“the fact that Perrault’s ideas on architecture may have been indirectly derived from Beeckman and Stevin’s notes sheds new light on the dissemination of Stevin and Beeckman’s ideas” (123). However, this does not constitute the needed comparison with Stevin’s European contemporaries in the fields of architectural theory and urban development—Vredeman de Vries, Andrea Palladio, Vincenzo Scamozzi, Salomon de Bray, Pierre Le Muet, Louis Savot, Joseph Furttenbach, or even Rubens. This research will hopefully be launched in the coming years thanks to the numerous sources and insights offered in Van den Heuvel’s book.

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Notes

2. See Klaas van Berkel, Isaac Beeckman (1588–1673) en de mechanisering van het wereldbeeld (Amsterdam, 1983).

William Tronzo, editor

St. Peter's in the Vatican

The theme of papal authority runs through the essays William Tronzo has compiled in St. Peter’s in the Vatican, and the book’s many authors illuminate how the successors of Peter have sought to establish, reestablish, and affirm this authority over nearly seventeen hundred years in St. Peter’s Basilica. The largest church in the world, built on inhospitable ground over the tomb of a fisherman who became Christ’s vicar on earth, the Vatican basilica stands as a testament to the enduring power of the Roman Catholic Church even as it reveals the changing nature of that power and the myriad concerns of the men who have ascended to Peter’s throne.

The book’s essays, some of which appeared previously in other contexts, discuss such discrete themes as patronage of the fourth-century structure; the use of spolia in the construction and decoration of Old St. Peter’s; innovative and propagandistic commissions for the apse and façade mosaics of the early Christian basilica; the radical decision to tear down the decrepit fourth-century church and build St. Peter’s anew; the succession of projects leading to the completion of the Fabbrica; the decoration of New St. Peter’s under Bernini; the way in which ephemeral decorations for canonization ceremonies reflect papal authority in the post-Tridentine period; and the architectural legacy of St. Peter’s in a variety of contexts from the sixteenth century to the present day. Contributors write candidly about the fragmentary nature of ancient inscriptions and the lost contexts of archaeological remains, the uncertain dates of monuments or documents, inconsistent units of measurement, the unreliability of prints, and the discontinuous and contradictory sources of evidence. A frequent caveat concerns the need to interpret written and visual data together. Authors marshal their evidence from relevant graphic, textual, numismatic, or archaeological sources, prints, paintings, sculptures, or drawings, frequently with a synopsis of divergent interpretations of the same evidence offered in the text or notes. In this the book serves as a valuable methodological resource even as it highlights one of the reasons we remain fascinated by the papal authority over nearly seventeen hundred years to our understanding of the Roman Empire.

The author suggests that new decorations for the Apostle’s tomb alluded to the pillum, a symbol of authority only the pope could confer. Chapters five, six, and seven form a thematic group discussing New St. Peter’s and its decoration. In the first of these, Christof Thoenes chronicles the shift from conservation of Old St. Peter’s to the commission for a massive new church evoking the grandeur and power of the Roman Empire. In his discussion of Donato Bramante’s designs for New...
Bernini’s ephemera emphasized the pontiff’s authority in an era when Catholic veneration of saints and papal power to create them were under Protestant attack.

The architectural legacy of St. Peter’s is the subject of the book’s final chapter, in which Richard Etlin traces the evolution of the basilica’s majestic forms in such disparate progeny as St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, theoretical projects for French neoclassical churches, and nineteenth-century structures like the Milan Galleria and domed glass palaces built for industrial exhibitions. The lengthy history of St. Peter’s and theaugust associations of its classicizing architecture also made it a point of reference for the United States Capitol Building and for Adolf Hitler’s grandiose visions for a Grosse Halle in Berlin, an unexecuted project designed by Albert Speer as a public gathering place to be, in Hitler’s words, “built on such a scale that St. Peter’s and its Square [would] seem like toys in comparison” (295). Etlin shows that the allure of St. Peter’s is timeless and that its power as an archetype is remarkably and unexpectedly fluid. That the sacred space of the Vatican basilica, a marble colossus built in the architectural vocabulary of classical antiquity, became the model for the delicate glass and iron constructions of nineteenth-century commercial arcades and the crystal palaces of industrial exhibitions, is, Etlin suggests, St. Peter’s greatest paradox.

Authority is a ubiquitous subject in scholarship concerning papal patronage of art and architecture in the Vatican. What makes Tronzo’s offering unusual is its breadth. Few scholarly books on St. Peter’s begin with Constantine and end with Adolf Hitler. With this ambitious scope, the book’s authors illustrate how papal authority has been emphasized through various means in a range of historical moments from late antiquity to the present day, in essays that offer new observations about the building, its patrons, and its architects. Some of the essays originated in other venues; the others draw substantially on their
Robert S. Nelson  
**Hagia Sophia, 1850–1950: Holy Wisdom and the Modern Monument**  

A number of buildings in Western culture float, for very distinct reasons and at special times, promiscuously and sometimes frighteningly through our common cultural consciousness—the Parthenon, Chartres, the Florentine Duomo, St. Peter’s, and Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. One of the things that was “scholarly” about professional architectural history when it emerged in the mid-nineteenth century was its avoidance of this flow of associations and its fixing of a generally accepted order of monuments by date, region, author and—the greatest and shakiest accomplishment of all—aesthetic morphology or “style.” The Parthenon embodied a specific instant in the morphological evolution of the form of the Greek temple; Chartres in that of the Gothic cathedral; Hagia Sophia and St. Peter’s successive steps in that of domical church construction.

This inheritance was bequeathed to post-World War II scholarship. However, for a quarter century, the specificity of monuments has come to be valued and explored, at first in studies of the peculiar circulation of art objects in culture—for example, in the work of W. J. T. Mitchell and others, and now also in architecture. First came monographs on buildings that embraced construction history as well as design, patrons, publics, artisans, and architects, an expansion of analysis inspired by Manfredo Tafuri and James Ackerman. More recently the materiality of the building and the moment of its erection have eroded before studies of its consumption (a word no longer placed in quotation marks)—sometimes in everyday life—perhaps most directly in Neil Harris’s *Building Lives* (1999); sometimes placed in an ongoing historical narrative like Mary Beard’s *Parthenon* (2003) or John Pinto and William MacDonald’s *Hadrian’s Villa and its Legacy* (1995); or sometimes as a point of reference in a general cultural history, as in the case of Robert S. Nelson’s *Hagia Sophia, 1850–1950*, the book here under review. It is a history of the monument’s intrusion on the modern mind without any reference to its production, as the dates in its title alert us.

Nelson has chosen the (relative) high road rather than the (relative) low road of Mitchell and Harris, the history of Hagia Sophia’s reception in the architecturally informed mind rather than its recirculation and rebuilding in general culture. He includes chapters documenting the initial Byzantine Revival in European Romantic architecture circa 1850, especially in Germany; Ruskin’s slightly later Byzantine enthusiasm inspired by Venice (not Constantinople/Istanbul); the picturesque embrace of the Byzantine monument in lithography and photography, the fin-de-siècle interest (represented here in the Arts and Crafts personalities of William Morris and W. R. Lethaby plus the cultured diplomat Lord Curzon); Yeats’s *Sailing to Byzantium*; the interwar Byzantine restoration projects concentrating on the American connoisseur Thomas Whittemore; and finally Frank Lloyd Wright’s late response to Hagia Sophia’s imagery in his Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church near Milwaukee (1955–61). Nelson executes these chapters with fascinating care. Each item is treated with equal precision, while interconnections (some quite brilliant and thought provoking) are identified and emphasized. There is a profound pleasure in following his sheer craft of documentation and argument.

But, of course, the question is: what do these seven foci tell us and are these foci the right ones? Interestingly, a competing book has just appeared in J. B. Bullen’s encyclopedic and gorgeously illustrated *Byzantium Rediscovered* (2003), and one can compare.¹ The two volumes do not cite each other. Bullen’s focus is much more general, balancing Nelson’s in sketching a history of many possible links, but treating none with Nelson’s richness of imagination. Bullen is exhaustive and immensely erudite and includes every particle of a spreading but literally defined narrative. It is impressive how much information he can get into a single paragraph. Yet Curzon, Whittemore, and Wright are entirely omitted, presumably because they were too tangential or too modern in different ways. Bullen documents a formal vocabulary that was reworked in unmistakably historicist architecture down to its demise in the 1920s. In doing this his volume is a corrective: we realize that within the profusion of architecture, the reaction to Byzantine architecture and to Hagia Sophia in particular was more general than Nelson’s focused essay indicates. Yet the result is a much less interesting and challenging book. We are still dealing with a stylistic vocabulary and have not jumped to cultural imagery. Whittemore and Wright are important in showing how tricky and close historicist questions still are for us.

It is clear that Nelson, the art historian, is doing something very different from Bullen, the English professor: Nelson dissects Yeats’s text itself, sets its words against words in parallel texts, and (true to his documentary brief) focuses on just what pieces of art and architecture—what photographs from what angle, what illustrations in what books—Yeats had in his head and was trying to translate into poetry. For Nelson, images exist not just in the mind, but on the ground—in buildings, in documents, in...