

CARLO FRANCESCO MELLONE

(active in Milan 1693-1743)

The first that is heard of Mellone is the commission to carve the statue of St. Pius V for the Collegio Ghislieri in Pavia in 1685, a work that he only completed in 1701. Meanwhile, he is known to have spent a long period in Rome, from which he had returned to Milan by 1693, and had carved the statue of S. Rosalia on Milan Cathedral, which was completed in 1696. In 1716 he was appointed Giuseppe Rusnati's successor as protostatuario della Fabbrica of Milan Cathedral, a post that he held until 1736, and which constituted his main employment, supplying sculpture for the interior and exterior of the Duomo. Between 1718 and 1721 he made a second sojourn in Rome, invited by Cardinal Boncompagni to assist his compatriot Rusconi on the Monument to Gregory XIII in St. Peter's. Despite being declared "totally blind" in 1735, he was given the commission for another statue for the cathedral in 1742, which was delivered in 1743, whilst also providing the sculpture - notably two bronze angels - for the new high altar of S. Nazaro in 1736-38. Mellone was the key figure in the transmission of the idiom of Baroque Rome to Milan.

Modello for a statue to St. Pius V

Polychromed terracotta

H. 53 cm.

Clearly the model for a statue of St. Pius V, this terracotta can only have been - of all those enumerated by Werner Hager's Ehrenstatuen der Päpste (Rome 1929) - for the unillustrated seated statue at the foot of the main staircase of the Collegio Ghislieri in Pavia. This would appear to be confirmed by the illustrations of this statue in Il Collegio Ghislieri 1567-1967, Associazione Alunni del Collegio Ghislieri, Pavia, 1967 (frontispiece), and in San Pio V e la problematica del suo tempo, Cassa di Risparmio di Alessandria, 1972 (p. 37). The difference between the modello and the statue can be explained by the fact that Mellone not only took at least sixteen years to carve the marble, but also by his no doubt coming under his fellow-Milanese Camillo Rusconi's influence during this period, part of which he spent in Rome (cf. Rossana Bossaglia, 'Scultura', in Il Duomo di Milano, Cassa di Risparmio delle Province Lombarde, 1973, vol. II, pp. 122-126, and A.M. Romanini, 'La scultura Milanese nel XVIII secolo', in Storia di Milano, Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri, Milan, vol. XII (1959), pp. 783-4). For it is evident that the more Baroque character of the finished monument is prefatory of Rusconi's seated figure of Gregory XIII (1715-23), on which Mellone was to carve the relief of The Establishment of the Gregorian Calendar and other elements between 1718 and 1721

59, JERMYN STREET - ST. JAMES'S. LONDON. SW1Y 6LX. 01-493-0688 - CABLE HEIMGAL

(cf. Robert Enggass, Early Eighteenth-Century Sculpture in Rome, Pennsylvania State University Park, 1976, vol. I, pp. 103 & 155 and figs. 67-71 and 150).

Mellone must have been commissioned to carve the monument to Pius V in 1685, for Siro Zanelli was paid for the marble for it on 31 December of that year (cf. Il Collegio Ghislieri, pp. 325-6). The final payment for the statue was only made on 2nd March 1701, and its pedestal was not completed until 1709. From 1693 Mellone was working for the Duomo of Milan, but it seems highly probable that he retained connections with Rusconi in Rome, most of whose family had remained in Milan, and who was to employ him in Rome subsequently. Only this could account for Mellone's finished statue of St. Pius V almost appearing to be a trial run for Rusconi's statue of Gregory XIII, since there can be no question as to which was the major sculptor of the two, and thus the influence upon the other. The present, more cautiously posed and less dynamic terracotta would, by contrast, represent Mellone's own idea for the statue.

St. Pius V (1566-72) was the outstanding Pope of the Counter-Reformation, who made great strides in reforming the Catholic Church, despite the brevity of his reign. One of these acts was to found the College that bears his family name in Pavia, with the object of training priests capable of matching the challenge of their Protestant opponents.