

*The following is taken from August Schmarsow: Barock und Rokoko, pp.132-33. Here he discusses the second phase of the Roman Baroque, describing Vignola's work on the Gesù, which began in 1568. Schmarsow was writing in 1897, and there is a certain lovely Gemüth to the style, which I have broken up into paragraphs.*

The church of the Florentine community in Rome probably formed the basis of the chancel, which here likewise is enclosed in a semicircle, with a square crossing before it but with short arms either side; the aisles, however, such as they are, are subordinated to the unity of the nave. Thus the nave is closer to its other precursor, the hall church Santa Maria degli Angeli, whose walls Michelangelo too had penetrated with chapels. These combine in strict subservience to the wider nave; as with the short transepts together with the crossing, there is a darker area, then here a brighter area, and the entire plan forms a closed rectangle up to the apse.

Nevertheless in the interior, the crossing with the cupola suspended above it is set apart from the nave with its three bays tangibly enough as a central plan. The latter certainly appears, when you follow the structure from the entrance, only as a preparation for the former, but reaches through to the chancel tribune, and the structure itself remains recognisable with exemplary clarity, as awareness of the strict architecture demands. The Late Renaissance master did not discredit himself. Coupled pilasters with low plinths and composite capitals accompany the chapel openings, whose arches do not reach the architrave, but permit strong horizontal emphasis in further gallery-like mountings above them in a single section of wall, which thus functions together with the entablature. This is therefore low, but above it emerges a raised attic with mighty sculpture up to the cornice of the massive barrel vault which spans the entire space in front of the crossing.

The barrel vault, which was conceived by Vignola as uniformly continuous, is the most important factor both for the cohesion of the broad nave which is like an ancient hall, and that of the domed structure at the end.