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# CARLO FONTANA'S PROJECT FOR A CHURCH IN HONOUR OF THE 'ECCLESIA TRIUMPHANS' IN THE COLOSSEUM, ROME

By Hellmut Hager

Carlo Fontana's project for the erection of a church in the Colosseum was posthumously published in 1725 in connexion with his treatise on the Flavian amphitheatre.<sup>1</sup> According to Coudenhove-Erthal this project was not to be taken as a concrete building plan, but merely as an art-historical speculation.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation of the project has been generally accepted, although Fontana in the description of his project—as Coudenhove-Erthal acknowledged—gives much room to the practical considerations involved in the execution of his plans.

Michela di Macco, in her recent history of the Colosseum,<sup>3</sup> considers Fontana's project in relation to the general tendency in the later Seicento: to bring home to pilgrims, particularly in connexion with the Holy Year of 1675, the religious importance of the place, but she does not quote one vitally important source.

The source is Carlo Fontana's own account, preserved as the introduction to the album in the Sir John Soane's Museum, London (see Appendix), which contains the drawings for the engravings published in 1725.<sup>4</sup> This report differs fundamentally from the *proemio generale* of the published work and throws much light on the early history of the church project, which can be reconstructed from its very inception from the drawings and, more important, it allows us to answer affirmatively the question whether the actual execution of the building was planned.

The volume of drawings was acquired in Rome in 1774 by the English architect James Paine (c. 1716–89), from whom it passed into the possession of Sir John Soane.<sup>5</sup> Its binding, which differs from the reddish-brown leather of the Fontana volumes at Windsor Castle and in other libraries,<sup>6</sup> was no doubt added by Paine. As is indicated by its inscription *Eques Carolus Fontana delin* on the engravings, the drawings are either by Fontana himself or executed under his immediate direction. The engraving was made by Domenico Mariano Franceschini, a professional engraver,<sup>7</sup> and not by Alessandro Specchi, who usually did such work for Fontana. All the drawings are on white paper with the water-mark of a lily in two concentric circles.

I should like to thank Sir John Summerson and Miss Dorothy Stroud, who kindly facilitated my studies in Sir John Soane's Museum and to Miss Elsa Scheerer for translating this article from the original German text.

<sup>1</sup> Carlo Fontana, *L'Anfiteatro Flavio*, The Hague 1725. Giovanni Maria Crescimbeni mentions in his obituary of Carlo Fontana (*Vita degli Arcadi morti*, ii, Rome 1720, cxxvi, p. 245, and Ugo Donati in *Artisti Ticinesi*, Bellinzona 1942, p. 286), that the manuscript was complete but its publication postponed owing to the death of Fontana.

<sup>2</sup> E. Coudenhove-Erthal, *Carlo Fontana und die Architektur des römischen Spätbarocks*, Vienna 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Michela di Macco, *Il Colosseo, Funzione simbolica, storica, urbana*, Rome 1971, pp. 82ff. Copy of the treatise by Fontana of 1725 republished, *ibid.*, pp. 385–431.

<sup>4</sup> London, Soane Museum, AL/7A.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, note on fol. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Allan Braham and Hellmut Hager, *The Drawings by Carlo Fontana in the Royal Library in Windsor Castle* (in the press).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Thieme-Becker, xii, 1916, p. 296.

The order is generally the same as in the published work, as is the old pagination (top right)—not always preserved—while the new pagination (bottom right) differs from this; and some drawings are missing,<sup>8</sup> while others have not been included in the published work, probably because they contain details already represented in other plates.<sup>9</sup>

Since the church project is published as the last part of the treatise on the amphitheatre, it seems opportune to discuss here briefly its contents.

Unfortunately we do not know—as we do for his work on St. Peter's<sup>10</sup>—Fontana's reason for writing a dissertation on the Colosseum, the decay of which had already alarmed Clement IX (1667–69).<sup>11</sup> Fontana himself only tells us in general terms in the printed version that he was impressed by the 'Bellezza e Gravità dell'Edificio', and that no author had 'pienamente trattato e dimostrato' such matters.

Fontana was probably right in making this statement, since, although Serlio and Palladio and later Antoine Desgodetz (1682)<sup>12</sup> had made drawings and attempted detail-reconstructions, none of them had made the Colosseum the subject of as comprehensive a study.<sup>13</sup>

Like Desgodetz,<sup>14</sup> Fontana—who makes no reference to this author, whose book was published in Paris—discusses in his short introduction amphitheatres in general, basing himself on antique writers such as Cassiodorus, Vitruvius, Pliny, and others, and then describes the building as it was in his time. His account starts with the ground floor and ends with the top storey. The same scheme is applied in the second book, in which he discusses in detail the original state of the building, elucidating the function of each member and attempting to reconstruct missing parts, including even the awning, while Desgodetz had been content with the description of the existing building, ignoring the missing upper zones of the interior.<sup>15</sup>

Chapter vii of the second book, in which Fontana discusses the system of proportions for the amphitheatre, is of special interest to us, since, as will be seen later, it conditioned in detail his design for a church to be erected in the arena. The basic unit is one of the two circles serving for the construction of the long axis of the arena. Fontana divides the diameter of one of these circles into ten segments, which provide the *moduli* for the 'Proporzioni delle Parti

<sup>8</sup> Those for pls. 4, 17, 19, which are possibly of later date than the others.

<sup>9</sup> These are the following sheets (new pagination): fol. 21 above—Façade and portico (Pl. 43b); fol. 21 below—medallions above the drum and on the bell-towers; fol. 22 above—The High Altar (Pl. 47b); fol. 22 below—Setting of the altar (Pl. 47b); fol. 23 above—Longitudinal section (Pl. 48a); fol. 23 below—Main entrance to the Colosseum (Pl. 49a).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Braham-Hager, *op. cit.*

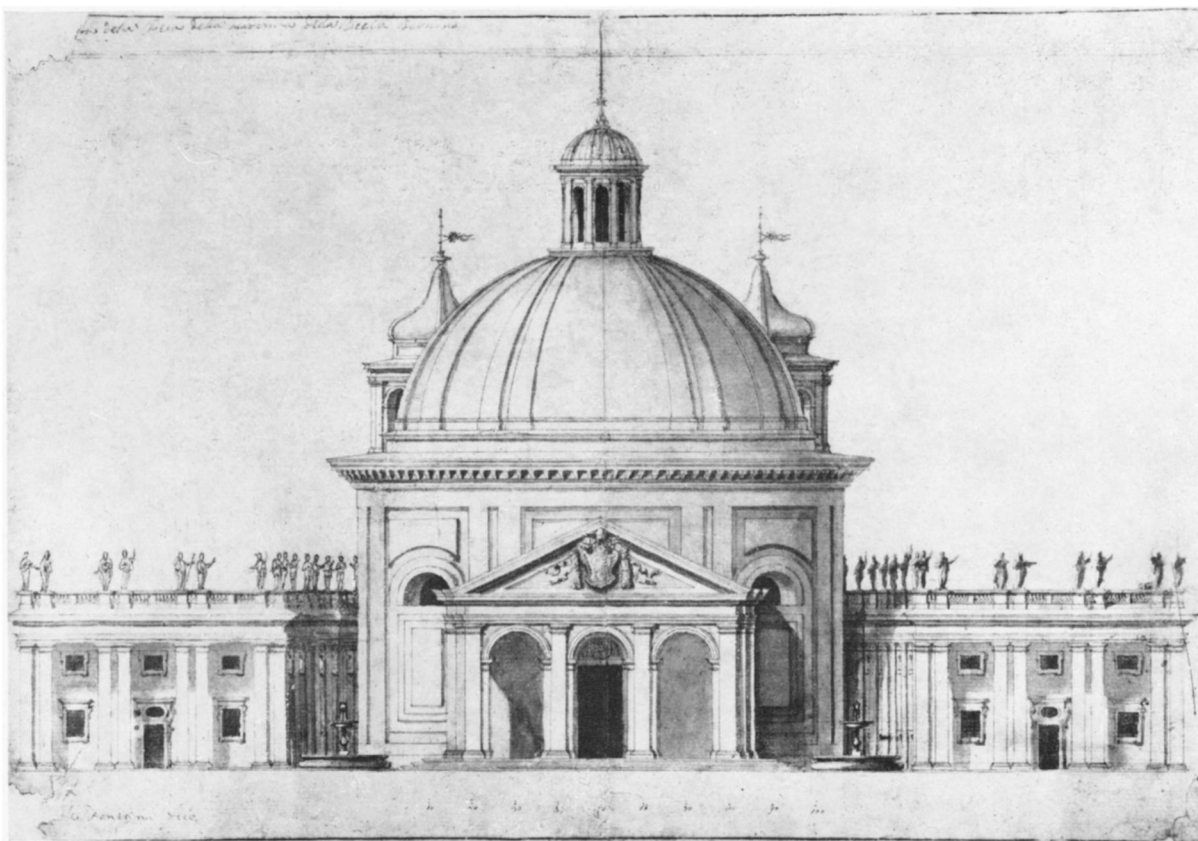
<sup>11</sup> Cf. Gaetano Beani, *Clemente IX, Notizie storiche*, Prato 1893, p. 113.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Antoine Desgodetz, *Les édifices antiques de Rome, dessinés et mesurés très exactement par Antoine Desgodetz architecte*, Paris 1682, pp. 246ff.

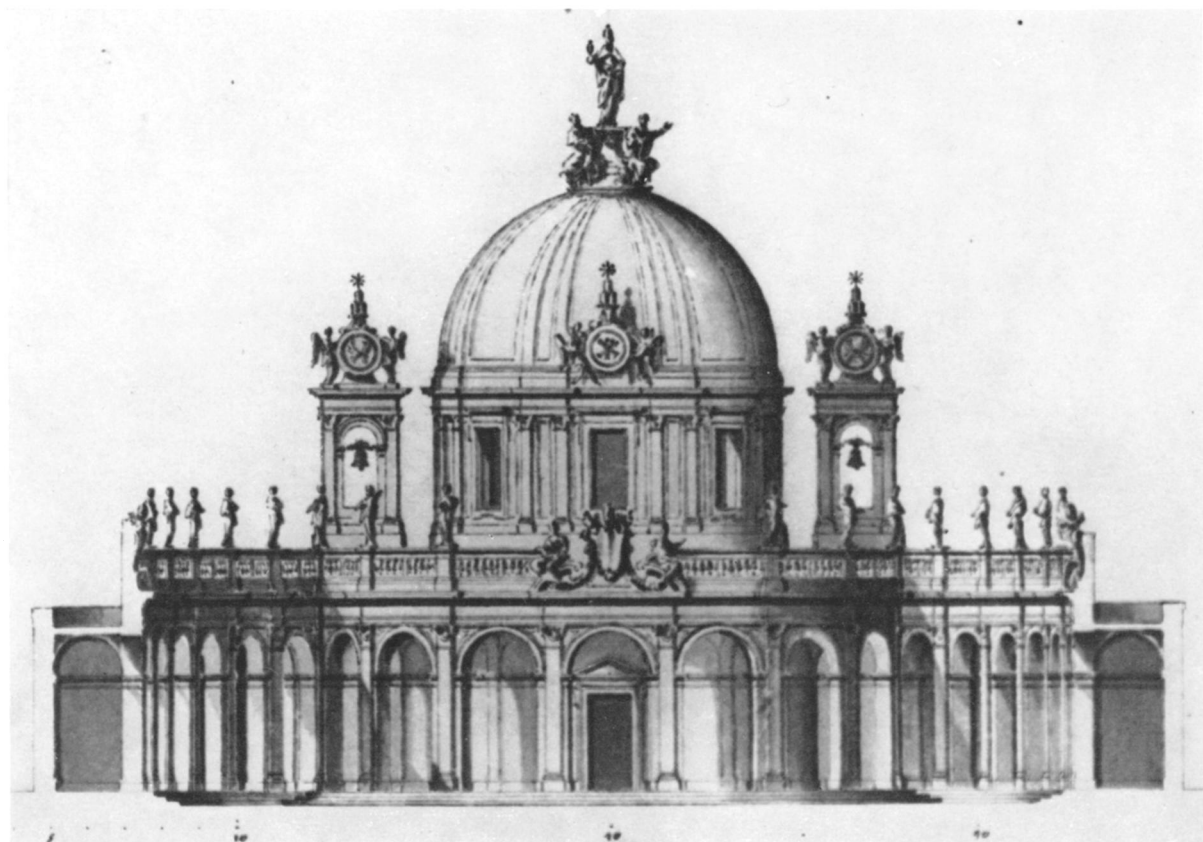
<sup>13</sup> Pozzo simply used it as an inspiration for a freely adapted stage design (cf. Andrea Pozzo, *Prospettiva de' pittori ed architetti*, ii, Rome 1700, fig. xlv). Under Clement XII it was even suggested that the Colosseum be transformed into a theatre (cf. below).

<sup>14</sup> He was awarded a third prize for a church design (in the first class of architecture) at the Academy of St. Luke in 1677. The drawings are in the archives of the Accademia di S. Luca (Cartella III/B, Nos. 399, 409).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Armin von Gerkan, *Das Obergeschoss des flavischen Amphitheaters. Gesammelte Aufsätze von Armin von Gerkan, Herausgegeben von Erich Boehringer*, Stuttgart 1959, pp. 29ff. and pl. 1; Giuseppe Lugli, *Das flavische Amphitheater*, Rome 1962, pp. 24ff., pls. 7f.



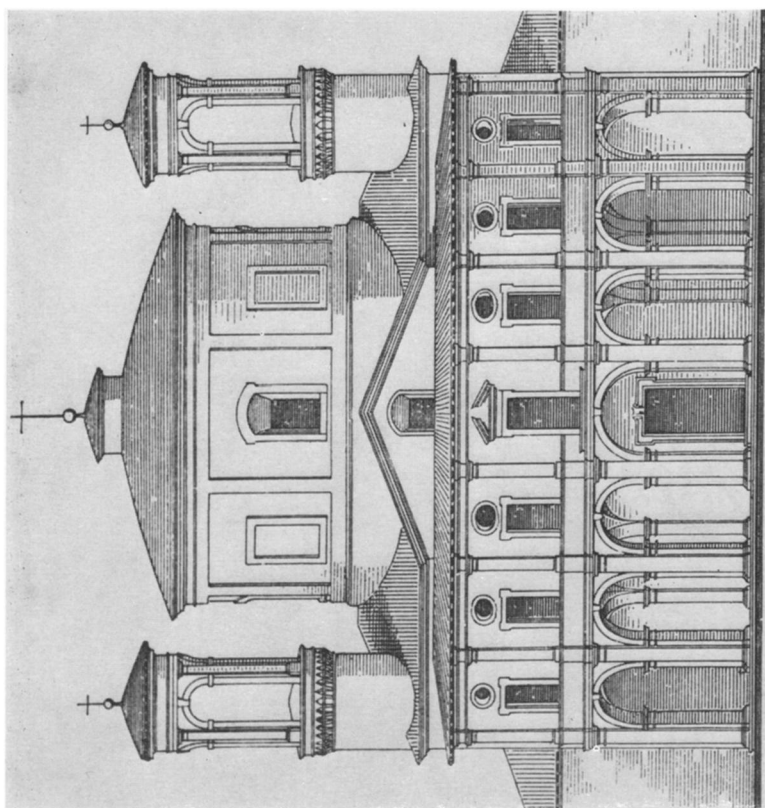
a—Carlo Fontana, façade of S. Maria dell'Assunta at Ariccia. Berlin, Kunstbibliothek der Staatlichen Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz (*p.* 327)



*Courtesy Trustees, Sir John Soane's Museum*

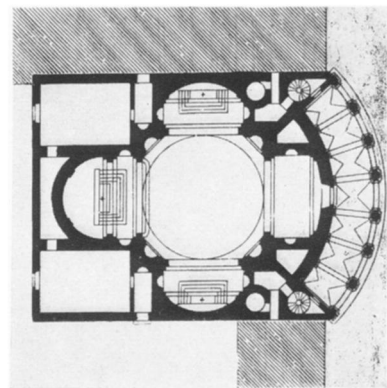
b—Carlo Fontana, façade of a projected church for the Colosseum. London, Sir John Soane's Museum (*pp.* 320n., 326, 328)



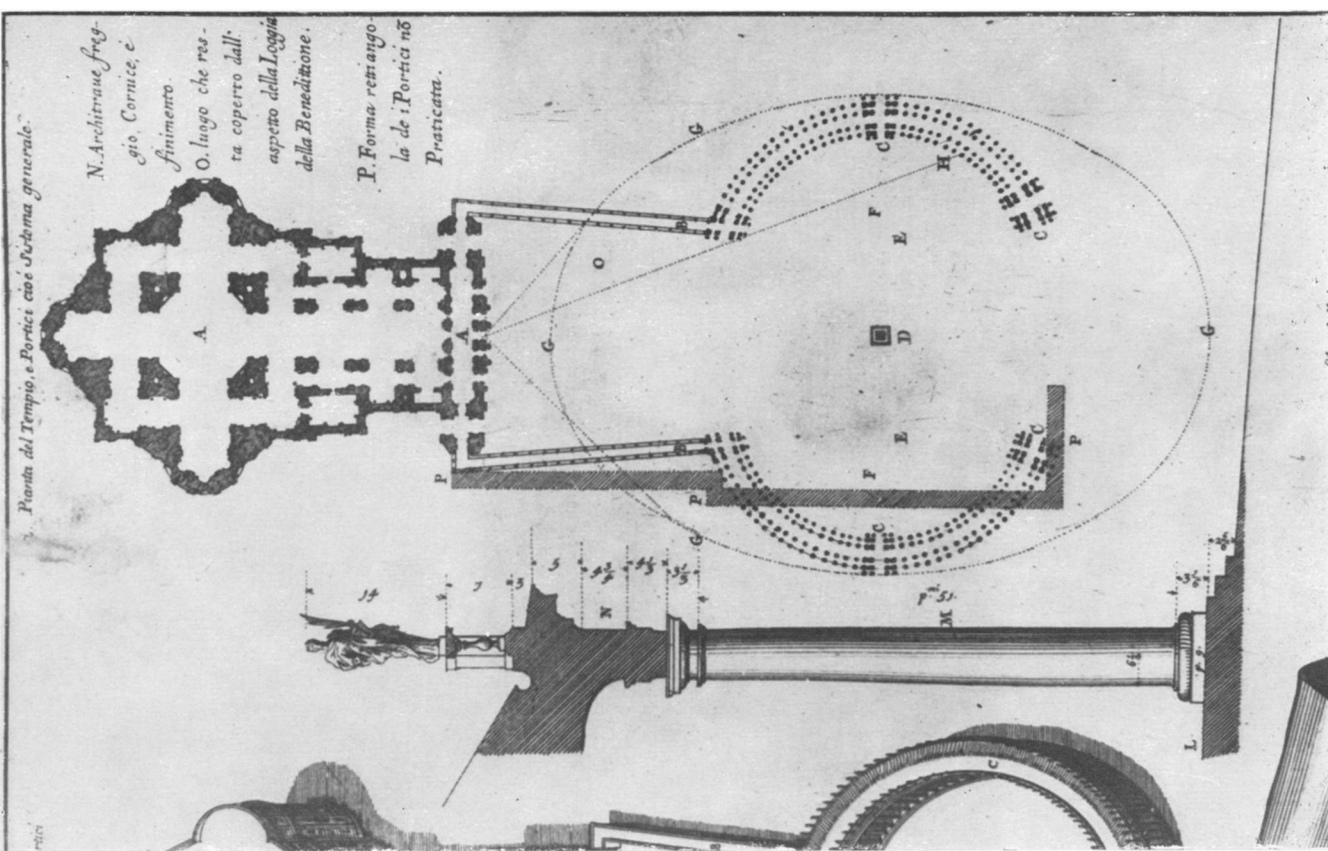


b—Façade of S. Maria di Belvedere at Città di Castello, from Laspeyres, *Kirchen der Renaissance in Mittelitalien* (p. 329n.)

c—Ground plan of S. Maria di Belvedere at Città di Castello, from Laspeyres, *Kirchen der Renaissance in Mittelitalien* (p. 329n.)



a—Carlo Fontana, sketch for St. Peter's Square as an oval. Tempio Vaticano (p. 330)



accessorie'. One of these segments represents the width for the passage running round the arena. The distance from this passage to the outer perimeter of the Colosseum and the height of the building (excluding the cornice) are each equal to the diameter of the circles.<sup>16</sup>

In the third book, entitled 'Erudizione profane intorno all'Anfiteatro Flavio', Fontana is concerned with the foundation of the amphitheatre, with the scale and distribution of the accommodation, acoustic problems, water supply and drainage, and the purification of the air by the use of 'Aromati col Croco'.

The fourth part deals with the martyrs and leads to the fifth and last part of the treatise, in which Fontana proposes the erection of a church in honour of the martyrs as a practical solution for the future use of the building.

This project, of great importance to our theme, is, as has already been said, closely related to the post-antique history of the amphitheatre, and especially to the religious ceremonies which had taken place in the arena since the later Middle Ages.<sup>17</sup>

\* \* \*

Since the last restoration in the reign of Theodoric the Colosseum had been in an ever-increasing state of decay, caused partly by earthquakes and intensified by the removal of materials, which continued into the eighteenth century. By 1332 the stone benches had been removed and on the occasion of bullfights wooden seats had to be provided for the ladies.<sup>18</sup> From the tenth century onwards the Colosseum was used for secular purposes, first under the ownership of the Frangipane, and then, from the thirteenth century, under the part-ownership of the Annibaldi, who used it as their family stronghold.<sup>19</sup>

In the fourteenth century religious interests took over. In 1366 the Compagnia dei Nobili Romani Sancta Sanctorum began to acquire houses that had been built in the Colosseum, and in 1381 they were granted ownership of a third of the area in appreciation of the efforts of the fraternity to free

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Michela di Macco, *ibid.*, p. 86; pl. 139.

This is not the place to compare Fontana's suggested reconstruction of the Colosseum with those of modern scholars, but it is worth pointing out that the main differences concern particularly the upper zone of the interior, which still presents problems for contemporary archaeology. The main difficulty arises from the fact that sources indicate a third storey of seats in this zone, which is missing in Fontana's engraving. Arnim von Gerkan (*op. cit.*) reconstructs this as freely suspended above the inner passage-way above the second storey of the auditorium. Fontana's reconstruction of the passage of the last storey shows an arcade, open towards the arena and resting on piers, analogous to the exterior. In modern reconstructions the piers have been replaced by columns which are

lighter and therefore more probable.

<sup>17</sup> The history of the Colosseum has long been the subject of study for modern scholars, the most prominent works being those of H. Delehay (L'*Amphithéâtre Flavien et ses environs dans les textes hagiographiques*, *Analecta Bollandiana*, Brussels 1897, pp. 209ff.); F. Cerasoli ('Nuovi documenti sulle vicende del colosseo del sec. XIII al XVIII', *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma*, 1902, xxx, pp. 300ff.); P. Colagrossi (L'*Anfiteatro Flavio nei suoi venti secoli di storia*, Florence-Rome 1913); Engilberto Martire ('Intorno alle memorie religiose al Colosseo', *Atti del I Congresso Nazionale di Studi Romani*, i, 1929, pp. 602ff.); Giuseppe Lugli (*op. cit.*); and Michela di Macco (*op. cit.*).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Colagrossi, *op. cit.*, p. 158, and Lugli, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Cerasoli, *op. cit.*, pp. 300ff.

the amphitheatre of the rabble.<sup>20</sup> The fraternity was joined in 1490 by the Compagnia del Gonfalone, who had in that year been given permission to perform religious plays.

In 1519 a chapel, dedicated to S. Maria della Pietà, was built.<sup>21</sup> When Sixtus V in 1587, in connection with his project for building a road leading from S. Giovanni in Laterno past the Colosseum to the Capitol, suggested the transformation of the Flavian amphitheatre into a church 'con una piazza bella d'ogni intorno senza invidia di quelle bellezze de'suoi primi architetti et fondatori',<sup>22</sup> he obviously did not consider its significance as a place of martyrdom. His interest lay in the transformation of a famous antique monument into a building for religious use which, like the pagan obelisks he erected, was to proclaim the victory of Christendom over the pagan world. Unfortunately no drawings are known to tell us more about the project, which must have been connected with the emergence at that very moment of the oval church which was to become so popular.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that the Pope in the last year of his pontificate (1590) decided to erect in the Colosseum a textile factory with housing for its workers proves that, unlike for instance Pius V (1566–72),<sup>24</sup> he was completely indifferent to the religious implications of the place. We know from the detailed comment about this project by the architect Domenico Fontana<sup>25</sup> that the ground floor of the arena was to contain shops ('Loggie che venivano coperte al piano di terra et di sopra scoperte a torno detto Colosseo'), while on the first floor each family of workers was to be allocated 'una sala e due camere'. The outer passages around the arena were reserved for workshops ('per seruitij di detta arte della lana'). New fountains were to provide water supplies. A hundred workmen with sixty waggons were already busy with the removal of earth from the arena, when the death of the Pope brought to an end the project, for the completion of which, according to Domenico Fontana, only one further year of the pontificate would have been necessary.

After the collapse of this project it was decided in 1622 to restore the decaying chapel of S. Maria della Pietà 'in meliorem formam',<sup>26</sup> that is to say in effect to rebuild it, with the addition of a room for the custodian. Carlo Fontana's engraving<sup>27</sup> shows the chapel on the left, next to the Porta Libitinaria, inserted into the lowest storey of the seats, still a very small

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Cerasoli, *loc. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Colagrossi, *op. cit.*, pp. 186ff.

<sup>22</sup> Avviso of 2 September 1587, quoted from Cesare d'Onofrio, *Le Fontane di Roma*, 2nd edn., Rome 1962, p. 86.

<sup>23</sup> For the origin of the oval church plan, cf. Wolfgang Lotz, 'Die ovalen Kirchenräume des Cinquecento', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, vii, 1955, pp. 7–99, and Jack Wassermann, *Ottaviano Mascherino and his drawings in the Accademia Nazionale di S. Luca*, Rome 1966, pp. 72ff.; J. H. Müller, *Das regulierte Oval*, Diss., Marburg 1966; Bremen 1967.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Michela di Macco, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Domenico Fontana, *Della trasportazione dell'Obelisco Vaticano e delle fabbriche del Nostro Signore, Papa Sisto V*, ii, Naples 1603, pp. 18f.; Ludwig von Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste*, x, Freiburg i. Br. 1926, p. 446, and Cesare d'Onofrio, *Gli obelischi di Roma*, 2nd edition, Rome 1967, p. 115. For the prehistory of the projects, cf. Michela di Macco, *op. cit.*, pp. 75f.

<sup>26</sup> Compare the inscription of 1622 (Forcella, *Iscrizioni delle chiese e d'altri edifici di Roma*, xii, Rome 1878, p. 377, no. 472).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Carlo Fontana, *L'Anfiteatro Flavio*, pls. 49A and 49B.



building with a lean-to roof.<sup>28</sup> The entrance is flanked by two pilasters and accentuated by a pediment. The small opening to the left of the entrance and the mezzanine window of the upper floor probably belonged to the custodian's residence. A small bell cote is shown above the upper storey (Pl. 48b).

In 1671 new profane activities, such as bullfights, etc., threatened the religious status of the Colosseum. Two private citizens, Giuseppe Guiccardi and Giambattista Galante, had managed to get permission from Pope Clement X for such displays for a period of six years, and this permission was confirmed by the Conservatori del Popolo Romano on 23 May 1671.<sup>29</sup> Carlo Fontana tells us in the unpublished version of his foreword that he was put in charge of the preparations for these activities, which, with the arrival of six 'grossissimi cani' for fighting bulls, were almost completed, when the whole business led to a scandal. It had been discovered that the two people who had obtained permission had been acting as covers for Filippo Azzaioli and 'Monsù' d'Albret.<sup>30</sup> This discovery was skilfully exploited by Cardinals Giovanni Bona, a former Cistercian abbot, and his Theatine friend, Giuseppe Maria Tommasi, made a Cardinal in 1712, who, out of veneration of the early Christian martyrs, had objected to the scheme and managed to persuade the Pope to withdraw his permission.<sup>31</sup> According to Fontana, they were supported in their endeavours by Cardinal Benedetto Odescalchi (later Innocent XI), who had been buying the wood of the *palchetti* for distribution as fuel to poor convents,<sup>32</sup> and by Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Consequently the Pope ordered Padre Tommasi to have the entrance to the Colosseum blocked and inscriptions set up for the instruction of the pilgrims expected for the Holy Year 1675.

The driving force seems to have been Padre Tommasi, who in his treatise, first published for the Holy Year 1675<sup>33</sup> and partly reprinted by Colagrossi and di Macco<sup>34</sup> stressed the importance of the Colosseum as a place of martyrdom of early Christians, naming some of them.<sup>35</sup>

Tommasi particularly venerated the Greek monk Telemachus (S. Almachio), who on the occasion of his pilgrimage to Rome in the beginning of the fifth century had tried to preach in the arena against the contests of gladiators, with the result that he was killed by them in front of

<sup>28</sup> For comparison see the representation of Franz Caucig (1762–1828), reproduced in Hermann Egger, *Römische Veduten*, ii, Vienna 1931, pl. 138.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Alessandro Giuseppe Capponi, *Delle Memorie sacre e profane dell'Anfiteatro Flavio di Roma, volgarmente detto il Colosseo*, Rome 1746, p. 63; Cerasoli, *op. cit.*, pp. 307f., and Michela di Macco, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Avvisi of 18 July 1671 in Ermete Rossi, *Roma ignorata*, xviii, Rome 1940, p. 158.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Avvisi of 25 July and 1 August 1671 in E. Rossi, *loc. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Cf. E. Rossi, *loc. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Giuseppe Maria Tommasi, *Breve relatione dell'Anfiteatro flaviano detto comunemente il*

*Coliseo consecrato col sangue pretioso d'innumerabili Santi Martiri serrato e dedicato ad onore, e gloria de'medesimi gloriosissimi Martiri l'anno del giubileo MDCLXXV da un Chierico Regolare*, Rome 1675.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Colagrossi, *op. cit.*, p. 214. Michela di Macco, *op. cit.*, pp. 82ff., has provided documentary evidence about the care with which Padre Tommasi prepared his volume.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Tommasi, *op. cit.*, pp. 3f. Doubts have occasionally been expressed, though without sufficient reason, as to whether the Colosseum had been the actual place of execution (cf. Lugli, *op. cit.*, p. 41, and Michela di Macco, *op. cit.*, p. 140 note 214).



the angry audience, an event that induced the Emperor Honorius to prohibit the contests. Tommasi speaks of Telemachus as 'ultimo Martire e primo Padrone del Coliseo di Roma'.<sup>36</sup> This 'patronage' seems to allude to the fact that from an undetermined date the care of the chapel of S. Maria della Pietà had been entrusted to a hermit. This must have already been the case in Fontana's time, since in the text to his engraving he describes the building as 'chiesola ovvero romitorio'.

After the intervention of the Theatine Padre Tommasi and the Cardinals against the projected bullfights, and in preparation for the Holy Year 1675, deliberations had taken place about the future fate of the Colosseum. Bernini was among those approached, and his advice, according to Tommasi, was that 'non solo per la devozione à SS. Martiri, ma anche per la conservazione di una Macchina, che come mostrava la grandezza di Roma, così era l'idea dell'architettura', the amphitheatre should be left in its existing state, without touching or covering up any part of the original.<sup>37</sup>

This advice, which could not have been more clearly formulated by modern preservationists, was obviously taken in connexion with the preparations for the Holy Year 1675. An inscription set up on the east façade still drew attention to the historical and architectural importance of the building, but in a way that emphasized its other significance, as a place of Christian martyrdom: 'Amphitheatrum Flavium, non tam operis mole et artificio ac veterum spectaculorum memoria quam sacro innumerabilium martyrum cruore illustre. . . .'<sup>38</sup>

Tommasi tells us, and Fontana shows in his volume of engravings (pl. 4), that the wall which was erected by order of the Pope to close the outer arcades—for which the funds were provided by Cardinal Pamphili—was of open work, thus allowing a view through to the interior. The Cartari-Febei *Diary* reports about these activities and the exhibition of painted scenes of martyrdom in the upper arcaded passage as follows under 30.X.1674:

In detto giorno di Martedì mi portai all'Anfiteatro, e uiddi, che si murorno tutti gli archi dal di fuori, con pilastretti ad uso di Cannello, e che negli Archi superiori verso l'Arco di Tito si erano collocati due quadri assai grandi dipinti à chiaro scuro, rappresentanti alcune Historie de Santi martirizzati in detto Anfiteatro; et anche una Croce di legno assai grande, con Inscrittione à piedi in lettere assai grandi. Alcuni hanno detto, che si faccia detta clausura p. onciore a molti mali, che ui si commetteuano, altri p. rinchiuderli i poveri et alimentarli, durante l'Anno Santo.<sup>39</sup>

Tommasi further mentions two 'façades', of which the one facing the city served as a portico, consisting of three of the outer arches closed by iron grilles. Its middle storey bore an inscription, and the upper one a Cross as 'versillo e trofeo dei SS. Martiri'. The second façade, towards S. Giovanni in

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Tommasi, *loc. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Tommasi, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Colagrossi, *op. cit.*, p. 215, and Michela di Macco, *op. cit.*, pp. 84, 141f.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Carlo Fontana, *L'Anfiteatro Flavio*,

p. 157, and Coudenhove-Erthal, *op. cit.*, p. 98 note 169.

<sup>39</sup> Archivio di Stato di Roma, Archivi Gentilizi, Cartari-Febei, vol. 85, fol. 61<sup>v</sup>.

Laterano, was similar but only covered one bay. The mention of a tempietto to be erected in the middle of the arena is of special interest to us in connexion with Fontana's project for a church. It would probably have had similarities with Bernini's recently constructed tabernacle for the chapel of the Holy Sacrament in St. Peter's, inspired by Bramante's Tempietto.<sup>40</sup> It was deliberately left small in scale, so as not to compete with the structures in honour of the holy martyrs: '... designando parimente del centro del Coliseo oue era prima l'ara o altare doue si sacrificaua a Giooue un piccolo tempio per non impedire la gran macchina in honore de'Santi Martiri...'. Cardinal Altieri was responsible for the carrying out of the scheme—as far as it went—and it met with the enthusiastic support from the people.<sup>41</sup>

\* \* \*

Carlo Fontana tells us in his introduction to the volume in the Sir John Soane's Museum that he was commissioned to design a church in the Colosseum after Benedetto Odescalchi had been elected Pope Innocent XI, and that the commission was transmitted to him by Cardinal Francesco Barberini with the request 'che pensassi il modo per fare in quell'ambito un sontuoso edificio Sacro invece del Profano'. The date of the contract can therefore be determined as between 21 September 1676 (the election of the Pope) and before 1679, when Francesco Barberini died.

It was therefore a project still very much conceived under the influence of the events of the recent Holy Year and probably took up again an idea that Innocent XI had cherished when still a Cardinal and which he now, as Pope, hoped to bring to fruition. It was after all his only major religious building project and, as Fontana tells us, the Pope pursued it with keen perseverance during the whole of his pontificate: 'resistè costante nella Mente della S.M. di detto Papa Innocenzo XI'. The choice of Fontana, instead of Bernini, as architect was probably due to Bernini's opposition to any drastic alterations to the Colosseum.

From the beginning conditions in general were, however, not propitious for the execution of the Pope's project, and in particular the financial situation had to be readjusted and from the beginning ruled out any project involving a total transformation of the Colosseum into a church.<sup>42</sup> The economic situation was made worse through the outbreak of the Turkish War which

<sup>40</sup> For the planning history of the tabernacle, see Rudolf Wittkower, *Bernini, the Sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, London 1966, pp. 260ff., no. 78; Maurizio and Marcello Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Bernini una introduzione al gran teatro del barocco*, Rome 1967, scheda 233, and Mark S. Weil, 'Statuette of the Risen Christ, designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini', *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, xxix-xxx, 1966-67 (1969), pp. 7ff.

<sup>41</sup> According to Colagrossi (*op. cit.*, p. 215) the tempietto-like chapel was probably not executed because the existing Cappella S. Maria della Pietà was still in sound condition. He further states (*loc. cit.*, note 1) that Carlo

Fontana supplied the 'disegno', but without giving his source. It is quite possible that Fontana produced the drawings, but the design was probably Bernini's, since in its small scale the chapel corresponds to his conception of how the amphitheatre should be treated. Michela di Macco, who also accepts Bernini as the author of the chapel design, discovered in her studies of Tommasi's manuscripts in the archives of S. Andrea della Valle the mention of a further design, which envisaged three chapels for the arena (*cf. op. cit.*, p. 84).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. von Pastor, *op. cit.*, xiv, 2, pp. 683ff.

eventually, through the support of the Pope, led to the relief of Vienna in 1683. It was indeed the Pope's commitment to this war which, according to Fontana, made the realization of the projected building under Innocent XI impossible. In the consciousness of the Romans, however, the Pope remained associated with the Colosseum, and, when three arches collapsed at the hour of his death, Battista Grapelli was inspired by this coincidence to compose an ode to the Pope entitled 'Cade parte dell'Anfiteatro Romano detto il Colosseo poco dopo la morte del Sommo Pontifice Innocenzo XI.'<sup>43</sup>

It now remains to determine what Fontana's project looked like at the time of Innocent XI. The drawings for the engravings in the London volume represent a stage when the plans for the church had been fundamentally revised. This can be recognized from the earlier ground plans (cf. Pl. 45c), which on fol. 15<sup>44</sup> and fol. 16<sup>45</sup> are preserved under a flap of paper pasted over with the final scheme (Pl. 45a, d). They show a centralized building, like Bernini's S. Maria dell'Assunta in Ariccia (Pl. 45b), with three side-chapels on either side, divided by walls with single pilasters articulating the main space. The use of single pilasters was characteristic of Fontana's work until the end of the pontificate of Innocent XI,<sup>46</sup> and it is probable, therefore, that the ground plan of the original project dates from the time of Innocent XI and that the alterations as shown in the engravings were mainly concerned with the organization of the interior, involving the replacement of single pilasters by coupled pilasters, as we see them, for instance, in Fontana's final design for S. Spirito dei Napolitani.<sup>47</sup>

The elevation of the interior of the church, except for these modifications, would probably have corresponded with the section of the final project (Pl. 49a).<sup>48</sup> The cupola may have had a lantern and, if so, it may have carried a statue of the Ecclesia Triumphans, which replaced the lantern in the final

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Cartari-Febei, *op. cit.*, vol. 100, fol. 227 (6 September 1689), and von Pastor, *op. cit.*, xiv, 2, pp. 1039ff.

<sup>44</sup> Fol. 15 of the London volume corresponds to pl. 20 in Carlo Fontana's volume of engravings and the underdrawing of fol. 16 (Pl. 45c) to that of fol. 15. The pink shading represents the old building and the grey the new project. In the scheme shown on both fols. 15 and 16 the arena is accessible through three entrances, one on the long axis, two on the short, as well as through the former Porta Libitinaria. Coudenhove-Erthal, being unaware of the practical reasons for the enclosure of the amphitheatre (cf. above), called the wall 'grotesque' and misinterpreted it aesthetically 'als Andeutung eines räumlichen Abschlusses', which in his view here demonstrates 'in einer Kleinigkeit das Kernproblem spä-barocker Platzauffassung' (*op. cit.*, p. 101).

<sup>45</sup> Fol. 16 corresponds to pl. 21 of the 1725 edition. The signature 'Cau. Mariano Franceschini' is indicated below. This ground plan represents a first step towards a slightly later

project by Carlo Fontana, the church of St. Ignatius at Loyola, which also (see below) goes back to Bernini's Assunta at Ariccia (cf. H. Hager, *Carlo Fontana and the Jesuit Sanctuary in Loyola*. In preparation).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Coudenhove-Erthal, *op. cit.*, p. 59, pl. 19.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Braham-Hager, *op. cit.* Since the revised designs incorporate features which correspond to Carlo Fontana's style about 1700, Paolo Terzone's hypothesis that Juvarra collaborated in the project (cf. 'L'Opera di Carlo Fontana e Filippo Juvarra', *Arte in Europa, Scritti in Onore di Edoardo Arslan*, i, Milan 1966, p. 784) can be discounted. At the relevant time Filippo Juvarra was still a pupil of Carlo as well as his son Francesco Fontana.

<sup>48</sup> Drawing fol. 18 corresponds to pl. 24 in the published version of 1725, where, however, the pilasters on the drum, which continue as ribs on the outside of the cupola, have been strengthened in profile (cf. pencil sketch on the left).



design and would have been a reference to the victory over the Turks in 1683. It is, however, impossible to determine whether this motive was already included in the design at the time of Innocent XI or belongs to a later phase (Pl. 43b).<sup>49</sup>

The portico on the façade originally had columns instead of pillars, but it is uncertain whether the ambulatory of the oval was originally conceived with columns, like Bernini's Colonnades at St. Peter's, since the available ground plans (Pl. 45a, d) already show the pillars of the final project as engraved by Franceschini.

Fontana, as he specifically points out in his introduction to the published version, placed the church near the Cappella S. Maria della Pietà, next to the Porta Libitinaria, so that, coming from the city, it would be seen at the end of the long axis of the arena. The diameter of the rotonda equals the radius of the circle BC on plate 13 of the volume of engravings, representing a quarter of the diameter of the whole arena.<sup>50</sup> Behind the building the portico of the arena is carried on as a mere corridor, while the arcades follow the line of the convex façade of the church, taking on the function of a vestibule.

The enclosure of a centralized building by circular passages that converge on the longitudinal axis into an entrance, here the Porta Libitinaria, is not surprising in a pupil of Bernini and again recalls the Assunta in Ariccia, where, in the frontal view, the surrounding wall hides the sloping terrain behind the building (Pl. 43a). In Ariccia the passages converge behind the chapel of the main choir into a couple of parallel streets going down the hill. This twofold connexion with the work of Bernini—the centralized ground plan of the building and the scenic arrangement in its setting—is at least in part due to the fact that Fontana was not only connected with the building of the Assunta at Ariccia (1662–64),<sup>51</sup> but was also, as Pl. 43a shows, responsible for the elaboration of the final plan, which was later utilized for the engraving in Domenico di Rossi's *Studio d'architettura Civile* (Rome, 1711, ii, p. 56).<sup>52</sup> It is to be remembered that the Assunta had only been completed about a decade before Innocent XI commissioned Fontana to design the church for the Colosseum.

The modifications of the ground plan of the Assunta at Ariccia were determined by the difference in the site. In order to have access to his centralized church from the Porta Libitinaria, Carlo Fontana opened up the chapel which in Bernini's design contained the High Altar and placed the latter in the centre of the building, comparable, for instance, to the Cappella del SS. Sacramento in S. Maria Maggiore, and surrounded it with a

<sup>49</sup> Fontana's design of 1688 for the cupola of the cathedral at Como already shows the lantern replaced by an ornamental superstructure. Coudenhove-Erthal, *loc. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> For the proportions of the elevation, see below.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Incisa della Rocchetta, 'Notizie sulla fabbrica della Chiesa Collegiata di Ariccia', *Rivista dell'Istituto di Archeologia e storia dell'Arte*, i, 1929, pp. 349–77, who publishes a similar ground plan of the church (fig. 5). Numerous

designs by Fontana for the palace are preserved in the Vatican Library.

<sup>52</sup> Sabine Jakob will give a detailed description of this drawing in her catalogue of Italian drawings in the Kunstbibliothek, Berlin, which is in preparation (Hdz. No. 3842). For the use of project designs for the purpose of engravings, see Paolo Portoghesi, *Borromini nella cultura europea*, Rome 1964, p. 103.

balustrade (Pl. 47b). With this central arrangement of the altar, with the *mensa* accessible from two sides, Fontana achieved the practical purpose of allowing access to the communion bench for the greatest possible number of pilgrims at a time.<sup>53</sup> The baldacchino over the altar is a repetition of that planned for the High Altar in St. Peter's as represented on the medal of 1617-18, but rectangular instead of square.<sup>54</sup>

In Ariccia the *campanili* had been planned to be seen from the side in a distant view of the little hill-town and from the above-mentioned streets behind the church, and they flanked the Sacristy behind the High Altar; in the Colosseum Fontana has moved them forward to the lateral axis. Their lower parts were planned as vestibules in Ariccia, and as sacristies in the Colosseum, one for use on ordinary, the other for special occasions. Above the sacristies Fontana envisaged dwellings for the priests.<sup>55</sup> In order to attach the sacristies to the main circular space, it was necessary to insert doors in the two spaces on the cross axis, thus leaving only those on the diagonals to serve as side-chapels.

Fontana's arrangement of the bell-towers on either side of the cupola is closer to that of S. Agnese on the Piazza Navona than to Bernini's Assunta at Ariccia, because at S. Agnese the towers are meant to be seen from the front (Pls. 43b, 45d).<sup>56</sup> His design is similar to a drawing by an unknown architect in the Accademia di S. Luca, Rome (Pl. 46a,b), which is dated 1676 and was probably intended for a competition for a *concorso accademico* or was made after the author was nominated 'Accademico'.<sup>57</sup> This is basically also a centralized building, but is extended by the arms of a Greek cross. The one-storeyed *campanili* rise behind the arms of the portico, which encloses the front arm of the cross, so that their relation to the cupola is very similar to that in Carlo Fontana's design.

At this time Carlo, who had been an academician since 1667, had close connexions with the Accademia di S. Luca and was actually teacher of architecture there in the year 1675.<sup>58</sup> There is, therefore, a strong possibility that he knew of this project and was perhaps even inspired by it. On the other

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Carlo Fontana, *op. cit.*, pp. 16of., 167. The drawings on fol. 22 in the Sir John Soane's Museum, London, were not, as has already been stated above, used in the published version of 1725. They are executed in pen, sepia, and grey wash, on separate sheets of white paper (39.5 × 29.3 cm) and joined vertically.

<sup>54</sup> For this baldacchino, see Heinrich Thelen, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Hochaltararchitektur von St. Peter in Rom*, Berlin 1967, and Irving Lavin, *Bernini and the Crossing of St. Peter's*, New York 1968. Fontana's baldacchino is shown in profile in the longitudinal section of the church on fol. 18 of the London album (pl. 24 in the 1725 edition). The *mensa*, which is much wider than deep, can be approached from two sides, identical in shape but serving different religious purposes. This is

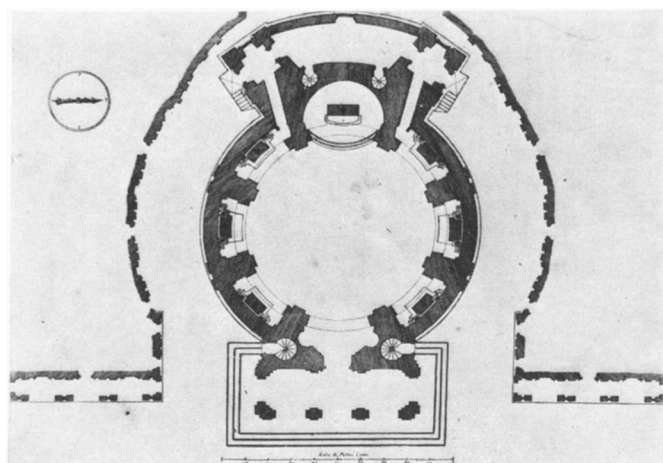
already made clear in the drawing on Pl. 47b, where the arrangement of the Crucifix and the figures of the angels towards the entrance from the arena indicate that Mass could only be celebrated from one side. This is stressed in the text accompanying the engraving (1725 edition, p. 161), which further points out that the reverse side of the *mensa* was to house the 'sacre Supelletili'.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Carlo Fontana, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Coudenhove-Erthal, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

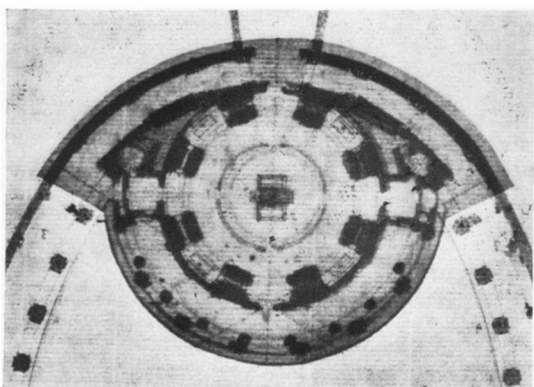
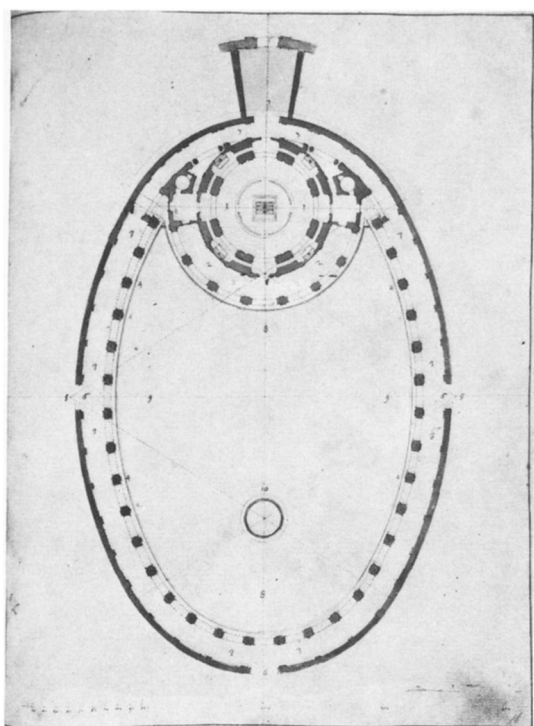
<sup>57</sup> In the Archivio dell'Accademia di S. Luca, Rome, Cartella Y. no. 319: Front elevation, pen, sepia and grey wash on white paper (0.43 × 0.30 cm), and no. 317: Ground plan; technique as in nos. 319 and 320 (longitudinal section).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Archivio dell'Accademia di S. Luca, Rome, MS 45, fol. 17.

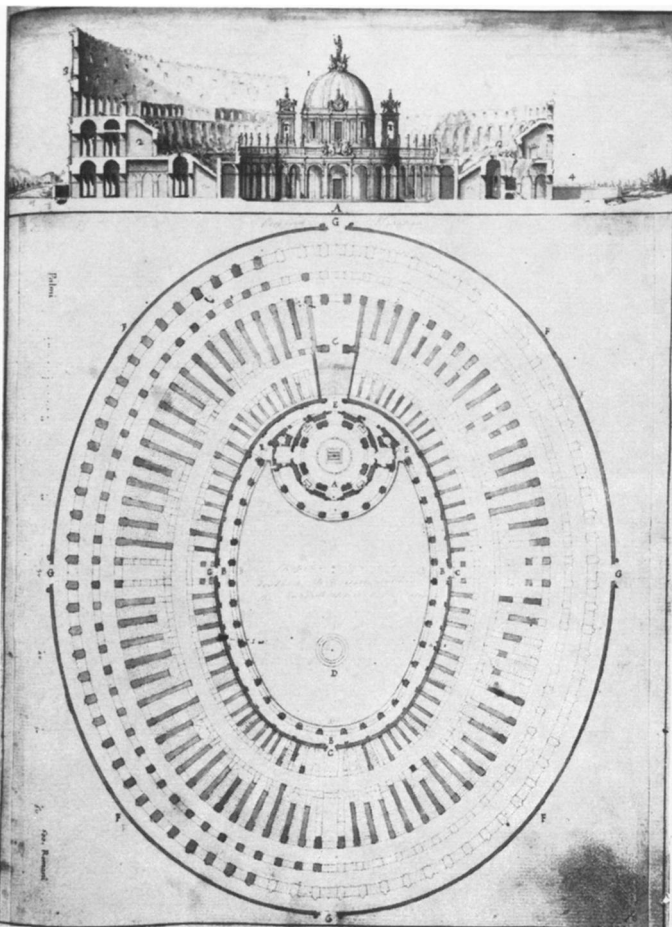


b—Ground-plan of Bernini's S. Maria dell'Assunta at Ariccia from Dom. de Rossi, *Architettura Civile* (p. 326)

a—Carlo Fontana, church design and ground-plan of the arcades in the arena of the Colosseum. London, Sir John Soane's Museum (pp. 326f.)



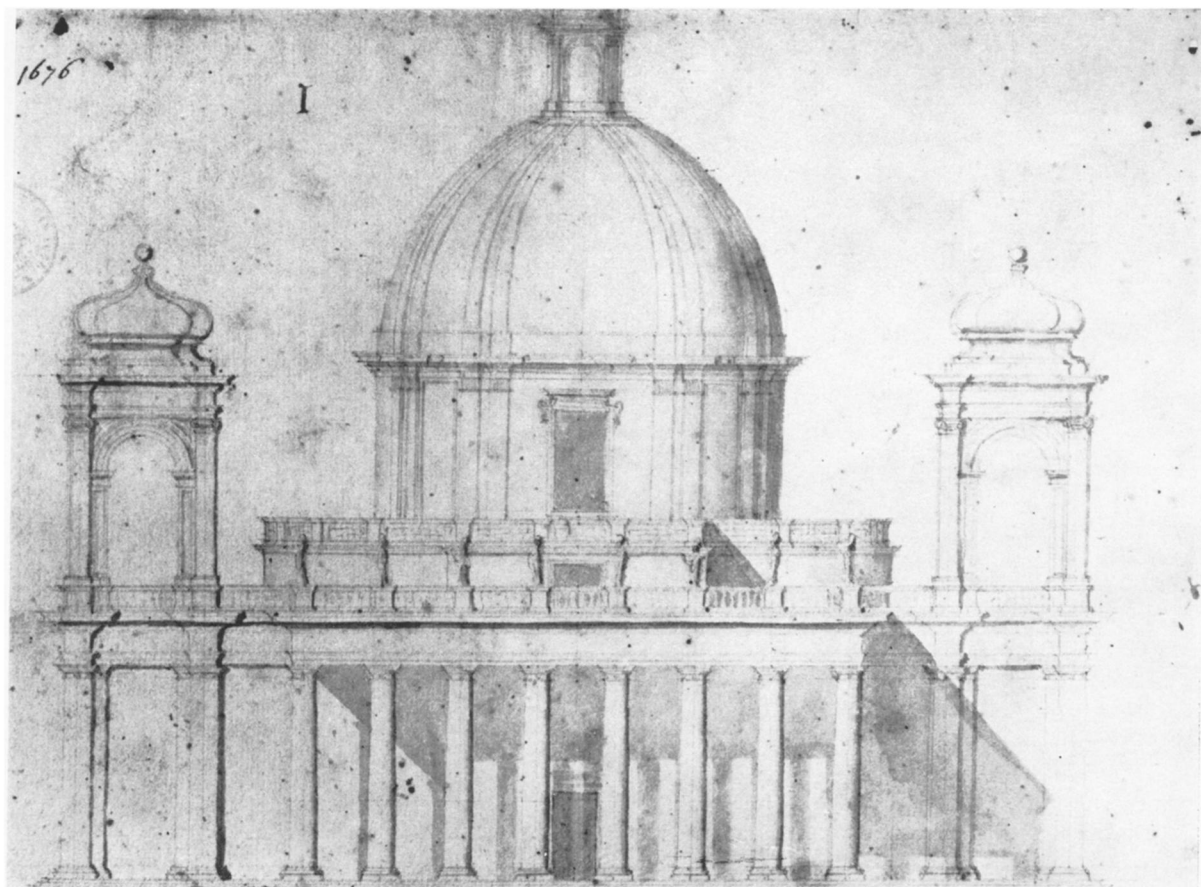
c—Carlo Fontana, first church plan (covered over on Pl. 45a). London, Sir John Soane's Museum (p. 326)



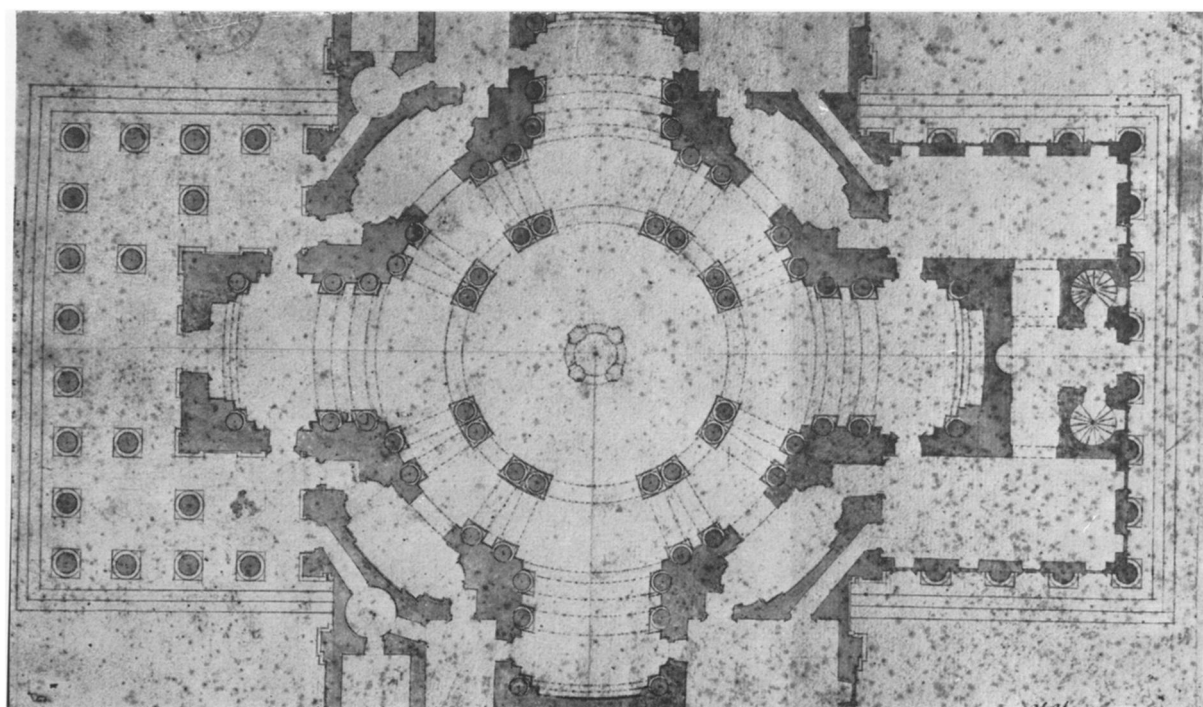
d—Carlo Fontana, elevation of the projected Colosseum church in the ruin of the amphitheatre, and ground-plan. London, Sir John Soane's Museum (pp. 326ff.)

Courtesy Trustees, Sir John Soane's Museum





a—Façade for a church project. Rome, Accademia di S. Luca (*pp.* 328f.)



b—Ground plan for a church project. Rome, Accademia di S. Luca (*pp.* 328f.)

hand it is now known that the dating on drawings of the Academy during the time in question was very unreliable,<sup>59</sup> and in view of Fontana's position as teacher an influence of the drawing on him seems hardly possible. The Academy project should therefore be seen as a reflection of Carlo's church design for Innocent XI.

At this time the oval church of S. Maria di Monte Santo in the Piazza del Popolo was nearing completion. Fontana had collaborated in the design and execution of the building, and the influence of one of his designs for it on the project for the church in the Colosseum has already been discussed elsewhere.<sup>60</sup> Since 1676 Fontana had been working in collaboration with Carlo Rainaldi—and single-handed from 1677 onwards—on the erection of the church of S. Maria dei Miracoli, like the present project a circular building, of which the drum, however, was enclosed in an octagon. Between 1670–74 he had completed the cupola of the cathedral of Montefiascone. With its widely spaced double-pilasters on the drum it looks forward in certain respects to the Colosseum church in as far as the frontal view is concerned.<sup>61</sup> Fontana's very next commission after the Colosseum project was the design for the Jesuit College at Loyola, with a circular centralized church in its centre.<sup>62</sup>

The design for a circular church in the Accademia di S. Luca and Fontana's project for the Colosseum church are similar in the proportions of the façades and the drum (without attic in Carlo's design), and in the fact that the *campanili* have the same height as the drum of the cupola. Fontana's proportions of the elevation are based on a ratio of 1:1:1 in conformity with the arrangement of the storeys of the Colosseum, i.e. the façade and the drum equal two storeys of the auditorium, while the cupola, which has the same height, reaches with the crowning statue the upper rim of the surrounding wall (Pl. 45d).

The motive of a loggia following the curve of a circular church at the end of a court has a source unexpected for Fontana, namely Borromini's design for the extension of S. Maria in Vallicella with *cortile* (Pl. 47a).<sup>63</sup> Another influence must have been Bernini's first project for the east front of the

<sup>59</sup> Cf. H. Hager, 'Filippo Juvarra e il concorso di modelli del 1715 bandito da Clemente XI per la Nuova Sacrestia di S. Pietro', *Quaderni Commentari*, ii, Rome 1970, pp. 54f. and note 88, and 'Il modello di Ludovico Rusconi Sassi del concorso per la facciata di S. Giovanni in Laterano (1732) ed i prospetti a convessità centrale durante la prima metà del Settecento in Roma', *Commentari*, xxii, 1971, p. 40.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. H. Hager, 'Zur Planungs- und Bauge-schichte der Zwillingskirchen auf der Piazza del Popolo in Rome', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, xi, 1967–68, pp. 225f.

<sup>61</sup> An investigation of Carlo Fontana's cupola of the cathedral at Montefiascone is being prepared by the present author.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. above, note 45.

<sup>63</sup> No. 285 in the Albertina, Vienna. Cf. Paolo Marconi, 'Le fabbriche pamphiliane di Borromini', *Studi sul Borromini, Atti del Convegno promosso dall'Accademia Nazionale di S. Luca*, Rome 1967, pp. 112ff., and 'Disegni di Francesco Borromini', Catalogo a cura di Paolo Portoghesi, *Mostra organizzata dall'Accademia Nazionale di S. Luca in occasione del terzo centenario della morte di Francesco Borromini*, Rome 1967, pp. 13f., no. 29, and *The Rome of Borromini*, New York 1968, pl. xxxv. An interesting example of a portico following the curved façade of a church is S. Maria di Belvedere, near Città di Castello, built by Antonio Gabriele and his pupil Nicola Barbioni in 1669–84 (Pl. 44b and c; cf. Corrado Rosini, *Città di Castello*, Città de Castello 1961, pp. 112f.).

Louvre of 1664,<sup>64</sup> in which the loggia, which covers two storeys, continues from the flanking pavilions round the convex curve of the central oval section. The model for the single-storey arcaded portico with balustrade and figures, on the other hand, is Bernini's so-called 'arcade project' for the Piazza of St. Peter's.<sup>65</sup> In the Colosseum project the plan was changed from a lateral to a longitudinal oval, a form which Fontana (inspired by antique theatres) would have considered as by far the more suitable for the Piazza di S. Pietro (Pl. 44a).<sup>66</sup>

Fontana's designs for the Colosseum church represent therefore a criticism of Bernini's colonnades of St. Peter's and a demonstration of what would have been his own solution to the problems involved. Consequently Fontana's suggestion for the completion of St. Peter's Square, which was published in 1694 in his book on the Vatican Basilica, and which accepted Bernini's porticoes as given, also very clearly stresses the axis leading up to the church façade, with the result that the diameter of Bernini's lateral oval would have become a secondary axis of the square.<sup>67</sup> This demonstrates the fundamentally different attitude of the two architects towards the longitudinal oval, which Fontana favoured, whilst Bernini avoided it as far as possible.<sup>68</sup> If, then, Bernini had received the commission—which, as we know, would have been unwelcome—to design for the Colosseum not only a chapel but a monumental religious building, how would he have solved the problem involved? Taking the above observations into account, he would probably have fitted the church into the broad side of the arena and given it the corresponding lateral-oval form.

Michela di Macco<sup>69</sup> believes that one could conclude from the introduction to the printed version of Fontana's book that a dialogue between Bernini and Carlo took place about the consecration of the Colosseum to the martyrs, which is quite probable. Bernini's point of view in this matter, however, has been transmitted to us so clearly by Tommasi that it is impossible to believe that the former would have encouraged Fontana to attempt a building of the dimensions that he proposed.

<sup>64</sup> Pozzo's project for a church dedicated to the Virgin, published in his second volume on Perspective in 1700 (*op. cit.*, pls. 88ff.), also shows the influence of Bernini's first project for the Louvre (cf. also Bernhard Kerber, *Andrea Pozzo*, Berlin-New York 1971, pp. 192ff.), but it is later than Fontana's original design for the church in the amphitheatre.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Heinrich Brauer-Rudolf Wittkower, *Die Zeichnungen des Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Römische Forschungen der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, xi, Berlin 1931, pl. 161.

<sup>66</sup> 'La linea del diametro maggiore essendo parallela alla Facciata del Tempio, è impropria, secondo le buone regole, questa disposizione; mentre douerebbe la predetta linea essere corrispondente a quella del mezzo del Tempio, cioè essere situati i Portici per il lungo, e formare la vera figura Elipse, colla

quale douerebbero quasi essere congiunti al Tempio, come è stato praticato dagl'antichi Romani ne'loro Teatri. Questi poneuano la Scena, e Orchestre ne'due termini del diametro maggiore dell'Elipse, acciò si potesse comprendere dalla vista ogni minima parte, e ciascheduna Persona che dentro vi fosse stata' (Carlo Fontana, *Il Tempio Vaticano e la sua origine*, Rome 1694, p. 183, pl. 185, no. 2). The note referring to the dotted line of the oval (G) reads: 'figura elipse che hauerebbe assegnato il p. fetto modo de i portici'.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. H. Hager, 'Progetti del tardo barocco romano per il terzo braccio del colonnato della Piazza S. Pietro', *Commentari*, xix, 1968, p. 301.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. H. Hager, *Zwillingskirchen*, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Michela di Macco, *op. cit.*, p. 84.



Through their height the ruins of the amphitheatre form a closed mass quite unlike the Piazza di S. Pietro and the usual Roman squares surrounded by buildings, but, owing to the terraced arrangement of its storeys, and in spite of the massive outer screen, the Colosseum gives in addition an impression of opening out upwards, and yet optically the storeys of the amphitheatre seem to be related to the proportions of the church (Pl. 45d).

Thus enclosed by the ruins the church and setting combine to make one of Fontana's most mature works, which may be said to mark the culmination of his creative power in religious architecture. Coudenhove-Erthal's statement that the church and the portico 'in no way relate artistically to the ruins of the Colosseum' is therefore unjustified and was rightly criticized by Hans Sedlmayr in his review of the Fontana monograph by Coudenhove-Erthal.<sup>70</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Coudenhove-Erthal was unable to appreciate the scheme in which the bell-towers were set on a transverse axis. His interpretation of it as representing a means to disguise 'the optical difficulties involved in fitting the church into the arena'<sup>71</sup> shows a complete misunderstanding of its real function. Like the bell-towers of the twin-churches on the Piazza del Popolo, executed in the eighteenth but designed in the seventeenth century, they frame the view without blocking it. In his project Fontana was mainly concerned with the views round and through the *campanili* on to the curved background of the ruins, thus creating the spatial setting for the upper parts of the church. On the right-hand side, however, his intentions would not have been fully realized, owing to the damaged condition of the antique building and the gaps in it.

The formal harmony between Carlo's architecture and that of the amphitheatre expresses in visible form a quite specific idea. More than any other monument of the Holy City the Colosseum had always been regarded as the symbol of the greatness of ancient Rome, and in this respect was even compared with the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, since the Holy Year of 1675, it had become a monument to the steadfastness of the early Christians martyred there, which so obviously contrasted with the crumbling decay of the ancient monument. This contrast was therefore consciously in the mind of Fontana, when he designed his church.<sup>73</sup>

Fontana's treatise on the Colosseum was already listed among his theoretical writings in 1696,<sup>74</sup> so that it must have been more or less completed at the time. It is probable that, bearing in mind the Holy Year of 1700, he intended to present to Pope Innocent XII the project for which he had been commissioned by Innocent XI. A large number of drawings, however, must date from the time of Clement XI, since they bear his coat-of-arms. Both forewords are addressed to this Pope. The printed version refers explicitly to Clement XI's reverence for antique monuments: 'E perchè la Santità Vra ueglia con tanto spirito, e con tanto zelo al decoro del culto diuino, col

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Coudenhove-Erthal, *op. cit.*, p. 101; Hans Sedlmayr, *Kritische Berichte*, iii-iv, 1930-32, p. 94.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Coudenhove-Erthal, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Orazio Piselli Ciuccioli, *Notizie storiche della Chiesa Parrocchiale di S. Maria in*

*Monticelli di Roma col ristretto della vita del regnante Pontefice Clemente XI restauratore della medesima*, Montefiascone 1719, pp. 149f.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. note 80.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Coudenhove-Erthal, *op. cit.*, pp. 84f.

rinouare i sacri antichij tempij, e renderli più uaghi, e maestosi . . .'. The engraving of the contests that took place in the arena, which occupies the two pages in the middle of the book, is dedicated to Clement XI by name.<sup>75</sup>

It seems, therefore, that the revision of the church project was undertaken after the Holy Year of 1700, i.e. under Clement XI, since, according to Fontana, the printing of his treatise was delayed by external events and by his obligations in connexion with the Anno Santo. It was, however, certainly completed by 1707, the year mentioned in a note to the foreword.<sup>76</sup> In spite of the fact that Clement XI had removed stones which had fallen in the earthquake of 1703 to be used for the construction of the Porto di Ripetta,<sup>77</sup> Fontana, who was aware of the Pope's attitude towards monuments related to the history of the early Christian period, could reasonably hope that Clement XI would not abandon his plans for the transformation of the Colosseum.<sup>78</sup> In order to arouse the interest of readers of his work, especially the Pope's, Fontana had preceded the comments to his drawings in the fourth book of the treatise with the essay mentioned above, which deals with the history of the Colosseum as a centre of Christian martyrdom and gives an enlarged version of Tommasi's list of the martyrs who had met their death there.<sup>79</sup>

In the arena, the 'letto mortale' of the early Christian martyrs, Fontana intended to build a church dedicated to them, which he saw as a monument of the Church Triumphant, symbolized by a figure—like the statue of a pope wearing a tiara—carrying a chalice with the Host and accompanied by the four Evangelists, which architecturally replaces the lantern.<sup>80</sup> One is again reminded of Carlo's project for the Piazza di S. Pietro, where the entrance-wing with the bell-tower was conceived as an 'Arco trionfale della Santa Fede Cattolica'.<sup>81</sup> The concept of the Church Triumphant was characteristic of the period and the theme was common in painting and sculpture, particularly in the last quarter of the Seicento.<sup>82</sup> Fontana's sculptural representation of the triumph motive is, of course, relatively independent of contemporary compositions which glorify the monogram of Christ or the victory over the enemies of the Church. Fontana seems rather to follow the traditional type of enthroned female allegorical figure with crown or tiara,<sup>83</sup> to be found, for instance, on the title-pages of some of the volumes of Cardinal Cesare Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiastici*.<sup>84</sup> The transformation of such models

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Carlo Fontana, *op. cit.* (n. 38), pl. 19.

<sup>76</sup> The ground plan of the ground floor bears the date 1708 (cf. Carlo Fontana, *op. cit.*, pl. 1, and Michela di Macco, *op. cit.*, p. 85).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Thomas Ashby and Stephen Welsh, 'Alessandro Specchi', *The Town Planning Review*, December 1927, p. 238, no. 4. For the building history of the Ripetta-Harbour, see Cesare d'Onofrio, *Il Tevere e Roma*, Rome 1968, pp. 103ff., and Braham-Hager, *op. cit.*

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Braham-Hager, *op. cit.*

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Carlo Fontana, *L'Anfiteatro Flavio*, *op. cit.*, pp. 115ff.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Coudenhove-Erthal, *op. cit.*, pp. 100ff., and Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600–1750*, 2nd edition,

Harmondsworth 1965, p. 245.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. H. Hager, 'Terzo Braccio', *op. cit.*; *Commentari*, xix, 1968, p. 303.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Robert Enggass, *The Paintings of Baciccio, Giovanni Battista Gaulli*, University Park, Penn. 1964, pp. 64ff.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. W. Greisnegger, in *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, i, Freiburg i. Br. 1968, pp. 568f.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Cesare Baronio, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 2nd edition, Rome 1610, vol. iv. Here the Cross is shown supported by the personification of the Church Triumphant, with its enemies in chains cowering at its feet. Rubens's variation of the theme is reproduced in the edition of Baronio's work published in

into a monumental standing figure and its placing on the top of a cupola is, however, Fontana's invention, even if it owed much to the influence of Bernini.<sup>85</sup>

In his explanations Fontana expresses the view that the time had come for the Colosseum to be put to religious purposes, pointing out that the other pagan buildings, such as the Pantheon, the Temple of Minerva, the Temple of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, etc., had long since served Christianity.

In order to accommodate the expected increasing number of pilgrims, Fontana suggests the erection of confessionals in the arcades, with above them scenes of martyrdom in panels framed in the manner of altarpieces (Pl. 49a),<sup>86</sup> at a height out of reach of damage. The balustrades, like the colonnades of St. Peter's Square, were to carry statues of saints, which Fontana no doubt intended to represent the martyrs mentioned in the list.

Near the main entrance, opposite the church, Fontana planned a fountain with a column rising from its centre (Pl. 49b).<sup>87</sup> This scheme is reminiscent of St. Peter's Square, except that Fontana replaced the obelisk by a column and has connected it physically with the fountain, in a way analogous to the Piazza del Popolo, where fountain and obelisk had been placed closely together. The fountain was placed at the centre of one of the above-mentioned circles defining the oval of the amphitheatre (see BC on plate 13 of the volume of engravings),<sup>88</sup> corresponding to the entrance of the church on the opposite side. Fontana's fountain follows a tradition specifically connected with the Colosseum and he consciously aims to produce an 'imitazione' of the *Meta sudans* which used to refresh the gladiators and 'per mezzo della quale tanti gloriosi Martiri sono giunti alla Meta del Martirio, e nel medesimo tempo a quello della gloria'. Like the triumphal columns of Trajan and Antoninus Pius, the column was to be decorated with sculptures. In contrast to the ordinary water of the *Meta sudans*, Fontana's fountain was to contain Holy Water, which in the Sacrament of Baptism was to wash away the 'Immondizie dell'Anima macchiata'. Its function was therefore that of a font. In the placing of his fountain Fontana not only looks back to the tradition and usage of the Pagans, but also to Old St. Peter's, where the fountain with the pinecone in the atrium of the Basilica of Constantine<sup>89</sup> symbolized the 'Fountain

Antwerp in 1623 and shows the Church enthroned, surrounded by the allegories of the Four Continents (cf. also Anton Mayer, *Das Bild der Kirche, Hauptmotive der Ecclesia im Wandel der abendländischen Kunst*, Regensburg 1962, pp. 60f., pl. 34).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. the statue of the Risen Christ on the cupola of Bernini's Sacraments-tabernacle in St. Peter's.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. fol. 23 (top) in the London album, and note 87 below. The frames for the scenes of Martyrdom, mentioned by Carlo Fontana in the 1725 edition (p. 161) are in fact placed so high that there was little danger of damage.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. fol. 23 (bottom) in the London volume. These two drawings, which were excluded from the engravings volume of 1725,

are on one sheet (39.5 × 29.5 cm), executed in pen, sepia, and grey wash. The first clarifies the shape of the *meta* so clearly described by Carlo Fontana in the volume of engravings (*op. cit.*, pp. 161f.). The balustrade of the arcade carries statues of the 42 Martyrs of the Colosseum. The drawing indicates that the entablature of the arcades which cover the entrances into the arena were to be crowned with two figures of Virtues flanking the coat-of-arms of the Pope and seated on fragments of a curved pediment.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Michela di Macco, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Schüller-Piroli, *2000 Jahre St. Peter*, Olten 1952, pp. 181ff., pl. 126; Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'S. Pietro in Vaticano', *Le Chiese di Roma illustrate*, lxxiv, Rome 1963, p. 31. Carlo



of Life'. Fontana's fountain was to take its place in emphasizing the transformation of the arena of the Colosseum into an atrium for his projected church. Like the pedestal of the statue on the cupola, that of the fountain is surrounded by allegorical figures, the four Virtues, alluding to the 'quattro cose particolari che hanno havuto li santi Martiri nel soffrire i loro Martirii'. Formally the motive of the fountain is a simplified repetition of the Four-River Fountain in the Piazza Navona.<sup>90</sup> Since, however, it is free of any naturalistic accessories, it goes back, with its seated figures on the rim of the basin (Pl. 49c), to the 'Fontana dei Mori' of 1642 in Marino, near Rome—itself one of the models for the Four-River Fountain<sup>91</sup>—built for Francesco Colonna. In this case, however, four captured Moors take the place of Fontana's Virtues (Pl. 49b) at the bottom of the column, an allusion to the victor of Lepanto.<sup>92</sup> In this connexion it is worth remembering that statues of Virtues also appeared in Fontana's project for the Baptistry of St. Peter's, which was rejected by Innocent XII in 1693.<sup>93</sup>

As in Domenico Fontana's project for Sixtus V, the outer passages were to be used for practical purposes, to accommodate 'le botteghe sparse in quella strada di S. Gregorio'.

The timing for the submission of the project for the Colosseum church, about 1707–8, seemed propitious, since at that moment Fontana was about to receive the commission for an important new building project, the New Sacristy of St. Peter's.<sup>94</sup> But the blow fell, when during the Spanish War, towards the end of 1708, the Emperor's forces advanced on Rome, and soon afterwards even this menace was overshadowed by the renewed threat from the Turks. Under these conditions Clement XI was forced to relinquish his plans for the New Sacristy, for which in 1715—a year after Fontana's death—the great model competition had taken place, and it was even more out of the question for him to realize Carlo's project for the Colosseum. It is not known whether decisions had been made, but during Clement's pontificate the outer arcades had already been closed in 1700, and the fencing had been restored and the arena itself levelled in 1714,<sup>95</sup> when the 'Presidente delle Antichità' Monsignor Bianchini, had made trial excavations in order to establish the original level of the arena.<sup>96</sup>

\* \* \*

Fontana mentions the fountain in his book (*Il Tempio Vaticano*, *op. cit.*, p. 83) and says that Paul V had the 'Pinea' transported into the courtyard of the Belvedere. For the symbolical meaning of the fountain, see A. Thomas, in *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, *op. cit.*, i, pp. 330ff.

<sup>90</sup> For the design history of the fountain in the Piazza Navona, see Brauer-Wittkower, *op. cit.*, pp. 47ff., pls. 26ff., and Hans Kauffmann, *Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini. Die figürlichen Kompositionen*, Berlin 1970, pp. 174ff.

<sup>91</sup> Norbert Huse (*Gianlorenzo Bernini's Viertrömebrunnen*, Dissertation, Munich 1967, pp. 18f.) already referred to it as a prototype for Bernini's fountain.

<sup>92</sup> For the restoration of the fountain, a variant of the monument for Grand-Duke Ferdinand I in Livorno—with four Turkish slaves—by Giovanni dell'Opera and Pietro Tacca, see Paolo Paolini, 'Sistemazione e restauro della Fontana dei Mori di Marino', *L'Urbe*, xxxii, 1969, fasc. ii, pp. 22ff.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Francis H. Dowley, 'Carlo Maratti, Carlo Fontana and the Baptismal Chapel in Saint Peter's', *The Art Bulletin*, xlvii, 1965, pp. 59f., and Braham-Hager, *op. cit.*

<sup>94</sup> Cf. H. Hager, 'Filippo Juvarra', *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Piselli-Giuccioli, *op. cit.*, pp. 149ff.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Colagrossi, *op. cit.*, pp. 217f.

Fontana's project, which, owing to its position in the Colosseum, would have enriched Rome by a place of worship equal in importance to the great basilicas, did not come to fruition, but it was nevertheless to have considerable influence in the field of architecture. This was first apparent in the Accademia di S. Luca, where the subject set for the Concorso Clementino for the first class in architecture in 1713 was a design for a circular centralized church in honour of the saints canonized on 23 May 1712—Pius V, Andrea Avellino, Felice da Cantalice, and Catarina da Bologna<sup>97</sup>—and in 1716 the theme was a project for a church to be erected in honour of a victory.<sup>98</sup> These designs were to a greater or lesser degree based on Fontana's church project, as was the case with that of Juvarra for his nomination as 'Accademico' of 1706 and with his design for the Superga at Turin.<sup>99</sup> As regards executed buildings, a clear derivation from Fontana's project can be seen in the interior and the form of the cupola of Derizet's centralized church of SS. Nome dei Maria in Trajan's Forum.<sup>100</sup> Even in the later Settecento Fontana's ideas were still taken up, not only in Italy—as, for instance, by Ridolfi in the Concorso of the Accademia di S. Luca of 1762<sup>101</sup>—but also in northern Europe. N. H. Jardin, for instance, in his project of 1756 for the church of St. Frederic to be erected opposite the Royal Palace in Copenhagen, takes over Fontana's scheme for the layout—a circular domed church, flanked by *campanili* of the same height as the drum—but in the Pantheon-like vestibule and the massive use of columns on the drum, etc., he has taken up a position midway between the Baroque and the Romantic classicism that was beginning to become prevalent.<sup>102</sup>

The reason for this lasting influence was no doubt the publication in 1725 of Fontana's treatise on the Colosseum. Although this event did not lead to the realization of Carlo's project, it was largely responsible for encouraging new ideas about the future of the Colosseum, especially after 1730, when Cardinal Lorenzo Corsini became Pope Clement XII, who shared Clement XI's urban interests. The subject of the first Academy competition of his pontificate (1732) was the transformation of the Colosseum for practical purposes,<sup>103</sup> but this followed a curiously different direction from what had gone before. The winners of the competition—Antonio Marazza of Turin (1st prize), Carlo Morelli of Rome (2nd prize), and Giovanni Orsolino of Monte Santo (3rd prize)—all envisaged the amphitheatre as an ordinary theatre, for which only half the arena would have been used, cut off by an elaborate *scenae frons*.

Another idea of surprising similarity was proposed a few years later by

<sup>97</sup> The drawings are in the Archives of the Accademia di S. Luca, Rome, vol. xxv, architectural designs of the Concorsi Clementini.

<sup>98</sup> Drawings in the Archives of the Accademia di S. Luca, Rome, vol. vi. The view of the façade in the prize-winning project of Pietro Paolo Ameli of Rome (nos. 603, 604, 605) is especially close to Fontana's church design.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Verzzone, *loc. cit.*

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Antonio Martini-Maria Letizia Casanova, *SS. Nome di Maria, Chiese di Roma*

*illustrate*, lxx, Rome 1963, pls. 6f. For the building history, see pp. 22ff.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Archives of the Accademia di S. Luca, Rome, vol. xii; see especially drawing no. 882.

<sup>102</sup> For this design, see Merete Bodelsen, 'Foreign Architects in Denmark', *Festschrift Hans Vollmer*, Leipzig 1956, pp. 54, 60, pl. 4.

<sup>103</sup> This was the competition for the second class in architecture of 1732. The successful projects are in vol. viii in the Archives of the Accademia di S. Luca, Rome.

Charles de Brosse, who visited Italy in 1739 in order to collect material for his edition of Sallust. He also suggested making the Colosseum a 'half-theatre', eliminating the long side towards the Caelian which had suffered most from decay, and restoring instead the opposite side. In the arena itself he projected a fountain, or even a lake, which would have allowed for nautical displays. The Arch of Constantine was to provide the entrance to the whole scheme. In commenting on his project, the author asks the rhetorical question as to whether it would not be more desirable to have 'un demi-Colisée en bon état que de l'avoir entier tout en guenilles?'.<sup>104</sup> There was, however, no danger of de Brosse's destructive project being realized under Benedict XIV (1740–58), who fortunately, like Clement XI, cherished the religious significance of the Colosseum and made it a centre of his activities. He had the enclosure renewed, a large cross erected in the arena, and presented fourteen Stations of the Cross designed by Paolo Posi and known through engravings by Piranesi and others (Pl. 48b),<sup>105</sup> which remained in the arena until the restoration of the Colosseum in modern times<sup>106</sup> under the care of a brotherhood especially founded for this purpose in 1750.<sup>107</sup>

Coudenhove-Erthal asked the question whether it was to be regretted that Fontana's church project did not come to realization and answered 'unhesitatingly' in the negative: 'The greatest Roman edifice surely means more to us in its ruinous purity than in the most splendid baroque enrichment.'<sup>108</sup> Most modern critics would agree unreservedly, especially archaeologists, to whom we owe its present state.

In contradiction to this puritanical and essentially archaeological conception, it could, however, be argued that the Colosseum, from both the religious and the aesthetic point of view, was deprived of an important part of its historical development through archaeological intervention. It is, of course, of great architectural interest to have the substructure of the arena revealed, but this surely cannot compensate for Fontana's scheme, with its church so skilfully fitted into its antique setting and with its oval forecourt, which would have enriched Rome with another splendid example of late Baroque scenographic architecture.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. *Lettres historiques et critiques sur l'Italie*, iii, Paris 1799, p. 115, and von Pastor, *op. cit.*, xvi, 1, pp. 121f.

<sup>105</sup> Compare also the view by Franz Caucig, already mentioned (cf. H. Egger, *op. cit.*, pl. 138).

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Colagrossi, *op. cit.*, pp. 219ff.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Matizia Maroni Lumbrosi and Antonio Martini, *Le confraternite romane nelle loro chiese*, Rome 1963, pp. 32ff., and Michela di Macco, *op. cit.* pp. 90ff.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Coudenhove-Erthal, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

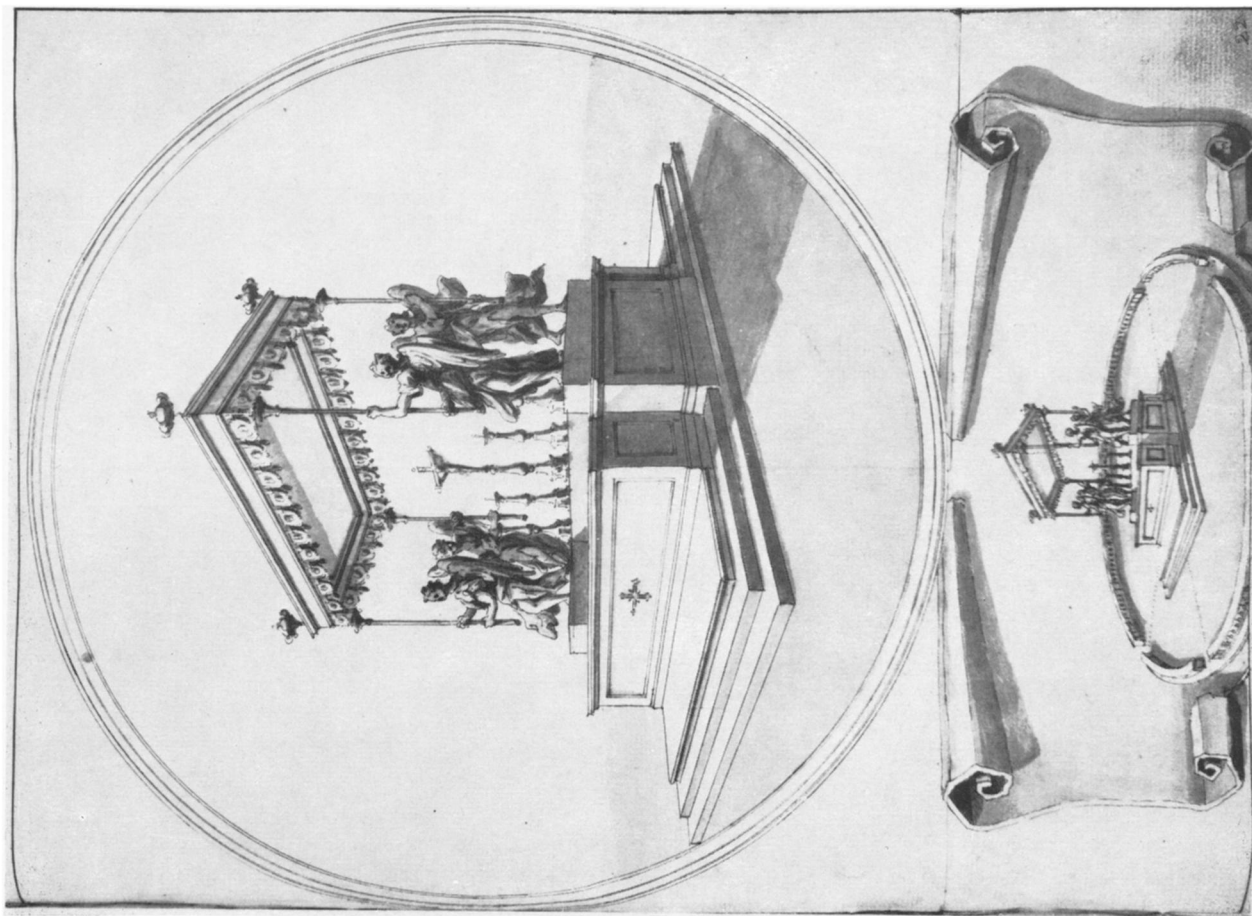
## APPENDIX

Introduction by Carlo Fontana to the volume of drawings of the Colosseum. London, Sir John Soane's Museum, MS AL/7A.

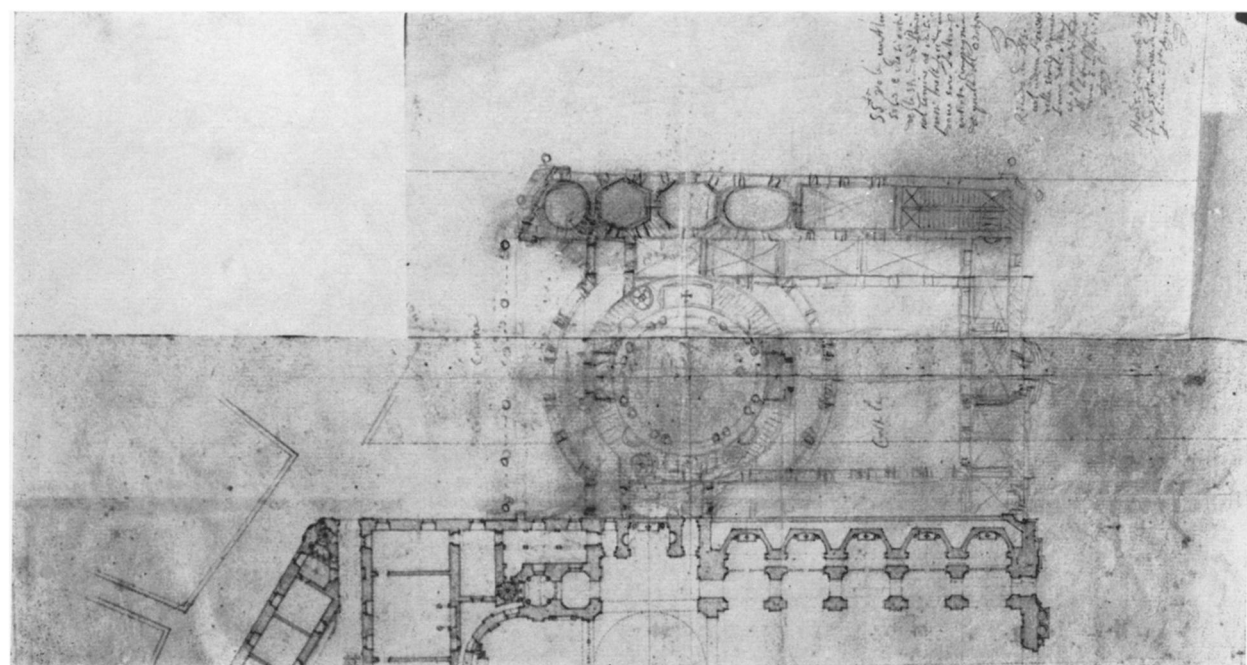
Beatiss.mo Padre.

La sempre Venerabile Antichità non ha saputo mai riportare à nostri sguardi maggior merauiglia del celebre Anfiteatro di Tito, questo ammirabil Vestigio delle romane Grandezze offro delineato, e descritto in questi fogli all'Augusto Trono della Santità Vra, e perchè non pareami lodabile d'espore un edificio, già un tempo così profano auanti il maestoso soglio di Vra Beatitudine, ho voluto ritrouare in esso tanto

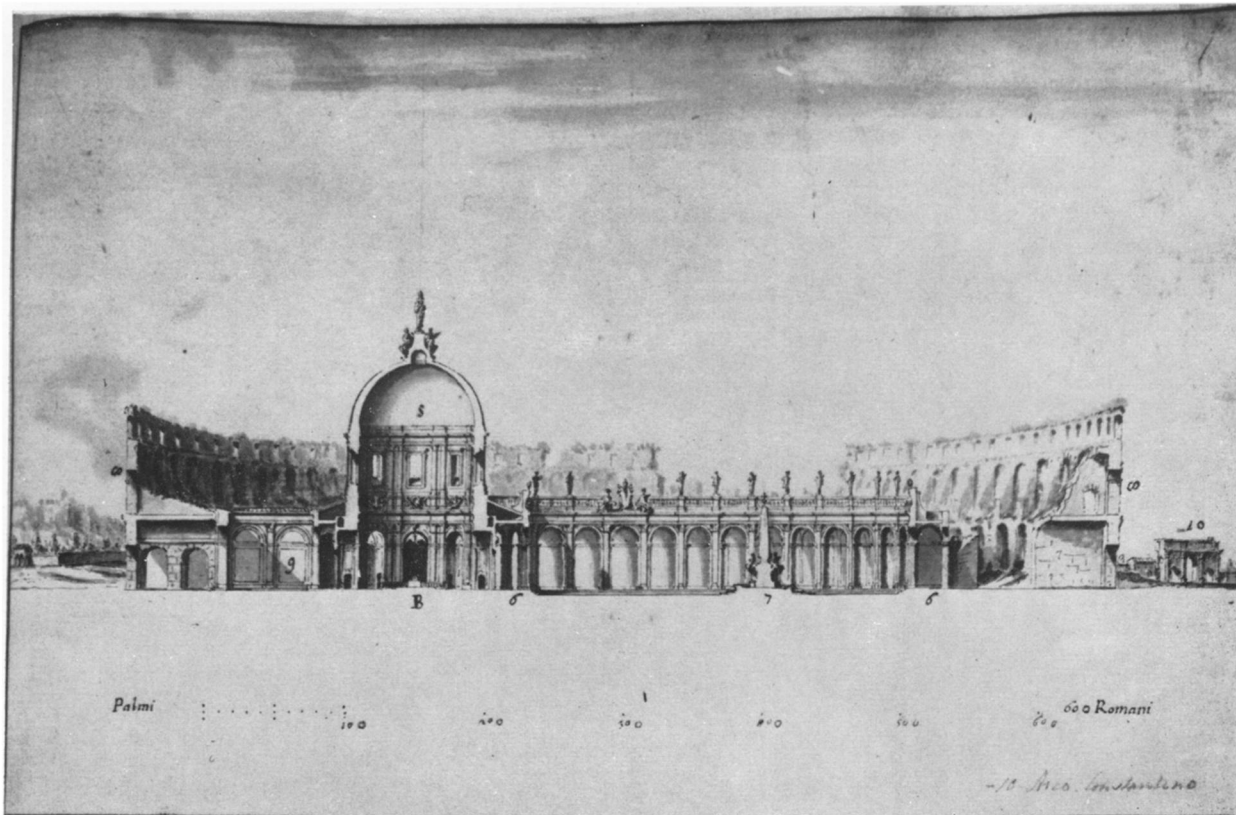




b—Carlo Fontana, design for the High Altar (see also Pl. 48a). London, Sir John Soane's Museum (*pp.* 320n., 328)  
 Courtesy Trustees, Sir John Soane's Museum



a—Francesco Borromini, ground plan for a circular chapel to be erected adjoining S. Maria in Vallicella. Vienna, Albertina (*p.* 329)



Courtesy Trustees, Sir John Soane's Museum

a—Carlo Fontana, longitudinal section of the Colosseum and the projected church (see also Pl. 49a). London, Sir John Soane's Museum (*pp.* 320n., 333)



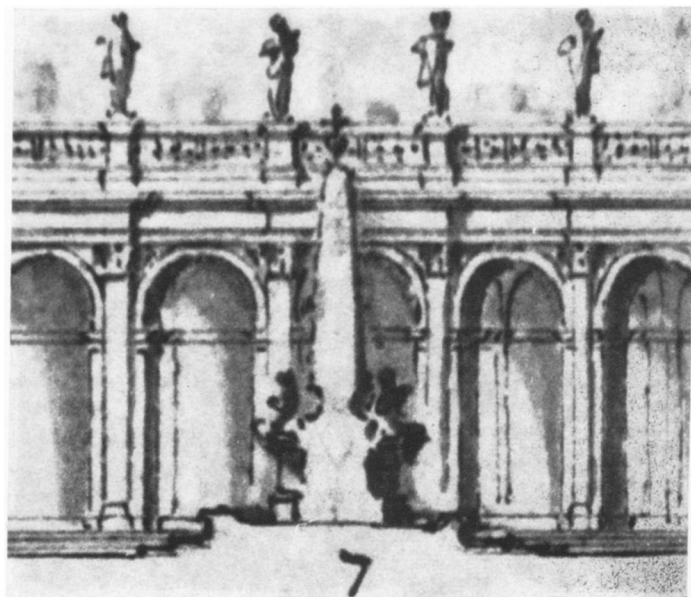
b—View of the interior of the Colosseum with the Chapel of S. Maria della Pietà by John Smith, London 1795 (from *Select Views in Italy*) (*pp.* 323, 336)





*Courtesy Trustees, Sir John Soane's Museum*

a—Elevation of the entrance to the arena (see Pl. 48a). London, Sir John Soane's Museum (*pp.* 320n., 326, 333)



*Courtesy Trustees, Sir John Soane's Museum*

b—Detail of the fountain on Pl. 48a. London, Sir John Soane's Museum (*pp.* 333f.)



c—Fontana dei Mori, Marino (*p.* 334)



di Sacro, e di Venerabile, che meritasse di comparire auanti a chi sa chiuder con un Cenno l'Inferno, et aprire con un accento l'empiro.

Rinuenuta da esse pertanto la preziosità di questo Terreno inaffiato col sangue glorioso di tanti santi Martiri, ho uoluto sù queste Carte registrarne prima l'Istoria sacra, e doppo la profana, e far uedere, che quel sito già da Romani Gentili uilipeso, e profanato si deue oggi da Romani fedeli (ad esempio de Cristiani della primitiua Chiesa) uenerar come sacro.

E perchè la Santità Vra ueglia con tanto spirito, e con tanto zelo al decoro del Culto Diuino, col rinourare i sacri antichi Tempij, e renderli più uagli, e maestosi, hò preso ardire di mostrare in quest'opera come si possa con lasciare illeso quell'Anfiteatro, superbo auanzo d'una Roma a mille insane Dieta già soggetta.

Nè ciò è solamente mio moderno Pensiere, mentre fin dal tempo della San:Mem: di Papa Clemente X essendo a me da un Principe Romano dato ordine di preparare dentro detto Teatro uarij Comodi attorno per farui alcuni Trattenimenti publici; et essendo quasi di già il tutto in essere, fù poi impedito dall'attenzione de i zelantissimi Porporati Benedetto Odescalchi, poi Papa Innocenzo XI di San.Mem: e Franceso Barberini, i quali ne diedero parte al detto Sommo Pontefice, che sapendo molto bene la Venerazione, che doueuasi à quel Santificato Terreno, che non era ragione, che in tempo di Roma Cristiana si uedessero risuegliate, e rinouate quelle cose del Gentilissimo, ordinò subito che fosse il tutto disfatto, e s'inalberasse sù gl'Ingressi principali dell'Anfiteatro la SS.ma Croce; Indi comandò al P. Tommasi, che si chiudesse attorno con Muri, e con due Inscrizioni indicasse a i Passaggieri, et à i Pellegrini, che ueniuano in Roma con l'occasione del Santo Giubileo la Diuozione, et ossequio, che doueuasi à quel santificato Terreno dalla generosa costanza di tanti inuitti eroi della nostra Fede Cattolica.

Giunse poi il predetto Emo Odescalchi al Pontificato, e mi fece imporre dal pre nominato Sig.Card.Barberini, che pensassi il modo per fare in quell'ambito un sontuoso edificio Sacro invece del Profano; Il qual sublime Pensiere resistè costante nella Mente della S.M. di detto Papa Innocenzo XI, ma poi occupato tutto se stesso nelle Guerre contro il Turco, indi oppresso da altri graui Pensieri restò così lodabilissima opera senza il suo fine bramato.

Per non defraudare dunque la sua S. Mente, espongo alla Sta Vra li qui annessi Pensieri per fare in quell'antico Arenario un Santuario degno d'essere uenerato come Teatro Illustre de Martiri, e come Sito, in cui s'incamminarono al Cielo infinite schiere di Santi e uaglia il uero a Chi doueuasi riserbare l'Impresa di quest'opera così Pia, Sacra, e decorosa, se non alla S. Vra, che col nome di Clemente promette al Mondo Cattolico il sospirato ritorno del Secolo d'oro, in cui farà bella pompa la Clemenza, la Pietà, la Liberalità, e la Giustizia, Virtù tutte, che ritrouano il loro Trono entro l'Augusto Petto di Vra Beatitudine.

Questo è quanto hò ardito di palesare con li seguenti Disegni in questi Volumi, non con altro desiderio, che di pubblicare alla Sntà Vra l'Istorie, che mi hanno dato giusto motiuo a dimostrare tanto i Disegni per le Fabriche sacre, si come anche delle Profane acciò il Mondo tutto riconosca la grandezza dell'Une, e dell'Altre e qui à Vra Beatitudine bacio li SSmi Piedi.

di Vra Santità

Umo. Diuotiss.mo et obligatiss.mo Ser.e  
Carlo Cau. Fontana