

THE GEOMETRY OF A DOME: LUDOVICO DAVID'S
*DICHIARAZIONE DELLA PITTURA DELLA
CAPELLA DEL COLLEGIO CLEMENTINO DI ROMA**

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In seventeenth-century Rome, ceiling painting was one of the most highly regarded art forms, and many of the most influential paintings of this period are found on ceilings. Annibale Carracci's masterpiece adorns the ceiling of the Galleria Farnese. Both Reni and Guercino painted their best-known Roman works, their *Aurora* frescoes, on the ceilings of small garden palaces. Giovanni Lanfranco revolutionised Roman painting with his fresco in the dome of S. Andrea della Valle. Pietro da Cortona's most famous secular work in Rome is the ceiling in the Barberini Palace, while his most influential religious decorations are those on the ceilings of S. Maria in Vallicella. Andrea Sacchi's most prominent work is his ceiling in the Barberini Palace, and Baciccio's ceiling decorations in the Gesù and Andrea Pozzo's in S. Ignazio are far better known than any other of their paintings.

This prominence of ceiling decoration in Roman seventeenth-century art is to some extent mirrored in art literature, as may be illustrated by a few examples. One of the most accomplished descriptions of an art work written in the seventeenth century is Ferrante Carli's account of Lanfranco's dome of S. Andrea della Valle.¹ Giovanni Pietro Bellori's accounts of the Farnese Gallery and Lanfranco's dome,² the latter perhaps inspired by Ferrante Carli's text,³ are among the most famous sections of his *Lives*.

The case of Lione Pascoli is particularly revealing. When, in his proemium, he wishes to convey to his readers the greatness of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century painting, he first invokes those on vaults and domes, and only secondly turns to easel paintings.⁴ In the same proemium, he promises that he will not write any

* This article was completed with the help of an Arts Budget Centre Research Committee Grant from the University of Leicester.

¹ N. Turner, 'Ferrante Carlo's "Descrizione della Cupola di S. Andrea della Valle dipinta dal Cavalier Gio: Lanfranchi": a Source for Bellori's Descriptive Method', *Storia dell'arte*, xii, 1971, pp. 297-325. On Ferrante Carli see C. Delcorno, 'Un avversario del Marino: Ferrante Carli', *Studi secenteschi*, xvi, 1975, pp. 69-155; and M. Capucci, 'Carli, Ferdinando (Ferrante)', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, xx, Rome 1977, pp. 150-2. On Roman ceiling decoration see R. Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600 to 1750*, Harmondsworth 1958; E. Waterhouse, *Italian Baroque Painting*, London 1962; M. C. Gloton, *Trompe-l'oeil et décor plafonnant dans les églises romaines de l'âge baroque*, Rome 1965; T. Poensgen, *Die Deckenmalerei in italienischen Kirchen*, Berlin 1969.

² G. P. Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, ed. E. Borea, Turin 1976, pp. 57-77, 382-5.

³ The close dependence of Bellori's description of Lanfranco's dome on Ferrante Carli's text, assumed in Turner (as in n. 1), pp. 309-11, is questioned by G. Perini, 'L'arte di descrivere: la tecnica dell'ecfrasi in Malvasia e Bellori', *I Tatti Studies*, iii, 1989, pp. 175-206, esp. 187-90.

⁴ '...l'applauso universale del Mondo intendente, che non sa senza ammirazione fissar lo sguardo nelle volte, e nelle cupole maravigliosamente dipinte dai Coreggi, dai Caracci, dai Zampieri, dai Lanfranchi, dai Berrettini, dai Cignani, e dai Gaulli, e nelle tavole non men maravigliosamente colorite dai Vinci, dai Caliari, dai Tintoretto, dai Barbieri, dai Reni, dagli Albani, e da tutta quasi la scuola d'Annibale, dai Pussini, dai Sacchi, dai Maratti, e da qualche suo discepolo, e da tant'altri...' L. Pascoli,

'boring descriptions'.⁵ However, he breaks this promise in the second half of the second and last volume of his *Lives* where Andrea Pozzo's frescoes in Rome are described at elaborate length.⁶

The painter Ludovico David himself provided an extended account of his own fresco decoration of the dome of the Cappella dell'Assunta (see Appendix),⁷ once part of the Collegio Clementino in Rome.⁸ The chapel, which was designed by Carlo Fontana,⁹ had a circular ground plan and was richly articulated by pilasters and columns. The altar niche projected outward and had windows on either side, illuminating the altarpiece (Pls 24–5).

The Collegio and its chapel were torn down in 1936 to widen the Lungotevere Marzio. The loss of the fresco is particularly regrettable since the art historian Ugo Donati had sought, and received, permission to salvage parts of it. None the less the demolition company proceeded to destroy both the building and the fresco¹⁰, which is recorded in only one overall photograph (Pl. 27).

Ludovico David's *Dichiarazione della pittura della capella del Collegio Clementino di Roma* was issued by the publishing house of Giovanni Giacomo Komarek 'at the Trevi Fountain' in 1695. The same publisher had printed Andrea Pozzo's short explanation of the iconography of his fresco in the nave of S. Ignazio in 1694.¹¹ These two texts seem to be the only independently published descriptions of Roman ceilings written by their respective artists. Like Pozzo, whose *Prospettiva de' pittori e architetti*¹² was among the most influential books on the subject, David was a painter of considerable intellectual ambition, though he was less successful both as an artist and as a writer.

Ludovico David was born in Lugano in 1648,¹³ and trained by Francesco del Cairo and Ercole Procaccini in Milan. In the late 1660s he studied the works of the great sixteenth-century painters in Venice, and of the Carracci in Bologna. In the latter city he was the student of Carlo Cignani. David then settled in Venice. He undertook a study trip to Mantua, where he drew the works of Giulio Romano. In Modena he copied the paintings of Correggio in the ducal collections, and in Parma he prepared drawings after Correggio's domes, which were intended for publication.¹⁴ In 1686 he took up residence in Rome, where he came under the influence of the art of Baciccio, a painter himself greatly influenced by Correggio.

Vite de' pittori, scultori, ed architetti moderni, 2 vols, Rome 1730–6; facs. edn Amsterdam 1965, i, sig. C^v; for a critical edition see op. cit., edn Perugia 1992, p. 42, introduction by A. Marabottini.

⁵ Pascoli, op. cit., last page of proemium [n.p]; edn 1992, p. 45.

⁶ Pascoli, op. cit., ii, pp. 252–61; edn 1992, pp. 694–9.

⁷ L. David, *Dichiarazione della pittura della Capella del Collegio Clementino di Roma. Dedicata agl'Illustrissimi Signori li Signori Convittori del detto Collegio*, Rome 1695. The text was first reprinted in H. Hager, 'Un riesame di tre cappelle di Carlo Fontana a Roma', *Commentari*, xxvii, 1976, pp. 252–89 (see esp. pp. 284–7).

⁸ P. L. Zambarelli, *Il Nobile Pontificio Collegio Clementino di Roma*, Rome 1936; L. Montalto, *Il Clementino 1595–1875*, Rome 1939.

⁹ See Hager (as in n. 7), pp. 258–64.

¹⁰ U. Donati, *Vagabondaggi. Contributi alla storiografia artistica ticinese*, i, Bellinzona 1939, pp. 251f.

¹¹ A. Pozzo, *Copia d'una lettera scritta da Andrea Pozzo della Compagnia di Giesu pittore all'Illustrissimo ed Eccellentissimo Principe Antonio Floriano di Liechtenstein Ambasciadore dell'Augustissimo Imperadore Leopoldo Ignazio presso la Santità di nostro signore Papa Innocenzo Duodecimo circa alli significati della volta da lui dipinta nel Tempio di Sant' Ignazio in Roma*, Rome 1694; also in H. Tietze, 'Andrea Pozzo und die Fürsten Liechtenstein', *Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich*, xiii–xiv, 1914–15, pp. 432–46, esp. 434–6; most of this letter is found in B. Kerber, *Andrea Pozzo*, Berlin and New York 1971, pp. 70–2.

¹² A. Pozzo, *Prospettiva de' pittori e architetti*, 2 vols, Rome 1693–1700.

¹³ See R. Enggass, 'David, Ludovico Antonio', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, xxxiii, Rome 1987, pp. 147–51, with bibliography.

¹⁴ On these drawings after Correggio's works see G. Campori, *Lettere artistiche inedite*, Modena 1866, pp. 521f.

David's intellectual ambition can be documented from as early as his Venetian period. He set up an academy where prominence was given to debates rather than to draughtsmanship.¹⁵ Such an emphasis is in accord with David's later writing: in his *L'amore dell'arte* of about 1704, which survives in manuscript, he attacks the Roman Accademia di San Luca for basing the teaching of painting on drawing after the nude. David wants the study of mathematics, and in particular of Euclidean geometry, to dominate academic practice.¹⁶

One of the very few paintings which are preserved from David's Venetian period is found in the Palazzo Albrizzi near S. Aponal in Venice (below).¹⁷ Given the artist's intellectual inclinations and the emphasis in his teaching, it is quite ironic that the



Ludovico David, *Zeuxis and the Maidens of Croton*. Venice, Palazzo Albrizzi

author who first published a photograph of this picture, in 1957, considers it as 'almost a symbol of Lodovico's academic activity', suggesting as one possible title 'La Scuola del nudo'. To my mind there cannot be much doubt that this picture

532, 536; L. Frati, 'Lettere autobiografiche di pittori al P. Pellegrino Antonio Orlandi', *Rivista d'arte*, v, 1907, pp. 63-76, esp. 71f (also in idem, *Varietà storico-artistiche*, Città di Castello 1912, pp. 111-32, esp. 125-7).

¹⁵ For a quotation and interpretation of the relevant passage in Vincenzo da Canal, *Vita di Gregorio Lazzarini*, Venice 1809, pp. 24f, see Enggass (as in n. 13), pp. 148f.

¹⁶ For a study of this text see N. Turner, 'An Attack on the Accademia di S. Luca: Ludovico David's "L'Amore

dell'Arte"', *The British Museum Yearbook*, i, 1976, pp. 157-86; for an introduction to David's art theory see L. Grassi, *Il Settecento in Italia* (Teorici e storia della critica d'arte, iii), Rome 1979, pp. 48f. Already during his period in Venice David had pursued the study of mathematics; see Frati (as in n. 14), 1907 p. 71, 1912 p. 125.

¹⁷ R. Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del Seicento*, 2 vols, Milan 1981, i, p. 280 and ii, pl. 941.

represents Zeuxis and the maidens of Croton.¹⁸ It is thus a straightforward history painting which does not give us any clues regarding David's own art theory.

Of his most important literary achievement only some short summaries and statements of intent remain. In his *Il disinganno delle principali notizie, e erudizioni dell'arti più nobili del disegno*, now lost, David wrote a history of Italian art in which Vasari's errors were, he claimed, to be corrected.¹⁹ It is hard to assess the importance of this work. David's letters reveal that he undertook scrupulous research on Correggio, investigating the circumstances of his life and the prices commanded by his pictures, among other questions.²⁰ The chapter on this painter was certainly one of the most important sections of *Il disinganno*.

David also undertook studies on Leonardo. He painstakingly read the Codex Gates (formerly Leicester and Hammer), then in the possession of Giuseppe Ghezzi in Rome,²¹ and wrote a series of letters to gain information on the Leonardo manuscripts at that time preserved in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana. Disappointingly, he received no useful information from Milan,²² and it is today impossible to determine how innovatory his discussion of Leonardo was.

No trace remains of David's research on any other painter. In fact, his letters as they have come down to us strongly suggest that his work on Correggio and Leonardo was of much greater importance than that on any other artist. It is not surprising that David was interested in Leonardo, whose studies of a wide range of subjects, including geometry, conformed to his own ideas about art. David's interest in Correggio is similarly revealing. He considers Correggio the greatest of all painters.²³ In particular, he sees him as 'the norm, the light, and the hero of those who have undertaken to paint concave surfaces',²⁴ that is, domes or apses. However, David's interest in geometry to a large extent determines his understanding of Correggio. In a short summary of his chapter on the artist at the beginning of *L'amore dell'arte*, he gives some indications regarding his re-evaluation of Correggio in the *Disinganno*. He writes:

Then I comment on the principal artistic means which I have been able to detect in the works of Correggio: in particular the geometrical art taught [by him] of the proportional increase of the concave surfaces of domes and apses, which is not applied by anybody else; and the enormous benefits of his works for all the *arti del disegno*. In doing so I prove that those particular characteristics which are criticised by some writers as shortcomings of his *disegno*, above all with regard to the above-mentioned dome of the cathedral, are in fact the innermost perfections of *disegno*. I also prove that the use of colour which attracts so much praise is the least important characteristic of all his works.²⁵

¹⁸ N. Ivanoff, 'Lodovico David da Lugano e la sua Accademia veneziana', *Emporium*, cxxvi, 1957, pp. 248-53, esp. 250; the suggestion that the image may represent 'Apelle che dipinge le grazie' (ibid.) is similarly unlikely since the women in the picture are more than three. The correct identification is found in N. Pelicelli, 'David, Lodovico', in U. Thieme and F. Becker, *Künstlerlexikon*, viii, Leipzig 1913, p. 458; and in Donati (as in n. 10), p. 244.

¹⁹ On this lost work see P. A. Orlandi, *Abecedario pittorico*, Bologna 1704, pp. 258, 394; Turner (as in n. 16), pp. 159f, 180.

²⁰ Campori (as in n. 14), pp. 517-41, 547, 549; on the place of Correggio in David's *Il disinganno* see p. 522.

See also L. Frati, 'Il progetto di un monumento al "Correggio" in Milano', *Rivista d'arte*, v, 1907, pp. 139-50 (also in Frati 1912, as in n. 14, pp. 193-211).

²¹ Campori (as in n. 14), pp. 534f.

²² See F. S. Bassoli, 'Un pittore svizzero pioniere degli studi vinciani: Lodovico Antonio David', *Raccolta vinciana*, xvii, 1954, pp. 261-314.

²³ Campori (as in n. 14), p. 519.

²⁴ *Dichiarazione*, p. 4.

²⁵ 'Noto poi gl'Artifizij principali, che nell'opere d'esso Coreggio hò potuto scoprire; ed in spetie l'arte geometrica insegnata d'accrescere in data proporzione le concave superfizie delle Cupole, e Tribune da niun' altro praticata, e gl'utili grandissimi delle sue opere a

This interest in mathematics which shapes Ludovico David's approach to Correggio also characterises his description of the Cappella dell'Assunta. Before August 1687 David had painted the Assumption of the Virgin on the altarpiece there (Pl. 24).²⁶ Since this work met with approval, in 1692 the decision was taken to commission the same artist to decorate the dome.²⁷ As David himself writes, much of the dome was painted in autumn and winter 1694.²⁸ Due to bad weather conditions, natural light was scarce and the fresco was executed largely in the light of oil lamps²⁹ and candles. After the completion of the work *a buon fresco*, in August 1695 the scaffolding was removed for the feast of the Assumption, to invite critical comments. Against the wishes of the painter, however, the timbers were disposed of, and David could not retouch his work *al secco* as he claims is necessary. He therefore complained that the decoration was not satisfactory.³⁰

David's description of the dome of the Cappella dell'Assunta allows some conclusions as to what was considered the norm in the decoration of domes, and at the same time explains and justifies some departures from tradition. The opening paragraph of the *Dichiarazione* contains some extremely interesting information, providing answers to a number of questions which are frequently addressed in twentieth-century studies of ceiling decoration.³¹

The fathers of the Collegio Clementino commissioned David to depict the Coronation of the Virgin in the dome of their chapel. Beyond this initial iconographic choice, however, the painter was entirely free to paint whatever figures he wanted, and however many. David specifically states that these last two decisions were left to his own judgement. In specifying what his choice was, he continues with the phrase, 'mi sono ingegnato' ('I have tried hard')—a choice of words which implies that he did not seek help from any artistic advisor. One could not hope for a clearer testimony regarding the authorship of the iconography of a fresco.

In his own words, David had been commissioned to paint 'la Storia dell'Incoronazione della Santissima Vergine'. The 'story' of the Virgin's coronation is integrated into what he calls 'a summary mental image of the comprehensors of this time';³² or

tutte l'Arti del disegno scaturiti; provando che quelle particolarità, che dà alcuni scrittori gli vengono principalmente nell'accennata Cupola del duomo a mancamento di disegno addossate, sono dello stesso disegno le perfezioni più recondite; e che la minore prerogativa di tutte l'opere sue consiste nel colorito tanto decantato.' L. David, *L'amore dell'arte*: Rome, Archivio Storico, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, MS 35, p. 8 (dated 1704); compare David's statements in Campori (as in n. 14), p. 519. David may be referring to texts such as Du Fresnoy's, where a mention of Correggio's domes appears in close proximity to the assertion that the painter's draughtsmanship lacks correctness; here quoted after the French edition: Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, *L'Art de peinture*, 2nd edn, Paris 1673, p. 269 (for 268): 'A Parme Le Corregge a peint deux grandes Coupes à fresque et quelques Tableaux d'Autel... Sa Maniere est tres-grande et de Dessein, et de Travail, quoy que sans correction.' Generic praise of Correggio's colour, and criticism of his draughtsmanship, are frequent in 16th- and 17th-century art literature; see S. de Vito Battaglia, *Correggio bibliografia*, Rome 1934, pp. 1-14.

²⁶ Hager (as in n. 7), pp. 259f. David himself states that the altarpiece was painted in 1688; see n. 30 below. For further references to the painting see *Dichiarazione*, p. 3, and n. 74 below.

²⁷ Hager (as in n. 7), pp. 283f.

²⁸ *Dichiarazione*, p. 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 'splendori delle liquide olive'.

³⁰ 'Intanto nel 1688 gli riuscì di dipingere una gran tavola dell'Assunta nella Cappella del Collegio Clementino, ... e nel 1694 la cupola della capella del Collegio Clementino, dipinta quasi sempre anco di giorno a lume di candela per le continue piogge, e fattala scoprire per la festa dell'Assunta per sentire le censure, poi ricoprirla e ritoccarla, com'è necessità, a secco, furono dissipati i ponti promessi, et impiegati in altre fatiche, onde è restata tutta scordata, con altre emulazioni ben note à pittori di Lombardia, che son venuti ad operare in Roma...' Frati (as in n. 14), 1907 p. 72, 1912 p. 127; Hager (as in n. 7), p. 264.

³¹ *Dichiarazione*, p. 3.

³² *Ibid.*

in other words an image of those who, at the time of the Virgin's Assumption, had attained to full religious comprehension. This assembly of saints is in the next paragraph called a 'Paradiso', a reference to a particular compositional type made up primarily of celestial figures.³³ In a general discussion of the decoration of domes, David also employs the word 'gloria',³⁴ a form of decoration characterised by light, clouds, angels and saints, often surrounding one central figure or group of figures.³⁵ These two ways of depicting the heavenly realm are not mutually exclusive: a dome can depict a 'storia' within a 'gloria', and at the same time within a 'Paradiso'.³⁶

Since the dome depicts a story, it needs to be treated like any other history painting. David asserts that he wants the unity of time to be observed in the composition, and elaborates on this requirement in a discussion of which relatives of the Virgin Mary should be included in the fresco. He adduces the notion of probability. Accordingly one, but only one of the Maries is depicted. No other New Testament figures are included, since there is not sufficient information as to who was in Paradise when the Virgin was crowned.³⁷

That domes representing a history should observe the unity of time seems to have been a common requirement. In his description of Lanfranco's *Assumption of the Virgin* in the dome of S. Andrea della Valle (1625–8), where the unity of time is not observed, Ferrante Carli feels obliged to devise an elaborate justification in defence of what he calls 'anacronismo'. He refers to poetic licence as much as to the iconographic tradition of religious painting in his defence of the inclusion of New Testament figures and Christian saints in the dome.³⁸

A particular solution was chosen by Pietro da Cortona in his decoration of the dome and apse of S. Maria in Vallicella (1647–51, 1655–9),³⁹ which together depict the Assumption of the Virgin. The Madonna is seen rising in the apse, and she is being greeted by the Trinity in the dome.⁴⁰ Only Old Testament figures surround the Trinity, observing the unity of time required by the narrative. The Virgin in the apse, on the other hand, is surrounded by New Testament saints,⁴¹ following the non-historical syntax of what we today call a *Sacra Conversazione*.

³³ See N. Tommaseo and B. Bellini in *Dizionario della lingua italiana*, iii, Turin and Naples 1871, p. 756: 'Diciamo non solo 'Gloria del paradiso' la beatitudine celestiale, ma gli spiriti che ne fruiscono, anche quando si rappresentano all'uomo in visione terrestre; onde al linguaggio dell'affetto pio non disdice anco in prosa: 'Il paradiso che si mostra, che scende verso noi'.

³⁴ *Dichiarazione*, p. 7; for a somewhat misleading attempt to draw a firm distinction between a 'gloria' and other iconographical content in Pozzo's S. Ignazio frescoes see H. Schadt, 'Andrea Pozzos Langhausfresko in S. Ignazio, Rom. Zur Thementradition der barocken Heiligenglorie', *Das Münster*, xxiv, 1971, pp. 153–60.

³⁵ See S. Battaglia in *Grande Dizionario della lingua italiana*, vi, Turin 1970, p. 931: 'Rappresentazione di angeli e di beati contornati da luce e nuvole o disposti a corona intorno a Dio, alla Vergine o ai Santi'.

³⁶ Both terms are employed in Sebastiano Resta's description of Correggio's designs for the dome of Parma cathedral, where the Assumption is depicted. '... [Correggio] risolse per fine, di levar dal Tamburro le finte fenestre tonde ornate di putti e festoni, e calar al Tamburro medesimo gl'Apostoli, dove hebbe commodo di

farli di gigantesca misura per essere soli in teatro che sfugge per l'altezza onde vengono à coronare tutta la Gloria della Cuppola, che restò tutta spicciata e dirò capace d'un paradiso mandato incontro dall'eterno figlio alla glorificata sua Madre.' Padre Sebastiano Resta, *Correggio in Roma*, ed. A. E. Popham, Parma 1958, p. 48. This text was written after 1709 or 1711; see *ibid.*, p. 17 n. 4, p. 70 n. 60.

³⁷ *Dichiarazione*, p. 5. On the notion of history painting in ceiling decoration see Turner (as in n. 1), pp. 300f, 304, 307.

³⁸ See Turner (as in n. 1), pp. 323f. See also p. 305.

³⁹ On these frescoes see G. Briganti, *Pietro da Cortona o della pittura barocca*, Florence 1962, pp. 248f, 261.

⁴⁰ The iconographic unity of apse and dome was observed in W. Schöne, 'Zur Bedeutung der Schrägsicht für die Deckenmalerei des Barock', *Festschrift Kurt Badt zum siebzigsten Geburtstage. Beiträge aus Kunst- und Geistesgeschichte*, Berlin 1961, pp. 144–72, esp. 169; and in Poensgen (as in n. 1), p. 101.

⁴¹ Many of the figures in these two frescoes are specified in E. Strong, *La Chiesa Nuova (Santa Maria in Vallicella)*, Rome 1923, pp. 117–19.

Between 1681 and 1683 Baldassare Franceschini of Volterra painted the Assumption of the Virgin in the large dome of SS. Annunziata in Florence. There is no indication that Ludovico David knew this fresco. However, he may well have known the extensive and brilliant description of the work which Filippo Baldinucci published in his *Notizie dei professori del disegno*.⁴² David most probably used Baldinucci's text during his work on his *Disinganno*, and he specifically refers to a passage of Baldinucci's *Notizie* in one of his letters.⁴³ Baldinucci, after his account of the Trinity and of the Virgin in Franceschini's fresco, introduces the description of the other figures as follows:

In the remainder of the painting Volterrano had the notion of representing not only the great number of angelic spirits, but all the souls of the sacred Fathers, and others who are mentioned in the sacred scriptures, who up to the time of the glorious Assumption of the Virgin Mary had earned eternal salvation.⁴⁴

This affirmation of the unity of time may well have been among David's sources when he devised the decoration of the Cappella dell'Assunta. In fact, he may have taken inspiration from the rest of the description as well. The majority of the figures depicted in David's much smaller dome are also mentioned in Baldinucci's account of the Florentine *Assumption* fresco.

Two sources which David specifically acknowledges are Dante Alighieri and Correggio. Both are invoked in David's explanation of why he separated male and female saints in his fresco.⁴⁵ Dante does so in his *Divine Comedy*,⁴⁶ and Correggio in the dome of Parma cathedral. In addition, it is apparent that David's explanation of who the innocent children are is closely based on Dante's.⁴⁷ We shall return to the question of the importance of Correggio for David's work at a later point.

A further remark in David's opening paragraph justifies the very existence of his description. He states that his fresco expresses concepts which may not be comprehensible at first glance, and which therefore require a written explanation.⁴⁸ Only very few descriptions of individual fresco decorations were issued as independent publications in the seventeenth century. Among the better known are the descriptions of Pietro da Cortona's Barberini ceiling,⁴⁹ Filippo Gherardi's ceiling fresco in S. Pantaleo,⁵⁰ Andrea Pozzo's S. Ignazio fresco,⁵¹ and Ludovico David's dome. The conditions of visibility for many large-scale decorations, and their iconographic

⁴² F. Baldinucci, *Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, ed. F. Ranalli, 5 vols, Florence 1845-7 (facs. edn, with two volumes of appendices, ed. P. Barocchi, Florence 1974-5), v, pp. 185-9.

⁴³ G. Bottari and S. Ticozzi, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura scultura ed architettura*, 8 vols, Milan 1822-5, iii, p. 364.

⁴⁴ 'Nel rimanente della pittura ha avuto concetto il Volterrano di rappresentare, oltre alla gran copia di spiriti angelici, tutte le anime de' santi Padri, ed altri nominati nelle sagre carte, che fino a quel tempo della gloriosa Assunzione di Maria Vergine si trovavano al possesso dell'eterna salvezza.' Baldinucci (as in n. 42), v, p. 186.

⁴⁵ *Dichiarazione*, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, ii.94-102; *Paradiso*, xxxii. 1-36.

⁴⁷ *Paradiso*, xxxii.40-8, 73-81.

⁴⁸ *Dichiarazione*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Mattia Rosichino, *Dichiaratione delle pitture della sala de' signori Barberini*, Rome 1640; repr. in *Il voltone di Pietro da Cortona in Palazzo Barberini* (Quaderni di Palazzo Venezia, ii), Rome 1983, pp. 109f; J. B. Scott, *Images of Nepotism. The Painted Ceilings of Palazzo Barberini*, Princeton, NJ 1991, pp. 216-19; for an analysis of this text see pp. 136-45 and passim.

⁵⁰ Francesco Zanoni, *La nuova pittura opera del signor Filippo Gherardi da Lucca, sù la volta, e tribuna della chiesa di San Pantaleo de Chierici Regolari Poveri della Madre di Dio delle Scuole Pie di Roma. Scoperta l'anno MDCXC*, Rome 1690.

⁵¹ See n. 11; on this ceiling see also *Breve descrizione della pittura fatta nella volta del Tempio di Sant'Ignazio scoperta l'anno MDCXCIV. Per la festa del medesimo Santo*, Rome 1694.

richness, often make detailed viewing difficult (this has not changed much since the introduction of electric light), and it seems legitimate to wonder why so few explanations and descriptions were published.

The Barberini publicised Cortona's ceiling in a lavish volume on their palace, copies of which were probably employed as prestigious gifts.⁵² However, they left it to a certain Mattia Rosichino, who was employed in the palace as sweeper but appears to have acted as custodian as well, to compile a short explanation which could assist casual visitors in their understanding of the fresco.⁵³

A sheet inserted into an account book of S. Pantaleo states that the description of Gherardi's fresco in this church was printed 'per sodisfattione del Pittore' ('for the satisfaction of the painter').⁵⁴ This somewhat ambiguous remark may imply that the publication had in fact been instigated by Gherardi. Pozzo's and David's descriptions were written by the painters themselves.

These observations suggest that it was painters and viewers, rather than patrons, who were principally interested in a detailed comprehension of all the details of such fresco decorations. They also suggest that patrons thought it sufficient that the principal subject should be comprehensible, and attached less weight to additional artistic or iconographic choices made by the painter. This conclusion accords with our earlier observation that the fathers of the Collegio Clementino specifically requested no more than a Coronation of the Virgin, leaving all other decisions to the painter.

Since David's dome depicts a narrative, it has a main view, located so as to afford optimum visibility of the protagonists, Mary and Christ. David calls this main view the 'principal veduta'.⁵⁵ This main view is not defined only by the figure composition, but also, highly unusually, by linear perspective.

The introduction of linear perspective into a dome otherwise following the compositional type of the celestial glory is explained at length in David's *Dichiarazione*.⁵⁶ He begins by discussing the problems posed by lanterns, which are described as one of the 'pernicious' shortcomings of contemporary architecture, in disaccordance with Vitruvian maxims.⁵⁷ David notes that, in the domes painted by Correggio and 'others of good taste', lanterns were rejected even though architects as important as Raphael and Bramante had introduced them into their buildings. As he explains, for the painter lanterns pose insurmountable difficulties. If one of the persons of the Trinity is depicted within a lantern (as is the case in S. Maria in Vallicella), that figure is separated from the others and looks imprisoned. If the lantern is left empty, it looks inert. Furthermore, festoons and putti (as introduced into Roman painting by Lanfranco)⁵⁸ seem insufficient support for the lanterns whose bases they surround.

⁵² Hieronymus Tetius, *Aedes Barberinae ad Quirinalem... descriptae*, Rome 1642; on this work see Scott (as in n. 49), pp. 43, 102f, 137f, 195 and passim.

⁵³ On Rosichino's position in the Barberini Palace see Scott (as in n. 49), pp. 136f.

⁵⁴ P. Osvaldo Tosti Sch. P., 'Vicende architettoniche della chiesa di S. Pantaleo in Roma con particolare riferimento all'altare maggiore', *Archivium scholarum piarum*, xiii, 25, 1989, pp. 179-224, esp. 195.

⁵⁵ *Dichiarazione*, p. 3; compare n. 62 below.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 7f.

⁵⁷ In fact, Vitruvius does not refer to lanterns at any point of his *De architectura*. In a section on the domes of round temples he refers to a flower, not a lantern, as the crowning element (*De architectura*, iv.8.3).

⁵⁸ G.-P. Bernini, *Giovanni Lanfranco (1582-1647)*, 2nd edn, Parma 1985, pp. 74-6.

David meets these difficulties with the ingenious device of incorporating an image of the outside of the lantern, corresponding to its real interior, into his fresco. Thus the lantern is transformed into a temple in honour of the name of Mary. Even though David does not say so, his *tempietto* may be intended as a reference to the Marian attribute of the 'templum spiritus sancti', 'the temple of the Holy Spirit'.⁵⁹ It is carried by angels whose physical size is equal to the load they bear.

Hellmut Hager has suggested that the formal inspiration for a lantern carried by angels was provided by Antonio Gherardi's Avila Chapel in S. Maria in Trastevere, constructed in 1678–80.⁶⁰ The fact that David took up this motif is revealing. The inclusion of a perspectival element allows a re-interpretation of the celestial glory in perspectival terms. David brings to bear on the decoration of this dome his profound concern with the mathematical sciences. His perspectival dome presents to the viewer a spatial arrangement of a complexity unequalled in the decorations of seventeenth-century Roman domes.

In David's composition, a *tempietto* is carried in mid-air. Shaded groups of saints at either side of the central axis and two angels carrying the *tempietto* frame a view into an area of light beyond the building. The beholder's glance passes just underneath this small temple, meets Christ and the Virgin, and then rises to the luminous zone where the Lord and the Holy Spirit reside (Pl. 26).

In perspectival images, the spectator's ideal line of sight can be found by establishing the point of convergence of orthogonals. Thus, by extending the vertical lines of the *tempietto* upwards, it can be shown that the 'principal [point of] view' is eccentrically placed (see diagram). The vertical lines converge on the right-hand horse drawing Elijah's chariot. This point of convergence defines the beholder's ideal station point. The beholder's eye level is referred to as 'horizon' in David's text.⁶¹ His eye point, located by the horizon and by the point of convergence, defines the ideal viewing position of the spectator with regard to the main figures and the depicted architecture, and thus defines the 'principal view' in geometrical terms.⁶²

David's dome was not alone in suggesting the viewer should take an eccentric viewing position. All domes in which the main figures are depicted on one side, such as Correggio's dome in Parma Cathedral⁶³ and Lanfranco's in S. Andrea della Valle,⁶⁴ to some extent do so. In fact, the relation between the Assunta in the apse

⁵⁹ On the attributes of the Immaculate Virgin see P. Eich, 'Empfängnis Mariä, unbefleckte', in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, v, Stuttgart 1967, cols 242–59, esp. 253.

⁶⁰ Hager (as in n. 7), pp. 263f; on this chapel see T. C. Pickrel, 'Antonio Gherardi, Painter and Architect of the Late Baroque in Rome', Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas 1981, pp. 98–111, 217–28.

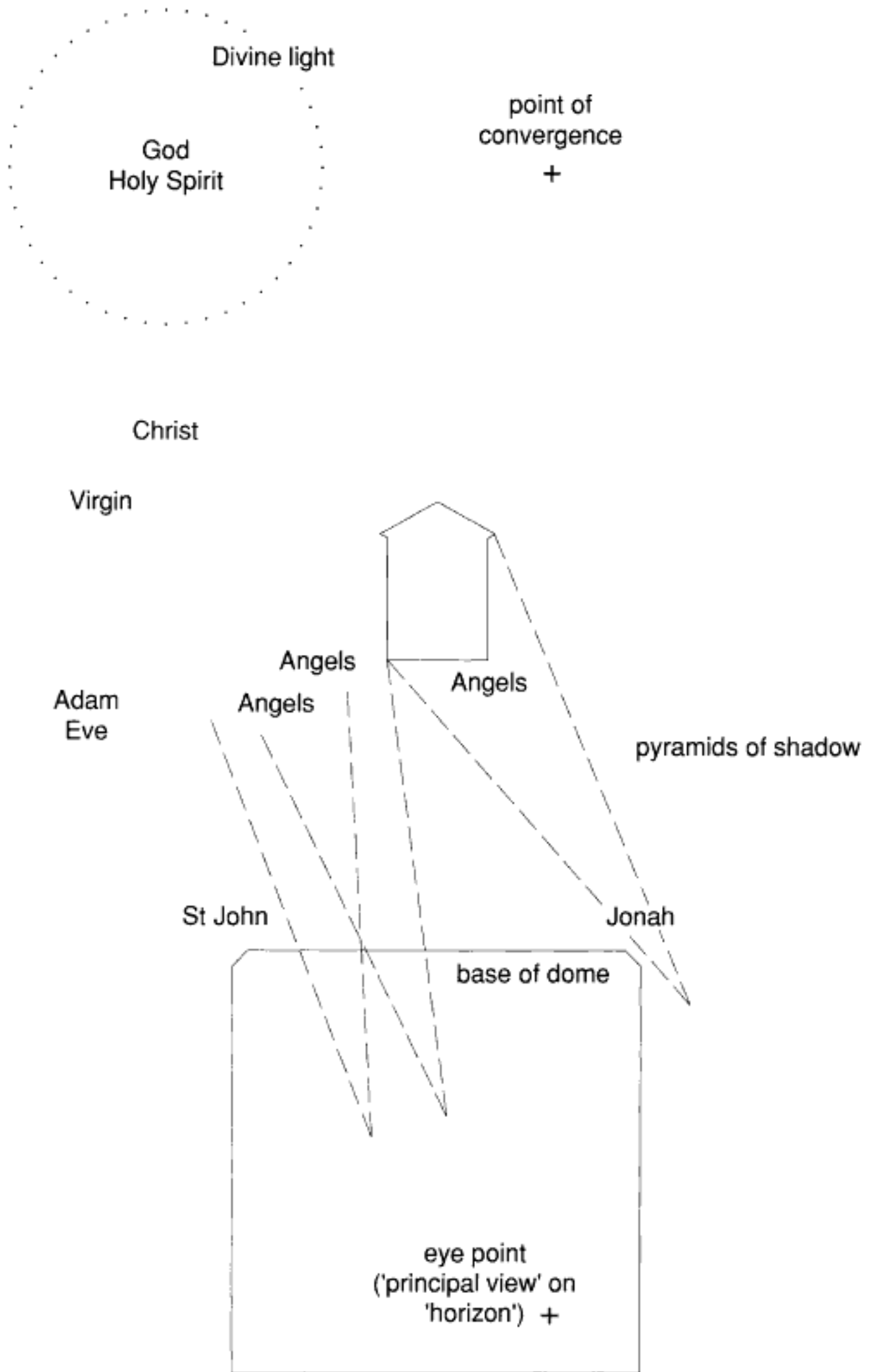
⁶¹ *Dichiarazione*, pp. 4, 8.

⁶² I think that David uses the terms 'principal veduta' (p. 3) and 'Orizzonte' (p. 4) to some extent as synonyms. In introducing the notion of a horizon, he speaks of 'detto Orizzonte'; in the preceding text the word 'detto' can refer to nothing other than 'principal veduta'. I therefore think that 'principal veduta' means both 'main view' and 'main point of view'. Since the overall photograph of the dome (Pl. 27) was taken from a

central position, it gives only a weak impression of what the principal figures would have looked like from the main point of view. The photographs showing sections of the dome seen from the other side of the chapel (Pls 24–5) allow us to assess how much greater the impact of figures along the margin of the dome must have been, when they were viewed from positions obliquely opposite.

⁶³ See J. Shearman, *Only Connect... Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, Princeton, NJ 1992, pp. 186–8.

⁶⁴ It is most likely that Ferrante Carli's phrase 'al primo aspetto... à mezo giorno', at the beginning of his description, entails an oblique view, that is the first oblique view onto the dome's fresco for a viewer approaching the crossing of S. Andrea della Valle from the nave; Turner (as in n. 1), p. 317.



Approximate diagram of the spacial arrangement depicted in Pl. 27

and the Trinity in the dome of Cortona's S. Maria in Vallicella frescoes is apparent only in an oblique view onto the decorations.⁶⁵ Like Pozzo's *trompe l'oeil* dome in S. Ignazio,⁶⁶ however, Ludovico David's dome departed from this tradition in not allowing a satisfactory view from a central position, or for that matter from any position other than the principal point of observation. Nevertheless, the full reading of David's dome depended on changes of the viewer's position. Neither the saints placed behind the observer, nor the name of the Virgin placed inside the lantern,⁶⁷ would have been visible from the 'principal veduta'.

In addition to the construction of a sophisticated perspectival space, a second focus of David's geometrical analysis is the behaviour of light. Throughout his description, the author insists on the importance of light, both in its metaphorical meaning and its physical behaviour, such as its propagation, its illumination of objects, and its reflection. The glory of the Trinity is expressed through light, and David describes this light as illuminating the other saints like a sun.⁶⁸ In fact, the luminosity surrounding the Trinity is treated as a light source of finite size, and the fresco describes both the paths of this light and the shadows cast by opaque objects (compare diagram).

David specifies that the lantern is suspended between the divine light source and the figures of Jonah and Job.⁶⁹ Thus a pyramid of shadow is created which casts Jonah and part of the figure of Job into darkness. In the fresco, further pyramids of shadow caused by the angels surrounding the lantern cast darkness on the figure groups at either side of the Coronation of the Virgin.

David's study of shadow projection, and more specifically of pyramids of shadow, could have been assisted by a variety of sources. Pyramidal shadows were discussed or illustrated in the contexts of optics,⁷⁰ perspective theory,⁷¹ and astronomy.⁷² Pyramids of shadow are also shown in Leonardo's Codex Gates (Leicester, Hammer) but we do not know if David studied this manuscript as early as the 1690s.⁷³ His use in the *Dichiarazione* of the verb 'to eclipse' may suggest that astronomical literature inspired the very specific rendering of shadows in his dome. Given the prominence of pyramidal shadows in elementary astronomical literature, still at this time a normal component of mathematical education, David's knowledge of this subject would not have depended on his access to Leonardo's manuscript.

One further influence on David's approach to the rendering of shadows may be mentioned. A study of one of his earliest Roman works to have come down to us, his

⁶⁵ The importance of oblique views in general terms is discussed in Schöne (as in n. 40). However, regarding Schöne's interpretation of Pozzo's frescoes in S. Ignazio, see Kerber (as in n. 11), pp. 94–8.

⁶⁶ Kerber, *ibid.*, pp. 54f, 92f.

⁶⁷ *Dichiarazione*, p. 8: David refers to the name of Mary in the dome of the lantern; it is not visible on the extant photograph.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ See e.g. John Pecham and the Science of Optics: *Perspectiva communis*, ed. D. C. Lindberg, Madison, Milwaukee and London 1970, pp. 100–3.

⁷¹ See e.g. Pietro Cataneo, *L'architettura*, Venice 1567, p. 179 (for 180). For an introduction to the study of shadows in treatises on linear perspective see T. Da

Costa Kaufmann, 'The Perspective of Shadows: The History of the Theory of Shadow Projection', this *Journal*, xxxviii, 1975, pp. 258–87.

⁷² For example, numerous pyramids of shadow in the context of astronomy are illustrated in Athanasius Kircher, *Ars magna lucis et umbræ*, Rome 1646; see e.g. pp. 11, 729f, 747, 766.

⁷³ Shadow pyramids in the context of astronomy are illustrated on fols 1^r, 2^r and 30^r of Leonardo's Codex Gates (Leicester, Hammer); see *Il Codice di Leonardo da Vinci della Biblioteca di Lord Leicester in Holkham Hall*, ed. G. Calvi, Milan 1909. David's reference to this codex appears in a letter of 1704; see Campori (as in n. 14), pp. 534f. In this letter, David refers to his reading of this manuscript as happening in the present.

Adoration of the Shepherds in S. Andrea al Quirinale (Pl. 28),⁷⁴ reveals that the emphasis on shadow projection is, at least partly, also an aspect of David's 'Correggismo'. The composition of this painting is closely based on Correggio's *Notte*, today in Dresden.⁷⁵ David's dependence on this picture extends to the motif of a shadow cast by a hand, or in his case by only a finger, over the face of the one shepherd who looks directly towards the Christ child.

During his Roman period, David to a very noticeable extent came under the influence of the principal exponent of 'Correggismo' in Rome, Baciccio.⁷⁶ This influence is apparent in the dome of the Cappella dell'Assunta, not least regarding individual facial types such as Christ's. There cannot be any doubt that in addition David studied the highly rational way in which Baciccio depicted the propagation of light and the projection of shadows in his recently completed frescoes in the Chiesa del Gesù. In the apse fresco of the Gesù, of 1680–3,⁷⁷ the light radiating from the Lamb generates conspicuous shadows. Such rational projection of shadows is even more prominent in the stupendous fresco in the nave of the church (Pl. 29), painted in 1676–9,⁷⁸ where saints on banks of clouds cast painted shadows onto the vault.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ This painting can be dated to between 1689 and 1690. In a letter of 13 Oct. 1691 David writes: '... e finalmente, giunto in Roma cinque anni sono, dipinsi una gran tavola con la istoria dell'Assunta, molto maggiore di ciascheduno de' quadri da farsi per costì, nella nuova cappella del collegio Clementino, un'altra in s. Dionigi Areopagita, e tre quadri esposti questo prossimo passato Natale pel sig. principe Panfilio, in una cappella che doveva fare Giro Ferri, entro la chiesa di s. Andrea di Monte Cavallo al Noviziato de' padri Gesuiti, al confronto delle più stimate tavole de' primi pittori moderni di Roma, cioè Guglielmo Borgognone, Iacinto Brandi, Carlo Maratta e Baciccio; le condizioni de' quali rimetto al giudizio degl'intelligenti.' Bottari and Ticozzi (as in n. 43), iii, p. 362. In this letter, only Principe Giambattista Pamphilj (the brother of Cardinal Benedetto Pamphilj, the latter the 'Cardinale protettore' of the Collegio Clementino from 1689 to 1730; see Zambarelli, as in n. 8, p. 53) is mentioned as patron of the three pictures in S. Andrea al Quirinale. In the *Dichiarazione* the Principe is again referred to. David writes that Principe Pamphilj honoured his achievement in this church (p. 5). This is not to say that Principe Giambattista Pamphilj commissioned the works in S. Andrea al Quirinale; see F. Haskell, *Patrons and Painters. A Study in the Relations Between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*, London 1963, pp. 87f. A document in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (Fondo Gesuitico 1017, p. 191) states that: 'Nella Cappella della Madonna della nostra Chiesa, cioè nella prossima a quella del B. Stanislao, furono collocati tre quadri, cioè quello dell'altare, e gli altri due laterali, rappresentanti la Natività del Sig[no]re, l'Adoratione de Magi, e la fuga in Egitto. Il Pittore che li dipinse, chiamato Lodovico David, ottenne permesso del Sig[no]r Card. Ottoboni Nipote della Santità d'Aless[andr]o 8^o, di farli a spese del Sig[no]r Principe Panfilio, fondatore della Chiesa [in the sense of successor to the founder, or of patron? Or was the writer of the document unaware that Principe Giambattista was not himself the founder, but his heir?],

il quale si contentò, che si esponessero nella detta Cappella. Se poi dovranno stabilim[en]te rimanere nella med[esi]ma Cappella tali quadri, toccherà al med[esi]mo Sig[no]r Principe il determinarlo a tempo suo, cioè quando ordinerà l'ornam[en]to della detta Cappella, che di pre[sen]te è affatto rustica.' This text was located and sent to me by Wiktor Gramatowski, S.J., to whom I extend my most cordial thanks; the shelfmark is incorrect in Haskell, op. cit., p. 88. David's pictures were painted on behalf of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, and were paid for by Prince Giambattista Pamphilj with money left by Prince Camillo Pamphilj who had died in 1666. The three works must have been painted between 1689 and 1690. The document in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu suggests that the pictures were not painted before 1689, the year of the election of Pope Alexander VIII. The letter quoted above reveals that the pictures were complete by Christmas 1690 (not in 1691 or after, as Haskell, op. cit., p. 88, implies). The Jesuit document further reveals that the chapel was criticised as 'affatto rustica' even though David's pictures had already been installed.

⁷⁵ In the late 17th century this picture was in the ducal collection in Modena; see C. Gould, *The Paintings of Correggio*, London 1976, p. 205. It was most probably among the pictures copied by David in 1685 (see Frati, as in n. 14, 1907 p. 71, 1912 p. 126), and figures prominently in some of David's letters of 1703 (see Campori, as in n. 14, pp. 517f, 525, 527, 531).

⁷⁶ On Correggio's influence on Baciccio see R. Enggass, *The Painting of Baciccio. Giovanni Battista Gaulli. 1639–1709*, University Park, Penn. 1964, pp. 7–9 and ad indicem; and Gould (as in n. 75), pp. 151f.

⁷⁷ Enggass (as in n. 76), pp. 137f.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 136f.

⁷⁹ The rationality of the depiction of this glory suggests that Enggass's diagrammatic reconstruction of the represented space requires some revision; see *ibid.*, fig. 72. To allow the banks of clouds to cast shadows underneath the vault, it is necessary to assume that the

Observation of Baciccio's and David's frescoes lends support to David's contention in his *Dichiarazione* that the behaviour of light in a ceiling decoration can and should be rationally depicted.

David's sophistication in representing three-dimensional configurations, and in analysing these configurations in his text, is further demonstrated by his comments on the way the persons of the Trinity are arranged (see Pl. 26). He states that the Virgin at the right of her son is the subject of the 'principal view', and that 'higher up' one sees the Lord and the Holy Ghost. This description of different heights at which figures are placed within the depicted space contrasts with a further comment on the placing of the three figures of the Trinity:

...in the principal view of this paradise I have placed [the Most Holy Virgin], served by the angels, seated on clouds, in a most humble posture, on the right of her son, who places a regal crown on her head, whilst higher up one sees the Eternal Father with the world carried by celestial cupids, blessing her, and the Holy Spirit. The three Divine Persons are placed ... at the points of an equilateral triangle...⁸⁰

This is to say that David distinguishes between the spatial arrangement of figures and their configuration in terms of surface geometry. I am not aware of any other descriptive text of this period that makes this distinction.

It is highly unlikely that David would have considered the geometrical means of his fresco as restrictive. He employs phrases such as 'varietà de... Simetrie'⁸¹ to indicate the desirability of introducing variety into symmetrical configurations. A particularly interesting reference to the artist's subtle use of geometry is found in his account of one of the most lively iconographic inventions in the fresco, regarding the attributes of John the Baptist (see Pl. 26).⁸² This saint is seen pointing to the Saviour, and David suggests what words he may be speaking whilst doing so. Furthermore, he is accompanied by two youths, who are shown older than the Innocents depicted in their vicinity, 'to introduce variety into the symmetries'. One of these youths holds a glass of water, to indicate 'that he is here for baptism', while the other clasps a reed cross with a scroll bearing the words 'Ecce qui tollit peccata mundi'. This characterisation of St John by means of attributes and symbols is complemented by a narrative use of symbols. The youth carrying the water points to the other; the latter, as David observes, dries his hair and thus reinforces the reference to baptism. This illustration of the physical effects of St John's attribute of water enlivens the depiction of the Baptist, and is all the more effective since the two youths are both near the protagonists of the fresco and, as David points out, symmetrically placed with regard to them.⁸³

The artist's comments on the sizes of animals in his fresco are equally revealing. On the one hand David explains that he could render no more than a few details of the head of Jonah's whale, in giving the fish a size appropriate for a man-eating beast (compare Pl. 25);⁸⁴ on the other hand he refers to poetic licence, pictorial

light source, that is the light surrounding the letters 'IHS', cannot in fact be above the level of the vault.

⁸⁰ *Dichiarazione*, p. 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸³ These youths may be seen as predecessors of the numerous putti or children who enact religious or other

narratives in 18th-century art; for a particularly interesting discussion see W. Messerer, *Kinder ohne Alter. Putten in der Kunst der Barockzeit*, Regensburg 1962, pp. 30-6.

⁸⁴ *Dichiarazione*, p. 6.

ingenuity and heraldry in his explanation of why he painted the dove on Noah's ark praeternaturally large.⁸⁵

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Ludovico David's *Dichiarazione* documents the importance of geometry in his work. The same emphasis, as we have seen, characterises David's understanding of the teaching of art. His approach to perspective in the context of a glory sets his work apart from the conventions governing the representation of glories within domes in the seventeenth century. David's insistence on the correctness and rationality of his depiction of light, on the other hand, conforms with the visual conventions of many fresco decorations painted by his contemporaries.

The *Dichiarazione* belongs within the tradition of writers such as Ferrante Carli, Bellori and Baldinucci, in its verbal analysis of depictions of light and shade in large-scale decorations. David's treatment of the geometry of shadows in a ceiling decoration, however, may be considered as his own contribution to art literature. In spite of David's idiosyncrasies, I think that his analysis of the geometry of shadow projection in his dome of the Cappella dell'Assunta is one of the most revealing art-theoretical sources to have come down to us from the late seventeenth century. The *Dichiarazione*, more clearly than any other text, documents a rational approach to the depiction of light and shadow in ceiling decoration. As the example of Baciccio demonstrates, such a rational approach to light and shadow characterises some of the finest ceiling painting of the period.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

APPENDIX

*Dichiarazione Della Pittura Della Capella Del Collegio Clementino di Roma.
Dedicata Agl'Illustrissimi Signori Li Signori Convittori Del detto Collegio.
Da Ludovico Davide Pittore Autore dell'Opera
(Rome, Gio. Giacomo Komarek Boemo alla Fontana di Trevi, 1695)*

p. 3

Illustrissimi Signori.

Havendo li Rev. Padri del Collegio Clementino deliberato di far dipingere la Cupola della loro Capella, ed havendone commessa à mè la cura di rappresentarvi la Storia dell'Incoronazione della Santissima Vergine, lasciandomi la libertà di porre in essa quel numero, e

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 5. In this passage David refers to two classical texts. In *Elements*, v, Euclid deals with proportion. David refers to Euclid as 'Mathematico di Megara', confusing the ancient mathematician with the philosopher Euclid of Megara, an error common in the Middle Ages and found in all printed editions of Euclid from 1482

to 1566; see I. Bulmer-Thomas, 'Euclid (fl. Alexandria [and Athens?], ca. 295 B.C.)', in *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, ed. C. C. Gillispie, iv, New York 1971, pp. 414-37, esp. 415, 432 n. 14. David's 'Swan of Venosa' is a reference to Horace, more specifically to *De arte poetica*, 9f.

qualità di figure, che havessi giudicato à proposito, mi sono ingegnato di descrivere nella medesima una ristretta Idea de comprensori di quel tempo; E perche in essa occorrono diverse riflessioni non così facili ad esser à prima vista intese, sono stato persuaso da molti virtuosi ad esporre una breve Spiegazione della medesima; Ed havendomi l'esperienza insegnato à temere il livore della Critica emulazione, hò pensato di ricorrere al benignissimo Patrocinio delle Vostre Signorie Illustrissime, le quali mi si sono mostrate tanto favorevoli nel compiacimento della Tavola dell'Altare d'essa Capella, ed altre Opere da mè al Publico esposte sperando francamente, che dallo splendore delle sublimi Virtù delle Vostre Signorie Illustrissime restino dileguate quell'Ombre, che procurassero d'offuscare le mie ancorche povere fatiche; Perloche umilmente le supplico à non isdegnare quest'atto del mio devoto ardire, che m'hà spronato ad inchinargli con questo Foglio i deboli sentimenti del mio pennello nella seguente forma ideati.

Essendosi nella sottoposta Tavola dipinta la Santissima Vergine al Cielo Assonta, che con le braccia aperte attende d'incontrare l'amato Figlio, nella principal veduta di questo Paradiso hò situata la medesima servita dagl'Angioli sedente supra le nubi in umilissima attitudine alla destra dello stesso Figlio, che sopra il Capo gli pone una Regia Corona; Mentre più in alto si veggono l'Eterno Padre col Mondo portato da amori Celesti, che la benedice, e lo Spirito Santo; Essendo non solo situate le trè Persone Divine negl'angoli d'un equilatero; mà per rappresentare al senso l'egualità delle medesime con la parità della gloria, (la quale non si è saputo fin'ora altrimenti, che con la luce, che le illumina esprimere) è commune à tutte trè la detta luce, e la Santissima Triade, qual Sole ò Fonte di luce illumina tutti i Beati, ed altri Corpi, che come geroglifici dinotatori de'Santi compariscono nel detto Para-

p. 4

diso, havendo con ogni à me possibile osservazione procurato di esporre le proprie incidenze adequate alla propagata luce, nelle situazioni delle figure, ò sia corpi illuminati corrispondenti al detto Orizzonte, così ne lumi diretti, come ne riflessi, acciò non si trovi chimerica la cagione, da cui derivano.

S'inchinano à piedi della Santiss. Vergine li nostri primi Parenti col pomo in mano, e mentre Adamo preme con la sinistra mano il petto in segno di spiacimento del commesso errore, Eva addita il sottoposto Serpente, da cui fu ingannata, ed un Paraninfo Celeste percuote con un giglio (Simbolo della Virginità di Maria) lo stesso Serpente, che pure stringe trà denti il mezzo, con cui l'umanità deluse, e resta infranta la di lui dura cervice, uscendone copioso il sangue, mentre il tenero fiore, che in tal guisa lo può ferire resta immacolato, ed intatto.

Vicini alli detti primi Parenti stanno scorrendo due fanciulli di sesso diverso, esposti come Capitani del numeroso stuolo, impossibile ad esprimersi coi colori, di quelli, che morti prima d'arrivare all'uso di ragione avanti, che s'introducesse nel Popolo eletto la Circoncisione andavano à luogo di grazia per la credenza de' Genitori nel Mediatore Venturo.

Più sotto si vede Giovanni il Battista, che accenna il Redentore; Quasi, che dica; che se peccarono li detti primi Parenti; Il Figliuol' di Dio coll'essersi umanato nell'utero Virginale, ed haver in questo Mondo patito distrusse ogni colpa, e restituì al genere humano la gratia perduta.

Due altri fanciulli con la sudetta figura; mà di maggior età per variare le simetrie stanno vicini al Battista; de'quali l'uno tenendo un bicchiere d'acqua in mano accenna d'esser' in quel luogo pel Battesimo, e l'altro con la Croce di canna fasciata col motto; *Ecce qui tollit peccata mundi*, che tiene in mano s'asciuga i capegli per dinotare il medesimo.

Assistono intanto alla festa giuliva della Gloriosa Vergine sopra globi di nubi li di lei più prossimi Parenti; havendo situati dalla banda del Vangelo i Maschi, e dall'altra le Femine; per seguire la disposizione del dottissimo Dante Aligieri, e del non mai à bastanza lodato Antonio da Coreggio, Norma, Fanale, e Protagonista di quelli, che all'imprese di dipingere le Concave superficie si sono accinti; Onde primo di tutti con la Verga fiorita apparisce il di lei castissimo Sposo Gioseffo, il Padre Gioachimo, il Sacerdote Zacharia, à cui vicino stà un Angelo, che in un libro accenna parte del Cantico da esso alla Posterità lasciato.

Stanno à questi vicini li Rè Magi, che guidati dall'insolita Stella adorarono in Betleme il Regio Infante; dietro d'essi si vede il buon La-

p. 5

drone, con la Croce, sopra di cui seppe rubbarsi il Paradiso. Più vicino apparisce Stefano il Protomartire, e sotto stanno i Pastori, che annonzati dall' Angelo ebbero grazia d'umiliar il loro cuore al luminoso Presepe, ed'udire in terra le melodie del Cielo, ed alcuni de'Fanciulli innocenti, che dalla Barbarie di Erode furono trucidati.

Dall'altra parte appariscono Sant'Anna, Sant'Elisabetta, Anna la Profetessa, e fondato sul probabile una delle Marie parente della Beatissima Vergine tralasciando d'introdurvi altri Personaggi del Nuovo Testamento, per iscarrezza di notizie d'altri, che nel tempo di quella Storia fossero in Paradiso.

Seguendo però l'ordine Maschile con li Padri più famosi del Vecchio Testamento apparisce Noè col modello dell'Arca, à cui intorno vola la candida Colomba col ramo di Ulivo nel rostro. Qui bensì prego le Signorie Vostre Illustrissime à difendermi dalle Censure, che col quinto degl'Elementi del Mathematico di Megara potesse pubblicare l'Emulazione, per Esser la Colomba così grande, che non può entrare nell'Arca; Poiche se anche il Cigno di Venosa non mi concedesse di poter fingere appresso à quell'epilogata machina vivo, e naturale il volatile, e non isperasse dall'ingenuità qualche vantaggio questa Pittura, in cui con tal Gergolifico si gl'accenna haver'essa havuto necessario principio ne i diluvij del prossimo passato Autunno, e prosieguimento nell'ombre quotidiane del Verno, più ajutata dagli splendori delle liquide olive, che da i raggi del Sole; L'antico stemma dell'Eccellentissima Casa Pamfilia reso sempre più chiaro da i gloriosi allori dell'Eminentiss. Sig. Card. Ereditario Protettore di esso Collegio, ormai tanto giganteggia, che non solo è capace d'occupare quell'edifizio, mà tutto l'universo; Onde sarebbe stato errore, di qualsivoglia Pittore, che in tal grandezza in questo luogo non l'havesse dipinta, e di me in particolare, che vivo tanto obbligato all'Eccellentissimo Sig. Principe Fratello di Sua Eminenza per gl'honori fatti alla mia mano nell'Opere del Noviziato de'Padri Gesuiti; Ne dovevo finalmente perder la congiuntura d'atterrire con tal gloriosa, ed à me benefica insegna la Maledicenza, e l'Invidia; Mà per tornare al filo di questa spiegazione sieguono l'antico Patriarca, due di lui figliuoli, l'uno Sacerdote, l'altro Soldato, tralasciando il faticante maledetto dal Genitore per haver à fratelli propalata la di lui nudità.

Si vede poi Abramo in atto di ferire l'ubidente figlio inginocchiato sul rogo, di cui commosso alquanto il petto forte mostra dalle smarrite rose del proprio volto il natural rimbrezzo, e l'agonia di chi attende colpo mortale; l'Irco al sacrificio dal Cielo destinato si volge verso il Patriarca, quasi accennandogli, che esso, e non il figlio debba ferire; E qui vicino uno de figli circoncisi, che tenendo il reciso

p. 6

prepuzio, el Coltello in mano ancora piange pel patito dolore, ed accenna l'Origine di tal sanguinoso comandamento divino.

Giacobbe con le verghe semiscorzate imprime nella fantasia delle beventi pecore del Suocero la varietà de colori, siegue Gioseffo, che dalle longhe chiome usate dall'Ebraismo, che escono sotto il Turbante indica d'esser quello, che fù inalzato alle grandezze d'Egitto; Loth col bicchiero in mano accenna ignudo la spensieratezza, che suol inferire il soverchio liquore di Bacco, di cui ne hà votato il vaso dal fanciullo à lui vicino tenuto.

Mosè mostra ad Aronne, Eleazaro, ed altri Sacerdoti i precetti del Decalogo, Sansone si fà vedere con le porte in ispalla della Città di Gazza, le quali per la sopratural forza nelle chiome, che escono sotto l'Elmo mostra con poco aggravio di sostenerle. Stà Giosuè in atto di fermare il Sole con la tromba in mano, e Gedeone preme la rugiada dal Vello; mentre il Profeta reale accorda l'Arpa, che per dinotarlo non meno Salmista, che Cittaredo, comparisce un Angelo con una carta in mano, sopra la quale stà scritto parte di un verso de suoi Salmi, Daniele circondato da altri Profeti siede sopra uno di quei Leoni, che l'inchinarono, mentre un'altro stà lambendo con la lingua i di lui piedi. Si vede Giobbe consolato dagl' amici, de quali alcuni stanno leggendo le sue lamentazioni; Giona ringraziando il Cielo ben pentito dell'inobedienza esce dalla Balena, di cui non potendosi per l'angustia del sito esprimere la natural' grandezza, si è mostrato solamente parte della testa di un Corpo capace à poter ingojare un uomo vivo; sopra quella sede Tobia col pesce in mano, col di cui fiele diè la luce al Genitore.

Li trè Fanciulli Isach, Misach', ed Abdenago, si raccomandano à Dio, e gli rendono grazia nel vedere senza calore le rilucenti fiamme della fornace, nella quale furono gettati, e per rappresentarvi Eliseo; si vede questo, che stà raccogliendo il mantello d'Elia, mentre sul carro di Fuoco è al Ciel rapito. E qui si osservano Eleazaro, la gloriosa Madre con i suoi sette figli Maccabei; che tutti con le palme in mano si mostrano trionfanti del proprio martirio.

Ester servita da una Mora umilia il diadema, e lo scettro alla reina del Paradiso, di cui essa fù all'antichità figura; La Vedova di Betulia mostra il reciso Capo d'Oloferne alla vecchia servente, che entro di un sacco attende di avvolgerlo. La Casta Susanna appoggiata al Fonte, tenendo nella sinistra mano due ramoscelli uno di Ilice l'altro di lentisco, i quali mediante lo spirito di Daniele furono cagione di far assolvere la sua condannata Innocenza.

La Figlia di Jefte inghirlandando il Capo di fiori stà piangendo la sua Virginità sacrificata dal Genitore, nel giglio, e coltello, ch'essa

p. 7

tiene in mano simboleggiata; Jael col chiodo, e mazzuolo mostra d'esser quella, che trafisse il Capo di Sisara, e Debora con la verga, e tavola in mano accenna di essere stata giudice è profetessa.

Galleggiano le due Mogli di Giacobbe tenendo la vaga Rachele sotto il manto nascosti gl'Idoli furati al Padre, mentre la di lei losca, e lagrimosa, e non piacevole Sorella intrecciate le chiome di fiori mostra nell'habito d'un colore giallo più vivo, ed acceso di quello delle sue carni la femminile sagacità di sapere con l'opposizione eclissare, e nascondere le deformità naturali; si vede poi l'affettuosa Noemi consigliare la nuora, che dalle recise spiche si manifesta, à confidare negl'ajuti Divini. Rebecca col capretto, che tiene in grembo, el coltello accenna l'astutia con cui deluse il Cieco marito, facendogli concedere al di lei diletto secondonato la Primogenitura ad Esaù dovuta, e finalmente la gelosa Sara scacciare la vaga, e dolente Serva col figliuolo Ismaele da Casa.

Havendo intanto procurato nel men cattivo modo, ch'è stato concesso alla debolezza de miei talenti di dilettere l'occhio con la varietà de Personaggi, Simetrie, età, fisionomie, azioni, affetti, habiti, animali, e stromenti, restava d'insinuare al medesimo senso visivo il colmo de godimenti della gloria Celeste; Onde per accennare le sodisfazioni dell'Odorato si

veggono vicini alla Santissima Triade scherzare spiriti celesti co' Turibuli in mano, de quali altri stanno infondendo in uno d'essi l'incenso, altri spargendo col moto de medesimi il fumo odoroso. E per dinotare le caste delizie del tatto si veggono dall'altra parte della SS. Triade abbracciati due casti amorini celesti. E finalmente per allettare l'orecchio si mira una moltitudine d'Angeli con varj stromenti, e carte musicali al cenno del mastro di Capella concertar sinfonie, ed articular musici accenti.

Restava per ultimo d'adornare il lanternino, che è quel buco pernicioso alle Cupole, e perciò riprovato dalle massime Vitruviane negl'edifizii degl'insignissimi Raffaele Sanctio, e Bramante Lazari d'Urbino, dall'accennato Coreggio, e da altri di buon gusto, anzi quel laberinto in cui intricati i più famosi pennelli moderni, gl'è convenuto, o dipingere nel concavo Emisferiuccio una delle tre Persone Divine, dall'altre disgiunta, ed in tal luogo quasi imprigionata, ò lasciarli imperfetti alla curiosità degl'osservanti, e per alleviare il fastidio, che riceveva l'occhio nel vedere quel buco entro le glorie, circonscriverlo con ghirlande di fiori, ò festoni, con bambocci, che quelle massiccie machine di lanternini sembrassero ancorche impropriamente di sostenere.

Per rimediare dunque in quest'opera à tal difetto quasi commune alla più moderna Architettura, e far à l'occhio credere esser il detto

p. 8

lanternino più tosto, che ad altro stato fabricato per vantaggio di quest'Istoria, hò rappresentato il medesimo esser un Tabernacolo dagl'Angeli fabricato al nome di Maria, e per lo Cielo portato, de quali alcuni con ghirlande di rose lo vanno adornando essendo sotto l'Apice d'esso situato il medesimo glorioso nome candido, e risplendente à guisa di Luna da Cherubini corteggiato; E ricorrendo agl'artificj dell'Optica mi sono ingegnato nel concavo della Cupola, che più s'avvicina all'Orizzonte di far vedere il Convesso Cilindrico d'esso Tabernacolo, che più dall'occhio s'allontana in modo, che il finto esteriore corrispondesse al Reale interiore: E perche quest'Opaco Opticamente mostra d'esser al detto Orizzonte più vicino, che la Santissima Triade[,] eclissa la Divina luce alle figure di Giona, e parte di Giobbe velandoli con la propria ombra piramidale. Perloche in questo picciolo Cielo decantato da Professori incapace di più di dodeci figure, non solo si è procurato di moltiplicare all'occhio lo spatio; cosichè in esso ne giganteggiassero più di ducento; Mà col motivo di questo finto mobile Tabernacolo apparissero immobili Paralasse, ed eclissi Pittoresche, se non fatte come la gran virtù degl'intelligenti desidera, almeno, quanto la debolezza di Lodovico David Umilissimo Servo delle Vostre Signorie Illustrissime hà saputo.

Il fine.