frequent changes of décor for *S. Alessio*, and though his surviving plans appear to us to be remarkably conservative and unadventurous, Roman spectators, who lacked much theatrical experience, were deeply impressed. All of them wrote with enthusiasm of the vividness of the scenes in Hell, the woody landscapes, the palace, the angels flying through the clouds, the final triumphant appearance of Religion. The performance stimulated a passion for sensational effects which were much more vividly produced in the provisional theatre which Bernini erected outside his own house. Here he directed plays written (and often acted) by himself, the most famous of which was *L'Inondazione del Tevere* given during the carnival of 1638 and inspired by a flood of the year before. As no drawings for it have survived, we have to rely entirely on the evidence of contemporary spectators. ‘When the curtain rose,’ wrote one of them,³ ‘a marvellous scene appeared showing the most distant buildings in perspective, above all St Peter’s, the Castel S. Angelo and many others well known to those who live in Rome. Nearer, you saw the Tiber, which through hidden devices of the most ingenious kind, was shown to be rising. . . . Nearer than that part of the stage where the acting took place was real water held back by dykes which had been specially placed all round the scene. And you saw real men rowing people from one side to the other, as if the river had submerged the lower part of the city and stopped traffic as it did last year. While everyone was stunned by the spectacle, various officials went to inspect the banks and repair the blocks and dykes so that the river should not flood the city. But suddenly the banks collapsed and the water, rising above the stage, began to pour down towards the auditorium. Those who were nearest thought that there was real danger and got up so as to run away. But just as the water was about to fall on them, a large dyke suddenly emerged at the edge of the stage and the water was diverted without harming anyone. . . .’ It was only after this and similar accounts that the guests referred to the great satirical licence that was allowed to Bernini.

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In 1641 the War of Castro broke out. The final consequences of this absurd dispute with the Duke of Parma were insignificant, but its effects on the Barberini were of great

¹ For Rospigliosi and artists see also Bellori, 1942, pp. 87–8; Pascoli, I, pp. 41, 47, 138, and II, pp. 128, 155, 302, 482; De Dominicis, IV, p. 13, and Pastor, XIV, pp. 553 ff. ² Prunières, 1913, chapter I.

³ Fraschetti, p. 264. Another account of the same occasion was written many years later by the artist’s son Domenico (p. 55).

importance. All the latent hostility aroused by their twenty-year rule came to the surface and almost overwhelmed them. Troops marched on Rome, there was financial panic in the city, patronage suffered disastrously. A humiliating peace was imposed in 1644; a few months later the Pope died.

Giambattista Pamfili, who became Pope Innocent X in September 1644, was elected partly through the support of the two Barberini Cardinals after attempts to promote the cause of their friend Giulio Sacchetti had failed. Though there was every likelihood that Pamfili would reverse the foreign policies of Urban VIII, they were more concerned with their own security than any such consideration, and hoped that by backing the winning side they stood a good chance of survival. In this they were mistaken. An enquiry into their financial administration of the War of Castro was threatened. To avoid it Cardinal Antonio disguised himself as a sailor and fled to France in September 1645. Four months later he was joined by his two elder brothers Francesco and Taddeo. In Rome their palaces were taken over, their property confiscated, and Taddeo's wife (very soon to be a widow) was left penniless.¹

The exile of the Barberini was a terrible blow to artists. Romanelli, indeed, wrote to Cardinal Francesco that 'it is impossible for one who has until now lived under the noble patronage of Your Eminence and has received so many favours, to live far from Your Eminence', and he joined his patron in France.² Bernini himself suffered for a time from his close association with the hitherto all-powerful family, and rivals and enemies such as Borromini and Algardi saw their opportunities and took them gleefully.

Yet even from a distance the Barberini managed to make their presence felt, though on a drastically reduced scale. While Francesco wrote from Paris that 'of the painters here none is better than Vouet',³ Bernini at last completed the tomb that Urban VIII had so wished to see during his lifetime, and Angelo Giori, who was in charge, wrote to the exiled Cardinals and suggested that they should congratulate the artist.⁴ Meanwhile weavers continued work on a series of tapestries illustrating the life of Christ taken from cartoons that the Barberini had commissioned from Pietro da Cortona.⁵

And then, only three years after the disaster, occurred one of those reversals of fortune so frequent in seventeenth-century Rome. In February 1648 Cardinal Francesco, after some negotiations, returned and was warmly welcomed by the Pope. Artists in Rome were overjoyed and when Antonio arrived in 1653 the brothers characteristically celebrated the occasion by ordering from Pietro da Cortona a picture of *Xenophon sacrificing to Diana after his return from exile*, a subject chosen by the Cardinals from the *Anabasis* to commemorate the restoration of their fortunes.⁶ The theatre opened once more and Giulio Rospigliosi resumed work on his librettos.

Yet though the Barberini were back again their patronage of the arts was inevitably

¹ See her poignant letters published by Pecchiai, 1959, pp. 182 ff.

² Letter of 21 January 1646 published by Pollak, 1913, p. 50.

³ Letter of 9 March 1646 to Cassiano dal Pozzo published by Lumbroso, p. 312.

⁴ Feliciangeli.

⁵ U. Barberini, 1950.

⁶ Briganti, 1962, p. 254. The picture has disappeared.

only the shadow of what it had been. Pietro da Cortona was much in demand with the new régime; and Sacchi to whom Cardinal Antonio remained loyal was becoming increasingly reluctant to paint anything at all. Indeed he shocked his envious fellow-painters by refusing to fresco the vault of S. Luigi dei Francesi as commissioned by Antonio, who wished by this gesture to show his gratitude to the French for appointing him their Protector in Rome.¹ When Sacchi died in 1661 Antonio turned to his pupil Carlo Maratta. That artist carried on painting a series of Apostles which Sacchi had scarcely begun at the time of his death,² and also recorded his patron's features in some of the finest Roman portraits of the whole century (Plate 3b).³ Old and rather feeble, yet immensely grand in his full Cardinal's regalia, deep red echoing deep reds in the background, he stands solemnly erect at a table and gazes at the spectator. His hand points not at the small carved crucifix to his left but at the Ordre du Saint-Esprit hanging on his breast; the very embodiment of declining power. In the last years of his life Antonio became increasingly attached to the Jesuits to whose noviciate church of S. Andrea al Quirinale he made large contributions. More and more of his time was spent in France—where he was given several important posts, including the Archbishopric of Rheims—but after a bout of ill-health he returned to Rome to die in 1671.

Francesco outlived him by eight years. The divergence between their tastes continued into old age, accentuated perhaps by their political differences as the elder brother's sympathies moved further and further away from France after his return from exile.⁴ Francesco, as always, showed a love of colour and of richness that was alien to the more classically minded Antonio. He befriended Velasquez when the great Spanish painter came to Rome in 1650, but it is not certain whether or not he had his portrait painted by him.⁵ Romanelli, whose attachment to the Barberini cause was rewarded by the gift of a country-house, continued to paint for Francesco. In particular he produced two large canvases of *The Marriage of Peleus and Bacchus and Ariadne* shortly before dying, in virtual retirement, in 1662.⁶ In the next year Francesco began an important project whose completion he was not to see. He commissioned from Lazzaro Baldi and Ciro Ferri drawings and cartoons for a set of twelve tapestries designed to illustrate the main events of the life of Urban VIII.⁷ The work lasted for more than twenty years mainly

¹ Passeri, p. 301. ² Bellori, 1942, p. 84. For the full history see Mezzetti, 1955, p. 253.

³ For the most recent discussion of the portrait, now in the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica in Rome, and of others of the Cardinal (including two by Nanteuil), see Edoardo Lombardo, 1959, p. 2. It will be seen that the version reproduced here, from the collection of the Duke of Northumberland, is rather different from the one described above.

⁴ See the biting comments made about him by the French ministers in 1654: '... tout à fait suspect à la France . . . jalouse, envie, vengeance, ingratitudo. . . .' in Hanotaux, p. 8 and pp. 12–13.

⁵ Palomino (III, p. 336) says that when in Rome Velasquez painted a portrait of Cardinal Antonio Barberini. In fact Antonio did not return from France until 1653, long after the departure of Velasquez, and Palomino must be confusing Antonio with Francesco.

⁶ Pollak, 1913, p. 60.

⁷ The tapestries are now dispersed; the cartoons are in the Palazzo Barberini. For their history see Adolf S. Cavalllo, 1957, M. Calberg, 1959, and Blunt and Cooke, 1960, p. 36, who suggest Ciro Ferri as the artist. There had been a plan earlier to cover the walls of the Salone with frescoes representing rather similar subjects—Pastor, XIII, p. 969.

because Francesco insisted on using wool only from his own flocks. So for the last time Urban VIII was commemorated in the grand Baroque style (though now only feebly reflected) which he had done so much to promote—acquiring Urbino for the Church, fortifying Rome, receiving the homage of the Christian world. . . . This commission with its nostalgic yet eloquent echoes from the past in some ways symbolised the position of Francesco Barberini during the years after his return from exile. The love of art and learning remained as deep as ever—he continued to build up his marvellous library and corresponded with scholars all over Europe¹—but inevitably he played little part in the more vital culture of the day. The artists he employed were mainly those of an earlier generation; while Bernini, who owed so much to the patronage of his family, was now transforming Rome for new dynasties and new generations. And although the Barberini were represented in the patronage of younger artists—notably by Prince Maffeo, son of Taddeo²—a real estimate of their contribution to seventeenth-century art must be based on the period of their supreme power during the pontificate of Urban VIII.³

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This contribution was not as strikingly apparent as that of certain other popes. Rome itself was not transformed by Urban VIII. No great new squares recall his memory as they do those of his successors Innocent X and Alexander VII. And yet the Barberini heritage was more important than that of any other seventeenth-century dynasty, for their choice of artists determined the style that was to influence all future building and decorating in the city. Neither Bernini nor Pietro da Cortona had been originally 'discovered' by the Barberini, yet both were given their first supreme opportunities by them, and with the exception of the highly original and individual Borromini no other artist of equal stature was to appear in Rome. Their most important contribution to patronage was their quick realisation of the greatness of these men and their support of them in the most ambitious undertakings. The ease with which Camassei was dropped when his limitations were only just becoming apparent and the tenacity with which Bernini was retained when certain of his constructional errors were threatening to overwhelm him show how certain was their sense of values.

Bernini was the genius of the age: his authority dominated all the arts and was responsible for the relative neglect of Borromini until the very end of Urban's reign, though the Barberini showed on occasion that they admired his talents.⁴ It is doubtful whether the relationship between an artist and his patrons has ever been more fruitful. For Bernini and the Barberini had much in common: a remarkable width of culture,

¹ Biblioteca Vaticana, MSS. Barb. Lat. 6463, and many other collections.

² Bellori, 1942, p. 85.

³ It will be obvious that in such a general survey I have omitted a great many important examples of Barberini patronage. Very useful accounts are given in Baglione, pp. 177–83, and Pastor, XIII, pp. 903–1000.

⁴ See, for example, Cardinal Francesco Barberini's part in the building of S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane—Pollak, 1927, I, p. 45.

a deep respect for the past, a combination of real religious feeling with dramatic ostentation—above all the most strenuous ambition. The confidence between them allowed Bernini to experiment fully with his talent, but while working for Urban he never gave rein to that introspection and mysticism that characterise some of his later sculpture. Compared to the relationship between those two tragic giants Julius II and Michelangelo theirs was placid and free from tension. Both men were much more ready to accept the compromises of their age; both had more than a streak of worldliness.

Throughout Urban's reign the papacy was losing power and prestige and yet it still (for the last time) appeared to be an important force in international politics. The end of the Thirty Years' War and the arrogance of France were soon to change all that. Meanwhile court art reached a new pitch of grandeur and flattery. Religious imagery was used to buttress secular claims, and new techniques of illusionism were devised to overwhelm the onlooker. For all its apparent optimism and opulence there is perhaps a touch of hysteria about Pietro da Cortona's ceiling in the Barberini palace. Certainly no later pope was able to go so far in self-glorification. That was to be left to the King of France whose artist, Le Brun, adopted a modified version of Pietro's Baroque to express it.

Even from the purely artistic point of view one of the most significant characteristics of the Barberini and their circle was the great attention paid to learning. Scholars of all kinds were welcomed at their courts and brought into contact with painters, thus giving rise to an art of great intellectual subtlety and the growth of theories which were later to be highly influential. Yet the period itself is marked by a notable freedom from dogmatism and a wide measure of variety within certain well-established limits. This was very different from the frenzied experiments of earlier years and the generally uninformed or eclectic taste of Cardinal Borghese and his friends. The Barberini were much more coherent in their opinions, but thanks to Urban's nepotism and their own strongly individual characters, contrasting tendencies were all catered for, as the support given respectively by Cardinals Francesco and Antonio to Pietro da Cortona and Sacchi clearly testifies. When Urban VIII died everyone realised that the situation would never be the same again.