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Die Cappella Gregoriana: Der erste Innenraum von Neu-Sankt-Peter in Rom und seine Genese. Kaspar Zollikofer.

Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana 36. Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2016. 382 pp. €125.

The planning, design, and construction of New St. Peter's in Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been treated in a wealth of literature, ever since Heinrich von Geymüller published the early design drawings for a new St. Peter's in 1875. This flow of research projects and a corresponding ocean of literature mostly focuses on specific topics of architectural history: the chronology of the drawings and of the design process; the con-

tributions of successive famous architects like Bramante, Raphael, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, Michelangelo, and others; and the changing architectural ideas that were funneled into this enormous project. Much less attention has been given to the interior decoration of New St. Peter's, especially in its early phases, as Kaspar Zollikofer rightfully mentions. He has chosen the Cappella Gregoriana for a thorough and rich book, and this choice of course makes much sense.

When Pope Gregory XIII decided in 1578 to have the chapel richly decorated, the construction had already been going on for six years. It would be the first of the four chapels of New St. Peter's that surround the main altar space in the center of the building. Even though it has never been a chapel closed off from the main space of the church, it was treated as such in the early phases of its existence. Both arms that connect it to the rest of the church were initially closed off with bronze fences, and on the medal that was struck at the occasion of the inauguration the Gregoriana is shown as a chapel in its own right. The architecture is dominated by the aedicula niches, which were originally designed by Antonio da Sangallo and later on further developed by Michelangelo.

Zollikofer gradually unfolds his very rich and sometimes very dense history of this chapel, which then begins to explain the fascinating depth of layers of meaning of the Gregoriana, not only because of the intentions of Pope Gregory XIII, but also because various relics were involved with specific and interconnected meanings. The high altar houses the Madonna del Soccorso, which was brought as a relic from a nearby position in the Old St. Peter's, where it ended up when its original position near the altar of Leo the Great at the west wall of the south transept was given up in the time when the western part of the old basilica was torn down. In the sequence of topics, the interplay between the chosen altars, the decoration of the Cappella Gregoriana, the relics, and the specific order of these ingredients, Zollikofer is able to reconstruct the original ideas of Gregory XIII and the underlying meanings that direct the content of the project for the chapel. One of the lines in the program is about the relics. With relics of both Latin and Greek church fathers, a balance between East and West was planned, not accidentally in the two western chapels and the two eastern. This ambition has not been realized completely, however. The concept is reflected in the decoration, with two Eastern and two Western church fathers represented in the mosaics of the pendentives. Relics of Pope Gregory's namesake, Gregory of Nazianzus, were given a position in the new chapel in 1580, but the idea to bring relics of Saint John Chrysostom to the southeast chapel—the present Cappella Clementina—was never realized.

A leading concept for Gregory XIII must have been to realize a geographical and spatial ideal of Christian ecumenism for New St. Peter's as a whole. Although this ambition was not fulfilled, the Cappella Gregoriana is masterfully explained by Zollikofer in all its aspects. The only weakness of the book—which is published in a beautiful manner, with very good illustrations, more than adequate annotations, and a thorough bibliography, as well as some seventy pages of written source documents—might be that no real conclusion follows the exciting analyses and interpretations, which makes it a tough job for

the reader to knit the whole program together again. That said, this book is a very welcome addition to the research on St. Peter's.

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