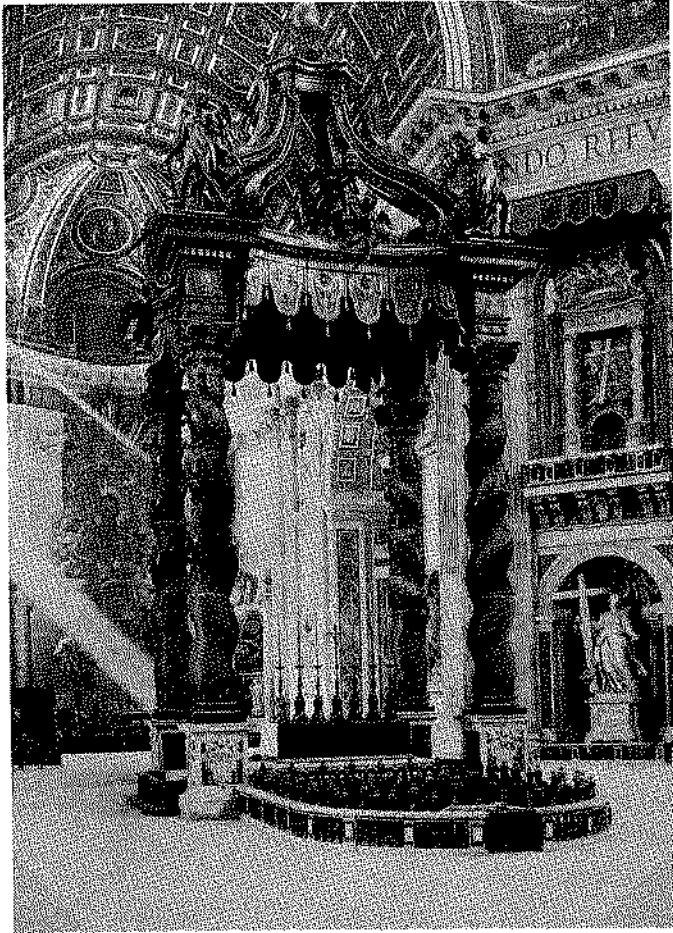


THE REBUILDING OF ST. PETERS BASILICA AND THE VATICAN PALACE (Cont.)

URBAN VIII (Cont.)



The Canopy of Bernini. Right- Column of Saint Helena, repositiry of the large relic of the True Cross.

The Canopy or domed ciborium is 77 1/2 feet tall to the top of the cross and is in harmony with the proportions of the huge basilica. Bernini in this canopy allowed a view of the apse and enhanced the impression of length given by the basilica. The four bronze columns rest on marble bases adorned with the Barberini arms of Urban VIII.

The twisted pillars are divided into three sections, surmounted by Ionic-Corinthian capitals, which are joined by a cornice. From this rises the canopy proper, crowned by a cross. Four huge angels stand on the capitals, with smaller angels between them on the cornice, holding the tiara and keys, the book and the sword, symbols of Saints Peter and Paul.

To complete the decoration of this area, Bernini suggested that the upper niches of the surrounding pillars of Michaelangelo's dome should have loggias, from which could be shown the most precious relics of St. Peters Basilica- the handkerchief of Veronica, the Lance of Longinus, the large section of the True Cross, found by St. Helena, and the head of St. Andrew. Larger niches in the bases should contain statues referring to these relics.

The Fabbrica approved the project on December 10, 1629, and entrusted the execution of the statue of Longinus to Bernini, St. Helena's to Andrea Bolgi, Saint Veronica's to Francesco Mocchi and St. Andrew's to Francois Duquesnoy, a Fleming. Duquesnoy was first to complete his statue, while the

others took years. The niches for these statues were faced with alabaster.

Many were jealous of Bernini, and a crack in the dome gave rise to the rumor that it was about to crash down because of the drilling done in the pillars of the dome for the niches. Staircases had been cut into the pillars to give access to the loggias. When nothing developed from the crack, the rumor died.

Urban VIII saw to the decoration of the various chapels of St. Peters Basilica with altarpieces by the best artists of the time. Michaelangelo's "Pieta" stood in the choir chapel, whence were translated the relics of St. John Chrysostom. Giotto's "Navicella" was placed over one of the entrance doors. The Jubilee or Holy Year Door was erected by Urban VII, and a great many of the sepulchral monuments were executed and installed.

The structure on the 60 L. commemorating the visit of Paul VI to Bombay is called the GATE OF INDIA and is on the waterfront. All the big wigs visiting India enter the city through this gate. The OVAL on the 25 L. is the location of the midna or play areas for field hockey at which India excels

ALEXANDER VII.

In August 1655 Alexander VII ordered the laying of the marble floor of St. Peters according to the plan of Bernini, who was also commissioned to do the floor of the benediction loggia. A bas-relief by Bernini was placed over the main entrance showing Christ appointing St. Peter as shepherd of his flock. Further decoration of the altars and chapels continued.



The old piazza of St. Peters was too small for the crowds that gathered there on solemn occasions. Plans drawn up by Papirio Bartoli and Carlo Rainaldi under Innocent X were inadequate, though remarkable. Alexander VII placed this project in the hands of Bernini, who succeeded in creating unity of the square with the entrance of the Vatican and the rooms connecting the Vatican to St. Peters.

His first step was the staircase, the Scala Regia, which replaced the irregular, dark ascent to the Sala Regia and the Sistine Chapel with a commodious, well-lighted staircase of great beauty. This was begun in 1663 and finished in 1665. A niche was provided for the equestrian statue of Constantine the Great, finished by Bernini under Alexander VII but unveiled in 1670. This was to correspond with a statue of Charlemagne at the end of the portico of St. Peters, recalling the first two great protectors of the Church, - the creator of the Eastern Empire and the founder of the Western Empire on guard at the tomb of St. Peter.



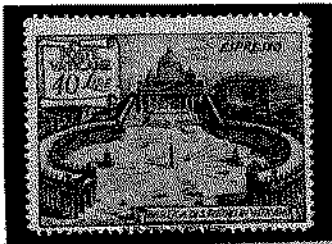
The Portico of St. Peters Basilica, showing the five doors leading to the nave. Holy Year Door at right.

Over all objections Alexander VII put the project of the Square into the hands of Bernini on July 13, 1656. The Fabbrica then ordered the demolition of all buildings from the Piazza del Priorato to the Campo Santo on August 19, 1656, and the work began in September. December saw the purchase and removal of more houses.

Bernini's original plan called for a two storied portico with a palace to the left corresponding to the Vatican Palace. After prolonged study he submitted his sketches on March 17, 1657, showing the actual colonnade as it is today, and it was approved. Work began in June, 1657, and medals struck at the time show a third portico which would have closed the open part, but which was abandoned. The work was not completed until November, 1666. The first part of 1667 saw the beginning of the sloping flight of steps in place of those of Paul V, and the rising corridors which join the colonnade to St. Peters. During this time a whole band of sculptors under Bernini's direction was at work on the 96 statues of saints, five meters high, intended for the balustrade of the colonnade.

Bernini gave to the Piazza the form of an ellipse to which is joined a quadrilateral, widening out in the direction of St. Peters. The quadrilateral is framed by the corridors leading to the basilica and on the right by the entrance to the Vatican. This oblique shape softens the impression of excessive width of the facade and pushes it back to make it appear loftier.

The colonnade is linked to the corridors and is formed by four rows of Doric columns which are made of travertine. These 284 columns are fifteen feet high and are divided into groups by pilasters, 88 in number, bearing a plain entablature and attic with its statues. The colonnade forms three corridors, the middle one being vaulted and wide enough for the passage of two carriages. Their practical purpose is to shelter pilgrims from the sun and rain, a plan in the mind of Nicholas V when he planned the three approaches to St. Peters. While this work was going on, the foundation for a second monumental fountain, corresponding to that of Carlo Maderno, was laid in 1667.



At this time the monument to the Chair of Peter was designed and placed in the choir apse of St. Peters enshrining the episcopal chair used by the Apostle. Originally an oak chair, its front and back had been decorated with antique ivory tablets in the ninth century. Rings had been added to admit staves so that it could be used as a sedia gestatoria. It had stood in the Baptistery of Pope Damasus in the Old St. Peters, and was the object of veneration before the third century, when the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter was observed on February 22. Urban VIII had it



decorated and placed in the new baptistry. Innocent X had had it enclosed in a bronze reliquary.

Bernini sketched a small model from which his pupils prepared a larger one. Work on it was begun in 1657 and the casting completed in 1665. It required more bronze than the baldachino, weighing 191,383 pounds. Giovanni Artusi da Piscina directed its casting, and its gilding was superintended by Carlo Mattei.

On January 18, 1666, the Feast of St. Peter's Chair, the venerable chair was carried into the choir apse and enclosed in Bernini's monument. The base of the huge bronze is of multicolored marble, with the statues of Sts. Augustine and Gregory, Latin Fathers, and Sts. Athanasius and John Chrysostom, Greek Fathers of the Church, supporting it (Pastor, XXXI, pp. 284-304)

CLEMENT X.

Clement X saw the unveiling of Bernini's statue of Constantine, and worked for the completion of the statues on the colonnade. He resolved to erect the corresponding fountain to Maderna's in St. Peter's Square. The Maderna fountain was moved to its present site. It was then discovered that the Acqua Paolina was insufficient to provide water for the two fountains, so it was necessary to enlarge the aqueduct from Lake Bracciano. Clement died while this was in progress. (Pastor XXXI, p. 451.)