

Architectural Instructions in Italy between the 16th and 18th Centuries

By Francesco Del Sole *

Carlo Borromeo's Instructions represent the only practical application of the Tridentine decrees in architecture. However, historians over time have given little weight to the work, which is mostly considered a simple parish handbook due to its practical-functional nature used to treat the sacred space. New research conducted on the literary work has focused on the massive diffusion of this treatise in the undergrowth of the ecclesiastical literature of the time, testifying to how much the Instructions are linked to the historical context and the spiritual needs of the post-Tridentine Church. The great novelty of the work lies in the fact that it completely overturned the way of writing about architecture. In the writings of Carlo Borromeo, a continuous interweaving between the doctrine of the soul and the sacred building is outlined to give the Church the image of an institution organically constituted in its material and spiritual reality. The influence of this work outside the Milanese context in which Carlo Borromeo worked is still to be clarified, especially in the South of Italy, which experienced the peak of its Counter-Reformation season between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here, Instructions will be analyzed along with the Antica Basilicografia of Pompeo Sarnelli (1686) and Il Rettore ecclesiastico of Marcello Cavalieri (1688), two writings born in the diocese of Benevento under the wing of the bishop Vincenzo Maria Orsini, a native of Gravina di Puglia.

Introduction

Since Paola Barocchi included the first book of Carlo Borromeo's *Instructionum Fabricae et Suppellectilis ecclesiasticae* in her edition of the sixteenth-century Treatises on Art in 1962, the work has experienced a new flowering.¹ Critics, moving away from the habit of reading the text as a mere manual of practical use, have begun to investigate the deeper reasons that link Borromeo's work to the historical context and the spiritual needs of the post-Tridentine Church.² To date,

* Assistant Professor, Department of Cultural Heritage, University of Salento, Italy.

1. P. Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma* (Bari: Laterza, 1962), III, 3-113.

2. The most important studies include the invaluable writings of Maria Luisa Gatti Perer. Here I would like to mention the most significant contributions that will be cited in the article several times: M. L. Gatti Perer, "Prospettive nuove aperte da S. Carlo nelle sue Norme per l'Arte Sacra," in *Atti dell'Accademia di S. Carlo, inaugurazione del III anno accademico*, 15-33 (Milano: Studia Borromaica, 1980); Gatti Perer, "La manutenzione ordinaria degli edifici sacri e delle loro suppellettili secondo Carlo Borromeo," in *Atti dell'Accademia di S. Carlo. Inaugurazione del V anno accademico*, 121-147 (Milano: Studia Borromaica, 1982); Gatti Perer, "Progetto e destino dell'edificio sacro dopo S. Carlo," in *San Carlo e il suo tempo, Atti del convegno internazionale nel IV centenario dalla morte - Milano, 21-26 maggio 1984*, 611-631 (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1986). See also: J. S. Ackermann, "Pellegrino Tibaldi, San Carlo Borromeo e

the influence of the work outside the Milanese context remains to be clarified, especially in the South of Italy, which experienced the peak of its Counter-Reformation season between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here the *Instructiones* will be analyzed along with some writings born in the diocese of Benevento under the wing of the bishop Vincenzo Maria Orsini, a native of Gravina di Puglia. It was precisely the future Pope Benedict XIII who, about a century after the death of Saint Charles, was able to actualize the image of Borromeo's loving and zealous bishop that had given way to the seventeenth-century vision of the prelate, which spread with his early sanctification.

Saint Charles Borromeo, Model of Every Virtue

The canonization of Carlo Borromeo is the event that in the Catholic world inaugurates the seventeenth century, becoming the most effective manifestation of the renewal drive of the Counter-Reformation.³ The year 1610, when the bull of sanctification was issued, was only the last step in a process that had begun in 1601 when the Oblates of Milan proposed to the vicar general of the diocese that their archbishop, who had died in 1584, be made a saint. The citizens of Milan immediately began to frequent Borromeo's sepulchre in constant pilgrimage, shaping the public cult of the prelate. This devotion, originally of the popular matrix, was nourished by daily graces and miracles, meticulously noted down by the Hosts of the Cathedral who had the task of collecting every useful testimony to shape the figure of the new saint. Furthermore, at a time of great crisis in Catholic doctrine, the birth of a strong devotion around one of the most important cardinals of the Council was seen by the ecclesiastical leadership as a precious opportunity for the post-Tridentine church. Within a few years, Borromeo underwent sudden depersonalization. As the process of sanctification unfolded, the memory of the prelate settled down in a well-codified form: Charles Borromeo was no longer a simple archbishop but a model who had to appear 'as an ornament to the triumphant

l'architettura ecclesiastica del loro tempo," in *San Carlo e il suo tempo, Atti del convegno internazionale nel IV centenario dalla morte - Milano, 21-26 maggio 1984*, 573-586 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1986); A. Scotti, "Architettura e riforma cattolica nella Milano di Carlo Borromeo," *L'Arte* 18/19, no. 24 (1972); D. Frascarelli, "Arte e Controriforma: l'altare maggiore nelle *Instructiones fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae* di Carlo Borromeo," in *I cardinali di Santa Romana Chiesa, collezionisti e mecenati* (ed.) M. Gallo, 24-37. Roma: Shakespeare and Company 2, 2001.

3. There is a vast amount of literature on Carlo Borromeo, his canonization and the importance of his doctrine in the Counter-Reformation world. I will limit myself to pointing out the most recent contributions that have outlined an updated framework of the research carried out so far: A. Turchini, *La fabbrica di un santo. Il processo di canonizzazione di Carlo Borromeo e la Controriforma* (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1984); J. M. Headley and J. B. Tomaro (Eds.), *San Carlo Borromeo. Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century* (Washington: Folger Books - Associated University Presses, 1988); D. Zardin, *Carlo Borromeo. Cultura, santità, governo* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2010); M. L. Frosio and D. Zardin (Eds.), *Carlo Borromeo e il cattolicesimo dell'età moderna. Nascita e fortuna di un modello di santità* (Milano: Bulzoni, 2011).

church and useful to the militant one'.⁴ His sanctity is dispersed in a long list of virtues, of which commemorative panegyrics were composed beginning in 1601. The production of votive images and the flourishing trade of relics constitute indispensable support for the widespread diffusion of the cult (see Figure 1). During the canonization of 1610, the formal purity of Caroline's doctrine gave way to a bubbling of metaphors, linguistic games and theatrical constructions that highlighted, above all, the propagandistic and self-celebratory power of the counter-reformed church.



Figure 1. *Saint Charles Represented as a Man with a Window in his Chest ‘Where it is Possible to See the Heart’*

Note: The heart is a recurring and almost obsessive theme linked to the canonization of Carlo Borromeo.

Source: P. Fattorio, *Ampla et diligente relatione de gli honori fatti al cuore di San Carlo* (Roma, 1614).

The ‘Sapiens Architectus’

Parallel to the image of the new saint who invites to ‘guard one’s own heart’ in the sign of sincere devotion, the Jesuit Achille Gagliardi (1537–1607) focuses on the reform aspect intrinsic to Borromeo’s pastoral action. He is the *Sapiens Architectus*. From his words, we understand why the Milanese bishop was proposed as a model of life not only for the faithful but also for the clergy. It was necessary to look at Borromeo’s ‘holy flesh’ by drawing inspiration from the key principles of his pastoral action: the priest who embodies the image of the Good Shepherd must rediscover the bond with his flock. The man of the church must appear as an architect capable of working on several fronts. On the one hand, based on the Tridentine decrees, he must carry out a monumental work of the rebuilding

4. A. Turchini, *La fabbrica di un santo. Il processo di canonizzazione di Carlo Borromeo e la Controriforma*, 1984, 21.

of the ecclesiastical organs, ordering the Church according to a ramified structure of government, where the bishops are the *cardines* and the priests the desired *nerves* of the spiritual life of the people;⁵ on the other hand, he must promote a true and proper restoration of Catholic worship, inventing suitable solutions to accompany the people on the path of faith.⁶ To this end, the Good Shepherd must not be concerned only with doctrine but also focus on sacred space, which, in its rational and ordered structure, creates the necessary conditions for man's encounter with God. The deep sense of Carlo Borromeo's idea of architecture is based on this necessity, translated in the *Instructionum Fabricae et Supellectilis ecclesiasticae*, printed in Milan in 1577 (Borromeo, 1577) (see Figure 2).⁷



Figure 2. *Saint Charles and the Main Sacred Buildings Built in the Years of his Episcopate*

Source: Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana.

5. A. Paredi (Ed.), *Sancti Caroli Borromaei Orationes XII: ad usum episcoporum in Concilium Oecum. Vaticanum II convenientium Pauli VI Pont. Max. iussu denuo editae* (Milano: Tip. U. Allegretti di Campi, 1963), II, 122. The reference to bishops as “cardines” is taken from the homily of 21 July 1583 at S. Prassede in Milan (II, 122); the reference to priests as “desired nerves” is taken from the homily of 3 January 1584 (III, 300).

6. E. Cattaneo, “Il restauro del culto cattolico,” in *San Carlo e il suo tempo, Atti del convegno internazionale nel IV centenario dalla morte - Milano, 21-26 maggio 1984*, 427-453 (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1986).

7. C. Borromeo, *Instructionum fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae: libri II* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1577).

From the 'Good Shepherd' to the 'Good Visitor'

The impressive diffusion of the whole 'corpus' of St. Charles' works between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries should be seen in the context of the new post-Tridentine spirituality. The *Acta ecclesiae mediolanensis*, in addition to dealing with the institutional part (Provincial Councils and Synods), pay particular attention to the devotional aspect of the Catholic Reform, which must be based on 'instructions', homilies and pastoral letters to recover the relationship with the faithful. It is precisely on the moral behaviour of Vincenzo Maria Orsini that biographers insist when they describe him as the most worthy heir, between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of the Carolinian pastoral model. Elected cardinal in 1672, Orsini arrived in the diocese of Benevento in 1686 where he remained until his election to the papal throne.⁸ If Carlo Borromeo became a pastoral model immediately after his death, Orsini's reformist zeal was already exemplary during the years of his government, so much so that Pope Innocent XII himself wished that the organization of his diocese be followed by his contemporaries.⁹ He spent much of his days approaching the people in the parishes, insisting on frequent and direct preaching. As such, starting from Caroline's teaching, Orsini transformed the model of the Good Shepherd into that of the Good Visitor, making his own the precept according to which 'the office and exercise of the Bishop is nothing but a continual visitation: for it is necessary for him always to be vigilant and to toil in everything with apostolic zeal'.¹⁰ This is an enrichment of the model of the post-Tridentine bishop using a pastorality which, precisely in carrying out the Visits, moves carefully through the first phase of detection of critical situations, followed by intervention and provision. To give an idea of the extent of his pastoral action, it is sufficient to recall that in the 44 years of his episcopate in Benevento, the prelate was able to make, personally or through his collaborators, about two thousand pastoral visits.

The 'Treatise of the Pastoral Visit' by Giuseppe Crispino (1682)

It is not surprising, given his spiritual zeal, that under the influence of Orsini, writings such as the *Trattato della Visita pastorale*, printed in Naples for the first time in 1682, came to light.¹¹ The work became a veritable *vademecum* for bishops

8. For more on Vincenzo Maria Orsini see A. De Spirito, *Culto e cultura nelle visite orsiniane e L'osservazione partecipante di un vescovo del Mezzogiorno*. (Roma: Studium Edizioni, 2003).

9. De Spirito, *Culto e cultura nelle visite orsiniane e L'osservazione partecipante di un vescovo del Mezzogiorno*, 2003, 14.

10. Ibid, 103.

11. G. Crispino, *Trattato della visita pastorale* (Roma: Domenico Antonio Ercole, 1965). The first printing was dedicated by Crispino to Innico Caracciolo, whose secretary he was. The version taken as reference here is the reprint of 1695, in whose preface Crispino explains to the reader the genesis of the work, linked to Orsini's advices. The work was enormously successful and was printed regularly until the end of the nineteenth century (the ninth edition was published in 1895). About the

scattered throughout the provinces of Italy. The author Monsignor Giuseppe Crispino had already been the secretary of Archbishop Innico Caracciolo who, for the first time, had introduced in the South of Italy the type of pastorality directly inspired by the reformist practice of Carlo Borromeo.¹² Having found a road paved by Caracciolo's policy in the nearby Neapolitan diocese, it was easy to impose the Ursinian method in the management of the Visitation. With the subdivision into phases (preparatory, local, real and personal), the event took the form of a real spiritual rite that helped the provincial parish priests to make the sacred building worthy of celebrating the glory of God and, at the same time, to form a clergy adequate to the care of souls. The author's use of terms such as 'building/edifying', 'raising' or 'plant' in his literary endeavour does not appear obvious. The Treatise is the result of a studied edification of the parts, constructed *iure architectonico* based on the 'precious stones' of the doctrine imparted by Orsini.¹³ The analogy with architecture is evident not only in the use of terms proper to the discipline but also in the metaphorical reference to that art of building, which must fuse, in a single whole, the internal itinerary of the soul to the sacred space. This substantial identity between moral and material construction induces Orsini to guide Crispino in the writing of the Treatise. The author describes the model of the Pastoral Visit focusing on a single objective: to regulate the liturgy and the practice of worship by highlighting problems of action, movement and function of space. Therefore, in the part dedicated to the 'real visitation', the text only takes up the practical indications on the sacred building set out in the *Instructiones* of Carlo Borromeo. The only 'unit of measure' to be considered in the composition of the sacred space is faithful in their condition of user.¹⁴ If the church is a spiritual building that exists only in function of the devotees who animate it, man must identify himself with the house of God, becoming himself a 'church of living stones'.¹⁵

From Homily to Treatise

The substantial interpenetration between the care of the soul and the care of the sacred space present in the doctrine of Carlo Borromeo, well taken up by Orsini, leads to a logical consequence: the sacred building must be treated with the same method with which the Good Shepherd awakens the faith in his flock. Accordingly, historiography is unanimous in defining Borromeo's preaching work as one of the greatest achievements of his pastoral action. In a climate of fervent disputes of faith, Saint Charles' homily was not philosophical but essentially popular. Moreover,

book see G. De Rosa, *De Rosa, G. Chiesa e religione popolare nel Mezzogiorno* (Bari: Laterza, 1978), 105-110.

12. R. De Maio, *Società e vita religiosa a Napoli nell'età moderna (1656-1799)* (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche, 1971), 23-25.

13. S. Della Torre, "Riferimenti classicisti nell'architettura sacra post-tridentina," in *I tempi del concilio. Religione, cultura e società nell'Europa tridentina* (eds.) C. Mozzarelli and D. Zardin (Roma: Bulzoni, 1997), 414-427.

14. Borromeo, *Instructionum fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae: libri II.*, 1577, 13.

15. G. Dominici, *Regola del governo di cura familiare* (Firenze: Angelo Garinei, 1860), 79.

Borromeo's intellectual working method, which is influenced by his *mens iuridica*, is based on perspicuitas, the utmost clarity and communicative effectiveness.¹⁶ In the composition of his homilies, little space is reserved for improvisation. The inspirational principles of the speech are arranged according to logical 'tree-like' schemes that outline the plot of the subjects to be developed and branch out into gradually simpler concepts, functional to the game of content symmetries and useful for memorization (see Figure 3). The message of the sermon is thus diluted in such a way as to divert the personal needs of each member of the faithful towards a collective devotionality, made up of mystical impulses and direct involvement in the rite. The objective is to speak to the heart of the faithful since the prelate sensed that 'irreligiosity is a disease of the heart before being a disease of the brain'.¹⁷ The architectural *Instructiones* are developed using the same deductive ad arbores method with which the key concepts of a sermon are branched out (see Figure 4). This innovative approach is precisely one of the reasons why this literary work, for a long time, was not considered a true treatise on architecture. In this regard, the exclusion of the text from the famous *Artistic Literature* (1924) by Julius von Schlosser is emblematic. Antony Blunt was the first, in 1940, to define Carlo Borromeo 'the only author who applied the Tridentine decree to the problem of architecture'.¹⁸ The great novelty of the work lies in having completely overturned the way of writing about architecture; no longer, as in Palladio's treatise (1570), through a structure that unravels from the particular to the general with an eye fixed on the classical models. We find ourselves in front of a gigantic work of disassembly in which the sacred building is decomposed into its parts, progressively descending in scale. This examination expresses the author's meticulousness in revising the physical reality of the building: the visibility, the hierarchy of the architectural elements, the measures and dimensions of the parts, the furnishings and the vestments, even lingering over minute prescriptions. The only concern of the bishop-legislator is that of reducing the various aspects of the liturgy into 'norms', making sure that every element of the sacred space does not get in the way of the Christian rite for which the place is functional. In the writings of St. Charles, a continuous interweaving between the doctrine of the soul and the sacred building is outlined, aiming to give the Church the image of an institution organically constituted in its material and spiritual reality. On the one hand, the homily must be composed according to a disciplined architecture of knowledge; on the other hand,

16. Carlo Borromeo graduated in canon and civil law from the University of Pavia (1552-1559) where he studied under Francesco Alciati. See C. Fantappiè, "Per una reinterpretazione dell'opera e dell'eredità giuridica di san Carlo Borromeo," in *Carlo Borromeo e il cattolicesimo dell'età moderna. Nascita e fortuna di un modello di santità*, 165-210 (Milano: Bulzoni, 2011); S. Bianconi, and S. Morgana, "Verborum pondera vimque habebit: teoria e pratica linguistica in Carlo Borromeo," in *Carlo Borromeo e l'opera della 'grande riforma'. Cultura, religione e arti nella Milano del pieno Cinquecento* (eds.) F. Buzzi and D. Zardin (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 1997), 366.

17. A. Novelli, "S. Carlo Borromeo oratore sacro," in *San Carlo Borromeo nel terzo centenario della canonizzazione. La Scuola Cattolica XVIII*, serie IV (1910), 131.

18. A. Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 137.

the sacred building must result in ‘a creative living [...] that knows how to make the human talents, mentioned in the Gospel parable, bear fruit’.¹⁹

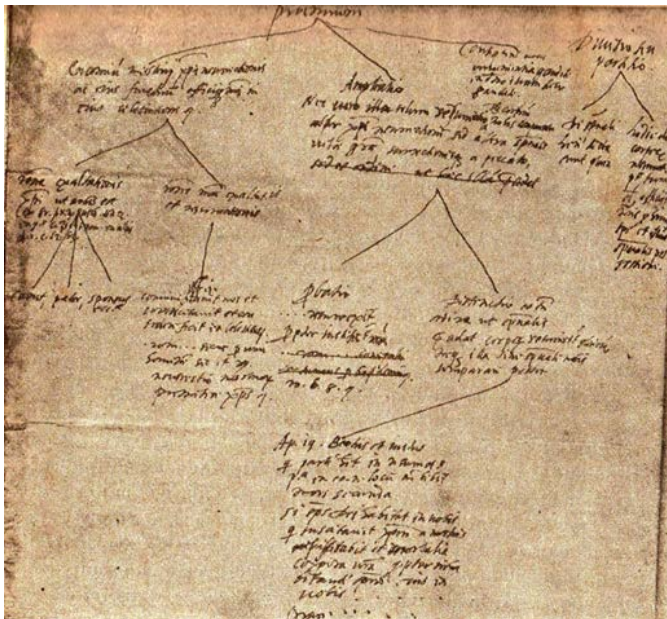


Figure 3. Autograph Scheme of Carlo Borromeo’s Homily for Easter Mass in 1581
Source: Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana.

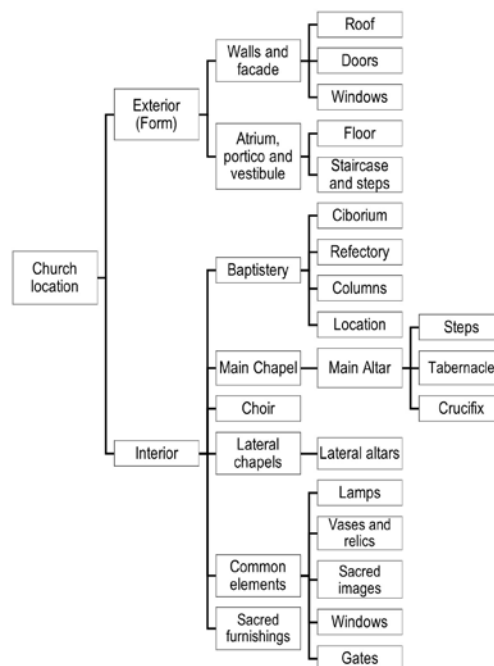


Figure 4. Compositional Scheme ‘Ad Arbores’ of the *Instructiones* of Carlo Borromeo (1577)
Source: Author’s elaboration.

19. S. Benedetti, *Fuori dal classicismo. Sintetismo, tipologia, ragione nell’architettura del Cinquecento* (Roma: Multigrafica Editrice, 1984), 113.

Carlo Borromeo's Ideal Church

Once the site and plan of the church have been chosen, the portico in front of the building and the access portals are the first *thresholds* to introduce the faithful to the grand liturgical stage. Behind the sentences dedicated to the portico in the *Instructiones* (proportionate to the size of the church, erected on marble columns or pillars of stone or brick), it is possible to read between the lines figures and types typical of early Christian architecture, called upon to give the main portal the necessary prominence, as a means which introduces the hall in semi-darkness. The portals must be architraved “as seen in the most ancient basilicas [...] since they must be distinguished from the civil ones”.²⁰ As for the number of entrances, it must be multiple and possibly odd. The choice of a number corresponding to that of the naves is justified by the original function of separating the entrances for men from those for women. This separation of roles, which applies more generally to the separation of roles between the clergy and the faithful, is reflected in the division of space and is one of the major early Christian legacies of the Counter-Reformation building designed by Borromeo. The hall is delineated as a path that marks the itinerary of the soul with the aim of giving life to a new man, understood as a temple of God, a church of living stones. This vision, underlying the *Instructiones*, is to be found in the overall structuring of the liturgical space, in the dialectical relationship between nave and presbytery, church and square, exterior and interior. The sacred space must be a line of tension towards the sacrarium. The altars that until then had been placed “under pulpits or choir lofts, where the organ is played, [...] between pillars and columns”²¹ were to be eliminated altogether, in order to create a straight path that does not tolerate interruptions. Leafing through the pages of the *Instructiones*, one realises that the architectural elements of the entire building are described according to a precise hierarchy, marked out by the use of real and symbolic thresholds that look back to medieval tradition. The faithful are mere spectators; they must participate in the Eucharistic celebration from below and from afar, limited by physical barriers and studied elevations of the floors. Elements of great liturgical importance such as the altar, the tabernacle and the baptistery become almost inaccessible places, protected by gates that allow the faithful to see them only, always at a proper distance. Chapels, including the main chapel, must be protected by gratings or marble or stone balustrades. The same applies to the choir, which must be “separated from the part of the church where the faithful are and closed off by gates, in accordance with ancient custom and for reasons of discipline”.²² If space does not permit this, the bishop must ensure that “the crowd is kept at a certain distance from the celebrating priest”.²³ These physical thresholds respond not only to the practical need to bring order to the liturgical assembly, but also to underline its hierarchical differences, rehabilitating the priestly ministry, which was deeply challenged by Protestant doctrine. The

20. Borromeo, *Instructionum fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae: libri II*, 23.

21. *Ibid.*, 49.

22. *Ibid.*, 35.

23. *Ibid.*, 53.

attention paid to the steps and different levels that articulate the sacred space, a reflection of the pyramidal structure in which the entire *societas christiana* is organised, should be interpreted in the same light. Right from the chapter dedicated to the location of the church, Borromeo recalls how important it is for the building to be “in a rather elevated position [...] so that it can be accessed by less than three steps, five at the most”.²⁴ The ninth chapter is entirely devoted to this subject. He asked the architect to create an external staircase large in proportion to the size of the church, with a wider treadway every three or five steps for a comfortable ascent. Also in the chapter devoted to the high altar he feels the need to provide indications about the floor, which “will be higher than the floor of the church [...] by at least eight ounces and at most one cubit”.²⁵ The reorganisation carried out by Pellegrino Tibaldi, Borromeo’s trusted architect, in Milan Cathedral is emblematic in this respect.²⁶ In an axial line, Tibaldi’s basilica has a nave reserved for the faithful; higher up, the senatorial choir reserved for the civil authorities; and finally, even higher up, the presbytery with the altar. The clear division of the presbytery, on a higher level than the nave, is the device which, more than any other, reflects Borromeo’s entire reform. The liturgy, which had always been conditioned by the relationship between the nave and the presbytery, was profoundly innovated by Borromeo in the way the spaces were divided up, which profoundly influenced “the norm and the form, so that they conform to the criteria indicated by the Fathers regarding the construction [...] of the building”.²⁷

The ‘Antica Basilicografia’ by Pompeo Sarnelli (1686)

The use of this innovative dialectic *a genere ad speciem* is not only to be considered the technical expedient of an academic. On the contrary, it is the practical method chosen by a bishop who wanted his people to understand the essential concepts of the faith, spreading the doctrine of the Counter-Reformation throughout the territory. This is the purpose of the *Instructiones*, which are not to be read as a set of precepts to be rigidly followed but as successfully experimented guidelines in the Milanese diocese and proposed as a model, tacitly favouring great freedom of action precisely because of the norms outlined in the Treaty. The objective is to give weight to the local needs of each community as highlighted by the bishop, who, in turn, takes into good account the opinion of the architect. Bishop Orsini was inspired by the principles of adaptability and usability of the Caroline norms, experimenting with local models of the *Instructiones* that could adapt to the needs of the diocese of Benevento where, before his arrival, ‘there was

24. Ibid, 9.

25. Ibid, 31.

26. G. Benati and F. Repishti (Eds.), *Carlo Borromeo, Pellegrino Tibaldi e la trasformazione interna del Duomo di Milano: nuove acquisizioni critiche e documentarie* (Milan: Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano, 2010).

27. Borromeo, *Instructionum fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae: libri II*, 5.

not a church in which it was possible to celebrate'.²⁸ After the fruitful experiences in the dioceses of Manfredonia and Cesena, during his first visits to the churches, Orsini understood the state of the city. It is no coincidence that in 1686, the year of his settlement in Benevento, the *Antica Basilicografia* was printed.²⁹ Pompeo Sarnelli's treatise ideally attempts to reconstruct the spaces of the primitive church-building through reckless use of the sources, referring to the original meaning of 'basilica' of the early Christian age, also proposing a graphic reconstruction (see Figure 5). We are facing erudite research on religious architecture that aims to intercept no longer the mass of the clergy and the 'heart' of the faithful but an audience of authoritative ecclesiastics and scholars. The drastic change of the interlocutor is accompanied by the blurring of some characteristics at the basis of the Caroline Treatise, such as the bishop-architect relationship well outlined by Borromeo with the specificity of tasks and roles. In this case, the architecture does not take shape from the constant dialogue between client and technician but thanks to the *auctoritas* of the past, reconstructed piece by piece with great obstinacy. Hence, the text attempts a mediation between the erudite studies already carried out for some time on sacred buildings (such as the work of Cataneo or Panvinio) and the practical approach of the norms of Saint Charles.³⁰ This is also evident in the compositional choices; as the author himself confirms, the reference to the *Instructiones* is constant (the subdivision of the paragraphs keeps well in mind the technique *ad arbores*, articulating the discourse from the general to the particular) but the approach to look at the source has changed (see Figure 6). The author describes the various parts of the sacred building, forgetting the *perspicuitas* of the post-Tridentine treatise and inserting long historical and symbolic reflections. St. Charles' precepts are generally placed at the end of a series of authoritative quotations, thus losing the 'flexibility' that his careful vision made possible (see Figure 7). Fully aware that he is reaching an audience of a select few, Sarnelli chooses the path of erudition. This does not mean that his goal is only a disquisition among intellectuals. The *Basilicografia* was born above all to highlight the strength of the example and discipline of Orsini; the treatise itself is emphatically described as the 'basilica of his Orsini roses' and in many passages, the work illustrates the results obtained by Orsini's episcopal government. In the drafting of the text, the author moves in the same direction as the pastoral attitude of the bishop, who, having recently arrived in Benevento, realized the serious deficiencies in the local religious education so much so that he personally visited many cities 'doing the

28. P. Sarnelli, *Memorie cronologiche de' vescovi ed arcivescovi della S. Chiesa di Benevento* (Napoli: Giuseppe Roselli, 1691), 168-171.

29. On this personality see M. Basile Bonsante, "Appunti su Pompeo Sarnelli moralista e scrittore d'arte," in *Atti del congresso internazionale di studi sull'Età del Vicereame – Bari, 7-9 ottobre 1972*, 239-256 (Bari: Bigiemme, 1977); Basile Bonsante, "Architettura e committenza religiosa: l'Antica Basilicografia di Pompeo Sarnelli," *Archivio Storico Pugliese* XXXV, fasc. I-IV (1982): 205-235.

30. P. Cataneo, *I quattro libri di architettura di Pietro Cataneo Senese* (Venezia: Casa de' Figliuoli di Aldo, 1554); O. Panvinio, *De praecipuis urbis Romae sanctoribus basilicis quas Septem Ecclesias vulgo vocant* (Roma: Apud Maternum Cholinum, 1570).

usual functions and preaching what the holy visitation was'.³¹ The worrying spiritual emergency is accompanied by the material one, for which the sacred buildings had 'semblance of hovels, or caves'.³² As Carlo Borromeo had taught, all that remained was to restructure the diocese to 'provide for the crumbling churches and restore discipline'.³³ Sarnelli's treatise aims to respond to these needs, addressing the problems related to architecture concerning the much more serious deficiencies in the field of religious education. As such, just the continuous oscillation between norm and erudition highlights 'the attempt to reconcile morality and erudition or, rather, to put the latter at the service of the former'.³⁴

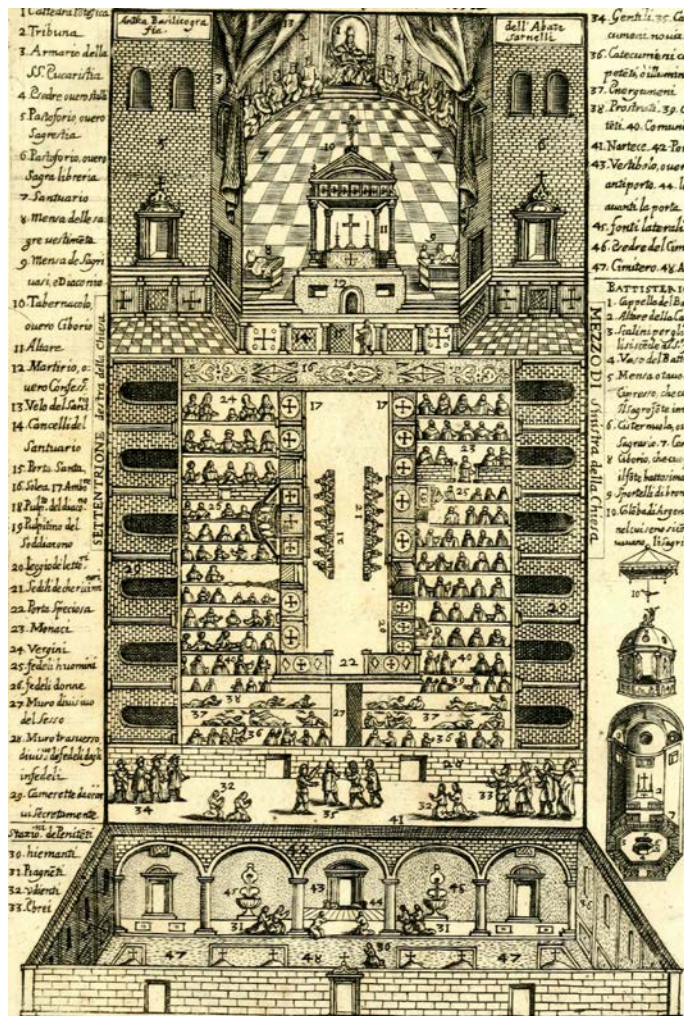


Figure 5. *Graphic Reconstruction of the Interior and Atrium of the Early Christian Basilica*

Source: P. Sarnelli, *Antica Basilicografia*, 1686.

31. Sarnelli, *op. cit.*, 168-171.

32. De Spirito, *op. cit.*, 104.

33. Sarnelli, *op. cit.*, 168-171.

34. Basile Bonsante, "Architettura e committenza religiosa: l'Antica Basilicografia di Pompeo Sarnelli," 1982, 220.

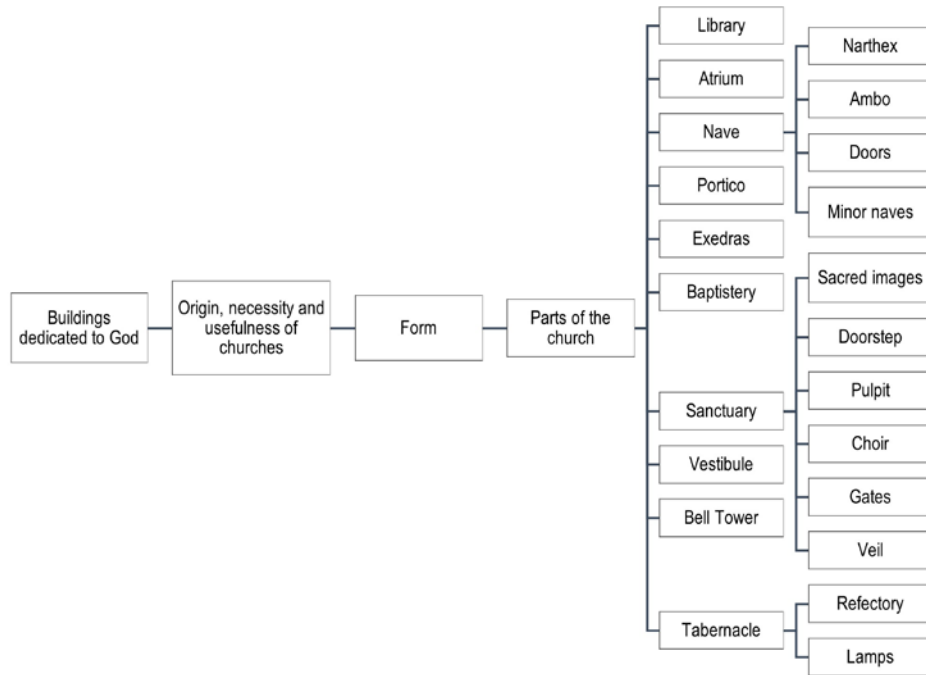


Figure 6. *Compositional Scheme ‘Ad Arbores’ of the Macrothemes of the Antica Basilicografia of P. Sarnelli*
 Source: Author’s elaboration.

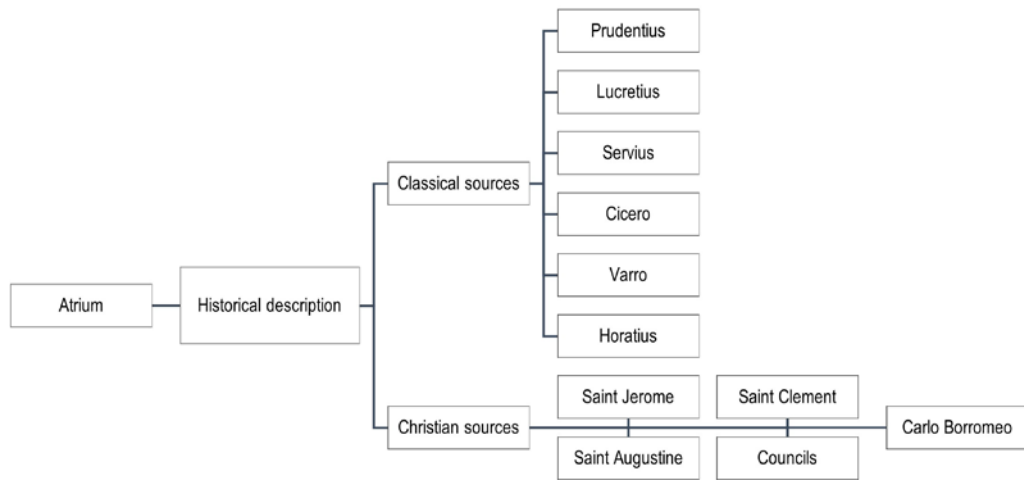


Figure 7. *Detail of the Development of the Paragraph Dedicated to the Item ‘Atrium’ in the Antica Basilicografia*
 Note: It is evident how much the speech is based on authoritative quotations of classical and Christian kind, and then closes with the norm of Saint Charles.
 Source: Author’s elaboration.

The 'Rettore Ecclesiastico' by Marcello Cavalieri (1688)

If the first times of Orsini's episcopate in Benevento allowed a certain erudite reflection on religious architecture, in 1688, there was the urgency to move to the operational phase after the earthquake that struck the city. The acts of the Visits that the bishop made in those years testify to serious damage to sacred buildings. Orsini, speaking of the tragedy, refers to the age of the buildings and does not fail to emphasize how the divine hand had wanted to punish the clergy for the unseemly way in which they were used to guard the house of God.³⁵ The most urgent need at that time was to rebuild the places of worship, proposing a model of management of the sacred space that would allow reaching 'at least decency, when having does not allow to compliment abundance; making up for more with kindness [...]. Because God [...] puts the fullness of heart before the preciousness of the vows'.³⁶ Since the earthquake suddenly changed the priorities of the Benevento diocese, the bishop was forced to move towards crude practicality that left no room for erudite digressions. With this spirit he turns to Cavalieri, commissioning him to write the *Rettore Ecclesiastico*, which, even more than the *Antica Basilicografia*, appears to be a work dominated by the 'express commandment' of the prelate that, in this case, must be contained 'within the limits of a bare and literal instruction, so as to facilitate its execution with brevity and reading, with adapting to the short intelligence of not a few'.³⁷ The intention to create a link with the *Basilicografia* of Sarnelli printed two years earlier is clear. According to Cavalieri, it is not necessary to make erudite reasoning on the primitive Christian church because it was St. Charles himself who had 'accommodated' the ancient practices according to 'modern customs' and the 'dictates of architecture'. Avoiding preambles and clearly departing from Sarnelli's vision, the *Rettore Ecclesiastico* is set up as a parish handbook. The work recovers the Caroline model in many ways, so much so that several times this treatise has been spoken of as a simple translation 'to the letter' of the sixteenth-century *Instructiones*.³⁸ However, reading the words of the author and accompanying them with a careful analysis of the composition of the work, it is possible to realize that the norm of Saint Charles underwent important modifications, since it was adapted to the functional needs of the diocese, which required rules of immediate application. Although the chapters of the treatise reflect the 'disassembly' of the sacred building proposed by Saint Charles, they do not follow the order dictated by the Milanese bishop but are composed differently, highlighting 'the author's long experience as a "visitor" in the diocese of Benevento' (see Figures 8–9).³⁹ 'I do not deny, however, that I have put in some small part of my own, which, with the office of Visitor in this diocese [...] I have judged more proper and appropriate to the different circumstances of places and

35. De Spirito, *op. cit.*, 55-60.

36. M. Cavalieri, *Il Rettore ecclesiastico istruito sulle regole della fabbrica e delle suppellettili...* (Napoli: Fusco Editore, 1688), Introduction.

37. *Ibid.*, 26.

38. Benedetti, *op. cit.*, 131, note 97.

39. Basile Bonsante, *op. cit.*, 220.

times'.⁴⁰ The greatest novelty of Cavalieri's work lies in the fact that he fully understood the spirit with which Borromeo had printed his treatise on architecture, leaving full freedom of action to the local bishop who, as Good Visitor, could have proposed 'those rules that in the progress of the holy visitation have arisen suitable to needs, and universally necessary no less to practice than to know'.⁴¹ The aspect on which he insists, even in a redundant way, is that of the 'cleanliness' of the sacred buildings, with entire paragraphs dedicated to the problems of humidity, the 'clearness' of the walls and the repairs to be carried out 'without delay', recalling on several occasions the poverty in which the churches of Benevento were after the earthquake. The result is a treatise that scrupulously follows the system *ad arbores* of San Carlo; in some cases, it shortens or eliminates entire parts of the original text because they were not considered necessary to the practical needs of the diocese. In this respect, the first lines of Title I are exemplary: the reader is warned that the first two chapters of the *Instructiones* of Saint Charles, dedicated to the site and form of the church, are not included. As the author affirms, the *Rettore Ecclesiastico* has the task of reporting only the news 'that concern the construction of the churches already built'.⁴² Completely absent, for obvious reasons, are the prescriptions on the Ambrosian rite as well as the paragraphs on the location and shape of the baptistery and the bell tower along with the instructions regarding the churches and monasteries of the nuns. The prescriptions on the ecclesiastical furnishings are inserted directly as chapters within the text without providing for the division into two tomes as had happened for the *Instructiones* of Borromeo. On other points, however, the norms of Saint Charles are rewritten to allow for greater flexibility in the organization of sacred space. Among the most obvious changes on this point, aimed at simplifying the text by the emergency due to the earthquake in which the diocese found itself, we must mention the possibility of providing openings on the sides of the church, expressly forbidden by St. Charles; the possibility, for poor churches, of having only one sacarium near the baptistery (on this point, St. Charles appeared intransigent in providing a sacarium for the baptistery and one for the church); the presence of a single pulpit as a simpler solution (Borromeo describes minutely, according to the width of the church, the presence of several ambos or pulpits). The same simplification is made in the case of the minor altars, the sacristy, the bell tower and the burials inside the sacred space. In other parts of the treatise, on the other hand, the descriptive meticulousness reaches even more accurate results than Borromeo had done, precisely because of the practice of the Holy Visit (see Figures 10-11). In addition to inserting entire paragraphs on the 'cleanliness' of the churches, the major additions concern practical expedients: detailed description of drapes, veils, lamps, candlesticks, tablecloths to be used on the altars and the tabernacle; the addition of an entire paragraph dedicated to the 'cabinet of the holy oils and its annexes' (tit. IX). In general, it is worth noting the scrupulous attention paid to coverings, restorations and maintenance to be done constantly, which are absent in Borromeo's text. The text constantly repeats the

40. Cavalieri, *op. cit.*, Introduction.

41. *Ibid.*, 26.

42. *Ibid.*, I, 1.

works of ‘retouching’, ‘whitewashing’ of the ‘disacconcised’ paintings as well as the obligation, for each church, to place a cross in the presbytery, at the intersection with the nave, so that ‘at the first entry into the church it is made visible and excites the piety of the faithful to veneration’.⁴³

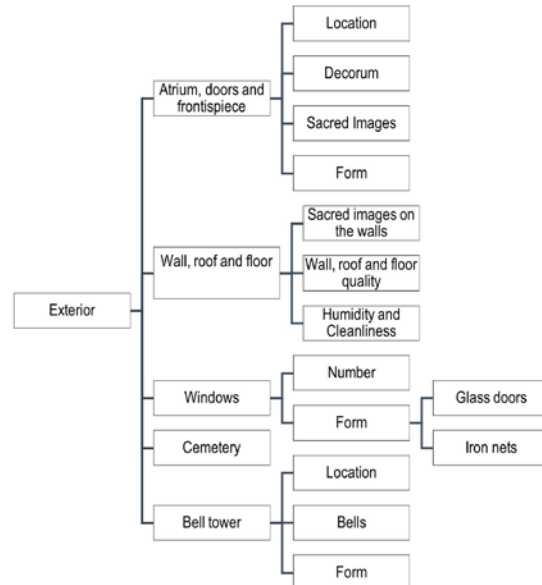


Figure 8. Compositional Scheme ‘Ad Arbores’ of the Macro-themes related to the Exterior of the sacred building in the Rettore Ecclesiastico

Source: Author’s elaboration

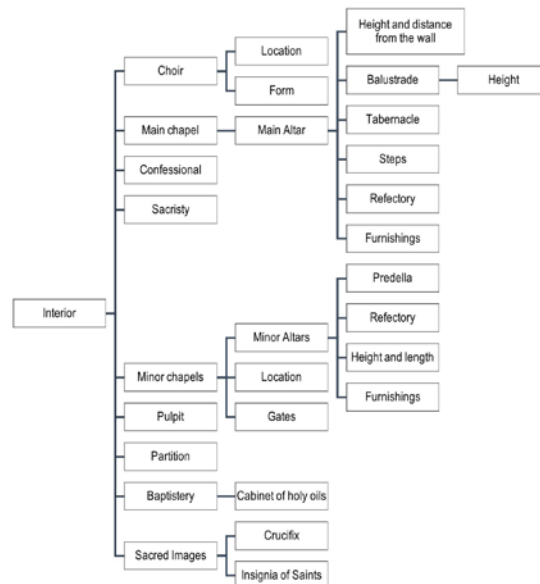
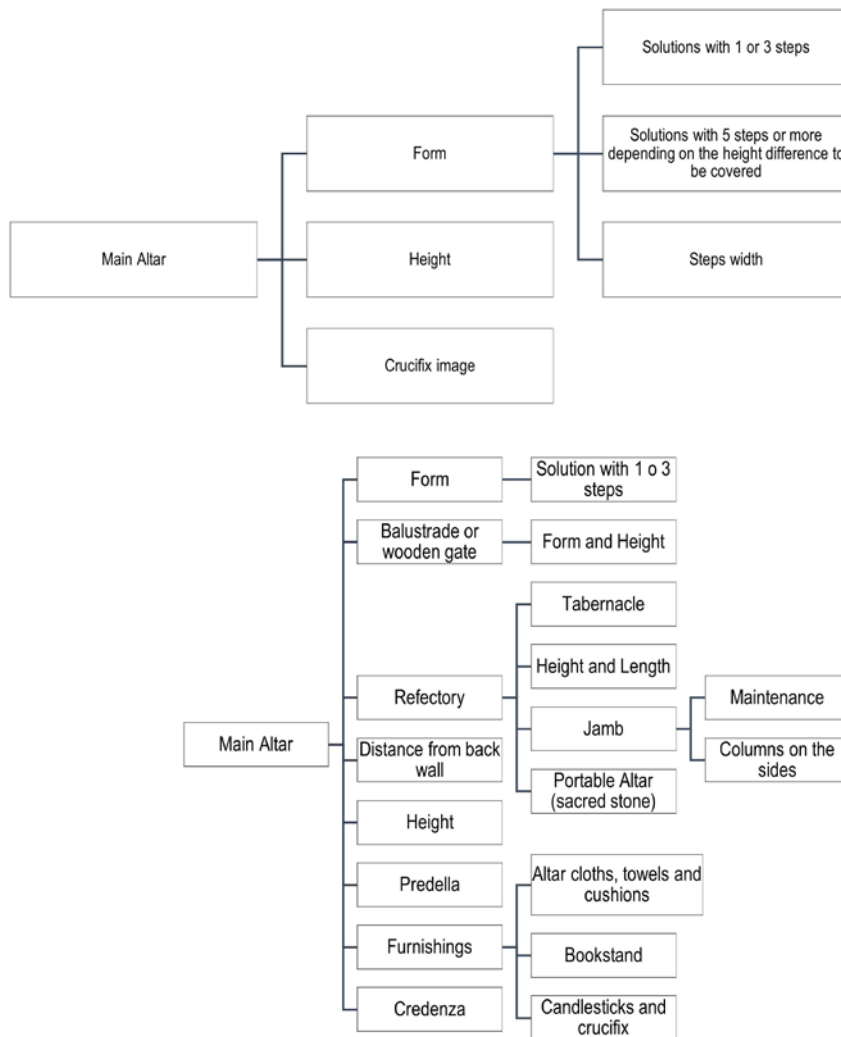


Figure 9. Compositional Scheme ‘Ad Arbores’ of the Macro-Themes Related to the Interior of the Sacred Building in the Rettore Ecclesiastico

Source: Author’s elaboration.

43. Ibid, XI, 26.



Figures 10-11. Detail of the Development of the Item 'Main Altar' in the *Instructiones of Saint Charles* (top) and in the *Rettore Ecclesiastico* (bottom)

Source: Author's elaboration.

Conclusions

The massive circulation of the *Antica Basilicografia* and the *Rettore ecclesiastico* in the undergrowth of the ecclesiastical literature of the time can be explained by the fact that we are dealing with a perfect synthesis of Orsini's discipline, whose key principles are the formation of a clergy suited to the care of souls and the meticulous attention given to sacred space. Orsini's pedagogical choice, centred on the importance of the pastoral visit, is intertwined with the archetype of Carlo Borromeo's *Instructiones*, examined on the concrete dimension of the local tradition. The use of the 'ad arbores' technique, index of a vision of religious building linked to concreteness and practical reason, allowed to adapt in

time the compositional scheme of the Caroline treatise, leading the Good Shepherd to change, correct or innovate principles and corollaries to ‘invent solutions suitable for the infinite ways in which the fragility of man is manifested, to support and accompany him with Christian charity in the path of faith’.⁴⁴ Like Orsini, who more than anyone else embodies the model of Saint Charles par excellence, many other contemporary prelates of the South set up their pastoral practice, emulating the sixteenth-century norms. The study of the various ‘Instructions’ that were printed between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries allows us to look at the religious architecture of these times from a different perspective, making the text of St. Charles, with all the local variations, one of the possible normative sources. After all, as Kirschbaum stated, ‘the Catholic Reformation created neither Mannerism nor Baroque: it found them, infused them with its spirit, and made use of them’.⁴⁵

Acknowledgments

This essay is the result of a research financed with funds from the European Union - European Regional Development Fund - PON Aim - Research and Innovation - International and Attraction Mobility (2014-2020).

Bibliography

- Ackermann, J. S. “Pellegrino Tibaldi, San Carlo Borromeo e l’architettura ecclesiastica del loro tempo.” [Pellegrino Tibaldi, San Carlo Borromeo and the Ecclesiastical Architecture of Their Time.] In *San Carlo e il suo tempo, Atti del convegno internazionale nel IV centenario dalla morte - Milano, 21-26 maggio 1984*, 573-586. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1986.
- Barocchi, P. *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma*. [Treatises on Art of the Sixteenth Century Between Mannerism and Counter-Reformation.] Bari: Laterza, 1962.
- Basile Bonsante, M. “Appunti su Pompeo Sarnelli moralista e scrittore d’arte.” [Notes on Pompeo Sarnelli Moralistic and Writer of Art.] In *Atti del congresso internazionale di studi sull’Età del Vicereame - Bari, 7-9 ottobre 1972*, 239-256. Bari: Bigiemme, 1977.
- Basile Bonsante, M. “Architettura e committenza religiosa: l’Antica Basilicografia di Pompeo Sarnelli.” [Architecture and Religious Commission: The Ancient Basilicography of Pompeo Sarnelli]. *Archivio Storico Pugliese* XXXV, fasc. I-IV (1982): 205-235.
- Benati, G. and F. Repishti (Eds.) *Carlo Borromeo, Pellegrino Tibaldi e la trasformazione interna del Duomo di Milano: nuove acquisizioni critiche e documentarie*. [Carlo Borromeo, Pellegrino Tibaldi and the Internal Transformation of the Milan Cathedral: New Critical and Documentary Acquisitions.] Milan: Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano, 2010.

44. Gatti Perer, op. cit., 1986, 624.

45. E. Kirschbaum, “L’influsso del Concilio di Trento nell’arte,” in *Gregorianum*, 26 (1945), 106.

- Benedetti, S. *Fuori dal classicismo. Sintetismo, tipologia, ragione nell'architettura del Cinquecento*. [Outside Classicism. Synthetism, Typology, Reason in Sixteenth-Century Architecture.] Roma: Multigrafica Editrice, 1984.
- Bianconi, S. and S. Morgana. "Verborum pondera vimque habebit: teoria e pratica linguistica in Carlo Borromeo." [Verborum pondera vimque habebit: Theory and Linguistic Practice in Carlo Borromeo.] In *Carlo Borromeo e l'opera della 'grande riforma'*. *Cultura, religione e arti nella Milano del pieno Cinquecento*, edited by F. Buzzi and D. Zardin, 366-378. Milano: Silvana Editorial, 1997.
- Blunt, A. *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
- Borromeo, C. *Instructionum fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae: libri II*. [Instructions for the Fabric and Furniture of the Church: Book II.] [Translated by M. Marinelli (2000). Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1577.
- Cataneo, P. *I quattro libri di architettura di Pietro Cataneo Senese*. [The Four Books of Architecture of Pietro Cataneo Senese.] Venezia: Casa de' Figliuoli di Aldo, 1554.
- Cattaneo, E. "Il restauro del culto cattolico." [The Restoration of Catholic Worship.] In *San Carlo e il suo tempo, Atti del convegno internazionale nel IV centenario dalla morte - Milano, 21-26 maggio 1984*, 427-453. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1986.
- Cavaliere, M. *Il Rettore ecclesiastico istruito sulle regole della fabbrica e delle suppellettili....* [Ecclesiastical Rector Educated on the Rules of the Factory and Furnishings....] Napoli: Fusco Editore, 1688.
- Crispino, G. *Trattato della visita pastorale*. [Treaty of the Pastoral Visit.] Roma: Domenico Antonio Ercole, 1965.
- De Maio, R. *Società e vita religiosa a Napoli nell'età moderna (1656-1799)*. [Society and Religious Life in Naples in the Modern Age (1656-1799).] Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche, 1971.
- De Rosa, G. *Chiesa e religione popolare nel Mezzogiorno*. [Church and Popular Religion in Southern Italy.] Bari: Laterza, 1978.
- De Spirito, A. *Culto e cultura nelle visite orsiniane e L'osservazione partecipante di un vescovo del Mezzogiorno*. [Worship and Culture in the Orsinian Visits and The Participant Observation of a Southern Bishop.] Roma: Studium Edizioni, 2003.
- Della Torre, S. "Riferimenti classicisti nell'architettura sacra post-tridentina." [Classicist References in Post-Tridentine Sacred Architecture.]. In *I tempi del concilio. Religione, cultura e società nell'Europa tridentina*, edited by C. Mozzarelli and D. Zardin, Roma: Bulzoni, 1997.
- Dominici, G. *Regola del governo di cura familiare*. [Government Rule of Family Care.] Edited by D. Salvi. Firenze: Angelo Garinei, 1860.
- Fantappiè, C. "Per una reinterpretazione dell'opera e dell'eredità giuridica di san Carlo Borromeo." [For a Reinterpretation of the Work and the Juridical Legacy of Saint Charles Borromeo.] In *Carlo Borromeo e il cattolicesimo dell'età moderna. Nascita e fortuna di un modello di santità*, 165-210. Milano: Bulzoni, 2011.
- Fattorio, P. *Ampla et diligente relatione de gli honori fatti al cuore di San Carlo*. [Ampla and Diligent Relation of the Honors Made to the Heart of San Carlo.] Roma, 1614.
- Frascarelli, D. "Arte e Controriforma: l'altare maggiore nelle Instructiones fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae di Carlo Borromeo." [Art and Counter-Reformation: The Main Altar in the Instructiones Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae of Carlo Borromeo.] In *I cardinali di Santa Romana Chiesa, collezionisti e mecenati*, edited by M. Gallo, 24-37. Roma: Shakespeare and Company 2, 2001.

- Frosio, M. L. and D. Zardin (Eds.) *Carlo Borromeo e il cattolicesimo dell'età moderna. Nascita e fortuna di un modello di santità.* [Carlo Borromeo and the Catholicism of the Modern Age. Birth and Fortune of a Model of Holiness.] Milano: Bulzoni, 2011.
- Gatti Perer, M. L. "Prospettive nuove aperte da S. Carlo nelle sue Norme per l'Arte Sacra." [New Perspectives Opened by St. Charles in his Norms for Sacred Art.] In *Atti dell'Accademia di S. Carlo, inaugurazione del III anno accademico*, 15-33. Milano: Studia Borromaica, 1980.
- Gatti Perer, M. L. "La manutenzione ordinaria degli edifici sacri e delle loro suppellettili secondo Carlo Borromeo." [Ordinary Maintenance of Sacred Buildings and Their Furnishings According to Carlo Borromeo.] In *Atti dell'Accademia di S. Carlo. Inaugurazione del V anno accademico*, 121-147. Milano: Studia Borromaica, 1982.
- Gatti Perer, M. L. "Progetto e destino dell'edificio sacro dopo S. Carlo." [Project and Destiny of the Sacred Building After S. Carlo.]. In *San Carlo e il suo tempo, Atti del convegno internazionale nel IV centenario dalla morte - Milano, 21-26 maggio 1984*, 611-631. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1986.
- Headley, J. M. and J. B. Tomaro (Eds.) *San Carlo Borromeo. Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century.* Washington: Folger Books - Associated University Presses, 1988.
- Kirschbaum, E. "L'influsso del Concilio di Trento nell'Arte." [The Influence of the Council of Trent on Art.] In *Gregorianum*, 26, 1945.
- Novelli, A. "S. Carlo Borromeo oratore sacro." [S. Carlo Borromeo Sacred Orator.] In *San Carlo Borromeo nel terzo centenario della canonizzazione. La Scuola Cattolica XVIII, serie IV* (1910).
- Panvinio, O. *De praecipuis urbis Romae sanctioribus basilicis quas Septem Ecclesias vulgo vocant.* [Of the Principal Halls of the City of Rome, which they Commonly Call the Seven Most Sacred Churches.] Roma: Apud Maternum Cholinum, 1570.
- Paredi, A. (Ed.) *Sancti Caroli Borromaei Orationes XII: ad usum episcoporum in Concilium Oecum. Vaticanum II convenientium Pauli VI Pont. Max. iussu denuo editae.* [St. Charles Borromeo's Orations XII: For the Use of Bishops in the Ecumenical Council the Second Vatican Council, Convened by Paul VI of Pont. Max. by Order of Reissued.] Milano: Tip. U. Allegretti di Campi, 1963.
- Sarnelli, P. *Antica Basilicografia di Pompeo Sarnelli.* [Ancient Basilicography of Pompeo Sarnelli.] Napoli: Antonio Bulifon, 1686.
- Sarnelli, P. *Memorie cronologiche de' vescovi ed arcivescovi della S. Chiesa di Benevento.* [Chronological Memoirs of the Bishops and Archbishops of the Holy Church of Benevento.] Napoli: Giuseppe Roselli, 1691.
- Scotti, A. "Architettura e riforma cattolica nella Milano di Carlo Borromeo." [Architecture and Catholic Reform in the Milan of Carlo Borromeo.] *L'Arte* 18/19, no. 24 (1972).
- Turchini, A. *La fabbrica di un santo. Il processo di canonizzazione di Carlo Borromeo e la Controriforma.* [The Making of a Saint. The Process of Canonization of Carlo Borromeo and the Counter-Reformation.] Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1984.
- Zardin, D. *Carlo Borromeo. Cultura, santità, governo.* [Carlo Borromeo. Culture, Holiness, Government.] Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2010.