Visible Spirit

The Art of Gianlorenzo Bernini

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Irving Lavin

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ELECTION – NAME

POPES are elected by action of the Holy Spirit: Divine Wisdom inspires them to resolve their differences and make the right choice. The election of Urban VIII was, however, exceptional in this tradition, because the choice was accompanied by an extraordinary event that seemed to confirm the principle of divine intervention in concrete, visible, and unmistakably personal terms. It so happened that a swarm of bees passed through the open window of the conclave; it so happened that the bee, because of its perfectly organized modus vivendi and its deliciously beneficial product, had from time immemorial been taken as the earthly incarnation of the Divine Wisdom (Fig. 1); and it so happened that the bee was the emblem of Cardinal Maffeo Barberini — three bees, as it so happened, easily understood in terms of the Trinity from whom the Holy Spirit descends (Fig. 2).³

The first action of the new Pope following his acceptance of the outcome of the election is to choose his new name. When Barberini was asked whether he accepted the election, he went down on his knees to pray for a while; he then declared that he accepted and that he would take the name of Urban VIII. There was no hesitation about the name: evidently Maffeo Barberini had himself foreseen, perhaps even long before, the action of Divine Wisdom in the choice of the cardinals, and perhaps even the action of Divine Wisdom in his own choice of his new name! The contemporary

³ On this famous engraving see now Finocchiaro 2004.
sources give essentially three reasons why Maffeo Barberini chose to call himself Urban: 1. because of his special affection for Rome, the Urbs par excellence. 2. because he wished his name to be a perpetual reminder that he must curb his own natural inclination toward sternness. 3. in memory of his early predecessors, full of holy zeal and far from worldly interests.2

The purpose of this essay is to try to comprehend the nature and relationship between these three prime themes of Maffeo Barberini’s papacy, as I have come to believe he understood it, that is: his affection for Rome, his personal character, and his self-identification as Pope Urbanus. I shall discuss these ingredients in sequence, but my whole point is that they were conceived together, merging Urbs and Urbanus into one coherent Persona — as the embracing lovers merged into a single persona in Ingmar Bergman’s great film of that name. The sense of urbanity to be considered here was surely rooted in the cultivated humanistic ambience of the villa of Cardinal Scipione Borghese, nephew of Paul V (1606–21), which the learned and literate Maffeo Barberini had frequented, and for which Bernini had made his most important early works.3 Maffeo Barberini himself, who commissioned one of the most famous of these works, was undoubtedly an inspiring participant. The concept was expressed explicitly in the famous inscription at the entrance to the villa’s garden, which invited the people of Rome to enjoy its pleasures in accordance with the “golden laws of urbanity.”4

2 “Egli dice haver preso il nome di Urbano per due cause, la prima per amar egli molto questa città, che s’appella Urbs per autonomasia, la seconda perchè conoscendo egli la sua natura tirar alquanto al rigidetto le fusse continuo raccordo di dover temperarla.” (Pastor 1923–53, XXVIII, 25, n. 1) “…dal qual nome ha voluto egli insignirsi, come ha detto, per venerare la memoria degli antichi Urbani predecessori suoi, che pieni di santo zelo, ed alieni agli interessi del mondo, tentarono imprese gloriose.” (Barozzi and Berchet 1877–8, I, 225). On the Urban predecessors in particular, see p. 1301f. and n. 53 below.

3 See the fine essay by Müller Hofstede 1998, and the references, especially to studies cited there, p. 122 n. 1, by Rudolf Preimesberger. Neither Preimesberger nor Müller Hofstede relates the concept of urbanity to Urban himself.

4 “Whoever thou art, so long as thou art a free man, fear not here the bonds of the laws! Go where thou wilt, ask whatever thou desirest, go away whenever thou wishest. More is here provided for the stranger than for the owner. In this golden age, which holds the promise of universal security, the master of the house wishes to lay no iron laws upon the well-bred. Let seemly enjoyment be the guest’s only law. But let him who with malice aforethought offends against the golden law of urbanity fear lest the irate custodian burn for him the sacred emblems of hospitality.” Pastor 1923–53, XXVI, 453ff. Heilmann 1973, 115ff., gives the inscription but notes that other Roman villas of the period were also open to the public.
This classically-minded and quasi-juridical conceit focused essentially on the sophisticated comportment associated with city life generally.\(^5\) When Maffeo became pope the urbanity of Rome itself, the *urbs* par excellence, acquired a new, comprehensive metaphorical significance as an ideal of personal identity and conduct, as well as a universal code of moral, political, spiritual, and social concern.

TUSCAN TAFANI – ROMAN BEES

The special relationship Maffeo Barberini felt between himself and the city of Rome originated long before he was elected pope and chose the name that would convey that relationship *expressis verbis*, as it were. The relationship was probably encoded in his personal identity from the time he was named cardinal in 1606. And from the beginning the relationship appeared to be sanctioned by a higher authority than his own volition. Cardinals when elected become princes of the church, and hence are entitled to the armorial bearings of nobility. I suspect that this was the occasion when the famous and crucial transformation took place in which the three horseflies (tafani) that originally formed the Barberini family coat arms were morphed into bees (Fig. 3).\(^6\) Tafano was (and still is) the name of a locality in the vicinity of Barberino Val d’Elsa, whence derived the original family name, Tafani da Barberino, and coat of arms, which also included a scissors representing the founder of the dynasty, a tailor who established the family fortune in an ever-expanding wool trade. (Fig. 4) But the horsefly is a menace that passes its entire life in an incessant mass attack on its victims, inflicting painful, blood-letting wounds with two powerful, sharp pincers that protrude from its head; hence also the emblem of the scissors that related the family’s incisive and relentlessly aggressive business tactics to their toponym. Worker bees may also inflict a painful wound (not the queen or what was sometimes

\(^5\) This generic, rather than specifically Roman notion of urbanity, as opposed to rusticity, is evident in Cicero’s frequent use of the concept (see Bléry 1909, and Haury 1955, *s.v. urbanitas*. For a perceptive discussion of the significance and development of the concept in antiquity, including “Roman humor,” see Saint-Denis 1939, 5–25. A broad-ranging study of Ciceronian urbanity will be found in Heuer 1941.

\(^6\) On the vicissitudes of the Barberini coat of arms see Pecchiai 1956, 76f, 231, and 1959, 85–92; Valdarni 1968, 31; Zangheri 1990 and Marzocchi 1998, both with illustrations. Further examples of the tafani with scissors are illustrated in a manuscript which Pecchia 1956, 91, dates before 1636.
thought to be the king bee, which has no stinger), but only once and at great self-sacrifice, for the bee, which then dies, suffers even more than its enemy. Bees are also normally solitary creatures bumbling about haphazardly from flower to flower gathering their precious nectar hither and yon; they are marvelously of one mind, however, when they are at home in the hive, and when they swarm *en masse*, which they do only in self-defense for the common good when they are threatened, or when they decide to migrate to another territory and establish a new colony. The Barberini armorial metamorphosis is usually explained as a simple and obvious elevation or evolution of the lowly and pestiferous horsefly to the noble and useful bee. In 1636 Cardinal Francesco Barberini commissioned a Florentine client merchant to go to Barberino and revise the coats of arms by canceling the scissors and changing the horseflies to bees.7 But there is surely more to the story if one considers what might be called the poetic mystique of the bee, which Maffeo must have had in mind from the outset.

This property of the bee to migrate *en famille*, as it were, and to have done so during the conclave was a God-send not only because the bee was the family symbol, but because shortly before he was elected pope Cardinal Maffeo had invented an impresa with an astonishing clairvoyance that was itself one of the many otherwise inexplicable coincidences testifying to the divine providentiality that became the overriding leitmotif of his reign (Fig. 5).8 The famous phrase *Hic Domus* with which Virgil announces the arrival of Aeneas in Latium, the foundation of Rome and the Golden Ages of Augustus, is illustrated by a swarm of the armorial bees alighting upon a laurel tree, symbol of eternity.

“Salve, fatis mihi debita tellus,
vosque, ait, o fidi Troiae, salvete, Penates!
Hic domus, haec patria est.”

“Hail, O land,” he cries, “destined as is my due! and hail to you, ye faithful gods of Troy! Here is our home, here our country!”9

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7 Zanobi Radicchi, aromatario, writes to Cardinal Francesco 9 November 1636 reporting that, stealthily, at night, the mission had been carried out. (Pecchiai 1956, 89ff. cf. p. 91).
8 Ferro 1623, II, 72.
The devastating invasion of Troy by the Trojan horse was thus superceded by the beneficial invasion of Rome by the Barberini bees. A much richer understanding of Maffeo’s conceit emerges when one considers that the same phrase, this time derived from Genesis, occurs in one of the most powerful texts of the Roman liturgy, specifically as the Introit of the common of the mass in celebration of the dedication of a church:

*Terribilis est locus iste: hic domus Dei est, et porta caeli: et vocabitur aula Dei.*

How terrible this place! It is the house of God and the gate of heaven, and it shall be called the court of God.\(^{10}\)

The import of Maffeo’s brilliant metaphor was fully appreciated in Rome, even in the negative, later in his reign. Only in this light can one fully grasp Pasquino’s ironic inversion of the conceit with his famous lampoon on the appropriation of bronze from the Pantheon to create the baldachin at St. Peter’s: *quod non fecerunt barbari fecerunt Barberini.* The joke was not just a clever pun on the sounds of the two words barbari–Barberini, but an even cleverer inversion of the basic Virgilian conceit, now identifying the swarm of Barberini bees with the barbaric invasion that devastated ancient Rome. Similarly, the swarm of bees, representing not just the Cardinal’s device but his whole family, later became an allusion to Urban’s notorious nepotism as a barbarian invasion, when the number of bees arrogantly populating Rome

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\(^{10}\) Lasance and Walsh 1945, 1388f. *Genesis* 28:17:

*Pavensque, quam terribilis est inquit locus iste non est hic aliud nisi domus dei et porta coeli.*

And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

The terribilis passage does not occur in the breviary liturgy, where instead the hymn at first Vespers begins *Caelestis urbs Jerusalem.* This hymn was radically changed by Urban VIII, who participated actively in a major “correction” of the breviary hymns for a more classical Latin. The second stanza in the revised breviary begins “O sorte nupta prospera,/ Dotata Patris gloria,/ Resperta Sponsi gratia,/ Regina formosissima” (*Hours*, I, 922, Common of the Dedication of a Church). This was also a drastic expurgation: the original passage (in the 1570 Breviary of Pius V), was as follows: “Nova veniens e caelo, nuptial thalamo / Praeparata, ut sponsata copuletur Domino.” *Copuletur* is the word used by St. Bernard. The point is that the dedication of a church is the consummation of the Marriage of Christ to Ecclesia. On Urban’s revision of the hymns: Blume 1910, Pastor 1923–53, XXIX, 13–18.

3. Coat of Arms of "De Barberino", with three horseflies (tafani) and trace of excised scissors. Florence, Santa Croce, south cloister.
4. Horseflies arranged as the arms of Tafani da Barberino.


Rome, Palazzo Barberini.
13. Detail of Fig. 12.


19. Matthias Greuter, the Barcaccia, engraving. Lasena 1638, p. 78.
and the papal states was facetiously estimated at more than ten thousand. One of the ten thousand must have been the beautifully poetic depiction of a bee sipping nectar from a flower in the garden of Paradise depicted in the apse mosaic of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, restored by Cardinal Francesco (Fig. 6).

Following the choice of his name the pope’s affection for the city was expressed publicly by his devotion to the Archangel Michael, the weigher of souls. The Archangel was the patron of Castel Sant’Angelo and favorite and protector of the city of Rome since he had appeared above the Castello in a famous vision of Gregory the Great to alleviate a devastating attack of the plague (Fig. 7); and had liberated the city from the scourge from the north at the Sack of Rome in 1522. Following the Council of Trent Michael was invoked by Pius V as defender of the Faith, in the engraved title page of the new Missal published in 1570, where the archangel is shown appearing with scales and sword defeating the devil of heresy, before the kneeling pope, both figures looking up toward the radiant dove of the Holy Spirit (Fig. 8). Urban established a distinctly new, personal relationship with the Archangel by choosing the saint’s feast day (September 29) for his coronation, making Michael the patron of his pontificate. This was a fundamental shift in meaning, which he signified early in his reign in a medal (1626) commemorating his coronation; Pius’s threatening image is transformed into one of benign protection, with Michael appearing cloud-borne to lead the kneeling pope who looks up to the Archangel for guidance, in fulfillment of the motto *Te Mane, Te Vespere* (you day, you night) (Fig. 9). The text was based on a hymn that introduced the liturgy for the Feast of the Trinity, which invoked the sun, one of Urban’s primary emblems, as the ever-luminous Christ to replace the transient sun of fire. The personal reference became more explicit in a commemorative medal issued in 1640 with the same motto, in which St. Michael as ever vigilant protector again descends from heaven in a radically new guise, without the sword and scales but as Divine messenger bearing the tiara to crown the pope, and so confirm the divinely ordained election (Fig. 10). The altar in the apse of St. Peter’s, the chief altar after the high altar itself, was dedicated to the Archangel and

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11 The importance of the Archangel Michael for Urban VIII and the early plans for decorating St. Peter’s has been recuperated by Rice 1997; cf. Index, s.v. “Saints.” See also Lavin 2003 and Lavin 2005, 182–94.

12 Sodi and Maria Triacca 1998.
Bernini was commissioned to design the altarpiece in 1626. The work was never carried out, and there is no record of what he may have planned at this stage. But the project clearly inspired the bold combination of themes — St. Michael, papal succession, Petrine relic — envisaged in an astonishing design that evidently served in the preparations for the Cathedra Petri carried out in the same location later in the century under Alexander VII (Fig. 11): over the reliquary throne of St. Peter shouldered by the fathers of the church, the Archangel appears bearing the keys of St. Peter (one of which opens, the other closes the gateway to heaven) and the papal tiara, symbols of the pope’s God-given, sovereign jurisdiction over Christ’s legacy on earth.\(^{13}\)

The full import of the concept can only be grasped from the liturgical context of the text, which is derived from a famous Ambrosian hymn revised by Urban VIII himself. Recited at evening prayer, on the Feast of the Holy Trinity, the hymn invokes the Trinity to replace the setting sun.

\[\begin{align*}
\text{O Trinity of blessed light,} \\
\text{O Unity of princely might,} \\
\text{The fiery sun now goes his way,} \\
\text{Shed thou within our hearts thy ray.} \\
\text{To thee our morning song of praise,} \\
\text{To thee our evening prayer we raise;} \\
\text{Thy glory suppliant we adore,} \\
\text{For ever and for evermore.}^{14}\end{align*}\]

\(^{13}\) On the medal and Bernini’s drawing see Rice 1992; 1997, 89f., 267. I suspect that the Trinitarian origin of Urban’s motto also motivated the triangular vision that appears in the apse of St. Peter’s in a burst of clouds and light above the Cathedra Petri, sketched in what seems to be its later form, in a problematic drawing in the Morgan library; the drawing depicts a papal ceremony in the choir and crossing, with Bernini’s first project for the baldachin. Damian Dombrowski has dated both the Windsor and Morgan drawings early in Urban’s reign (Dal trionfo all’amore. Il mutevole pensiero artistico di Gianlorenzo Bernini nella decorazione del nuovo San Pietro, Rome, 2003, 39–44).

\(^{14}\) Hours of the Divine Office, II, 1420f.

Jam sol recedit igneus; 
Tu, lux perennis, Unitas, 
Nostris, beáta Trinitas, 
Infunde lumen córdibus.
The hymn follows immediately upon the Little Chapter, from Romans 11:13

11:33 Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!¹⁵

In other words, the entire conceit falls under the heading of Divine Wisdom. Michael is in effect the sun — Urban’s emblem — bestowing Divine Wisdom’s dominion (tiara) and judgment (keys) on the pope-papacy. Hence the aureole of rays surrounding Michael in the second coronation medal, succeeded by the brilliant burst of light behind the Archangel in the Cathedra Petri drawing, where also the Holy Spirit, evoked in the hymn, appears on the back of the throne; the light and the dove were fused in the famous window of the Holy Spirit of the final work.

In these papal images Michael is shown in an entirely unprecedented role, not as weigher of souls or avenging angel, but as Divine messenger, conveying the authority and power of Christ on earth. In this way, Urban’s personal invocation of St. Michael, enforcer of God’s will, served also to extend the Archangel’s special surveillance of Rome to the church at large. (Fig. 12) Finally, it becomes especially significant of Urban’s self-identification with Rome, that the coronation imagery has its counterpart, and may have originated in Pietro da Cortona’s vault fresco in the salone of the Palazzo Barberini (1633–9):¹⁶ the glorious flight of bees swooping up through the empyrean at the command of Divine Providence below, is crowned at the apex with the papal tiara borne by a personification of Rome (Fig. 13). Rome enacts in the secular domain the role of Michael in the Church.

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¹⁵ O altitudo divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei quam incomprehensibilia sunt iudicia eius et investigabiles viae eius.

¹⁶ On this point see Rice 1992, 429f.
I have no doubt that the history of the papacy is full of pontiffs who enjoyed a good joke, but none to my knowledge had ever made good humor and wit a matter of public policy. (Figs. 14, 15) One of the most astonishing of all modern urban creations, or should one say creatures, is the fountain installed early in Urban’s reign (1627–9), fondly known as the Barcaccia, from its resemblance to a type of humble work-boat, double-prowed for going up and down stream without turning around, used in hauling freight on the Tiber nearby (Fig. 16). The Barcaccia is the first monumental, public fountain in Rome, in the very heart of the city, to suggest a wholly organic, quasi-natural, shape; and it is surely the first public monument that is truly, sublimely, amusing. It was set low because of the feeble water pressure of the Aqua Vergine at that location, but this disadvantage made the work a prime illustration of one of Bernini’s basic principles of design, “The highest praise of art consists in knowing how to make use of the little, and the bad, and the unsuitable for the purpose, to make beautiful things, so that the defect becomes useful, and if it did not exist it would have been made.” Domenico Bernini, the artist’s son, reports on the fountain as follows:

And if Bernini in that which was not his profession showed such ability, how much must we believe him to be in that in which consisted his proper talent, refined by study, and art? And as he was wont to say, that “The good artificer was the one who knew how to invent methods to make use of the little, and the bad, to make beautiful things,” he was truly marvelous in demonstrating it in fact. Under the Pincio in the Piazza called di Spagna, there had been made a lead from the Acqua Vergine to create a fountain to adorn the place. But the limited elevation above the surface did not permit a work that would give richness and majesty to that

17 The Tiber work boats were cited by D’Onofrio 1967, 354–61; 1986, 363, 368.
18 The most important studies of the fountain are Hibbard and Irma Jaffe 1964, D’Onofrio 1967, 356–71, and 1986, 319–98; for a recent summary, Kessler 2005, 405–9. The fountain was called Barcaccia in a guidebook of 1693; the term first appears in a poem by Berni 1555 (Hibbard and Irma Jaffe 1964, 160 n. 2).
19 Concerning fountains: “Anzi il sommo pregio dell’Arte consistere in sapersi servire del poco, e del cattivo, e del male atto al bisogno, per far cose belle, e far sì, che sia utile ciò, che fu difetto, e che se non fusse, bisognerebbe farlo.” Bernini 1713, 32
most delightful site. Urban asked him to demonstrate also on this occasion the vivacity of his imagination, and find a way with a certain artful slope, to make the water rise higher. The Cavaliere responded acutely, that in that case it would be better to think that the work and the fountain should conform to the water, than the water to the fountain. And so he conceived the idea of a beautiful and noble object for which it would be necessary, if need be, to restrict the height of the water. And he explained that he would remove enough earth to create a large basin which, being filled with water the fountain would represent at ground level an ocean, in the midst of which he intended to float a noble, and appropriate stone boat, which at several points as if from artillery cannons would spout water in abundance. The thought greatly pleased the pope, and without ado he gave order to carry out the project, which he deigned to ennoble himself with the following verses:

The papal warship does not pour forth flames,
But sweet water to extinguish the fire of war.  

Everyone praised the ingenuity of the novelty of this fountain, and the above two verses were received by the literati with such applause that one of them, either truly convinced by the vivacity of the concept that seemed to him impossible to have originated so appropriately for the purpose, or else disposed to think the worst, thinking it to believe it, and believing it to publish it, responded ingeniously but boldly with the following distich:

He made the fountain for the verses, not the verses for the fountain.
Urban the poet; thus may anyone take pleasure.  

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20 I have borrowed the translation of the distich from Hibbard and Irma Jaffe 1964, 164.
21 Bernini 1713, 57–9:
Hor se il Bernino in quel, che non era professione sua, si dimostrava tanto valente, quanto dobbiam credere, che fosse in ciò, in cui consisteva il suo proprio talento raffinato dallo studio, e dall’arte? E come che soleva dire, che Il buon’ Artefice era quello, che sapeva inventar maniere, per servirsì del poco, e del cattivo, per far cose belle, egli veramente fu mara / viglioso a comprovarlo con gli effetti. Sotto il Pincio in Piazza detta di Spagna era stato
From antiquity on there had been naval fountains in Rome, but never in post-classical times in so conspicuous a site, and always in the form of an imposing warship, whether an archeological relic, or a detailed replica of a modern galleon (Fig. 17). To be sure, Bernini’s workaday craft is clearly equipped fore and aft with cannon; but yet, at first glance, at least, the poor, awkward tub seems obviously and emphatically to be sinking beneath the waves, the guns squirting gentle streams of water, which also gushes from apertures within to spill over the gunwales. At the same time, the morbid shape of the gunwales suggests the lips and gaping mouth of some great sea monster swallowing in one voracious gulp a diminutive version of the thing raised on a sort of mast inside, from which an ultimate gasp of water spouts heavenward. Bernini’s gently militant, humble work-boat seems to founder

condotto un capo di Acqua Vergine per doverne formare una Fontana in abbellimento di quel luogo: Mà la pochissima alzata, ch’ella aveva dal suolo non dava commodo di poter condurre un lavoro, che recasse ricchezza e maestà a quel deliziosissimo sito. Urbano richiese lui, acciò al suo solito facesse spiccare in quest’occasione la vivacità del suo ingegno, e trovase modo con qualche artificiosa pendenza, che quell’acqua venisse maggiormente a solevarsi: Rispose acutamente il Cavaliere, che in quel caso dovevasi più tosto pensare, che l’Opera, e la Fonte si confacesse all’Acqua, che l’acqua alla Fonte; E per ciò concepi un’Idea di Machina vaga, e nobile per cui bisognarebbe, se non fusse, restringer all’acqua l’altezza. E gli espone, che haverebbe scavato tanto di terra, quanto in essa si venisse a formare una gran Vasca, che empiendosi dell’acqua di quella Fontana rappresentasse al piano del suolo un Mare, nel cui mezzo voleva, che natase nobile, e confacevole barca di sasso, che da più parti quasi da tanti Cannoni di Artiglieria gittasse acqua in abbondanza. Piacque il pensiere incredibilmente al Papa, e senza più diè ordine, che si dasse esecuzione al disegno, quale egli medesimo non isdegnò di nobilitar con questi versi:

Bellica Pontificum non fundit Machina flammas,
Sed dulcern, belli qua perit ignis, aquam.

Fu lodata da tutti l’ingegnosa invenzione di questa Fontana, e li due sopra citati versi con tanto applauso furono ricevuti da’ Letterati, che un d’essi ò persuaso ve / ramente dalla vivacità del concetto, che gli paresse impossibile farlo nascere tanto confacevole al proposito, ò pur disposto a pensare il peggio, e pensandolo crederlo, e credendo pubblicarlo, rispose ingegnosamente mà arditamente col seguente Distico.

Carminibus Fontem, non Fonti Carmina fecit
Urbanus Vates : sic sibi quisque placet.

See also the equivalent account in Baldinucci-Ludovici 1948, 83f.

The antecedents from antiquity on were studied by Hibbard and Irma Jaffe 1964, D’Onofrio 1967, and 1986 (as in n. 18).
in the overwhelming flood of its own delicious, liquid superabundance. In point of fact, however, the situation might just as well be the other way around: the monster could be vomiting it up, in effect saving it from a watery death. In the end, the Barcaccia appears in a perpetual state of suspension, animated by the constant flow of water, here again easily accessible over rock-like steps conveniently protruding to bridge the gaps at either end, between the edge of the basin and the tub. This ironic portrayal of an unlikely object in an unlikely situation in an unlikely place — one of the major city squares — was a delight to one and all and surely contributed to its immediate baptism with its endearing, cuddly name, in the common Romanaccia parlance of the city.

Lest there be any doubt that it was perceived in this way by contemporaries, we may call to witness the account of the fountain in an extraordinary book by a now obscure but then well-known polymath, Pietro Lasena (1590–1636), published in Rome in 1637, dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Barberini: Cleombrotus [the name of an ancient Greek philosopher], or, a Philological Dissertation on Those who have Died in the Water (Fig. 18). Described in The Transactions of the Royal Humane Society in London for 1756 as the first work devoted to the awful theme of shipwreck and drowning, Lasena’s treatise contains the first known illustration of the Barcaccia, by Matthias Greuter, along with a discussion and various epigrams, including one in Greek by Leone Allacci (Figs. 19, 20). The point of it all, following the pope’s own epigram, is to interpret the fountain with its mellifluous waters as an emblem of apian peace:

The Golden Peace of Pharia, once torn from the keel,
Immerses the ships of war in Hyblaean honey.

23 The following description of the work, now in my possession, was provided by the bookseller, F. Thomas Heller, of Swarthmore, PA.


First and only edition and very rare. A distinguished Neapolitan jurist and polymath. Lasena (1590–1636) came to Rome in 1634 to serve the Pope, Urban VIII, and his brother, the cardinal Francesco Barberini, to whom the book is jointly dedicated. He was received with honor and lodged in the Vatican, but soon died of malaria and was buried in S. Andrea della Valle. Cleombrotus is an
And now, O Prince, the ship brings new omens  
From which your bee sends forth honeyed liquids.\textsuperscript{24}

Under the beneficent sun and the vessels of redemption all meld in a  
kind of self-immersion in the salvific waters of the church. The Barcaccia is  
eternally flooded but it never sinks. On the contrary, it also rises from within  
the gigantic, open-mouthed fish, disgorging the thirst- and fire-quenching  
waters of baptism as the Whale disgorged Jonah.

The irony of the conceit is most evident if one considers that the major  
symbol of the Catholic church as an institution was precisely the noble ship, as  
the ship of state, Christ’s earthly domain guided by the pope at the helm. The  
extended series of essays occasioned by the catastrophic shipwreck of a flotilla  
of Spanish galleons lost in the Gulf of Genoa in 1635, the passengers of which  
included Lasena’s parents. The work was read before a Roman literary society but  
published posthumously, in tribute to its author. A discussion of the theme of  
shipwrecks and drowning, largely with reference to antiquity, the work is, in fact,  
the first book on drowning and has long been recognized as such in the literature  
on resuscitation — see page XVI of \textit{The Transactions of the Royal Humane Society},  
London [1796]. Hitherto unnoticed, however, is an engraving and several pages of  
analysis of Bernini’s famous “shipwrecked” fountain, the Barcaccia, a celebrated  
work, Bernini’s first fountain, the archetypical Roman fountain, and traditionally  
considered to be the first fountain in what would come to be called the Baroque  
style (see Wittkower. \textit{Bernini}, 80a for the relevant bibliography). This engraving  
is the first depiction of the fountain, predating by one year the illustration that has  
hitherto been considered to be the earliest representation of the work, a view found  
in the guidebook \textit{Ritratto di Roma Moderna} published by Pompilio Totti in 1638  
analysis is also of considerable interest for its emphasis on Egyptian (i.e. hermetic,  
neoplatonic) symbolism, and contains several epigrams relating to the fountain,  
including a lengthy quatrain in Greek by Leone Allacci. Graesse IV 113.  
A brief eulogy of Lasena appears in Rossi 1692, 106–8.

\textsuperscript{24} Lasena 1637, 77:

\begin{center}
\textit{Aurea Pax Phariæ quondâ detracta carina,  
Imbuit Hybleis bellica rostra fœvis:  
Et nova nunc pacis, PRINCEPS, fert omina  
Puppis,  
Mellitos latices qua tua promit Apis.}
\end{center}

\begin{quote}
Isis, Egyptian goddess of peace, was called Pharia from the lighthouse — pharos — of  
Alexandria;  
Hybla, from Mount Hybla in Sicily, famous for its honey.
\end{quote}
theme was so central to the ideology of the church that one proposal offered at the outset of Urban's reign for furnishing the newly completed basilica of St. Peter's actually enclosed the high altar and the choir for the cardinals in a ship under a sail blown by the crucifixion (Fig. 21). There were essentially three New Testament contexts that lay behind this maritime metaphor, that is, the gospel episodes involving Christ's institution and dissemination of the Faith through his disciples: the vessel from which Christ called Peter, the first and foremost among the disciples, as he was fishing with Andrew on the Sea of Galilee, to succeed him as the Prince of the Apostles, his earthly vicar, saying to them I will make you become fishers of men (Mt. 4:18–20; Mark 1:16–17); the vessel in which the apostles were caught during a storm, from which Christ saved them, proving his divinity by walking on the water, and Peter's faith by urging him to do the same (Mt. 14–22–343; and the vessel in which Christ saved the apostles, as it was sinking from the weight of a draft of innumerable fishes he had miraculously provided, saying that henceforth they would catch men (Luke 5:3–10). Behind these episodes there lay two main Old Testament prognostications: Noah and his ark, in which all the world's creatures were saved from the universal flood of man's sins; and Jonah who, guilty for having fled from the Lord's command, asked to be cast into the sea as a sacrifice, was swallowed by a sea monster, and prayed to the Lord from the belly of hell, whereupon the beast vomited him out upon the dry land (Jonah Chs. 1–2).

If the note of serious humor (serio ludere in Renaissance terms) struck by the Barcaccia seems startlingly bizarre, the explanation lies in two interrelated works of learned and imaginative antiquarianism that were its inspiration and justification. Vincenzo Cartari in his great compilation of ancient religious imagery, deals at length with the belief of the Egyptians, paragons of pre-Christian arcane knowledge and wisdom, that the gods were identified with animals. On the authority the church father Eusebius of Caesarea, significantly in his compendious treatise on the forerunners of Christianity, Preparation for the Gospel, Cartari reported that the Egyptians associated the Sun with a ship and a crocodile, the former shown riding on the latter immersed in sweet water (Fig. 22). The Ship of the Sun, shown enflamed and spouting fire from its forward gun-ports in Cartari's image,

25 Vincenzo Cartari, “Le imagini de gli dei de gli antichi,” Venice, 1625, 45. The Nave del Sole, which is mentioned by Hibbard and Irma Jaffe in a footnote (1964, 164 n. 19), appears in all the many editions of Cartari.
represented the creative effect of the sun’s motion through liquid, and the crocodile signified the water which the sun purges of its impurities: “l’acqua dolce, dalla quale il Sole leua ogni trista qualità, & la purga con i suoi temperati raggi.”26 The relevance of the “temperate” sun as a ship conducted through the pure water by an aqueus beast whose humid generative power was second only to God’s, was a congeries of associations astonishingly proleptic of the themes Urban would adopt for himself. In particular, the sun was a primary emblem of Urban VIII and the quenching waters spewing from the solar visages inside and the gunports outside at either end of the Barcaccia clearly reflect Cartari’s description of the water-tempering rays of the Egyptian sun-boat. The same themes, more fully developed, underlay and may have inspired a chalcedony gem, now lost, that was assumed to be an important relic of Early Christian, specifically early Petrine art (Figs. 23, 24).27 Mounted as an anulus piscatoris (formally a papal ring), the carving depicted a ship at sea mounted on the back of a huge open-mouthed sea monster; from the ship’s deck rose a mast that supported another, smaller vessel surmounted by a dove evocative of the salvific message a bird brought to Noah in the ark, while another bird rode to safety on the poop. To the right, as if retrieved from the jaws of the sea-monster, Christ calls Peter to walk upon the waters and follow him. (The visitor who approaches the gun-spouts on the narrow, bi-lingual platforms from the “shore,” does indeed seem to walk, precariously, upon the water.) Above the figures the abbreviated names of Jesus and Peter were inscribed in Greek. The gem was

26 The caption of the illustration reads: Naue del Sole portata de un Crocodilo, che significa la prima causa che gouerna l’unuierso dopò Iddio esser la forza del Sole congiunta nella generatione delle cose con l’umidità; & lui purgare le triste qualità di quella. The reference to Eusebius (p. 44) is as follows: Et perciò, come riferisce Eusebio, i Theologi dello Egitto metteuano l’imagine del Sole in vna naue, la quale faceuano portare da vn Crocodilo, volendo per la naue mostrare il moto, che si fa nello humido alla generatione delle cose, e per lo Crocodilo l’acqua dolce, dalla quale il Sole leua ogni trista qualità, & la purga con i suoi temperati raggi. The passage in Eusebius is as follows: The sun they indicate by a man embarked on a ship, the ship set on a crocodile. And the ship indicates the sun’s motion in a liquid element: the crocodile potable water in which the sun travels. The figure thus signified that his revolution takes place through air that is liquid and sweet. (Eusebius 2002, I, 126).

27 The gem is discussed briefly by Hibbard and Irma Jaffe 1964, 164. The circumstances of Aleandro’s composition and the engraving by Mellan have been studied by David Jaffé 1990, 168–75. The most extensive modern discussion of the gem’s content, and the question of its authenticiy, is that by Dölger 1943, 286–91.
engraved by Claude Mellan in two versions, in one of which, that published by Aleandro, Christ also stands on the water; in the other, Christ stands upon a rock in allusion to Peter as the rock upon which the church would be built. The gem was the subject of a scholarly monograph published by Girolamo Aleandro with a dedication to Cardinal Francesco Barberini in 1626, the same year Urban dedicated the new church of St. Peter’s and the year before the Barcaccia was begun. Aleandro, secretary and a close friend of the pope and his nephew, all of whom were associated with the famous Accademia degli Umoristi, explains the gem as allusive to the Old and New Testament vessels of salvation, the ark of Noah, the fishing boat of Peter, and the ship of the church, in which both Jews and Gentiles are saved. Aleandro does indeed relate the open-mouthed sea monster to the beast that disgorged Jonah in anticipation of the Resurrection. Aleandro made this point by referring it Peter, recalling the annual tribute money (actually a specific coin denomination, the didrachma in the Vulgate, worth two drachmae), which Christ instructed Peter to pay, having extracted it from the mouth of a fish. Aleandro offered this reference to explain the open mouth of the animal in the ring, and the explanation is equally valid for the gaping maw of Bernini’s bi-faced ship-monster welling up from and hovering over the lower depths, inundating the fountain with the silvery redemption that both Jonah and Peter won by virtue of their devotion. The Barcaccia was a monumental conflation of the salvific associations accumulated in Cartari’s dramatic Ship of the Sun and the diminutive anulus piscatoris. The fountain morphed the sun, the vessel, and the fish into a coherent, organic

28 Aleandro 1626.
29 Trium extimo rerum sacrarum potissimum symbola (nam & alsia quaedam consideranda se nobis offerent) hac gemma contineri. Ac primum quidem illud signifiari tem Arcam Noë, quam Petri nauiculam Ecclesiae fuisse typum. Deinde, quoniam coniunctae inuicam arca ipsa & naus cernunut, Cathlicam Christi Ecclesiam iam inde aq muni primordio fuisse. Tertio loco, cum arca malo nauis imposita ab ipsa nau fuleiri ac sustentari videatur, quicumque siue ex Iudaismo, siue ex Gentibus salutem vnquam sunt adepti, id per fidem in Iesum Christum, quae fides Ecclesiae firmamentum est, ijs contingisse (Aleandro 1626, 15f.)
30 Nec eius opinio improbanda videretur, qui extimauerit, piscem in gemma insculptum fuisse ad inuenti illius stateris memoriam refricandam exhibendumque mysterium, de quo loqui suum, ac profeco os huiusce nostri piscis apertum verba Domini respicere videtur, & aperto ore eius innuies staterem (Aleandro 1626, 127f.); cf. Dölger 1943, 286.
31 For examples of didrachmae bearing twin fishes see Noe 1935.
image of Urban’s offering on behalf of the church to the people of Rome: an abundant cascade of grace as aquatic refreshment for body and soul.

Baldinucci says unequivocally that Bernini made the fountain at the Pope’s behest, and I have no doubt that in this case as in others where Bernini himself attributes to the pope ideas that he has carried out, however ingeniously, the basic conceit did indeed spring from Maffeo Barberini’s imagination; after which the two men, like swarming bees, were of a single mind. The reason I say so in this case is the location of the fountain, which was the pope’s wish: it is located between the two preternatural enemies, Spain on one side of the piazza, France up the hill on the other. The papacy was often caught uncomfortably in the middle, especially in seeking to reconcile and unite the antagonists in the struggle against the Protestant heretics. In this light and in this place, the Barcaccia it is an emblem not only of the pope’s diplomacy but also of his diplomatic method.

An essential part of my argument in this paper is that Urban’s effort to mitigate asperity and mediate peace under the aegis of the church was as much a part of his Urbanity as were the daring informality, charm, and wit that have indeed made the fountain an eternal symbol of what it means to be Roman. Another of Bernini’s dicta concerning the design of fountains was that “the good architect had always to give them some real significance, or alluding to something noble, whether real or imagined.” In the case of the Barcaccia, Urban’s own distich provided the key to the fountain’s significance in its context. But the same kind of open-mouthed sea-creature fun populates the Piazza Barberini itself, in the “natural” form of gigantic, splayed out conch-shells displaying the unimaginable treasures offered by their patron. (Figs. 25, 26).

The element of humor and wit also informs another instance cited by the biographers of Bernini’s ingenious cooptation of refractory conditions to his own advantage. This is the huge commemorative inscription decreed by

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32 On Urban’s patronage see Pastor 1923–53, XXIX, 408–44; his patronage of Bernini has been surveyed more recently by Hirschfeld 1968, 156–70.
33 The political topography of the site was aptly sketched by Hibbard and Irma Jaffe 1964, 165f.
34 “sua opinione sempre fu che il buono architetto nel disegnar fontane dovesse sempre dar loro qualche significato vero o pure alludente a cosa nobile o vera o finta.” Baldinucci-Ludovici 1948, 84
35 I refer of course to the Triton fountain and the Fountain of the Bees, the latter a modern reconstruction incorporating parts of the original; cf. D’Onofrio 1986, 385–9.
the Roman Senate in 1634 on the inner facade of S. Maria in Aracoeli, where two winged figures of fame unfurl a long scroll that seems to billow out and envelop the space of the nave. The pope’s numerous urban benefactions are inscribed, ending, significantly in our context, with an acclamation of his “just, tempered and truly paternal rule,” and his “vigilant care for the benefits of the people.” Immediately above, as if to confirm the divine intervention, a pre-existent window was replaced by a stained glass version of the papal escutcheon (Figs. 27, 28). Here, the conceit made a special reference to the pope’s self-conflation — love affair, one is tempted to say — with his adopted city. The virginal church on the Capitoline hill recalls the Emperor Augustus who, disturbed by rumors that the Senate was about to honor him as a God, consulted the Tiburtine Sibyl, prophetess par excellence of the Tiber and Rome, who foretold the descent from the skies of “the King of the Ages.” As the prophetess spoke, Augustus beheld a marvelous vision of the Virgin standing on an altar in a dazzling light holding the baby Jesus in her arms, and heard a voice that said, “This is the altar of the Son of God,” following which the Emperor dedicated the Altar of Heaven. Passing through the window, Urban’s emblematic sun recreates the miraculous apian invasion of the conclave that elected him. The device became universal — transferred from urbi to orbi, as it were — in Bernini’s cooptation for the Cathedra Petri of Michelangelo’s window in the apse of St. Peter’s (Fig. 29).
Urban’s choice of his name as a reminder to himself to mitigate a certain natural tendency to austerity has a personal psychological resonance that evokes the way *urbanus* — as opposed to *rusticus* — was used by the ancient writers on style, like Cicero and Horace, for whom it conveyed, a relaxed, congenial, and open-minded *modus agendi*, associated especially with sophisticated city life. In a bust of Urban VIII from the beginning of his reign, about 1624, Bernini departed radically from the formulae for papal portraits laid down in the 16th century (Fig. 30). To begin with, the ends of the shoulders are cut off and the torso is amputated at the breast. To show so little of the figure was extraordinary in a life-size papal bust. Secondly, Bernini defied the normal convention in such works that Popes be shown wearing the pontifical robe, or pluvial, and either bare-headed or wearing the papal tiara; instead, he shows Urban wearing only the *mozzetta*, a short cape, and the papal cap, or *camauro*. The *mozzetta* and *camauro* are specifically non-liturgical garments, so that the pope is shown as he would appear on ordinary occasions. Finally, the gentle smile that graces Urban’s face, retained soon thereafter even in Bernini’s first monumental sculpture of him with pluvial (Fig. 31), was quite unprecedented in papal bust portraiture. In sum, Bernini in these works presents us with a new kind of human being: an unimposing, ordinary, cheerful pope.

Later, as Urban ages and clouds begin to form over his reign, the psychology becomes more complex but not less human and humane (Figs. 32, 33). This is how Lelio Guidiccioni, one of the leading letterati of the day, described the bust Bernini executed in the summer of 1632:

> For ten years you have attentively observed the face of this most *urbane Prince* (*principe urbanissimo*), who opens to you not only
the joy of his countenance, but also the intimacy of his feelings. And with your bold imagination you have seen only the living inward harmony (il vivo consenso interno). You have succeeded in expressing those airs and attitudes which in ten years of observation you found to be most noble in that face, whose name [i.e. Urban] we see expressed in an open book. Thus one sees the portrait pensive with lightheartedness, gentle with majesty, spirited with gravity; it is benign and it is venerable. This image of His Holiness has no arms; yet by a faint movement of the right shoulder and a lifting of the mozzetta, together with a turn of the head (which serves a variety of purposes) and also an inclination of the brow, it clearly shows the action of gesturing with the arm to someone to rise to his feet.

Apart from the subtlety of Bernini’s (and Guidiccioni’s) psychological analysis, the bust is revolutionary in two particular respects: Bernini introduced here a motif unprecedented in the history of papal bust portraiture: the third button of the camaura is only half buttoned. Bernini had introduced the motif in his portrait of the Cardinal Agostino Valier (ca. 1624–5), where one button is missing or undone, a second only half done; Valier was Venetian and therefore perhaps somewhat independent from the more rigid ecclesiastical traditions of Rome (Fig. 34). In the case of Urban the device suggests only a minor, scarcely noticeable inadvertency, but in traditional terms the pope is practically undressed; in modern terms

41 The expressive relationship between Urban’s name and character and Bernini’s portrait of the pope, is explicit in the theme of a punning epigram, titled “Since Urbanity cannot turn to Stone, the Stone must put on Urbanity,” that Guidiccioni appended to his epic poem on the baldachin of St. Peter’s, published in 1633 (Guidiccioni 1633; Newman and Newman 1992, 174f.).

42 Ha ella osservato in dieci anni attentamente il volto di un Principe Urbanissimo, che apre a lei non solo la giocondità del suo volto, ma la soavità degli affetti. Hora com’ella è di gagliardissima fantasia, nel fare il ritratto, ha solo veduto il vivo consenso interno, et non altrimente con gli occhi. Ha potuto esprimere et quelle arie, et posture, che in dieci anni è venuta osservando più nobili in quella faccia; il cui nome [i.e. Urbano] in libbro aperto, si veggonno espressi... Così si vede quel ritratto pensoso con allegria, dolce con maestà, spiritoso con gravità; ride et è venerando.

Parve il suddetto ritratto di Nostro Signore che non ha braccia, con un poco di motivo di spalla destra et alzato di mozzetta, aggiunto alla pendentia della testa, che serve a piúl cose, come anco il chinar della fronte, dimostra chiara l’attione di accennar col braccio ad alcuno che si levi in piedi. (D’Onofrio 1967, 382)
he is physically, psychologically and socially “unbuttoned” (sbottonato — an expression whose resonance stretches back to antiquity). This whimsical touch of personal sartorial laxity effectively mitigates the sense of austerity that is inherent in the papal presence. Equally unprecedented in papal bust portraiture was the action of the right arm, as if beckoning — so Guidiccioni observes — to the approaching visitor to rise and greet the pontiff (Fig. 35). This open gesture introduces a kind of narrative, breaching the formal and psychological facade and extending the intimacy of Urban’s glance to a veritable dialogue between the pope and the outside world.

The portraits express the pope’s openness in a personal sense, but it was also expressed publicly, as it were, in his family residence. In the context of Roman domestic architecture, Palazzo Barberini is a suburban villa type turned completely around (1625–33; Figs. 36, 37). What is usually the garden façade, with protruding wings that flank three stories of open loggias, now reaches out to embrace the city, in the direction of St. Peter’s, effectively destroying the traditional, closed Renaissance palace facade as an awesome and forbidding legacy of the Middle Ages. The most conspicuous prototype in Rome was, of course, the garden façade of the Villa Farnesina (Fig. 38). But equally striking is the great dwelling of the “Most Powerful Prince and King,” resting on a rustic foundation, envisioned in an emblem that celebrated the encompassing dragon device and celestial and earthly dominion of Gregory XIII (Fig. 39); the design of the facade reflects that of the inner courtyard of Gregory’s summer palace on the Quirinal hill. The Barberini palace is a stone’s throw distant from the Quirinal, and Urban VIII surely knew the emblem, since early in his reign, while the Barberini palace was being designed, he carried out important additions and restorations on Gregory’s works at both the Vatican and Quirinal palaces. Bernini himself also took cognizance of the emblem, especially its “naturalistic” foundation, in his subsequent palace designs for Innocent X and Louis XIV. The widespread, completely permeable ground floor entrance foyer — no forbidding...

43 Patricia Waddy has emphasized the importance of the palace’s orientation toward the heart of the city and St. Peter’s (1990, 176, 212, 218f., 223f., 231). Waddy aptly refers to the type of the Paris hôtel, which Urban certainly knew well from his early years there, and which may have contributed to the reprise of the Roman model.

44 Fabrizi 1588, 308. On this emblem and its significance, see Lavin 1993, 167f., and Courtright 2003, 178f.

Portals! — is also an astonishingly bold revolution in palace architecture. The genial new openness embodied in the Barberini facade affected not only the palace: with the fountains in the nearby piazza, the whole neighborhood was invited to share its precious and effusive bounty. The design theme of arms opening from a central core announced in the Barberini palace sounded a leitmotif that echoed through Bernini’s entire life, in the Aracoeli inscription (Figs. 27, 28), at St. Peter’s (Fig. 40), Sant’Andrea al Quirinale (Fig. 41), Santa Maria Assunta in Ariccia (Fig. 42), in his original project for the rebuilding of Louis XIV’s Louvre (Fig. 43). Later in the century the anomalous, hybrid, urban-suburban innovation of the Palazzo Barberini was literally codified at the Accademia di San Luca in a new, quasi-oxymoronic architectural type called “Palazzo in Villa”: a central, open facade screening an oval salone, flanked by projecting wings. Developed from Bernini’s studio in Rome the theme was patented — explicitly, since he claimed credit for the invention of his version of the concept — and disseminated throughout Europe by Fischer von Ehrlich with his famous Lustgartengebäude, in which the open and embracing gesture was repeated on both sides of the building, with perfect, biaxial symmetry (Figs. 44, 45).

**POLITICAL AND SOCIAL URBANITY**

In 1635 the Senators of Rome, in recognition of Urban’s benefactions, revived after a lapse of nearly half a century a long-standing tradition by commissioning from Bernini a monumental commemorative statue of the pope for the Capitol, completed in 1640 (Fig. 46). I am not aware of any prior example of a papal monument, whether a tomb effigy or a commemorative portrait, in which the seated, enthroned figure is gestures with his left hand; the left hand either rests empty-handed, as it were, or holds immobile some object emblematic of the pontiff’s office or character. To be sure, Urban’s gesture is also emblematic, alluding to the left side as the sinister side of perdition and evoking the Pope’s role as earthly vicar of the judging Savior at the Last Judgment (Fig. 47). But here the hand is turned up suggestive of elevating grace rather than repressive wrath. This simple, subtle action

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46 See the discussion of these relationships in Lavin 1993, 191f.
47 I have traced this trajectory in Lavin 1992.
48 The standard work on honorific papal monuments is Hager 1929. A full account of the Capitoline statues will be found in Butzek 1978.
transformed the ideological heritage of papal statues on the Campidoglio, which since the early sixteenth century sought to impose the will of the pope on the senate and people of Rome through images of austerity and even intimidation (Figs. 48, 49). I feel sure that both Bernini and Urban had in mind the famous exchange reported by Vasari between Julius II and Michelangelo while the sculptor was executing a great bronze statue of that pope to be placed over the entrance to the Duomo of Bologna:

... the question was raised of what to put in the left hand, the right being held up with such a proud gesture that the Pope asked if it was giving a blessing or a curse. Michelagnolo answered that he was admonishing the people of Bologna to be prudent. When he asked the Pope whether he should put a book in his left hand, the pontiff replied, “Give me a sword; I am not a man of letters.”

Michelangelo’s statue was made in a military context, to commemorate Julius’s triumph over the Bentivoglio masters of the city and serve as a warning to their followers, who destroyed it a few years later when they briefly recaptured the city. But its austere, menacing aspect was reflected in all the subsequent honorific statues of the popes on the Campidoglio. It was not by accident that the fearsome statue of Moses that Michelangelo made for Julius’s tomb in turn became the model for the Capitoline statue of Gregory XIII (Figs. 50, 51). Bernini’s Urban VIII, with his benign expression, arms flung open, mantle cast aside, displays (I use that word advisedly) a radically different, even diametrically opposed attitude. The prototype in this case was Urban’s primary namesake, Pope Urban I, who had been portrayed in almost exactly the same way in the frescoes of the Sala di Costantino in the Vatican (Fig. 52). As the first pope (222–230) to identify himself literally with the capital of the empire, he would have been the embodiment par excellence of the virtues with which the Church exercised its dominion Rome. Flanked by personifications of Justice and Charity, the import of the pope’s gestures is obvious: he raises a measured hand toward the balance of Justice while pointing insistently to Charity, not

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49 Michelangelo’s bronze Julius II has been comprehensively studied by Rohlmann 1996.
50 This relationship was noted in a brilliant paper by Freiberg 2004.
only a Moral but the chief Cardinal virtue. The inspiration and aspiration implicit here were illustrated in a spectacular pair of paintings by the Muti brothers, which the Barberini’s acquired 1627, 1630, the *Apothesis of Urban I* and the *Allegory of Peace* (Figs. 53, 54). There are striking analogies between Bernini’s sculptured portrait and Muti’s painted apotheosis, and between the composition of the Muti’s allegorical picture and the portrayal of Urban I with flanking allegories in the Sala di Costantino. There is also surely a recollection of another great and zealous predecessor, Urban II, Roman born, who was portrayed with the same virtues. Urban II was famous as the promoter of the first crusade, and may have inspired Urban VIII’s adoption of the same cause, as well as his support for foreign missions and the Propaganda Fide. Urban II was equally famous for having accepted the office only reluctantly, as was Barberini when he insisted that a recount of the votes be taken to confirm his election, after an error had been discovered in the first scrutiny. The same allegories reappear in the frame of an engraved portrait of Urban VII, by Cherubino Alberti (Fig. 55).

The expansive and inclusive embrace suggested by the Campidoglio figure was embodied in an important but neglected enterprise in what might be called spiritual-demographics. I refer to Urban’s massive effort to ensure adequate care for the spiritual needs of the populace through the system of apostolic visits, initiated soon after his election and continued throughout

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51 No doubt Barberini was also aware that, according to the *Golden Legend* Urban I, who played a central role in the life of St. Cecilia, used the most familiar of all bee clichés to describe the Roman martyr’s works in the service of Christ: “...Lord Jesus Christ, sower of chaste counsel, accept the fruit of the seeds that you sowed in Cecilia! Lord Jesus Christ, good shepherd, Cecilia your handmaid has served you like a busy bee (apis tibi argumentosa): the spouse whom she received as a fierce lion, she has sent to you as a gentle lamb!” (Voragine 1948, 691; “...Caecilia famula tua quasi apis tibi argumentosa deservit; nam sponsum, quem quasi leonem ferocem accepit, ad te quasi agnum mansuetissimum destinavit.” Voragine 1850, 772)

52 On these paintings see Schleier 1976, followed by Thuillier 1990, 30–3. Only Urban I is saint. Urban II and V are beatified.

53 According to Negri 1922, 174, “Narrano taluni penegiristi e biografi che Maffeo Barberini, all’assunzione sua al pontificato, assumesse il nome di Urbano per ricordare quell’Urbano II che primo aveva suscitato le turbe cristiane alla liberazione del Santo Sepolcro.” In fact, I suspect Negri was extrapolating from the zealous and otherworldly “antichi predecessori” who nevertheless undertook glorious imprese (see 2 above). Urban II described himself in a letter, as “renitente” (Moroni 1840–61, LXXXVI, 4 col. b). On Urban VIII’s ballot recount, see Scott 1991, 183.
20. Detail of Fig. 19.

Nave del Sole portata da un Cocodrillo, che significa la prima causa che governa l'Universo doppo Iddio esser la forza del Sole congiunta nella generazione delle cose con l'umidità, e lui purgare le triste qualità di quella....


27. Bernini, Memorial inscription for Urban VIII. Rome, S. Maria in Aracoeli.

28. Detail of Fig. 27 (photo: SIP Rete di Roma, 1993/94, front cover).
31. Bernini, Urban VII. Rome, S. Lorenzo in Fonte.

33. Detail of Fig. 32.


37. Palazzo Barberini, ground floor plan, drawing (after Hibbard 1971, pl. 94b).

40. Bernini, St. Peter’s and the colonnades as the pope with embracing arms, drawing. Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana.
39. Emblematic dwelling of the “Most Powerful Prince and King.”

engraving. (From Fabrizi 1588, 308).
42. Bernini, S. Maria Assunta. Ariccia.

43. Bernini, project for the Louvre, drawing. Paris, Musée du Louvre.

45. Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, plan of the Pleasure Garden Building, drawing. Vienna, Albertina.
46. Bernini, Memorial statue of Urban VIII.
Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori.
47. Michelangelo, Last Judgment, detail.
Rome, Vatican Palace, Sistine chapel.
48. Domenico Aimo, Memorial Statue of Leo X. Rome, S. Maria in Aracoeli.

49. Lorenzo Sormano, Memorial Statue of Paul III. Rome, S. Maria in Aracoeli.


Bernini, Tomb of Urban VIII. Rome, St. Peter's.

Bernini, Justice. Rome, St. Peter's.

60. Bernini, Tomb of Urban VIII, detail. Rome, St. Peter’s.

his reign. The visitations required detailed reports on the current status of all the churches and dioceses of Rome, as regarded both their physical condition and the pastoral care they provided. Such surveys were a long-standing tradition, but nothing before compared with the scope, depth and systematic coverage envisioned by Urban. It is important to emphasize, moreover, that the purview of the visitations was by no means confined to matters pertaining to religion. Much attention was also paid to the often execrable physical and moral conditions in which many people lived, conditions that instigated far-reaching reforms in the church’s mode of ministering to the poor and unfortunate. This concrete measure of Urban’s religio-social urbanity thereafter became the fundamental utility for public policy and social planning both in Rome itself, and as a model for others to follow in the future.

**URBANITY IN EXTREMIS**

The ideology expressed in the secular context of the Campidoglio, had its counterpart in the pope’s ecclesiastical domain at St. Peter’s, where Bernini executed Urban’s tomb 1627–47 (Fig. 56). I want to make just three brief comments that seem particularly relevant in the present context. The first is that it can be shown in a variety of ways that the allegories of Charity and Justice (the reversal of the arrangement in the Sala di Costantino is significant — Charity is now on the dexter side, Justice on the sinister) do not refer, as is commonly assumed, to the personal, moral virtues of Maffeo Barberini; rather, they follow a long tradition of righteous governance according to which these are Divine Virtues that descend from Divine Providence upon all the successors of Peter as vicars of Christ and magistrates of the church’s material and spiritual domains. The attributes were those attributed to God in the Second Book of Machabees, 1:24:

*And the prayer of Nehemias was after this manner: O Lord*

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54 See the extraordinarily rich and perspicacious study by Fiorani 1980, esp. 112–27. Urban’s visitations in turn inspired the even more ambitious efforts of Alexander VII (Fiorani 1980, 127ff.; also Lavin 2004).

God, Creator of all things, dreadful and strong, just and merciful, who alone art the good king.56

The allegories do not flatter Urban VIII — to my mind notions of flattery and sycophantism are grossly overworked in the historiography of the Baroque — but represent his conception of the role he sought to fulfill in the long tradition of Christ’s ministers on earth. Maffeo Barberini’s phenomenal rise in the church hierarchy was due to two fundamental and complementary aspects of his exemplary service, as diplomat on behalf of his predecessors, and in his administration of justice as Prefect of the papal Segnatura (Ministry) di Giustizia.

The animated figure of Charity has two infants rather than the usual three, one of whom sleeps blissfully at her bosom, while the other, repentant sinner, bawls miserably reaching up for the salvation that her radiant smile promises. The figure of Justice is not mourning but leans in calm repose against the sarcophagus, feet crossed to emphasize her immobility as she looks heavenward in calm contemplation (Fig. 57). She clearly reflects the tradition expressed by Vincenzo Cartari that “Divine Goodness does not run quickly or noisily to castigate error, but belatedly and slowly, so that the sinner is unaware before he feels the pain.” Under the heading precisely of Divine Justice Cesare Ripa describes the fasces with the ax, carried by the lictors before the consuls and the Tribune of the People, as signifying that in the execution of justice overzealous castigation is unwarranted, and that justice should never be precipitous but have time to mature judgment while unbinding the rods that cover the ax. The crossed-leg pose and the fasces occur together in a painting of Justice attributed to Battista Dossi (Fig. 58).

The Divine Virtues of salvific mercy and reluctant retribution have a long tradition in the history of Christian jurisprudence [until recently the judicial authority in Italy was still called the Ministero di Grazia e Giustizia], but never had they been portrayed so explicitly and so movingly. What are indeed personal references in the monument, apart from the portrait of the pope, are the bees. They swarm to and alight all over the sarcophagus — as did the bees that flocked to the tomb of the great Greek poet, Archilochus,

56 Et Neemiae erat oratio hunc habens modum Domine Deus omnium creator terribilis et fortis iustus et misericors qui solus es rex bonus.
who invented the epode, one of Urban’s favorite verse forms (Fig. 59). Considered in this light the seemingly casual, bumbling placement of the three big Barberini bees becomes charged with meaning. They all face upward and seem to rise in an ascending march past the skeletal figure of death, as if in response to the resurrecting command of the pope — appropriated, as Kauffmann first noticed, from the gesture of St. Peter himself in the Sala di Costantino series — enthroned on his seat of wisdom, itself ornamented with bees. The upper two worker bees, as if resurrected, proceed in their rise to the very border between death, commemoration, and life (Fig. 60). The lowermost bee, at the rim of the sarcophagus basin beneath the cover, has no stinger — it is not broken off, it never had one (Fig. 61). In a kind of punning witticism in extremis, the image conflates the quintessential principles of classical moral political philosophy and Christian eschatology. Urban’s choice of his name as a cautionary reminder to temper his natural tendency to austerity, was evidently inspired by Seneca’s invocation, in his treatise On Clemency, of the stingless king bee as a metaphor for the beneficent ruler, “the king himself has no sting. Nature did not wish him to be cruel or to seek a revenge that would be so costly, and so she removed his weapon, and left his anger unarmed.”

(All three of the majestic bees in Cortona’s ceiling fresco are stingless! Fig. 13) And St. Paul alluded to the same apian menace, disarmed by faith, in his celebrated invocation of the Resurrection, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”, which in this case refers not only to Urban VIII and all humankind, but to the Church itself through the eternal succession of popes. The gentle, loving bee seeks its master — attracted no doubt by the sweet odor of sanctity — while its siblings rise, as if reborn whole, to the resurrection above.

Such a profound and touching public display of urbanity has no equal, I think, and I think there is, and can be, only one conclusion. Urban VIII, with Bernini at his side, gave to the papacy, to the church, to Rome, and to the world at large, a new face — more personal, more intimate, more accessible, more sophisticated, more gracious, more expansive, more humane — more urbane, in sum — urbi et orbi. And in the end the new face has only one name, modern.

57 Alciati 1621, Emblema LI.
58 De Clementia I. xix. 3.
59 1 Cor. 15:55.
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