FOOTSTEPS ON THE WAY TO REDEMPTION
THE PEDESTALS OF BERNINI’S BALDACCHINO IN ST. PETER’S


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LA BASILICA DI SAN PIETRO
FORTUNA E IMMAGINE

a cura di
Giovanni Morello
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Footsteps on the Way to Redemption.
The Pedestals of Bernini’s Baldacchino in St. Peter

IRVING LAVIN

God, we say, is in the details. My project in this essay is to discuss in some detail some details of the Baldacchino, that is, the pedestals and the things represented on them. Some of these details are eminently conspicuous and have been subject to the most extravagant explanations, others are barely visible and are rarely, if ever noticed by the public. Taken together, I believe, these details give us to understand that the pedestals are indeed the foundation stones on which that miraculous work of art rests, not just structurally but also spiritually.

THE CREATIVITY OF THE BALDACCHINO

The Trinity: Bees between heaven and Earth

In essence the Baldacchino (Fig. 1) constitutes a fusion of the three traditional types of honorific markers that served to confer the distinction of holiness on the persons, places, and things of ecclesiastical belief and ritual, the architectural ciborium supported on columns (Fig. 2), the suspended canopy (Fig. 3), and the processional baldachin carried on staves (Fig. 4). The idea of merging these quite distinct species into what one contemporary described as a “chimaera” was more than an ingenious solution that synthesized and epitomized the hallowed traditions and unique challenges that confronted Bernini in the unprecedented task of “furnishing” the high altar of St. Peter’s. The typological merger was also a creative act in which the three species were subsumed under a new unity, a metaphor for the divine creativity of the Holy Trinity itself, which had created the church for the express purpose of achieving the salvation of humanity. This ecclesiologically generative nature of the Trinity is explicit in a drawing showing the early project.

1 See the comprehensive account of the theme in scholastic theology by EMERY 1995.
for the Baldacchino, in which the sun passing through the apse window containing the triangular sign of the Trinity illuminates the choir. With God the Father portrayed in the act of creation in the apex of the lantern of the cupola, and the

2 The problematic drawing, in the Morgan Library, is a pastiche consisting of two sheets, one showing the choir with Bernini’s early project for the upper niches in the piers and in the apse the Cathedra Petri with the Trinitarian window, on which a second sheet has been pasted showing a papal ceremony with the early project for the Baldacchino; the drawing was discussed by Dombrowski 2003, pp. 39-44, who attributes it to Agostino Ciampelli and dates it to the beginning of Urban’s reign. The apse project is evidently an alternative to that shown in a drawing at Windsor, where in the first storey, below the window, a presumably sculptured image of St. Michael carrying the keys and papal tiara appears in a sunburst above the niche containing the Cathedra upheld by Fathers of the Church (see Lavin 2007, 17, fig. 6; Rice 1997, 89, 267).
underside of the canopy to illuminate the crucifixion at the altar below, the Baldacchino came actually to incorporate this mystery of the Trinity, in a form that echoes the traditional disposition of the Trinity in the Throne of Grace or Mercy Seat (Fig. 9). The notion of the Trinity as the creative agent of redemption was as old as the church itself and had its direct legacy in the belief that to insure the continuity of the promise of salvation through Christ’s vicar on earth, the Divine Wisdom intervened at the election of every pope. Divine inspiration is invoked frequently during the election cooalves through the ancient hymn Veni creator spiritus recited liturgically at Pentecost, when the Holy spirit descended on the Virgin and apostles to ensure the divulgation and continuity of Christ’s teaching.\(^3\) The Holy Spirit intervened in a particularly, indeed triply auspicious way at the election of Urban VIII, August 6, 1523: during the conclave a swarm of bees descended through a window of the Sistine Chapel to settle on the wall of Barberini’s cell (Fig. 10); owing to their perfect community and beneficent creativity, bees were a traditional symbol of Divine Wisdom, and three of the species had formed Cardinal Maffeo Barberini’s personal coat of arms. The trinity of big bronze bees that have alighted and conjoined to bind the crown together and sustain the universally triumphant Cross at the apex, seems to reenact in perpetuity this heavenly descent of divinely providential salvation (Fig. 11). The episode was also reenacted metaphorically at the apex of Pietro da Cortona’s ceiling fresco in the great salone of Palazzo Barberini, where at the direction of Divine Providence, Rome carries the papal crown above the flight of bees framed by a laurel wreath (Fig. 12); and the all-presiding inspiration of Divine Wisdom is portrayed in Andrea Sacchi’s vault fresco in the north wing (Fig. 13).\(^4\)

\(^3\) See the references to the hymn in LEVI 1671, 14, 22, 37.

\(^4\) See the splendid analyses by SCOTT (1991, 180-6, 38-67), who generously acknowledges, p. 185 n. 28, that it was I who alerted him to the election event and its relevance to the epiphany of the papal coat of arms in the salone fresco.
Surprisingly, perhaps, the creative nature of the Holy Spirit was represented more directly in the pedestals that serve as the very foundation stones of the Baldacchino (Fig. 14). It has frequently been observed, and much disputed, that the swelling forms and disposition of the three Barberini bees in the coats of arms on the exterior faces of each pedestal suggest the body of a pregnant woman, and that the female faces enclosed in the cartouches above portray the phases of parturition. (Figs. 15-32). The sequence begins at the left facing the nave with a smile, passes clockwise around the Baldacchino through various more or less pained expressions and ends facing the nave at the right where a radiantly beaming, winged cherub's head appears. Below, at the groin, grotesque masks, half human, half bestial, sneer and threaten vile, demonic pleasures.

The pregnancy and parturition were first mentioned in print in 1883 in a touristic guidebook to Rome, transmitting the salubrious anecdotes no doubt recounted by local ciceroni. The second to consider them was a distinguished historian of ancient medicine and gynecologist Giacomo Emilio Curatulo, who in 1901 published an obstetrical analysis that he believed con-
15. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Sud-Est, lato Est [IA].
16. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Sud-Est, lato Est [IA], dettaglio di testa femminile e maschera.
17. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Sud-Est, lato Sud [IB].
18. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Sud-Est, lato Sud [IB], dettaglio di testa femminile e maschera.
20. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Sud-Ovest, lato Sud [IIA], dettaglio di testa femminile e maschera.
22. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Sud-Ovest, lato Ovest [IIB], dettaglio di testa femminile e maschera.
23. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Nord-Ovest, lato Ovest [IIIA].
24. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Nord-Ovest, lato Ovest [IIIA], dettaglio di testa femminile e maschera.

25. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Nord-Ovest, lato Nord [IIIB].

27. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Nord-Est, lato Nord [IVA].

29. Baldacchino, Piedistallo Nord-Est, lato Est [IVB].
firmed the birthing physiologically. The escutcheons and the theme of partu-
ritation were often seen as satiric, prurient allusions to scandalous rumors that cir-
culated about the pope's family. This was also the view of the great Russian mo-
tion picture maker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein who first gathered and sum-
marized the early literature on the pedestals in a famous unfinished treatise on
 cinematic montage (1937-40) (Fig. 33).6 Eisenstein interpreted the reliefs in for-
termal terms as a perfect demonstration of his theory of montage, that is, sequen-
tial narration in film, and argued that their full significance could only be
grasped when they were considered in this way. Ironically, he grossly misprized
their meaning in a radical anticlerical vein, but his understanding of the tempo-
ral import of the escutcheons was astonishingly perceptive wth respect to their
ultimate significance. The pedestals have been discussed seriously only twice in
recent scholarly literature. Philip Fehl explained them in adulatory terms as a
"compliment" to the felicitous reign of Urban VIII. Cesare D'Onofrio considered
the reliefs in metaphorically, referring to the ecclesiastical tradition of the
church as mother of the faithful, Mater Ecclesia.8 As we shall see, all these in-

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6 Eisenstein 1985, 87-100; Eisenstein 1989, 111-31; Eisenstein 1991, 67-80. The essay has been
7 Fehl, 1976.
8 D’Onofrio 1979, 243-9. D’Onofrio’s work was greatly dependent on that of Witkowski 1908,
who was the first to consider the reliefs in positive, if witty, ecclesiological terms.
34. Tiara con testa di cherubino, particolare del Baldacchino. Piedistallo Sud-Est, Iato Est [IA]. (Dettaglio della Fig.15)
35. Michelangelo Buonarroti, Madonnna Pitti, particolare. Firenze, Museo del Bargello.

heavenward (Fig.34). Under the apian aegis of Divine Wisdom, the cherub seems to forecast the infant that replaces the woman's head at the end of the series. In fact, in the Celestial Hierarchies of the Pseudo-Dionysius, "the name cherubim signifies the power to know and to see God, to receive the greatest gifts of his light, to contemplate the divine splendor in primordial power, to be filled with the gifts that bring wisdom and to share these generously with subordinates as part of the beneficent outpouring of wisdom" (Fig. 35).

In ecclesiological terms the creativity of the Trinity took two main forms, with respect to God's method and purpose. The first, the creation of the Church, was embodied in John's Apocalyptic vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Revelations, in the famous passage at the beginning of Chapter 12, describing the appearance of the Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet,

Revelations 12: 1-5
1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

From at least the time of Methodius's treatise on the virtues of virginity, these references to the tribulations and joys of childbirth were understood as the labor and sufferings of the Mother Church in bringing about salvation through a healing of the souls by virtue of Christ's sacrifice at the crucifixion, re-enacted in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the mass.

The woman who appeared in heaven clothed with the sun, and crowned with twelve stars, and having the moon for her footstool, and being with child, and travailing in birth, is certainly, according to the accurate interpretation, our mother ...

It is the Church whose children shall come to her with all speed after the resurrection, running to her from all quarters. She rejoices receiving the light which never goes down, and clothed with the brightness of the Word as with a robe.

And Hippolytus, in his Treatise on Christ and Antichrist Son_PB

"she, being with child, cries, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered," means that the Church will not cease to bear from her heart the Word that is persecuted by the unbelieving in the world. The passage in Revelations was closely linked to that in John's gospel where the second creative act in the achievement of salvation, Christ's sacrifice, is de-

10 VII; Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, 162. On the cherub-ornamented headdress see the comments of Tollmay 1943–60,1, 160, concerning Michelangelo's Pinti Madonna, which he calls Sylline. D'Onofrio 1979, Fig. 188, p. 252, labels the head "illusione al concepito". According to Eisenstein 1991, 74, "It might be read as something like a chapter heading or an introductory epigraph about the birth of a new son of the family that was crowned with the papal tiara". Witkowki 1908, 266, was most eloquent, and right on the mark: "Cette échec tourmentes n'a1legorisent-ils pas encore les terrible epreuves subies par l'Eglise militante au Sion is the Church whose children shall come to her with all speed after the resurrection, running to her from all quarters. She rejoices receiving the light which never goes down, and clothed with the brightness of the Word as with a robe.11

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13 Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 62, Roberts, Donaldson V, 1951, p. 217
finis: Christ likens the period from his death to his second coming to the travail of a woman in parturition and the joy that follows to the birth of her child,

John 16: 20-22
[20] Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.
[21] A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.
[22] And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

This passage in Christ's sermon to the apostles was understood as Christ's paradoxical allusion to his own death and resurrection, comparing his suffering and that of his disciples at his death to the pangs of delivery, and their joy and his own at their redemption into eternal life achieved by his resurrection, to the joy at the birth of the child. The tribulation described by John was foreordained to the Church's gestation of the faithful through God's warning to Eve after the fall, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children". The great Jesuit exegete Cornelis a Lapide (1567-1637), who was then in Rome composing his famous biblical commentaries, interpreted the passage thus: "For Christ compares His death to child-birth and His resurrection to the joy after child-birth. For Christ suffered anguish and tortures like a woman in child-birth, but when He was Himself rising again through the merit of His death, and he knew that we should in like manner rise again, He greatly rejoiced Himself, and inspired the Apostles and all the faithful with great joy ... . Hence the solemnities of the Saints are said to be their birthdays, not their burials". 15

Purification-Healing

The particular relevance of these themes of divinely ordained gestation to the Baldacchino over the apostles' tomb at St. Peter's, was established in the early sixteenth century with Leo X de' Medici's program of reaffirming the hegemony of the church and the papacy in the great campaign of decorations that he entrusted to Raphael-Feschi in the Vatican palace, and tapestries for the Sistine chapel. In the compass of these decorations two subjects in particular were associated with the high altar of St. Peter's, both of which served as historical and doctrinal precedent for Bernini's project. In the Sala di Costantino the Donation of Constantine was conceived as actually taking place in the basilica, and Raphael's portrayal of the disposition of the spiral columns from the Temple of Jerusalem in the Constantinian presbytery of Old St. Peter's (Fig. 36), as well as the suspended canopies over the flanking portraits of Sylvester I and Gregory the Great (Figs. 37-38), re-

36. Giulio Romano, Le stanze, La Donazione di Costantino, affresco. Città del Vaticano, Palazzo Vaticano, Sala di Costantino.

was conceived as actually taking place in the basilica, and Raphael's portrayal of the disposition of the spiral columns from the Temple of Jerusalem in the Constantinian presbytery of Old St. Peter's (Fig. 36), as well as the suspended canopies over the flanking portraits of Sylvester I and Gregory the Great (Figs. 37-38), re-


Footnotes:
14 Gn. 3:16. Multiplicabo aerumnas tuas et conceptus tuos; in dolore paries filios...
15 LAPIDE 1876-1908 VI, 171.
Peter insists that while the healing was physical, it was effected through faith, not a physical but a spiritual healing. Peter was acting as the vicar of Christ, who had described himself as the physician, whose power came from his faith in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? or why marvel ye at this? 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The miracle was performed in the place where Jesus had himself performed acts of spiritual healing, in his youthful disputations with the Doctors and later by driving out the money changers, thus signifying the power and legitimacy of Peter’s vicarage. The events took place, however, before the famous Porta Speciosa, famous for its heavy brass doors, for which Raphael instead substituted the Solomonic columns whose vine scrolls gave them a sacramental significance singularly appropriate for the altar at St. Peter’s tomb. Peter says explicitly to the bystanders at the event that they should not mistake him as a magician for it was not he who had worked the miracle, but through the power of Jesus.

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sick... for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance".19

John Shearman’s analysis of the tapestry has made it amply clear that Raphael’s bold transposition of the Healing of the Lame Man with reference to St. Peter’s was intended to evoke the legacy of Christ the Physician, *Christus Medicus*, to Peter his vicar, and hence to Leo X, whose family name was de’ Medici.20 The theme of papal healing was represented in a relief in the Sala di Costantino above the portrait of Sylvester I, who had baptized the emperor Constantine the Great (Fig. 40). The relief refers to the fact that Sylvester had earlier cured the emperor of leprosy, which led to his conversion. In correspondence to the healing depicted here the relief above the portrait of Gregory the Great (Fig. 41) illustrates Gregory’s decree that masses be celebrated over the tomb of St. Peter; four of the spiral columns are displayed in a row, as they appear before the apse in the reconstruction of the Constantinian building in the intervening fresco of the *Donation*. The fact that the columns in the tapestry are silver, rather than marble, constitutes another, specific reference to the altar, for Gregory the Great had erected over the tomb a “cyborium cum columnis suis IIII ex argento puro,” and had also decreed that masses be celebrated over the body of St. Peter (“Hic fecit ut super corpus beati Petri missas celebrarentur”).21 The relief above his portrait in the Sala di Costantino actually shows him celebrating mass before a structure with four spiral columns.

Raphael perpetrated another astonishing conflation in the tapestry, also noted, but not discussed by Shearman. Raphael flanked the central episode of the Healing of the Lame Man with figures that clearly allude to the Hebrew rituals of

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19 Matt. 9:12-13:
12But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.
13But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

20 SHEARMAN 1972, 55-7, 77ff. Shearman does not himself make this deduction, concluding only that “the meaning of the columns cannot, therefore, be literal but must be symbolic—either of the miraculous healing powers of one of them, or of Solomon himself, Rex Pacificus, or perhaps both” (p. 57).

21 I knew that all I was asking for was mercy, not sacrifice; for I have never come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Matt. 9:12-13; 12But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.
13But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.)
presentation and purification mandated by the Lord in the book of Leviticus: at the right an infant carrying a pair of doves and a handmaiden with other celebratory food offerings, and at the left a mother carrying her child at her bosom. Following the birth of a child a woman is considered unclean for certain specified intervals according to the sex of the newborn, after which she must bring, to the door of the tabernacle offerings, a lamb or a pair of pigeons or turtle doves if she is poor, to the priest, who makes an atonement for her so that she is cleansed and may again enter the sanctuary.\footnote{Homilies on Leviticus. Homily VIII, MIGNE 1857-1905, XII, cols. 492f.} The rite of purification applied to Christ as well, since the Law of Leviticus provided that the male child be presented by the mother at the same time. The Presentation of the Christ child and the Purification of the Virgin were thus correlated themes, each with its proper feast in the calendar of the church, and both were commemorated on the same day. From the earliest Christian times the church Fathers emphasized that neither the Son of God nor the Virgin Mary had need of purification, but they did so anyway so that the ritual of the Old Law of the Hebrews, might finally be fulfilled, literally once and for all, in the New Law for all believers. And when the tapestry series was continued after Raphael's death by Giulio Romano, the \textit{Presentation of Christ in the Temple} was located in the same ideally conflated setting, appropriate to this critical act of transition from the Old Law to the New (Fig. 42).\footnote{Homilies on Leviticus. Homily VIII, MIGNE 1857-1905, XII, cols. 492f.} 

The Old Testament purification and New Testament healing had been associated early on by Origen under the rubric of Christ's power, as Christus Medicus, to cleanse the soul of sin. Discussing Christ's definition of himself as the physician for the sick, not the well (Mark 9:12,13), Origen relates the purification rituals (Leviticus 12 and 13, specifically 12:2, the birth of a male child),

\textit{Leviticus 12 (King James Version)}

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child, then she shall be unclean seven days: according to the days of her separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean.

3 And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. 4 And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean.

5 But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days.

6 And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest:

7 And the priest shall make an atonement for her; and she shall be clean.

8 And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.

9 And if she is poor, to the priest, who makes an atonement for her so that she is cleansed and may again enter the sanctuary.
ter's. In the sermon that followed the healing, Peter adjured the witnesses not to assume that the power came from him, but from Jesus whom they had condemned to death, and who had himself attributed his power to his Father. In effect, the curative power of Christus Medicus, expressed in Christ's metaphor referring to himself as physician, descended not just to Leo X as a Medici, but to all those who occupy the papal throne. This idea lay at the very heart of the ideology of Bernini's Baldacchino.

It is important, moreover, that in all these cases the healing brought revelation and conversion, the leper cured by Christ who spread the good word (Mark 1: 43-5), the lame man and bystanders who had witnessed the miracle. At the Purification and Presentation, the witness and convert was the just and devout Simeon, who recognized Mary and Jesus and publicly proclaimed their salvation “A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2: 32). This last pronouncement is crucial because it foreshadows what would become the church's basic claim to be successor to paganism and Judaism, ecclesiae ex gentibus and ex circumcisione.

Considering these implications of the two subjects Raphael combined in the tapestry, it becomes clear why the scene was set among the twisted columns—not simply because they came from the Temple of Jerusalem and were installed at the high altar at St. Peter's but also because they were Roman columns on the one hand, and on the other richly ornamented with vine scrolls that suffused them with the symbolism of the Eucharist. By framing the Healing by the presentation, and setting them both within the symbolic columns from Jerusalem at St. Peter's, Raphael gave physical and topographic reality to the theme of succession that was Catholicism's chief claim to universality. Hence the appropriateness of the ideology expressed in the tapestry to its display in the Sistine Chapel, where papal elections were held and the succession assured.

_Lupercalia_

The pedestals of the baldachin incorporate, conjugate would a better word, as cornerstones the two stones, Peter and Mary, on which Christ built his church. Following the words about childbirth in the Book of Revelations and from Christ's own mouth as reported by St. John, the tribulations and ultimate jubilation of childbirth depicted on the pedestals reenact the process of salvation that is achieved in the sacrifice at the altar and triumphs with the Resurrection of Christ in the original plan for the Baldacchino, and with the world dominion of the Cross as it was executed. The Original Sin over which the church Triumphed and from which the repentant sinner is redeemed is illustrated in the satiric, indeed devilish masks that appear as imprisoned at the “groins” of the cartouches. The grimacing visages, beginning with the male “vagina dentata,” recollect, besides the biblical Original Sin, for which the Old Law of Leviticus failed to compensate, a lewd and orgiastic Roman pagan fertility festival which the Purification of the Virgin...
tory sacrifice celebrated in that month in honor of Februus, the god of the underworld. The history of the Purification-Presentation feast in relation to the pagan festival was thereafter embodied in church tradition, recorded notably in the thirteenth-century Golden Legend of Jacopo da Voragine, who relates that Candlemas was instituted to remedy a Roman festival honoring the goddess Februus, to celebrate her motherhood of Mars. Toward the end of the sixteenth century the great church historian Cardinal Cesare Baronio (1538-1607) took a bold and crucial step by linking the Presentation specifically and explicitly to the greatest, the most popular, the most ancient, and the most venerated of all Roman celebrations, the Lupercalia (Fig. 44). Baronio based this extraordinary leap of the historical imagination on the fact that the earliest form of the Purification, the Quadragesima Epiphaniae took place on February 14, the day before the Lupercalia on February 15. The Lupercalia was, moreover, a quintessential Roman celebration, said to have been introduced by Romulus himself and celebrated on a vast scale by the entire populace of the city. The celebration incorporated the fundamental themes of augury for the coming spring, that of purification and renewal, of regeneration and fertility. In addition to orgiastic and promiscuous public orgies, of both wine and libido, the festival was characterized by a quasi-primitive ritual in which boys ran naked the length of the Via Sacra carrying goat skins, symbolic of unrestrained productivity, with which they flagellated themselves and attendant girls, who were thereby promised painless delivery of numerous offspring. Above all, the evils of the Lupercalia had been set forth in great detail in a vituperative polemic by Pope Gelasius I (492-496) against the lingering vestige of the festival, which he condemned. Gelasius' letter had been published for the first time in 1591, and Baronio cited it in arguing his illuminating intuition, first in his discussion of the Feast of the Presentation in his 1586 revision of the Martyrology, and later in his monumental Annuales, which brought the theme to the very forefront of Catholic ideology. By way of confirmation, Baronio refers to the Roman grammarian Varro, who describes the flogging of women with goat hides and says explicitly that the Lupercalia was a celebration of fertility and purification. It is important to realize that Baronio was not the first to emphasize the importance of the Lupercalia in the legacy of pagan religious celebrations, no
naturally the notoriously licentious and vituperatively vilified festival of Carnival. In contrast to many other writers, who relate carnival to the Saturnalia, which took place in December, the prolific Carmelite poet Baptista Mantuanus (1447-1516), later beatified, derived Carnival from the Lupercalia, which took place on February 15. Mantuanus series poems on the calendar of Fasti emulate in modern moralizing Christian terms those of Ovid, and his poem on Carnival, February 5, takes Ovid’s account of the Lupercalia (Fasti 11 15) as its point of departure. Mantuanus describes in Iuvit terms the evils of the tradition, in particular the naked men erotically aroused and wearing masks (personae libides) roaming the streets and lashing women with goat hides, addressed specifically to their hidden parts (membra recondita). Mantuanus’ Fasti was published posthumously in 1518, with a dedication to Leo X. In 1535 the early folklorist Johannes Boemus Aubanus (ca. 1485-1533/6) published a work on popular customs in which he, too, related Carnival to the Lupercalia.31

Baronio’s association of the Purification of the Virgin and the Lupercalia was thus not merely a coincidence of dates but also of religious substance. Though not generally accepted by modern scholars, the theory struck at the very center of the Counterreformation effort to reaffirm the moral and theological superiority of the church over the degeneracy of the pagans and, by implication, that of the heretical Protestants and the recalcitrant Jews. Baronio had perceived, as no one before, an inner link between the Jews and the Romans, the idea of purification, which Christ had appropriated and subsumed in the universal Church. Christ’s sacrifice healed mankind of the original sin of the Jews and the promissory license of the pagans. Baronio’s replacement of the Lupercalia by the Purification and Presentation fulfilled in the domain of procreation the age-old definition of the church as the successor to the ecclesia ex circumcissione and the ecclesia ex gentibus. In effect, Baronio brought to fruition the fundamental theme of the universality of the Church, as expressed in the biblical metaphor of creativity, that is, childbirth, from the Woman clothed with the Sun envisioned in the Book of Revelations, and from Christ’s own childbirth account of the period from his birth to his Second Coming. Precisely this notion, an agony of creation triumphing over evil toward a salutary end, is portrayed on the pedestals that support the columns of Bernini’s baldachin, where Urban VIII with his coat of arms succeeds Peter, the stone on which Christ built his church, who, punning on his own name, referred to Christ as a other stone.32

31 For the foregoing on Mantuanus and Aubanus, see THEMPI 1979, 30-2, 80-3, and Ulf 1982, 70-2. On Carnival and Lupercali in Rome, see the introductory pages in CLEMENTI 1958-9, 1, esp. 14-22.
32 Isaiah 28: 16: idcirco haec dicit Dominus Deus ecce ego mitram in fundamentum Sion lapidem praebatur angularem sanctum in fundamentum fundamentum qui excludit non frontem. 1 Peter 2: 6: proprius quod continent in scriptura ece pena in Sion lapidem summum angularem electum praebetum et qui crediderit in eo non confundetur.
Spiritual benefical and the laborious creating of its progeny is exactly what is emblazoned in the pedastals of the Baldacchino: the birthing that takes place in the embrace of the papal arms, with the expressive heads above, the bees marking the breasts and the belly in the swollen torso, and the groin covered or replaced by the ghoulish masks that echo the goat skins with which, in the Lupercalia, pagan women were lashed at their groins to insure fertility. This increase in the faithful through conversion and baptism is precisely the kind of progeny envisaged by Methodius and other churchmen as resulting from the travails of the apocryphal Woman dressed in the Sun, and Christ's own procreative passing from his death to his Second Coming -a troubled birth with a happy issue. This construct of the ideology of the Church depends wholly on the virginity of Mary, which is expressed in the Barberini coats of arms by the bees.

Among the leading intellectuals who expected great things from the urban and humanistically inclined new pontiff were the members of the nascent scientific society, the Accademia dei Lincei, which included the pope's controversial protegè Galileo. To celebrate the Jubilee of 1625, the major event that followed, fortuitously, as if in celebration, the pope's election (and the beginning of work on the Baldachino), the group produced three novel, even revolutionary works of science and scholarly erudition, all devoted to the bee. The first was the famous engraving, the Melissographia, dated 1625, showing three greatly magnified views of the bee, top, bottom, and side, arranged as in the pope's coat of arms - the first illustration of a subject observed (by Francesco Stelluti, so inscribed at the bottom of the print) under a microscope (Fig. 46). The main preoccupation in the Lincei circle was with one above all of the seeming miraculous virtues of the bee, its mysterious capacity to procreate autogenetically, without intercourse. This divine chastity had in antiquity made the bee sacred to the chaste and virgin goddess, Diana, commonly identified with the Virgin Mary, and the second work was a poetic numismatic tract with elaborate explanatory notes by the Belgian Lincean Justus Riquius, devoted to the cult of Diana as represented on coins with her sacred bee. (Fig. 47). "Even the many-breasted statue of Diana as Ephesus ... did not mean that she was in any way unchaste. Her abundant breasts were not for any sexual purpose, but to imbibe nurture and nourishment." So too the ample bee-
breasts of the coats of arms. The chastity and fecundity of the bees are inher­
ent in those of pope.41 The third Jubilee publication of the Linceans, also in
1625, was an extensive treatise on the natural history of the bee by Federico
Cesi himself, titled *Apiarium.*42 Printed with extreme density in perfect order,
like a bee-hive, on four sheets conjoined to make a huge broadside (107 x 69.5
em), the work is a wonderment in itself (Fig. 48). Cesi also starts with Roman
bee coins, and eulogizes the many qualities of the bee that correspond to those
of the pope and his “Urban bees”. But his prime interest was precisely in the
wondrous autogenesis of the bee, since it focused on the very nature of cre­
ativity. Cesi is at pains to explain, in purely “natural” terms how the king bee
(actually the queen) creates its myriad progeny without intercourse, while the
females remain inviolate. Nowhere does he appeal explicitly to divine inter­
vention, but the reference to the pope as the chaste King Bee is explicit, and
he does appeal to what he calls the “seminal” or “vital” spirits of the King; and

41 “The leitmotif of the poem would thus be the parallel between the chastity of the bees and that
42 Undated but mentioned in a letter by Cesi of September 1625 (FREEDBERG 2002, 166). The
work has recently been edited and translated by GUERRINI and GUARDO 2005. A fine English edition
and translation remains unpublished, KIDWELL 1970.
the parallel with the theology of the incarnation and the progeny of the Mother Church is implicit. All this under the aegis, as it were, of the triune image of the Barberini bees. It is particularly significant in our context that this mysterious natural history of the bee had long since been epitomized in the traditional explanation of the most famous ritual of the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin, in Voragine's *Golden Legend*: the wax of the candles carried in the Candlemas celebration was "a sign of his [Christ's] body, which was born of the Virgin Mary without corruption of the flesh, as bees make honey without mingling with each other".41

**Born from the Dunghill**

Another important tradition related to the theme of the progeny of the pope in his marriage with the church relates to the ritual of the investiture of newly elected popes, from the Coronation, when he is vested with the accouterments of his office, including the episcopal ring as a sign of his ecclesiastical marriage, to the ceremony of taking possession of his cathedral, in this case St. John's in the Lateran, the ancient seat of the papacy founded by Constantine on the site of the Sessorian Palace. In the case of Rome the possession signified the world dominion of the pope and the institutional church. Two biblical texts are crucial to an understanding of how this process was conceived. The first is recited by Hanna, the famous Song of Hanna, in the first Book of Samuel, where the prophetess intones her thanks to the Lord for opening her womb, previously barren, to bear her son, whom she had promised to dedicate to the priesthood, and who became the future leader of Israel.

1 Samuel 1:
27 For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which
I asked of him:
28 Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall
be lent to the Lord.
1 Samuel 2:
7 The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.
8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the
dunghill (de stercore elevat), to set them among princes, and to make
them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
and he hath set the world upon them.

41 *Voragine* 1993, 1, 149. For associations of Mary with the bee, the candle, and wax, especially with respect to the virgin birth, the references in *MARRACCI* 1710, 30È, 89; *SULZER* 1907, s.v. *Bienen, Kerze, Wachs*.

The theme and much of the wording is repeated in Psalm 112,

5 Who is as the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high:
6 and looketh down on the low things in heaven and earth?
7 Raising up the needy from the earth, and lifting up the poor out of the
dunghill:
8 That he may place him with princes, with the princes of his people.
9 Who maketh a barren woman to dwell in a house, the joyful mother of
children.

and the passage about the genesis and elevation of Samuel was recited by the assembled cardinals as the newly elected Pope assumed his exalted position, reminding him of his humble origin, of the divine act that had elevated him, and of the promise of sanctified progeny.

These texts are of primary importance in the history of rulership, in that they articulate the moral conditions under which God bestows the authority of dominion over others. The first is that it is indeed God on high who bestows this power. The second is that the rulership results from God's charitable act of lifting the poor and needy to the company of princes. The third is the promise of fulfillment through increase, expressed through the metaphor or analogy of joy in the wondrous elevation of a barren woman who bears children. In sum, the ruler in his exaltation must remember that his power is not of his own making but stems from God, that his origin is humble, earthly, and poor, and that God's beneficence will be the joy of his faithful subjects. For Cardinal Bellarmine, commenting on the psalm in the time of Urban VIII, the man raised from the filth of original sin joins the possessors of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and the participants of the Kingdom of Heaven. He compares this elevation to the childless woman made fertile; and the latter generally to individual women from Sarah to Anna. In a higher sense the elevation also applies to the church comprised of the gentiles, *ecclesia ex gentibus*, which remained sterile for a long time, until in old age it gave birth to many.42

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42 *BELLARMINO* II, 1866, 268: nam genus hominum jacet in terra, et in stercore peccati originalis et consequentiam minuitarum; et tantum Deus sedes ex oculo repentin in terram, et inde suscitavit hominem, hominem sibi propter spoliunm much a lanonibus, et reliquias seminivm, et jacem in stercore minuitarum, ut collocaret eum a "cum principibus : " non quibuscumque, sed "cum principibus populi sui," possessoribus etiam a sita et erige eum a "cum principibus populi sui." In the Barberini bees, the parallel with the theology of the incarnation and the progeny of the Mother Church is implicit. All this under the aegis, as it were, of the triune image of the Barberini bees. It is particularly significant in our context that this mysterious natural history of the bee had long since been epitomized in the traditional explanation of the most famous ritual of the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin, in Voragine's *Golden Legend*: the wax of the candles carried in the Candlemas celebration was "a sign of his [Christ's] body, which was born of the Virgin Mary without corruption of the flesh, as bees make honey without mingling with each other".41

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In the Middle Ages these biblical definitions of rulership gave rise to a traditional ceremony of taking possession in which once the pope was enthroned, all the cardinals honored him by elevating him and intoning the *stercore* verse from the book of Samuel, after which he threw three handfuls of coins to the people, intoning the line from the Acts of the Apostles (3, 6) spoken by Peter when he healed the lame man at the Temple of Jerusalem “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee”. The medieval white marble throne in the Lateran used for this ceremony came to be known, from the biblical vocabulary, as the Sede Stercorata or Stercoreata (the dung chair) (Fig. 49). The ceremony, in effect, consummated the marriage between the Church and the pope. The term became notorious, however, when it was associated with two other, altogether different “thrones” that were used in the ritual that followed (Fig. 50). Made of red marble thought to be porphyry, perforated and cut open at the front, these chairs were of a shape that actually embodied the three elements of the biblical theme of enthronement. The perforations corresponded to those used by ancient Romans in their latriones and in obelisks, when women were delivered from a seated or reclining position, and by virtue of their material they were indeed imperial thrones (Figs. 51-52). The sedes stercorata and these extraordinary objects of papal ritual were notorious evidence, perhaps even the progenitors, in the endless polemics about the supposed medieval female pope Joanna who gave birth during the possession ceremony, and hence their use in verifying the sex of newly elected popes. Through the Middle Ages the popes were indeed described as seated successively on the two porphyry chairs in a distended position as if reclining. In point of fact, however, early accounts of the coronation ceremonies give a quite specific explanation of the two chairs and the reclining position — that the newly elected pope appeared to lie between the primacy of Peter the Prince of the Apostles and the preaching of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. In my view the phraseology, to lie “between the two lectulos” (biers) of Peter and Paul, entombed at St. Peter’s in the Vatican, refers to the transitoriness of the Pope’s reign, an idea by no means inconsistent with that of the “progeny” expected of his marriage with the

43 Burckard 1906-14, 83.
44 On the chair in the Vatican, see Helbig 1963-72, I, 156f., no. 212, with references. The second chair, identical, was removed to the Louvre by Napoleon. There is also a polychrome marble specimen in the British Museum that came from the Baths of Caracalla.
45 On the terracotta relief at Ostia, see Helbig 1963-72, IV, 14f., no. 3004.
46 Except for the ideological implications of the biblical passages that underlay the whole phenomenon, the stories of the sedes stercorata and Pope Joanna have been amply studied by D’Onofrio 1979, to whose work I have been indebted. Important subsequent studies see those by Cusinelle 1977, esp. 251-87, MacCarrone 1991, II, esp. 1304-25, Paravicini-Bagliani 2000, 39-57, and Bourreau 2001.

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49 Qui siquidem electus illis duobus sedibus sic sedere debet ac si videatur inter duos lectulos jacere, id est, ut accumbat inter principis Apostolorum Petri primatum et Pauli doctoris gentium praedicationem.
50 Sedia di porfido. Città del Vaticano, Musei Vaticani.
51 Antica latrina romana. Ostia.
Church. In this sense the election ceremony of a new pope may be understood as a sort of mimetic commemoration of the passing of the apostles, as well as a rebirth of the Church, both points expressed in the pair of perforated porphyry thrones and the reclining position. The scandalous sto-
ries nevertheless became powerful instruments of anti-papal Protestant propaganda, engendering a vicious polemic through the sixteenth century, including depictions of the pope giving birth, being examined, as a female demon, as Satan himself with female breasts, wearing a quasi-tiara, enthroned, legs spread to reveal an open-mouthed, jeering face; the nether mask of Satan could also function ambiguously, expelling nude souls to a new, eternal life in Hell (Figg. 53-57). Partly owing to these unsavory associations, no doubt, the sedes stercorata and porphyry chairs were long aban-

52. Scena di nascita, terracotta, Ostia, Museo Ostiense (Mus. No. 4, Inv. 5204).
pedestals of the Baldacchino. Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1, 46ff. uses language similar to that of the Old Testament, and expresses the same idea of the Lord miraculously fecundating the barren and raising up the humble. 52 And Hannah presented the infant Samuel in the Temple at Shiloh, as Mary presented Christ in the Temple of Jerusalem. 53

The main themes we have discerned in the imagery of the coats of arms affixed to the pedestals are encapsulated and incorporated into the fabric of the Baldacchino itself in the form of what might be called marginalia, or rather footnotes distributed here and there on the plinths of the bronze columns. 54 These seemingly incidental details, seven in all, are in fact serendipitous testimonies to the kind of divine intervention that occurred with the invasion of bees at the pope's election (Figg. 58-65). They are of two kinds: commemorative medals, personal as well as devotional; and explicitly emblematic animals. Be it noted that these men-entoones are life-size, literally true to life, and partly for this very reason, they refer to the real world, the altar itself and its role in the mission of the church. Suspected from beads or ribbons draped over the edges of the

57. Satana, incisione ca. 1500, det. (Morrone 1812, II, pl. 10).

52 Magnificat, Luke 1:
46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,
47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
48. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
49. For he shall have regard to his sanctuary, the meek shall he fill with strength:
50. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
51. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
52. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
53. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.
54. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
55. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
56. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
57. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

53 Evidently Leo X was the last pope to use all three chairs, beginning with the sola sterrerea, the elevation and the recitation of the passage from the Song of Hannah. In each case Leo X was said to have been seated as reclining. D'Olorio (1979, 159) considered this position an allusion to the miraculous birth that concludes the biblical sterecore passages. It is intriguing that this abbreviational association might have been part of the Medici-Medicius metaphor that previously informed the ideology of Leo's reign from the outset. "... ad quem facilem ... tres Priora Ordinum Cardinalium discernere super eum, dum elevatur, suscitant de terramere etc., etc. Papa stans accepta de gremio Camerarii tres pugnos quaternorum, et projiciens dixit, argentum, et aurum etc. ... Petites ... prima adae, quoniam inesse ... et dicit ... Papa naves inti ad aulae Sedere, et Jacob ... (from the description of the papal Master of Ceremonies Paris de Grassus, published by Can-Cellieri 1802, 641).
column stylobates, the medals are all of the sort that would have been acquired by pilgrims to the 1625 Jubilee and deposited by them anonymously as votive signs of their devotion, in the hope of finding miraculous cures for their afflictions. They came to St. Peter’s as if to Jerusalem, circle around the baldachin, and ultimately the passion relics displayed

Andrew
1. Southeast Pedestal [I], north face: Fly

Veronica
2. Southwest Pedestal [II], west face: Rosary with Veronica-Porta Santa Medal
3. Southwest Pedestal [II], north face: Medal suspended from a ribbon. Urban VIII facing left, right hand raised blessing, wearing camauro and mozzetta

Helen
4. Northwest Pedestal [III], west face: Urban VIII medal (obverse and reverse) suspended from a sash
5. Northwest Pedestal [III], west face: Lizard crawling up
6. Northwest Pedestal [III], north face: Lizard crawling up

Longinus
7. Northeast Pedestal [IV], west face: Lizard crawling down devouring a scorpion

58. Elenco e diagramma delle parti terminali del Baldacchino.

59. Piedistallo Sud-Est [I], faccia Nord, Mosca (1).

60. Piedistallo Sud-Ovest [II], faccia Ovest, Rosario con medaglie raffiguranti Veronica e la Porta Santa (2).

61. Piedistallo Sud-Ovest [II], faccia Nord, Medaglia sospesa con un nastro. Urbano VIII benedicente, con volto a sinistra e vestito con camauro e mozzetto (3).
62. Piedistallo Nord-Ovest [III], fronte Ovest, Medaglia di Urbano VIII (dritto e rovescio) sospesa con un cordone (4).

63. Piedistallo Nord-Ovest [III], fronte Ovest, Lucertola che si arrampica verso l’alto (5), (Figura intera e particolare).

64. Piedistallo Nord-Ovest [III], fronte Nord, Lucertola che si arrampica verso l’alto (6), (Figura intera e particolare).

65. Piedistallo Nord-Est [IV], fronte Ovest, Lucertola che striscia in basso e divora uno scorpione (7).
in the crossing piers, celebrating Holy Year in perpetuity in a kind of virtu

tual via crucis – exactly as Eisenstein understood. Two are medalllic por
traits of the pope, such as were often inserted in the foundations of new
structures as good omens and historical records. One shows the pope fac-
ing left, his hand raised in blessing, wearing the papal cap (camauro) and
cape (mozzetta). The medal is shown backwards (the pope blesses with
his right hand, always the near hand on profile medals), probably as a neg-
avive form prior to casting. The anomaly is no accident: shown thus on
the north face of the Veronica pedestal, the pope’s blessing is toward the
altar. No example of this type is extant, but there is a correspondence to
the single metallic portrait of Urban shown blessing, wearing tiara and
cope, issued to commemorate the canonization of Andrea Corsini, which
took place on the same spot, as it were, in 1629; the scene on the reverse
includes an important version of the Baldacchino itself (Fig. 66). A third
medal, which shows the pope facing right toward the choir, hatless and
wearing the papal cope, is doubtless the one issued in 1624, with an image
of Peace on the reverse, recording the pope’s efforts to achieve a peaceful
settlement to the Thirty Year’s War (Fig. 67).

Of a devotional nature is a rosary from which is suspended an oval medal
showing the Porta Santa flanked by Peter and Paul; this was specifically a sou-
venir of the Jubilee, recalling the indulgences earned by those who made the
pilgrimage, passed through the portal and performed this venerable devotion
to the Virgin at the high altar.55 The Porta Santa, as the entrance both to St.
Peter’s and via the Church to redemption, was also known as the Porta Coeli,
the gateway to heaven, one of the most common epithets of the Virgin, re-

ferring both to her virginity and the incarnation, and to her intercessory role
in the process of salvation. The reverse of the medal in the one known exam-
ple of this oval type, shows Veronica presenting her miraculous image of the
Savior, the display of which during Holy Year, very rare at other times, was one
of the celebration’s most important features and attractions (Fig. 68).56

The rosary had a particular relevance to the virginal theme of the
pedestals and the Trinitarian ideology of the Baldacchino as a whole, since
they evoked the Woman of the Apocalypse and were recited in honor of the
Trinity.57 The rosary was also given special prominence during the 1625 Ju-

55 For what follows here concerning the imagery, symbolism, and ritual related to the Holy Year,
see the comprehensive survey by FAGIOLO, MADONNA 1984.

56 FAGIOLO, MADONNA 1984, 54, fig. II 2.12a.

57 LAVIN 1966-88, XXI, col. 238. Comment on Apoc, XII, 1: et in capite eius corona stellarum
duodecim:
Ex hoc loco nonnulli viri religiosi et cultus B. Virginis studiis, confidenti coronam, rive Ro-
sarium duodecim stellarum, illustrat hoc modo recitant. In honorem S. Trinitatis legitur in-
terpolare et orationem Dominicans, pura ter Pater noster ...

66. Medaglia di Urbano VIII benedicente, con volto a destra e vestito con la tiara e il pi-
67. Medaglia di Urbano VIII con volto a destra, testa scoperta e vestito con il piviale, ro-
vencio: la Giustizia detiene la bilancia e la spada, 1624. Londra, British Museum.
68. Medaglia Giubilare, Veronica e la Porta Santa con i Santi Pietro e Paolo, 1625. Col-
lezione privata (Fagiolo e Madonna, eds., 1984, Fig. 11. 2. 2a).
biles in a vast celebratory procession organized by the Dominicans at Santa Maria sopra Minerva, 5-12 October. The celebration centered on a huge temporary structure designed by Orazio Torriani (who the following year collaborated with Bernini on the high altar of Sant’Agostino), which clearly reflects the Baldacchino in overall design and in many details (Fig. 69). Particularly significant, however, is the fact that in a detailed contemporary account of the celebration the structure is called a "talamo," that is, a nuptial chamber, in reference to the image it contained of the Queen of Heaven holding the Christ child, striking exactly the same note as do the pedestals of the Baldacchino. The patron of the event was Carlo Barberini, the new pope’s brother.

LIZARDS AND THE SOL JUSTITIÆ

Many small animals populate the natural tendrils of the ancient marble columns, but here, isolated on the plinths, there are only lizards, a scorpion, and a fly.\(^{39}\)

The importance and meaning of two of the lizards may be illuminated - I use the word deliberately - by one of the great contributions to the art history of classical sculpture, made as recently as 2002 in a brilliant study by Renate Preisshofen. Preisshofen resolved at last the traditional but patently anomalous and contradictory interpretation of one of the major monuments of Greek art, the so-called Apollo Stauroctonos, originally a work in bronze by Praxiteles, famous from the references to it in ancient sources and from the innumerable extant copies and variants in virtually all media (Fig. 70). The sculpture showed the god leaning against a tree or tree stump, with a lizard climbing up the trunk. The god carried a bow and arrow, as if preparing to shoot an arrow at the animal, hence the epithet, stauroctonos, lizard killer, attached to the figure by Pliny, "He also made a young Apollo with an arrow watching a lizard as it creeps up with the intent to slay it close at hand; this is known as the Saurcrotonos or Lizard-slayer," whose interpretation was followed by the poet Martial, "Corinthian Lizard Slayer. Spare the lizard, insidious boy, as she creeps toward you; she wants to die by your fingers".\(^{40}\) Preisshofen showed that Pliny was simply in error, misinterpreting the meaning of Apollo’s gesture, perhaps by associ-


\(^{39}\) The animals on the marble columns, including a lizard on the health-giving Colonna Santa are noted by NOBELONI 1997, passim, and see p. 94.


70. Apollo “Salutari” (Saurcrotonos), già nella Galleria Borghese, marmo. Parigi, Musée du Louvre.

71. LUMINA RESTITVTA, gemma intagliata in un anello dorato. Berlino, Staatliche Museen.
On the S. Lorenzo Capitol, see Clausen 1992, 34-8.

66) Fritz 1913, 33, no. 237.

6) Fritz 1913, 33, no. 237.


The epigraphical evidence for the Greek term has been collected by von Staden in an essay 'The Oath and the Oaths, or recovery from eye ailments; and the relationship was explicit, as can be seen, for example, in a gem amulet showing a lizard and inscribed IUVINA RESTITVTYA, where the translucency of the material invokes the agent of the charm (Fig. 71).

It is astonishing to discover that Bernini may have been aware of the true meaning of the Praxitelean work, even though the error was only corrected by modern scholarship in 2002. The statue was first associated with the passage in Pliny in the eighteenth century. The version now in the Louvre was in the Villa Borghese in the early seventeenth century, where in Jacomo Manilli’s 1650 description of the villa the subject is correctly identified as Apollo Salvatore (Apollo the Physician), and the animal on the trunk identified as a snake, which had the same attributes of shedding its skin and renewing its eyesight in the sun and was also deemed a symbol of health. Manilli may fortunately have been unaware of Pliny’s and Martial’s misidentification, relying instead, as did Preisshofen, on the abundant literary and numismatic evidence that associated Apollo with healing. Bernini and his contemporaries very likely knew the sculpture and understood it in this way. On the Baldacchino column bases two of the lizards are also shown climbing up the face of the plinth toward the emblems of the sun that alternate with bees on the torus above. Association of the Praxitelean type of Apollo healing the lizard with the architectural context of the Baldacchino may have come from coins on which the figure is actually shown leaning on a column taking aim at the lizard crawling upward (Fig. 72). A further relevance to the Baldacchino may have been suggested by coins that show the statue as a cult figure in a four-columned front of the temple of the sun god (Fig. 73). There may even have been an association with the twisted columns, from the appearance of a lizard in the spiral volute of a famous ionic capital in San Lorenzo fuori le Mura in Rome, where a frog appears in the other volute (Fig. 74). The names of the animals in Greek, Sauras and Batrachos, are recorded in Pliny as two architects who designed temples in Rome; foiled in their

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with to sign the buildings, instead they inserted the homonymous animals in the "spirits" (literally spirals) of the columns (in columnarum spirit insculptae). Winckelmans was the first to link the passage to the capital at San Lorenzo, but the text might easily evoke the spiral columns at St. Peter's, and serve as a personal commemoration and association with the ancient architect. The motif thus alludes to the same kind of healing process as that associated with the Colonna Santa and the theme of purification and Perine thynagury Raphael had associated with the twisted columns transferred from the Temple of Jerusalem to the high altar at St. Peter's. Christian thought had long considered the obstinacy of disbelief a malady of the soul associated with blindness, as in depictions of Synagoga blindfolded (Fig. 75). In the Baldacchino the miracle of healing from original sin was linked to the Church and hence to Urban. And it involved a fundamental shift of emphasis and meaning from ritual and physical healing to what might be called visionary healing that involved the double meaning of the verb to see, that is, to verify with the physical eye, and to understand and believe with the inner eye—to be "illuminated" and "restored" to the "visio dei" of Paradise before the Fall. It is in this new, visionary sense that Urban succeeds Leo X, in the role of vicarious Christus Medicus.

The relevance of this theme in particular to the papacy under Urban VIII is evident from another attribute under which Apollo as healer was worshiped in antiquity—so devoutly that the Hippocratic oath actually begins by invoking him, "I swear by Apollo the Physician and by Asclepius and by Health and Panacea and by all the gods as well as goddesses ...." Shown on coins, the healer holds in his left hand a branch of laurel, famous in antiquity for its many medicinal powers, and in his left a bow and arrow (Fig. 76).

The type is most famous from a figure of Apollo by the sculptor Calamis, which was moved from Apollo's in Pontus to the Capitoline in Rome. The sculpture was a colossal bronze, as tall as a tower, singled out by Pliny as a technical tour de force, a challenge that must have appealed to Bernini as he prepared his colossal bronze columns. One of the important functions of the Sun God was to protect the populous from the plague, and the coin type related to the Borghese statue, which bore the inscription Apollo Salutaris, was associated with a third century plague epidemic (Fig. 77). Livy records that a famous temple of Apollo Medicus in Rome, near the Theater of Marcellus, the remains of which are still to be seen, was motivated by the plague. The disease, always menacing, must have been especially worrisome to Urban since the city had been threatened at the very beginning of his reign.

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69 Pliny, NH, XXXIV, 39.
70 Of auditory counterparts instances can be given. For example artists have conceived the idea of gigantic statues called colossi, as tall as towers. Of this class is the Apollo in the Capitol, brought from Apollo's in Pontus by Marcus Lucullus; it is forty-five feet high, and cost five hundred talents.

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61 PLINIUS, Natural History, XXXVI, 42; Jen-BLACE 1977, 212 / 215.
62 Invenio er Canachum laceratum et intus inscriptum fines. Juno, Sauram arque Bactracum obliterrari convenit, qui feceret templo Octaviae.
63 Winckelmans thought the capital antique, whereas, like its companions, it dates from the early thirteenth century (see Claussen 1992, 35). The medieval artist likewise must have interpreted Pliny's text as referring to a spiral and executed the capital in emulation of the ancient architect's signatures. The term, however, is normally used for the base, or torus, of a column, which Bernini may also have realized, so that his lizards conform to both readings.
75 Synagogue. Portale Sud del Transetto. Strasburgo, Cattedrale.
77 Antonianus di Trebonianus Gallus, 251-3 AD, rovescio, Apollo Salutaris con ramo d'al­loro e lira (foto su cortesia di David Sear).
Laurel, the plant sacred to Apollo, immune to lightning, capable of regenerating from a branch, rather than from seed, was the third, along with the bee and the sun, of the trinity of Barberini emblems. In the Baldacchino, the laurel, symbol of eternal life, climbs the twisted columns in the form of tendrils spiraling up toward the resurgent Christ, *Institutae*, as he rises to take his heavenly seat of judgment.

The medieval physiological tradition allegorized two main properties of the "Sun Lizard" in specifically visionary terms: its capacity to heal itself in old age by shedding its skin and to renew its eyesight by looking at the sun, is compared to the man who, clothed in old vestments, the eyes of his heart blinded, seeks the intelligible rising sun, that is, Christ, whose name means rising, and who is called the Sun of Justice, with healing in his wings. Thus the intelligible eyes of the heart are opened and the man sheds his old self and dons the new. The reference here to Malachi's prophecy of Christ as the rising *Sol Institutae* with healing wings, is particularly significant in the context of what we said earlier about the Apocalyptic Woman clothed in the Sun whose travail gives birth to the Church and the Man-Child. The Apoca-

78 The Virgilian laurel branch as a symbol of autogenesis and eternal rejuvenation was a major theme of the Medici in Florence, no doubt an important inspiration for Urban's ideas. See Lavin 1993, 31-5, and the references cited there.
79 Carmody 1941, 134:
XLI. Deus salutis nunc est ancilla solis

80 CARMODY 1939, 60G: XXXVII Lacerta

81 Si, et tu, homo, qui uirtutis inducitur es, quando oculi tuoi cordis solituri sunt, quare hac lucem intelligibili orientem iungis et id est, ad solen iustitiae [cf. Mal. 4, 2] Christum dominum nostrum leuem te converte, cuius nomen dicitur [cf. Zach. 3, 8; 12].
82 et salietis sicur vituli de armento.
83 Est qui vocatur saura eliace, hoc est anguilla solis. Cum senuerit, impeditur duobus oculis suis, et necesse est, non uidens solis lumen. Quid faciet? ex bona sua natura inquit patre mei respi- cientem ad orientem, et intrat in fissuram patreis, uidens ad orientem, et orietur sol iustitiae [cf. Mal. 4, 2]; et aperit tibi intelligibiles oculos cordis tui, et nouum per ueteris fiet tibi uestimentum.

84 It is surely in this context of the lizard as the believer who "sees" the salvific light of the Woman of the Apocalypse wrapped in the sun of her Son, that it appears beneath the Virgin in Peter Brunelleschi's Way to Calvary (see Grigon 2000, 146.), and Schongauer's woodcut and Dürer's engraving of the Flight into Egypt (Koch 1976), and, since penitence is the route to salvation, in images of the penitent St. Jerome by Luini (together with a scorpion), Bosch (Friedmann 1980, 19, 150, 168ff.) and Patinir (Falkenburg 1988, 84). Ulrich links the lizard's recuperation of vision to Christ healing the blind (Luke: 18, 35-43), to the archangel Raphael healing the blindness of Tobias (Tobit: 6, 9, 11-13), to Jonathan whose eyes were enlarged by honey (1 Kings: 14, 27), and to the mother eagle of Physiological tradition, which flies toward the sun with her offspring, dropping the one that is blinded, saving the one that sees (Beauchesne 1937ff., col. 833-54, esp. cols. 839 no. 27, Schmidt 1959, 92-4, Munscher 2000, 231, Boreanzy 2000, 46 fig. 67, 53, 54). Bernini later used this emblematic eagle to illustrate an important Jesuit treatise on optics (Lavin 1985).

Footsteps on the Way to Redemption. The Federals of Bernini's Baldacchino in St. Peter

1 ccce enim dies veniet successa quasi caminavit erunt omnes superbi et omnes facientes impietatem: stultus et inanis et capillatus in carne: tu vero eris in domum Dei, et in templo gloriae. 1166

1166 The assimilation of the ancient concept of Apollo the Healer (Sol Instiutae) with the Church and the Man-Child. The Apoca-

lyptic Woman was also endowed with wings — and to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness (Apoc. 12, 14) — and in the Physiologus she was actually merged with the *Sol Institutae.*

The lizard was also related directly to Christ the Healer in one of the many late medieval concordances of the Old and New Testaments, Ulrich of Liliensfeld's *Concordia Caritatis* (ca. 1590), notable especially for its unprecedented systematic inclusion of the natural world, namely the bestiary, along with the biblical texts as witness to God's providential plan for salvation.

The assimilation of the ancient concept of Apollo the Healer (Salutaris) with Christ of the resurrection as the Savior (*Salutarius*) and the Sun of Justice (*Sol Institutae*) was a fundamental theme of church doctrine and forms one of the provisions of the catechism itself, prepared and published in 1566:

# 1166

"By a tradition handed down from the apostles which it took its origin from the very day of Christ's Resurrection, the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery every seventh day, which day is appropriately called the Lord's Day or Sunday"... The Lord's day, the day of Resurrection, the day of Christians, is our day. It is called the Lord's day because on it the Lord rose victorious to the Father. If passions call it the "day of the sun," we willingly agree, for today the light of the world is raised, today is revealed the true Christ with justice in his rays...
The pope succeeds *Christus Medicus* as Christ succeeded *Apollo Medicus*. The third lizard, which now travels downward, displays the animal’s own salvific virtue, its enmity with the scorpion.82 The scorpion is almost universally evil in the physiological literature. The most notorious of these associations by far was the scorpion’s identification with the libido and lasciviousness, and indeed the genitalia, that is, the original sin of carnal knowledge that brought about the expulsion of humankind from Paradise. In the anthropomorphic zodiacal system (melothesia) that distributed the constellations to parts of the human body, Scorpio was identified with the penis (Fig. 78). According to Giovanni Piero Valeriano the scorpion “represents the libido and lasciviousness, and among the human parts the shameful ones are dedicated to him”.83 Cesare Ripa repeats Valeriano’s statement, and adds a description of the personification of Libido that is particularly interesting in our context: “A woman lasciviously adorned, …, holding in her right hand a scorpion, nearby a goat erotically aroused, and a vine with bunches of grapes”.84 When one recalls the sacramental, originally Bacchic grape vines, that covered the twisted columns brought from Jerusalem, analogy with the Bacchanalian and goatskin ritual of the Lupercalia is inescapable. The motif shown here evidently reflects a remarkable phenomenon recorded by Pliny and preserved in the medieval bestiary tradition.85

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82 References in NOCK 1972, 274.
83 Valeriano 1625, 238 (Exe edition 1556): Of this he speaks, in the scorpions dimissors dimostrato la libidine e la lascivia, and tra le parti del corpo humano, a lui sono dedicate le parti vergognose.
84 Pliny 1603, 295: Libidinem. Donna lascivamente ornata … nella man destra terre vn scorpione, a canto vi serà vn becco acceso alla libidine, & vna vite con alcuni graffi d’ue.
85 Pliny, *Natural History*, XXVIII, 29, ed. RACKHAM et al., 1938-63, VIII, 240/1. Scorpionibus contrarius maxime invicem stelio traditur, ut visu quoque pavorem his afferat et torporem frigidi sudoris. … in Italia non nascitur. est enim hic plenus lentigine, stridoris acerbi, et vescitur araneis, quae omnia a nostris stelionibus aliena sunt.
86 *Cena Domini* centrum est eius, quia in ea tota communitas fidelium Domino occurrit: a canto vi sara vn becco acceso alla libidine, e la lascivia, e tra le parti del corpo humano, a lui sono dedicate le parti vergognose. The motif shown here evidently reflects a remarkable phenomenon recorded by Pliny and preserved in the medieval bestiary tradition.
The scorpion is so frightened by a certain kind of lizard, the stellio (the name derived from its speckled — starry — markings), that it is literally "scared stiff," so that the lizard may devour his enemy without danger from its immobilized stinger. Also interesting is Pliny's remark that the stellio is not found in Italy.

The tradition has been confirmed by scientific studies of the behavior of the stellio in Israel, where it is reported that "scorpions were normally grabbed sideways at the mesosoma, so that initially the metasoma (and stinger) protruded to one side of the gecko's mouth, and the pincers protruded to the other side. Only in one of the six well-observed cases was the scorpion grabbed from in front. Thus in all cases, the metasoma and stinger were initially left free but in four of the six cases they were stiff (as if paralysed) and no stinging occurred (Fig. 79)."

Finally, it is surely significant that at the Last Judgment, the damned should also be swallowed head first into Hellmouth, the agent of God serving to punish sinner.

The salvific, solar lizard devouring the scorpion, head first, on its way to inferno, is thus emblematic of the same drama portrayed in the coats of arms on the pedestals, which enact the purification and healing of the original sin worked through the labor of Christ's sacrifice at the altar.

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and on the right by a bird flying heavenward (Figs. 84–85). The vine scroll and the grapes were of course emblematic of the Eucharist, and the heaven-bent bird emblematic of the Holy Spirit and the heaven-bent soul. Although small animals populate the vine scrolls of the other spiral columns, this motif is unique to the Colonna Santa, and that this face was considered the front of the column is evident from the fact that it confronts the devotee approaching Cardinal Orsini’s enclosure.39 As we have seen, the lizard was from antiquity sacred to the Sun God Apollo by virtue of its ability to renew its falling or lost eyesight by looking to the rays of the sun. It thus became emblematic of divinely effected cures of vision, conceived in the case of the Colonna Santa, as demons and unclean spirits. The Apollonian association of the lizard must have seemed providential in view of the fact that St. Peter’s was long believed to have been built adjoining a temple of Apollo, variously identified with one of two ancient rotundas later converted, one to St. Petronilla, the other to St. Andrew; both were destroyed to make way for the new basilica.90

In the Mirabilia Romae, the early pilgrim’s guide book to Rome, the very name Vatican came from the rituals practiced by the priests (vates) of the temple of Apollo.91 In this way the translation of the column to St. Peter’s converged with the pagan therapeutic legacy at the site. The same legacy evidently underlay the tradition evinced in the twelfth century description of the basilica by Petrus Mallius, who states that the twisted columns came from the temple of Apollo at Troy.92 In 1574 during excavations under the high altar an early Christian tomb was discovered, whose vault was covered with a splendid mosaic representing Christ – Helios rising heavenward in his quadriga, amidst a celestial canopy of interlacing vine-scrolls (Fig. 86). Although the subject was not recognized at the time, and there is no further reference to the tomb until it was reopened in modern excavations at the end of World War II, the discovery may have reinforced the Apollonian heritage of the site.93

A measure of the significance of the spiritual healing embodied in the

Colonna Santa, not only for the ideology of the Baldacchino but for the role of St. Peter's itself in the process of salvation, is evident from the fact that in 1632 it was installed in a chamber adjoining the first chapel on the north side of the nave, the furnishing of which was then in course of completion (Figg. 87-88). The column was joined at the same time by another miraculously salutary relic, a frescoed image of the Virgin and Child, the *Madonna della Febbre*, that had come from the converted rotunda of S. Andrea, to which the painting had given its own name.94 No doubt the location, immediately adjacent to the Porta Santa, was conceived as the ideal starting point of the pilgrim's procession through the basilica to the high altar. The intention was evidently to concentrate the focus of miraculous healing in the basilica on this primary location.

What might well be called the sun mysticism of Urban VIII worked its magic not only at the center of St. Peter's in the Baldacchino, it also embraced the church at either end, in the apse at the west where the window above the Cathedra Petri would have illuminated the emblem of the Trinity, while at the east entrance the rising sun shone through two huge windows that flanked one of the most important relics of Old St. Peter’s, Giotti’s famous mosaic of the *Navicella* (Christ summoning the fisherman Peter from his boat) in the stormy Sea of Galilee—the act that inaugurated the established Church (Fig. 89).95

94 Torreggio 1635, 17: “Nel 1632, [the Colonna Santa] è stata posta presso alla Cappella del Crocifisso, e vi è stata eogno collocata una dipinta Imagen di Maria Verc, che stava già nella Basilica vecchia nella naue dell'altar di S. Andrea”. In 1631, evidently to enhance the image in preparation for the move, the Madonna and Child were given golden crowns (Rice 1997, 184). The chapel is now the Chapel of the most important relics of Old St. Peter's, Giotto’s famous mosaic of the *Navicella* (Christ summoning the fisherman Peter from his boat) in the stormy Sea of Galilee—the act that inaugurated the established Church (Fig. 89).


Urban had the mosaic installed in this location in 1628 in tandem, conceptually as well as chronologically, with the execution of the Baldacchino. The *Navicella* had originally been made ca. 1300 for the inside of the entrance wall of the open atrium of the old basilica, facing the facade (Figs. 90-91). After the atrium was demolished the mosaic was preserved, elaborately restored, and installed near the entrance to the Vatican Palace—until Urban decided to return it to its featured location at the entrance to the church, but now high up, between the windows and on the inner facade facing the worshiper exiting toward the east. The choice was deliberate, and its purpose was to create in the new basilica an exact counterpart to the cooperation-conversion at the high altar of the ancient Lupercalian and Hebrew purification rites. In this case, the celebration was that of the third great Apollonian tradition, besides the *Salutaris* and *Iustitiae*, the *Sol Invictus* that had long been identified with the Roman emperors and whose birth was celebrated in the winter festival of the *Natalis Solis Invictus*, on December 25. In the time of Constantine the ancient festival was converted to Christmas and the birth of the Christian *Sol Iustitiae*, but Leo the Great (440-461) complained that pilgrims visiting the basilica were still wont to turn and kneel facing eastward in devotion to the rising sun. Eventually, in fact, the celebration of Christ's birth was shifted from Epiphany, January 6, to December 25. All this was well known in Urban's time. It was said, indeed, that the *Navicella* was originally intended to substitute the Calling of Peter for the pagan sun worship. As the high altar was intended to replace the Lupercalia, Urban's installation of the *Navicella* was clearly intended to replace the *Sol Invictus* with the Calling of Peter and the rising of the *Sol Iustitiae*. The basilica through its entire length thus superseded the classical solar heritage, fulfilling the spiritual promise of Malachi, the last of the Hebrew Prophets (1:11):

> For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.\(^{56}\)

Again, Cardinal Baronio may have been a prime mover in this grandiose scheme of cosmic historical theology; his great reverence for the mosaic and understanding of its history was still reported later in the century. One day be was asked why is had been placed in the middle of the portico, in front of the portal

\(^{56}\text{ab oris enim solis usque ad occasum magnum est nomen meum in genti bus et in omni loco sacrificatur et offeretur nominis meo oblatio mundi quia magnum nomen meum in gentibus dicit Dominus exceutum}
of the basilica, rather than elsewhere. "He replied that it was to eliminate the superstitious custom of some people who, entering the church, in the ancient manner of the Gentiles turned toward the east, as pope St. Leo reported, and lowering their heads in honor of that luminous planet, gave it profound reverence." 97

It was said that Urban opened the flanking windows so that the mosaic could be better appreciated with the great flood of light. 98 Urban's antagonistic successor, Innocent X, later removed the Navicella from its place in the sun, as it were, because it was too high and difficult to see in the glaring light. 99 In 1675 it was transferred to its present, in effect, the original location on the inner wall of the narthex portico above the central entrance, facing Bernini's Peace over seas relief (Fig. 92). 100

Beelzebub

The last and least conspicuous of the animal marginalia is perhaps the most important of the all. In the biblical tradition the fly has one and only one association, that is, with the Philistine God Beelzebub, whose name was commonly translated as Lord of the Flies and equated with Satan. Of particular relevance here is the fact that he was consistently invoked in matters of healing. So in the second Book of Kings the ruler Ahabiah, who had suffered a fall, sent to inquire of Beelzebub the God of Ekron, whether he would recover. Offended by this want of faith in himself, the God of Israel decreed that he would indeed die of his injury. 101 He appears repeatedly in the Gospels when the disbeliefing Jews attributed Jesus's power to heal and cast out devils to the power of Beelzebub, now identified as Satan himself; to which Jesus replies, that cannot be so, since the house divided against itself shall not stand. 102


98 "...da ambi i lari gli apri fenestrae perche meglio con la copia di raggio potesse essere vagheggiata (from report of 1644-53, cited by MARDER 1997, 268 n. 112).

99 "...non godendosi per la troppa altezza, et abbarbagliandosi la vista nel rimirarla per le due finestre laterali... (report by Virgilio Spada published by GOTHENHEIM 1979, 186).

100 MARDER 1997, 78.


Mart 12:23-8

23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? 24 But when the Pharisees heard [it], they said, This [ fellow] doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. 25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: 26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? 27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast [them] out? therefore they shall be your judges. 28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. 103
Cornelis à Lapide interprets the passages in 2Kings and the gospels in exactly this way, ascribing all manner of evils to the Lord of the Flies, especially the libido and anabaptism. The little, insidiously inconspicuous insect thus represents the very devil and his myriad hosts, whose power is exorcized at the altar of St. Peter's.

An ironic inversion of zoological healing under the aegis of Urban VIII may be found in an extraordinary drawing by the great Dutch master of natural and supernatural imagery Jacques de Gheyn II (1565-1629) (Fig. 93). The composition emulates the Barberini microscopic bee emblem (Fig. 46) substituting three microscopic views of "real" (including their shadows) flies arranged in a similar way. The relationship can scarcely have been coincidental, and the metamorphosis into flies was surely inspired by the knowledge of the fact that the Barberini crest originally consisted of three large but humble horse-flies — *tafani*, whence Tafeno, the name of the Tuscan locality whence the family sprang. The tafano, whose bite was vicious, even mortal in droves, had a particularly bad reputation, and Maffeo adopted the noble bee instead when he became cardinal. The matter was important enough so that some years later the pope's nephew Cardinal Francesco sent to Florence to have the flies excised from the coats of arms visible there and in their subsequent home town nearby, Barberino in Val d'Elsa. In antiquity the fly was identified with the plague and, by a familiar homeopathic principle of like healing like, fly amulets were worn to ward off the enemy. The medieval Mantic Virgil was said to have warded off the plague from Naples with a huge bronze fly. There was a major outbreak of the plague in the Netherlands in 1624, and De Gheyn, who was deeply involved with witchcraft and devilry, may have had this kind of Barberini Trinitarian papal therapy in mind. Although married to a Catholic, De Gheyn in 1598 had made a portrait of Marnix van St. Aldegonde that was published repeatedly beginning in 1631 in Marnix's famous pre-Barberini anti-catholic bee diatribe *The Beehive of the Holy Roman Church* (*De Byencorf der H. Roomshe Kerck*), first published in 1569. Here, alone among the animals that inhabit the columnar plinths, the minuscule fly is gilt, glowing with the glittry allure of sin.

The mementos that grace the lowestmost plinths of the columns appear to have been left, as if inadvertently, by the "providential" hand of the Baldacchino's creator. They appear inexplicably, and their very inadvertency is an essential ingredient in the heaven-sent message they convey. For taken together these memorabilia tell a memorable story of their own, consistent with and underlying the main theme of the pedestals, that is, the expiation for original sin purchased by Christ's sacrifice and achieved through its reenactment at the altar. In that case the initial formation begins at the left, or sinister side of the entering worshiper, moves in a purificatory circuit clockwise about the altar to end with the felicitous newborn soul at the right, as the pilgrim prepares to depart. Accordingly, Beechbeeb the King of the Flies lurks unseen, from the beginning, back inside the first pedestal; the pope, the rosary, and the healing lizards, placed nearest the sanctuary of the choir, guard the route; and at the end, the embodiment of the original sin is finally destroyed by the Apollonian agent of the sun's salubrious power. The drama unfolded in these details seems to encapsulate the overarching theme with which Urban imbued the basilica itself, to which he may himself have referred when he described Bernini:

"Rare man, sublime intelligence, and born for Divine Purpose, and for the glory of Rome to bring light to that Century."

With all their depth of meaning, however, the Baldacchino's little marginalia are also charming, sophisticated, witty, even humorous, and thus ingratiating in a spirit that can best be described, I think, as "urbane". This quality, characteristic of Bernini, also permeates other, contemporary work he carried out for Urban VIII, and corresponds to a fundamental cast of the new pope's mind, his public policy, as well as the very name he chose as Christ's vicar.
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