CHAPTER 1

Rome of the Emperors, Rome of the Popes

1.1 Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapter,[1] the following discussion analyses how Rome was created a Christian city or, more specifically, how it became the symbol and heart of the western Christian world. This will be examined with the overall aim of establishing how Rome functioned as an influential model to subsequent cultures and generations in early medieval Europe, particularly in Anglo-Saxon England, in the areas of art and architecture.

The process of Christianization was not uniform, and especially at the beginning was characterized by contradictions and ambiguities. Nevertheless, it does seem that Christianity was practised in Rome during the first century AD, as early as it was elsewhere in the Empire. In Rome itself this was certainly given added impetus by the martyrdom of the Apostles, the early persecutions of Christian followers and the popular devotion that developed around them. The reign of Constantine (306-337), however, can be considered the first real watershed in the establishment of the religion; his recognition of Christianity as legitimate within the Roman Empire by the Edict of Milan (313) marked in a number of ways the beginning of a significant transformation into a new world. In addition to consequences in the fields of politics, economics, theology, liturgy, and the built environment, Constantine himself came to be regarded as the founder of an officially Christian Empire, a figure that, a few centuries later, would function as the symbol of a powerful past and a meaningful example to cultures that were subsequently Christianized. To fully understand the changes in Rome after Constantine's decision it is thus necessary to explore the different powers active in the city of Rome and the various ways in which they expressed their patronage of Christian buildings; and examine questions regarding the

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[1] See supra, Introduction.

potential perceptions of this multifaceted reality and complex dynamics of change by Anglo-Saxon visitors to Rome.

1.2 Constantine

Regardless of the many consequences of his reign, it can be accepted that, to all intents and purposes, Constantine was responsible for the official Christianisation of Rome. Whether this was the result of a genuine personal conversion, or a process determined primarily by other reasons – political, social and economic – or, most likely, a combination of all these, is difficult to determine, and not strictly relevant in the context of this study.[2] Nevertheless, what must be kept in mind is that although his attitudes and actions towards Christianity saw many changes during the course of his long reign, his conversion was that of a leader, his catechesis following rather than preceding it, as he was baptised only shortly before his death.[3] Thus, while the motives underlying this event have led to much scholarly debate,[4] there are a number of considerations to be borne in mind that had important consequences, as far as the current discussion is concerned: namely, those affecting the developments of Christian architecture and the relationship between Church and Empire, all of which started with Constantine and were followed by his successors.

The nature of the impact of Christianity on the Roman Empire without Constantine's support can be questioned, as can the reasons behind his promotion of a religion that, at the time, despite being successful, was only one of many. Nevertheless, this particular aspect of the process may well be

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[2] Some recent and significant studies on Constantine and his period are N. Lenski (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine,* Cambridge 2006; R.R. Holloway, *Constantine and Rome,* New Haven-London 2004; C.M. Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, New York 2004.

[3] See Odahl, p. 268. Constantine's conversion, regardless of its momentous consequences, is similar in some elements to the traditional 'conversion of a leader' (as seen in some of the successor states) followed from top to bottom with the conversion of Roman aristocracy. The major difference is that, by the early fourth century, a large section of the population was also Christian. For an estimate see J.F. Baldovin *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development and Meaning of Stational Liturgy,* Roma 1987, pp. 106-8.

[4] J.R. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital. Rome in the Fourth Century*, Oxford 2000, p. 70; see also A. Cameron, 'Constantinus Christianus' in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 73 (1983), pp. 184-90.

reflected in the arguably ambiguous character of Constantinian church-building.[5] Furthermore, the presence and survival of texts by pagan authors, and their counterparts offered by Christian apologetics,[6] demonstrate that the newly legitimized faith was regarded as a relevant issue, possibly as a threat by some, and addressed accordingly with 'official restraint, sporadic repression and universal suspicion'.[7] Some significant aspects that may have contributed to its success and which have consequences for the architectural and building choices made, include the fact that pre-Constantinian Christianity already had an institutionalised base which facilitated its quick and organised diffusion; its comparatively tolerant and inclusive nature may also have made it more appealing than other, more traditional cults, which were often localized and linked to a geographic area and-or ethnic group. An exception to this may be represented by Mithraism, a cult that, with its central rite focusing on sacrifice and regeneration, has often been linked to Christianity, and which, in some cases, offers some interesting architectural overlapping.[8] Finally, another reason for the eventual success of Christianity might lie in the fact that, despite paganism being traditionally linked to the Imperial office,[9] the adaptable monotheism offered by Christianity could have been regarded as an appropriate mirror to the political power wielded in the hands of a single Emperor.[10] Whether this is indeed the case, it is the architectural implications of Constantine's conversion which are important in this context, along with the symbolic associations and practical solutions that they explored and created.

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[5] R. Krautheimer, *Rome. Profile of a City, 312-1308,* Princeton 1981, p. 42; Id. *Three Christian capitals: topography and politics*, Berkeley 1983, p. 38.

[6] Among the pagan authors need to be mentioned Celsus and Porphyry, while notable apologists are Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, only to name some. See Holloway, pp. 4-12.

[7] Holloway, p. 6.

[8] Both in Rome and Anglo-Saxon England have been found examples of Christian churches that developed on the same site, or in close vicinity, with mithraic temples. In Rome the most renowned and prestigious example is the Mithraeum underneath the church of San Clemente, while others have been identified underneath Santo Stefano Rotondo and Santa Prisca (or Santa Sabina?). In Anglo-Saxon England the most typical example is that of London, in Walbrook: see infra, p. 245

[9] Holloway, p. 14.

[10] See H.A. Drake, 'The Impact of Constantine on Christianity' in Lenski (ed.), pp. 119 and 127.

1.2 a) The ideology of Constantinian architecture and patterns of Imperial display

In the years between his acclamation as *Augustus* at York in 306 and the famous battle at Ponte Milvio in 312, there is one Constantinian building of note in the light of the Emperor's subsequent activities within Rome itself: this is the *Aula Palatina* at Trier (**Pl.1**), built around 306-10.[11] It was an official hall for secular imperial ceremonies, and it still towers over its surroundings with its remarkable dimensions, although the current isolated setting of the building probably does not reflect the fourth-century landscape. Having said this, the hall presents some notable features, in particular the emphasis on the change in access, and therefore axis, from the traditional, basilican lateral plan to an innovative longitudinal one. With this design, the hall at Trier was not dissimilar to the Christian basilicas that Constantine subsequently ordered to be constructed in Rome and which constituted his architectonic trademark.[12]

Indeed, soon after Maxentius' final defeat in 312, Constantine – who had married Maxentius' sister, Fausta, in 307 – completed the large basilica in the Forum that his predecessor had started.[13] This so-called *Basilica Nova* was an impressive structure, overlooking the Via Sacra and the Senate House (**Pl.2**). The still extraordinarily large ruins of the building allow for the reconstruction of a structure with the same change in orientation seen at Trier, a change imposed by Constantine on the pre-existing Maxentian building, with its lateral access and apse. Just as in Trier, the apse of Constantine's basilica was placed at one end, on the longitudinal axis, but the internal division into three naves chosen by Maxentius was maintained, with the central one rising above the lateral ones. In addition to its architectural realignment, the basilica housed – in

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[11] See R. Krautheimer, 'The Constantinian Basilica' in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21 (1967), pp. 115-40.

[12] This obviously bears some connection with Charlemagne's Aula Palatina at Aachen and also with the Lateran basilica, which is at the same time the episcopal/imperial palace in Rome and was started by Constantine within 3 months of Milvian Bridge battle. See infra.

[13] See C. Giavarini (ed.), *The Basilica of Maxentius: the monument, its materials, construction and stability*, Roma 2005.

its newly established apse – a colossal statue of the Emperor(**Pl.3**), whose eyes and hand point upwards, towards the heavens,[14] and which held a *labarum* bearing the cross as a sign of victory.[15] This monumental, secular structure with its interior statuary indicates that, from the outset, Rome was central to Constantine's building programme; it was, nevertheless, the only example he managed to construct in the heart of the imperial city, perhaps because it was not a Christian church: rather, like the basilica in Trier, it was an imperial hall. In fact, most of Constantine's Christian buildings were to be erected in the suburbs of Rome, and his programme found its final and most complete expression elsewhere in the Empire, with the foundation of the 'New Rome', Constantinople.

However, in 316, in order to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Constantine's reign, the Senate commissioned the construction of another imperial edifice: a triumphal arch (**Pl.4**), a magnificent monument that combined the earlier triple-arched structure erected for Septimius Severus in the Forum just outside the Curia (**Pl.5**), with *spolia* from earlier imperial triumphal monuments associated specifically with Hadrian, Trajan and Marcus Aurelius.[16] This adaptation and layering of materials created for previous Emperors can be understood as having been chosen to display and legitimize Constantine's rule, to define him as the direct and equal heir to his most illustrious predecessors. While there are no explicit references to pagan ceremonies in these carvings, the eight reworked Hadrianic tondoes do present scenes of hunting and sacrifice and that were altered to depict Constantine (**Pl.6**).[17] The Christian symbol of the cross that, according to tradition, had

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[14] Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, p.33 and Id., 'Constantinian Basilica', pp. 124-5.

[15] See Eusebius, Life of Constantine (chapts 28-31); Church History (Book 9, chapt. 8); see also Lactantius, De Mortibus Persecutorum (chapt. 44). The story was known in the Anglo-Saxon world probably in Rufinus' Latin translation of Eusebius Church History. See infra, p.310.

[16] Holloway, chapt. 2; M.W. Jones, 'Genesis and Mimesis: the design of the Arch of Constantine in Rome' in *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59 (2000), pp. 50-77. On *spolia* see infra, p.34-5; 229-33.

[17] Completely missing are the more traditional scenes of triumphal procession and Capitoline sacrifice. See J. Rasmus Brandt & O. Steen (eds), *Imperial Art as Christian Art – Christian Art as*

granted Constantine his crushing victory over Maxentius,[18] is also absent from the arch's decoration and its inscription, in which the only hint at the Christian aspect of Constantine's triumph could be read in the ambiguous construction '*instinctu divinitatis*' ('with inspiration from the divine' or 'at the prompting of the divinity').[19] Nevertheless, it is important to note how, in the first period of official recognition of Christianity, images and symbols belonging to different and apparently contrasting religions could coexist, to be recognized or ignored depending on the viewer, while at the same time the associations made through the use of *spolia* could play an important part in this process.[20]

Apart from these secular imperial structures in Rome, Constantine's building programme is perhaps best known – and most significant – for its patronage of Christian architecture; in turning to consider this, there are some preliminary observations that need to be made. Eight Christian foundations have been attributed to Constantine (**Pl.7**), yet only two out of these eight, the Lateran Basilica and the present S. Croce in Gerusalemme (Basilica Sessoriana), were built within the Aurelian walls, although outside the Servian walls (outside the *pomerium*);[21] both of these were set on Imperial estates.[22] This situation has traditionally been explained as the result of the Emperor's wish not to interfere with the senatorial centre of Rome, to avoid causing offence by monumental celebration of the newly legitimised Christian faith where the

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Imperial Art. Expression and Meaning in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Justinian. Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, 15, Roma 2001, pp. 64-5. Consider also the argument *ex silentio* of Constantine not performing the traditional ascension/pagan sacrifice on the Capitoline: Curran, pp. 72-5.

[18] 28 October 312. See supra, fn 15.

[19] See Holloway, p. 19; Curran, p. 87.

[20] This is true of the art during any process of conversion: certainly true in an Anglo-Saxon context, but cf. also early Islamic art. Similarly, the protective value of the Christian imagery could be considered here: the Cross and the *nomen Christi* - the Chi-Rho - were regarded as talismans, symbols of victory over death, and supremacy over evil. This can be relevant in particular when considering the apotropaic interpretation of some Anglo-Saxon decoration, possibly influenced also by the common use of symbols in specifically Christian monuments, churches/catacombs/funerary monuments. See Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, p. 35; infra, pp. 305-9.

[21] 'The strip of ground marking the formal, religiously constituted boundary of a Roman city'. Oxford English Dictionary.

[22] Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, p. 29.

pagan presence and life were still active.[23] In the case of the Lateran Basilica, however, it is likely there was also a more personal, logistical and military reason for it; it was built over the barracks of the *equites singulares*, the elite Imperial guard which had recently supported Maxentius at Milvian Bridge, while the estate housing the barracks had been inherited by Constantine through the dowry of his wife Fausta. Building his first church here, after having razed the head-quarters of the *equites singulares* to the ground, can be thus considered, at the very least, as a seal of Constantine's victory and a display of his attribution of it to the Christian deity.[24] The other six churches were all situated outside the city walls on imperial estates, and all of them can be described as funerary or martyrial basilicas.

Of these, both St Peter's and S. Paolo fuori le mura were built over the tombs of the two celebrated Apostles, martyred in Rome. St Peter's was to be not only the largest of the Constantinian basilicas, but the largest of all the Christian churches (**Pl.8**). Originally a cemetery church, it was also to become the main pilgrimage destination in Rome, and probably in the West. Begun c. 324 and not completed until after 360,[25] it had a central nave ending with an apse, flanked by double side aisles ending in embryonic transepts, a design similar to that of the Lateran basilica (**Pl.8**). Of the other five basilicas, S. Paolo, although originally established by Constantine, was built under the emperors Valentinian II (375-92), Theodosius I (379-95), and Arcadius (395-408) – probably prompted/encouraged by Pope Damasus – towards the end of the fourth century (384-403), following the model of St Peter's.[26]

The last four basilicas attributed to Constantine's programme were very specific in their layout and function: SS Pietro e Marcellino on the via Labicana;

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[23] Krautheimer, *Rome,* pp. 31 and after; id. *Three Christian Capitals,* pp. 28-9; L. Bosman, *The Power of Tradition: spolia in the architecture of St Peter's in the Vatican,* Hilversum 2004, p. 19.
[24] Odahl, p. 151; Curran, pp. 93-6.
[25] Krautheimer, 'Constantinian Basilica', p. 131 fn 53. For a different approach see G.W. Bowersock, 'Peter and Constantine' in W. Tronzo (ed.) *St. Peter's in the Vatican,* Cambridge 2005, pp. 5-15.
[26] Krautheimer, *Three Christan Capitals,* p. 104.

the Basilica Apostolorum (S. Sebastiano) on the via Appia; Sant'Agnese on the via Nomentana; and S. Lorenzo on the via Tiburtina. All were martyrial and funerary churches, dedicated to local martyrs (rather than apostles) and were built over their tomb or shrine which, in each case, was already venerated within the catacombs situated on the same sites.[27] These so-called '*circus basilicas*' were an innovative, albeit short-lived, creation of the first century of legitimized Christianity in Rome(**Pl.9**). Exhaustively discussed by Krautheimer, and further explored in several recent publications,[28] it is important here to underline how these structures constituted very characteristic buildings annexed to some of the most important and visited pilgrimage sites of Rome. They were all designed as central-naved basilicas ending in an apse and flanked by a single aisle, running round the perimeter, including the apse, to create a continuous ambulatory, or a covered U-shaped corridor. Their importance seems to have diminished by the sixth/seventh-centuries, something that has been ascribed to the increasing prominence of St Peter's and the other basilicas *ad corpus* as the main, 'official' pilgrimage and funerary foci of Rome;[29] a decline in the population and a shrinking of the daily life within the city walls, especially during and after the Gothic Wars, could also explain such a process. Regardless of such considerations, these sites are all mentioned in the seventh-century itineraries,[30] and they must have exercised a significant influence on their visitors, not least by their impressive dimensions – all measured between 64 and 98m long – and their distinctive, unreplicated U-shape, where the

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[27] There are also the two anonymous basilicas on the via Ardeatina and Prenestina, which are attributed not unanimously to Constantine (or Maxentius).

[28] R. Krautheimer, 'Mensa, Coemeterium, Martyrium' in *Cahiers Archeologiques* 11 (1960), pp. 15-40; M. Torelli, 'Le Basiliche circiformi di Roma. Iconografia, funzione, simbolo' in *Felix Temporis Reparatio. Atti del Convegno Archeologico Internazionale 'Milano capitale dell'Impero Romano', Milano 8-11 marzo 1990*, Milano 1992, pp. 203-17. For a different opinion see T. Lehmann, '"Circus Basilicas", "coemeteria subteglata" and church buildings in the *suburbium* of Rome' in J. Rasmus Brandt [et al] (ed.), *Rome AD 300-800. Power and Symbol – Image and Reality. Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia,* 17, Roma 2003, pp. 57-77. All works include extensive bibliographies.

[29] Krautheimer, 'Mensa', pp. 34-5.

[30] Although not explicitly as '*circus basilicas*', the definition being a modern creation.

tombstones of Christians paved the large halls, and funerary banquets and memorial services were held.[31]

In two instances, they were further linked to the Imperial family in a way that could only strengthen their already powerful cemetery associations, and that of their architectural *genus* to the imperial milieu of the Circus.[32] The basilica of SS Marcellino e Pietro was closed at its eastern end by a narthex connected to an imperial mausoleum, an enormous, classical rotunda that Constantine had – reputedly – planned as his own burial place, but which instead came to house his mother, Helena. Slightly later than its associated 'circus basilica', and probably not an original part of the project, the Mausoleum of Santa Costanza provides the second example(**Pl.10**).[33] It still towers over the remains of the Constantinian Basilica dedicated to Sant'Agnese, and is probably the best preserved of the early Christian monuments of Rome; it is certainly one of the most evocative. Recent work has convincingly shown how it was probably built not for Constantina, the Emperor's daughter who died in 354, but for her sister Helena, the wife of Julian the Apostate who died in 360.[34] The circular, centrally-planned and domed structure of this Mausoleum was neither a Constantinian nor a Christian invention, but represented an example of the long-standing tradition of Roman funerary monuments characterised by the round domed plan. Previous examples (**Pl.11**) range from the tomb of Caecilia Metella on the Appian Way (first century BC) to the Imperial mausolea of Augustus and Hadrian, and the Emperor Diocletian in Split, which was

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[31] It is not clear if citizens had to pay to be buried in the circus basilica, or if it was the privilege of members of particular families or backgrounds. However, there is evidence from two early fifth-century epigraphs retrieved from the Verano/San Lorenzo cemetery that tomb could be purchased. See Krautheimer, 'Mensa'.

[32] For these associations see Torelli, p. 207ff.

[33] It is also possible, and unique, that this site originally also housed a Baptistery, although its architectural-structural relationship with the mausoleum is unclear. Baptism was an eminently Episcopal function, which however in this case seems to coincide with the private and imperial nature of the site. Mention of the Baptistery appears in the life of Pope Sylvester in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and the next pope Liberius seems to have stayed at the site; later, Baptism was celebrated at the site by Pope Boniface (418-22), see infra, p.52.

[34] G. Mackie, 'A New Look at the Patronage of Santa Costanza, Rome' in *Byzantion* 67 (1997), pp. 383-406.

certainly familiar to Constantine and his immediate family. This architectural form, legitimated by Imperial heritage, would prove extremely influential when translated into Christian terms.

The hypothesis that Julian was responsible for this monument certainly provides a useful explanation of the ambiguous iconography of its decoration, an ambiguity enhanced by the positioning of otherwise traditional iconography in unusual contexts: the vault mosaics strongly recall floor mosaics in both their colouring and subject matter (**Pl.12-13**).[35] The images and motifs depicted in these mosaics, however, are worth considering in detail, in the light of their potential influence on the visual experience of Anglo-Saxon visitors. The whole building was originally covered in mosaics and parietal marble decoration, of which only those in the ambulatory survive. According to sixteenth-century drawings, the dome was decorated with scenes from the Old and New Testament, arranged in two registers, the lower band representing an 'idyllic riverside landscape', populated with animals, putti and traditional, ornamental candelabra. [36] Matthiae distinguished between 'doctrinal and narrative' depictions when describing this decoration, referring in particular to the contrast between the dome and ambulatory mosaics, and those – heavily restored – in the lateral apses, representing the *Traditio Legis* and the *Traditio Clavis* (**Pl.14-15**). However, it seems more appropriate here to consider the symbolic meaning of the more traditional and naturalistic scenes of the ambulatory. Here, images of vintage (**Pl.13**), the abundance of branches and fruits, with birds pecking from them, as if they were the remains of a lavish banquet, can be understood in both a Classical, secular or Christian sense. Similarly, the arrangement of the geometric motif of lozenges (**Pl.12**), traditional

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[35] See the floor mosaic at Aquileia for a striking and Costantinian contemporary parallel, but also the recently discovered vault catacomb frescoes in the catacomb of S. Tecla, in Rome, probably dated to the fourth century.

[36] See G. Matthiae, *Pittura Romana del Medioevo. Secoli IV-X. Vol.I* (*Aggiornamento Scientifico e Bibliografia* di M. Andaloro), Roma 1987, pp. 32-7; Mackie; H. Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen Roms vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Der Beginn der abendländischen Kirchenbaukunst*, Regensburg 2004 [Italian translationby A. Costa, *Le prime Chiese di Roma, IV-VII secolo. L'inizio dell'architettura ecclesiastica occidentale*, Milano 2004], pp. 69-86, esp. pp. 82-6.

in floor mosaics in secular dwellings, can be regarded as revealing crosses in a Christian context. Displaying these images, the mosaic decoration of the Mausoleum of Santa Costanza has been easily and successfully considered to reflect an age in which syncretism and the coexistence of pagan and Christian themes, images and symbols, were still appropriate and largely understood.[37] This perceived and probably intentional ambiguity has an added resonance when considering that the patron himself, sitting between the old and the new religion, was ultimately to choose paganism and give it its last Imperial revival. Here, however, it is important to note that, although the Mausoleum was first built as an eminently private Imperial monument in the late fourth century, the seventh-century itinerary *De Locis Sanctis* demonstrates that by that time it had certainly become accessible to pilgrims visiting the nearby cemeterial basilica and catacombs of Sant'Agnese.[38]

Overall, the churches built under Constantine's patronage can be understood to have had different functions and meanings, in part associated with their site. Thus, the extra-mural *Circus Basilicas* had a strong pilgrimage role, as well as a burial role for the local community, which seems to have been well-established before receiving Imperial recognition and official support. At S. Lorenzo, SS Pietro e Marcellino, S. Sebastiano and Santa Costanza, the Imperial patronage seems to have enhanced the importance of sites that were already integral to Christian devotion in Rome.[39] The architectonic structure of the basilicas nevertheless seems specific to their Constantinian foundation, as does the connection between a public funerary site and a monumental, centrally-planned, imperial mausoleum. A similar architectural and symbolical specificity can be found in the project for St Peter's that combined the concept of a pilgrimage church with a monumental, celebratory and liturgical intent: this

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[37] Mackie, p. 395.

[38] See infra, pp. _____

[39] 'Long before Constantine, Romans and pilgrims from afar had gone to pray at the grave of St Peter, as they went to the graves of the other great martyrs.' Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, p. 116.

association was to be subsequently enhanced and manipulated by later Popes, such as Damasus (366-84) and Symmachus (498-514).

In addition, a further and different set of meanings and functions is revealed when the Lateran Basilica is considered: together with the Sessorian Basilica (later Santa Croce in Gerusalemme), it was the only church to be built inside Rome, although it is unlikely that this vast, unique structure was intended primarily to serve the needs of a religious community. There has been a (perhaps optimistic) estimate of the number of Christians living and practising in Rome in the fourth century,[40] but regardless of the size of this community, it seems that its religious needs were suitably accommodated by the large number of *tituli*; these represented a primary, albeit unobtrusive, feature in the topography of Christian Rome around which the early Christian cult and liturgy focused. As the Lateran did not respond to immediate liturgical and religious needs, the size of the community itself was probably not the determining factor for the large and lavish layout of this basilica; it is more likely that this represented a visible, official and overt affirmation of the status of the now legitimate Christian faith. What the Emperor gave to the Church hierarchies through the Lateran was a public palace suitable to reflect and house a powerful emergent social class. After having acquired land and economic prestige, the Church needed an area in Rome that could appropriately represent this new group, just as the Forum had always represented the space of imperial governorship, senatorial and aristocratic officialdom. [41] The importance of this action cannot be underestimated: ultimately, the Constantine revolution in Rome was the provision of religious buildings that had the same public significance embodied until then by *thermae* and *basilicas*.[42]

The Lateran itself was the very first religious foundation of Constantine, and the formal commitment to build it can be likely dated to 9 November 312,

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[40] Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals,* pp. 102 and 109.
[41] Id., pp. 16-20.
[42] Krautheimer, 'Constantinian Basilica', pp. 127-30

barely two weeks after his victory at the Milvian Bridge.[43] While functioning as the official and prestigious 'palace' of the Bishop of Rome, it also and quite naturally had a strongly triumphal significance. This aspect of the Lateran has, however, been questioned by Dale Kinney, who argues that the basilican type of Christian building, as a pagan, public and imperial space, once translated in Constantinian terms and set at the peripheries of the cityscape, failed to convey the equally imperial themes of victory and military prowess as represented centrally in the decoration of the Basilica Nova and Arch. [44] It seems nevertheless that the imperial structures themselves had been slightly altered, and once presented within a Christian light they naturally assumed new meanings, without being any the less imperial. Krautheimer, for example, argued that Constantine seems to have been particularly concerned with the concept of Unity;[45] understood in this way, the innovative, Christian model of the Basilica transformed by Constantine with its new longitudinal access and axis, became a monumental and unified space, in which movement and gaze, although dispersed sideways through the aisles, was provided with a single, continuous access and focus, from the entrance to the apse. Furthermore, the change of access changed the role of light in Constantinian churches to underline and strengthen the idea of convergence towards a single point: the light itself, pouring from the multiple windows in the clerestory, convey a sense of unity, balance and uniformity.[46] In a similar way, the idea of imperial victory was not abandoned, but only translated into a new Christian sense with the use of the triumphal arch covered with mosaics, framing and enshrining the apse housing the altar. Thus, the latter functioned as the ultimate focal point for Christ and His victory over death. This was furthermore emphasized during the

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[43] Curran, pp. 94-5.

[44] D. Kinney, 'The Church Basilica' in Brandt & Steen (eds), *Imperial Art*, pp. 115-35.

[45] Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals,* p. 41, also considered as a reason for the foundation of Constantinople. See also infra, p.49.

[46] The same principle seems to appear in earlier, non-Christian buildings like the Curia Senatus, or the Aula Palatina (already a stage further). This use of the windows/opening to convey the light in a certain, almost symbolic way is clear at the Lateran and St Peter's, and in the exemplary, albeit slightly later, Santa Sabina.

celebration of the Eucharist, the re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice and triumph, and so functioned as a substitute for the previous, imperial and 'lay' setting, where the focal position in the basilica was occupied by the emperor and his officials or, as in the case of the Basilica Nova, by the emperor's statue. This architectural innovation can probably be regarded as Constantine's most astute and long-lasting achievement, reflecting as it does the basis of his conversion process and success, the future of the Roman Empire itself: a vision of Divine victory.[47]

Certainly, the mosaics of some of the Constantinian foundations provided visual expression of these concepts in a Christian context. Although emerging from a slightly later phase of activity (352-61),[48] the apse-mosaic at St Peter's (**Pl.16**) portrayed Christ flanked by Peter and Paul in the act of the *Traditio legis*, with a lower band depicting the twelve Apostles, while the triumphal arch depicted Constantine offering a model of the church to Christ and St Peter.[49] The iconographic implications of these specific images are clearly significant: the figure of Christ enthroned and giver of the Law, probably originates in Ephesians 1:19-23,[50] and can be understood as Christ seated to the right of the Father, thus exalted and equal to the Father, standing as Ruler above all things, including the body of the Church. However, a further reading can be added, that of Christ as Judge; this aspect resonates not only in the iconography of the mosaic, representing Christ enthroned, and signifying also God sitting in judgement, but also in the apse inscription, which opened with the words '*iustitiae sedis*', the Seat of Justice.[51] It is essential also to remember here that

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[47] See also further discussion on the *fastigium*, infra pp. 31-4.

[48] R. Krautheimer, 'A Note on the Inscription in the Apse of Old St. Peter's' in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), pp. 317-20.

[49] Krautheimer, 'A Note', p. 318.

[50] 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us, who believe according to the operation of the might of his power, Which he wrought in Christ, raising him up from the dead, and setting him on his right hand in the heavenly places. Above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And he hath subjected all things under his feet, and hath made him head over the church, Which is his body, and the fullness of him who is filled all in all.'

[51] Krautheimer, 'A Note', pp. 318-9.

even the architectural form chosen, the basilica, implied a legal status and role, being the place where official judgements were dispensed. The layering of meaning in the iconography of St Peter's apse decoration is thus very complex: not only it can be read as signifying power, victory and more generally the concept of the universal triumph of the Christian Church, but the enthronement of Christ is in itself a clear reference to the imperial ruler. Moreover, on the triumphal arch, the decoration offered an even more explicit link between the Emperor, Christ and his Apostle, establishing the legitimate transmission of power from one authority to the other, while also investing the Pope with imperial authority, as the heir of Peter. The fact that the triumphal arch was a gateway to the apse further enhances the symbolic meaning of the inner apse mosaic, its unambiguous decoration providing a key to decode that of the apse.

The apse mosaics of S. Paolo, the Lateran and the non-Constantinian foundation of Santa Pudenziana, were imbued with a similar symbolic frame of reference, heavily modelled on and understood through their imperial associations (**Pl.17-18-19**). At S. Paolo for instance (**Pl.17**), Christ portrayed as Pantocrator, the 'all powerful judge', could be read in imperial terms, while at the same time suggesting a connection with the book of Revelation, where the term is used at least nine times.[52] Another apocalyptic association lies in the representation of the jewelled cross, seen both in the apse-mosaic at the Lateran (**Pl.18**) – dating to the thirteenth century, but possibly inspired by its fifth-century counterpart – and at Santa Pudenziana (**Pl.19**), with the correlated references to Victory over death. The latter example is particularly important, as it shows that – by the early fifth-century – the imperial implications of the new Christian iconography were prominently used even in non-imperial foundations.

Another important example of the power of imperial iconography in the early Christian architecture of Rome, was the *fastigium* donated by Constantine as part of the Lateran's furnishing (**Pl.20**). Described in detail in the Life of Pope

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[52] At 1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 16:14, 19:6, 19:15, 21:22.

Sylvester (314-35) in the *Liber Pontificalis,* the architectonic structure was destroyed or pillaged during the sack of Rome in 410, although the statues contained within it may have survived until a later period.[53] A heavily decorated silver screen, weighing 2.025lbs/918.5kg, framing the life-size statues of the twelve Apostles, Christ and four angels with gemmed eyes, with hanging chandeliers holding numerous lamps, this is an object difficult to picture and almost impossible to classify. Its form could have been influenced by the *fastigium* of Diocletian at his palace in Split, with which Constantine must have been familiar. A similar structure was also present at St Peter's, donated by the Emperor Valentinian during the papacy of Sixtus III (432-40), while an object similar to the *fastigium* was also given by Gregory to St Peter's.[54] Another relevant monument was also a Constantinian donation, decorating the Font of the Lateran Baptistery, which included a solid gold lamb, pouring the water, flanked by two silver statues of Christ and John the Baptist, and seven silver stags, also pouring water.[55] Apart from these well-known objects, it seems that large-scale statues were not a common gift to early Christian foundations, possibly because of the difficulties inherent in their use in Christian spaces; they were too strongly reminiscent of classical, pagan statuary in religious settings. Whether this was indeed the case, though, association with Constantine, their

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[53] L. Duchesne (ed.), *Le Liber Pontificalis: texte, introduction et commentaire,* 3 volls. Paris 1886-92, vol. 1, p. 172; see also R. Davis (ed.), *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): the ancient biographies of the first ninety Roman bishops to AD 715*, Liverpool 1989, rev. ed. 2000, p. 16; M. Teasdale Smith, 'The Lateran *Fastigium*: a gift of Constantine the Great' in *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 46 (1970), pp. 149-75; see also A. Iacobini, 'Aurea Roma. Le arti preziose da Costantino all'età carolingia: committenza, produzione, circolazione' in CISAM 49 (2002), pp. 651-94.

[54] As recorded in the lives of Sixtus III (432-40) and Leo III (795-816) and in the life of Gregory the Great by John the Deacon. The way in which these gifts were listed in the *Liber Pontificalis* may also have had some influence on an Anglo-Saxon audience, see on this J. Hawkes, 'Anglo-Saxon *Romanitas*: The Transmission and Use of Early Christian Art in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages. Proceedings of the 2003 Harlaxton Symposium*, P. Horden (ed.), Donington 2007, p. 26.

[55] *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 174; Davis (ed.), p. 18. Silver statues of stags, dolphins and lambs are relatively common gifts/decorations of the early churches, while figural decoration seems rarer. On the contradictions linked to statues and their classical but ambiguous meaning see also Brandt & Steen (eds), *Imperial Art*, pp. 72-4.

setting and comparative rarity make these pieces of Constantinian furnishing all the more significant within the context of early Christian Rome.

The *fastigium* itself was produced at a time when church architecture, decoration and furnishing were genuinely experimental, although at the same time they probably replicated the familiar, lavish, elaborate furnishing and decoration of contemporary imperial palaces – lamps, chandeliers, costly textiles, statues – translated into a Christian setting. One aspect of this extravagant object is undeniable: it was inherently imperial, to the extent that, after it was damaged during the sack of Rome, Pope Sixtus explicitly asked Valentinian III to restore it (although on a practical level the Emperor was probably the only authority who could afford to replace/restore such a lavish ornament). Placed between the central nave and the apse, like a structural filiation of the triumphal arch, inhabited by life-size statues, the *fastigium* possibly served to create separate spaces within the large basilica (choir, sanctuary, apse and nave), but its heavily symbolic aspect and luxury can be considered as disproportionate to its immediate practical function for the liturgy or the needs of the community. Furthermore, the two faces of the *fastigium* addressed congregation and bishop with two different representations: the faithful were faced by Christ, flanked by the Apostles, enthroned as judge and giver of the new Christian and Apostolic Roman law, while the bishop, earthly representative of that heavenly power, was faced by Christ enthroned between the angels, attendants on the heavenly throne.[56] This confirms, as previously suggested, the true nature of the Lateran as a public palace of religious and imperial display, rather than a church designed to serve parishioners. Besides, its shape and decoration with statues bring to mind the *frontone glorificante*, a 'symbolic setting for certain imperial appearances and actions'.[57] Similar objects constituted the backdrop for godly and royal action in theatrical settings, while in official halls (basilicas), they represented the

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[56] Teasdale Smith, pp. 160-66.

[57] S. De Blaauw, 'Imperial connotations in Roman church interiors : the significance and effect of the Lateran Fastigium' in Brandt & Steen (eds), *Imperial Art*, pp. 137-148.

background for ceremonial receptions. Within a Christian basilica these meanings were retained and remembered: imperial, official, ceremonial and divine overlapped and the Church-throne hall became the backstage to a dramatic action where Christ Himself was celebrated, as the heavenly ruler embodying all the aspects of his majesty.[58]

Also reflecting the continuing imperial character of the new Christian basilica was the widespread use of *spolia*, already extremely common in the Roman world, and expressed by Constantine most famously in his triumphal Arch, but also witnessed at St Peter's and the Lateran, particularly in the reuse of precious marble columns and revetments. Subsequently, this was to become an almost customary practice in the building of new churches, although it was not circumscribed to Christian architecture.[59] The reuse of columns, capitals and lintels had the practical function of salvaging valuable building material, although there is evidence this was not the main or overriding reason: for the Basilica of S. Paolo fuori le mura the columns were produced and transported from Constantinople, while the capitals and other structural elements were built or carved specifically for the building in Roman workshops.[60] Even when the materials were neither created especially for a newly-built church, as was the case at S. Paolo, or literally spoliated from a pre-existing building, the use of 'antique' material in Rome, often retrieved from storage, was regarded as full of symbolic meaning, and conveyed the intention to ensure a lavish, prestigious and dignified aspect to the new building. Such an achievement can be observed at Santa Sabina (**Pl.21**), probably the best preserved early Christian church in Rome, where the homogeneous set of second-century columns, capitals and bases look as if they were especially created ex-novo: this, in combination with the multicoloured marble revetment of the spandrels, create a building of remarkable, classical solemnity. Furthermore, the use of several varieties of

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[58] It can be also suggested that a similar shift later occurred to the Imperial *adventus* translated to saints and martyrs, and also to the Pope.

[59] Brandenburg, pp. 34-5.

[60] Brandenburg, pp. 116-8.

marble, originating from different locations within the Empire, has been interpreted intentionally signifying the geographical extension of the now widespread Christian Empire.[61] More widely, the reuse signalled the overruling of the previous buildings' identities, as well as continuity and legitimacy, incorporating the old into the new.[62] In addition, the positioning of some of the spoliated elements within a church building could be used to enhance their symbolic significance.

1.2 b) Constantinople and Jerusalem: further aspects of Constantinian experimentation

As noted, with the legitimization of Christianity, Constantine found in Rome a political and social situation that needed to be approached with the utmost diplomacy, yet he still required a capital for his Christian Empire, in which he could outline a Christian topography without having to negotiate the restrictions of a pre-existing imperial and pagan heritage, as was the case in Rome. The result was the foundation of Constantinople, the New Rome, in which the customary public buildings, the Forum, hippodrome, imperial palace, baths and triumphal columns and arches rose in co-existence with the Christian monuments, the cathedral church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom), Hagia Irene and the mausoleum of the Holy Apostles: all being integral to a Christian imperial capital.[63] In this setting, Hagia Sophia would prove a successful model for several subsequent churches in the East, while the mausoleum became one of the most notably ambitious and ambiguous architectural examples to be emulated. Conceived as Constantine's Mausoleum, it was cruciform in plan with a vaulted interior dome; and, consistent with its dedication to the Apostles,

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[61] D. Kinney, 'The discourse of columns', paper delivered at the Conference 'Ex Changes. Rome Across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and reception of Ideas (c. 400-1400)', Cambridge, July 2008.

[62] Lenski (ed.), pp. 264 ff. It is interesting to note how the *spolia* used in the early Christian basilicas of the Lateran and St Peter were in turn reused in the Baroque renovation of both churches, their symbolic power renewed and enhanced throughout the centuries.

[63] The dedications to Sophia and Irene may reflect the still syncretic character of Christianity at this early stage of its legitimization.

contained twelve commemorative 'monuments', arranged around and enclosing the Emperor's tomb. In its centralized plan and domed vault it thus recalled the Constantinian foundation of the Domed Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built to enclose the edicule incorporating Christ's Sepulchre in Jerusalem. This was, together with St Peter's, one of the most evocative of the early Christian churches: as Christ's martyrium and tomb, it encapsulated allusions to resurrection and baptism, and was to be endlessly replicated, imitated and alluded to in multiple instances in the West.[64]

It is possible that the innovative architectural arrangement of the Holy Apostles was intended to underline Constantine's role as the new apostle of Christianity, or even his perceived role as an 'earthly manifestation of Christ',[65] a phenomenon articulated elsewhere in his eponymous city, for instance with the statue set over the porphyry triumphal column that portrayed him as Helios.[66]

Whether this was indeed the case, the importance of Constantinople can be summarized by its special relationship with Rome and its associations with Constantine. In particular, its connection with Rome was such that, conversely, it emphasized the symbolic significance of Rome as an architectural Christian prototype. It represented, on every level, Constantine's attempt to duplicate Rome: in its layout, buildings and institutions. It thus acted as a public manifestation and glorification of its model, while freed of the frictions that restricted Constantine in Rome itself.

On the other hand, when considering Constantine's building activity in Jerusalem, further observations can be made. Known to the Anglo-Saxons

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[64] On Constantinople and Jerusalem see Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals,* pp. 41-67; Lenski, pp. 291-5; Odahl, pp. 211-20, 232-44 and 268-76.

[65] Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals,* p. 64.

[66] Constantine seems here to be continuing in the classical tradition of considering and representing the Emperor as a deity; however, a well-known depiction interpreted as Christ as Helios is preserved in a mosaic in the pre-Constantinian cemetery underneath St Peter's basilica. On Constantine's triumphal column in Constantinople see G. Fowden, 'Constantine's Porphyry Column: the Earliest Literary Allusion' in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991), pp. 119-31; on Constantine as Helios, and his cult for Sol Invictus, see Lensky (ed.), pp. 59-90, 111-36.

directly, through visitors' accounts, and indirectly, through literary sources,[67] the artistic, architectural and iconographical influence of Jerusalem at large was considerable. The key role of Jerusalem as one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites also played a relevant part, especially after the waning of actual contacts with the Holy Land following the Arab conquest in 638. It is possible that at this stage, the artistic and architectural inspiration provided by the city itself, and in particular by its imperial and official Christian buildings, was transferred to Rome, and through Rome to the West in general, in a chain of significant symbolic allusions that provided pilgrims and believers with the experience of Jerusalem, even in the absence of the actual place.[68] One of the best examples of this is the liturgical development for the celebration of Good Friday in Rome, articulated in a procession '*ad Hierusalem*' from the Lateran to the Church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, and more in general in the symbolic embodiment of Jerusalem represented by the Basilica Sessoriana.[69]

1.3 Rome, with or without the Emperor.

With the removal of the imperial capital to Constantinople, it can be argued that Rome's importance as the seat of the papacy gradually increased. The absence of the Emperor from Rome enhanced the idea that the city was no longer central to the 'imperial' world, especially when its Bishop succeeded so cleverly – and sometimes dramatically – in channelling different financial, architectural and political control elements of the city to his own advantage. The role of the Popes in continuing Constantine's architectural and artistic programmes within a Christian context in Rome itself had a lasting impact, especially in the light of the influence on those visiting the city. From the very start of the legitimizing

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[67] For instance Adamnan's account of Arculf's journey, *De Locis Sanctis*, which was also partially included in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

[68] See further discussion in M. Boulton, *'(Re)building Jerusalem; a conceptual analysis of space in ecclesiastical Anglo-Saxon England'* (PhD) York forthcoming 2011; I am grateful to her for the opportunity to preview and discuss this topic.

[69] See É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood. Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition*, London 2005, pp. 148-50, 183-201.

process, the Bishops of Rome had worked in close conjunction with the Emperor, but architecture soon became a tool by which papal interest in, and control over, different areas of the city could be stressed. This material and ideological 'architecture of power' was at times emblematic of the political struggle between Pope and Emperor, being effectively conveyed by the sacred buildings themselves, with their rich and elaborate furnishings and decoration.

1.3 a) Tituli

As mentioned, the churches founded in Rome by Constantine responded more to needs relating to the new official status of the Church, rather than to the ritual and liturgical needs of the Christian community within the city, which were met by other sites where they could meet and celebrate their faith, the catacombs outside the walls, and in *domus ecclesiae* and/or *tituli* within the city. The difference between the two terms (*domus ecclesiae* and *titulus*), if there is any, is difficult to assess. While the term *titulus* seems to pertain to the legal and economic status of these early 'community churches', the *domus ecclesia* seems to reflect – according to the double meaning attributed to the word *ecclesia* – both the surroundings and buildings where the early communities met, their church being a private dwelling, and their characteristic domestic structure.[70] These uses are most notably reflected in the names of some of the churches, which supposedly preserve the memory of their lay patron or owner. The *Liber Pontificalis*, compiled probably around the 540s,[71] attributes the first creation of the system of *tituli* to Evaristus (100), but other Roman bishops, like Callistus (217-22) or Marcellus (305-7) are also remembered as founders of *tituli*: the first being located in Trastevere, and the second, according to tradition, being in the

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[70] See K. Sessa, '*Domus Ecclesiae*: rethinking a category of *ante-pacem* Christian space' in *Journal of Theological Studies* 60 n.s. (2009), pp. 90-108; Id., 'Domestic conversions: households and bishops in the late antique 'papal legends'' in K. Cooper & J. Hillner (eds), *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300-900,* Cambridge 2007, pp. 79-114. See also Curran, pp. 122ff.; Baldovin, pp. 108 and 112-5.

[71] For a discussion on the dating of the *Liber Pontificalis*, see Davis (ed.), pp. xxxii-lxvii.

private house of a lady, Lucina.[72] The information provided in the life of Pope Sylvester (314-35) seems to be based on a more detailed, first-hand account, and his foundation of the *titulus Equitii* can thus probably be considered genuine.[73] Furthermore, his life introduces what became the almost formulaic record of the donations and gifts associated with new or renovated churches. In addition to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the most frequently cited document regarding the Roman *tituli* is the record from a synod held in 499 that contains a list of 29 named *tituli* identified through the names of the presbyters in their charge.[74]

The Christianization of the Roman aristocracy and their role in the establishment of these *tituli* churches has been the subject of considerable scholarly investigation which, traditionally, attributes the control and patronage of the Roman *tituli* as reflecting the struggle between the bishops and the Roman aristocracy over control of church revenues.[75] It is certainly true that the Church was expanding as an economic power during the fourth century, and this is made very clear in the *Liber Pontificalis* by the stress on the endowments necessarily attached to each new foundation to sustain it financially in terms of its construction and maintenance, and the upkeep of its functionaries and charitable activities. 'Both Pietri and Llewellyn assumed that the *tituli* were characterised by an endowment derived from the often aristocratic founder of the said church'.[76] More recently it has been suggested that the Roman bishops were responsible at least with organising and probably administering the *tituli*'s properties, while not directly owning them,[77] but, as

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[72] 'domum suam nomine beati Marcelli titulum dedicavit', *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 164. See also K. Cooper, 'The martyr, the *matrona* and the bishop: the matron Lucina and the politics of martyr cult in fifth- and sixth-century Rome' in *Early Medieval Europe* 8 (1999), pp. 297-317.

[73] *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 170-201; Davis (ed.) pp. xxix-xxx.

[74] J. Hillner, 'Families, patronage, and the titular churches of Rome, c.300-c.600' in Cooper&Hillner (eds), pp. 225-61. See also Curran, pp. 116-57. While not necessarily comprehensive or certain, this list is often considered the official/definitive standardization of the system.

[75] Hillner pp. 227ff. and n. 16. See also P. Llewellyn, 'The Roman Church during the Laurentian Schism: Priests and Senators' in *Church History* 45 (1976), pp. 417-27.

[76] Hillner, p. 230

[77] Id. p. 231

Hillner rightly argues,[78] even if the *tituli* were liturgically dependent on the bishop or organised within a network of urban churches, it does not necessarily follow that their economy and administration were equally controlled by the bishop. While the exact relationship between the presbyters and clergy, and the bishops and deacons over the control of the *tituli* remains unclear, the fact that they are recorded as part of the ecclesiastical landscape of Rome from the fourth century onwards points to their importance within the city, both politically and architecturally.[79] As places of worship they pre-dated Constantine's building programme, but as Christianity became established as the official religion, they were often renovated, possibly in line with the new, imperial basilican style. It is interesting here to investigate their potential architectural differences, or similarities, with both the Constantinian foundations and those controlled by the Pope.

The Christianization of the Roman aristocracy and their related interest in church-building, has long been a matter of scholarly discussion, while their lavish patronage and involvement in artistic and architectural activities have been used as evidence for, or barometers of, the success and impact of Christianity on the city as a whole. With this in mind and in the context of the present discussion, it is perhaps more relevant to consider not only how Christian the aristocracy of Rome had become during the fourth/fifth centuries, but also what kind of Christianity they expressed and how this was accomplished. Analysis of church architecture does seem to shed some light on this for, as much as Constantine's architectural expressions of Christianity had a somewhat hybrid character, so 'his' senatorial class for a few generations seem to have taken a similar attitude in articulating projects that would reflect a certain degree of coexistence and transition between the two worlds of Christianity and paganism.

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[78] Id. pp. 233-4.

[79] As argued in the past by Llewellyn, op. cit. and J. Moorhead, 'The Laurentian Schism: East and West in the Roman Church' in *Church History* 47 (1978), pp. 125-36. See infra, pp. 45-56.

The Roman aristocrats' continued attempts at the turn of the sixth-century to exert control over the land and revenues that they had once given to the *tituli* suggest that they still had an active role in the economy of Rome and control of its properties. Nevertheless, at least in ecclesiastical circles, it is likely that they had long been superseded by the Pope and his clergy.

Here, as noted again by Hillner, there is a marked difference between one-off foundation-gifts, and a patrimony granted with all its revenues and in perpetuity to a church. The prominence of the one-off gift in the documentation is likely to reflect the grand gesture of renouncing earthly wealth, whilst the other – the patrimonial grant – is rarer, probably because the patrons were 'reluctant to relinquish their property unconditionally'.[80] Nevertheless, a few examples of this phenomenon are recorded, during the fourth century, in connection with the problems arising from the decision of wealthy, aristocratic Roman women to renounce the world and consecrate themselves to the Christian and often ascetic life: the concern expressed by their relatives, often also Christian, when faced by such actions and the inherent danger to family property is palpable.[81] On the other hand, it seems clear that the one-off gifts to churches tended, for the most part, to follow the tradition of civic donations, and were therefore not only a more familiar institution, but intrinsically easier to control. Indeed, it is also likely that senatorial estates could be potentially safer in ecclesiastical hands; it was through the Roman aristocracy's private wealth that, in 408/9, Alaric was paid twice before the sack of Rome of 410.[82] Thus, despite some contradictions, it seems that the aristocratic families – although struggling at times – succeeded in exerting control over the territory of Rome for over two centuries, their achievement being founded on ancestry, land, politics and latterly, in most cases, on their open affiliation to Christianity. This ensured that, when they encountered difficulties (social or political) in maintaining their position, they could now turn to the Bishop – in the West – or

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[80] On the connections with civic evergetism of the pre-Christian times, Hillner, pp. 244-47.
[81] See Curran, pp. 260-320.
[82] Curran, pp. 304-11.

to the Emperor – in the East – because both powers were rising, and at this point, becoming strongly polarized and seemingly independent. In one and/or the other, the Roman elite could find support; indeed some fluidity between the two categories was even accepted in certain situations: for instance, within the secular or ecclesiastical administration. [83] Thus, Roman aristocratic families could still have a lasting impact on the landscape of Rome, and it was Christianity that offered them a new arena within which to realize this, often through the very visible medium of building or decorating churches.

In this context, titular churches constituted a large part of non-imperial foundations, and were often later incorporated into the bishop-controlled restructuring of the places of worship in Rome. Thus, they became one of the most prominent groups of intra-mural Roman churches, and an important element in the sacred landscape of the city accessible to pilgrims and visitors. Unlike catacombs and extra-mural churches,[84] it is difficult to assess if and to what extent they were known to Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, but some observations can nevertheless be made.

The *titulus Pammachii* probably corresponds to the present site of SS Giovanni e Paolo on the Celian Hill (**Pl.22**).[85] The Late Antique foundation was supposedly first established at the turn of the fifth century by the patron Pammachius, known through a variety of sources as a wealthy senator noted for his strong support of Christianity.[86] The church is particularly remarkable because it is the only one in Rome for which there is evidence for continuity of Christian worship. The large, three-naved building incorporated as its foundations and walls a series of Roman *domus* and *insulae*.[87] These preserve a

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[83] This is even more real at a later stage. See infra, ch.4 for the discussion on the *pater diaconiae* and their *cursus honorum*. See also T.S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers. Imperial Administration and Aristocratic power in Byzantine Italy A.D. 554-800,* London 1984.

[84] Discussed in ch.2.

[85] See Brandenburg, pp. 155-62 and relevant bibliography.

[86] On Pammachius see http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11436a.htm (accessed April 2010).

[87] They have recently been excavated and opened to the public; however, a report of the excavations and a catalogue of the many objects exhibited in the Antiquarium have not yet been published.

series of frescoes (**Pl.23**) which decorated the residences of this well-to-do neighbourhood, and included a small room, obtained from a landing, the central wall of which depicts a male *orans* figure, flanked by venerating women; the lateral walls portray scenes of martyrdom. The tiny space could not have been used for ceremonies, and as it was not built over a tomb, it could not represent a *confessio* or *memoria* of the kind often created in the catacombs. Nevertheless it bears witness, at least, of a genuine element of private Christian devotion, and may indicate even more public worship, as the embryonic remains of a *domus ecclesia.* A sixth-century *passio* narrates the martyrdom and burial of the remains of saints Giovanni and Paolo at this site, a tradition reinforced by the dedication adopted by the subsequent church building. There is little evidence, however, that the frescoes represented the legendary account of the *passio*, which may well have been written with other aims in mind.[88] The church represents not only a magnificent example of the interplay with pre-existing Roman structures, but also the later attempt to control and justify, through the creation of a literary text, an otherwise spontaneous devotion that clearly reflected the complexities and contradiction of Christian Rome in the fourth century.

The prominent position of the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo on the Celian Hill could be relevant in the context of Anglo-Saxon contacts. It lies, after all, in close vicinity to the monastery of S. Andrea, founded by Gregory the Great, which could have well been a pilgrimage destination for Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, whose devotion for their missionary 'apostle' was second only to that for St Peter.[89] It is possible that Augustine himself and the members of his mission would have been familiar with the *titulus Pammachii*, as they were members of Gregory's monastic community, and thus probably residing at S. Andrea on the Celian Hill before departing for the Anglo-Saxon shores. In addition, the church

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[88] See C. Leyser, 'A church in the house of the saints: property and power in the *Passion of John and Paul*' in Cooper&Hillner (eds), pp. 140-62.
[89] See B. Colgrave (ed.), *The earliest life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous monk of Whitby*, Lawrence 1968.

of SS Giovanni e Paolo is mentioned in the *Notitia Ecclesiarum* and cited in the list of stational churches attached to the *De Locis Sanctis Martyrum*.[90]

Another important early church is the *titulus Clementis*, now the church of San Clemente, to the south of the Colosseum (**Pl.24**).[91] Probably consecrated under Pope Siricius (384-99),[92] it shows a similar reuse of pre-existing Roman civic structures covering at least two building campaigns and constituting the foundations of the large, three-naved church of fairly square proportions, which was provided with a narthex, atrium and possibly a Baptistery. Furthermore, the structures here included an earlier, non-Christian place of worship, demonstrating a continuity of worship at the site: a Mithraic temple and school were brought to light by the nineteenth-century excavations, and it is possible that, for a short period of time, both buildings were simultaneously in use. The church is also very relevant for the surviving fresco paintings pertaining to different phases of decoration,[93] while fragments of the furnishing – the marble ciborium, altar and screens of the *schola cantorum* – also survive, reused in the twelfth-century church (**Pl.25-26**). These were gifts of the presbyter Mercurius, who later became Pope John (533-5), a gesture that could denote an increasing interest in this building by the highest ecclesiastic hierarchies, perhaps reflecting a phase of increasing centralized control of churches by the Bishop of Rome.[94] Certainly, the rich and elaborate nature of the furnishing and the decoration in general indicate San Clemente was a church of some significance, focus of patronage from both ecclesiastical and secular sources. This in turn suggests it was home to a vibrant community with a fairly public role.

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[90] See infra, pp. 67-75.

[91] See L.E. Boyle, E.M.C. Kane, F. Guidobaldi *San Clemente Miscellany II. Art & Archaeology*, L. Dempsey (ed.) Roma 1978.

[92] The Sirician dedication propounded by De Rossi after his reconstruction and interpretation of a heavily fragmentary epigraph found in situ has been questioned in the more recent publications, although even when based exclusively on the less certain archaeological evidence, the conclusions still point to a mid-fourth century date as the first transformation into a Christian space, with the possibility of a later, early-fifth century addition for the apse. Guidobaldi in Dempsey (ed.), pp. 290-3.

[93] For further discussion see infra, ch.4.

[94] Cfr with the attitude of Pope Symmachus, only a few generations later. See infra, pp. 52-5.

Furthermore, it had a very central position, at the bottom end of the Roman Forum and close to the church of SS Quattro Coronati, a church known in Anglo-Saxon England by virtue of its dedication, replicated – according to Bede – at Canterbury.[95]

Finally, a more curious case is that of the slightly later church of Sant'Agata dei Goti, also founded as an act of private Christian patronage and subsequently taken over by a Pope.[96] What makes it significant to this discussion is the fact that it was established by the Goth Ricimer (*c*.470), possibly for the use of the Arian community. It was then re-dedicated, and possibly given new decoration, by Gregory the Great. It thus represents an 'heretic titulus' re-appropriated by the highest ecclesiastical hierarchies, by the Pope who exercised such a huge influence on the Anglo-Saxon imagination.

1.3 b) Schismatics

Linked to the network of the *tituli* and the status of the Roman aristocracy during the early stages of shaping the Christian landscape of Rome, is the role of schismatic groups and their part in the construction and dedication of churches.[97]

Schism was a problem of organisation within the Church hierarchies, and did not involve a difference in religious thinking; it was not a question of doctrine, but of (political) authority. Thus, schismatic activity was frequently attached to specific sites, communities or buildings, over which a particular faction exerted control.[98] The episcopal disputes in Rome, from the mid-fourth to early-sixth centuries, give a clear sense of how delicate the political and religious balance of the city was, and how much of the support relied not only on the people of Rome at large, but more specifically with those areas where the

[95] See HE, II.7, pp. 156-8, 'erat autem eo loci…martyrium beatorum quattuor Coronatorum'.
[96] See Brandenburg, pp. 219-20.
[97] See H.O. Mayer, 'The topography of heresy and dissent in Late-Fourth-century Rome' in *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 44 (1995), pp. 232-49.
[98] M. Humphries, 'From emperor to pope? Ceremonial, space, and authority at Rome from Constantine to Gregory the Great' in Cooper & Hillner (eds), p. 53.

Popes were able to wield power, areas that often were historically linked to previous Popes.[99]

This 'topography of factions' can probably be observed as early as the pontificate of Julius (337-352), after the long and significant Constantinian pontificate of Sylvester and the short, but equally important pontificate of Mark (335-7), for Mark can be credited with the first Christian foundation in the heart of Rome: the basilica *in Pallacinis* which can almost certainly be identified with S. Marco a Piazza Venezia, which backs on to the Capitoline hill and the Forum.[100] His example was imitated by his successor, Julius, who founded a basilica in Trastevere (S. Maria in Trastevere), and another *iuxta Forum (Traiani)*, which can probably be identified with SS Apostoli.[101] Both foundations can be considered of some significance: SS Apostoli by the Forum encroached with no apparent problems upon the classical heart of Rome, while the other claimed a connection with the *titulus Callisti*, established by the venerated bishop and martyr of Rome, Callistus (217-22).[102] This association seems to reflect an independent and intentional choice on the part of Julius, and so provides some insight into his preferences towards certain areas of Rome and a wish to create a connection between himself and a particularly important figure of the early Roman Church.[103]

Following Julius' death, the first crisis of the early Roman episcopate arose under Pope Liberius (352-66). Opposed by the antipope Felix II, the schism was marked by the question of Arius' doctrine and the involvement of the Emperor. The two ecclesiastics were closely affiliated to different areas of Rome: Liberius built his own basilica on the Esquilino, not to be identified with Santa Maria

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[99] Curran, pp. 116-57.

[100] He also in all likelihood established a 'Circus Basilica' outside the wall, on the via Ardeatina. See supra, fn 28.

[101] In the Liberian Catalogue it is located '*basilicam Iuliam, quae est regione vii iuxta forum divi Traiani*'. *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 9; Davis (ed.), p. 28; Brandenburg, p. 112.

[102] It is possible that the actual church of Santa Maria in Trastevere, the *titulus Iulii*, was established over or in close vicinity to the *titulus Calixti*, the foundation of which was traditionally ascribed to pope Calixtus. See supra, p. 38.

[103] Curran, pp. 119-27.

Maggiore, and – after his exile and subsequent return to Rome – he resided at the suburban basilica of Sant'Agnese, under the symbolic protection of Constantine's daughter, Constantia.[104] Felix, on the other hand, controlled the Lateran, until he too was 'deprived of the bishopric' and went to live on an estate on the via Portuense, from which – prompted by his priests – he returned to the city and gained control of the *Basilica Iulii*. It seems that the two lived together in Rome for a number of years, simply controlling different areas of the city and their churches, and both claiming topographical affiliation with the buildings of Julius: Liberius was associated with the Esquilino and Sant'Agnese, while Felix laid claims to the areas of via Portuense and Trastevere.[105] Their churches therefore represented centres of schismatic power where the separation, physical and ideological, was made more evident by the usurpation, control and probable administration of the churches, which in turn became foci of antagonism and possible reaction – often expressed through architectural renovation – once the schism was brought to an end and the next Pope elected.

The church of Santa Maria in Trastevere, associated with Felix, was originally the *Titulus/Basilica Iulii et Calisti*, is probably the earliest Christian foundation in this populous neighbourhood, and one of the most important Marian churches in Rome.[106] Its rededication is certainly linked to the presence in the church of one of the most remarkable Marian icons preserved in Rome.[107] On the via Portuense, where the antipope Felix had social and economic connections, is also situated one of the minor catacombs, that of Ponziano, which was known to Anglo-Saxon visitors. [108] However, not all the early churches in the area of Trastevere can be directly linked with schismatic activity. The *titulus Crysogoni*, for instance, was established in the fifth century, and the

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[104] Costantia died in 354 and was buried in Rome. At the time of the pope's return from exile she was already dead, but probably the Imperial connections and patronage with the site were still very much alive.

[105] Curran, pp. 134-7.

[106] See D. Kinney, *S. Maria in Trastevere, from its Founding to 1215*, unpublished PhD Thesis, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts 1975. Also, Brandenburg, pp. 112-3.

[107] See infra, ch.4.

[108] See infra, pp. 90-101.

several subsequent and lavish campaigns of decoration suggest it was a church of considerable status, probably serving an important community(**Pl.27-28**).[109] The large (60m long), single-naved original structure was provided from the outset with a separate room with a baptismal pool;[110] the nave was painted with geometrical frescoes featuring the traditional motif of *vela* (curtains), dating to the sixth/seventh centuries; and what seems to be a side-aisle is in fact a complex arrangement of smaller rooms and spaces, in turn decorated with frescoes and preserving some fragments of mosaic flooring.[111] It underwent a substantial programme of renovation in the first half of the eighth century, under Gregory III (731-41), who added other frescoes and had a ring crypt built, focusing on the *memoria* of a saint/martyr.[112]

Under Damasus (366-84) the complexities of schism experienced by his predecessors re-emerged with an even stronger dispute, this time characterised by extreme violence as well as intense territorial control. The events related to the accession of Damasus are preserved not only in the *Liber Pontificalis*, but also in the so-called *Collectio Avellana*, probably dating to the mid-sixth century. [113] Like the *Liber Pontificalis*, this presents a very negative portrait of Damasus, who was otherwise recognised as one of the 'founders' of a Roman Christian topography within and outside the city walls.[114]

Damasus' rival, Ursinus, despite not being a pro-Felician candidate, was appointed at the *Basilica Iulii* (*et Calisti*) which was not only one of the

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[109] Brandenburg, pp. 163-4.

[110] It could have been a pre-existing basin: more have been found during the excavations and there is the suggestion that the pre-existing building that housed the *titulus* could have been a *fullonica*.

[111] Similar to the structure and arrangement of porticus in Asax churches. See infra, pp. 209-15.

[112] Gregory also renovated the church of Santa Maria in Trastevere. *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 415-25; Davis (ed.), pp. 17-28.

[113] K. Blair-Dixon, 'Memory and authority in sixth-century Rome: the *Liber Pontificalis* and the *Collectio Avellana*' in Cooper&Hillner (eds), pp. 59-76; Curran, pp. 137-57.

[114] This critical narration can reveal something: the life in the *Collectio Avellana* emphasizes an attitude of compromise and implications with the Emperor as early as the second half of the fourth century, probably as a reflection the intertwined condition of Papal/Imperial power almost two centuries later, when the collection was compiled, and thus reflecting the contemporary situation.

foundations associated with Liberius, but also a stronghold of the opponents to the official Pope. On the other hand, Damasus' apparent dedication in the *titulus in Lucinis*, now S. Lorenzo in Lucina, is slightly problematic, as it appears that the church was probably not established until the early-fifth century.[115]As with their schismatic predecessors, the Ursinians were expelled, but managed to gain control of one of the churches on the Esquilino.[116] This location, demonstrably associated with Pope Liberius, and therefore with the 'legitimate' candidate to the Roman See, was a key area, both topographically and ideologically. They also acquired another Liberian church, Sant'Agnese, but here they were defeated in an outbreak of violence so extreme as to require the intervention of the Emperors, Valentinian I, Valens and Gratian.[117]

It is not surprising that, after this intense territorial struggle, Damasus sought to affirm his position of complete territorial control, particularly where the claims of papal opposition had been strongest. So, he launched into a serious, concerted architectural programme aimed at expressing unity and concord[118] through epigraphs – his most famous and celebrated contribution – not only in the suburban cemeteries, but also with a series of foundations within the walls at very significant locations.

The most striking of these was Sant'Anastasia, located at the foot of the Palatine hill, the Imperial hill of Rome, and opposite the Circus Maximus; it is hard to imagine a more central, and sacred, area within the city. It is often affirmed that the conversion into churches of SS Cosma e Damiano (527), the Pantheon (608) and the Curia Senatus (630) mark the official establishment of Christianity in the heart of pagan Rome, but Sant'Anastasia had already, more quietly achieved that, almost two centuries earlier.[119] In addition, Damasus' foundations of S. Lorenzo in Damaso and the problematic S. Lorenzo in Lucina

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[115] Blair-Dixon, pp. 71-2.
[116] Or perhaps two, the *Basilica Liberii* and the *Basilica Sicinii*. See Curran, p. 140.
[117] Curran, p. 141.
[118] See supra, pp. 29.
[119] Brandenburg, pp. 134-5.

were situated in different parts of the Campus Martius, while the *titulus Fasciolae*, now SS Nereo e Achilleo stood close to the Baths of Caracalla, towards the via Appia, a location until then almost ignored by the Church. Damasus may also have been responsible for the foundation of Santa Pudenziana: its position on the Esquilino marks the strengthening of one of the most conspicuous enclaves of power in the topography of early Christian Rome.

This church shows a complex architecture stemming from the typical reuse of pre-existing Roman structures, possibly a private building combining houses and shops; unfortunately, the early medieval phase of the church is hardly recognizable under the sixteenth-century (and later) renovations. Despite this, it reflects several characteristic aspects of the fourth/fifth-century titular churches of Rome: its patronage is ascribed to a number of presbyters and lectors of the church, so, even without the possible involvement of Damasus, the sumptuous nature of building and its decoration can be ascribed to the sponsorship of the ecclesiastical hierarchies of the *titulus* itself. Interestingly, a later literary source, the *Acta Pudentianae et Praxedis*, probably written during the late fifth-century Laurentian schism,[120] seems to use the legendary foundation of these two (sister) churches to support the political, social and economical claims of the Roman people, secular and ecclesiastic, gravitating around the *tituli*, just as the *titulus Pammachii* did in relation to the *passio* of John and Paul.[121] This demonstrates once again how churches and their patronage could be perceived for several generations as important tools of support in the phases of adjustment that the Christian religion and its hierarchies went through in Early Medieval Rome. The decoration of Santa Pudenziana probably reflects this important role: seemingly it took several years to complete, and the resulting apse mosaic, the earliest preserved in Rome and the only visible surviving part of the Late Antique complex, offers a magnificent example of a composite iconographic achievement, based on Imperial and Christian symbolism.

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[120] Llewellyn, pp. 419-23.
[121] See Cooper and Llewellyn.

Damasus' renovation of Sant'Agnese was also undertaken within both the transformation of suburban devotional centres, and the programme of eradicating the memory of the schismatics from the sites that they had once controlled. Here, as well as at S. Ippolito on the via Tiburtina, he successfully swept away the visible presence of schisms and devotional separation, in an attempt to confine and normalize otherwise dangerous situations.[122] In most cases Damasus' activity contributed to the 'creation' and emphasis of the status of 'Roman' saints (even when they were not Roman), a programme which in turn is likely to have generated the institutionalization of local saints.[123] By his contemporaries Damasus was regarded as ambitious, but it could be argued that he had a clear vision of what the increased power of the Bishop of Rome could achieve, as early as the mid-fourth century. Furthermore, his pontificate made clear that the Pope had to accept this transmission of authority and his new, more political role: leaving Rome in an (imperial) power vacuum was no longer a feasible plan.

In the first half of the fifth century, another less dramatic episcopal schism affected Rome. Again, churches came to embody the solidarity of the people and the legitimacy of one candidate over the other. Pope Boniface (418-22) was ordained at the *basilica Iulii*, traditionally associated with the official Pope, but perhaps also because the antipope Eulalius had swiftly managed to gain control of the Lateran. After the intervention of the Empress Galla Placidia, on behalf of her young son Valentinian and in accord with her brother Honorius, both Popes

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[122] A Novatianist community was active in Rome, 'separatist but seemingly orthodox in doctrine, not the only Christian community known in Rome which combined essential orthodoxy with its own hierarchy and leadership, property, churches and cemeteries distinct from those of the official Roman Church'. Llewellyn, p. 422. This community seems to have been the focus of Pope Damasus' attention, and the basis of the devotional competition between S. Ippolito and S. Lorenzo on the via Tiburtina.

[123] 'The newly affirmed civic identity of the saintly dead was an appeal for solidarity to the living'. Curran, p. 154.

were driven out of the city and found refuge, according to the new usual pattern, at suburban cemeteries.[124]

It is interesting to note that in this dispute the site of Sant'Agnese again came to play a significant role: Eulalius, probably encouraged by the control he had previously obtained over the Lateran, returned there to perform the canonical Easter Baptism, while the legitimate candidate Boniface stayed at the cemetery of Sant'Agnese where he performed the Easter Baptism. While this demonstrates that at the time the site at Sant'Agnese featured a Baptistery; on the other hand, it also indicates that the suburban complex on the via Nomentana had achieved, probably thanks to the well-orchestrated Damasian post-schismatic 'purge', a status important and orthodox enough to be the location of such an important liturgical ceremony. As Llewellyn has noted:

> The celebration of Easter was an important expression of valid Episcopal authority, especially through the attendant baptisms, whereby new Christians were inducted into the unity of the faithful and specifically into unity with the celebrating bishop.[125]

In the latter part of the fifth century, the Church was hit by the Acacian schism; in Rome this coincided with another episcopal struggle, between Laurence and Symmachus (498-514),[126] which is discussed in the *Liber Pontificalis* and the so-called Laurentian fragment.[127] Just as Damasus' church-building campaign had left its mark on the Christian topography of Rome, so too did Symmachus', and the ways and areas in which he developed his architectural projects were once again integral to the establishment of the spiritual and political control over the city.[128]

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[124] *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, pp. 227-9; Davis (ed.), pp. 34-5. It seems that frequently the Popes had a personal connection with, or ownership of, the suburban site of their choice, which was also often chosen as their burial place.
[125] Llewellyn, p. 420.
[126] Moorhead, pp. 126-8.
[127] On the Laurentian Fragment see *Liber Pontificalis*, pp. xxx-xxxii and Davis (ed.), pp. 103-5.
[128] While leaving aside the complex issues concerning the administration of the *tituli* and their relevance in the schism, Llewellyn underlined the topographical setting of the Laurentian

Symmachus was elected at the Lateran, while his rival controlled the Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore, which although not the Liberian Basilica, was also located in the faction stronghold of the Esquilino.[129] Symmachus thus attempted to strengthen his power over this area by taking over the old *titulus Equitii*, significantly established by Pope Sylvester, re-dedicating it to St Martin, having it enlarged and lavishly furnished.[130] Furthermore, Symmachus focused his attention and effort on St Peter's, where he 'shut himself' in after returning from Ravenna, where he had been summoned by Theodoric and from where he moved to Rimini before returning to Rome;[131] St Peter's was the only basilica still 'available' to the Pope and his supporters at the time. Nevertheless, Symmachus' patronage of the church, possibly in the attempt to raise the profile of this successful pilgrimage shrine to the status of a papal basilica, equal to or even in competition with the Lateran, saw the construction of three oratories around the font at St Peter's, dedicated to the Holy Cross, St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist; these replicated exactly those at the Lateran Baptistery.[132] With this Symmachus was not only implying the architecture of the Lateran, but also stressing the importance of Baptism, the ultimate episcopal

schism, in the hope of gaining an understanding of the control and administration of the titular churches involved. Ultimately, it appears that one of Pope Symmachus' decisions in the synod of 502 extended the restrictions on the alienation of church properties not only to bishops but to all clerics: this was probably a way to ensure that local churches - and their wealth - could not be used in the future as a base for political rebellions. See Hillner, pp. 251-2. What seems here relevant - and linked to the previous discussions - is that the *tituli*, regardless of their status and connection with deacons or presbyters, acted on the territory as parish-like churches, eventually singling out a strong association with their community and neighbourhood, even when/if supportive of schismatic papal candidates or groups. Once more, the authority over the territory in the Early Christian Church of Rome seems equally influenced by personal preferences (of the bishops or other patrons), and the desire to enhance control over some areas of the city, with logistic, political or religious motivations.

[129] On the Esquilino, see Llewellyn, pp. 424-5.

[130] Llewellyin, pp. 426-7. The actual church of San Martino ai Monti clearly reflects the Symmachan dedication, although the Roman structures underlying the church seem to be too small to be identified with the fourth-century *titulus*. They might pertain instead to the subsequent *diaconia*, see infra ch.3.

[131] Laurentian fragment, Davis, pp. 103-4.

[132] On Symmachus and his building programme see the recent C.J. Goodson, 'Building for Bodies: the Architecture of Saint Veneration in Early Medieval Rome' in *Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, É. Ó Carragáin & C. Neuman de Vegvar (eds), Aldershot 2007, pp. 51-79, esp. pp. 58-62 and relevant bibliography.

liturgy, conveying the symbolic meaning of spiritual ecclesia and the practical significance of political unity in the person of the bishop.[133]

The Laurentian schism also provides further evidence of the growing importance of the relationship between Rome and Constantinople. Imperial affairs were by then one of the most influential variables in the internal affairs of Rome, where politics and religion were closely intertwined, and support of the Emperor might not necessarily mean support of the Pope, and *vice versa*.[134] In Rome, the power struggle between bishop and Emperor was certainly not new; the dynamics continuously adjusted, relying heavily on the attitudes, ambitions and agenda of the individuals involved. While this has been much discussed in the scholarship, of importance here is that, while the process of acquisition, transformation and management of power was not straightforward, and its balance was often threatened or abused by individuals or factions, by the early seventh century the Pope emerged as embodying a significant power within the city of Rome and beyond.

The Emperors, long before Constantine's decision to found the New Rome, had rarely resided in Rome for extended periods of time, but following the establishment of Constantinople, Rome remained the focus of the symbolic presence of the Emperor, and the centre of the Senate and imperial functionaries. Images of the absent Emperor were received with all honours and officially kept at the imperial palace on the Palatine, as in 603 when the Emperor Phocas was so honoured.[135] The arrival and reception of the Emperor, or in this case his image, comprised a highly formal and historically complex ritual: the *adventus*, an intrinsically Roman ceremony, demonstrating imperial power and 'Romanness'; by the seventh century, regardless of the religious choices of its patron, it had to accommodate the increasing presence of

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[133] Moorhead, pp. 134-6. According to Llewellyn, Symmachus, and the related Laurentian schism, had a great influence on the establishment of Santa Pudenziana and Santa Prassede and their foundation legends. See Llewellyn, pp. 424-27.

[134] Moorhead, p. 129.

[135] Humphries, in Cooper&Hillner (eds), p. 21. For relevant discussion on the column erected in the Forum in conjunction with Phocas' visit, see infra chapter 8, p. 278.

Christianity in the city. Perhaps because of this reality, a number of Emperors took up temporary residence in Rome more often from the second part of the fifth century, and increased their building patronage, public and Christian alike.[136] Clearly, buildings were important tools in this power struggle: church buildings could be used by secular authorities as a visible sign of their prominence in the landscape of Rome, not only as religious, but also as political and social centres.[137]

The Pope-Emperor interaction became more clear-cut during the late-sixth and seventh centuries, when Gothic Wars defined the two powers as more discrete entities, while problems with Constantinople and the rule of Ravenna also emphasised dissent with the Emperor. Often this was openly expressed, as in the case of popes Martin I (649-55) and Sergius I in relation to the Quinisext Council (692).[138] The Pope was increasingly treated as an imperial subject, although the force of the Emperor's actions can be considered directly proportional to the rising power of the Pope himself, and in turn the people of Rome seemed to become more and more supportive of their Bishop.[139]

This growing struggle can be confirmed by the continuing importance and symbolic leverage of sacred and public buildings in the fabric of the city: in 608/609 Pope Boniface IV asked permission to the Emperor to turn the temple of the Pantheon into a Christian church; almost 60 years later, in 663, the first visit of a Roman Emperor to Rome in almost two centuries took place; it was to be the last.[140] Constans II, gracefully received by Pope Vitalian, took part to the celebrations at the main Christian basilicas, but then stripped down and

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[136] It is interesting to note how in the mid-fifth century, the son of Galla Placidia was buried at St Peter's in the round lateral chapel of St Petronilla, probably reminiscent of the setting of an imperial mausoleum. See on this the recent work of M. McEvoy, 'The Mausoleum of Honorius: Late Roman Imperial Christianity and the City of Rome in the Fifth Century', paper delivered at the Conference *Old St Peter's Rome*, British School at Rome, March 2010.

[137] Humphries, p. 49.

[138] See discussion in ch.4.

[139] This is clear from the events at the time of Pope Sergius: the attempted kidnapping failed, the Pope in his city being by then strong enough to defend himself or rely on the people for his defence. See infra, ch.4.

[140] *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 317; Davis (ed.), p. xlvi.

removed the bronze dome covering of the very same building granted by his predecessors to the church of Rome, taking along 'various other things he had dismantled'. This imperial pillage of the papal city can be interpreted as an affirmation of his supremacy over the Pope, not only symbolically, but through the materiality of the Pope's churches, those churches being fundamental expressions of ecclesiastical power and control over the city of Rome.[141]

1.4 Summary

Towards the end of the seventh century, Pope Leo II (682-3) translated the remains of the martyrs Faustino, Simplicio and Viatrice – housed in the Catacomb of Generosa on the via Portuense – to the church of Santa Bibiana, a fourth-century *titulus* on the Esquilino.[142] As has become clear, these two areas of Rome had been the stage of opposing factions in the episcopal disputes from the fourth century onwards. The translation could thus signify that they were no longer so ideologically defined, while in turn the catacombs, their churches and paintings – explored in the next chapter – started to be 'included' within the walls. At the same time, the political impact of a church, in terms of its patronage, location or aspect, continued to be highly influential, while in turn visitors to the city played a central part in the development of its sacred topography.[143]

The process of transition encapsulated in the interaction between imperial and episcopal power, and the development and adaptation of a specific Christian architecture onto the pre-existing classical urban landscape of Rome was critical in defining the culture and visual appearance of the city. It was also an aspect that would impact on the world of Anglo-Saxon England. After the Roman mission of 597, those elements of art and architecture elaborated in

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[141] Davis (ed.), p. 74.

[142] *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1, p. 360; Davis (ed.), p. 81; Brandenburg, pp. 215-6. For the Catacomb of Generosa, see infra, pp. 97-8 on its possible connection with the decoration at the catacomb of Ponziano.

[143] See ch.2.

Rome that conveyed the public, official, legitimate face of Christianity – hence the stress and importance given to the historical figure of Constantine and his religious foundations – were inserted architectonically into a native landscape, one that had in turn a pre-existing layer of *Romanitas*, which itself was often reused, reshaped and combined in a process that emulates buildings, materials, itineraries and patronage.

In addition, the picture of Christian Rome outlined here demonstrates the importance of Christian patronage, the numerous and diverse ways in which it could be expressed, and the manner in which the architectural patronage of a church could be topographically and politically loaded. The importance of female figures, and of the secular aristocracy, as well as the ecclesiastical hierarchies in the promotion of the religion also needs to be borne in mind, as these elements too are encountered in the responses to the re-introduction of Christianity into Anglo-Saxon England, with analogous visual, monumental and architectural implications.