Sacred Fragments
The reception of Christian Antiquity in post-Tridentine Rome

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation analyzes cultural attitudes and modes of reception of Christian antiquity and Early Christian art in late-sixteenth century post-Tridentine Rome, and its effects on the antiquarian, historical, and artistic culture of the time. It challenges the established scholarly paradigm that Christian archaeology was an apologetic discipline and the by-product of Catholic ideology, and argues instead that the discovery and investigation of Christian antiquity was instrumental to the critical reappraisal of the methods of classical historical scholarship, leading to a fundamental revolution in both historical and antiquarian method, and artistic taste. With their unrefined formal qualities, rather unappealing to eyes still accustomed to Renaissance style, Early Christian artifacts played a fundamental role in establishing less narrow criteria to approach and assess art beyond the classical canon, paving the way for a new and more favorable evaluation of art objects hitherto ignored if not despised.

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Introduction

This dissertation is a historical investigation of the past, as well as a reflection on our own comprehension of that past. It is an attempt to understand cultural attitudes towards Christian antiquity, and modes of reception of Early Christian art in late-sixteenth century post-Tridentine Rome, and its effects on the antiquarian, historical, and artistic culture of the time. As such, it is also an attempt (as superficial and partial as it might be) to redefine our modern understanding of post-Tridentine culture, with its contradictions and epistemological tensions between truth and dogma, certainty and doubt, past and present.[1] To do so, it is necessary to reconsider the long-standing assumption that the interest of this period in Christian antiquity and its artistic remains was a by-product of post-Tridentine ideology, encouraged by the Church and substantially different from the historical and antiquarian humanistic culture of the Renaissance. To rethink the role of Christian antiquity in post-Tridentine culture is to look beyond a well-established historiographical paradigm by which the investigation of the Christian past in the second half of the sixteenth century was justified solely by its militant purpose of providing material evidence in support of the Catholic Church.

My dissatisfaction with such narrative began many years ago now, in Rome at the Scuola di Specializzazione of La Sapienza, with an encounter with Alessandro Zuccari and his work on the artistic world of post-Tridentine Rome, as well as the discovery of Ingo Herklotz's scholarship on Christian antiquarianism. At that time, I also began a systematic

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[1] "It was a world of fractures and fractured truths", S. Tutino, *Shadows of Doubt: Language and Truth in post-Reformation Catholic Culture*, Oxford - New York 2014, p. 4.

exploration of Rome with a group of fellow students and friends, to discover the remains of the Early Christian and medieval city beyond (and beneath) the early modern and Baroque Rome. Most of what we saw then was not "neutral", as it was not simply what had, randomly, escaped the destruction of time. Rather, it was what others had preserved for us, by copying, restoring, sometimes reinventing, monuments of the Christian past, and thus recomposing and recreating a specific image of Christian antiquity. It was inevitable to wonder whether such an image – which, in turn, had deeply shaped our own understanding of Early Christian, but also medieval, art – was merely the result of apologetic and religious concerns, or whether a more genuine antiquarian and artistic interest had played a part in it. In the following years, here at Columbia University, my interest for post-Tridentine Rome, its monuments and its culture, grew even stronger, perhaps also due to my longing for my hometown. After having taken two interesting classes, one on sixteenth-century Roman art and one on the cult of relics from late antiquity to Counter-Reformation, I decided to devote my dissertation to the problem of the discovery of Christian antiquity in Rome in the aftermath of the Council of Trent.

The premise of my argument is that the assumption that the interest in Christian antiquity in the second half of the sixteenth century was a byproduct of post-Reformation Catholic culture, influenced in particular by the Oratorian spirituality – still very much emphasized in the literature – was established by a group of early twentieth-century Catholic scholars, and reflected their own cultural attitudes and biases. Scholars such as Orazio Marucchi, Pietro Fremiotti and Carlo Cecchelli – pupils and followers of Giovan Battista De Rossi, involved with the Fascist party – who relied on a biased reading of secondary sources, usually hagiographic literature on Filippo Neri often penned several

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years after the events in question. It is often emphasized in the literature that the *antiquaria sacra* was primarily concerned with apologetic issues, its fundamental task being that of providing material evidence to support Catholic ecclesiastical historiography against Protestant accusations. Thus, the argument continues, its method took root in the certainty of faith rather than the critical curiosity found in Renaissance antiquarianism, and all philological criticism and historical objectivity were necessarily sacrificed on the altar of ideological commitment. As a consequence, physical evidence was accepted with no critical discernment, when not manipulated to further support literary authorities proclaiming the Roman Church as the *vera Ecclesia* and confirming the legitimacy of Catholic cults and liturgical practices. But to what extent, I ask, does such narrative actually represent the reality of the interest in Christian antiquity and its material legacy at the end of the sixteenth century? The original documents seem to suggest a more nuanced picture that reflects the discrepancies and fractures typical of post-Reformation Catholic culture.

Focusing on primary sources, I argue instead that sixteenth-century Christian archaeology was characterized by a genuine antiquarian and historical interest in the past as much as it was by ideological commitment. I also argue that the discovery and investigation of Christian antiquity actually had an important impact on the study of antiquities, in Italy and beyond, informing a new type of "object-based" cultural history of antiquity and leading to a fundamental revolution in historical method based on material remains and visual evidence as key documents to understanding the past. In fact, sixteenth-century Christian antiquarians, increasingly aware of the value of early-Christian material culture for the ongoing religious debate, advanced for the first time the notion of the documentary power of the images. The result was a new "visual turn" in antiquarian and historical

studies where images and objects emerged as key documents in and of themselves. At least a century before the crisis brought about by late eighteenth-century historical Pyrrhonism, Christian antiquarianism was already debating the distinction between literary and non-literary sources, and original and derivative authorities. A new methodology based on the programmatic union of textual and visual material in a sort of "philology of things" was being developed, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the "object". All these issues are thoroughly discussed in the first chapter, which provides a critical reconsideration of the relationship between studies of Christian antiquity, religious concerns, and antiquarian and artistic interests among Roman scholars in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The second chapter focuses on the antiquarian world of post-Tridentine Rome, and in particular on the Spanish Dominican Alfonso Chacón (1530-1599), a prominent antiquarian of the time. Through the analysis of unpublished primary documents, I reevaluate Chacón's attitude towards Christian antiquity in the light of his struggle between the ideological commitment of a loyal member of the Catholic Church and the documentary criticism of a scholar, which is occasionally detectable in the Spaniard's work. I consider this struggle an important symptom of the fact that the investigation of the *antiquitas sacra* was not necessarily, or not always, a militant commitment in the service of the Catholic cause, and that Christian antiquarians were not just wardens of the Church but true scholars. Among the documents, there is an unpublished letter addressed to an anonymous cardinal, possibly Cardinal Francesco Alciati, which is the first critical description of the catacomb

discovered in 1578 on the Via Salaria.[2] With this letter Chacón, who explored the catacomb in person as confirmed years later by Antonio Bosio,[3] provides an interesting glimpse into his innovative method of investigation – typical of the antiquarians of the Farnese circle – that was based on the use of material evidence and literary sources combined, and well aware of what I call the "visual turn" in the antiquarian scholarship of the time. In addition to the letter, two manuscripts in particular are comparatively examined in this chapter: Vat. Lat. 5409, compiled by Chacón, and Vat. Lat. 10545 assembled by Claude Nicholas Fabri de Peiresc and reproducing drawings and notes taken in Rome by the Fleming Philip van Winghe. The two manuscripts partly illustrate the same murals and reliefs from the same catacombs and churches, and their close comparison provides a unique opportunity to investigate two different approaches to Early Christian monuments. Having compared Chacón and van Winghe's copies of catacomb murals, the latter more truthful to the originals than the former, I propose a different explanation for their evident discrepancy. I suggest that it is the consequence of the different reception and use intended by the two antiquarians for their drawings, rather than advocating the usual –- and superficial – refrain of the contraposition between the apologetic point of view of the Dominican and the "scientific" interest of the Fleming antiquarian.

In the third chapter I venture into the world of post-Tridentine history writing, and reassess a well-known work on Early Christian Rome, Antonio Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea*

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[2] Chacon's account, dated July 1578, is preserved in a miscellaneous manuscript in the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Archives of the History of Art, in Los Angeles (Mss. 88-A200 840005B), c. 70r-78v.

[3] "(…) Alfonso Ciaccone dell'Ordine dei Predicatori, scrittore e huomo illustre dell'eta' nostra; il quale vi fu particolarmente a vederlo in compagnia di Cardinali, Ambasciatori regii, e diversi altri personaggi (…)", in *Roma Sotterranea di Antonio Bosio Romano*, Roma 1632 (1634), reprinted in Rome 1998, p. 511.

– edited by the Oratorian Giovanni Severano and published posthumously in Rome in 1632-34 – as a work of ecclesiastical history rather than antiquarian scholarship. By placing Bosio's work within the framework of history writing instead of antiquarianism, it seems finally possible to abandon the usual (and sterile) accusation that *Roma Sotterranea* is ultimately the failed work of an antiquarian guided more by faith than physical evidence in his reconstruction of Early Christian Rome. I propose to evaluate *Roma Sotterranea* as a document of the critical process of elaborating and refining the tools for investigating the past and searching for the truth in history, forged in the fight between Protestants and Catholics. Bosio's treatise on the catacombs is, in my analysis, an important *monumentum* of the crucial debate regarding the very possibility of understanding and reconstructing the past, and offers a truthful account of it, which had become particularly urgent in both the Catholic and Protestant camps in the wake of the publication of the Magdeburg Centuries (1559-1578) and of Antonio Bosio's *Annales Ecclesiastici* (1588-1607). *Roma Sotterranea* may be taken as a good example of the tension that early modern historians (Protestant and Catholic alike) began to experience between dogmatic certainties and uncertainties in the investigation and reconstruction of the past, between the belief in human history as the imperfect and fragmentary reflection of God's will, and the belief in the possibility itself to reconstruct it from scattered fragments. Following a (partial) reevaluation of Giovanni Severano as an antiquarian and not just as a pious Oratorian moved by apologetic concerns, through a close reading of his *Memorie sacre delle sette chiese di Roma* (Rome 1630), I then analyze more closely *Roma Sotterranea* in the context of ecclesiastical history. In doing so, I explain both the preponderance of literary sources over physical evidence, and the supposed "manipulation of evidence" (the two capital sins repeatedly pointed out by

scholars) as the consequence of the crucial tension between documents (evidence) as traces attesting to the reality of the past, and the possibility for the historian to identify, explain, and truthfully interpret them; of the tension, in other words, between subjectivity and objectivity in history writing. I conclude the chapter by suggesting that the well-established perception of *Roma Sotterranea* as nothing more than an erudite work of devotion should be abandoned in favor of a different evaluation of Bosio's (and Severano's) work as a sophisticated expression of the crucial post-Tridentine debate on the modes of understanding and representing the past, still relevant today.

Chapter four, finally, explores the artistic scene in Rome between the closure of the Council of Trent (1563) and the beginning of the new century. Much ink has been spilled over whether there was a "palaeochristian revival" in post-Tridentine Rome,[4] but I argue here that to claim that either there was or there was not such a revival is to ignore the artistic complexity of the period. In the aftermath of the Council of Trent many contrasting and even clashing forces and ideas were at work as the renovation of all aspects of religious life was the ultimate challenge upon which the existence of the Catholic Church itself depended. Art – both sacred and profane – was one of the main topics at stake, and not surprisingly there were many suggestions as to how to reform it while purging the many errors accumulated over time in response to the strict and yet vague 1563 Tridentine decree on the images, dictating that *figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting*

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[4] As specified in chapter 4, p. 160, n. 1, I use the definition "Early Christian" and "palaeochristian" as synonyms, referring to the artistic production of the first five centuries of Christianity, in accordance with the definition of the two terms found in P. Murray and L. Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, Oxford – New York 1996.

to lust.[5] Among many, one of the most interesting was perhaps that of a return to the purest and uncorrupted models of the Early Christian art, with its simplified and austere pictorial language that seemed particularly appropriate to reflect the new Tridentine *pietas*. But not everyone shared the same interest in palaeochristian art, and it is true that several old mosaics and frescoes in Roman churches, and sometimes even entire buildings, were destroyed, damaged or restored beyond recognition in the late sixteenth century. Many others, however, were preserved, studied and copied in an important effort to recreate and revive Early Christian art**.** Sometimes, new frescoes were even deliberately made to evoke Christian antiquity through a number of visual or iconographic elements, as in the precocious example of the apse of Santa Sabina in Rome (1560).

In this last chapter I examine several restoration projects in Rome, from the reign of Pope Gregory XIII to that of Pope Clement VIII, which were more or less respectful of the original identity of the monument, in an attempt to convey the nuanced complexity of the relationship with Christian antiquity and its physical remains, detectable in post-Tridentine Rome. However, regardless of the undeniable ambiguity towards Early Christian monuments, in the late sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century extensive campaigns of restoration and visual documentations (the most extensive campaign of visual documentations before the invention of photography, in fact), preserved an inestimable patrimony of buildings, images, and iconographies, which are still today the foundation of our understanding of Early Christian and medieval art. I then consider the case of

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[5] "Decree on the invocation, veneration, and relics of saints, and on sacred images", XXV Session (December 3-4, 1563), in *The canons and decrees of the sacred and oecumenical Council of Trent*, J. Waterworth ed. and transl., London 1848, "The Twenty-Fifth Session", pp. 232-89, in particular pp. 233-236.

Sant'Agnese f.l.M, restored at the opening of the seventeenth century by Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici, a close friend of Cardinal Cesare Baronio and the mind behind Clement VIII's politics of conservation and restoration of Early Christian monuments in Rome. Following the example of Santa Sabina in 1560, and in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, ancient Christian imagery was often looked upon as a source of artistic inspiration, and even given a new triumphal life through an original combination of old and new iconographic themes and symbolic connotations. Sant'Agnese f.l.M is certainly an interesting example, conceptually sophisticated though certainly not of exquisite artistic quality, of how old Christian images and iconographies were redeployed and combined into new images carrying new ideologically charged messages, particularly poignant for the post-Tridentine Church.

I conclude this last chapter by pointing to the fact that while apologetic and political reasons were undoubtedly at stake in the artistic projects initiated in Rome in the second half of the sixteenth century, what is important is that the language used to give form to such reasons was, in many cases, that of Early Christian art. This was in fact, I conclude, a deliberate and important choice from the part of the artists and their patrons, an important indication of new taste and embryonic appreciation of an art hitherto neglected. It did not last long, however, and a new artistic language, better suited to give form to a different political, cultural and religious situation, emerged with the beginning of the seventeenth century. But if it is true, as Antonio Nibby states, that Poussin admired the apse mosaic in

Santa Pudenziana as "the best work of the old school",[6] and if Mancini was able to praise catacomb paintings as well as medieval mosaics,[7] then the seeds for a new evaluation and appreciation of Early Christian and medieval art had been securely planted, and were soon going to blossom.

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[6] "(…) il Pussino riguardavalo come il migliore della vecchia scuola", cit. in M. Andaloro, "L'irruzione delle 'nuove' immagini", in *La pittura medievale a Roma, 312-1431. Corpus. Vol I, L'orizzonte tardoantico e le nuove immagini (312-468)*, edited by M. Andaloro and S. Romano, Milan 2006, pp. 291-304, pp. 15-31, p.25.

[7] About catacomb paintings Mancini writes for instance that "si vede quel buon e quel seme commune che si vede in tutte le pitture di quei tempi", while he praises the heads of Saint Peter and Saint Paul from the *Grotte Vaticane* (891-896) as "molto ben fatte" or the frescoes in the church of Santi Quattro Coronati as "assai buoni, con i piedi che posano nei loro piani", G. Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (Roma 1621), ed. by A. Marucchi, Roma 1956, vol. I, pp. 48-49; p. 61.

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Rethinking the Paradigm: Christian Archaeology between

Humanism and post-Tridentine Catholic Culture

The premise of the argument

The long-standing assumption that Christian archaeology was a product of the

theological and cultural program of the post-Reformation Church, influenced in particular

by Filippo Neri and Oratorian spirituality, was and still is very popular among scholars.[1] In

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[1] See for instance classical works such as G. Ferretto, *Note storico-bibliografiche di archeologia cristiana*, Citta' del Vaticano 1942 or G. Bovini, *Gli studi di archeologia cristiana dalle origini alla meta' del XIX secolo*, Bologna 1968; G. Cantino Wataghin, "Roma sotterranea. Appunti sull'origine dell'archeologia cristiana", in *Ricerche di Storia dell'Arte*, 10, 1989, pp. 5-14. See also the volumes "Fonti e studi Baroniani" on Cesare Baronio: *Baronio storico e la Controriforma. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Sora 6-10 ottobre 1979*, edited by R. De Maio *et alii*, Sora 1982; *Baronio e l'arte. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Sora 10-13 ottobre 1984*, edited by R. De Maio *et alii*, Sora 1985; and the more recent *Baronio e le sue fonti. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Sora 10-13 ottobre 2007*, edited by L. Gulia, Sora 2009. For more up-to-date literature, still maintaining the same assumption, see: *Le catacombe cristiane di Roma. Origini, sviluppo, apparati decorativi, documentazione epigrafica*, edited by V. Fiocchi Nicolai, F. Bisconti, D. Mazzoleni, Regensburg 1998; V. Fiocchi Nicolai, "San Filippo Neri, le catacombe di San Sebastiano e le origini dell'archeologia cristiana", in *San Filippo Neri nella realta' romana del XVI secolo*, edited by M.T. Bonadonna Russo and N. Del Re, (Miscellanea della societa' romana di storia patria 39), Roma 2009, pp. 105-130; G. Cantino Wataghin: "Forme di devozione nella cristianita' tardoantica: bilancio storiografico sulle indagini archeologiche in Italia", in *Martiri, Santi, Patroni. Per una archeologia della devozione*, Atti del X Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana, Universita' della Calabria, 15-18 settembre 2010, edited by A. Coscarella and P. De Santis, Universita' della Calabria 2012, pp. 17-40 (with bibliography). See also the extensive production of Massimiliano Ghilardi, with a rich bibliography, for example: "Il pittore e le reliquie: Giovanni Angelo Santini e la Roma sotterranea" in *Storia dell'Arte*, 133, NS, 33, 2012, pp. 5-23; "*Quae signa erant illa, quibus putabant esse significativa martyrii?* Note sul riconoscimento e l'autenticazione delle reliquie delle catacombe romane nella prima eta' moderna", in *Mélange dell'École française de Rome*, 122, 2012, pp. 81-106; "Il 'cavallo epigrafista'. La riscoperta delle iscrizioni cristiane di Roma antica nella prima eta' moderna", in *Receptions of Antiquity*, edited by J. Nelis, Gent 2011, pp. 277-295; "Oratoriani e Gesuiti alla 'conquista' della Roma sotterranea nella prima eta' moderna", in *Archivio italiano per la storia della pieta'*, XII, 2009(a), Rome, pp. 183-231; "*Forceps ferreus seu instrumentum ad torquendum martires*. La tenaglia del Vaticano tra devozione apologetica e propaganda controriformista", in *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae*, Citta' del Vaticano 2009(b), pp. 153-198; "Le catacombe di Roma dal Medioevo all'eta' contemporanea", in *Studi Romani*, 49, 2001, pp. 27-56. A slightly different position of Christian archaeology is presented by Friederich W. Deichmann, *Einführung in die Christliche Archäologie*, Darmstadt 1983, Italian transl. by A. de Lachenal and R. Taliani, *Archeologia Cristiana*, Roma 1993.

the literature it is often maintained that the *antiquaria sacra* was born in the last decades of the sixteenth century with the fundamental task of providing material evidence to support ecclesiastical historiography.[2] According to this view its methods took roots in the certainty of the faith and it shared nothing of the critical methodology and documentary approach found in Renaissance antiquarianism, as philological criticism and historical objectivity were ultimately sacrificed on the altar of ideological commitment.[3] Finally, some scholars argue that although the antiquarians were aware of the relevance of Early Christian material to ongoing religious debates and approached them as primary sources, they were reluctant to consider them as autonomous art objects.[4] The paradigm of sixteenth-century Christian

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Deichmann distinguishes between Christian archeology as cultural history (thus depending on ecclesiastical history), and Christian archaeology as history of the monuments (thus a scientific discipline detached from apologetic and religious concerns), Deichmann 1993 (in particula pp. 21-26). However, Deichmann's approach to the origins of Christian archaeology is ultimately much in line with most of the literature (*Ibid.*, pp. 27-50) For a different stance on the origins of Christian archaeology and on Christian antiquarianism in the early modern age, see instead: Barbara Agosti, *Collezionismo e archeologia Cristiana nel Seicento. Federigo Borromeo e il Medioevo artistico tra Roma e Milano*, Milan 1996; I. Herklotz, *Cassiano Dal Pozzo und die Ärchaeologie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1999; "Christliche und klassiche Archäologie im sechzehnten Jahrundert: Skizzen zur Genese einer Wissenschaft, in *Die Gegenwart des Altertums. Formen und Funktionen des Altertumsbezugs in den Hochkulturen der Alten Welt*, edited by D. Kuhn and H. Stahl, Heidelberg 2001, pp. 291-307; *La Roma degli antiquari. Cultura ed erudizione tra Cinquecento e Settecento*, Studi sulla Cultura dell'Antico, VIII, Rome 2012 (with updated bibliography). Also Cornelis Schuddeboom in his *Philips van Winghe (1560-1592) en het onstaan van de christelijke archeologie*, Leiden 1996, shows a different perspective on the subject, although limited to the work of the young Flemish scholar.

[2] For bibliographical references, see above n. 1. On the relationship between Christian archaeology and ecclesiastical history in Counter-Reformation culture, see also: *Cesare Baronio tra santita' e scrittura storica*, edited by G.A. Guazzelli *et alii*, Roma 2012; *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, edited by K. Van Liere, S. Ditchfield, H. Louthan, Oxford 2012.

[3] On historical objectivity and ideological concerns in post-Reformation Catholic culture, see for instance S. Tutino, *Shadows of Doubt: Language and Truth in post-Reformation Catholic Culture*, Oxford 2014 (in particular Chapter 3).

[4] This is a widespread opinion in the literature. For bibliographical references see above, notes 1-2. In addition, see also: S. Ditchfield, "Text before Trowel: Antonio Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea* revisited", in *The Church Retrospective*, *Studies in Church History*, edited by R.N. Swanson, The Ecclesiastical History Society 1997, pp. 343-360; *Arte e committenza nel Lazio nell'eta' di Cesare. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Sora, 16-18 maggio 2007*, edited by P. Tosini, Roma 2009.

antiquarianism in the service of the apologetic interests of the Church is found even in most recent scholarship: in 2012, for instance, Gisella Cantino Wataghin emphasizes the religious context of the birth of Christian archaeology, arguing that for at least two centuries after the famous discovery of the catacomb on the Via Salaria in 1578 the new discipline debated all historical problems in the light of apologetic purposes and polemical concerns, creating a dichotomy between historical and theological truth.[5] But to what extent, one might ask, does such a narrative actually represent the reality of the studies on Christian antiquity in the last decades of the sixteenth century? Only a few voices have been raised to challenge this well-established historiographical paradigm. Among them, Martine Gosselin and Ingo Herklotz have both remarked on the necessity to go back to the original sources in order to assess the real impact of apologetic and polemical concerns on the newly developing discipline of Christian archaeology.[6]

In a recent article, Martine Gosselin argues that it was Giovan Battista De Rossi, *il Winkelmann cristiano*[7], who first introduced – perhaps unwittingly – the *topos* of Christian archeology in the service of the Catholic Church.[8] In the introduction of his *Roma*

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[5] G. Cantino Wataghin, "Forme di devozione nella Cristianita' tardoantica: bilancio storiografico sulle indagini archeologiche in Italia", in *Martiri, santi, patroni: per una archeologia della devozione*, Atti X Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana, Universita' della Calabria 15-18 settembre 2010, Universita' della Calabria 2012, pp. 17-40, in particular pp. 18-19.

[6] M. Gosselin, "The Congregation of the Oratorians and the Origins of Christian Archaeology: a reappraisal", in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 104, 2009, pp. 425-447. Ingo Herklotz has published extensively on early modern antiquarianism, including Christian antiquarianism, from the fundamental *Cassiano Dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1999 to the most recent collection of revised essays with an updated bibliography, *La Roma degli antiquari*, Rome 2012.

[7] O. Marucchi, *Commemorazione di Giovan Battista De Rossi*, Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Serie 3, Rendiconti, Vol. 1, 1921-22 and 1922-23, pp. 47-62, p. 54.

[8] See Gosselin 2009, in particular pp. 425-428.

sotterranea Cristiana (1864-1877), De Rossi engaged in a long historical excursus tracing the history of the discipline from its beginnings.[9]

He named several sixteenth-century antiquarians who devoted their work to the study of Christian as well as pagan antiquity, from Onofrio Panvinio (1530-1568) and Antonio Augustin (1516-1568) to Alfonso Chacon (1530-1599), Philips van Winghe (1575-1592), Jean L'Heureux (1551-1617), Pompeo Ugonio (d. 1614) and Antonio Bosio (1575-1629). When introducing these antiquarians, De Rossi does indeed seem to emphasize the importance of Filippo Neri and his congregation:

> "After them [Panvinio and Augustin] others followed, who were only interested in gathering the venerable memories of the Christian centuries: among them, one must mention especially the Fathers of the Oratory (...) In such a [historical] context (...) the first discovery of whatever subterranean Christian cemetery adorned with paintings or any other monument was to be a spark that ignites the flames, which will not be extinguished. And so it was".[10]

Such a remark, however, is the only instance in which the Oratorians and their spiritual leader are named in the *Roma sotterranea Cristiana*, suggesting that after all De Rossi regarded their contribution to the *antiquaria sacra* as rather marginal. Moreover, De Rossi did not appear particularly interested in any religious or ideological background when discussing the antiquarian work of Chacon, van Winghe, L'Heureux or Bosio. In the years

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[9] G.B. De Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana,* 3 vols., Rome 1864-1877, I, pp. 1-39.
[10] "A costoro [*Panvinio and Augustin*] succedettero altri unicamente intesi al raccogliere le venerande memorie de' secoli cristiani: fra i quali la principale menzione e' dovuta ai padri dell'Oratorio (…) In un tempo siffatto (…) la prima scoperta d'una qualsivoglia regione de' sotterranei cemeteri cristiani adorna di pitture o d'alcun insigne monumento doveva necessariamente essere scintilla, che grande fiamma accende, e piu' non si spegne. E cosi' fu". *Ibidem*, p. 12.
Unless otherwise indicated all translations from Italian and Latin are my own.

following De Rossi's death in 1894, however, some of his students and followers – Orazio Marucchi, Pietro Fremiotti, and Carlo Cecchelli in particular – were to forge the persistent belief in the polemical and apologetic purpose of Christian archaeology. First, Marucchi – a pupil of De Rossi himself – promoted the idea that Filippo Neri was personally involved in the birth of the discipline.[11] A few decades later, Pietro Fremiotti and Carlo Cecchelli sanctioned once for all the alleged importance of the Oratorians for sixteenth-century studies of Christian antiquity.[12] In 1926 Fremiotti wrote that

> "The origin of Christian archaeology is indebted to the impulse that the Catholic reform gave to such studies in the second half of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Everything that is Christian archaeology (...) was stimulated by the new religious fervor".[13]

A few years later Cecchelli stated that

> "(...) The Oratorian circle needs to be credited with the new interest in Christian antiquity. It transformed the Humanistic spirit (...) and transformed

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[11] For instance, Orazio Marucchi wrote in 1926: "Filippo Neri (...) invitava gli studiosi della storia della Chiesa a servirsi non solo dei documenti, ma anche dei monumenti primitivi del cristianesimo per confutare gli errori dei protestanti", in P. Fremiotti, *La riforma cattolica del secolo decimosesto e gli studi di archeologia*, Rome 1926, preface by Orazio Marucchi, p. 7. On Orazio Marucchi see H. Leclerc, "Marucchi, Orazio", in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, edited by F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, Paris 1907-1953, col. 2619-2638; *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 71, 2008, M. Munzi, *ad vocem*.

[12] Very little, if anything at all, is known about Pietro Fremiotti's life. His biography is not in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* nor, as far as I know, in any other biographical repertoires I consulted. On Carlo Cecchelli see *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 23, 1979, P. Testini, *ad vocem*.

[13] "il sorgere dell'archeologia Cristiana e' dovuto all'impulso dato a tali studi dalla riforma e dalla restaurazione cattolica nella seconda meta' del XVI secolo e all'inizio del XVII. Tutto quello che e' archeologia cristiana (…) ha trovato la sua ragione d'essere nella nuova volonta' e nel rinnovato fervor religioso". Fremiotti 1926, p. 19.

religious erudition into a new kind of active piety (...) imposing the analysis of all evidence and monuments of Christian antiquity (...) It recognized in the catacombs and ancient basilicas the source of light to illuminate Christian dogma and to inspire a new religious piety in the people".[14]

Throughout their work, Marucchi, Fremiotti and Cecchelli maintained the thesis that Filippo Neri, having realized the importance of Early Christian *realia* for the current religious debate, encouraged his disciples and followers to study Christian antiquity and its remains: Filippo Neri "encouraged scholars of ecclesiastical history to use not only literary documents but also ancient Christian monuments in order to confute the mistakes of the Protestants".[15]They claimed that the most prominent Christian antiquarians and historians at the turn of the sixteenth century – including Baronio whom, as Cecchelli informs us, Filippo Neri "modeled like one does with clay, making him inflamed with his same divine ardor, and encouraged this *homo novus* to undertake the arduous intellectual task to defend [Catholic] orthodoxy"[16] – all belonged to the Oratorian circle.[17] According to them, while

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[14] "(...) il cenacolo filippino ha il maggiore merito nel nuovo orientamento degli studi sulle sacre antichita'. Esso opero' una integrale trasformazione dello spirito umanistico (…) col tramutare l'erudizione religiosa in pieta' viva ed operante (…) con l'obbligare ad una analisi di tutti i documenti e monumenti dell'antichita' Cristiana (…) egli addito' nelle catacombe e nelle basiliche grandissime sorgenti di luce per illuminare i dogmi cristiani e per far dilagare nel popolo nuove correnti di pieta'". C. Cecchelli, *Il cenacolo filippino e l'archeologia cristiana*, Rome 1938, pp. 24-25; p. 26.

[15] "Filippo Neri (...) invitava gli studiosi della storia della Chiesa a servirsi non solo dei documenti, ma anche dei monumenti primitivi del cristianesimo per confutare gli errori dei protestanti", Fremiotti 1926, p. 7.

[16] "Filippo (...) modello' come il plasmatore fa con la creta, gli infuse una parte di quel divino ardore che egli si sentiva bruciare nel petto, ed indirizzo' quest'homo novus verso gli ardui cimenti intellettuali per combattere a pro dell'ortodossia", Cecchelli 1938, p. 14.

[17] For instance, Cecchelli claimed that Baronio, as well as Ugonio, Ciacconio, van Winghe, L'Heureux, and Bosio, were either directly linked to, or influenced by, Filippo Neri (Cecchelli 1938, pp. 18-22) Cecchelli

remaining discreetly in the shadows,[18] Neri directed and supervised the work of the first explorers of Christian antiquity, posing as their *benefattore, maestro e padre*.[19] Finally, Marucchi, Fremiotti, and Cecchelli argued that Neri inspired many scholars to imitate his luminous example and devote their work to a higher spiritual purpose, thus dispelling the self-aggrandizing and paganizing intellectual attitude of Renaissance humanism and contributing to the spiritual and religious reform of their time.[20]

These early twentieth-century scholars with their peculiar attitude towards Christian archaeology and its supposedly apologetic concerns betray the confessional turn that the discipline took at the hand of the epigones of De Rossi. Unlike De Rossi who – despite being a devout Catholic himself – had always sought a scientific approach to Christian studies, Marucchi, Fremiotti and Cecchelli adopted in fact a different stance on scholarship. In their works they championed the idea that the scope of the budding discipline of Christian archaeology was not the acquisition of historical knowledge, but rather the reinforcement of Catholic faith. One important question arises at this point: why did, shortly after De Rossi's rigorous historical methodology, his followers show such an ideological and anti-humanistic approach to the Christian past? Two historical

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himself, however, admitted that evidence to support such claim are not always there, as in the case of Ciacconio: "In quanto al Ciacconio, noi non abbiamo documenti per metterlo proprio nella cerchia filippina, ma conobbe il Baronio e l'Ugonio e percio' ricevette gli impulsi che emanavano da quel gruppo", *Ibidem*, p. 20. Similarly, Pietro Fremiotti wrote: "tutti costoro [*Panvinio, Baronio, Ciacconio, van Winghe, etc.*] formano un gruppo di dotti che circondano come discepoli, ammiratori e seguaci la figura reverenda di Filippo Neri", Fremiotti 1926, p. 7.

[18] "Filippo Neri si mantenne nell'ombra, servendosi di Cesare Baronio", *Ibidem*, p. 55.

[19] *Ibidem,* p. 11.

[20] Cecchelli wrote that Neri "volle essere radicale nella formazione di uomini tutti improntati dallo spirito cristiano e permeati dalla cultura cristiana (...) capi' che il contravveleno [to the Protestant claims] non poteva trarsi da elementi viziati dalle antiche tendenze umanistiche", Cecchelli 1938, pp. 12-13.

circumstances come strongly into play here: the advent of Fascism in 1922, and the foundation of the *Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana* in 1925.[21]

Both Orazio Marucchi and Carlo Cecchelli were part of the Fascist intelligentsia, and although very little is known about the life and work of Pietro Fremiotti, he must have been on friendly terms with Marucchi who wrote the preface to his *La Riforma cattolica del secolo decimosesto* (Rome, 1926).[22] Orazio Marucchi (1852-1931) was a very active Catholic scholar and politician, and later became an enthusiastic supporter of Fascism. He was professor of Christian archaeology at the University of Rome, member of the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology, and the director of the Christian and Egyptian Museum in the Vatican, as well as of the Lateran Museum. He was awarded several distinctions in recognition of his life-long commitment to Christian archaeology.[23] The speech he gave on one of such occasions, besides the usual pompous language of the time, unequivocally clarifies his stance on Christian archeology:

> "And since the study of Christian antiquities is not only a very noble Italian tradition, but also a powerful support to Christianity, undoubtedly our progress in such studies will contribute to keep alive the Christian sentiment, and thus the union between the Church and Italy, the natural heir of Roman greatness and beacon of civilisation for the entire world, will become stronger than ever".[24]

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[21] See Gosselin 2009, pp. 431-434.

[22] The full title of Fremiotti's book is in fact: *La Riforma cattolica del secolo decimosesto e gli studi di archeologia cristiana. Con lettera di Orazio Marucchi*, Rome 1926.

[23] For Marucchi's biographical references, see above, n. 11.

[24] "E siccome lo studio delle antichita' cristiane non e' solo una nobilissima tradizione italiana, ma anche un potente aiuto per l'apologia del Cristianesimo, e' certo che il progresso di tali studi fra noi contribuera' a rendere sempre piu' vivo il sentimento Cristiano e percio' sempre piu' profonda e indissolubile l'unione tra la Chiesa e l'Italia, erede natural della grandezza romana, maestro di civilta' a tutto il mondo", O. Marucchi, *Le catacombe romane. Opera postuma*, edited by E. Josi, Rome 1933, p. XXXI.

Carlo Cecchelli, a very active member of the Fascist party, replaced Marucchi in the department of Christian antiquities at the University of Rome from 1928 to 1942, and held various appointments during the *Ventennio* including that of the head of the *Fondo per il Culto* in 1938.[25] It is important to remember at this point that the fascist mentality refused as corrupted and degenerate the idea of the accumulation of knowledge for its own sake.[26] Scholarly and intellectual endeavors were only legitimated by a higher political and cultural scope, and needed to be purged of subversive tendencies that could challenge the status quo. For instance, the prominent role that Classical archeology had in fascist propaganda for the elaboration of the myths of *Romanita'* and *Classicita'* is well known.[27] Although the history of Christian archeology in this period is much less investigated, there cannot be any doubt that it played an equally important role in the cultural program of Mussolini.[28] In

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[25] For Cecchelli's biographical references, above n. 12. The *Fondo per il Culto* (later *Fondo edifici di culto* or *FEC*) was the office of the Ministry of Interior responsible for several ecclesiastical buildings alienated to the Italian State after the Unification.

[26] On the notion of knowledge during the Fascist regime, see for instance Marco Tarchi, *Il fascismo. Teorie, interpretazioni, modelli*, Rome-Bari 2003.

[27] On the propaganda use of Classicism and Roman antiquity by the Fascist regime there is a vast literature. Among many, see the still very relevant study by Luciano Canfora: *Ideologie del Classicismo*, Turin 1980. More recently see: A. Giardina and A. Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma. Da Carlo Magno a Mussolini*, Rome-Bari 2000; G. Belardelli, "Il mito fascista della romanita'", in *Il classico nella Roma contemporanea. Miti, modello, memoria*, edited by F. Roscetti, vols. I-II, Rome 2002, vol. II, pp. 325-358; *Archaeology under dictatorship*, edited by M.L. Galaty and C. Watkinson, New York 2004; A. Argenio, "Il mito della Romanita' nel Ventennio fascista", in *Il mondo classico nell'immaginario contemporaneo*, edited by B. Coccia, Rome 2008, pp. 81-177; J. Nelis, "Le mythe de la romanité et la religion politique du fascisme italien: nouvelles approches méthodologiques", in *reception of Antiquity*, edited by J. Nelis, Gent 2011, pp. 349-360. For the tangible realisation of the *Romanita'* throughout the urban landscape of Rome, see E. Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, Bari 2008.

[28] The Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani founded by Carlo Galassi Paluzzi in 1925, for example, devoted much of its work to Christian Rome and Christian archaeology. Its main mission was to integrate Catholic culture and Imperial *Romanita'*, the Eagle and the Cross, and its motto was Dante's line "that Rome whereby Christ is Roman" ("*quella Roma onde Cristo e' Romano*", in *Divina Commedia*, Purgatorio XXXII, 102), obviously misinterpreted. For a discussion of the forced interpretation of Dante by the Istituto, see in particular M. Cagnetta, *Antichisti e impero fascista*, Bari 1979, p. 135, n. 29) On the Istituto di Studi Romani

particular, it sanctioned "the indissoluble union between the Church and Italy, the natural heir of Roman greatness and example of civilization to the whole world", according to Marucchi's own words.[29] It is evident that, given their political and intellectual background, Marucchi and his circle projected their own ideas – as well as lack of historical criticism – onto the origins of Christian archeology.

As for the *Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia*, it was founded in 1925 by Pope Pius XI with the *motu proprio "I primitivi cemeteri"*.[30] The document definitively reaffirmed the control of the Church over the catacombs, from the right to grant permission to access them to the exclusive supervision of all explorations and excavations in the subterranean cemeteries: "for the preservation of the ancient sacred monuments we reconfirm the exclusive right [viz. of the Church] to explore and excavate cemeterial areas both under and above ground, as well as to undertake whichever work that might be related to them, and to publish the results of both excavations and restoration works".[31] Moreover, the decree established that the *Istituto* was to support the already existing *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra* (founded in 1852) and the *Accademia Romana di Archeologia* in encouraging the investigation of the catacombs in particular, and the advancement of Christian archaeology

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and Christian archaeology during Fascism see: M. Cagnetta, *La pace dei vinti: un discorso di G. Gonella su Pace romana e pace cartaginese*, Rome 1997, in particular pp. 12-16; A. Vittoria, "L'Istituto di Studi Romani e il suo fondatore Carlo Galassi Paluzzi dal 1925 al 1944", in *Il classico nella Roma contemporanea* 2002, pp. 507-537; Argenio 2008, in particular pp. 101-107.

[29] "Indissolubile l'unione tra la Chiesa e l'Italia, erede natural della grandezza romana, maestro di civilta' a tutto il mondo", in Marucchi 1933, p. XXI.

[30] *Motu proprio "I primitivi cemeteri"* (December 11th, 1925), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis. Commentarium officiale*, volumen XVII, annus XVII, Romae, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis MDCCCCXXV, pp. 619-633.

[31] "(…) riconfermiamo il diritto esclusivo e collettivo per la conservazione degli antichi sacri monumenti, per la esplorazione ed escavazione dei cemeteri sotterranei e delle aree sepolcrali all'aperto cielo; per la determinazione e direzione assoluta di qualunque lavoro debba o voglia in quelli praticarsi, o che possa avere attinenza con essi, e per la prima pubblicazione dei risultati di scavi o lavori (…)", *Ibid*, p. 622.

in general.[32] The ultimate purpose of the operation was obviously more ideological than scientific, as openly stated in the *motu proprio*:

> "Since it is certainly an excellent thing (...) in such a terrible war brought against our most holy Religion by the weapons of historical criticism, to reignite the flame of Faith, ancient history, and Christian poetry in the people's hearts with the light that shines from the catacombs in Rome and many other Christian regions".[33]

Scholars of the time eagerly embraced the Church's message, in line with Fascist cultural ideals, favoring a dogmatic approach in the conviction that Christian archaeology was not as much an intellectual discipline as it was nourishment for the true faith.[34] Using secondary sources – mostly hagiographic literature on Filippo Neri often penned several years after the events in question – Marucchi, Fremiotti, and Cecchelli shaped an arbitrary image of Christian archaeology that was particularly consonant with their own religious and political convictions.[35] It is to them that we owe the persistent historiographical

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[32] "(...) accanto alla Pontificia Commissione, e piu' antica di essa, fiorisce la Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia tanto benemerita e tanto favorevolmente nota agli studiosi per le sue dotte pubblicazioni, abbiamo deliberato di coordinare le due istituzioni e di aggiungervi un Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, con proprio regolamento da Noi visto e approvato, per indirizzare giovani volenterosi, di ogni paese e nazione, agli studi ed alle ricerche scientifiche sopra i monumenti delle antichita' cristiane. Le tre istituzioni (...) potranno agevolmente completarsi e coadiuvarsi nel fine comune di cosi' alta importanza. (...) E Ci arride l'idea (...) che Roma, continuando la gloriosa tradizione del grande De Rossi, divenga il centro di nuovi e piu' fecondi studi archeologici sacri. Cio' senza dubbio arrechera' notevolissimo vantaggio alla scienza, non meno che alla storia viva della santa Fede nostra". *Ibidem*, p. 623.

[33] "poiche' e' senza dubbio ottima cosa (…) in mezzo a tanta Guerra incessante, che si pretende muovere alla nostra Religione santissima con le armi della critica storica dare esca, per riaccendere nei cuori la fiamma della Fede e della primitive storia e poesia cristiana, con la luce che irradia dai mistici recessi delle Catacombe del suolo romano e di molte altre regioni della Cristianita'". *Ibidem*, pp. 622-623.

[34] As Cecchelli puts it: "L'archeologia cristiana non e' soddisfazione di curiosita' erudita, non e' semplicemente pascolo dell'intelletto, ma e' alimento di Fede", in C. Cecchelli, *La Chiesa delle catacombe*, Rome 1943, p.5.

[35] For an accurate analysis of this process, see Gosselin 2009, in particular pp. 434-445. Particularly interesting is the example discussed by Martine Gosselin in her article of the *gratiarum actio* in the *Annales*. In it, Baronio presents the *Annales* as the product of Filippo Neri's luminous and spiritual mind (*divino perfusa lumine ac prophetico afflata spiritu*) minimizing his own role in the historical work. Baronio goes

misconception of the apologetic commitment of this discipline. However, had Marucchi and his colleagues consulted original sixteenth-century sources – and in particular the first descriptions of the catacombs – they would have not easily found support for their thesis of Christian archaeology as an apologetic discipline. The work of Panvinio, Chacon, Van Winghe, L'Heureux, and even Bosio (despite the posthumous changes made to his *Roma Sotterranea* by Giovanni Severano), reveals to the objective reader that they were in fact only marginally aligned with the ideological concerns of post-Reformation Catholic culture. Sixteenth-century Christian archaeology was not exclusively in the service of the Church except for few cases, for instance Gallonio's *Instrumenti di martirio* (1591) that was indeed a treatise of Catholic propaganda rather than a historical and antiquarian investigation.[36] On the contrary, Christian archaeologists could sometimes find themselves in a difficult position every time textual or material evidence seemed to indicate the continuity between old pagan traditions and Christian cults and rituals, especially since "disguised paganism" was one of the main Protestant accusations.[37]

It was only later, from around 1600 onwards, that Christian archaeology began to betray its initial promises by yielding to the mounting pressure of the Counter-Reformation Church and embracing its dogmatic certainties.[38] But in the second half of the sixteenth

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even further suggesting that the *Annales* were, ultimately, the result of Neri' s almost supernatural spiritual power. As Gosselin points out, the *gratiarum actio* was written after Neri's death in 1595 when his process of canonization had already begun, and it is a piece of hagiographical writing rather than an account of real events.

[36] A. Gallonio, *Trattato degli instrumenti di martirio e delle varie maniere di martoriare usate da' gentili contro christiani descritte e intagliate in rame*, Rome 1591.

[37] For an accurate analysis of one of such cases that involved even Cesare Baronio himself, see Tutino 2014, pp. 75-83. See also Herklotz 2013, pp. 61-66.

[38] Herklotz 2012, p. 66. On the difficult relationshiop between culture and Counter-Reformation Church in the seventeenth century, see for example the volume *Intellettuali e potere*, Annali.4, *Storia d'Italia*, edited by C.

century Chacon and others were still genuinely engaged in the study of Christian antiquity, not necessarily in support of ecclesiastical history, and shared the same ambition to recover the ancient past as their more classically inclined colleagues. To this end they turned to fields of historical enquiry such as topography, numismatics, and epigraphy, traditionally used by classical antiquarians, and borrowed the same methods of Renaissance antiquarianism based on the philological approach to the past.[39] In this regard their work should be understood as part of sixteenth-century antiquarian studies, an offspring of Renaissance humanism, rather than the result of religious impulses and apologetic concerns. But, as I argue, Christian antiquarians went even further promoting a new model of scholarship built upon the programmatic union of literary and non-literary sources, objects and images; a model that could provide a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the past itself.

Investigating the past: a discussion of method

As famously argued by Arnaldo Momigliano, early-modern antiquarianism was concerned with all those aspects of the past such as religious practices and customs of ancient civilizations, as well as their material remains, which were not directly related to

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Vivanti, Turin 1981. More recently, G. Caravale, *L'orazione probita. Censura ecclesiastica e letteratura devozionale nella prima eta' moderna*, Florence 2003 (with bibliography).

[39] On Renaissance antiquarian methods see for instance: P.J. Jacks, *Antiquarianism and Archaeological Method in Renaissance Rome*, Chicago 1984; Herklotz 1999, and in particular pp. 291-30; Herklotz 2012, pp. 57-78. See also: P.N. Miller, "Major Trends in European Antiquarianism, Petrarch to Peiresc", in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing. 1400-1800*, edited by J. Rabasa *et alii*, 3, Oxford 2012, pp. 244-260.

the *histoire événementielle*.[40] Unlike historical studies, antiquarianism privileged a systematic instead of chronological arrangement of the material, on the model of Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum et humanarum*.[41] Momigliano also argued that the "Age of the Antiquaries"[42] experienced a "revolution in historical method" raising the fundamental question of original and derivative authorities, and their historical reliability.[43] The modern historical method is in fact based upon the use of original authorities – documents or physical remains of the past – as opposed to derivative authorities – historical pieces or chronicles compiled after the events – too often biased by the author's interpretation. Momigliano claimed that the distinction between original and non-original historical sources became a necessary presupposition of historical research only in the late

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[40] A. Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* vol. 13, n.3/4 (1950), pp. 285-315. For a critical appraisal of Momigliano's essay, see: I. Herklotz, "Arnaldo Momigliano's 'Ancient History and the Antiquarian'; A Critical Review", in *Momigliano and Antiquarianism. Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences*, edited by P. N. Miller, Toronto 2007, pp. 127-153 [Herklotz 2007a] See also W. Gaston, "Merely Antiquarian: Pirro Ligorio and the Critical Tradition of Antiquarian Scholarship", in *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century*, edited by A.J. Grieco *et alii*, Villa i Tatti series 19, Florence 2002, pp. 355-373.

[41] Marcus Terentius Varro (116 BC – 27 BC), *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum libri XLI*. On Varro see: Y. Lehmann, *Varron théologien and philosophe*, Brussel 1997. On Varro's antiquarian work see E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, London 1985, in particular pp. 236-246. See also: *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Varroniani*, Proceedings of the Congresso Internazionale

di Studi Varroniani (September 1974), Centro di Studi Varroniani, Rieti 1976, a collection of forty-four articles that cover the full spectrum of Varro's activity.

[42] "Antiquary" was the term commonly used in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English to describe a person interested in historical documents and ancient remains, while "antiquarian" was used as an adjective. It was only from the mid-eighteenth century onwards that "antiquarian" became increasingly used as a noun, and today they are both used (see *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'antiquary' and 'antiquarian').

[43] Momigliano 1950, p. 286.

seventeenth century, when historical Pyrrhonism[44] started a spirited debate about the reliability of primary sources in particular, and the possibility of understanding events of the past in general.[45] According to Momigliano, eighteenth-century antiquarians were well aware of the importance of material objects as original sources being accustomed to working with non-literary evidence, and it was in fact in the eighteenth century that a systematic use of material objects in the investigation of the past was developed, paving the way to modern historical scholarship.[46] In Momigliano's opinion, however, once the historians themselves learned how to use material evidence to verify literary sources combining "philosophic" history with antiquarian erudition, the distinctive mentality and method of antiquarianism began to slowly fade away: "The more the 'learned' historian accepted the antiquarian's method of checking literary by non-literary evidence, the less the antiquarians could claim numismatics, diplomatics, and epigraphy as their own subjects (...) The combination of philosophic history with the antiquarian's method of research became the aim which many of the best historians in the nineteenth century proposed to themselves. It means (...) the avoidance of the antiquarian mentality".[47] Finally, the professionalization

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[44] On historical Pyrrhonism see: V.I. Comparato, "La Mothe Le Vayer dalla critica storica al pirronismo", in *Ricerche su letteratura libertina e letteratura clandestina nel Seicento,* edited by T. Gregory *et alii*, Florence 1981, pp. 259-279; C. Borghero, *La certezza e la storia. Cartesianesimo, pirronismo e conoscenza storica*, Milan 1983; C. Ginzburg, *Il filo e le tracce: vero, falso, finto*, Milan 2006, chapter 4 "Parigi 1647: un dialogo sulla finzione e sulla storia", pp. 78-93 (English ed., *Threads and Traces. True, False, Fictive*, engl. translation. by A.C. Tedeschi and J. Tedeschi, Berkley 2012)

[45] Momigliano 1950, pp. 295-307.

[46] *Ibidem*.

[47] *Ibidem*, p. 311. See also pp. 311-313.

of disciplines such as archeology or anthropology with partially coincident subjects led to the increased marginalization of antiquarian studies in the nineteenth century.[48]

Although being unquestionably a milestone in the comprehension of early-modern antiquarianism, Momigliano's survey is not without flaw, especially since he overlooked several aspects of antiquarianism that were only explored in more recent years.[49] For instance, as Peter Miller points out, Momigliano considered antiquarianism exclusively in its relation to history, and in particular as an antidote to seventeenth-century Pyrrhonist skepticism about the knowability of the past.[50] It was the antiquarian's patient and meticulous work on material sources that, Momigliano claimed, restored faith in ancient documents as reliable evidence from the past.[51] However, he did not pay much attention to the development and implications of the *antiquaria* as an autonomous discipline (Miller 2012), nor did he investigate the role of antiquarian studies in the development of modern archaeology (Schnapp 1997) or cultural sciences (Miller 2007).[52] Moreover, the interest in ancient material culture as well as the programmatic use of non-literary evidence that,

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[48] *Ibidem*, p. 311. On this see also P. Burke, "From Antiquarianism to Anthropology", in *Momigliano and Antiquarianism…* 2007, pp. 229-247.

[49] See for instance: Jacks 1984; A. Schnapp, *The Discovery of the Past*, New York 1997. For more recent contributions see: A. Schnapp, "Between Antiquarianism and Archaeologists – Continuities and Ruptures", in *Antiquity* 76, 291, 2002, pp. 136-137; Peter N. Miller, "Introduction: Momigliano, Antiquarianism, and the Cultural Sciences", in *Momigliano and Antiquarianism…* 2007, pp. 3-65; Miller 2012; H.R. Meier, "The Medieval and early modern World and the Material Past", in *World Antiquarianism. Comparative Perspectives*, edited by A. Schnapp *et alii*, Los Angeles Getty Institute Research 2013, pp. 249-272; W. Stenhouse, "The Renaissance Foundation of European Antiquarianism", in *World Antiquarianism* 2013, pp. 295-316.

[50] See Miller 2007. But see also G. Ceserani, "Antiquarian Transformations in eighteenth-century Europe", in *World Antiquarianism…* 2013, pp. 317-342.

[51] *Ibidem*., p. 318.

[52] See above, n. 49.

according to Momigliano, played such a fundamental role in the elaboration of a modern historiographical methodology was by no means unique to eighteenth-century antiquarianism. It originated well before, in the mid-sixteenth century, within the circle of scholars flowering in the protective shelter of the powerful Cardinal Alessandro Farnese: Fulvio Orsini, Paolo Giovio, Onofrio Panvinio, Girolamo Mercuriale, Pirro Ligorio, Pedro Chacón, and his unrelated namesake Alfonso Chacón.[53] It is with them that a new "visual turn" took place, significantly changing the traditional approach to the past and introducing a new historical method.[54]

Since Petrarch's days, antiquarian culture in Italy had always been attentive to material culture, and given the volume of ancient remains in Rome – and elsewhere in Italy – this attitude was perhaps inescapable. Petrarch, for instance, recognized that the physical remains of the glorious past of Rome had the power to stimulate the fantasy of the viewer, especially when seen across a landscape as broken fragments of the once much greater ancient city.[55] Emphasizing the evocative power of what we may define as an "archaeological landscape", Petrarch was suggesting a new way of thinking about the past in terms of space and topography even though he continued to privilege literary over

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[53] On Cardinal Alessandro and his circle of scholars see for instance: C. Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale. Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts*, Yale University Press 1992.

[54] Miller 2012, pp. 256-259; Herklotz 1999, pp. 225-232. On the visual turn in early modern antiquarian culture, see also F. Haskell, *History and its Images*, *Art and the interpretation of the past*, New Haven, 1993.

[55] During his first visit to Rome in 1337, Petrarch admired the ancient ruins in the company of the Dominican Giovanni Colonna, as he himself recalls in the letter addressed to Colonna a few weeks after his stay in Rome (*Rerum Familiarum Libri*, VI.2) In the letter Petrarch describes the great emotion he felt wandering through Roman ruins of Rome, as if ancient history were once again happening before him. F. *Letters on Familiar Matters (Rerum familiarum libri)*, vol. I, Book I-VIII, transl. by A.S. Bernardo, New York 1975, VI.2. For an in-depth discussion of this letter see for instance L. Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archeology and Aesthetics in the Making of the Renaissance*, New Haven 1999, pp. 24-26.

material evidence.[56] Like many others before and after him, he found it easier to work with written documents and manuscripts rather than artifacts, and believed that the scattered physical remains of antiquity could not compete with the greater completeness of the surviving literary works.[57] In the fifteenth century, the century credited with the beginning of antiquarianism, the general attitude towards the remains of Antiquity did not dramatically change from Petrarch's days. What changed was, rather, the degree to which fifteenth-century scholars such as Cyriac of Ancona, Poggio Bracciolini and Flavio Biondo – traditionally regarded as the actual founders of antiquarianism [58] – were acquainted with ancient material culture, and aware of the importance of direct contact with the physical remains of the past.[59] Cyriac of Ancona, an erudite merchant and indefatigable traveler, transcribed and collected ancient inscriptions while also amassing a number of accurate architectural drawings, becoming *de facto* one of the fathers of modern classical archeology and epigraphy.[60]

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[56] On Petrarch antiquarian and his approach to material and literary evidence, see: R. Weiss, "Petrarch the Antiquarian", in *Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Studies in Honor of Berthold Louis Ullman*, edited by C. Henderson Jr., Vols. I-II, Rome 1964, vol. II, pp. 199-209; A. Mazzocco, "The Antiquarianism of Francesco Petrarca", in *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 7 (1977), pp. 203-224; "Petrarca, Poggio, and Biondo: Humanism's Foremost Interpreters of Roman Ruins" in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later. A* Symposium, edited by A. Scalgione, Chapel Hill 1977, pp. 353-363. See also Miller 2012, pp. 247-249 (with bibliography).

[57] See for instance Miller 2012, p. 247.

[58] For biographical information on Cyriac of Ancona, Poggio Bracciolini and Flavio Biondo see respectively: *Cyriacus Anconitanus. Life and Early Travels*, edited by C. Mitchell *et alii*, vol. 65, I Tatti Renaisance Library, Cambridge (Mass.) 2015; F. Forner in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 84, 2015, *ad vocem*; E. Bigi in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 13, 1971; R. Fubini, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 10, 1968, *ad vocem*.

[59] Miller 2012, pp. 249-254

[60] "Cyriac of Ancona was the most enterprising and prolific recorder of Greek and Roman antiquities, particularly inscriptions, in the fifteenth century, and the general accuracy of his records entitles him to be called the founding father of modern classical archeology", in *Cyriacus Anconitanus. Later Travels*, edited by

While Cyriac's fascination with the decaying fragments of the past inspired the merchant turned humanist to record their ephemeral appearance, both Bracciolini in his Book I of *De Varietate Fortunae* on Roman inscriptions (1448)[61] and Biondo in his *Roma Instaurata* (1444-1448)[62] adopted the Petrarchan convention of physical movement through the scattered fragments of Antiquity, or "archaeological walk".[63] If, however, Bracciolini closely followed Petrarch in choosing the "spatialization of Antiquity" as a model for its reconstruction[64], Biondo went a bit further. He transformed Petrarch's melancholy and imaginative appreciation of ruins evocative of a bygone past into a more scientific and formalized approach to the past necessary to delineate the complete topographic account of the ancient city drawn from both literary and monumental sources found in his *Roma*

E.W. Bodnar and C. Foss, vol. 10, I Tatti Renaisance Library, Harvard University Press 2003, p. IX. Cyriac's antiquarian work and litery *corpus* is, unfortunately, almost completely lost except for a few excerpts printed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The very precious *Antiquarium rerum commentaria*, a monumental work that collected the results of Cyriac antiquarian research along with the descriptions of his travels and many of his letters, has since disappeared and until recent times it was thought to have perished in the 1514 fire that destroyed the Sforza Library in Pesaro (in R. Sabbadini, "Ciriaco d'Ancona e la sua descrizione autografa del Peloponneso trasmessa da Leonardo Botta", in *Miscellanea Ceriani*, Milan 1910, pp. 180-247). Today, however, scholars tend to believe that at least a copy of it survived the fire, and probably still lies hidden amidst other Cinquecento manuscripts in some library. See R. Cappelletto, "Ciriaco d'Ancona nel ricordo di Pietro Ranzano", in *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Ancona 6-9 febbraio 1992, edited by G. Paci and S. Sconocchia, Reggio Emilia 1998, pp. 71-80. On Cyriac's antiquarian work see, among others, *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo. Atti del Convegno di Studi, Ancona 6-9 febbraio* 1992, edited by G. Paci and S. Sconocchia, Reggio Emilia 1998.

[61] P. Bracciolini, *De varietate fortunae. Livre I: Les ruines de Rome*, transl. by J.Y Boriaud, edited by J.Y Boriaud and P. Coarelli, Paris 1999.

[62] F. Biondo, *Roma instaurata. Rome restaurée*, I, transl. and edited by A. Raffarin-Dupuis, Paris 2005; F. Biondo, *Roma instaurata. Rome restaurée*, II, transl. and edited by A. Raffarin-Dupuis, Paris 2012.

[63] Miller 2012, p. 249. See also Roberto Weiss, *The Renaissance discovery of classical antiquity*, Oxford 1969, pp. 56-83.

[64] Miller 2012, p. 248.

Instaurata.[65] Walking through the sites became in fact in Biondo's hands an effective way to collect visual information that was then used alongside literary sources to write about Roman monuments, institutions, and even daily life.[66] Nevertheless Biondo, just like Petrarch before him, was deeply impressed by the magnificent ruins and what they represented: the remains of a great and unparalleled civilization whose appalling destruction needed to be investigated and historically explained. The fall of Rome is in fact the subject of his *De Roma Triumphante* (1457-1459), where Biondo attempts to understand the reason of Rome's decline and fall by examining and comparing the economic and monetary structures, civil law, as well as the political, military, and religious systems of the Republic and the Empire praising in particular Rome's ability to create political and social stability.[67] With his work Biondo confronted the traditional question of whether the decline of Rome had begun with Caesar, Octavian and the advent of the Empire – and thus the loss of republican freedom – or, on the contrary, if the empire was in fact the pinnacle of Roman greatness and power.[68] Biondo attributes the decline of Rome to a moral crisis that led to the collapse of the Roman Empire, and concludes with the

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[65] *Ibidem*, p. 250.

[66] But see also N. Pellegrino, "From the Roman Empire to Christian Imperialism: the Work of Flavio Biondo", in *Chronicling History: Chroniclers and Historians in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, edited by S. Dale *et alii*, Philadelphia 2007, pp. 273-89, and in particular pp. 280-285.

[67] Pellegrino 2007.

[68] The idea that the Empire represented the height of Roman power had prevailed in the Middle Ages. For medieval thinkers the Roman Empire was in fact a historical necessity, so that the Christian religion could spread and prevail, and it was a creation of Divine Providence. As such it was the most perfect political organization, and imperial authority – divinely sanctioned – had been passed down from Roman to German emperors (*translatio imperii*). It was in the fourteenth century, when many Italian communes were struggling to maintain their independence, that Roman history came to be seen in a different light and the loss of Republican freedom came to signify the end of Rome itself. In the fifteenth century some humanists and politicians even suggested that the true heir of Rome's glory was certainly not the Holy Roman Empire but rather Republican Florence. Pellegrino 2007, pp. 285-287.

exhortation to Christian Rome to vindicate the legacy of pagan Rome, reaffirming its primacy and becoming, once again, *caput mundi*.[69] Both in the *Roma Instaurata* and *Roma Triumphante* (1457-1459) – which together form a sort of preface to Biondo's most ambitious work, the *Historiarum ab inclinatione romani imperii decades*[70] – Biondo used an analogous conceptual model of topographical arrangement, although transformed into what I would call a "thematic topography", where the geographical map of the ancient city was replaced with a map of public, private, religious and military topics.

In their work, Bracciolini, Biondo and Ciriaco all maintained – albeit to various degrees – the same approach to antiquity: a careful and extensive reading of ancient texts combined with some knowledge of material culture that could offer the best possible picture of the ancient *mores et instituta*. But it was a picture that, for all the attention paid to the material reality of antiquity, was still inevitably extrapolated from literary sources.[71] As Francis Haskell puts it: "as far as the study of the past was concerned, the triumph of humanism implied the triumph of the word".[72] It was only with the antiquarians in the Farnese circle that non-literary evidence such as objects and images emerged as key

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[69] *Ibidem*, pp. 283-284.

[70] F. Biondo, *Historiarum ab inclinatione romani imperii decades* (1439-1453, published in 1483). The *Decades* span from the Sack of Alaric in 412 to Biondo's own time, 1441. In reality, the Goths of Alaric entered Rome in 410, but Biondo choose the year 412 most likely as a form of "chronological symmetry" with the end of his historical survey, meant to be concluded in 1412 (the date of Filippo Maria Visconti's accession to the principate), Pellegrino 2007, p. 285, n. 36.

[71] Miller 2012, pp. 254-256.

[72] Haskell 1993, p. 14.

documents in themselves rather than ancillary additions to the texts.[73] For the first time

artifacts were felt to provide a more immediate understanding of antiquity than written

evidence. Objects were used to make sense of texts and texts to make sense of objects, in a

sort of meticulous "philology of things" meant to overcome the inevitable limitations of the

literary tradition.[74] Objects and visual imagery could in fact illuminate those classic topics

of antiquarian research such as rites and customs too often neglected by ancient authors. In

1529, for instance, Francesco Guicciardini laments that ancient authors often ignored those

aspects of daily life that were considered banal and not worthy of attention: "it seems to me

that all historians have been wrong in this, that they have neglected to write about many

things that were familiar to them, assuming that they will always be familiar".[75] More than

half a century later, Ulisse Aldrovandi faced a similar problem when reading the work of

classical zoologists and botanists, although in his case it was the scarcity of visual

descriptions (illustrations) that proved particularly frustrating for the Bolognese naturalist:

"had the ancient commissioned drawings to illustrate all the things they have described,

there would not be so many mistakes and doubts among the writers (...). Had they drawn

the plants and animals they described, today there would be no such difficulty in

recognizing them".[76]

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[73] See above, p. 25 and p. 25, n. 53. On the Farnese circle see also, among others, Herklotz 1999; 2007a; 2012; C. Occhipinti, *Pirro Ligorio e la storia cristiana di Roma da Costantino all'Umanesimo*, Pisa, 2007; Miller 2012.

[74] See Herklotz 2007a, pp. 136-141.

[75] "Parmi che tutti gli storici abbino (...) errato in questo: che hanno lasciato di scrivere molte cose che a tempo loro erano note, presupponendole come note", in F. Guicciardini, *Ricordi Diari Memorie,* Pordenone 1981, n. 143, p. 214.

[76] "Se gli antichi havessero fatto ritrare e dipingere tutte le cose, che hanno descritte, non si troverebbero tanti errori e dubbi infiniti appresso i scrittori ... e Dio volesse che gli antichi Principi et Monarchi come fu

The antiquaries of the Farnese circle were exploring exactly such union of textual and visual material meant to facilitate the understanding and reconstruction of the ancient world, and began to programmatically combine archeological material – objects, statutes, reliefs, paintings – and ancient authors in their investigation of the past.[77] By then, scholars were increasingly accepting the idea that non-literary evidence (either images or objects) could shed light upon literary sources and clarify them. The new methodological importance of the material and visual element in antiquarian studies appears further emphasized by the use of the *illustratione* in many works of the Farnese antiquarians. Here, the combination of text and image was meant to illuminate the words of ancient authors and help the reader in the understanding of the topic in question.[78] In the following century, the Roman patron and collector Cassiano dal Pozzo perfected the use of words and images combined together as the most effective tool to investigate both the ancient and the natural world in his ambitious project of the *Museo Cartaceo*, a visual encyclopedia embracing various aspects of human knowledge, from natural history to archeology and architecture.[79]

Alessandro Magno, et tanti altri scrittori, come Aristotele, Teofrasto et Cratina, tanto amico del nostro divino Hippocrate, havessero fatto dipingere le piante et animali, che da loro descritte furono, che certo non ci sara' hoggi tanta difficolta' in conoscerli", Ulisse Aldrovandi, *Avvertimenti del dottore Aldrovandi all'Ill.mo e R.mo Cardinal Paleotti sopra alcuni capitoli della Pittura* 1581, in P. Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento fra manierismo e* controriforma, vol. 2, p. 513. See also Herklotz 2007a, p. 138.

[77] For bibliographical reference, see above, n. 73.

[78] See I.R. Vermeulen, *Picturing Art History: the rise of the illustrated history of art in the eighteenth century*, Amsterdam 2010.

[79] Cassiano's *Museo Cartaceo* was the first and most ambitious attempt to embrace all human knowledge in visual form, from the remains of the ancient world to all kind of *naturalia*, animals, plants and minerals. The revolutionary result was the first visual encyclopedia formed of a staggering 7000 drawings and prints. See among others: *The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo. A catalogue raisonné; drawings and prints in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, the British Museum, the Institute de France and other collections*, The Royal Collection Trust London, 1996 (see in particular *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities. The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo*. Series A: Antiquities and Architecture, 2. Edited by J. Osborne and A. Claridge, London 1996-1998). See also Herklotz 1999.

Cassiano's brother Carlo Antonio described the collection of drawings and prints as "a general and interesting collection to illustrate [*per illustratione*] ancient poets and writers", adding also that "(the drawings) can help understand better many good authors".[80] It was a profound methodological revolution, and while the questions that antiquarians were seeking to answer might have basically remained the same as those of Petrarch and Biondo, it was the methodological approach to such questions that had by then shifted. Material evidence moved to the forefront, and for the first time scholars acknowledged the fundamental importance of images and objects when literary sources were inadequate, fragmentary, or simply too obscure for a modern reader.[81] The ability to decipher the language of the physical remains of the past became the true key for the understanding of the past itself. A particularly poignant consecration of the validity of this method of combining literary and non-literary sources can be found much later, and from a rather unexpected source given the author's critical attitude towards antiquarian studies. In 1767, in fact, Johann Joachim Winckelmann wrote that "with the observation of many numerous ancient monuments, I could slowly correct and illustrate a great number of passages from ancient writers, and even much better, as I hope to demonstrate beyond doubt, than what I could have done with the help of whatever manuscript".[82]

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[80] "[*Questi disegni*] Possono essere d'aiuto all'intelligenza e chiarezza di diversi buoni autori", Carlo Antonio dal Pozzo, "*Raccolta assai generale e curiousa per illustratione di poeti e prosatori antichi*", quoted in Herklotz 1999, p. 265.

[81] On this fundamental shift in antiquarian methodology see for instance: Herklotz 1999 and 2007a; Occhipinti 2007, *Introduzione* pp. XI-CVI

[82] "(...) con l'osservazione di molte e molte opere antiche ho veduto spianarmi a mano a mano e correggere ed illustrare un gran numero di passi degli antichi scrittori, e molto meglio, come spero di dimostrare fino all'evidenza, di quel che siasi potuto fare con l'aiuto de' codici manoscritti", J.J. Winckelmann, *Monumenti antichi inediti spiegati ed illustrati da Giovanni Winckelmann prefetto delle antichita' di Roma*, Rome 1767,

It was with Pirro Ligorio (1514-1583), a practicing architect and painter as well as an eclectic antiquarian and prolific writer, that the plea for non-literary material became particularly strong.[83] Never before him had the combination of visual and textual material been used in such a programmatic way. Ligorio adopted in his work the method of classical and humanistic lexicography in which *res* and *verba* were compared in order to understand the exact semantic meaning and use of a specific term or grammatical form.[84] In Ligorio's approach to antiquity, fragments and ruins with their vicissitudes and transformations became the only looking glass through which it was possible to reconstruct the past, as fragmentary and lacunar as such reconstruction might be. He maintained a critical position towards the well established antiquarian tradition that – from Petrarch to Flavio Biondo to many others such as Pomponio Leto or Andrea Fulvio – had made use of predominantly written sources,[85] claiming that such a textual approach to the past had produced several unfortunate mistakes in the comprehension of the ancient world and its artistic and material culture: "how much ignorance is found in those writers of ancient matters who have written without having any direct knowledge of ancient architecture, which instead is here as

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vol. I., pp. XV-XVI. The literature on Winckelmann is very vast; see for instance: K. Harloe, *Winckelmann and the invention of Antiquity in the Age of Altertumswissenschaft*, Oxford 2013; E. Pommier, *Winckelmann: inventeur de l'histoire de l'art,* Paris 2003.

[83] On Pirro Ligorio and his antiquarian work see: *Pirro Ligorio: Artist and Antiquarian*, edited by R. Gaston, Villa I Tatti, 10, Milan 1988; Occhipinti 2007 (with recent bibliography); G. Vagenheim, "La collaboration de Benedetto Egio aux *Antichita' romane* de Pirro Ligorio: à propos des inscriptions grecques", in *Testi, immagini e filologia nel XVI secolo*, edited by E. Carrara and S. Ginzburg, Pisa 2007, pp. 205-224; S. Tomasi Velli, "Pirro Ligorio tra ricostruzione antiquaria e invenzione: i circhi e le naumachie di Roma", in *Testi, immagini e filologia* 2007, pp. 225-246; C. Occhipinti, "L'iconografia del Buon Pastore secondo Pirro Ligorio: primi studi sulle catacombe romane", in *Testi, immagini e filologia* 2007, pp. 247-277. See also: Gaston 2002 (with an excellent bibliography)

[84] Occhipinti 2007, p. LXVIII-LXXII. On linguistics and antiquarianism see also Herklotz 2007a, p. 135.

[85] See Occhipinti, p. LXXII.

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important as the knowledge of ancient authors".[86] Ligorio was always vehemently critical

towards the "blind" antiquaries of his days who, while making a gesture towards material

sources, privileged in fact written evidence ultimately drawing their understanding of

antiquity from books alone.[87] Ligorio's attention to non-literary sources, however, was by

no means just a matter of philosophical convictions and historical Pyrrhonism *ante litteram*.

It was also, at least in part, the logical consequence of his limited literary erudition. His

scant knowledge of Latin and Greek, in fact, forced Ligorio to rely on objects and images

more than textual sources for his study of antiquity, unless he could count on the help of his

many erudite friends. In this regard Ligorio represented indeed the perfect opposite of

Petrarch, with his solid faith in the written word dictated by his profound literary

knowledge as opposed to a rather scarce familiarity with material remains.[88]

Having amassed over the course of several years an impressive amount of technical,

topographical, historical, and archeological information on ancient Rome, Ligorio decided

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[86] "Deh, quanta ignoranzia e' stata ancora di quelli scrittori dell'antiquita' che hanno voluto scrivere essendo senza cognizione alcuna di architettura, la quale arte puo' in questo tanto quanto possono le lettere. Pertanto loro non conoscendo un tempio da una basilica (...) hanno preso infiniti granchi, e non conoscendo gli ordini dell'architettura ne' delli membri sui, saputi li propri nomi, han scritto molte inezie (...)". P. Ligorio, *Il primo libro delle antiquita' di Pirro Ligorio napolitano, nel quale paradossamente confuta la commune oppenione sopra varii e diversi luoghi della citta' di Roma e fuori di essa. All'illustrissimo e reverendissimo signor Hippolito secondo cardinale d'Heste*, Ms. It. 1129 p. 32, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. (Quoted in Occhipinti 2007, p. LXXII).

[87] "Ben dice quel proverbio che l'uomo solitario o e' un Dio o e' una bestia, proverbio usato contro di coloro per cui si trovo' quella favola di quel'animal cieco che piglio' per guida la sua coda (...) Voglio dir per questo che oggidi' di questi tali ne veggiamo alcuni e tra essi il piu' ostinato e 'l piu' cieco di tutti gli altri che cadono con lui, il Marliale [Bartolomeo Marliani] il quale avendo gia' scritte tante bugie e tre volte scrivendo e stampando l'oppenioni falsi dell'antiquita' non e' ancor sazio (...)". P. Ligorio, *Libro XXXIV delle antichita' di Roma di Pyrrho Ligorio napolitano nel quale si tratta delle inscrizioni di statue, tanto di dei come de eroi, et altri uomini illustri con latre cose diverse secondo l'occasione de le dedicazioni fatte da diversi condizioni d'uomini*, Ms. XIII B7 c. 63v, Biblioteca Nazionale, Napoli. (Quoted in Occhipinti 2007, p. LXXV).

[88] Miller 2012, p. 247

to organize it in a coherent form with the intention to send everything to press.[89] A necessary step for the publication of the material was to supplement the antiquarian information that he had collected over the years through the direct observation of the physical remains of the past with information inferred from ancient authors, so that they could substantiate and verify each other. In putting together his impressive amount of visual, archaeological, and technical knowledge of the ancient world with the scholarly and literary knowledge of the humanists, Ligorio was exploiting the new antiquarian method – of which he was definitely an enthusiastic spokesman – based on the programmatic use of archeological material and written evidence combined together. Never before had texts and objects, literary and material documents, been brought together in this way in the investigation of the ancient world. Ligorio's final ambitious project was a fifty-volume encyclopedia embracing all Roman *antiquitates*. Here, perhaps for the first time, material culture was to play the most important role in the understanding of the ancient past, while literary sources were placed in an ancillary position.[90] Despite the fact that such grandiose *opus* was neither completed nor published – and despite the difficult arrangement of the immense material organized in a "thematic topography" similar to Biondo's *Roma*

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[89] On the complex redactional history of Ligorio's *Antichita' romane*, see Occhipinti 2007, pp. LXI-LXVII. See also Gaston 2002.

[90] The numerous manuscripts of the *Antichita' romane* have always represented an enigmatic problem for scholars, due to their hybrid nature and complex redactional history. Ligorio's first attempt to systematically organize the vast antiquarian material in his hands resulted in six books that are today preserved, although rather fragmentary, in the Bodleian Library in Oxford (Cod. Canon. Ital. 138). Seven books containing a second and more advanced elaboration of the material, completed with several citations of literary sources, are in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Most likely this version of the *Antichita' Romane* should be dated after 1553. The most important and most complete variant of Ligorio's *opus*, however, is found in the 10 books preserved in Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, and datable from the late 1540s to 1566. Finally, the manuscripts preserved in the Archivio di Stato in Turin were made during Ligorio's stay in Ferrara where (post 1568-1583). The important innovation of these manuscripts is the choice of an alphabetical rather than thematic organization of the immensely vast material.

Triumphante – Ligorio's model of antiquarian scholarship had a great impact on his contemporaries, and encouraged the use of material sources in addition to written documents. It inspired, for instance, Onofrio Panvinio's *Antiquitatum romanarum libri centum*, a monumental encyclopedia illustrating the public and private life of ancient Rome along with its institutions, unfortunately never brought to completion.[91]

Onofrio Panvinio, (1530-1568) an Augustinian friar from Verona, arrived in Rome at the age of nineteenth and became part of the erudite *famiglia* of Cardinal Farnese.[92] An indefatigable scholar and prolific writer, Panvinio became one of the leading antiquarians of the century despite his premature death in 1568.[93] Panvinio was above all a great compiler, which explains how by the time of his death he had published over 3,000 pages, although he unfortunately left unfinished his most ambitious project on Roman antiquities (the *Antiquitatum romanarum*) and *the* monumental *Historia ecclesiastica* dedicated to Philip II of Spain.[94] Panvinio was fundamentally interested in gathering information about the ancient world rather than suggesting new interpretations and original ideas: his

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[91] The monumental project was in fact left unfinished following Panvinio's untimely death. The vast material collected by Panvinio for his antiquarian encyclopedia – which was to be dedicated to the Emperor Maximilian II – is preserved in the Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome (Vat. Lat. 6783)

[92] For Panvinio's biography see S. Bauer, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 81, 2014, *ad vocem*. On Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and his circle see Robertson 1992.

[93] The most complete survey of Panvinio's work is J.L. Ferrary, *Onofrio Panvinio et les Antiquités Romaines,* École Française de Rome 1996. But see also Herklotz 1999, pp. 219-226; E. Lurin, "Les restitutions de scènes antiques: Onofrio Panvinio iconographe et inventeur d'images", in *Programme et invention dans l'art de la Renaissance*, edited by M. Hochmann *et alii*, Academie de France à Rome, Rome 2008, pp. 153-173; W. Stenhouse, "Panvinio and *Descriptio*: Renditions of History and Antiquity in Late Renaissance", in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 80 (2012), pp. 233-256. What follows in this paragraph regarding Panvinio, in particular the analysis of his *De triumpho commentaries*, is deeply indebted to Stenhouse excellent article.

[94] Stenhouse 2012, p. 240. Panvinio also left other unfinished projects, for instance a treatise on fifty ancient and medieval historians from Polybe to the twelfth-century Byzantine historian John Zonaras (see Ferary 1996.

aim was to document as thoroughly as possible specific aspects of the ancient life even at

the expenses of explaining and contextualizing them.[95] For instance, his *Reipublicae*

Romanae Commentariorum Libri Tres – a chronological description of Roman institutions

published in 1558 – is burdened by an erudite documentation that goes well beyond the

specific topic on which it is supposed to shed light. In this regard, Panvinio conforms quite

well to the image of the dry and unfocused early-modern antiquarian, someone who collects

"all the items that are connected with a certain subject, whether they help to solve a

problem or not"[96], derided by some modern scholars.[97] At first sight Panvinio's work seems

to fit well into the traditional antiquarian paradigm of a fervent accumulation of notions

substantially drawn from textual sources, despite a certain interest in material evidence.

From the early 1560s, however, Panvinio began to show a new interest in the visual and

material element, as well as an increasing awareness of the documentary power of objects

and images along the line of Ligorio's scholarship. In his 1568 *XXVII Pontificum*

Maximorum elogia et imagines accuratissime et ad uiuum aeneis typis delineatae[98], not

only did Panvinio appear aware of the delight that images might provide to the viewer but

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[95] Stenhouse 2012, p. 239.

[96] Momigliano 1950, p. 286.

[97] Momigliano, of course, but also Ginzburg: "The historian, like the lawyer, was expected to make a convincing argument by communicating the illusion of reality, not by exhibiting proofs collected either by himself or by others. Collecting proofs was, until the mid-eighteenth century, an activity practiced by antiquarians and erudites, not by historians". C. Ginzburg, "Checking the Evidence: the Judge and the Historian", in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18. N. 1, (Autumn 1991), pp. 79-92, p. 80.

[98] *XXVII Pontificum Maximorum elogia et imagines accuratissime et ad uiuum aeneis typis delineatae* (Rome 1568) was a collection of papal protraits and short biographies conceived as a complementary addition to Panvinio' major works of ecclesiastical history, two revised editions of Bartolomeo Platina's *Historia de vitis pontificum* (Venice 1562 and Cologne 1568), and the (unfortunately) unfinished *Ecclesiastica Historia* (the manuscript is in Madrid, Real Biblioteca del Escorial, Mss. f.l. 16) On Panvinio's *XXVII Pont. Max. Elogia et Imagines* see M. Pelc, *Illustrium Imagines: das Porträbuch der Renaissance*, Leiden 2002. See also Lurin 2008.

he also acknowledged the unique power of the images to record objects and facts and to preserve their memory for posterity.[99] By the mid-1560s Panvinio had become well aware not only of the importance of visual evidence for the study of the past, but also of their role in facilitating the understanding of the past itself: in his *De ludis circensibus* published posthumously in 1600, for instance, he explained the presence of illustrations as a means to facilitate the reader's understanding of the appearance of ancient circuses: "in order to facilitate the understanding of these things (...) I have added to these two plates a plan and a reconstruction of the Circus, as well as some ruins as they are now recognizable".[100]

Several circumstances appear to account for such an important shift in Panvinio's scholarship: first of all, sometime in the mid-1550s Panvinio had entered the Farnese circle, rapidly becoming one of the protagonists of the close-knit group of historians and antiquarians surrounding the *gran cardinal* Alessandro Farnese. As a result, he certainly became involved in the ongoing discussions about the use of non-literary sources for a better understanding of the past, discussions that most likely focused his attention on the new importance of the material and visual element. Moreover, from 1562 onwards Panvinio was involved, along with Annibal Caro and Fulvio Orsini, in the elaboration of the iconographic program of Villa Farnese in Caprarola, a circumstance that obviously further stimulated his interest in the images. But above all, it is important to remember here that also Pirro Ligorio was himself a member of the Farnese circle, although not an actual

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[99] "Quod a natura, quae nihil perpetuum esse patitur, nobis negatum, pictura praestat", in Panvinio, *XXVII Pont. Max. elogia et imagines*. Quoted in Lurin 2008, p. 158.

[100] "Haec ut facilius intelligantus, & morem meum sequar in satisfaciendo avidis antiquitatum studiosis Romanarum rerum, duabus tabellis huius Circi topographiam, delineationem, & post ruinam quomodo nunc cernitur adiunxi". O. Panvinio, *De ludis circensibus libri II. De triumphis liber unus, quibus universa fere Romanorum veterum sacra ritusque declarantur*, Venice 1600, pp. 55-56.

courtier. For instance, Girolamo Mercuriale – personal physician of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and illustrious member of his circle – commissioned from Ligorio several engravings to illustrate his medical treatise on ancient exercises, *De Arte Gymnastica* (1573). [101] With his impressive knowledge of Roman archeological material and his innovative use of visual reconstructions to access Antiquity, Ligorio had a profound impact on Panvinio. In more than one occasion Panvinio actually took advantage of Ligorio's work, to the point that Ligorio himself deplored the fact that Panvinio "had stolen almost everything from my work on antiquities". [102] As much as he might have stolen from Ligorio's methods and techniques to investigate Antiquity, however, Panvinio was in good company in beginning to understand the documentary power of images to record objects and facts, as well as to facilitate the understanding of historical events. [103]

By the 1560s, it was more easily accepted that the written word, with its hitherto privileged position within the humanistic tradition, should be paired with images in antiquarian and history books to heighten a sense of reality and historical accuracy in the

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[101] G. Mercuriale, A*rtis gymnasticae apud antiquos celeberrimae, nostris temporis ignoratae, libri sex*, 1st ed. Venice, 1569. See Lurin 2008, p. 160. On the collaboration between Mercuriale and Ligorio, see among many: G. Vagenheim, "Una collaborazione tra antiquari ed eruditi: i disegni e le epigrafi di Pirro Ligorio nel *de Arte Gymnastica* di Girolamo Mercuriale", in *Girolamo Mercuriale. Medicina e cultura nell'Europa del Cinquecento*, edited by A. Arcangeli and V. Nutton, Florence 2008, pp. 127-157.

[102] "Egli habbi robbate quasi tutte le sue cose dalla nostra opera dell'antichita'", in H. Burns, "Pirro Ligorio's reconstruction of ancient Rome: the *Anteiquae Urbis Imago* of 1561", in *Pirro Ligorio: Artist and Antiquarian* 1988, pp. 19-92, p. 51, n. 41. Most likely, Ligorio is referring to his work for the topographic map of ancient Rome, the *Anteiquae Urbis Imago Accuratissime ex Vetusteis Monumenteis Formata* (published in 1561 by Michele Tramezzino), and his reconstruction of the Circus Maximus. Ligorio's plan of Rome is in fact closely echoed in Panvinio's own map of the ancient city published in 1571, and while in this case Panvinio acknowledged Ligorio's work, in the case of the Circus Maximus he presented himself as the sole *inventor* of the reconstruction of the circus, without even naming Ligorio. On this problem, see Burns in *Pirro Ligorio: Artist and Antiquarian* 1988, in particular pp. 23-25.

[103] See Stenhouse 2012, pp. 244-247.

renditions of ancient events.[104] It was even suggested that, were it not for visual evidence, one could even doubt the great events narrated by the ancient authors as articulated in 1555 by Enea Vico: "the marvelous facts that have come to our ears and that perhaps many could have doubted, had the fragments of the ancient City, its magnificent ruins, the arches, the inscriptions, the medals, the statues, the cameos and gems not given certain evidence".[105] However, this "visual turn" not only led to the use of images (and objects) for the purpose of historical documentation, but also to the inclusion in antiquarian books of visual material meant to facilitate the understanding of textual accounts of an ancient event or a ceremony, and also induce a greater sense of historical realism. In fact, with their descriptive vividness and visual accuracy images and illustrations could actually become far more effective than narrative history in representing (illustrating, that is) ancient events for the modern reader.[106] In certain cases, when the illustrations were particularly detailed and historically accurate, they could even become an alternative to the written word: Onofrio Panvinio's *De*

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[104] Not only Ligorio, but many other scholars shared such position, for instance the philosopher and historian Francesco Patrizi (1529-1597), the author of *Della historia diece dialoghi* (Venice 1560) set in Venice. Considering the kind of sources and documents, as well as the different media that a historian could use, Patrizi affirmed: "Non solamente adunque, soggiunsi io, l'historia si scrive, ma & si scolpisce ella, & si dipinge, & saranno queste piu' propriamente Isorie [sic] per essere elleno oggetti della vista". *Ibidem*, 14r. See A. Grafton, *What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 126-142; Stenhouse 2012, p. 245, n. 39.

[105] "I maravigliosi fatti, i quali alle orecchie nostre sono si grandi pervenuti, che per avventura molti dubitare ne potrebbero, se i fragmenti dell'antica Citta', le mirabili rovine, gli archi, le iscrittioni, le medaglie, le statue, i camei, e le intagliate gemme, non ne rendessero apertissima testimonianza", in E. Vico, *Discorsi di M. Enea Vico sopra le medaglie de gli antichi*, Venice 1555, p. 11. On a side note: Enea Vico voiced his historical skepticism and his trust in non-literary evidence at least a century before the beginning of the crisis of Pyrrhonism that led, according to Momigliano, to the reform of the historical method in the eighteenth century. Vico's words strengthen the remark that historical skepticism and the use of non-literary evidence originated, as mentioned above, well before the late seventeenth century, in opposition to Momigliano's argument.

[106] See for example: P.N. Miller, "Description terminable and interminable: looking at the past, nature, and peoples in Peiresc's archive", in *Historia. Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, edited by G. Pomata and N. Siraisi, Cambridge (Mass.), 2005, pp. 355-397; Grafton 2007.

triumpho commentarius – a booklet describing the classical Roman triumph published posthumously in 1571 – represents one of the first and most interesting examples of such an incredibly modern and radical turn in scholarship.[107]

Panvinio's *Commentarius* was a textual explanation of the Roman triumph, a subject that had always fascinated antiquarians and artists alike,[108] and was complemented with four engravings depicting the military procession. The engravings were perhaps comparable to Mantegna's *Triumphi*, although Mantegna did not have the precise intention of creating an archaeologically correct reconstruction of an ancient triumph, as Panvinio did.[109] Albeit published a few years after Panvinio's death, the *Commentarius* was extracted in its entirety from a previous book published in 1558, the *Fastorum Libri V*, a chronology of military triumphs from the Roman times up to the sixteenth century.[110] The engraved plates, on the contrary, were newly made for the Tramezzino edition, but had been conceived much earlier: the first impressions were in fact dated 1565 (*anno salutis MDLXV*) and were dedicated to the Habsburg Emperor, Maximilian II.[111] [fig. 1] Panvinio

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[107] Onofrio Panvinio, *De triumpho commentarius*, Venice (publisher Michele Tramezzino) 1571. For an in-depth analysis of *De triumpho* see Stenhouse 2012.

[108] Already in the fifteenth century, for instance, Flavio Biondo gave an in-depth description of the ancient triumph in his *Roma Trimphans* (1459), while Andrea Mantegna created for the Duke of Mantua a series of nine large paintings depicting the Triumphs of Caesar (1484-1492). For an analysis of the ancient ceremony of triumph, see for example M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2009. For artistic representations, see A. Pinelli, "Feste e trionfi", in *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana*, edited by S. Settis, 3 vols, Turin 1984-1986, III, pp. 281-350. On Mantegna's Triumphs in particular, see P. Tosetti Grandi, *I Trionfi di Cesare di Andrea Mantegna. Fonti umanistiche e cultura antiquaria alla corte dei Gonzaga*, Mantua 2008.

[109] *Ibidem*, pp. 242-24.

[110] *Fastorum Libri V a Romulo rege usque ad Imp. Caes. Carolum V Austrium* published in Venice by Valgrisi and dedicated to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, see Ferrary 1996, p. 206.

[111] See Ferrary 1996, p. 29-31; p. 212.

himself had conceived of the engravings,[112] and selected a wide range of visual sources upon which the prints were based.[113] The title of the engravings reads in fact: "a most accurate 'descriptio' of a very elaborate triumph (...) *from ancient marbles, books, and coins* [my Italic]", pointing to the variety of sources used by Panvinio.[114] For instance, the details of the general's chariot, the *quadriga* led by four horses, and the triumphal arch were taken from the reverse of coins dating back to the Republic, while well-known Roman reliefs such as those on the Arch of Titus or the Trajan Column provided precise visual references for the military equipment, triumphal scenes, and imperial iconography. [fig. 2] Ancient reliefs also provided a specific model for the narrative technique adopted by Panvinio in his engravings where the *triumphator* appears twice in the same spatio-temporal sequence, outside the city walls in a scene of *adlocutio* and celebrated in the procession inside the city.[115] [fig. 3] Although they complemented each other, the textual content and the four engravings in the *Commentarius* were not necessarily conceived as a unit. For instance, some of the details in the engravings are not found in the text while some of the elements described in the text are not found in the engravings.[116] The impression is

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[112] "Onuphrii Panvinii Veronensis inventoris opera et aeneis formeis Romae Anno Salutis MDLXV", O. Panvinio, *De triumpho commentarius* 1571.

[113] Stenhouse 2012, p. 243

[114] "Ornatissimi Triumphi uti L. Paullus de Rege Macedonum Perse capto, P. Africanus Aimilianus de Chartaginiensibus excisi CN Pompeius Magnus ex oriente Julius, Augustus, Vespasianus, Traianii, et alii Imperatores Romani triumpharent ex vetustis lapidum, nummorum, et librorum monumenti accuratissima descriptio*", O. Panvinio, *De triumpho commentarius* 1571.

[115] Stenhouse 2012, p. 242. On the narrative of Roman reliefs see J. Elsner, "Sacrifice and Narrative in the Arch of the Argentarii at Rome", *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 18, 2005, pp. 83-98.

[116] Stenhouse 2012, p. 249.

that the plates could exist and function independently, as potentially self-sufficient entities both able to evoke and visualize the ancient ceremony for a modern audience.

As Stenhouse points out, Panvinio's choice of the word *descriptio* to indicate both the engravings and the textual content is particularly interesting, especially when other and more common options – *narratio* for the text and *imago* for the illustrations, or *historia* for both – were also available.[117] *Descriptio*, as its Greek correspondent *ekphrasis*, referred to a vivid verbal evocation of an event, a group of people, an object, or a work of art.[118] In this case the rhetorical implications of the term specifically pointed to the evocative power of the word.[119] *Descriptio*, however, was often used in the sixteenth century in relation to historical and topographical maps, with a different meaning and different implications. It meant "rendition" or "reconstruction", and referred to the graphic, rather than verbal and rhetorical, nature of geographical representation.[120] It put the accent on the visual element of the description suggesting a specific mode of pictorial representation, as Svetlana Alpers has demonstrated.[121] But it also referred to a specific typology of illustrations that, combining a variety of different sources in densely detailed images, reconstructed aspects of Antiquity. A reconstructive image was based on visual information as much as on historical imagination and the educated suppositions necessary to fill the gaps inevitably

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[117] *Ibidem*, p. 251-254. For the ample use of the term *historia* see for instance *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition* 2005.

[118] For a general survey of the philosophical, aesthetic, and historical implications of the term ekphrasis see S. Cheeke, *Writing for art: the aesthetics of Ekphrasis*, Manchester 2010.

[119] See S. Alpers, "The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art", in *Art and Cartography. Six Essays*, edited by D. Woodward, The University of Chicago Press 1987, pp. 51-96, in particular p. 69.

[120] *Ibidem.*

[121] *Ibidem*, in particular pp. 69-70.

derived from fragmentary sources. In the case of the triumph's engravings such gaps could be easily filled with details taken from other illustrations, for instance Mantegna's series of large paintings for the Duke of Mantua [122] or the twelve woodcuts by Jacobus Argentoratensis (1504) depicting the triumphal procession of Caesar.[123] In other instances, however, a more creative approach to the available visual sources was necessary. For example, in a drawing by Etienne Duperac for Panvinio illustrating a hunt scene or *venatio*, several details are taken from other iconographic sources. [fig. 4] A drawing by Pirro Ligorio after a Roman medal provided the model for both the slaves' cage standing in the center of the arena as well as the group of the gladiator fighting the lion and repeated twice. The three horsemen riding around the central arena are instead taken from a medal and two sesterces dating to the reign of Hadrian and Commodus. The animated group of fighting men and beasts in the foreground of the drawing, however, is more a work of imagination than a copy as such. [fig. 5] It is based on the motif of the gladiator and the bear after an ancient relief [fig. 6], but it freely combines human and beastly forms in an array of different poses and actions evoking the violent chaos of the fight. Such creative and imaginative response to material evidence in the instance of a "reconstructive image" was not, as Emmanuel Lurin points out, a matter of artistic license or mannerism.[124] On the contrary, it was the necessary historical method that allowed the antiquarian to vividly

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[122] Above, n. 109.

[123] Stenhouse 2012, p. 243. On the woodcuts by Argentoratensis see A.M. Monaco, "Il corteo trionfale a Galatone dal "Triumphus Caesaris" di Jacobus Argentoratensis tratto dal Mantegna: un caso di circolazione mediterranea di un tema iconografico", in *Ottant'anni di un maestro. Omaggio a Ferdinando Bologna*, edited by F. Abbate, vols. 1-2, Napoli 2006, vol. 1, pp. 263-276.

[124] Lurin 2008, in particular pp. 160-170.

recreate before the eyes of a modern viewer/reader an aspect, or event, of ancient life. It also allowed the antiquarian to synthesize in a single coherent image a range of fragmentary information collected from scattered literary and material sources.

The use of the term *descriptio* in reference to both the text and the illustrations of *De triumpho commentarius* was a precise linguistic choice on Panvinio's part. It reveals his awareness of the importance of the visual element in his antiquarian work, much in line with a new model of antiquarian scholarship based on material objects as evidence for ancient history, and on visual reconstruction as a means to recreate a vivid image of historical realities. The use of the term *descriptio* confirms the initial impression that the engraved images in *De triumpho commentarius* were in fact supposed to be seen independently from the text, and probably even be treated as an alternative to the textual description of the ceremony. After all, as Francesco Patrizio wrote in 1560, history is not just written but can also be sculpted or painted, and objects of sight are indeed truly narration of events.[125] One final observation: given the necessity of a certain degree of historical imagination to "fill in the gaps provided by a patchwork of evidence",[126] it was also necessary to have strong control over the authenticity of the sources employed in order to guarantee historical verisimilitude, if not exactly historical truth. And not only was Panvinio particularly brilliant at gathering and comparing literary and material evidence, he also deeply felt the necessity of maintaining a language of accuracy and historical truth in all his illustrations that reconstructed ceremonies and scenes from the ancient past. His

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[125] Patrizi 1560, 14r-v. Quoted in Stenhouse 2012, p. 245, n. 39; p. 246, n. 40.

[126] Stenhouse 2012, p. 253.

images of ancient Rome – from triumphal processions to circus games to a map of the ancient city featuring roads, aqueducts, and recognizable buildings, all conceived between 1564 and 1566 – provide an impressive range of the sources available to antiquarians at the time, as well as some of the most accurate historical reconstructions of the period.[127]

From Panvinio's affiliation with the Farnese circle to the influence of Pirro Ligorio, we have already listed several circumstances that may account for Panvinio's conversion to a new scholarship based on the material and visual evidence. However, it is important to recall one last condition that might have played an important role: Panvinio's lifelong fascination with ecclesiastical history and *sacra antiquitas*.[128] Christian antiquity was in fact a field of historical inquiry in which the existence itself of material evidence truly played a fundamental role, and even radically altered the nature of the problems at stake.[129] Objects and images provided in fact more immediate and unquestionable proofs for the resolution of some of the most delicate issues between Protestants and Catholics, especially

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[127] The illustrations of the circus games and the map of Rome, *Antiquae Urbis Imago Accuratissime*, were only published in 1600: *De Ludis circensibus libri II. De triumpho liber unus*, Venezia 1600 (publisher G.B. Ciotti). See Stenhouse 2012, pp. 243-244; Ferrary 1996, pp. 26-38 and p. 214.

[128] Already in 1552, when Panvinio was completing the transcription of ancient Roman calendars (*Fastorum Libri V*, Venice 1558), cardinal Marcello Cervini – Panvinio's first patron and protector in Rome – encouraged the young scholar to investigate Christian antiquity along with Roman pagan antiquity. In 1562 Panvinio published his first revision of Platina's *Historia de vitis pontificum*, followed in 1568 by a new edition of Platina's work dedicated to Pius V and completed with other brief treatises: *Interpraetatio multarum vocum ecclesiasticarum...*, *De stationibus Urbis Romae*, and *De ritu sepeliendi mortuos apud veteres Christianos et eorundem coemeteriis*. Panvinio compiled several other important works on Christian antiquity, and among them: the *Chronicon ecclesiasticum a C. Julii Caesaris tempore usque ad imp. Maximilianum II* (published in 1568); *De primatu Petri* (published posthumously in 1589); *De varia creatione Romani pontificis* (dedicated in 1559 to cardinal Alessandro and in 1563 to Hans Jakob Fugger but never published); the already mentioned *XXVII Pontificum Maximorum elogia et imagines accuratissime et ad uiuum aeneis typis delineatae* (published in 1568), and the monumental *Ecclesiastica Historia* (unfortunately never published). On Panvinio's works on Christian antiquity see: Ferrary 1996; Bauer in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 2014.

[129] See for example Haskell 1993, pp. 100-111.

the use of images or the cult of relics among the first Christians.[130] Catacombs in particular were an exemplary case where visual evidence proved for the understanding of the Christian past in particular, but also stimulated an immediate awareness of the importance of material evidence for the study of the past in general. So, it is now time to examine the work of those scholars who investigated Christian antiquity through its physical remains: objects, images, inscriptions, but also monuments in general and catacombs in particular.

The providential gift of catacombs

The last day of May 1578 surprised the good people of Rome with an extraordinary and providential gift: the accidental discovery of a long forgotten catacomb that, although sacked by relic hunters during the Middle Ages, had preserved a rich pictorial and sculptural decoration.[131] When a landslide provoked by some workers in the *vigna* Sanchez on Via Salaria revealed the existence of an underground cemetery, authorities were immediately called to inspect the site: "[they] identified the place, [and] the Pope sent Cardinal Savello, the General of the Jesuits and Monsignor Marc'Antonio Mureto".[132] The news spread rapidly among both ecclesiastic and lay people, and fueled an enthusiasm that

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[130] *Ibidem*.

[131] The catacomb, identified in the sixteenth century as the catacomb of Priscilla, is today known as the "anonymous catacomb of Via Anapo". See: E. Josi, "Note di topografia cimiteriale romana I. Il *coemeterium Iordanorum* sulla via Salaria nova", *Studi Romani*, 3, 1922, pp. 49-70 (a); E. Josi, "Relazione del ritrovamento della regione scoperta il 31 maggio 1578 sulla via Salaria nuova", *Nuovo Bollettino di Archeologia Cristiana*, 28, 1922, pp. 120-128 (b); J.C. Deckers, *Die Katakombe "Anonima di Via Anapo". Repertorium der Malereien*, Vatican City 1991.

[132] "riconosciuto il luogo il Papa vi ha mandato il Cardinale Savello, il Generale de Giesuiti et Monsignore Marc' Antonio Mureto". BAV, Vat. Urb. Lat. 1046, *Avvisi Urbinati*, f. 256 (June 1578).

still resonates today from the pages of various *Avvisi di Roma* reporting on the event.[133]

Both simple people and erudite scholars gathered at the site, and the crowd became so

excited that they crushed the barricades built for protection by cardinal Savelli.[134] What was

really sensational about the discovery was not so much the cemetery itself – after all the

memory of the catacombs had never completely faded in Rome[135] – but rather the

content.[136] An anonymous first-hand account of the discovery, compiled a few months later

in Rome, provides a powerful picture of the rising emotion with which the audience

responded to the progressive discovery of the frescoes, inscriptions, and relics that were

slowly emerging from the ground.[137] Not only were the frescoes a tangible token of the

uncorrupted faith of the early Christians – thus looked upon with the greatest respect and

intense feelings – but they also testified to the antiquity of the use of images and their

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[133] The event was recorded in three diverse *Avvisi*: BAV, Vat. Urb. Lat. 1046, *Avvisi Urbinati*, f. 256 (June 1578) and f. 302 (August 1578); Vat. Lat. 12214, *Annali di Gregorio XIII*, lib. VII, t. II, f. 66.

[134] "(…) vi concorsi tutta Roma rompindo li steccati fatti per ordine del Card. Savello", in Vat. Lat. 1046, f. 302.

[135] On the memory of the catacombs throughout the Middle Ages, see: I. Oryshkevich, *The History of the Roman Catacombs from the Age of Constantine to the Renaissance*, PhD Dissertation, Columbia University in New York, 2003. See also: M. Ghilardi, "Le catacombe di Roma dal Medioevo alla Roma Sotterranea di Bosio", *Studi Romani*, Anno XLIX, NN. 1-2, Gennaio-Giugno 2001, pp. 27-56; "Le catacombe di Roma tra la tarda antichita' e il Medio Evo", *Augustinianum*, Annus XLII, Fasciculus I, Iunius 2002, pp. 205-236; *Subterranea Civitas. Quattro studi sulle catacombe romane dal medioevo all'eta' moderna*, Rome 2003.

[136] In Vat. Lat. 1046, f. 302, "Di Roma li 2 d'Agosto 1578" it is mentioned with great enthusiasm that "alquanti Cappelletti et Oratorii di stucco ornati con vaghissimi lavori" were found in the catacomb. See also Vat. Lat. Urb. 12214 "De gl'Annali di Gregorio XIII", Libro VII, Tomo II, f. 66, which mentions the "varie seppolture de Santi Martiri con Iscrittioni di lingue diverse".

[137] "(…) ut profundius effondiendo magna omnium admiration via quaedam subterranean inveniretur atque aperiretur, cumpertisque ibidem christianae religionis signis", in *De coemeterio d. Priscillae Romae invento in canicularibus anno 1578*, in G. Ferretto, *Note storico-bibliografiche di archeologia Cristiana*, Roma, Citta' del Vaticano 1942, pp. 107-109. The anonymous report on the discovery of the catacomb on the Via Salaria was first published in H. von Sauerland, "De coemeterio d. Priscillae Romae invento in canicularibus anno 1578", *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Alterthumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte*, 2, 1888, pp. 209-217. The text of the report is also published in Ferretto 1942, pp. 107-109.

veneration: "one can see with his own eyes how [the first Christians] painted and worshipped their sacred images in the caves and subterranean places, those images that blinded Christians seek today (...) to remove from the churches".[138] Similarly, not only were the relics a physical reminder that the *Romana Ecclesia* had literally been founded upon the blood and bones of the martyrs,[139] but they also proved the existence of the cult of saints and martyrs since the early days of Christianity as it was mentioned in several written sources.[140] Given the spirited debate between Protestants and Catholics over the cult of images and relics, the moment to unearth such precious remains – material evidence of the early days of Christianity – could not have been more propitious. And the Roman Church was quick to appropriate the discovery, hailing it as a clear sign of divine intervention in the virulent controversy between Catholics and Protestants about the legitimacy of Catholic cults.

The problem of the images, along with that of the veneration of relics and saints, lay in fact at the core of the crucial question of the legitimacy of Catholic cults and rituals denied by the Protestants and, ultimately, of the spiritual authority and primacy of the

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[138] *De coemeterio d. Priscillae...1578*. Quoted in Haskell 1993, p. 101.

[139] It was in fact a common cliché that Christian Rome had been founded on the holy blood of the martyrs, as it is claimed for example in Pompeo Ugonio's *Historia delle Stationi di Roma* (Rome 1588) or later in Giovanni Severano's introduction to Antonio Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea* (Rome 1632-34). Ugonio, for example, wrote that "Quello [*Solomon's Temple*] d'argento solamente, et d'oro, et di caduche gemme era adornato, questi [*Roman churches and sanctuaries*] di molto piu' pretiosi ornamenti risplendono, ossa, sangue, ceneri d'invittissimi Martiri", in *Historia delle Stationi di Roma*, Dedication to Camilla Peretti.

[140] As Cesare Baronio triumphally affirmed in his *Annales*, the discovery of the catacomb was a confirmation "of what we knew before from written accounts", and finally allowed to "see with our own eyes the confirmatin of Jerome and Prudentius". "Quod legebat in chartis (...) tunc plenius intellexit; quae enim de iisdem apud S. Hieronymum vel Prudentium legerat, suis ipsius oculis intiens, vehemente admirabanda spectavit", C. Baronio, Romae 1594, t. II, p. 213.

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Roman Church.[141] The Protestant claim to the true understanding of the Christian faith based upon a close reading of the Holy Scriptures, as well as their rejection of all forms of external worship, challenged the spiritual authority of the Church. Moreover, the Protestants openly rebelled against the Roman Church on the ground of its outrageous immorality and betrayal of the spirit of the *Ecclesia primitiva*, thus endangering the primacy of Rome itself. For the sake of its own survival the Church had been forced into a rigorous examination of its past and rituals in search of physical evidence that could justify not only the Roman Catholic Church's official doctrine and liturgy, but also all its ecclesiastical practices. It was in fact imperative to demonstrate that the Church had never abandoned the *vita vere apostolica* preserving the continuity with the first apostolic community throughout the centuries and remaining the only legitimate successor to the early Church of the Apostles.[142] In response to the argument that every ritual or belief not mentioned in the Scriptures was to be rejected as a later addition to the pure essence of the Christian faith, Catholic theologians argued on the contrary that contemporary doctrines and rites reflected the *forma ecclesiae* of the primitive Church. While the Protestants believed in the absolute authority of the Sacred Scriptures, the *sola scriptura*, Catholic apologists defended the equal authority of *traditio*, the word of God passed down orally from Christ to the Apostles, and from the Apostles to their follower.[143]

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[141] An excellent summary of the problem is in Oryshkevich 2003, pp. 329-333.

[142] See for instance G.A. Guazzelli, "Cesare Baronio and the Roman Catholic Vision of the Early Church", in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, edited by K. Van Liere, S. Ditchfield, H. Louthan, Oxford 2012, pp. 52-71.

[143] "(...) this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand". *The canons and decrees of the sacred and oecumenical Council of Trent*, translated and edited by J. Waterworth, London 1848, p. 18.

While, unfortunately for the Church, Patristic literature offered little support for such a position, unexpected help came from the material legacy of Christian antiquity.[144] Early Christian monuments and objects hitherto neglected for their unappealing and crude features provided crucial evidence of the spiritual life and rituals of the first Christians. Catacombs, however, were soon to eclipse them: as pre-Constantinian monuments – as they were often thought to be – dating back to the age of the Apostles and the persecutions, the subterranean cemeteries provided material and visual evidence dating back to the earliest days of Christianity. [145] Furthermore, the holy remains of those who had offered their lives for the Christian faith legitimized the Church's claim to primacy as the true and sole heir of the *Ecclesia Martyrum*. And following the providential discovery of May 1578, catacombs became in fact the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of Catholic polemicists.

Much ink has been spilled over the finding of the catacomb on the Via Salaria erroneously identified in the sixteenth century with the cemetery of Priscilla, and known today as the anonymous catacomb of Via Anapo.[146] Since Giovanni Battista De Rossi's affirmation that the last day of May 1578 marked the birth of Christian archaeology,[147]

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[144] E. Ross Barker, *Rome of the Pilgrims and Martyrs: A Study in the Martyrologies, Itineraries, Syllogae, &Other Contemporary Documents*, New York 1912 is a very accurate analysis of the available literary sources on early Christian life and rituals. More recently, see among others P. Testini, *Archeologia cristiana: nozioni generali dalle origini alla fine del sec. VI*, 2 ed., Bari 1980, pp. 3-36.

[145] Voicing the official position of the Church, the already mentioned 1578 anonymous pamphlet stated that "(…) indubitatae et certissimae religionis catholicae rituumque catholicorum est videre religionem, curam et diligentiam illorum Dei amicorum circa humationem corporum. Ibi manifestissime oculis ipsis et sancti Dei amici, cum publice et in huius saeculi luce non possent, in antris saltem et cavernis terrae pias imagines pingebant et venerabantur", *De coemeterio d. Priscillae...1578*. Quoted in Ferretto 1942, p. 108.
[146] For modern literature on the catacomb, see above, n. 132.

[147] "Il 31 maggio del 1578 (...) alcuni operai cavando la pozzolana nella vigna di Bartolomeo Sanchez alla destra della via Salaria circa il miglio secondo aprirono il varco ad un cemeteri cristiano adorno di pitture, di

scholars in the field have endlessly debated the actual role of such a fortunate discovery as the founding event of the discipline. Although the cemetery on Via Salaria was to be forgotten again within a few years,[148] its discovery restored interest in the catacombs and encouraged an extensive search of several more underground cemeteries.[149] As early as 1593 cardinal Cesare Baronio reminded his readers that hidden below the city of Rome there was another Rome where the first Christians had gathered to pray and find refuge during the persecutions.[150] Around the same time a very young Antonio Bosio began the first systematic exploration of miles of gloomy and dark galleries that formed the *altera Roma*, the other and holier city of martyrs.[151] To further encourage the exploration of the

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sarcofagi e di alquante iscrizioni (...) in quel di nacque la scienza e il nome della Roma sotterranea*"*, De Rossi 1864-1877, vol. I, p.12.

[148] Only a few years later, between 1590 and 1593, a collapse in the terrain blocked the entrance, and the cemetery on Via Salaria was once again forgotten until 1912. For the modern re-discovery of the catacomb, see: Josi 1922(a); Josi 1922(b).

[149] The accidental discovery of the catacomb on the Via Salaria in 1578 had alerted the public opinion to the existence of a buried and holy city of the first Christians, and stimulated the investigation for additional catacombs. See for example I. Oryshkevich, "Through a Netherlandish Looking-Glass; Philips van Winghe and Jean L'Heureux in the Catacombs", *Fragmenta*, 5 (2011), 2014, pp. 101-120; I Oryshkevich, "Antonio Bosio's *Roma sotterranea* and the Staging of Early Christian Ritual", (forthcoming). On the new interest for catacombs following the discovery of 1578, see also: Cantino Wataghin 1980; Ghilardi 2001; Ghilardi 2003; L. Spera, "Cesare Baronio *peritissimus antiquitatis*, e le origini dell'archeologia Cristiana", in *Cesare Baronio tra santita' e scrittura storica*, edited by G.A. Guazzelli, R. Michetti, F. Scorza Barcellona, Rome 2012, pp. 393-423.

[150] "Obstupuit Urbs, cum in suis suburbiis abditas se novit habere civitates, Christianorum tempore persecutionis olim colonias, modo autem sepulchris tantum refertas", in *Annales ecclesiastici a Christo nato ad annum 1198 auctore Caesare Baronio sorano congreationis Oratorii presbytero*, Romae 1594, t. II, p. 81.

[151] Giovanni Severano in his preface to Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea* claims that Rome "contains another [*Rome]* beneath her, on a lower plane, to be sure, but one superior in magnitude and nobility". G. Severano *Al Beningno lettore*, in A. Bosio – G. Severano, *Roma Sotterranea, opera postuma di Antonio Bosio Romano…*, Roma 1632-34, n.p. (quoted in Oryshkevich, "Antonio Bosio's *Roma sotterranea*...", forthcoming). According to his own words, Antonio Bosio began the exploration of underground cemeteries on December 10th 1593 when, with Pompeo Ugonio and other gentlemen, descended into an anonymous catacomb near the via Ardeatina. See *Roma Sotterranea...* 1632-34, Lib. III, cap. XXIII, p. 279. Bosio said that *duplex Roma fuit: celsam extulit altera frontem / impia; sub terris altera sacra latet*, in M. Ghilardi, "Et intus altera sub Roma Roma sepulta iacet. Le catacombe romane metafora della citta' sotterranea in eta' moderna e conemporanea", in *I luoghi della citta': Roma moderna e contemporanea*, edited by M. Boiteux, M. Caffiero,

catacombs there was also the compelling promise of sacred findings: the holy relics of the martyrs that, as it was firmly believed, were buried copiously in the ground of Rome.[152]

The assumption that the catacombs were the resting place of the martyrs, and that the soil of Rome was literally soaked in their blood was by no means a post-Tridentine invention. Already in the fourth century, shortly after the legalization of Christianity in 312, the Church began to efficiently forge the cult of the martyrs.[153] The oldest list of Roman martyrs with their feast days and burial sites, the so-called *Depositio Martyrum* dating back to the papacy of Damasus I (366-384), was based upon an earlier Calendar of about 312.[154]

B. Marin, Rome 2010, pp. 263-288, p. 271, n. 29.

[152] The idea that Roman catacombs were filled with the holy remains of Christian martyrs dates back to the early Middle Ages, and already by the mid fourth century catacombs were visited by pious pilgrims. Even a young Saint Jerome was among them when, as a young boy studying liberal arts in Rome (c. 360/367), used to visit the tombs of the Apostles and Martyrs with other pupils of his age and interests: "Dum essem Romae puer, et liberalibus studiis erudirer, solebam cum caeteris eisdem aetatis et propositi, diebus Dominicis, sepulcra apostolorum et martyrum circuire, crebroque cryptas ingredi quae, in terrarum profunda defossae (...) habent corpora sepultorum" (Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem lib. XII,* ch. 40 in *Patrologia latina* 25, orig. ed. 1845, reprint 1992, col. 375. Quoted in V. Fiocchi Nicolai, "*Sacra martyrum loca circuire*: percorsi di vista dei pellegrini nei santuari martiriali del suburbio romano", in *Christian Loca* 200, vol. I, pp. 221-230, p. 222) A few decades later, at the beginning of the fifth century (401-403) the Spanish poet Prudentius recalls the "innumeros cineres sanctorum Romula in Urbe/vidimus, o Christi valeriane sacer" (*Perist*, XI, 1-2. Quoted in Fiocchi Nicolai 2000, p. 222). On the perception of catacombs' remains as holy relics of martyrs, see for example P.J. Geary, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the central Middle Ages*, Princeton 1990. See also A. Ferrua, *Sulla questione del vaso di sangue. Memoria inedita di Giovanni Battista de Rossi*, Città del Vaticano 1944; Ghilardi 2009(a) and 2009(b).

[153] On the history of the catacombs since the early Middle Ages and on the origins of their cult as the resting places of saints and martyrs, see among many: P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Chicago 1981; J. Osborne, "The Roman catacombs in the Middle Ages", *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 35.1985, pp. 278-328; Geary 1990; P. Pergola, *Le catacombe romane. Storia e topografia*, Roma 1997; V. Fiocchi Nicolai, "Origine e sviluppo delle catacombe romane", in *Le catacombe cristiane di Roma* 1998, pp. 9-69; Oryshkevich 2003; *Origini delle catacombe romane. Atti della giornata tematica dei Seminari di Archeologia Cristiana* (Roma 21 marzo 2005), edited by V. Fiocchi Nicolai and J. Guyon, Vatican City 2006.

[154] The *Depositio Martyrum* along with the *Depositio Episcoporum* formed the so-called *Philocalian Calendar*, compiled by the Pope's calligrapher Furius Dionisus Filocalus, and based on the 312 Roman Calendar. See Ross Barker 1912, pp. 50-53; R. Valentini and G. Zucchetti, *Codice topografico della citta' di Roma*, vols. 1-4, Rome 1940-1953, vol II (1942), pp. 1-28; Fiocchi Nicolai 1998, in particular pp. 48-57; Oryshkevich 2003, pp. 15-16. For a fourth-century list of cemeteries, see Ross Barker 1912, pp. 97-102. On

Pope Damasus himself was particularly active in shaping the fortune of Roman martyrs, and it was during his papacy that many catacombs – some of which were still in use – were transformed into pilgrimage sites.[155] Crypts and tombs were enlarged and embellished with paintings and celebratory epigrams while above ground newly built and lavishly decorated churches were consecrated to the martyrs and saints resting below.[156] By the seventh century the crowd of pilgrims who traveled to Rome from all over Europe to venerate the sacred tombs had greatly increased: already in 514, for instance, Pope Symmachus requested to be informed about the ecclesiastics traveling to Rome from Spain and France,[157] while several seventh-century sources recall the increasing number of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims. [158] In a well-known passage from his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, for example, Bede records how pilgrims from England were pouring into Rome at the beginning of the eighth century: *plures de gente Anglorum, nobiles, ignobiles, laici,*

Filocalus and his calendar see: W. Wischmeyer, *Das Kalenderhandbuch von 354 – Der Chronograph des Filocalus*, vols. 1-2, 2014.

[155] On the transformation of Roman catacombs into pilgrimage sites, see V. Fiocchi Nicolai, "*Itinera ad sanctos*. Testimonianze monumentali del passaggio dei pellegrini nei santuari del suburbio romano", in *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie*, vol. II, Münster 1995, pp. 224-235; G. Guyon, "L'église de Rome du IV siècle à Sixte III (312-432)", in *Historie du Christianisme des origines à nos jours*, II, *Naissance d'une chrétienté (250-430)*, Paris 1995, pp. 771-798; Fiocchi Nicolai 1998, pp. 48-57; P. Pergola, "Dai cimiteri ai santuari martiriali (IV-VIII secolo)", in *Christiana Loca. Lo spazio cristiano nella Roma del primo millennio*", edited by L. Pani Ermini, Rome 2000, vols. I-II, vol. I, pp. 99-105. On Pope Damasus' activity for the cult of the martyrs, see also: M. Löx, *Monumenta sanctorum: Rom und Mailand als Zentren des frühen Christentums; Märtyrerkult und Kirchenbau unter den Bischöfen Damasus und Ambrosius*, Wiesbaden 2013
[156] Above, n. 156. See also Oryshkevich 2003, pp. 15-17

[157] See Fiocchi Nicolai 2000, p. 223

[158] See for instance D.J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change*, Woodbridge 1998; C. Carletti, "'Scrivere i santi': epigrafia del pellegrinaggio a Roma nei secoli VII-IX", in *Roma fra Oriente e Occidente. Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi dell'Alto Medioevo*, vol. I, Spoleto 2002, pp. 323-360; R. Capasso, "Itinerari di pellegrini alla volta di Roma fra Tardo Antico ed Altomedioevo", in *Studi sulle societa' e le culture del Medioevo per Girolamo Arnaldi*, edited by L. Gatto and P. Supino Martini, Universita' degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza" 2002, pp. 91-104; R. Stopani, "Il pellegrinaggio degli angeli a Roma nei secoli VII e VIII e la nascita della via Francigena", in *De strata francigena*, XV/2, 2007, pp. 7-12

clerici, viri ac feminae certatim facere consueverunt [to go to Rome].[159] Itineraries such as

the *Notitia Ecclesiarum Urbis Romae* (or *Itinerarium Salisburgense*, probably compiled

during the pontificate of Pope Honorius, 625-638)[160], the *De locis sanctis martyrum quae*

sunt foris civitatis Romae (post 642)[161], the *Notitia Portarum Viarum Ecclesiarum circa*

urbem Romam (or *Itinerarium Malmesburiense*, post 648/ante 682-83)[162], and the so-called

Itinerarium Urbis Romae (Einsiedeln Itinerary, late seventh century)[163], were compiled to

guide the pilgrims through the catacombs and to the main shrines and burials.[164] These

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[159] *Hist. eccl. gent. Angl.*, V, 7. (Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, edited by A. Holder, Freiburg 1882, p. 237)

[160] The *Notitia Ecclesiarum Urbis Romae* is contained in a late-eight-century manuscript from Salzburg, and today in Vienna (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 795). For a detailed introduction to the *Notitia Ecclesiarum* see *Codice topografico,* pp. 67-99.

[161] The *De locis sanctis martyrum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae* is recorded in three manuscripts: the Cod. 795 in Vienna; a ninth- or tenth-century manuscript from Salzburg also in Vienna (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1008); and a tenth-century manuscript at the University of Wurzburg (Theol. Fol. n.49). A thorough discussion of the itineray is in *Codice topografico*, pp. 101-131.

[162] The *Notitia Portarum Viarum Ecclesiarum* is inserted as a digression in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, compiled over a long period of time (ante 1120/1140), and found in several manuscripts all preserved in British libraries (London, British Museum, Ms. Arundel 35; Additi. 23147; Harleian. 447; Royal 13, D. 2; Royal 13 D. 5. Oxford, Bodleian Library: Laud. Misc. 548; 712. Oxford, All Souls: Coll. 35; Coll. 33. Cambridge, Trin. Coll: R.7.10). The *Notitia*, however, was based on a much earlier document datable to the second half of the seventh century. The itinerary recalls the presence of the relics of Primus and Felicianus that Pope Theodore I translated to the the church of Santo Stefano Rotondo in 648, but it does not mention the relics of Simplicius, Faustinus and Beatrix translated by Pope Leo II (682-683) to the church of Saint Paul. Thus, the compilation of the *Notitia* can reasonably be placed between 648 (*post quem*) and 682-83 (*ante quem*). See *Codice Topografico*, pp. 133-153.

[163] The *Itinerarium Urbis Romae*, or Einsiedeln Itinerary, is contained in a miscellaneous manuscript from Reichenau, then belonged to San Gall, and today in the monastery of Einsiedeln in Switzerland (Stiftsbibliothek, *Codex Ensidlensis* 326). While the manuscript was assembled between 1324 and 1360, the *Itinerarium* was most likely compiled during the pontificates of Hadrian I (772-795) and Leo III (795-816). See *Codice Topografico*, pp. 155-207. More recently, see: S. Del Lungo, *Roma in eta' carolingia e gli scritti dell'Anonimo augiense (Einsiedeln, Bibliotheca Monasterii ordinis sancti Benedicti, 326 [8 nr. 13], IV, ff. 67v-86r)*, Rome 2004.

[164] Each one of these itineraries is published in *Codice Topografico* (see above, notes 161-164). For additional literature on early medieval itineraries in general, see: De Rossi 1864-1877, vol. I, pp. 128-157; A. Dufourcq, *Etudes sur les Gesta Martyrum Romains*, Paris 1900, pp. 17-22; Ross Barker 1912, pp. 93-126. A more recent discussion is in Pergola 1997, pp. 27-29; C. Leyser, "The Temptations of Cult: Roman Martyr Piety in the Age of Gregory the Great", *Early Medieval Europe*, 9 (2000), pp. 289-307 (especially pp. 296-299), and in

itineraries provided topographic information (although not always copious or accurate) but only very sparse biographic and historical notes about the martyrs. They all listed a much larger number of saints and martyrs compared to fourth-century sources, often citing large groups of nameless martyrs buried in communal anonymous graves.[165] Since the vast majority of the slabs sealing the *loculi* in the catacombs had neither signs of identification nor names and epitaphs, the inflated legions of Roman martyrs were largely made up of unknown men and women. Their real lives were replaced by legendary descriptions of their deeds and heroic deaths, later collected in the so-called *Passiones*.[166] Unlike the *Acta Martyrum*, dating back to the second and third centuries and based upon the actual trials of the martyrs, the *Passiones* were based on oral tradition and were compiled in Rome much later, between the fifth and the eighth centuries.[167] They were

Oryshkevich 2003, pp. 27-28. Furthermore, such itineraries are mentioned in almost all works dealing with pilgrimage to Rome during the Middle Ages, for instance Osborne 1985; C. Carletti, "*Viatores ad Martyres*. Testimonianze scritte altomedioevali nelle catacombe romane", in *Epigrafia medievale greca e latina: ideologia e funzione*, edited by G. Cavallo and C. Mango, Spoleto 1995, pp. 197-225; Birch 1998; L. Spera, "*Ad limina apostolorum*. Santuari e pellegrini a Roma tra la tarda antichita' e l'alto medioevo", in *La geografia della citta' e lo spazio del sacro. L'esempio delle trasformazioni territoriali lungo il percorso della Visita alle Sette Chiese Privilegiate*, Rome 1998, pp. 1-104; Fiocchi Nicolai in *Christiana Loca* 2000; Carletti 2002.

[165] In the 312 Roman calendar, for example, only 213 saints were named. As for the lists of anonymous martyrs buried together, see for instance the brief extract from the *Itin. Malmesburiense* in Ross Barker 1912, p. 118. Here the pilgrim is informed that in the basilica of San Silvestro alone there were the remains of S. Silvester, Prisca, Praxed, Potentiana Celestinus, Philip, Felix, Paul, Crescentianus, and Semetrius, along with those of three hundred and sixty-five other martyrs buried together in one anonymous sepulcher.

[166] For the general literature on the *Passiones* and the *Acta*, see Dufourcq 1900; Roos Barker 1912; H. Delehaye, *Les Passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*, Brussels 1921; H. Delehaye, *Les Légendes hagiographiques*, Brussels 1927; *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, translated and edited by H. Musurillo, Oxford 1972 (in particular pp. xi-lxxxiii); Testini 1980; V. Saxer, "Martirio. Atti, passioni, leggende", in *Dizionario patristico e di antichita' cristiane*, vol. II, Roma 1984, coll. 2140-2149; *Atti e passioni dei martiri*, edited by A.A.R. Bastiaensen, and translated by G. Chiarini, Milan 1987; Pergola 1997, pp. 21-31. On the intrinsic differences between Acts and Passions in particular, see Dufourcq 1900, pp. 17-22; Roos Barker 1912, pp. 127-204; Musurillo 1972, pp. l-lvii; Testini 1980, pp. 15-17; Oryshkevich 2003, p. 31, n. 44 and 45, and pp. 33-39.

[167] For the literature, see above n. 167.

characterized by a very conventional and repetitive plot, probably used to compensate for missing historical information, and many imaginary anecdotes.[168] As if to counterbalance the fantastic and unrealistic quality of their narrative, however, most *Passiones* describe actual monuments, roads, and cemeteries of Rome providing the reader with a very precise "martyrial topography". The reason for such intriguing duality probably lies in their ultimate *raison d'étre*, as the *Passiones* were didactic religious texts meant to encourage the faithful to imitate the extraordinary lives of the martyrs. Thus, it is possible to imagine that the use of narrative stereotype was meant to make the stories easier to follow and memorize even for an illiterate audience. Likewise, the topographic emphasis was plausibly meant to facilitate the process of memory by placing the events into well-known and recognizable settings.

Despite the initial skepticism of the Church towards such texts, often spurious and filled with macabre descriptions of tortures and deaths, they became extremely popular during the Middle Ages and beyond.[169] Indeed the *Passiones* had proved crucial in building the long-lasting fortune of Rome as the holy city blessed by the blood of the martyrs. These texts strengthened Rome's claim to primacy by circulating the idea that countless relics sanctified its soil.[170] Since, according to Christian theology, relics are *membra Christi* or the "temple of the Holy Spirit", Rome – with its unrivaled treasure of relics – deserved to

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[168] See Oryshkevich 2003, p. 32.
[169] Unlike the *Acta*, the *Passiones* were not inserted into the official liturgy of the Church until the 8th century. SeeTestini 1980, pp. 16-17; Oryshkevich 2003, p. 36-38.

[170] See above, n. 153

be elevated over all the Christian communities.[171] By the time the catacomb on the Via Salaria came back to light in 1578, the stories told in the *Passiones* had become common knowledge among all pious Christians. The locations of where countless Christians had been slaughtered, and their resting place, had become part of the very familiar sacred topography of Rome. Yet, it was only in the last decades of the sixteenth century, following the providential discovery of 1578, that material evidence of the Christian past, newly unearthed, could finally lend some sort of historical credibility to such literary sources. While common people greeted these findings with the sincere enthusiasm of the believer who suddenly saw martyrs and saints become real before his eyes, Catholic polemicists eagerly used the material remains of the Christian past to vindicate and glorify the Church of Rome.[172]

Since the Council Fathers declared that Scriptures and Tradition both proceeded from God and thus held the same authority, history became a crucial battlefield for Catholics and Protestants to either impugn or defend the doctrinal truth and liturgical practices of the Church.[173] The Catholic champion who tackled the enormous task of demonstrating that there was no conflict between the truth of Catholic religion and the truth

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[171] On the fundamental theological question of relics as *membra Christi*, see among others J. Gagé, "*Membra Christi* et la deposition des reliques sous l'autel", *Revue Archeologique*, 29, (1929), pp. 137-53; G.J.C. Snoek, *Medieval piety from Relics to the Eucharist. A Process of Mutual Interaction*, Leiden 1995, pp. 198-199. Snoek cites a fifth-century source, *De dogmatibus ecclesiasticis*, in which it is clearly stated that the Christians worship the *membra Christi* in the relics: p. 198, n. 31.

[172] Above, pp. 47-52.

[173] "(...) this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand". *The canons and decrees of the sacred and oecumenical Council of Trent*, translated and edited by J. Waterworth, London 1848, p. 18.

of history was Cardinal Cesare Baronio.[174] Armed with his extraordinary knowledge and

profound faith, Baronio compiled two of the most formidable weapons to be found in the

literary arsenal of the Church: the *Martyrologium Romanum* and the *Annales

ecclesiastici*.[175] The *Annales* were the official Catholic reaction to the Magdeburg Centuries

(1559-1574), and narrated the history of the Church from the birth of Christ up to 1198.[176]

In response to Protestant accusations, the *Annales* aimed to demonstrate that the Church

had always remained the same – *semper eadem* – since its apostolic origins.[177] Given the

paucity and problematic nature of early patristic sources shedding light on the early days of

the Church, Baronio often sought help in coins, medals, and other monuments when dealing

with historical controversies.[178] Bosio called him *peritissimus antiquitatis*,[179] and although

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[174]On Cesario Baronio and his historical work see, among many others: S. Ditchfield, "What was Sacred History? (Mostly Roman) Catholic Use of the Christian Past after Trent", in *Sacred History…* 2012, pp. 72-97; G.A. Guazzelli, "Cesare Baronio and the Roman Catholic Vision of the Early Church", in *Sacred History…* 2012, pp. 69-70. See also Tutino 2014, chapter 3 in particular.

[175]Baronio's revised *Martyrologium Romanum* with critical notes (*Notationes*) and an introductory preface (*Tractatio de martyrologio romano*) that was first published in 1586, although baronio updated and republished it several times (incl. Antwerp 1589, Rome 1598, Venice 1609). The final edition was published in 1630. The revised *Martyrologium* codifies the liturgical reform of Pius V (1566-1572) and his successor Gregory XIII (1572-1585). Guazzelli in *Sacred History* 2012, in particular p. 55, n. 10. The *Annales ecclesiastici a Christo nato ad annum 1198* in twelve volumes were published in Rome between 1558 and 1607. In direct and polemical imitation of the *Magdeburg Centuries*, the *Annales* were chronologically divided by centuries, and within each century the material was organized thematically. See for example Guazzelli in *Sacred History…* 2012.

[176] The so-called *Magdeburg Centuries* (1559-1574) are the first history of the Protestant Church. Compiled by a group of scholar led by Matthias Flacius Illiricus (1520-1575) and Johannes Wigand (1523-1587), the *Magdeburg Centuries* were organized into one-hundred-year sections divided, in turn, in thematic sections. The main argument of the Centuriators against the Roman Church was the progressive decline and decadence of the papacy, and its disconnection from the apostolic Church from the pontificate of Gregory the Great (590-604). Baronio, on the contrary, asserted with his *Annales* that the Church had never betrayed its apostolic origins. See for example Guazzelli in *Sacred History* 2012, in particular pp. 58-63.

[177] *Ibidem*.

[178] Sources such as the Acts of Martyrs or the *Liber Pontificalis*, used by Baronio, were of later origins and thus considered not reliable by the Protestants. On the historical sources used by Baronio for his *Annales* see

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his preference as a historian went to written accounts, the Cardinal always showed a sophisticated understanding of antiquarian evidence, as in the case of the coin of Julian the Apostate.[180] When the catacombs on Via Salaria were discovered, he was just completing the first volume of the *Annales* and went immediately to see them.[181] The Cardinal's sharp mind was quick to grasp the enormous impact of the discovery, especially with regard to the delicate question of the role of images. For Baronio and his contemporaries, in fact, an army of saints and martyrs had providentially emerged from the darkness to support the Catholic side.[182] Since the presence of mural decoration in the catacombs was a decisive and undeniable historical fact – at the time there was no doubt that all catacomb paintings

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the rather recent volume edited by L. Gulia, *Baronio e le sue fonti*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Sora, 10-13 ottobre 2007, Sora 2009 (with bibliography).

[179] A. Bosio, *Relatio eorundem Sanctorum Martyrum Caeciliae et sociorum corporum novae inventionis*, in L. Spera, "Il recupero dei monumenti per la restituzione del Cristianesimo antico nell'opera di Cesare Baronio", in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio nell'eta' di Cesare Baronio*, Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Frosinone, Sora 16-18 maggio 2007, edited by P. Tosini, Rome 2009, pp. 69-86, p. 71, n. 9.

[180] A very irritated Baronio exposed a "certain antiquarian" who claimed that the reverse of a coin of Julian the Apostate represented the Virgin and Child when in fact it was undoubtedly a representation of Isis nurturing a Child, affirming that "God forbid that we should rely on fictions in our endeavours to illustrate the Christian religion!". Quoted in Haskell 1993, p. 106. On Baronio antiquarian see among others Spera 2012. See also Guazzelli in *Sacred History…* 2012, in particular pp. 66-67.

[181] Baronio himself recalls his exploration of the newly found catacomb on Via Salaria, while giving us one of the most interesting and vivacious descriptions of the underground cemetery: "(...) Mirabile dictu: vidimus, saepiusque lustravimus Priscillae coemeterium, haud pridem inventum atque refossum via Salaria tertio ab Urbe lapide: quod nullo magis proprio vocabulo dixerimus prae eius amplitudine, multisque atque diversis eiusdem vijs, quam subterraneam civitatem: quippe quod ipsius ingressu primaria via ceteris amplior pateat, quae hinc inde vias diversas habeat, easdemque frequentes, quae rursum in diversos viculos dividantur, et angiportus; rursus, ut in civitatibus, statis locis velut fora quaedam, ampliora sint spatia ad conventus sacros agendos, eademque sanctorum imaginibus exornata; nec desint, licet nunc obstructa, ad lumen recipiendum desuper excisa foramina" (*Annales Ecclesiastici*, II, Romae 1594, p. 81).

[182] As already mentioned, the finding of paintings and corporeal remains in the catacombs was greeted as a miraculous confirmation of the legitimacy of Catholic cults and rituals. Above, pp. 47-52.

dated back to the earliest days of Christianity – no one could doubt anymore that early Christians used images, or question their legitimacy.[183]

Baronio was one of the first enthusiastic visitors of the cemetery on Via Salaria, and he also visited the catacombs of Saint Hermes and of Petrus and Marcellinus.[184] The Cardinal was acutely aware of the importance and effectiveness of the visual element and was himself a fervent promoter of the decoration of church interiors, possibly inspired by Early Christian models.[185] To a more careful observation, however, Baronio's interest in antiquarian evidence appears to have been rather superficial as he only treated it when relevant to his historical work.[186] For instance, he mentioned classical monuments such as temples, baths, or columns when directly related to the Christianization of the urban landscape of pagan Rome. But after all Baronio was a historian, and objects and images were only significant for him as material traces of past events, and always in combination with written sources.[187] Although as a scholar and devout Catholic, the Cardinal was

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[183] See Haskell 1993, pp. 102-103.

[184] For Baronio's exploration of the catacomb on the Via Salaria, above n. 183. For the other two catacombs: M.A. Boldetti cites in his *Osservazioni sopra i cimiterj* (Roma, 1720) a testimony given in court in 1627 by a Father Jesuit who declared to have guided cardinal Baronio through the cemetery of Saint Hermes (*Osservazioni sopra i cimiterj de' santi martiri, ed antichi cristiani di Roma: aggiuntavi la serie di tutti quelli, che sino al presente si sono scoperti. E di altri simili, che in varie parti del mondo si trovano: con alcune riflessioni pratiche sopra il culto delle reliquie*, Roma 1720, p. 243). As for the catacombs of Peter and Marcellinus, Antonio Bosio recalls to have visited them with "il Cardinal Baronio, il quale ne senti' grandissimo contento", Bosio, *Roma sotterranea....*, 1632 (1634), p. 327. Additionally, we know of further explorations that Baronio carried on outside Rome, for instance in the catacomb of Saint Gaudiosus in Naples and in the catacomb of Saint Victorinus in Amiternum (see Spera 2012, pp. 397-8; notes 9-10)

[185] On the artistic interests and commissions of cardinal Baronio see, among many others: *Baronio e l'arte…* 1985; *Arte e committenza…* 2009.
[186] On Baronio's functional and ideological use of ancient monuments see Guazzelli in *Sacred History…*2012, pp. 69-70; Spera 2009, p. 74; Spera 2012, p. 399.

[187] On the role of written and material sources in Baronio's historical work see for instance Tutino 2014, pp. 83-88.

obviously amazed at the discovery of the catacombs and eager to use the new visual material, catacomb paintings represented in reality just a small addition to the large body of already available (and easier to work with) material and visual evidence.[188] With their obscure iconographies and lack of formal elegance, catacomb murals could in fact be rather disconcerting for eyes accustomed to the classical language of perspective and idealized forms of *cinquecento* art. Moreover, observers of the time must have found it difficult to reconcile the crude quality of catacomb painting with the perfection of all divine creations (and sacred images were obviously believed to be of divine origin), thus preferring to avoid them when possible.[189] A further circumstance that may also explain why many Catholic scholars essentially appeared to ignore catacomb art was probably a lack of artistic understanding rather than blunt disinterest. Likewise, the fact that relic hunters authorized by the Church itself damaged or even destroyed some of the catacomb paintings does not necessarily suggest that they "were regarded as expendable" in general.[190] Perhaps, it only suggests that relic hunters themselves – often unscrupulous individuals not easily impressed by miles of dark and gloomy galleries lined with tombs, let alone by the silent crowd of painted saints – were more interested in the profit from the sale of relics rather than in the historical and artistic importance of catacomb art as *vestigia* of the sacred past.[191]

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[188] Haskell 1993, p. 106.

[189] See for instance Oryshkevich 2012.

[190] Irina Oryshkevich argues for instance that "(…) the degree of damage inflicted on them [*catacomb images*] by relic hunters (...) reveals that they were regarded as expendable". I. Oryshkevich, "Cultural History in the Catacombs: Early Christian Art and Macarius' Hagioglypta", in *Sacred History…* 2012, pp. 250-266, p. 251.

[191] *Ibidem*, pp. 250-254.

Whatever the case, it is true that objects and images found in the catacombs appeared to have initially stirred the curiosity of only few learned antiquarians interested in pagan antiquity but also intrigued by the world of the ancient Christians. Alfonso Chacon (1530-1599), Jan L'Heureux (known as Macarius, 1551-1617), Philip van Winghe (1560-1593), Pompeo Ugonio (d. 1614), and the young Antonio Bosio (c. 1576-1629), were among the distinguished scholars who devoted their attention to the material remains of the Christian past. As we will see in the following chapters, they maintained a more humanistic approach to Christian antiquity avoiding wherever possible confessional and apologetic questions despite their moral engagement with the material. An engagement that would be unreasonable not to expect from scholars active in Rome at the time, many of whom were either loyal supporters of the Church or came from its ranks. Chacon, van Winghe, and Macarius, a Spanish Dominican friar and two antiquarians from Flanders, became acquainted in Rome sharing similar antiquarian interests.[192] All three split their attention between classical and Christian antiquity, and rather than highlighting their irreconcilable differences they tried to develop a more nuanced understanding of the ancient world in which Christian Rome appeared to be the direct continuation and natural successor of pagan Rome. In their perception, the Christian world was gradually emerging from the pagan world, and even the nascent Christian Church evolved some of its rituals from pagan and Jewish traditions and ceremonies. Such a harmonious view of the past – still echoing humanistic ideals of providential universalism – was exactly what Catholic polemicists

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[192] The fact that Chacon, L'Heureux, and van Winghe were good acquaintances is not just a supposition. L'Heureux himself in the introduction to his *Hagioglypta*, describes the life and work of Chacon and van Winghe in Rome with great familiarity and even affection. J. L'Heureux, *Hagioglypta, sive picturae et sculpturae sacrae antiquiores praesertim quae Romae reperiuntur*, edited by. R. Garucci, Paris 1854, *Praefatio ad Lectorem*, pp. 1-6.

were instead eager to cut off in fear that it could support Protestant accusations of paganism in Catholic thought and practices, and thus undermine the authority of the Catholic Church.[193]

It has been argued that since Chacon never completed his *Historica descriptio Urbis Romae sub Pontificibus*, van Winghe died prematurely, and Macarius' manuscript on Early Christian art remained unpublished until the nineteenth century, they only had a minimal impact on seventeenth-century antiquarian discourse.[194] Others benefitted from their antiquarian research, fragments of which appeared in various books on the early Church. According to Irina Oryshkevich, the fragmentation of their work inevitably resulted in a loss of coherence and power to inspire a different approach to Christian antiquity.[195] However, it was exactly through such "cannibalization" that their unpublished work – as altered and weakened as it was – reached instead a wider audience even outside their inner circle, and paved the way for a different approach to the material remains of Christian Antiquity.

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[193] See for instance S. Ditchfield, "Text before Trowel: Antonio Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea* revisited", in *The Church Retrospective*, *Studies in Church History*, edited by R.N. Swanson, Woodbridge, Suffolk 1997, pp. 343-360, in particular pp. 353-356.

[194] See for instance Oryshkevich 2014.

[195] *Ibidem*, in particular pp. 115-116.

In Search of the Christian Past (I): Antiquarians.

Interlude on Chacon

"Frater Alfonsus Chacón doctor theologus" and sophisticated antiquarian*

Alfonso Chacón arrived in Rome at the end of 1567 invited by Pope Pius V as a minor penitentiary for the Spanish language in Saint Peter's Basilica, and remained in the city until his death in 1599.[1] Chacón was initially part of the household of Cardinal Francisco Pacheco de Toledo (1508-1579), perhaps the most influential and powerful member of the Spanish party in Rome, and lived in his palace for several years. In 1569 he was officially granted the title of *Sacrae Theologiae Magister*, and was often called upon to review supposedly immoral or heretical books. Chacón himself recalls being often busy "reviewing and correcting the work of those who were held in jail by the Saint Inquisition".[2] Despite what one might expect, Chacón always showed excellent judgment and great tolerance in handling such a delicate job, avoiding fanaticism and nonsense, and

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* *This is the autograph signature found in an unpublished document in the Archivio di S. Isidoro degli Irlandesi, in Rome, ms. 2/49, f. 295v.*

** *All translations into English are mine unless otherwise stated.*

[1] For biographical information of on Chacón, see: S. Grassi Fiorentino "Alonso Chacón", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XXIV, *ad vocem*, Rome 1980. In general, see also: A. Recio Veganzones, O.F.M., "Alfonso Chacón, primer estudioso de lo mosaico cristiano de Roma y algunos diseños chaconianos poco conocidos", in *Rivista di Archeologica Cristiana*. 50 (1974), pp. 295-329; "Una obra manuscrita de Alfonso Chacón OP (1530-1599): la "Historica Descriptio Urbis Romae", *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, 78 (2002), pp. 325-367.

[2] "(...) in revisendis et examinandis scriptis aliquorum, qui in carceribus sanctae Inquisitionis detinentur", in *Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum historicorum, dogmaticorum, moralium amplissima collectio*, E. Martène and U. Durand, Paris 1724-1733, coll. 1325-26, quoted in Grassi Fiorentini, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italian*i 1980.

refusing to condemn potentially good and useful books. An eloquent example of such (perhaps surprising) open-mindedness is the review he completed in 1572 of *De subtilitate rerum* and *De rerum varietate libri* by the Lombard physician and philosopher Gerolamo Cardano (1501-1576).[3] [fig. 7] In 1570 Cardano was imprisoned by the Holy Inquisition with the accusation of heresy, and released several months later only after having abjured his scholarship and academic teaching. At the end of his meticulous examination, Chacón urged the members of the Congregation of the Index to certainly make the necessary corrections, but not to include Cardano's work in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* as it was too valuable and useful a book.[4] His calm and measured attitude towards religious censorship, distant from ideological excesses and disinclined to engage in confessional polemics, offers fundamental insight into Chacón's approach to Early Christian art, too often misunderstood and misinterpreted.

While in Rome, Chacón entered the erudite circle of Cardinal Farnese and rapidly became one of the leading scholars in the city. Over the years he gathered a rich library and

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[3] Chacón himself mentions his examination of Cardano's work: "Castigationes et animadversiones in sententias aliquot partim erroneas partim suspectas Hieronymi Cardani medici Mediolanensis in libris De subtilitate et varietate rerum contestas (...), (Bibliotheca, Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale, Ms. IX. G. 33, col. 98). Although the review has been presumed lost, I was able to locate it in the archive of the College of St. Isidore in Rome. The document is contained in a miscellaneous manuscript presumably assembled by the Irish Franciscan father and historian Luke Wadding (1588-1657), and containing much of Chacon's unpublished material (Rome, Archivio di S. Isidoro degli Irlandesi, ms. 2/49, ff. 271r-295v). On Girolamo Cardano, see for instance: G. Gliozzi, "Gerolamo Cardano", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XIX, *ad vocem*, Rome 1976. See also: *Girolamo Cardano: Philosoph, Naturforscher, Arzt*, edited by K. von Eckhard, Wiesbaden 1994; *Girolamo Cardano nel suo tempo: atti del Convegno, 16-17 novembre 2001*, Castello Visconti di San Vito, Somma Lombardo (Varese), edited by G. Arnocida *et alii*, Pavia 2003.

[4] "hoc solum advertens libros hos Hieronymi Cardani si purgentur utilissimos futuros cum (...) medicis, mathematicis, astronomis, architectis, agricolis, nautis (...) multa collegit, multa tradit (...) quae sunt lectione digna", Rome, Archivio di S. Isidoro degli Irlandesi, ms. 2/49, f. 295v.

a large museum.[5] He collected various artifacts, from coins and inscriptions to everyday objects, particularly appreciated for their documentary value as material fragments of ancient cultures.[6] His library gained so much fame that, after his death in 1599, Clement VIII claimed it for the Vatican Library.[7] His scholarly interests ranged wide, as reflected in the encyclopedic and often chaotic collection of documents he left. A miscellaneous volume preserved today in the library of the College of St. Isidore in Rome, for instance, contains a number of papers touching upon diverse erudite topics, from the lives and deeds of cardinals, the *Gesta et mortes Cardinal. ab anno 1557* obviously related to his ambitious *Vitae et gesta summorum Pontificum*,[8] to the transcription of the (allegedly) original verdict against Jesus Christ, the *Sententia originale di Pontio Pilato contra Jesu Christo trovata al Aquila l'anno 1580*, emblematic of his interest in the early history of Christianity, to a collection of poems as well as of medical recipes.[9] [fig. 8] The volume also contains transcriptions of ancient inscriptions, *Inscriptiones Roma e Italiquae urbium*, as well as a few drawings of ancient buildings.

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[5] On Chacón's collection and library, see also I. Herklotz, "Alfonso Chacón e le gallerie dei ritratti nell'eta' della Controriforma", in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio nell'eta' di Cesare Baronio*, edited by P. Tosini, Rome 2009, pp. 111-142.

[6] "Alphonsus Ciacconius (...) instruxerat Romae museum, non solum libri cujuscumque generis, sed et suppellectile varia, tum rerum in natura admirabilium, ut fossilium, concharum, marmorum et affinium, tum scutorum antiquorum, ut stilorum, clavium, nolarum, staterarum, et mille aliorum ejusmodi (…)", in J. L'Heureux, *Hagioglypta, sive picturae et sculpturae sacrae antiquiores praesertim quae Romae reperiuntur*, edited by. R. Garucci, Paris 1854, p. 2.

[7] A. Recio Veganzones 1974. See also T. Dandelet, *Spanish Rome, 1500-1700*, New Haven 2001, p. 82

[8] A. Chacón, *Vitae et gesta summorum Pontificum, a Christo Domino usque ad Clementem VIII nec non S.R.E. Cardinalium cum eorumdem insignibus*, Rome 1601.

[9] Rome, Archivio di S. Isidoro degli Irlandesi, ms. 2/49.

Interested in history and antiquarianism, Chacón was equally fascinated by Christian and pagan antiquity, and he had envisioned a monumental and encyclopedic work in three volumes on ancient Rome, the *Antiquitatum romanarum Libri*, which he was never able to conclude.[10] As he himself explains, the first book was to be dedicated to three hundred famous ancient men and women, comprising their portraits and explanations of their memorable deeds; the second volume was to be devoted to the reconstruction of the ancient military and everyday life, mainly based on material remains; the third and last book, finally, was to illustrate and analyze the reliefs on some two hundred sarcophagi, in order to discuss ancient religion.[11] He also composed an erudite and detailed analysis of the group of the Dioscuri on *Monte Cavallo* dedicated to Pope Sixtus V,[12] which – as Ingo Herklotz points out – clearly reveals his ability to deal with archaeological material and his understanding of the current antiquarian method based on the sophisticated combination of material and literary evidence in an attempt to understand the past.[13] Chacón also composed works dealing with Christian history, such as the monumental and still useful *Vita, et gestae*

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[10] Herklotz in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…*2009, p. 118.

[11] BAV, Chigi, R. II. 62, c. 324r. See I. Herklotz, *Cassiano dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, München 1999, in particular pp. 258-260; Herklotz in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…*2009, p. 118.

[12] A. Chacón, *De statuis marmoreis ad Quirinalem*, 1589. The text, never published, is in the Universitätsbibliothek in Basel (C.VI.a.81- E.VIII.4). See P.O. Kristeller, *Iter italicum. A Finding-List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogues Manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and other Libraries*, I-VI, London 1963-1997, V, 49.

[13] See Herklotz in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…*2009, p. 129; p. 129, n. 102. For an analysis of the antiquarian method of the time, see above, chapter 1, pp. 22-47.

pontificum romanorum et S.R.E. Cardinalium..., completed and published much later,[14] to

the rather fanciful *Historia ceu verissima*, harshly criticized by Baronio and Bellarmino as a

fable.[15] In 1576 he published a particularly important work, the first systematic study of

Trajan's Column dedicated to King Philip II of Spain,[16] whom Chacón celebrated as the

successor of Trajan since they were both, in his own words, Spanish as well as both wise

and just rulers.[17] The book featured a forty-page textual description of the frieze completed

with 130 illustrations engraved by Girolamo Muziano based on drawings by Jacopo

Ripanda.[18] [figs. 9,10, 11] The engravings were densely detailed and fairly accurate despite

some minor mistakes that were probably unavoidable given the extension and complexity

of the reliefs. With such a rich and complete visual apparatus, Chacón's work embodied the

innovative idea – already circulating within the Farnese circle since Panvinio's *De*

triumpho commentarius – of visual representation as an alternative to traditional verbal

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[14] A. Chacón (*et alii*), *Vita, et res gestae pontificum romanorum et S.R.E. Cardinalium an initio nascenti ecclesiae usque ad Clementem IX.O.M. Alphonsi Ciaconii Ordinis Praedicatorum & aliorum opera descriptae*, Rome 1677.

[15] A. Chacón, *Historia ceu verissima a calumniis multorum vindicata, quae refert M. Ulpii Traiani Augusti animam precibus divi Gregorii Pontif. Rom. a Tartareis cruciatibus ereptam*, Rome 1576(a). Bellarmino defines Chacon's story as fabulosa. See for instance G.A. Guazzelli, "Gregorio Magno nell'erudizione ecclesiastica della seconda meta' del XVI secolo", in *Gregorio Magno e le origini dell'Europa*, edited by C. Leonardi, Florence 2014, pp. 601-617, in particular pp. 612-613.

[16] *Historia utriusque belli Dacici a Traiano Caesare gesti ex simulacris,quae in eiusdem columna Romae visuntur collecta*, Rome 1576(b)

[17] "(…) successor Trajani Caesaris fuisti; Hispanus ille; Hispanus & tu; ille Italicae ortus, tu Hispali urbe illi proxima genitus: Rex ille Hispaniarum, tu regnum idem moderaris: ille medietati orbis praefuit, medietas etiam tibi subest: ille inter ethnicos pri ncipes optimus, tu inter Christianos censeris (…), A. Chacon, Historia utriusque belli Dacici... f. 2v. Not only Chacon dedicated his book to Philip II, but he gave the entire work a "distinctive Spanish flavor" (Dandelet 2001, p. 82) by claiming, for instance, that Trajan's military victory was possible thanks to both Italian and Spanish soldiers. He also claimed that it was possible to recognize among the soldiers on the column many Spaniard, due to their clothing and hairstyle. On this, see Dandelet 2001, pp. 81-82.

[18] A. Chacon, *Historia utriusque belli dacici a Traiano caesare gesti, ex simulacris quae in columna eiusdem Romae visuntur collecta*, Rome 1576(b).

descriptions of historical events or monuments.[19] Chacón's publication is one of the first antiquarian publications to be exclusively based on the monument itself rather than on textual sources, and shows that the Spaniard was among those antiquarians precociously aware of the importance of non-literary material for the study of antiquity, and of the role of ancient monuments in shedding light on ancient texts. An awareness that certainly positions Chacón among the main protagonists of what has been defined the sixteenth-century "visual turn" in antiquarian scholarship.[20]

Chacón was also one of the first few antiquarians who began to criticize the indifference with which Christian monuments were regarded, and increasingly turned his attention towards the *sacra antiquitas*.[21] However, while trading classical for Christian antiquity, Chacón did not modify his method of enquiry since, as Ugonio put it, whether looking at pagan or Christian artifacts, antiquarians should always ask the same questions about the past, and use the same method and critical tools to answer them.[22] Indeed, Christian and pagan antiquity were not necessarily perceived as two distinct fields of investigations; on the contrary, they were often conceived as the object of contiguous

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[19] On the relation between visual and verbal description of an event, or monument, see above, chapter 1, pp. 31-47 in particular.

[20] *Ibidem*.

[21] See for instance Chacón 1576(a), dedication to Pope Gregory XIII, ff. 2v-4r.

[22] "Ne' deve stimarsi per cosa bassa o da sprezzare l'osservar simili cose, le quali i Santi Pontefici, e Padri nostri con molta spesa, e con gran fede, e misterio le hanno per le chiese da loro edificate poste innanzi, perche' da noi fossero intese e considerate. Cerchi chi vuole perche' fusseil simulacro dell'Ocha in Campidoglio, perche' sopra il tempio di Saturno vi si vedessero i Tritoni e vadano altre simili superstizioni i curiosi cercando. A noi ogni minima memoria, o vestigio della Religione nostra Christiana, ci convien stimar piu' che tutto il fasto, e tutti gl'Imperii de profani Gentili", P. Ugonio, *Historia delle stationi di Roma che si celebrano la Quadragesima*, Rome 1588, c. 133 (r). On this, see also I. Herklotz, "Archeologia cristiana e archeologia classica nel XVI secolo: riflessioni sulla genesi di una nuova disciplina", in Id., *La Roma degli Antiquari. Cultura e erudizione tra Cinquecento e Settecento*, Rome 2012, pp. 57-66.

historical and antiquarian inquiry. In 1568, for instance, Onofrio Panvinio introduces his study of the burial rites among the early Christians as a sort of continuation of his scholarly work on the pagan burial rites.[23] Even when dealing with Christian antiquity, in fact, Chacón – and some of the other antiquarians interested in both pagan and Christian antiquity, Onofrio Panvinio, Pompeo Ugonio, Philips van Winghe, and Jean L'Heureux, to name a few – continued to use a method of investigation based on the analysis of material and visual culture (physical objects or their representation) combined with literary sources. In order to gain the best possible understanding of the Christian past, these antiquarians turned to various fields of historical enquiry, such as topography, numismatics, and epigraphy, traditionally used by classical antiquarians.[24] They treated the physical remains of the Christian past not just as sacred relics documenting the heroic era of the Catholic Church – and thus immune to philological scrutiny – but rather as true historical evidence to be analyzed critically and used to reconstruct and understand ancient life and customs.[25] Of course these scholars had no doubts whatsoever that material evidence would eventually corroborate the literary tradition and prove, once for all, the legitimacy of the Catholic Church and its practices against all Protestant allegations.[26] And it could not have been otherwise since, in line with their religious convictions, they firmly believed that the truth

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[23] "Apud omnes gentes Romanas, Graecas, Hebraeas, Aegyptias, & alias Barbars nations, statos, solennesque sepeliendorum mortuorum ritus, & caerimonias fuisse in libris, quos XL. Antiquitatum Romanorum scripsi (…)", in O. Panvinio, *De ritu Sepeliendi mortuos apud veteres christianos, eorundem cemeteriis liber*, Cologne 1568, "Praefatio", p. 4.

[24] See for instance I. Herklotz, "Arnaldo Momigliano's 'Ancient History and the Antiquarian'; A Critical Review", in *Momigliano and Antiquarianism. Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences*, edited by P. N. Miller, Toronto 2007, pp. 127-153.

[25] *Ibidem*. But see also Herklotz in *La Roma degli Antiquari…* 2012.

[26] For a discussion of the relationship between documentary evidence and critical interpretation, see chapter 3, pp. 140-159 in particular.

of history would necessarily confirm the truth of the Catholic doctrines that were, ultimately, the reflection of God's Truth.[27] And yet, on several occasions, scholars of Christian antiquity found themselves in a difficult position, trapped between the official Catholic line and their own understanding of the past built upon information gathered from material culture. An interesting example of how difficult it could be to find a balance between scholarly and apologetic reasons, documentary criticism and the growing ideological pressure of the Church, is provided by Chacón himself.[28]

In 1578 Chacón penned the first critical description of the *coemeterium* on the Via Salaria – identified at the time with the cemetery of Priscilla and known today as the cemetery of Via Anapo[29] – which he visited in person.[30] [fig. 12] It is an unpublished

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[27] According to post-Tridentine theology, human history is in fact the temporal manifestation of God's will, and evidence – both material and textual evidence – preserve traces of God's Truth disseminated throughout history. See below, chapter 3, pp… See also S. Tutino, *Shadows of Doubt. Language and Truth in Post-Reformation Catholic Culture*, Oxford 2014, in particular pp. 83-96.

[28] On the difficult balance between scholarly and ideological reasons, see for instance, Tutino, *Shadows of Doubt…* 2014, and in particular pp. 74-83.

[29] Chacon's account, dated July 1578 is preserved in a miscellaneous manuscript in the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Archives of the History of Art, in Los Angeles (Mss. 88-A200 840005B), c. 70r-78v. The manuscript is recorded in Kristeller, *Iter Italicum…* 1963-1997, V, p. 400. Chacon's account is unpublished and to my knowledge is only mentioned by Herklotz in Id., "Chi era Priscilla? Baronio e le ricerche sulla Roma sotterranea", in *Cesare Baronio tra santita' e scrittura storica*, edited by G.A. Guazzelli *et alii*, Rome 2012, pp. 425-444; Id. in *La Roma degli Antiquari*, p. 58, n. 6. There is also another anonymous contemporary account of the 1578 discovery, discovered in 1888 by V. Sauerland in a library in Trier and published in *Römische Quartalschrift*, 1888, pp. 209-212, and in G. Ferretto, *Note storico-bibliografiche*, Vatican City 1942, pp. 107-109. On the catacomb of Via Anapo, see for instance: J. G. Deckers *et alii*, *Die Katakombe "Anonima di Via Anapo": Repertorium der Malereien*, Vatican City 1991; see also F. Bisconti, *Le pitture delle catacombe romane. Restauri e interpretazioni*, Todi 2011, in particular pp. 1-5 and *passim*.

[30] Years later, Antonio Bosio wrote: "(…) concorse gran gente a vederlo; e particolarmente huomini di lettere, come piu; volte mi ha riferito Alfonso Ciaccone dell'Ordine dei Predicatori, scrittore e huomo illustre dell'eta' nostra; il quale vi fu particolarmente a vederlo in compagnia di Cardinali, Ambasciatori regii, e diversi altri personaggi (…) Fu ritrovato questo cimiterio, per quanto mi venne riferito tanto dal Ciacconio, quano da latri, che hebbero gratia di vederlo (…)", in *Roma Sotterranea di Antonio Bosio Romano*, Roma 1632 (1634), reprinted in Rome 1998, p. 511.

sixteen-page-long letter addressed to an anonymous Cardinal, urging him to intercede with Pope Gregory XIII for the restoration and preservation of the newly found catacomb identified with that of Priscilla. Although the cardinal remains unnamed throughout the letter, I have reasons to assume that he could be identified with Cardinal Francesco Alciati (1522-1580). A copy of Chacón's letter with the title *Detectio Coemeterii B. Priscillae an. 1578* was in fact bound with other papers belonging to Cardinal Alciati in a sixteenth-century miscellaneous codex preserved in the Trivulziana Library collection, where Giulio Porro saw it in 1884.[31] The codex was unfortunately lost with many others during the 1943 bombing of Milan, but Porro accurately described it noting also that the handwriting of some marginal notes was comparable to that of Giovan Battista Fontani de' Conti, a Milanese jurist and man of letters particularly close to Cardinal Alciati. While the presence of the letter among his papers and the annotations of his *protégé* points to Cardinal Alciati, the salutation formula as well – *vale decus et ornamentum pietatis et litterarum* – may offer a clue in this sense. In fact, Francesco Alciati, a relative of the more famous lawyer and writer Andrea Alciati, was renowned for his vast erudition as well as religious piety and indefatigable activity in the post-Reformation Church.[32]

As a young man, Alciati studied law in Bologna and Pavia where he earned his doctorate *in utroque iure* (canon and civil law). He subsequently taught civil law from 1550

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[31] Cod. 1601 Miscellanea Alciato, see G. Porro, *Catalogo dei codici manoscritti della Trivulziana*, Turin 1884, p. 95.

[32] On Francesco Alciati see N. Raponi, "Francesco Alciati", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, II, Rome 1960, *ad vocem*; see also *The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church* (digital resource, Florida International University Libraries, http://www2.fiu.edu/~mirandas/cardinals.htm), *ad vocem*. All biographical information on Cardinal Alciati are taken, unless otherwise stated, from these two sources.

to 1560 at the University of Pavia where one of his students was Carlo Borromeo who earned his doctoral degree with him in 1559. In 1560 Alciati was called to Rome by the Milanese Pope Pius IV, and in 1561 was elected bishop and given the office of the *dataria*. Finally, he was created cardinal in the consistory of March 12 1565. He participated to the Council of Trent first as a delegate of Carlo Borromeo then in his own authority, and in 1569 was named Cardinal Major Penitentiary. Cardinal Alciati was also a member of the Congregation for the Correction of the *Decretum Gratiani* and of the Holy Office. An important protagonist of the cultural life in Rome, the Cardinal was a fellow of the academy of the *Notti Vaticane* founded by Carlo Borromeo and several others, as well as a member of the congregation of cardinal-protectors who oversaw the Roman University La Sapienza.[33] Cardinal Alciati, finally, was a protector of Gerolamo Cardano and an admirer of his work. The same Gerolamo Cardano whose books *De subtilitate rerum* and *De rerum varietate Libri* Chacón had defended with the Congregation of the Index, a circumstance that further encourage the possibility that the Dominican and the Milanese Cardinal knew each other.[34]

What made Cardinal Alciati the ideal interlocutor for Chacón's plea to restore and preserve the catacomb with its Christian artifacts and murals, however, were his political

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[33] On the Notti Vaticane and San Carlo Borromeo in Rome, see the volume *San Carlo e il suo tempo. Atti del Convegno Internazionale nel IV centenario della morte (Milano, 21-26 maggio 1984)*, II, Rome 1986, and in particular R. De Maio, "Carlo Borromeo e Michelangelo", pp. 995-1012. See also: L. Berra, *L'Accademia delle Notti Vaticane fondata da San Carlo Borromeo: con tre appendici di documenti inediti*, Milan 1915. On Cardinal Alciati and the University La Sapienza, see F.M. Renazzi, *Storia dell'Universita' degli Studi di Roma detta comunemente la sapienza che contiene anche un saggio storico della letteratura romana dal principio del secolo XIII al declinare del secolo XVIII*, II, Rome 1804, in particular pp. 141-148.

[34] See above, pp. 65-66.

and personal connections. To begin with, Cardinal Alciati was particularly close to the Spanish faction in Rome, a "good vassal" of Spain as ambassador Don Juan de Zúñiga notes, certainly close to Cardinal Pacheco, the most important representative of Spanish interests in Rome.[35] Moreover, in Bologna where he studied with Ugo Boncompagni, future Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585), Alciati had become acquainted with fellow students Alessandro Farnese (1520-1589) and Otto Truchsess (1514-1573) among many others such as Reginald Pole and Cristoforo Madruzzo. All destined to important ecclesiastic careers, Farnese and Truchsess were also to become important patrons and protectors of the arts.[36] The artistic patronage of the *gran cardinale* Alessandro Farnese is well known and it suffices here to recall that he also protected a circle of antiquarians who studied Early Christian artifacts, from Ligorio to Panvinio and Chacón himself.[37] More important, perhaps, is that Cardinal Truchsess shared with Alessandro Farnese several important artistic commissions in Rome, for instance the decoration of the Oratory of the Gonfalone with the cycle of the Passion in the 1560s.[38] Furthermore, as titular-cardinal of Santa Sabina, Truchsess also commissioned the restoration of the basilica and the new apse fresco

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[35] Dandelet 2001, cit, p. 135.

[36] On Cardinal Farnese, see for instance C. Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale. Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts*, Yale University Press 1992. On Cardinal Truchsess, see N.M. Overbeeke, "Cardinal Otto Truchsess von Waldburg and his role as art dealer for Albrecht V of Bavaria", *Journal of the History of Collections*, 6, no. 2, 1994, pp. 173-179; M. G. Aurigemma, "Sacra in a Tower: The Cardinal of Augsburg's Paintings and Reliquaries in 1566" in *Sacred Possessions. Collecting Italian Religious Art 1500-1900*, ed. by G. Faigenbaum and S. Ebert-Schifferer, Los Angeles 2011, pp. 84-103; M. Nicolaci, "Il Cardinal d'Augusta Otto Truchsess von Waldburg (1514-1573) mecenate della Controriforma ", in *Principi di Santa Romana Chiesa*, ed. by M. Gallo, Rome 2013, pp. 31-42.

[37] On Cardinal Farnese and his antiquarian circle, see also: C. Occhipinti, *Pirro Ligorio e la storia cristiana di Roma da Costantino all'Umanesimo*, Pisa, 2007.

[38] For the literature on Cardinal Truchsess, see above p. 10, n. 36.

as a replacement of the original fifth-century mosaic, evidently too damaged to be maintained.[39] The fresco, painted by Taddeo Zuccari and his workshop (1559-1560), is based on the subject and composition of the original mosaic, and was most likely meant to preserve its iconographic and stylistic memory, as well as evoke an early Christian atmosphere particularly appropriate to the ancient basilica.[40] Moreover, Truchsess was also an avid collector of art and antiquities himself, and even incurred enormous debts for this passion, as well as being the counselor and art dealer of Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria from 1568 to his death in 1573. Although his understanding of *antiquitates* was by no means that of an expert – as Truchsess himself admitted – he worked along with professional dealers such as Jacopo Strada or Niccolo' Stopio and had become the Duke's main supplier of art objects and antiquities in Rome.[41] As a leading protagonist of Roman cultural and religious life, Francesco Alciati likely remained on friendly terms with personalities of the caliber of Alessandro Farnese and Otto Truchsess throughout his life.[42] They probably shared the

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[39] See also: M. Salmi, "La pittura absidale di S. Sabina", *Nuovo Bollettino di Archeologia Cristiana*, XX, 1914, pp. 5-10; C. Acidini Luchinat, *Taddeo e Federico Zuccari. Fratelli pittori del Cinquecento*, I, Milan 1998, pp. 115-116; G. Balass, "Taddeo Zuccari's fresco in the apse-conch in S. Sabina in Rome", *Assaph*, IV, 1999, pp. 105-124; B. Agosti, "La riscoperta dell'arte paleocristiana", in *I Papi della Speranza. Arte e religiosita' nella Roma del '600*, (Roma, Museo Nazionale del Castel di Sant'Angelo 2014), ed. by M.G. Bernardini and M. Lolli Ghetti, Rome 2014, pp. 31-41; M. Gianandrea, "Nuove strategie figurative. La decorazione pittorica tardoantica di Santa Sabina", in *Medioevo Natura e Figura. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Parma 20-25 settembre 2011*, edited by A.C. Quintavalle, Milan 2015, pp. 139-151.

[40] For a thorough discussion of the fresco and its possible relation with the original iconography, as well as of the Early Christian entire decorative program of the church, see chapter 4, pp. 169-183 (with additional bibliography)

[41] Overbeeke 1994.

[42] It seems important to mention here the fact that Andrea Alciati, the Cardinal's relative, had been particularly impressed by the young Truchsess in Pavia, and had befriended him, supporting the idea that the Cardinal Alciati maintained a friendly relationship with the German Cardinal even long after the end of their studies in Pavia. See Nicolaci in *Principi di Santa Romana Chiesa…* 2013, in particular p. 32. See also, Aurigemma in *Sacred Possessions…*2011, in particular p. 85.

same attention to Christian antiquity not necessarily imputable only to religious matters and reform issues, but also that antiquarian interest they had in common. If we finally take into consideration Cardinal Alciati's close relationship with Pope Gregory XIII,[43] his former professor in Bologna, it seems only too appropriate that Chacón addressed to him an appeal for the restoration and preservation of the newly discovered catacomb.

A glimpse into Chacon's antiquarian method.

Given the necessity to convince his illustrious reader of the uniqueness of the site, Chacón opens his letter to Cardinal Francesco Alciati recalling the overwhelming feeling of reverent admiration and religious piety that the newly discovered catacomb inspired in him.[44] He praises the courage and unshakable faith of those first Christians who sought shelter in the catacombs, rehearsing the common misconception of catacombs as hideouts during the persecutions.[45] Chacón then continues, establishing a clear distinction between Pagan and Christian burial customs, observing that the practice of inhumation had replaced

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[43] Cardinal Alciati was an important member of the Curia: for example, he was nominated (along with Cardinal Boncompagni, future Pope Gregory XIII) in the congregation for the revision of the Decretum Gratianii (1566) From that moment and until his death, Cardinal Alciati became one of the most authoritative experts on canon law of the Curia, often consulted by the popes, especially Gregory XIII who, evidently, knew and trusted his former college companion. See L. v. Pastor, *History of the popes from the Close of the Middle Ages,* 5th ed., 40 vols, English transl. F. Antrobus and R. Kerr, London 1923-1953, vols. 8-9.

[44] (...) quantam admirationem simul cum pietatis affectu, Chacón 1578, c. 71r.

[45] Idem, c. 77r. Needless to say, the catacombs never served as secret shelters during the persecutions as they were public cemeteries, often built by imperial law. Moreover, many of them were actually built in the fourth century and remained in use until the sixth century that is after the legalization of Christianity. See for instance Oryshkevich 2003, pp. 10-13.

that of cremation among Christians,[46] and that humble burials in the ground – following the tradition of the Biblical patriarchs – had replaced the *publica monumenta* erected by pagans to celebrate the deceased.[47] Nevertheless, notes Chacón, Christians did decorate some of the most important tombs, in particular those of the martyrs, with "ornaments, marble elements, pictures and inscriptions"[48] to celebrate their glory and preserve their memory.[49] He then goes to name seven Roman *pontifices* and a number of martyrs buried in the cemetery, and to describe some of the pictures still visible in the catacomb – from Christ and the Apostles to the Resurrection of Lazarus or the Ark of Noah [figs. 13, 14, 30] – as well as a number of marble inscriptions.[50] In this first portion of his letter, Chacón greatly emphasizes the political importance of the catacomb and its potential apologetic use as an "arsenal where to find weapons for combat against the heretics and the iconoclasts in particular, who impugned sacred images with which the catacombs are filled".[51] He also defines the catacombs as "arenas where God exercised his gladiators and fighters",[52] anticipating Severano's words in the preface of *Roma Sotterranea* where catacombs are compared to "theaters and circuses where the true and holy gladiators of Christi trained and

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[46] "(…) nec igne cremabant et cineris intra urnas recondebant sed integra intram terram humabant", Chacón 1578, c. 71v.

[47] *Ibidem*.

[48] "(…) ornamentis, marmoribus, picturis, et inscriptionibus", Chacón 1578., c. 71v.

[49] "(…) illorum memorias in posteritate propagarent", *Ibidem*.

[50] "(...) tumulos marmoribus ornatos epitaphiis inscriptos (...) recentes heretici contemptus et ludibrio habent", Chacón 1578, c. 77r.

[51] "Arsenali, donde si pigliano le armi da combattere contra gli Eretici, e particolarmente contra gl'Iconclasti, impugnatori delle sacre Immagini, delle quali sono ripiene i Cimiterij", *Roma Sotterranea…* 1632 (1634), "Al lettore".

[52] "(…) circi agonales in quibus Deus suos gladiatores et luctatores exercuit", Chacón 1578, c. 77r.

prepared themselves".[53] Chacón sees very clearly the possibility of the ideological use of the catacombs in the current religious debate, and this is – not surprisingly – his main argument to the Cardinal for the preservation of the site and its content. To further emphasize the significance of the providential discovery of the catacomb, Chacón adds that the cemetery of Priscilla is the only one in Rome that, despite having been sacked in the past, still preserves so many vestiges of the early days of Christianity, *prisca religionis vestigia*.[54] For this very reason the cemetery, neglected for centuries, deserves to be restored to its pristine glory and preserved for future generations, as the antiquarian passionately appeals to the Cardinal.[55]

At first sight, then, the emphasis that Chacón puts on the importance of the catacomb as a weapon against the Protestants and the numerous references to the glory of the Church and the Christian religion may suggest a strong ideological attitude and apologetic point of view of the author of the letter.[56] A more careful reading of the document, however, shows that Chacón approached the newly found catacomb more with the critical mind of a scholar rather than the biased attitude of a Catholic polemicist, and treated the Christian cemetery as the object of a dispassionate and rigorous analysis, based

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[53] *Roma Sotterranea…* 1632 (1634), "Al lettore".

[54] "In ceteriis namque coemeteriis neque pictura nec inscriptio ulla extat nec vestigum picturae aut monumenti (...) At hoc Priscillae coemeterium adhuc retinit prisca religionis vestigia (...)",Chacón 1578, c. 77r-v.

[55] "(…) in pristinam maiestatem et gloriam restituendus esset", Chacón 1578, c. 78r.

[56] That Chacon's interest in the catacombs was mainly apologetic and related to the point of view of Baronio and other champions of the Counter-Reformation, especially in comparison with van Winghe for instance, is still the common assumption in the literature. See Oryshkevich 2011; see also C. Schuddeboom, "Research in the Roman catacombs by the Louvain antiquarian Philips van Winghe", in *Archives & excavations: essays on the history of archaeological excavations in Rome and southern Italy from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century*, edited by I. Bignamini, London-Rome 2004, pp. 23-32, p. 25 in particular.

on both material evidence and literary sources. For instance, in an attempt to contextualize

the catacomb historically, Chacón related it to the other fourteen known Roman catacombs,

which he then ordered chronologically with the help of literary sources, *historiis pontificiis*

et martyrum gestiis.[57] The first and most ancient cemetery in his list is the *coemeterium*

Vaticanum, followed by the *coemeterium ad catacumbas Pauli* and then the *coemeterium*

Priscillae Virginis (that is, the newly discovered catacomb) dated between the end of the

reign of Trajan and the beginning of Hadrian's. Chacón based his analysis of what he

believed to be the *coemeterium Priscillae* on both literary and non-literary evidence.[58] As

material evidence he obviously used the entire catacomb and its content. For the dating of

the cemetery, in particular, Chacón looked at murals depicting a scene that he wrongly

identified as the martyrdom of Saint Ignatius of Antioch – which happened in the eleventh

year of Trajan's reign –and took it as a *terminus post-quem* for the catacomb.[59] [figs. 15,

16, 17] As for textual evidence, Chacón based his chronology on the information, found in

ancient sources, that senator Pudens, the father of Saint Praxedes and Saint Pudentiana, was

buried in the cemetery of Priscilla.[60] Since Praxedes and Pudentiana died during the reign

of Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD), Chacon coherently placed the death of their father Pudens

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[57] "(…) quinque intram urbem novem extram (…) ordinem et temporis antiquitatem ut poterimus, digeremus", Chacón 1578, c. 72v.

[58] *Ibidem*

[59] Actually depicting the biblical story of Daniel and the lions.

[60] "(…) ex antiquiis martirologiis constat Beatum Pudentem discipulum Pauli Apostoli in eo coemeterium fuisse sepultum", Chacón 1578, c. 73r.

aut sub finem imp.ii Traiani aut certe initium Adriani,[61] thus confirming the dating of the

catacomb that he had (wrongly) deduced from the mural decoration.[62]

There are obviously major mistakes in Chacón's chronology as he dated the

majority of the cemeteries too early, and nothing in the newly found catacomb actually

suggested that the burials were realized anytime before the mid-fourth century.[63]

Nevertheless, dating only the Vatican catacomb as early as the apostolic era and moving all

the others to later years, Chacón appears to have a rather good understanding of the

historical reality of the Roman *coemeteria*, which cannot be dated earlier than the end of

the first and the beginning of the second centuries.[64] What is utterly remarkable here,

however, is that by dating the newly found catacomb to a time well beyond the Apostolic

years, Chacón basically implied that the cemetery did not, in fact, provide any direct

evidence demonstrating the unbroken continuity of the Catholic Church and its traditions

from the apostolic times to the present. In other words, Chacón seems to undermine the

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[61] *Ibidem.*

[62] Chacon used here the (spurious) sixth-century *Acta* of Praxedes and Pudentiana that celebrates Pudens as amicus Apostolorum. However, he discretely corrected the evident chronological mistake in the *Acta*, where Pudens, the disciple of the Apostle Paul at the mid of the first century, was still alive during the papacy of Pius I about a century later (140-154 AD circa). Moreover, Chacon did not mention either the fact that in the same *Acta* appeared a certain Priscilla, wife of Pudens, or that there was no reference to charitable activities like, for instance the foundation of a cemetery for martyrs, from Pudens' part. A few years later, in 1586, Baronio tried to solve the question of this mysterious Priscilla identified with a woman, also named Prisca, wife of Aquila, remembered in the Acta Apostolorum and in some of Paul's letters. On the identification of Priscilla, see Herklotz in *Cesare Baronio tra santita' e scrittura storica…*2012.

[63] On the catacomb, see for instance Deckers *et alii* 1991.

[64] On Roman catacombs in general, see for instance: P. Testini, *Le catacombe e gli antichi cimiteri crtistiani in Roma*, Bologna 1966; V. Fiocchi-Nicolai *et alii*, *Le catacombe cristiane di Roma. Origini, sviluppo, apparati decorativi, documentazione epigrafica*, Regensburg 1998; *Origini delle catacombe romane. Atti della giornata tematica dei Seminari di Archeologia Cristiana (Roma, 21 marzo2005)*, edited by V. Fiocchi-Nicolai and J. Guyon, Vatican City 2006

importance of a "miraculous" discovery, whose polemical value against the Protestants had been immediately recognized and exalted.[65] Even more astonishing is the fact that of all the known Roman catacombs, Chacón dated only the Vatican cemetery as early as the apostolic era, thus basically neutralizing – or at least seriously weakening – in the name of factual accuracy and historical truth, one of the most powerful weapons of the Church against the Protestants. Whether he was aware of it or not, with his rigorous antiquarian analysis of the catacomb, Chacón basically contradicts the very notion of catacombs as infallible "arsenals" of the Catholic faith. To what extent Chacón was oblivious of this danger is difficult to assess. As mentioned above he seemed to maintain a certain distance from the apologetic and confessional polemics of his days,[66] and like other scholars found himself in a difficult place when trying to strike a harmonious concordance between the truth of history and the truth of the Church. So much for someone who was "interested mostly in the apologetic value of the paintings and objects" in order "to illustrate the early history of the Church from an apologetic point of view"![67]

As for the identification of the new catacomb with that of Priscilla, again Chacón based his deduction on the comparison of literary and material evidence (the entire catacomb in this case) working with an *argumentum ex silentio*: since all literary sources he had consulted named only a *coemeterium Priscillae* in that specific stretch of the Via

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[65] Both the anonymous account published in Sauerland (1888) and Ferretto (1942), celebrated the discovery of the catacomb "(…) ad confirmationem nostrae indubitatae et certissimae religionis catholicae rituumque catholicorum (…)", cit. in Ferretto 1942, p. 108.

[66] Above, pp. 34-35

[67] Schuddeboom 2004, p. 25 and p. 30.

Salaria, about two miles beyond the city walls, Chacón consequently concluded that the newly found catacomb was in fact that of Priscilla. A few years later, however, Chacón changed his mind proposing the identification of the cemetery with the *coemeterium Ostrianum* where Saint Peter himself used to administer baptism.[68] The new denomination was rapidly accepted by many other scholars, and also received the authoritative endorsement of Bosio.[69] It is plausible that Chacón changed his mind due to diverse circumstances. First, it was probably a matter of commitment to historical accuracy from Chacón's part who, faced with new evidence suggesting a different conclusion, was not afraid to retract his previous words. In fact, in the years following the discovery of the catacomb on the Via Salaria, Chacón most likely visited several other cemeteries, and among them also the actual catacomb of Priscilla on the Via Salaria Nuova. He himself annotates that the entrance of this catacomb is located in the vineyard of a certain Hieronymus Cupis,[70] information that clearly implies that the cemetery found in 1578, whose entrance was *subter vinea Bartolomei Sanctii* on the branch of the Via Salaria called "Vecchia", was necessarily a different cemetery. Thus, Chacón honestly corrected his previous identification. Second, it is also very possible that specific concerns, in this case certainly of apologetic and ideological nature (whether openly declared or not) played here

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[68] "(…) verum illud non est coemeterium Priscillae ut ipse confusit, sed Ostrianum, ubi Petrus predicavit et baptizavit (…)", BAV, Vat. Lat. 5409, f. 8v. On the question, see also Herklotz in *Cesare Baronio tra santita' e scrittura storica…* 2012.

[69]"(…) Il Ciaccone suddetto teneva, che questo fosse il Cimitero Ostriano; & io credo il medesimo; perche' abbiamo veduto in questa Vigna, vicino al Cimiterio, scatorire un'acqua limpidissima: la quale ho inteso da chi vi e' stato, che penetrava nell'istesso Cimiterio: onde si puo' credere, che servisse per uso del sacro battesimo: e sappiamo, che S. Pietro soleva battezzare nel Cimiterio Ostriano (…)", *Roma Sotterranea…* 1632 (1634), III, cap. LXI, p. 489.

[70] "(…) coemeterio Priscillae ad Clivum Cucumeris, subter Vineam Hieronymi a Cupis, civis et patritii Romani (…)", BAV, Vat. Lat. 5409, f. 14r; f. 8r.

an important role, and pushed Chacón to change his position on the newly found cemetery. Let us see why.

As mentioned above, the discovery of 1578 had been deemed providential since it provided plenty of arguments and physical evidence against those who denied the legitimacy of the cult of images and relics as well as the primacy of the Church of Rome based on the blood of countless martyrs. However, by dating the catacomb to the second century – well after the apostolic era although still during the age of the persecutions – Chacón obviously diminished the importance of the cemetery and attenuated the impact of its discovery. Furthermore, the chronological order of the fourteen Roman cemeteries that he proposed, with only one belonging to the apostolic age, could seriously endanger the image of the catacombs as *vestigia* of the purest and most heroic period of the Church. The *coemeterium Ostrianum*, on the other hand, was remembered in the literature, namely the *Gesta Liberii Papae* (sixth century), as the most ancient of Roman cemeteries, *ubi Petrus baptizavit*.[71] By linking the newly discovered cemetery to the presence of Peter in Rome, clearly its importance and authority as evidence of the reality of the early Church were immensely amplified. It is the same process by which Baronio, linking the cemetery of Priscilla to the Roman matron also named Prisca, wife of a certain Aquila and she herself a pupil of Peter and Paul as remembered in the *Acta Apostolorum* and in some of Paul's letters, anticipated its foundation to the apostolic era thus emphasizing its religious and

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[71] In De Rossi 1864-1877, I, p. 190. On the cemetery Bosio wrote: "Dalla famiglia Ostoria (...) questo Cimiterio fu detto Ostoriano e poi corrottamente Ostriano. Di esso si fa memoria solo appresso il medesimo Protonotario di Santa Romana Chiesa, nelli suddetti Atti di Liberio, e Damas; ne' quali si dice, che S. Pietro soleva battezzare in questo Cimiterio (...)", *Roma Sotterranea...* 1632 (1634), III, cap. LV, pp. 455-456. See also Herklotz in *Cesare Baronio tra santita' e scrittura storica...* 2012.

historical significance.[72] And perhaps Baronio may even have influenced Chacón in his rethinking of the catacomb's identification.

Although the Spaniard made several mistakes in his analysis of the newly excavated catacomb, it is important to highlight here the critical method that he used to approach and investigate the Christian monument, as it emerges from an accurate analysis of the letter to Cardinal Alciati. Two years after his publication of Trajan's Column, once again Chacón measured his ability to look at and assess an ancient monument – whether a classical column or a Christian cemetery – using both literary and non-literary sources. In his letter, in fact, Chacón paired the exegesis of written documents with the observation and critical evaluation of the physical and visual remains found in the catacomb, so that material evidence supported and shed light on textual sources and vice versa. The errors in his argument do not undermine the validity of his method as they are elsewhere, for instance in the kind of literary evidence that he took into consideration, mainly texts assembled years after the events in questions and where historical truth was often interwoven with legendary tales and characters. Chacón was indeed a learned and sophisticated antiquarian, very familiar with the most advanced historical method of his days and aware of the immense potential of material and visual evidence for antiquarian studies, and thus deserves to be placed alongside other antiquarians of the time such as Panvinio, Ugonio or van Winghe.

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[72] In his 1586 edition of the *Martyrologium Romanum* Baronio recalls three women named Priscilla in the early centuries of Christianity: the first one, also called Prisca and wife of Aquila, directly connected with the Apostles Peter and Paul; the second one was the mother of senator Pudens and grandmother of Praxedes and Pudentiana and mentioned in their acts, and the third one who lived at the beginning of the fourth century and mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* in the life of Saint Marcellus pope and martyr. Baronio, *Martyrologium…*1586, p. 32. See Herklotz in *Cesare Baronio tra santita' e scrittura storica…* 2012, in particular pp. 439-441.

He did not study Christian antiquity "in order to illustrate the early history of the Church from an apologetic point of view, to illustrate the statements made by Baronio and other champions of the Counter-Reformation", as it has superficially been affirmed.[73] On the contrary, his scholarship was a scrupulous and honest attempt to create historical truth based on the philological analysis of both literary and non-literary evidence. A truth that obviously was – and could not have been otherwise for the Dominican Chacón, *doctor theologus* – the Truth of God as he manifested Himself in human history.[74] At times, however, the historical and antiquarian investigation of the past could offer results not necessarily aligned with the Church, and it should be seriously reconsidered whether it is correct to simply assume that all research on the *antiquitas sacra* were works in the service of the Church.

One last observation: in the letter Chacón described early Christian burial rites and habits based on what he could observe in the catacomb. He noticed for instance that the Christians buried the bodies in the ground (*intram terram humabant*) and that their sepulchers were very modest compared to pagan funerary monuments, although they were often decorated with painting, reliefs, and marble inscriptions.[75] Already Panvinio had devoted his attention to funerary rituals both in classical antiquity (with his unpublished *Antiquitates Romanorum*) and Christian antiquity (*De ritu sepeliendi mortuos apud veteres*

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[73] Schuddeboom 2004, p. 25

[74] For a critical discussion of historical truth and religious truth, see chapter 3, pp. 140-159 (with bibliography)

[75] Chacón 1578, cc. 71v-72-r.

Christianos, 1568), as a crucial aspect of public as well as private life in antiquity.[76] This approach to antiquity, increasingly popular from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, was designated as *mores et instituta*, and was primarily concerned with religion, public and political life, military life, and finally private and domestic life.[77] Since material and visual evidence – from *suppellectiles* to reliefs – often offered a better glimpse than textual sources into ancient life, the preoccupation with material culture was typical of the study of ancient customs and institutions. For instance, the densely detailed reliefs of Trajan's Column illustrating military paraphernalia were a fundamental source of information for those studying warfare in antiquity. Given the fact that it was not always possible for scholars to look at material evidence in person, drawings and etchings reproducing a variety of ancient reliefs and objects in general were eagerly sought-after and collected. Undoubtedly Chacón was fully aware of the relevance of the visual element for antiquarian studies, and it is certainly no coincidence that he published the first complete visual rendition of Trajan's Column.

Along with reliefs and artifacts in general, manuscript illustrations could likewise help antiquarians to visualize objects and contextualize rituals and customs otherwise difficult to understand. A good example is, for instance, the much-debated question of the

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[76] Panvinio 1568. The *Antiquitates Romanorum libri centum* was an ambitious work meant to treat the whole of ancient life, but Panvinio was only able to finish the book on circles and games, published posthumously, *De ludis circensibus Libri II*, Venice 1600.

[77] The definition "mores et instituta" comes from Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, *Liber Quintus*, IV.11. For a critical analysis and account of the historical development of this antiquarian method, see Herklotz 1999, pp. 187-234; Id. in *La Roma degli Antiquari...* 2012. See also: Philip.J. Jacks, *Antiquarianism and Archaeological Method in Renaissance Rome*, Chicago 1984; *Dell'antiquaria e dei suoi metodi. Atti delle giornate di studio*, edited by E. Vaiani, Pisa 1998 («Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa», Serie IV, Quaderni, 2); Peter. N. Miller, "Major Trends in European Antiquarianism, Petrarch to Peiresc", in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing. 1400-1800*, edited by J. Rabasa et alii, 3, Oxford 2012, pp. 244-260. For a discussion of sixteenth-century antiquarianism and its method, see chapter 1 (with additional bibliography)

ancient *triclinium*.[78] The seating arrangements for feasts and official dinners in Rome, so different from modern manners, were in fact a matter of great curiosity and the *coenae veterum* became rapidly a popular topic of the antiquarian discourse in the second half of the sixteenth century.[79] [figs. 18, 19] In this case, the fascination with such aspects of Roman civilization was paired with a more subtle devotional concern: if the *mos accumbendi* was the usual form of the Roman banquet, in fact, then most likely the *coenae Domini* in Roman Palestine took the same form. Hence, it was concluded, it might even be necessary to modify the iconography of religious scenes like the banquet at the house of Simon or even the Last Supper.[80] [figs. 20, 21] The question of the evangelical suppers in the form of the *mos accumbendi* was considered in Mercuriale's *De Gymnastica*, the first modern medical treatise considering the importance of physical exercise,[81] but became a more pressing topic with other authors. The Bolognese Ulisse Aldrovandi, for instance, addressed a detailed account of the *mos accumbendi* to Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, author of the famous *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* (1582), most likely answering a

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[78] On the question of the *triclinium* in sixteenth-century antiquarian studies, see: Herklotz 1999, in particular pp. 217-219 and *passim*; F. Federici, "Il triclinio nella letteratura antiquaria tra Cinquecento e Settecento", 2006 (unpublished); Id., "Girolamo Mercuriale e l'*accubitus in coena antiquorum*", in *Lo sguardo archeologico. I normalisti per Paul Zanker*, edited by F. De Angelis, Pisa, 2007, pp. 221-237. On the *triclinium* in general, see for instance: M.B. Roller, *Dining Postures in Ancient Rome. Bodies, Values, and Status*, Princeton 2006.

[79] Already mentioned in Flavio Biondo (*De Roma Triumphante libri X*, first edition 1473-75 ca.), the *accubitus in coena antiquorum* intrigued several antiquarians, from Pirro Ligorio to Ulisse Aldrovandi and Girlomo Mercuriale, physician of Alessandro Farnese, who treated it at length in his *De Gymnastica*, (Venice 1569).

[80] See Federici 2006 (unpublished). But see also: A. Blunt, "The Triclinium in Religious Art", *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, II, 1938-1939, pp. 271-276.

[81] See Federici in *Lo sguardo archeologico…*2007. On Mercuriale, see also above, chapter 1, p. 39, and n. 102.

specific request for more information on the *triclinium* on the part of the Cardinal.[82] A few

years later, towards the end if the 1570s, the Spanish ecclesiastic Pedro Chacón (1525-

1581) penned a small treatise, *De Triclinio*, in which he debated on the banquets that

Dominus et Redemptor Noster attended during his mortal life, gathering a variety of ancient

texts and visual material.[83] Pedro Chacón was an active member of the Farnese circle – his

treatise was in fact edited and published by Fulvio Orsini, the antiquarian and librarian of

House Farnese [84] – and his clever handling of literary and non–literary evidence to

reconstruct such a specific aspect of ancient life is completely in line with the method

typical of the antiquarians of the Farnese circle. Among the material and visual evidence

used by Pedro Chacón to shed light on the *accubitus in coena antiquorum* were a few

marble reliefs – in particular Chacón concentrates on a first-century funerary relief found in

a small town near Padua, Este [fig. 22] – and also manuscript illuminations such as the one

illustrating the banquet of Dido from the fifth-century Vergilius Romanus. [85] The

manuscript miniature – which was cited twice in Chacón's *De Triclinio*, although it was not

reproduced – appears also in a manuscript belonged to the Flemish antiquarian Philips van

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[82] Aldrovandi's account is in the Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna, Manoscritti Aldrovandi, Ms. 71, ff. 257r-304r, see Federici 2006 (unpublished). On Aldrovandi, see G. Olmi, *Ulisse Aldrovandi. Scienza e natura nel secondo Cinquecento*, Trento 1976. On the relationship between Aldrovandi and Paleotti, see G. Olmi and P. Prodi, "Gabriele Paleotti, Ulisse Aldrovandi e la cultura a Bologna nel secondo Cinquecento", in *Nell'età di Correggio e dei Carracci: pittura in Emilia dei secoli XVI e XVII*, Exhibition catalogue Bologna, Washington, New York, Bologna 1986.

[83] P. Chacon, *De Triclinio sive de modo convivandi apuso priscos Romanos et de conviviorum apparatu*, Rome 1588. The treatise was published after Chacon's death in 1581 and was edited by Fulvio Orsini, the principal antiquarian of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. See Federici 2006 (unpublished)

[84] On Fulvio Orsini see: G.A. Cellini, *Il contributo di Fulvio Orsini alla ricerca antiquaria*, Rome 2004.

[85] BAV, Vat. Lat. 3867, f. 100v.

Winghe, alongside other Vergilian drawings.[86] [fig. 23] The manuscript contains several

firsthand copies of drawings that the young antiquarian had made in Rome and collected in

his *Notebook*.[87] The Vergilian manuscript after which van Winghe copied several

miniatures belonged to Fulvio Orsini, who was particularly interested in ancient

manuscripts as both an antiquarian and a philologist.[88] He had acquired it, along with

another fifth-century manuscript of comedies of Terentius,[89] in Padua from Torquato

Bembo (the father of Pietro Bembo),[90] and it seems plausible that Orsini himself directed

the attention of the young Flemish antiquarian towards ancient illuminations. Van Winghe

was in fact in Rome from 1590 to 1592 and certainly knew Fulvio Orsini personally, most

likely through Alfonso Chacón, with whom the young scholar had struck a friendly

relationship.[91]

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[86] BAV, Vat. Lat. 10545, f. 67r.

[87] On van Winghe see C. Schuddeboom, *Philips van Winghe (1560-1592): en het ontstaan van de christelijke archeologie*, Haren 1996; C. Schuddeboom in *Archives and Excavations…*2004; I. Oryshkevich, "Through a Netherlandish Looking-Glass; Philips van Winghe and Jean L'Heureux in the Catacombs", *Fragmenta*, 5 (2011), 2014, pp. 101-120.

[88] Cellini 2004. On the antiquarian interest towards ancient manuscript, see I. Herklotz, "Manoscritti tardo-antichi nella prima eta' moderna: filologia, antiquaria e storia dell'arte", in *La Roma degli antiquari… 2012, pp. 11-36.

[89] The so-called "Terenzio Bembino", Vat. Lat. 3226.

[90] *Ibidem*.

[91] "Nec multum intercessit temporis, cum illius viri familiaritatem et usum quotidianum, cum morum suorum facilitate et suavitate, tum varia cognitione rerum qua instructus erat (...) promeruit, atque ita communicavit cum eo sua studia ut difficulter alter ab altero divelleretur (…)", in L'Heureux-Garucci 1854, p. 3.

Drawings from underground: Vat. Lat. 5409 and Vat. Lat. 10545

The offspring of a noble Louvain family, the young Philips van Winghe arrived in Rome in November 1589.[92] In 1592 he moved to Florence where he began suffering from the tertian fever (malaria), as he noted in his diary on August 18th.[93] Sadly, the disease was to be fatal and the young man died shortly afterwards at the age of 32. During his stay in Rome van Winghe was introduced to several prominent scholars, either through the protection of his distinguished family – his uncle Antoine Morillon was bishop of Tournai and chancellor of Cardinal de Granvelle[94] – or through the good offices of renowned friends such as the antiquarian and humanist Aernout van Buchell from Utrecht, or the royal cartographer Abraham Ortelius.[95] Cardinal de Granvelle was a strong member of the Spanish faction and a loyal friend of the king of Spain, even acting as his intermediary in Rome where he spent scattered period of times. On several occasions, Granvelle even travelled to Rome to offer his official support to other cardinals loyal to Spain residing in Rome (Cardinal Pacheco and Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, for instance), or in general every time Philip II needed a special emissary for particularly critical matters.[96] If we also

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[92] For literature on van Winghe, see above p. 88, n. 87.

[93] In his *Notebook*, van Winghe wrote: "(…) Cepi Florentiae laborare febri tertiana", cit. in Schuddeboom 2004, p. 31, n. 1.

[94] "(…) ut qui nepos ex sorore esser Antonii Morillonii, viri doctissimi er in antiquitate versatissimi (…)", L'Heureux-Garucci 1854, p. 3. On Morillon, see for instance: M.H. Crawford, "Antoine Morillon, Antiquarian and Medallist", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 61, 1998 (1999), pp. 93-110. On Cardinal de Granvelle, see for instance: J. Brunet and G. Toscano, *Les Granvelle et l'Italie au XVIe siè le: le mécénat d'une famille; actes du colloque international organisé par la Section d'Italien de l'Université de Franche-Comté, Besançon, 2-4 ottobre 1992*, Besançon 1996.

[95] Schuddeboom 1886; Id. in *Archives and Excavations…* 2004.

[96] Dandelet 2001, in particular pp. 134-136.

consider that Cardinal Farnese himself was a loyal member of the Spanish faction, supposedly receiving a pension of 20,000 ducats per year from Spain, it seems inevitable that once in Rome the young van Winghe would be presented to Alfonso Chacón, the most illustrious Spanish scholar in Rome, and welcomed into the Farnese antiquarian circle.[97]

Among several protagonists of the intellectual and religious life in Rome, van Winghe also met Cardinal Cesare Baronio, who only a few years later was to warmly remember the prematurely deceased young man in his *Annales*.[98] Of all the scholars van Winghe became acquainted with, Alfonso Chacón and Jean L'Heureux were certainly the most influential, and the young scholar became particularly close to them.[99] They certainly stimulated his interest in Christian antiquity, and encouraged him to document and study the physical remains of the early Church. In his *Hagioglypta* L'Heureux recounts that by the time van Winghe arrived in Rome in 1589 Chacón had already organized and opened to other antiquarians, and amateurs in general, his museum of antiquities, of which the young Fleming rapidly became a regular and welcomed visitor.[100] L'Heureux also recalls that van

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[97] *Ibidem*.

[98] "(…) Philippo Vignio. nobili Lovaniensi, juvene erudito, ac rerum antiquarum studiosissimo. quarum causa patrio solo relicto Romae versatur (…)", C. Baronius. *Annales Ecclesiastici*, IV (Antwerp. 1594), 46.

[99] On Alfonso Chacón see above, pp. 65-89; for the literature on him, see p. 1, n. 1. On Jean L'Heureux (Macarius), see: I. Herklotz, "Die Hagioglypta des Jean L'Heureux: ein vergessener Beitrag zur Historisierung der Kunstbetrachtung um", in *Testi, immagini e filologia nel XVI secolo*, edited by E. Carrara and S. Ginzburg, Pisa 2007, pp. 471-504; Oryshkevich 2011; Id., "Cultural History in the Catacombs: Early Christian Art and Macarius' Hagioglypta", in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, edited by S. Ditchfield *et alii*, Oxford 2012, pp. 250-272.

[100] "(…) Cum autem Romam venisset Philippus Winghius nobilis adolescens lovaniensis, sacrae profanaeque peritissimus antiquitatis (…) nil illi prius fuit quam Alphonsum invisere. Nec multum inter essi temporis, cum illius viri familiaritatem et usum quotidianum, cum morum suorum facilitate et suavitate, tum varia cognition rerum qua instructus erat (et ego ipse qui fuit ei conjuctissimus expertus sum) promeruit (…) Quo toto tempore et Ciacconii alias omnes antiquitatis obervationes vidit et hunc ipsum librum coemetrium picturis et sarcophagorum imaginibus penum pervolvit (…)", L'Heureux-Garucci 1854, p. 3.

Winghe became especially interested in Christian antiquities, and that he was fascinated in particular with catacomb artifacts, and writes with regret that, had the young Fleming lived longer, he would have certainly surpassed everyone else in matters concerning Christian antiquity.[101] It is again L'Heureux, finally, who tells us that van Winghe and Chacón had a profound mutual understanding of their scholarly work, and that they frequently discussed their studies and shared their thoughts.[102]

It is easy to imagine that, twenty-years van Winghe's senior, Chacón probably enjoyed having such an avid and intelligent pupil, whom he could mentor. It is also plausible that Chacón was keen to share his work on Christian antiquity as a way to spread the word beyond the Alps – and van Winghe was indeed a well-connected young man[103] – about the lamentable condition of so many palaeochristian monuments in Rome, dilapidated and often completely abandoned, and to enlist as many scholars as possible to the cause of their restoration and preservation, especially close to his heart. In 1576 Chacón alerted Pope Gregory XIII to the general indifference towards Christian monuments[104], but already in 1572 he had mentioned the issue in a *supplica* to Pope Pius V to whom he offered his *Historica Descriptio Urbis Romae* in exchange for a salary.[105] It is important to

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[101] "(...) qui si senectutem attigisset, in hoc antiquitatis studio facile reliquos anteivisset", L'Heureux-Garucci 1854, p. 4.

[102] "(…) atque ita communicavit cum eo sua studia ut difficulter alter ab altero divelleretur (…)", *Ibidem*.

[103] See above, pp. 89-90.

[104] A. Chacón, *Historia ceu verissima…*, 1576, Dedicatio to the Pope.

[105] Chacon conceived the *Historica Descriptio*, unfortunately never published, as an artistic and historical survey of three hundred Early Christian monuments in Rome, as the Spaniard himself writes: "(...) res sacras huius Urbis trecentorum templorum origines, progressus et res notatu digniores complictitur ad exercitandum

highlight that it was Chacón's intention that the *Historica Descriptio* portrayed the monumental landscape of Christian Rome, always evoked for its symbolic power and flaunted like a flag of religious and political supremacy for the Church, but too often neglected (and violated) in its historical materiality.[106] With great dedication and passion Chacón, accompanied by two scribes, investigated and recorded the remains of "three hundred basilicas, temples and other holy places" to make them as well known as pagan monuments, while also preserving their form and memory for posterity.[107] The *Historica Descriptio* was to be completed by a number of very detailed drawings of apse mosaics and murals decorating Early Christian churches, assembled in two manuscripts preserved in the Vatican Library, Vat. Lat. 5407 and Vat. Lat. 5408. A third Vatican manuscript, Vat. Lat. 5409, contains annotated drawings of paintings and various artifacts found in the catacombs.[108] The drawings of this third manuscript were meant to illustrate *De coemeteriis vetustis Urbis Romae*, the other treatise on ancient Christian monuments planned by Chacón and, unfortunately, never completed and published.

The first few pages of Vat. Lat. 5409 feature drawings of sacred objects preserved in the basilica of Saint Peter – the Holy Lance with which the centurion Longinus pierced the side of Christ on the cross, a nail from the Cross, and torture instruments such as

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omnium fidelium Orbis affectum et desiderium haec sacriora loca visendi et frequentandi", Rome, Arch. di S. Isidoro degli Irlandesi, ms. 2/49.

[106] On the *Historica Descriptio* see Recio Veganzones 1974; Id. 2002.

[107] See Recio Veganzones 1974; Id., 2002.

[108] On Chacón's drawings, see also: L. Diego Barroso, "Luci rinascimentali: lo sguardo del Ciacconio (Alfonso Chacón) all'iconografia paleocristiana e altomedievale della Roma scomparsa", *Archivio della Societa' Romana di Storia Patria*, 127, 2004 (2005), pp. 133-176.

pincers and a whip[109] – and a brief description of Christian cemeteries in Rome [fig. 24] Based on Panvinio's list of Roman catacombs, Chacón mentions forty-three cemeteries within the city walls and in its immediate surroundings.[110] He also discusses the etymology of the word *coemeterium* from the Greek verb κοιμάω (to sleep), as suggested by Baronio, and the function of the catacombs both as a place for burial and a shelter during the persecutions.[111] There is also a drawing of the chandelier *veteris testamenti quod ante arcam extabat simulacrum*, with the foot made of four legs – *Homini, Leonis, Aquilae, Tauri* – which foretell the coming of the four Evagelists.[112] [fig. 25] On *folium* 8r, finally, it begins the series of drawings after the murals in the catacomb.

Each drawing is neatly framed, either as an imitation of the geometrical grid (usually painted in black or red) often found in catacomb murals as an echo of Hellenistic-Roman painting, [figs. 26, 27] or as an indication of the actual architectural setting of the paintings such as lunettes, vaults or *arcosolia*. [figs. 28, 29] Chacón's drawings, however, lack any depiction of the actual tridimensional space and architectural structure of the *cubicula*, and the painted scenes are singled out and arranged on the paper as vignettes. The drawings are done in pencil and retraced in ink, colored with pastel-like watercolors and occasionally highlighted in white. Given the number of visible corrections and underlying

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[109] Among these instruments, is the famous *ungula* excavated in the Vatican during the papacy of Paul III, also cited by Antonio Bosio. On the *ungula,* see M. Ghilardi, "*Forceps ferreus seu instrumentum ad torquendum martires*. La tenaglia del Vaticano tra devozione e apologetica e propaganda controriformista", *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae,* XVI, Vatican City 2009, pp. 153-198.

[110] *De XLIII coemeteriis antiquis qua sunt tam intra urbem Romam, quam extra vicina*, BAV, Vat. Lat. 5409, f. 6r.

[111] *Ibidem.*

[112] Vat. Lat. 5409, f. 7r.

pentimenti, the drawings were most likely sketched *in situ* and finished later.[113] The setting of the biblical stories is usually indicated by few elements such as trees, animals, rocks, or solid geometrical structures like Noah's ark or Lazarus' tomb that, although rather simplified are realistic enough to give a sense of perspectival space. [figs. 14, 30] The shadows cast by volumes – whether natural elements, human bodies or man-made objects – greatly amplify the illusion of three-tridimensional space. The characters are depicted standing in a *contrapposto* position, their elongated bodies showing pronounced muscles further emphasized by the *chiaroscuro*. [fig. 28] The rich drapery, characterized by the dynamic treatment of the heavy folds accentuates their well-defined bodies, occasionally becoming so light and transparent to reveal anatomical details such as the navel. [fig. 31] Although not terribly detailed, the faces are carefully drawn with expressive features. The pastel-like overall palette of the drawings, so distant from the earthen and dull tones of catacomb paintings, set further apart the copies from the originals.

While the drawings are all very accurate and elegant, it is possible to detect several hands with various degrees of artistic ability and a different interpretation of the original compositions. Chacón hired at least five different draftsmen to work in the catacombs: the first one copied the murals in the so-called cemetery of Priscilla (or Ostriano) discovered in 1578, and in the cemetery *Priscillae ad clivum cucumeris subter Vineam Hieronymi Cupis* (Vat. Lat. 5409, ff. 8r-18r); the second one worked in the *coemeterium s. Felicitatis* (Vat. Lat. 5409, ff. 19r-21r); a third and fourth draftsmen were at work *in coemeterio S. Zephirini*

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[113] On Vat. Lat. 5409 and the copies of catacomb paintings, see also H. Leclercq, "Copies de peintures des catacombs", in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, edited by F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, Paris 1907-1953, col. 2801-2819.

Papae via Appia tertio ab urbe miliario non longe a S. Sebastiano, nunc in fundo s. Ioannis Lateranensis (Vat. Lat. 5409, respectively ff. 22r-24v and ff. 25r-36v); and the last one copied the pictorial decoration *in sacello S. Iulii Papae prope Pontem Milvium iuxta ecclesiam S. Valentini martyris* (Vat. Lat. 5409, ff. 37r-38v). Of the five artists, perhaps only the one working in the catacomb of Saint Valentino was most sensitive to the original frescoes, and appears to show a better understanding of their pictorial style. His figures, not particularly dynamic or animated, are dressed in thick garments that cover their bodily forms, and their faces are blank and inexpressive. [figs. 33, 34] The absence of shadows enhances the general impression of flat silhouettes on a two-dimensional surface. A good example of the draftsman's interpretation of ancient frescoes is the copy of the Crucifixion (7th century) in the cemetery of Saint Valentino, quite a rare subject for a catacomb, which is definitely closer to the original and more convincing than the other drawings in the codex. [fig. 35]

The first copyist who worked in the catacomb of Priscilla and in the anonymous catacomb on the Via Salaria was instead the one who took the greatest liberties with the originals, but probably was also the most talented draftsman. His brilliant hand transformed catacomb saints and martyrs, with their grave and dull appearance, into flamboyant Renaissance figures, noble and passionate characters *all'antica*, with poses inspired by Classical art and floating drapery emphasizing their bodies. [fig. 36] A good example is the group of the Madonna and Child from the *secundo sacello* in the catacomb of Priscilla *ad clivum cucumeris* [fig. 37], especially in comparison with the Madonna and Child copied by the fifth draftsman in the catacomb of Saint Valentino, with their frontal and rigid pose

and blank expressions. [figs. 33, 34, 35] The Madonna and Child in the cemetery of Priscilla [fig. 37] forms a pyramidal composition, with the seated Virgin carefully holding baby Jesus in her arms and looking lovingly at him. The Child, a chubby infant with curly hair, turns his head looking out towards the viewer. Apparently, he has just been distracted from a playful interaction with his mother, as his right hand still playing with the Virgin's veils seems to indicate. The rich drapery of the Virgin's cloak seems to somehow expand her figure, and the ample folders create a comfortable space in her lap for the child. Both Mother and Child are not depicted frontally but in a slightly twisting motion. The Virgin's legs are turned to her left while her upper body turns to the right and the head is slightly bent towards the child; the legs of baby Jesus are turned to his right while his torso faces his mother and his head is turned toward the viewer. Their bodies show a subtle spiral movement that breaths life into the composition while also creating three-dimensional space around it. Such a depiction of Madonna and Child, so deeply indebted to the idealized figures and formal elegance of Renaissance art, obviously has very little to do with the original catacomb mural – as do almost all the drawings in Chacón's manuscript – and thus prompted the criticism of Philips van Winghe.

According to L'Heureux, Van Winghe carefully perused Chacón's notes and drawings only to find them not entirely reliable when not frankly misleading.[114] The young scholar – whose sharp mind and insatiable thirst for knowledge were indeed not easily

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[114] "(…) Quae causa fuit ut animum adjiceret ad ideam coemeterium visendum (…) et imagines, uti sui oculis viderat, fideliter et coloribus et figuris veris exprimebat, cum diceret in picturis Ciaccomii pictores quos adhibuerat plus sibi indulsisse quam par erat, dum nimium properant, vel non satis figuras observant. Volebat autem Philippus omnia, quantum fieri poterat, archetype respondere, et fidelis esse testis rei antiquae", in L'Heureux-Garucci 1854, pp. 3-4.

pleased – criticized Chacón's drawings for not being true to the originals. The draftsmen had taken too many liberties against the original paintings, indulging their own artistic taste. Rather than copying the originals, as unrefined and possibly aesthetically displeasing as they were, they tried to revive and animate the flat silhouettes and unexpressive figures.[115] Thus, van Winghe decided to mend the situation by personally recording with meticulous attention and an abundance of details, the archaeological material he came across both above and under ground, gathering an impressive amount of drawings, sketches, and notes regarding hundreds of various ancient artifacts.[116] Following his untimely death in Florence, it was his friend Jean L'Heureux who took care of van Winghe's belongings shipping everything to his brother Hieronymus, a canon of the cathedral of Tournay.[117] Despite Hieronymus' attempt to publish at least part of his brother's work, all the material remained buried in the library of the cathedral of Tournay and unfortunately was lost during the French Revolution.[118] Only one original manuscript apparently survived, the *Aantekenboekje* (translated as *Notebook*), preserved today in the Royal Library in Brussels.[119]

The *Aantekenboekje* contains 180 pages with hundreds of drawings representing inscriptions, reliefs, manuscript illustrations, paintings and mosaics, both pagan and

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[115] *Ibidem*

[116] See Schuddeboom 1996; Schuddeboom in *Archives and Excavations…*2004.

[117] Schuddeboom in *Archives and Excavations…*2004., p. 24.

[118] On the fate of Winghe's notes after his death, see also Schuddeboom 1996, pp. 58-119.

[119] Royal Library Albert I, Brussels, Inv. No. 17.872-3. The Notebook was originally divided in two parts, bound together in the 19th century.

Christian, as well as a short diary that van Winghe compiled during his two-year stay in Rome (1590-1592). Two other manuscripts – one in the Vatican Library in Rome and one in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris – also contain reproductions of several sketches that van Winghe made during of his Roman peregrinations.[120] The one in the Vatican Library (Vat. Lat. 10545) – formerly in possession of Giovan Battista De Rossi, who first recognized its derivation from the *Aantekenboekje* in Brussels – has always been attributed to the French antiquarian Claude Ménestrier, a member of the Barberini circle.[121] Cornelis Schuddeboom has, however, convincingly suggested that the manuscript was most likely assembled by the French scholar and collector Claude-Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1737).[122] Peiresc possessed in fact some of van Winghe's original drawings, mostly donated to him by Hieronymus van Winghe with whom the French antiquarian was on friendly terms. Hieronymus also lent him the original *Aantekenboekje* for about eleven years to have it copied, and from their unpublished correspondence it appears that Peiresc had made copies of almost all van Winghe's original material.[123] Peiresc assembled everything in a single volume that, according to Schuddebooom, should be undoubtedly identified with the Vatican manuscript 10545. Schuddeboom remarks that even the

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[120] Schuddeboom in *Archives and Excavations…*2004, pp. 23-24.

[121] On Ménestrier, see for instance G. Sabatier, *Claude-François Ménestrier: les jésuites et le monde des images*, Grenoble 2009 (with bibliography).

[122] From the correspondence between Peiresc and Hieronymus van Winghe, we know that Peiresc possessed a number of Philips van Winghe's drawings and that Hieronymus gave him on a loan of nearly eleven years (1612-1623) his brother's Notebook, to have it copied. Moreover, Schuddeboom claims that the handwriting in Vat. Lat. 10545 has no resemblance with Menestrier's handwriting. See Schuddeboom 1996, pp. 58-119; Schuddeboom in *Archives and Excavations…*2004, p. 24. On Peiresc, see for instance: P. N. Miller, *Peiresc's Mediterranea World*, London–Cambridge (Mass.) 2015 (with bibliography)

[123] Schuddeboom in *Archives and Excavations…*2004, p. 24.

handwriting in Vat. Lat. 10545 appears rather similar to that of Peiresc, while it does not bear any resemblance to that of Ménestrier.[124]

Vat. Lat. 10545, Peiresc's manuscript, is an utterly accurate and almost complete replica of the *Aantekenboekje*: the drawings are meticulously copied to the last detail, and all the annotations have been carefully transcribed word for word from the originals in Brussels. It consists of 256 *folia in quarto* of which ff. 1-174 are filled with copies of pagan inscriptions, reliefs, altars, tombstones, gems, coins, seals and daily objects such as lamps and vases, as well as manuscript illustrations. [figs. 38, 39, 40, 41, 23] The second part of the codex, ff. 184-256, comprises instead copies of catacomb paintings, Christian sarcophagi, and inscriptions from palaeochristian churches in Rome. [figs. 42, 43] Van Winghe's drawings with their rapidly traced contour lines and unpolished overall quality (as it is possible to observe in the original drawings in the *Aantekenboekje*, but also in their very accurate copies in the Vatican manuscript) were certainly sketched *in situ* as visual records for future reference. [fig. 44] They were meant to be objective copies of the originals, reliable visual documents that scholars could use for their work on antiquity. Colors in van Winghe's drawings are always limited to reds and earthly tones mimicking the actual palette of catacomb frescoes. The small silhouettes are only summarily delineated and two-dimensional, they cast no shadows, and are covered with thick garments that fall heavily flattening their bodily forms. [fig. 45] With their facial features rapidly sketched and lacking all expression, the characters of these biblical stories look like lifeless puppets. Only a few simplified elements – a tree, an animal, a geometrical shape alluding to

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[124] *Ibidem*.

Lazarus' tomb or Noah's ark – hint to a three-dimensional background and a narrative context. [fig. 46] However, the use of a frame for each painted scene visually seems to deny even the slightest appearance of narrative quality in the drawings. Each framed composition is no longer part of a narrative sequence. Rather, it becomes an isolated fragment, a piece of historical evidence captured on paper, a unique specimen of catacomb art worthy of being preserved and studied. In the case of marble reliefs, and sarcophagi in particular, the style of the drawings remains basically the same although it looks slightly more polished, probably due to better conditions of light (most of the sarcophagi were seen above ground), and perhaps also to generally more comfortable conditions for the draftsman compared to the gloomy and oppressive space of catacomb *cubicula*. [figs. 42, 43]

As objective as they might appear, however, Van Winghe's drawings reveal several mistakes and inaccuracies, in particular in the representation of the figures and their distribution.[125] For instance, van Winghe drew the figure of a man standing with his arms upraised in the position of the orant, identified as *Paulus Apostolus Pastor* by an inscription. [fig. 47] According to van Winghe, the effigy was located in *coemeterio eadem via Salaria in vinea Petri Cortesi Hispani*, formerly in possession of Bartolomeo Sanchez, that is to say in the cemetery discovered in 1578 on the via Salaria.[126] Since, however, there is no trace of such a figure in the catacomb – nor apparently was there when the catacomb was excavated once again in 1921 and Enrico Josi saw the frescoes – it is highly plausible that van Winghe relied on a Chacón drawing, [fig. 48] quite possibly just a fanciful

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[125] On this, see also Oryshkevich 2011, in particular pp. 106-109.

[126] BAV, Vat. Lat. 10545, f. 188v.

interpretation of a fragmentary picture, without inspecting the fresco himself.[127] Finally, the overall palette of earthly colors – although close enough to the original colors – is not entirely reliable. In other words, even if van Winghe's drawings are rather accurate they are not necessarily true to the originals. The reason they look more convincing than those of Chacón lies primarily in the fact that with their lack of formal elegance and stylistic sophistication they "corroborate the conventional view of palaeochristian art as 'artless', 'unsophisticated', etc", as Irina Oryshkevich has rightly remarked.[128] Van Winghe's drawings are sometimes even cruder and aesthetically less appealing than the original catacomb paintings, exhibiting repetitive and uniform figures that do not reflect the stylistic variety found instead in catacomb paintings.

A different interpretation

Both Cornelis Schuddeboom and Irina Oryshkevich have explained the discrepancy between Chacón's and van Winghe's drawings as the result of their different attitudes towards catacomb paintings and their value and use.[129] On the one hand, they claim that van Winghe, whose interests were predominantly antiquarian and "scientific", considered

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[127] See J. Wilpert, *Die Katakombengemälde und ihre alten Copien*, Freiburg 1891, pp. 7-8; Cabrol-Leclercq 1907-1953, col. 2803. See also Oryshkevich 2011, p. 107. Joseph Wilpert believed the inscription to have been wrongly interpreted, and proposed to read it as Paulus Pater Posuerunt. The question of the enigmatic Paulus Apostolus, however, is much debated as other scholars think that the mural was visible at the time of Chacon and van Winghe, and only disappeared in the following centuries. See for instance Bisconti 2011, in particular pp. 3-4. See also U. Utro, "Disegni degli affreschi della catacomba di via Anapo", in *Aurea Roma. Dalla citta' pagana alla citta' cristiana,* edited by S. Ensoli and E. La Rocca, Rome 2000, pp. 513-514.

[128] Oryshkevich 2011, pp. 108-109.

[129] Schuddeboom, 1996; Oryshkevich 2011.

his sketches mainly as visual documents for future studies.[130] While they needed to be faithful to the originals there was no point – and it was actually deceiving for the viewer – in making them more pleasing or sophisticated than they actually were. On the other hand, they both repeat the usual assumption that Chacón was primarily concerned with the apologetic values of catacomb paintings (many of which, probably, he never personally saw), and interested in their iconography and content rather than pictorial style.[131] Hence, he did not object (perhaps did not even notice) when his draftsmen – trained in the current academic manner – heavily altered the originals. Oryshkevich also suggests that Chacón and his copyists may have tried to soften the crude likeness of catacomb effigies so they could fit better into Chacón's museum.[132] This explanation, however, is not satisfactory for at least two reasons: 1) it once again assumes, automatically, that Chacón was just an apologist and defender of the Counter-Reformation Church, and therefore his religious commitment necessarily affected (in a negative way, of course) his approach to the material; 2) it assumes that since van Winghe's copies are more faithful to the original and thus more "objective", they reveal a better understanding of the style of catacomb painting.

Let us now address these two points. First, while as a Dominican theologian and a devout Catholic Chacón was inevitably concerned with the spiritual and religious values

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[130] For instance, Schuddeboom writes that "Van Winghe's interests (…) were predominantly antiquarian-scientific, they were based on the humanistic tradition of the Low Countries", Id. in *Archives and Excavations…*2004, p. 25, while Oryshkevich states that "The discrepancy between the two sets [*Chacon's and Van Winghe's*] may be due to the fact that Van Winghe, an antiquarian, prepared his own drawings as records for future reference", Id. 2011, p. 106.

[131] Schuddeboom for instance repeats the usual argument that "Chacón collected material in order to illustrate the early history of the Church from an apologetic point of view (…), Id. in *Archives and Excavations…*2004, p. 25.

[132] Oryshkevich 2011, p. 106.

embodied in the catacombs, he neither ignored nor disregarded their antiquarian and historical significance, if not artistic. Chacón was a very sophisticated and rigorous antiquarian, aware of the importance of material and visual sources for historical research; he was very good at gathering and making sense of a large number of documents, both literary and non. Although he was an active member of the post-Tridentine Church Chacón never compromised on his principles as a humanist and a scholar as, for instance, the "Cardano case" shows.[133] Second, the notion of "objectivity" may not at all be the right framework to assess and understand early modern culture, in particular when religious aspects are involved in the Catholic world of post-Reformation.[134] Furthermore, and perhaps this is the most important question, the main underlying assumption in the explanation provided by Schuddeboom and Oryshkevich is that ideological commitment and critical understanding of the past must necessarily exclude each other since ideological bias and lack of objectivity necessarily result in the manipulation and distortion of historical event and cultural facts. However, this is the consequence of a modern way of thinking that can be misleading when looking at early modern culture.[135] By abandoning such rigid dual theoretical mode, perhaps it is possible to find a more satisfactory explanation for the discrepancy between Chacon's and van Winghe's drawings.

As Arnaldo Momigliano has argued, the interrelation between dogma and fact in early modern ecclesiastical history is so inextricable that "any ecclesiastical historian who

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[133] Above, pp. 65-66.

[134] See for instance Tutino 2014, p. 82. On the problem of "objectivity" in post-Tridentine history and antiquarian research, see also below, chapter 3, pp. 140-159.

[135] Tutino 2014, in particular pp. 74-112.

believes in Christianity is bound to be a theologian".[136] Cesare Baronio, for instance, considered historical evidence as the manifestation of divine providence in history.[137] Not only had God traced the course of history, but he had also left some traces along its path in the form of both written documents (repository of theological truth), and archeological evidence such as objects and images (material traces of his presence). This explains why Baronio chose to privilege literary and non-literary evidence over theological debates and historical narratives in his *Annales*.[138] His use of documentation was certainly not dictated by a (modern) sense of historical objectivity, but rather because documents were for him precious gems, unique traces of the divine presence in history, and once assembled together they helped reveal the larger design of God for men.[139] As Anthony Grafton has cautioned, in fact, "heavy documentation did not confer, or imply, strict objectivity".[140]

Stefania Tutino has interestingly argued that Baronio's conception of history puts his *Annales* much closer to the Magdeburg Centuries than one might suppose.[141] Both the Catholic Baronio and the Protestant Flacius Illyricus, along with the other Centuriators, shared in fact the same interest in primary sources, as well as the same unshakable

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[136] A. Momigliano, "The Origins of Ecclesiastical History", in *The Classical Foundation of Modern Historiography*, Berkeley 1990, pp. 132-152, p. 137.

[137] On Baronio's conception of history, and his ideological and theological beliefs in relation to his work as a historian, see Tutino 2014, pp. 74-112.

[138] See Tutino 2014, in particular pp. 83-88.

[139] Baronio wrote: "(...) bisogna nel'historia mostrare per le tradizioni, & verita' li dogmi (...) lassar al lettore, o catholico o heretico che sia, delle cose dette ben fondate cavarne la certezza della verita' (…)", Letter to Antonio Talpa, 9 December 1589, in Tutino 2014, p. 213, n. 33.

[140] A. Grafton, *The footnote. A curious history*, Cambridge 1997, p. 166.

[141] Tutino 2014, pp. 86-88.

conviction that theology and history were complementary manifestations of divine truth.[142]

The concept of history as the book in which God has written his divine will, and therefore of documentary evidence as traces of divine truth in history, stems directly from Eusebius of Cesarea.[143] Post-Reformation ecclesiastical history was in fact, as Momigliano argued, a revival of the Eusebian model and methodology. Eusebius' main innovation was the massive use of primary sources, even rough and scattered, over the use of a polished narrative usually found in classical historiography.[144] More important for our discourse here, however, is Eusebius' conception of the Christian Church as a universal and supernatural institution. The Church was, in Eusebius' vision, the direct emanation of God on earth, thus its history necessarily revealed fragments of divine truth.[145] Both Catholic and Protestant historians followed Eusebius' model, firmly believing in the universality of their own Church and in the possibility of finding truth in its history. However, the first sporadic doubts about the identity of history and truth were emerging along with the perception, though still embryonic, of the Church as a human community rather than a divine institution, and thus frail and fallible as its protagonists.[146] It is exactly such tension between history and truth, skepticism and dogmatism – a tension by no means limited solely to ecclesiastical history – that is the main legacy that post-Reformation

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[142] On this see also below, chapter 3, in particular pp. 157-159l.

[143] Tutino 2014, pp. 86-88. See also Momigliano in *The Classical Foundation…*1990.

[144] As Anthony Grafton has observed, for Eusebius "Church history (...) was not a smooth narrative (...) but a coral work, in which the voices of many witnesses were heard". A. Grafton, "Church History in Early Modern Europe: Tradition and Innovation", in *Sacred History…* 2012, pp. 3-26, p. 18.

[145] Momigliano in *The Classical Foundation…* 1990.

[146] Tutino 2014, pp. 86-88.

historiography left to a modern way of thinking about history.[147] Let us now reconsider the contraposition van Winghe/Chacón in the light of what we just discussed, and see if it is possible to offer a different explanation to the discrepancy between their drawings.

To fully understand Chacón's approach to Early Christian art is necessary to frame it within the same theoretical model of post-Tridentine and early modern ecclesiastical history. As mentioned above, Chacón was well aware of the essential role of material and visual evidence for the study of ancient history.[148] In the case of ancient pagan history, material and visual documents helped the antiquarian understand the past of a human community with its rituals and institution, habits and daily life. In the case of early Christian history, however, material evidence helped reveal the life of the primitive Church, which is to say the life of a divine and supernatural institution. Sarcophagi, inscriptions, and painted effigies were not just the creation of a human hand comprehensible solely within a human context, but they also preserved the memory of God's hand, of His manifestation and eternal presence in history. In this regard the formal features of catacomb paintings – that is their pictorial style, a historical phenomenon that constantly evolves and changes, depending on different contexts, specific circumstances, and individual personalities – were only a transient detail, an accidental manifestation of the immutable essence of God. Thus, in Chacón's eyes likely there could not be any substantial difference between the simple and unrefined features of Early Christian painting and the idealized elegance of modern *cinquecento* art: they were simply two different (visual) languages

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[147] *Ibidem*. But see also below, chapter 3, *passim*.

[148] See above, in particular pp. 76-89.

meant to communicate and make comprehensible to different audiences in different times the same immutable content of divine truth that such painted images signified. Just like people from different ages spoke different languages so they understood different visual languages, and Chacón possibly understood that the (apparent) formal simplicity of Early Christian art could deceive the viewers into assuming that also its content and meaning was simple and unremarkable.

Perhaps Chacón chose to adapt the formal qualities of catacomb paintings – in his mind just a transient accident – to the artistic taste and cultural understanding of a sixteenth-century audience rather than maintaining the original style, whose artlessness and crudeness, paired with the theological complexity of several Early Christian iconographies, required too much of erudition and intellectual acumen to be understood. Perhaps he thought it was too much to ask from the large audience with whom Chacón hoped to communicate. It is important to recall at this point that Chacón's drawings were in fact meant to illustrate his treatise on Roman catacombs (*De coemeteriis vetustis Urbis Romae*)[149], addressed to an audience that, while being obviously well educated, was not to be limited (at least in the intentions of the author) to an exclusive circle of refined antiquarians. The readers that Chacón was seeking out, in other words, were not necessarily able to understand that the lack of formal elegance of palaeochristian art had nothing to do with the theological depth and intellectual refinement of its content, let alone appreciate its non-classical style. Moreover, it was fundamental for Chacón to sensitize the larger possible audience to the importance of ancient Christian art and its preservation, and a

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[149] See above, pp. 92-93.

scarcely pleasing and rough appearance could not be the best way to gain the people to his cause. Hence, Chacón's choice to adopt an "easier" and more familiar visual language for the illustrations of his book. Van Winghe's drawings, on the other hand, were meant to be simply personal "working documents" available, at most, for scholarly consultation to a few historians and antiquarians. Thus, he was in a better position to retain the original appearance and formal features of much of catacomb paintings and maintain an apparent greater objectivity in his drawings. A luxury that unfortunately Chacón, given his contingent cultural agenda, could definitely not afford.

In conclusion, the difference between the two sets of drawings may have been less the consequence of an apologetic as opposed to archaeological approach to palaeochristian art – resulting in a more or less profound understanding and appreciation of its pictorial style and visual language – than the contingent consequence of the specific "destination of use" and reception of the drawings themselves. As such, it had nothing to do with a different degree of sensibility towards the formal features of Early Christian art or, more importantly, with Chacón's supposedly exclusive interest in its apologetic values rather than its artistic quality.

3

In Search of the Christian Past (II): Historians.

Antonio Bosio, Giovanni Severano and the Truth of the Catacombs

The focus of this chapter is Antonio Bosio's lifelong monumental work on the Roman catacombs, *Roma Sotterranea*.[1] Published posthumously in 1634 with the date 1632, the book occupied for centuries a pre-eminent place in the scholarship on Christian antiquity and ecclesiastical history, earning its author the nickname "Columbus of subterranean Rome".[2] While acknowledging its value as the first attempt at a systematic

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[1] For biographical information about Antonio Bosio: G.B. De Rossi, *La Roma sotterranea cristiana*, Rome 1864-1877, vols. I-III, vol. I, 1864 pp. 24-39; A. Valeri, *Cenni biografici di Antonio Bosio con documenti inediti*, Rome 1900; G. Ferretto, *Note storico-bibliografiche di archeologia* cristiana, Vatican City 1942, pp. 140-161; N. Parise, "Antonio Bosio" in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 13, 1971, *ad vocem*. On *Roma Sotterranea* see: L. Spigno, "Considerazioni sul manoscritto Vallicelliano G31 e la 'Roma Sotterranea' di Antonio Bosio", in *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* (LI), 1975, pp. 281-311; *Id.*, "Della Roma Sotterranea del Bosio e della sua biografia", in *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, (LII), 1976, pp. 277-301; G. Finocchiaro, "La Roma sotterranea e la Congregazione dell'Oratorio. Inediti e lacune del manoscritto vallicelliano G31", in *Messer Filippo Nero, Santo. L'Apostolo di Roma*, edited by B. Tellini Santoni *et alii*, Rome 1995, pp. 189-197; S. Ditchfield, "Text before Trowel: Antonio Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea* revisited", in *The Church Retrospective*, *Studies in Church History*, edited by R.N. Swanson, The Ecclesiastical History Society 1997, pp. 343-360; V. Fiocchi Nicolai, "Presentazione", in *Roma Sotterranea di Antonio Bosio Romano*, Roma Guglielmo Facciotti 1632 (1634), reprinted in Rome 1998, pp. 11*-13*; M. Ghilardi, "Le catacombe di Roma dal Medioevo alla *Roma Sotterranea* di Antonio Bosio", in *Studi Romani*, XLIX, 2001, nn.1-2, pp. 27-56; Id., *Subterranea Civitas. Quattro studi sulle catacombe romane dal medioevo all'eta' moderna*, Rome 2003; Id., "Oratoriani e Gesuiti alla 'conquista' della Roma sotterranea nella prima eta' moderna", in *Archivio italiano per la storia della pieta'*, XXII, Roma 2009, pp. 183-231; M. Ghilardi, "I copisti della 'Roma Sotterranea' nel primo Seicento. Nuovi dati da ricerche di archivio", *Rendiconti*, vol. LXXXVII, Anno Accademico 2014-2015, Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia (serie III), Rome 2015, pp. 117-149; Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea' and the Staging of Early Christian Ritual" (forthcoming. I would like to thank here Dr. Oryshkevich for her generosity in giving to me her essay).

[2] Bosio's sobriquet, made famous by De Rossi (De Rossi, 1864-1877, vol. I, 1864, "Prefazione", p. 1) was actually coined a few years earlier by the father Jesuit Giuseppe Marchi in his *Monumenti delle arti cristiane primitive nella metropoli del Cristianesimo*, Rome 1844, p. 5. De Rossi described with great admiration Bosio's work on the catacombs, the *gravi e dotte esplorazioni* that he paired with his incessant perusal of Roman libraries and archives in search of ancient written documents. Wrote De Rossi: "Di lui [Bosio] io affermo con sicurezza che tutto conobbe, tutto noto' quanto poteva sapersi all'eta' sua sull'argomento della Roma sotterranea (...) Egli lesse da un capo all'altro tutt ele opere de' padri, latini, greci, orientali e le collezioni de' concilii e de' canoni, le epistole de' romani pontefici e degli scrittori ecclesiastici, le antiche

and comprehensive study of Roman catacombs, traditional scholarship has often considered

Roma Sotterranea a by-product of Counter-Reformation spirituality, meant to defend and

justify contemporary liturgical and devotional practices against Protestant accusations.

Simon Ditchfield, for instance, argues that it is one of those typical Catholic works of

devotion meant to facilitate "the *lectio divina* of Rome's sacred landscape".[3] He also points

out that *Roma Sotterranea* relied more on textual sources than physical evidence ("priority

of text which, in turn, informed trowel - and, of course, eye")[4], and that it was only very

marginally concerned with the material culture of palaeohristian Rome.[5] According to

Ditchfield, but also several scholars before him[6], the material *vestigia* of the early Church –

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liturgie, le storie e le cronache di tutti i secoli cristiani, le raccolte di vite de' santi, i trattati d'ogni maniera spettanti a materie sacre, compresi perfino gli scolastici (...) Ma il Bosio non si tenne pago alla ricerca ed all'esame di quanto era stato ai suoi di' pubblicato per le stampe spettante alla letteratura e alla storia cristianadal secolo primo al decimoterzo. Molta parte de' documenti necessarii alla sua impresa giaceva inedita ne' codici e negli archivii; ed egli, che non ebbe agio di perlustrare l'Italia e l'Europa, raccolse quanto pote' di siffatte memorie dalle biblioteche romane e dagli archivi delle nostre basiliche", De Rossi, 1864-1877, vol. I, 1864, pp. 31-32.

[3] Ditchfield 1997, p. 344. Referring to post-Reformation Catholic works of history and antiquarianism, Ditchfield also argues that "from the publication of the firs edition of the revised Roman martyrology with the historical annotations of Cesare Baronio in 1586 to the posthumous appearance of Antonio Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea* in 1635 devout Romans and pilgrims were provided with texts that not only mapped the universal saints' calendar of the Roman Church onto (and underneath) the particular physical topography of the city (...), but also reclaimed for veneration the material culture of Roman Christians from the first century AD in such a way as to make possible a comprehensive mental (and spiritual) re-imagining of early-Christian devotional practice", in S. Ditchfield, "Reading Rome as sacred landscape, c. 1585-1635", in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, edited by W. Coster and A. Spicer, Cambridge 2005, pp. 167-192, p. 167.

[4] Ditchfield 1997, p. 360.

[5] Ditchfield 1997; Ditchfield 2005, but see also: S. Ditchfield, "What Was Sacred History? (Mostly Roman) Catholic Uses of the Christian Past after Trent", in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, edited by K. Van Liere, S. Ditchfield, H. Louthan, Oxford 2012, pp. 72-97.

[6] See above, n. 5. On Bosio in particular, see also: Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'..." (forthcoming); Ghilardi 2001; Id. 2009. For a general overview of traditional and current scholarship's position in regard to the perception of Christian antiquity in post-Tridentine Catholic culture, see chapter 1, n. 1.

or "relics", as Bosio himself used to refer to them[7] – were in fact deemed of some interest only as "title deeds to its [*the Church's*] unique status as successor to the apostolic Church over and against Protestant counter-claims".[8] It was the apologetic value of the material remains that mattered, and Bosio was no exception: he used them only to integrate and complete literary documents so to facilitate the comprehension of sacred places, the catacombs, which bore testimony to the suffering, heroism, and devotions of the first Christians.[9] Only by putting material documents behind the undisputed authority of written sources could scholars like Bosio, or Baronio before him, successfully elaborate a historical narrative that testified to the unbroken continuity of the Roman Church since its apostolic origins as a way of justifying contemporary Catholic practices.[10] It was a matter of faith rather than historical investigation,[11] hence all physical remains that could reveal

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[7] For instance, Bosio mentions the "stanze, e portici concamerati, fabbricati di cemento, e calce; *reliquie* forse delle suddette Terme di Novato", in *Roma Sotterranea* 1634, Book III, chap. LXVI, p. 583.

[8] Ditchfield 1997, p. 352.

[9] Ditchfield argues that for Bosio "the subterranean space was not important for itself but for what signs it contained which might bear witness to the suffering and devotion of the early Christians", in Ditchfield 2005, p. 178. See also Oryshkevich, "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming)

[10] See Ditchfield 1997; 2005; 2012. On Baronio's historical method there is, of course, a far vaster literature; see, among others: S. Zen, *Baronio storico. Controriforma e crisi del metodo umanistico*, Naples 1994; *Baronio e le sue fonti. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Sora 10-13 ottobre 2007*, edited by L. Gulia, Sora 2009; *Cesare Baronio tra santita' e scrittura storica*, edited by G.A. Guazzelli *et alii*, Roma 2012; G.A. Guazzelli, "Cesare Baronio and the Roman Catholic Vision of the Early Church" in *Sacred History* 2012, pp. 52-71.

[11] Oryshkevich states for instance that "Baronio's ahistorical construct of the Roman Church was obviously based on faith", in Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming).

conflicting or potentially dangerous information about the early Church were carefully selected and adapted to the (much safer) established literary tradition.[12]

Unfortunately, this is the assumption that has informed, and perhaps often compromised from the outset the evaluation of the work of many Catholic post-Tridentine scholars. For example, Bosio's decision to narrow down the large number of *grotte* seen on the old and new via Salaria, and consider in his work only those "where there are things worthy of mention, and that we can possibly suppose are the same as those mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and in other ancient monuments",[13] appears to me perfectly reasonable and much in line with the antiquarian and historical use of both written (Acts of the Apostles) and material (the *grotte* themselves) documents combined together in the investigation of the past.[14] And yet, it has been used to further emphasize how "trowel fulfilled text" in Bosio's work,[15] and how the scholar used physical evidence exclusively to

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[12] Spigno explains that Severano decided to amend Bosio's text in all the parts that could damage the Roman Church and its rituals. For instance, Severano deleted all Bosio's allusions in Book I to the "bagordi et oscenita'" that would somehow happen during the vigils for the dead, as it contrasted with the image of the heroic martyrs who died for their faith (Spigno 1976, p. 285) Likewise, in Book II Severano made sure to eliminate all mentions to the incredible wealth accumulated in Saint Peter's, as they could easily lend credibility to the Protestant accusations against the avid and corrupted Church of Rome (*Ibidem*). Ditchfield also points out the fact that "Bosio's understanding of how the nascent Christian Church gradually evolved its rites and ceremonies in relation to pagan and even Jewish practices" was inacceptable for Severano. Also, Severano edited much of Bosio's account of how the brutal pagans made it difficult for the Christians to retrieve the remains of the martyrs, for instance by mixing together their bones with those of asses and camels as it happened during the reign of Julian the Apostate. A historical detail that was indeed best to remain ignored, as it obviously would have strengthened the Protestant argument against the cult of relics (Ditchfield 1997, p. 355)

[13] "Perilche' lasciando di raccontare tutte le Grotte, che abbiamo vedute in queste strade, e Vigne contigue, andaremo descrivemo solamente quei luoghi, ne' quali si sono ritrovate cose degne d'osservatione; e che verisimilmente possiamo credere siano quelle parti, che se ne fa' menzione ne gli Atti de' Martiri, e ne' gli antichi monumenti (....)"*Roma Sotterranea…* 1632 (1634), Book III, chap. LXI, p. 488.

[14] On the use of both literary and non-litery evidence in general, see below, pp. 140-159.

[15] Ditchfield 1997, p. 359.

support textual sources.[16] In this regard Ditchfield goes as far as to speak of "creative misinterpretations of visual evidence",[17] while Irina Oryshkevich lists examples of "molding physical evidence to texts".[18] In other words, it is commonly maintained in the literature that Catholic scholars manipulated and utilized material evidence *ad hoc*, to complete and support textual information that strengthened the legitimacy of the Roman Church and its practices. As a consequence, they sacrificed all documentary and philological criticism on the altar of the Catholic cause.[19]

While some scholars have voiced a slightly more positive opinion of Bosio, acknowledging in particular his lifelong effort to collect and document the physical remains of the primitive Church,[20] eventually they all seem to agree that *Roma Sotterranea* is ultimately a biased defense of an institution, rather than a historical investigation of the past, although it is important to notice that scholars usually blame the Oratorian Giovanni Severano and his strict editorial policy for such a disappointing outcome.[21] Despite their

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[16]For instance, Oryshkevich writes that if texts are used to question material remains, the latter never call into question the accuracy of the text. Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming).

[17] Ditchfield refers here to well-known examples of iconographic misunderstanding of catacomb paintings supposedly illustrating scenes of martyrdom. In particular, Ditchfield mentions the famous case of the naked woman among flames in the catacomb of Domitilla, recorded by both van Winghe and Chacon and today referred to as the "Adoration of the Magi", and Bosio's interpretation of a fresco in the catacomb of Pope Julius I as a martyr being immersed in a tub of boiling water or oil, when it is most likely the representation of the baptism of an adult man (*Roma Sotterranea*…1632 (1634), Book III, chap. LXV, p. 579). Ditchfield 1997, p. 359.

[18] Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming).

[19] On the question of ideological commitment and philological criticism in post-Reformation Catholic history see for instance Ditchfield 2012; Guazzelli 2012; Tutino 2014, chapter 3, and in particular pp. 75-83.

[20] Spera 1975, 1976; Fiocchi Nicolai 1998; Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming).

[21] Spigno 1975, 1976; Ditchfield 1997; Fiocchi Nicolai 1998.

different approaches to *Roma Sotterranea* – a rather demanding book for the modern reader, given its length and its heavy prose punctuated by countless Latin quotations – scholars have normally treated it as a typical product of Counter-Reformation apologetic culture. It has even been claimed that "its primary merit (...) [is] to have contributed to the recovery of the suburb as a place of popular devotion for the city"[22], and that it "should be seen not as an end in itself, but (...) as a tool to assist the faithful and, in particular, those who directed their devotions to complete the fragmentary, material *vestigia* of this heroic chapter of the Church history, with a whole understanding of the spiritual "reality' they imperfectly represented in the present".[23] *Roma Sotterranea* has been analyzed in relation to the problem of its dual authorship[24] and, more recently, in terms of its imagery, investigating in particular how Bosio and Severano shaped the visualization of catacombs for their readers.[25] However, no matter what aspect they have chosen to privilege in their analyses, scholars have traditionally regarded Bosio and Severano's work as an ultimate failure in terms of antiquarian scholarship since the use of non-literary documents is remarkably limited, and even when material evidence does make an appearance it is cleverly manipulated to echo, and support, textual sources.[26] Finally, one is also often warned that the genuine concern with the material reality of the Christian past that had

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[22] Ghilardi, 2001, p. 53.

[23] Ditchfield 2005, p. 189.

[24] Spigno 1975,1976.

[25] Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming)

[26] Above, pp. 112-113.

initially inspired Bosio in his subterranean explorations has been for the most part replaced by Severano's absolute devotion to the cause of the Catholic Church and its vindication. Fiocchi Nicolai, in his preface to the 1998 reprint of the 1634 edition of *Roma Sotterranea*, writes for instance that "Severano's pages reveal his scant critical sensibility (...) and appear completely useless, while Bosio's section of the volume reflect the more scientific approach of the Maltese scholar".[27]

At this point, however, I would like to propose approaching *Roma Sotterranea* from a different perspective altogether and reassess it, even if just as an intellectual experiment, as a work of historical scholarship rather than a work of antiquarian scholarship. And this, despite Bosio's well-established fame as a "prominent antiquarian, famous for his erudition".[28] By placing the book within the conceptual framework of history writing rather than antiquarianism, in fact, we can perhaps stop judging it for what is not, a pioneer work of Christian archaeology, and appreciate it for what it really is, a work of ecclesiastical history. It must be acknowledged here, before I venture into my analysis of *Roma Sotterranea*, that my attempt to provide a different interpretation of Bosio's work is deeply indebted to Stefania Tutino's brilliant book *Shadows of Doubts. Language and Truth in post-Reformation Catholic Culture*.[29] Her discussion of the complex relationship between

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[27] "Se le pagine di Severano rivelano la scarsa sensibilita' critica dell'Oratoriano (...) risultando oggi pressocche' inutilizzabili, la stesura della parte bosiana del volume rispecchia l'approccio piu' scientifico dello studioso maltese", in Fiocchi Nicolai 1998, p. 12*.

[28] "Antiquario insigne, e famoso per la sua dottrina", Severano in *Roma Sotterranea* 1634, "Al Benigno Lettore". Bosio is presented as an antiquarian also on the frontispiece of the book: "Antonio Bosio Romano Antiquario Ecclesiastico Singolare De' Suoi Tempi". On the frontispiece of *Roma Sotterranea* see: J. M. Merz, "Pietro da Cortona und das Frontispiz zu Antonio Bosio's Roma sotterranea", *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 2003, 30, pp. 229-244.

[29] S. Tutino, *Shadows of Doubt: Language and Truth in post-Reformation Catholic Culture*, Oxford 2014.

narrative and truth in history, applied in particular to exactly the same historical period and cultural context that I have been trying to understand beyond established clichés – and for which she applies the label "post-Reformation" while I prefer "post-Tridentine" – has suggested to me the idea of a different interpretive lens for Bosio's work. What if, I asked myself, the same problematic relationship between the unstable truth of the world of men and history, the solid divine Truth of theology, and the language to communicate them both found – as Tutino convincingly argues – in the work of so many early modern Catholic scholars, could be applied also to *Roma Sotterranea*? Could we then consider it as an expression of historical scholarship, rather than antiquarianism, as it was developing in the aftermath of the Council of Trent between dogmatic certainties and critical doubts? And if so, how would that change the traditional perception and evaluation of it?

Let us assume, for the sake of the argument, that *Roma Sotterranea* is not just a lost opportunity for antiquarian studies.[30] Rather, it is an important document of the critical process of elaborating and refining the tools for investigating the past and searching for the truth in history that, forged in the fight between Protestants and Catholics, will result in the birth of the modern historical method.[31] Far from being a tedious work of Oratorian erudite devotion, *Roma Sotterranea* offers, on the contrary, a precious insight into one of the crucial aspects of modernity as it first emerged in post-Reformation Catholic culture. Besides the obvious question as to what extent *Roma Sotterranea*, being a historical work, may actually contribute to the true reconstruction and understanding of the early heroic

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[30] Fiocchi Nicolai 1998, p. 12*.

[31]See Tutino 2014, pp. 40-41.

days of the Church, there is another fundamental question that needs to be asked here. That is, what does *Roma Sotterranea* tell us with regard to the crucial debate about the possibility itself of writing a human history of a divine institution like the Church and, by extension, about the problematic relationship between divine and human truth, theology and history, dogmas and documents?[32] This was part of the much larger problem of negotiating the apparently impossible relationship between the immutable, universal, and a-temporal truth of God and the particular and mutable truth of men, subject to the changes and destruction of time.[33] Even if often unexpressed, this kind of critical thinking – so distant from the usual view of the Counter-Reformation world as a world of granitic certainties built upon faith – is ultimately rooted in the still valid epistemological doubt regarding the very possibility of knowing and understanding the past, in the difficult relation of past and present, historical events and their interpretations, truth and verisimilitude.[34] And it is such critical thinking, as embryonic as it was, that "allows us to

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[32] On the question of the relationship between divine truth and human truth, dogmas and documents, see for example Tutino 2014, in particular chapter 3.

[33] This is neither the place to dwell on such an overwhelming philosophical problem, nor would I be able to offer any valuable contribution to it. I simply take the problem of truth in history and the related question of subjective and objective in the experience of reality, as well the idea of historical understanding as a form of self-understanding, as a critical lens through which reconsider Bosio's work. Seminal works on this philosophical problem are, of course: M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, New York 2008; H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. Engl. ed., London-New York 2004. Also very useful is, with regard with the problem of ecclesiastical history, T. Peters, "Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Pannenberg's Apologetic Method", *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Jan., 1975), pp. 36-56. Finally, Tutino 2014 provides, of course, an excellent demonstration of how to apply Gadamer to the active investigation of the past (with bibliography).

[34] On the problematic question of documentary traces and interpretation of historic facts, see C. Ginzburg, "Description and Citation. For Arnaldo Momigliano", in Id., *Threads and Traces. True, False, Fictive*, Engl. transl. by A.C. Tedeschi and J. Tedeschi, Berkley 2012, pp. 7-24; Tutino 2014, chapters 2 and 3.

view post-Reformation reflections on historiography and ecclesiastical history as a veritable laboratory of modernity", as posited by Stefania Tutino.[35]

The very elite of Counter-Reformation culture, from Cesare Baronio and the Oratorians to Roberto Bellarmino and the Jesuits, had been engaged in such a debate for several decades, and – as we will see – *Roma Sotterranea* can (and should) be seen as a product of this debate. Perhaps Bosio and Severano sided with the more conservative faction of this crucial debate, refusing to see those embryonic doubts that were increasingly challenging the certainty of faith upon which their world was founded. Nevertheless, their *Roma Sotterranea* is a critical *monumentum* of that crucial debate, and as such deserves to be analyzed and judged.

"Roma Sotterranea" and its two authors

The illegitimate child of a Knight of Malta, Bosio was likely born in 1575 in Malta,[36] although some scholars have also suggested Rome as his place of birth.[37] He was

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[35] Tutino 2014, p. 111.

[36] Bosio was most likely born in 1575 according to what he himself writes in relation to the underground cemetery discovered on the Via Salaria in 1578: "[the cemetery] was not see by me, as at the time I was a young boy of three years of age" ("Non fu da noi veduto, perche' all'hora eravamo fanciulli, in eta' di tre anni, e dapoi fu rovinato, e guasto...", *Roma Sotterranea* 1634, Book III, chap. LXI, p. 511). For biographical information of Bosio see Valeri 1900; Parise 1971; Spigno 1975. See also the older sources: J. N. Eritreo (G. V. de Rossi), *Pinacotheca vivorum illustrium*, I-III, Köln 1645-1648, vol. I pp. 232ff. In Spigno 1976, pp. 289-291.

[37] Spigno 1976, pp. 293-295. Although Bosio's Roman birth is only hypothetical, it is important to notice here that 1) when Bosio mentions the fact that he could not see in person the catacomb on the via Salaria discovered in 1578, he only refers to his very young age and not to a geographical distance from the site 2) all official documents (degree certificate, his testament, hid death declaration) as well as citation like the in the frontispiece of *Roma Sotterranea*, always refer to Bosio as *Romanus*. Even L'Heureux mentions Bosio as

educated in Rome under the supervision of his uncle Giacomo Bosio, ambassador of the Knights of Malta, who had probably already adopted him.[38] The young Antonio studied philosophy and jurisprudence at the Collegio Romano where he graduated *in utroque iure* in 1594,[39] although he only rarely exercised the legal profession, instead devoting most of his time to antiquarian studies.[40] Bosio became interested in particular in Christian *antiquitates*, likely encouraged by Pompeo Ugonio, his professor of Rhetoric at the Collegio Romano.[41] Bosio established a friendly relationship with him, and it is not surprising to find Ugonio among the temerarious explorers who accompanied him during the first subterranean exploration, on a memorable day in early December 1593.[42] Over the course of the same decade, Bosio came to be on good terms with Chacón and L'Heureux, entering their antiquarian circle.[43] Bosio himself recalls Chacón accompanying him to at

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juvenis romanus, J. L'Heureux, *Hagioglypta, sive picturae et sculpturae sacrae antiquiores praesertim quae Romae reperiuntur*, edited by. R. Garucci, Paris 1854, p. 4.

[38] Dal Pozzo B., *Historia della sacra religione milit. di S. Gio. Gerosol. detta di Malta*, I-II, Verona 1703, vol. I, p. 778; Valeri 1900, p. 16; p. 71, *Documento I*.

[39] See the transcription of Bosio's degree certificate in Valeri 1900, pp. 72-73.

[40] On Bosio's scarce interest in the legal profession, see Valeri 1900, p. 24; Parise 1971; Spigno 1976, p. 295; Ghilardi 2001, pp. 44.

[41] Valeri 1900, p. 17. On Pompeo Ugonio, see E. Josi, "Ugonio, Pompeo", in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, XII, 1954, col. 716; see also I. Herklotz, "Historia Sacra und mittelalterliche Kunst während der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts in Rom", in *Baronio e l'arte. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Sora 10-13 ottobre 1984*, edited by R. De Maio *et alii*, Sora 1985, pp. 23-74.

[42] "(...) l'anno 1593, alli 10 di Decembre (...) uscendo noi da Porta Capena, quando fummo arrivati alla Chiesa di Santa Maria in Palmis, lasciano a mano manca detta Chiesa, e la Via Appia, che va' dirittamente verso la Chiesa di San Sebastiano, seguitammo la strada a mano destra, che crediamo si al'Ardeatina, & arrivati alla campagna, & alla strada, che da S. Paolo va a S. Sebastiano (...) voltammo parimenti a mano destra verso S. Paolo; & havendo camminato alcuni pochi passi per essa, scorgemmo a mano manca alcuni archi di grotte di pozzolana, circa mezzo miglio lontano da S. Sebastiano. Erano in mia compagnia *Pompeo Ugonio* e alcuni altri gentil'huomini curiosi". *Roma Sotterranea* 1634, Book III, chap. XXIII, p. 195.

[43] Valeri 1900, pp. 21-22; Ghilardi 2001, 43; Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming).

least one subterranean expedition,[44] and it was the Spaniard – with whom Bosio had several conversations about the catacombs – who, with great generosity, gave him his own copies of catacomb murals and possibly also some drawings belonging to the prematurely deceased van Winghe.[45] Although according to Bosio's own words, he was given at least a few drawings by van Winghe himself, which obviously suggests some sort of friendly relationship also between him and the young Flemish antiquarian.[46] Bosio could have easily met van Winghe in Rome before his ill-fated trip to Florence, where the young Fleming was to die so unexpectedly.[47] L'Heureux also attests to their friendship, calling Bosio as "a

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[44] While describing the cemetery near the church of Saints Marcellinus and Peter on the Via Labicana, Bosio writes that after having at last discovered the entrance to the cemetery, he came back there many times, taking with him "many important people to visit it, and in particolar Cardinal Baronio, who was extremely happy, and also Alfonso Ciaccone, Pompeo Ugonio, and many other illustrious people" ("Non solo poi in quel giorno, ma diverse altre volte vi siamo ritornati a visitare questo Cimiterio, havendoci condotti anche molti personaggi a vederlo, particolarmente il cardinal Baronio, il quale ne senti' grandissimo contento, come ancora Alfonso Ciacconio, Pompeo Ugonio, e diversi altri huomini illustri", *Roma Sotterranea…* 1632 (1634),, Book III, chap. XXXVII, p. 327).

[45] For instance, Bosio mentions one of his certainly numerous conversation with Chacón while writing about the famous catacomb that came to light in 1578 on the Via Salaria, and which he never had a chance to see in person: "(...) as something new and unusual, many people went to see it; an din particular learned men, as many times told me Alfonso Ciaccone, of the Preachers order, writer and eminent man of our age" ("...come cosa nuova, & insolita, concorse gran gente a vederlo; e particolarmente huomini di lettere, come piu' volte mi ha riferito Alfonso Ciaccone dell'ordine di Predicatori, scrittore, & huomo illustre all'eta' nostra", *Roma Sotterranea…* 1632 (1634),, Book III, chap. LXI, p. 511). In regard to the drawings of Chacón and van Winghe, see below n. 46.

[46] Mentioning the copies of mural paintings that he obtained from Chacón, Bosio writes in fact: "Si ritrovarono in questo Cimiterio sette Monumenti arcuati; le cui pitture furono all'hora copiate da Filippo Vinghio Fiammengo, e dal Ciaccone ancora, *da' quali* noi l'abbiamo avute", *Roma Sotterranea…* 1632 (1634), Book III, chap. LXI, p. 513.

[47] In 1592 van Winghe travelled to Florence where he felt hill and died shortly afterwards. On van Winghe, see Cornelis Schuddeboom in his *Philips van Winghe (1560-1592) en het onstaan van de christelijke archeologie*, Leiden 1996; Id., "Research in the Roman catacombs by the Louvain antiquarian Philips van Winghe", in *Archives & excavations: essays on the history of archaeological excavations in Rome and southern Italy from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century*, edited by I. Bignamini, London-Rome 2004, pp. 23-32; Oryshkevich 2011. See also, above, chapter 2, pp. 89-101.

dearest friend of mine" and a "noble and learned young Roman, of excellent morality.[48]

Both Chacon and L'Heureux. and to some extent also van Winghe through his notes and sketches, had a great influence on the young Bosio. Traces of their comparative method – based on the collection and systematization of literary and non-literary evidence analyzed together – is found in his notes, sketches, and descriptions of Early Christian sites and objects, and is also still detectable in his *Roma Sotterranea*.[49] Bosio was also acquainted with Cesare Baronio[50] and possibly several other members of the Curia intrigued by his explorations of the catacombs for reasons that, at least in this case, may indeed have had to do with the vindication of the Church more than with a scholarly interest in Christian antiquity. [51]

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[48] "nobilis et doctus juvenis romanus, egregiis moribus, mihi amicissimus", L'Heureux 1854, *Praefatio ad Lectorem*, p. 4.

[49] See for instance Spigno 1975, 1976; Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming). My intention here, however, is not so much to discuss the antiquarian influence of Chacon and L'Heureux on Bosio, as to reassess *Roma Sotterranea* from a perspective different from that of antiquarianism.

[50] We know that Bosio guided Baronio through the cemetery of Marcellinus and Petrus, (see above, n. 46), and it is once again Bosio himself who testifies to their personal acquaintance remembering, for instance, to have heard from Baronio's himself the identification of the cemetery on the Via Salaria with the cemetery of Priscilla: "(...) onde con ragione fu anche dal Baronio, e dal Ciaccone similmente giudicato esser questo il Cimiterio di Priscilla; come piu' volte l'hanno dichiarato ne' scritti loro; *Et io piu' chiaramente l'ho inteso dalle loro proprie bocche*", *Roma Sotterranea* 1634, Book III, chap. LXI, p. 533. Moreover, both Bosio and Baronio were called to identify the relics of St. Cecilia found in the homonymous basilica in Trastevere in 1599, and it is certainly reasonable to imagine that – despite the inevitable distance between a prince of the Church and a young scholar – they might have exchanged their opinions on such occasion.

[51] In *Roma Sotterranea* Bosio often alludes to the illustrious people, "huomini illustri", whom he guided underground. They were obviously other scholars equally fascinated by the catacombs, but quite possibly also members of the Curia following the steps of Baronio, or even saint Filippo Neri himself. For instance, we know that Bosio was in friendly terms with another Oratorian Cardinal, Orazio Giustiniani, as he himself declares in a letter to the abbot Crescenzi dated to June 1628 (Vallicelliana Library, ms. H.30, f. 252r-254v, in P.A. Uccelli, *La chiesa di S. Sebastiano M. sul colle Palatino e Urbano VIII P.M.*, Rome 1876, pp. 53-56). On the life-long fascination of Filippo Neri with the catacombs, see for example: V . F i o c c h i N i c o l a , " San Filippo Neri, le catacombe di San Sebastiano e le origini dell'archeologia cristiana", in *San Filippo Neri nella realtà romana del XVI secolo*, Atti del Convegno di Studio in occasione del IV Centenario della morte di S. Filippo Neri (1595-1995), Roma 11-13 maggio 1995, a cura di M. T. Bonadonna Russo- N. Del Re, Rome 2000, pp. 105-130.

Through his historical and antiquarian work Bosio acquired social legitimacy despite his obscure birth,[52] as well as great credibility as a scholar of Christian antiquity, soon becoming an influential member of Roman scholarly circles well known even beyond the Alps.[53] In 1599, for instance, Bosio was called – along with none other than Cardinal Baronio – to identify the remains of Saint Cecilia exhumed in the eponymous basilica in Trastevere during the restoration commissioned by Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfrondato, certainly a prestigious opportunity for the young scholar.[54] A further sign of Bosio's scholarly reputation is the Oratorian Giovanni Severano's request, made through their mutual friend Giacomo Crescenzi abbot of Sant'Eutizio near Norcia, and former pupil of San Filippo Neri,[55] for Bosio's opinion on his *Memorie sacre delle sette chiese di Roma* prior to its publication.[56] A particularly interesting coincidence, considering that only a few months later, shortly after Bosio's untimely death, the task of seeing to the publication of *Roma Sotterranea* was given to none other than Severano himself.[57] Conveniently enough,

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[52] Valeri 1900, p. 30.

[53] Admirer of Bosio's work, as well as a good friend of his, was for instance the famous French antiquarian Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (Ghilardi 2001, p. 50). On Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, see *Peiresc et l'Italie: actes du colloque international. Naples, le 23 et 24 juin 2006*, edited by M. Fumaroli and F. Solinas, Paris 2009; P.N. Miller, *Peiresc's Mediterranean World*, Cambdridge (Mass.) 2015.

[54] Above, p. 120, n. 50. On the Santa Cecilia and its restoration, see chapter 4, pp. 207-208; for literature, see p. 207, n. 158.

[55] On Giacomo Crescenzi see I. Polverini Fosi in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 30, Rome 1984, *ad vocem*; Ghilardi 2003, *ad indicem*.

[56] In his letter of response (Vallicelliana Library in Rome, cod. G20) Bosio expressed a favorable opinion of Severano's work, and offered a number of suggestions that were all accepted by the Oratorian. Only a few months later Bosio was also requested by the ecclesiastical authority to sign an official approval, the *nihil obstat*, of Severano's book. See Valeri 1900, pp. 50-52 and pp. 74-76; see also below, pp. 127-129.

[57] On the difficult history of *Roma Sotterranea* following Bosio's death, and on Severano's final editing of Bosio's material, see: Spigno 1975; 1976; Ditchfield 1997; Ghilardi 2001; Id. 2009. See also G. Finocchiaro,

the name of Severano takes us straight to the heart of the problem that Bosio's monumental

book – with its dual authorship and tangled combination of historical methodology,

antiquarian erudition, and pious devotion – poses to modern scholars.

The question with *Roma Sotterranea* is, of course, whether it was a study concerned

with the historical truth and material reality of Christian antiquity, or an erudite defense of

the Catholic Church in which Christian antiquity is cleverly shaped to serve a specific

apologetic purpose. It is an important question to which the answer is rather nuanced and

debatable, although traditionally scholarship has judged it as merely a product of Catholic

ideology, as mentioned above.[58] If *Roma Sotterranea* is the result of nearly forty years of

tireless on-site investigations during which Bosio analyzed and studied the *vestigia* of the

primitive Church, it is also a book that relies heavily on textual tradition.[59] It is a historical

and antiquarian account of Christian antiquity as well as a product of Counter-Reformation

culture, and certainly makes no pretense of neutrality in its defense of the Roman Church.

The first systematic study on Christian archaeology is indeed a sort of double-headed Janus,

trapped between scholarly interests and apologetic concerns, and bears the marks of a

somewhat hybrid nature.[60] Yet, it is exactly such ambiguity of *Roma Sotterranea* that needs

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"Vetri dorati nel museo di curiosita' di Virgilio Spada. Un confronto tra la *Roma Sotterranea* a stampa e manoscritta (ms. vall. G.31)", in *I luoghi della cultura nella Roma di Borromini*, edited by B. Tellini Santoni and A. Manodori Sagredo, Roma, Biblioteca Vallicelliana 19 maggio- 3 luglio 2004, Rome 2004, pp. 181-205.

[58] Above, pp. 109-114.

[59] See Ditchfield 1997 and 2005; Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming).

[60] Irina Oryshkevich correctly highlights the dual character of Bosio's work writing that "Bosio, in other words, straddled the gap between the small circle of antiquarians whose interest in Early Christianity was tempered by their broader interest in antiquity, and the staunch wardens of papacy who molded the catacombs

to be better investigated and addressed in order to understand a book that mirrors, with its inconsistencies and contradictions, the fractured and often conflicting cultural world of the Counter-Reformation.[61]

After much delay, *Roma Sotterranea* was finally published in late 1634.[62] Upon his sudden death in 1629, Bosio left his manuscript – still unfinished despite its publication having been announced some ten years before[63] – to father Cristoforo Giarda, the Barnabite Bishop of Castro.[64] Only a few months later the Barnabite architect Giovani Ambrogio Mazenta[65] wrote to Cassiano dal Pozzo trying to secure Giarda's role in the publication of Bosio's treatise:

> "the employment of Father Giarda in the *Subterranea Roma* according to the desire of the testator will be of great splendor for ecclesiastical antiquity, and thus I

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into whatever shape served their purpose", Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming).

[61] See for instance Tutino 2014, pp. 1-9.

[62] *Roma Sotterranea* was published sometime at the end of 1634, five years after Bosio's death. Despite the date of 1632 on its frontispiece, in fact, the prefatory papal brief dates to October 6th 1634 (*Roma Sotterranea* 1634, *Urbanus papa VIII. Ad futuram rei memoriam*, s.n.) See Valeri 1900, pp. 62-63.

[63] According to what Giacomo Bosio, Antonio's uncle, wrote in one of his books, *La trionfante e gloriosa Croce* (Rome 1610), the idea to publish the results of Bosio's subterranean investigations appeared already before 1610. The voice that Bosio was going to publish soon his work must have indeed circulated in certain circles if the always well informed French antiquarian Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc wrote to Paolo Gualdo in January of 1615: "Intenderei volentieri, se si e' mai stampato un libro del Bosio, promesso un pezzo fa intorno alle catacombe, ed altre antichita' del primo cristianesimo: se si trova di qual prezzo e'…". A few months later, in July, de Peiresc wrote again to Gualdo complaining that "non fossero stampate le fatiche del signor Bosio", in *Lettere d'uomini illustri che fioriscono nel principio del secolo decimosettimo, non piu' stampate*, Venice 1744, p. 246. See Spigno 1976, pp. 298-99.

[64] See O. Premoli, "Lo scopritore della Roma Sotterranea", in *La scuola cattolica*, (XLVII) 1919, pp. 169-181. See also: Spigno 1976, pp. 300-301; Ghilardi 2001, p. 50, n. 124; Id. 2009, pp. 188-189. On Father Cristoforo Giarda, see D. Busolini, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (D.B.I.), 54, 2000, *ad vocem*.

[65] On Father Giovanni Ambrogio Mazenta, see V. Milano in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (D.B.I.), 72, 2008, *ad vocem*.

had the audacity to beseech His Most Illustrious Lordship [*Cardinal Francesco Barberini*] in this regard".[66]

In May of that same year Father Mazenta wrote again to dal Pozzo, enquiring if

> "the Most Illustrious Lordship the Cardinal [*Barberini*] has resolved whether our Father Giarda will continue the work on *Roma Subterranea* already given to him by Sir Antonio Bosio".[67]

Based on these letters, some scholars have suggested that Bosio had originally appointed Giarda to complete his *opus maximum*, and that Severano was chosen against his precise wish.[68] Most likely, however, Giarda was only involved in Bosio's work as a "proof-reader" of some sort, for while he was a refined writer, poet and theologian, he never showed any particular interest in Christian antiquity.[69] Whatever the case, once the powerful and resolute Cardinal-nephew Francesco Barberini – eager to finally see published a work deemed of particular importance – took the matter in his hands, he decided to designate someone better equipped for such an overwhelming task: the Oratorian

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[66] "L'impiego del P. Giarda nella Subterranea Roma, secondo la volonta' del testatore sara' di molto splendore all'antichita' ecclesiastiche e percio' habbi l'ardire di supplicarne S. Sign. Ill.ma (...)", Letter of March 25th 1630, cit. in Spigno 1976, p. 300.

[67] "Prego V. Signoria a farmi certo se l'Illustrissimo Signor cardinale Padrone habbi deliberato che il padre nostro Giarda continui l'opera de *Roma Subterranea* datagli gia' dal Signor Antonio Bosio di felice memoria", *ibidem*.

[68] Premoli 1919. See Spigno 1976, pp. 300-301; Ghilardi 2001, p. 50, n. 124.

[69] Spigno refuses categorically Premoli's suggestion, based on the consideration – ironically pointed out by Premoli himself – that while being "elegantissimo scrittore e poeta" Father Giarda was "affatto estraneo agli studi di Archeologia cristiana", in Spigno 1976, p. 301.

Giovanni Severano.[70] Given the strong interest that Bosio's research on the catacombs had stirred in antiquarian and ecclesiastical circles alike, both in Rome and beyond, it is not surprising that the Barnabites tried their best to appropriate the manuscript. Its publication, in fact, would have garnered great fame and merit for their Order. But Cardinal Barberini decided otherwise, giving all of Bosio's material, including some of the already engraved tables for the illustrations, to Severano along with the imperative request to complete and polish the material for the publication as soon as possible.[71]

Despite murmurs of disapproval, especially from the Barnabites, Cardinal Barberini's choice was, with regard to the fate of *Roma Sotterranea*, a wise one. Less than five year after Bosio's death, in fact, the thousands of pages that he had left behind were finally assembled into a coherent (though monumental) tome, completed with an entirely new part (Book 4), and polished for publication.[72] The Oratorian took also care of the iconographic apparatus of the treatise, correlating the text to the illustrations already prepared by Bosio and commissioning additional ones.[73] Whether against or in accordance

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[70] On Giovanni Severano, a figure that still needs to be properly studied, see: S. E. Vaccaro, "Giovanni Severano, prete dell'Oratorio e uomo di studio", in *Quaderni dell'Oratorio*, (IV) 1961, pp. 1-7; A. Cistellini, *San Filippo Neri. L'Oratorio e la Congregazione oratoriana. Storia e spiritualita'*, Brescia 1989, *ad indicem*; D.L. Sparti, "Pietro da Cortona e le presunte reliquie di santa Martina", in *Pietro da Cortona*. Atti del Convegno Internazionale Roma-Firenze, 12-15 novembre 1997, edited by Ch.L. Frommel and S. Schütze, Milan 1998, pp. 243-255.

[71] For bibliographical sources illustrating the circumstances between Bosio's death and the publication of *Roma Sotterranea*, see above, p. 14, n. 59.

[72] For a chapter-by-chapter comparative analysis of Bosio's original material and Severano's editing and additions, see Spigno 1975 and 1976, in particular pp. 277-286.

[73] With regard to the illustrations of *Roma Sotterranea*, I want to clarify here that they are not treated in this chapter, as the focus is on the written text. For an interesting analysis of the visual material in Bosio's book, see Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming). See also Ghilardi 2015, for information about the artists working for Bosio, Giovanni Angelo Santini "Toccafondo" and Sante Avanzini.

with Bosio's wishes, Cardinal Barberini's choice was dictated by obvious good sense: Severano was an Oratorian, and Oratorians were at the time particularly active in the investigation of Christian antiquity, though their contribution to the studies of Christian antiquity has been certainly overemphasized.[74] For instance Antonio Gallonio (1556-1605), the erudite author of a famous treatise on the tortures inflicted on Christian martyrs, the *Trattato de gli instrumenti di martirio e delle varie maniere di martoriare usate da' gentili contro christiani* (Rome 1591), was an Oratorian.[75] Other Oratorian scholars included Girolamo Bruni, author of a relation on how to identify with certainty the burial of a martyr in the catacombs,[76] and Paolo Aringhi, a very promising young pupil particularly interested in ancient history and *antiquaria sacra*. A few decades later, the same Aringhi was to complete the Latin translation of Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea*, left unfinished by Severano.[77]

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[74] See chapter 1, pp. 10-22.

[75] On Gallonio and his treatise, see S. Ditchfield in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (D.B.I.), 51, 1998, *ad vocem*; A. Cistellini, "A proposito della Vita di San Filippo Neri di Antonio Gallonio", in *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia*, LIV, 2000, pp. 1-6.

[76] On Girolamo Bruni see A. Cistellini 1989, *ad indicem*. Bruni's relation on the signs of martyrdom, compiled between 1629 and 1635 for Cardinal Marzio Ginetti, remains unpublished (Vat. Lat. 9498, ff. 1-23), except for an extract published in A. Ferrua, *Sulla questione del vaso di sangue. Memoria inedita di Giovan Battista de Rossi*, Vatican City 1944, pp. 63-98.

[77] P. Aringhi, *Roma subterranea novissima*, I-II, Rome 1651. It is possible that Bosio himself considered initially the idea of writing the book in Latin, as suggested by a manuscript in the Vallicelliana library where the title of the work appears in Latin as *Roma Subterranea* (Cod. G5). A short passage from Severano's dedication to Carlo Aldobrandini in the first edition of the *Roma Sotterranea* appears to support such hypothesis, as Severano wrote: "Havrei voluto con la mutatione dello stile, che mi e' bisognato fare in molti luoghi per renderlo piu' chiaro, & uniforme, tradurre ancora l'Opera in lingua latina; meritando, per la materia cosi' sacra, e piena di euditione, d'esser goduta universalmente da tutte le nationi; *e tale credo fosse il pensiero dell'Autore; poiche' nelle figure Cimiteriali, ch'egli fece intagliare, e nelli Capitoli stessi dell'Opera, ha posto i titoli latini*" (G. Severano, *Roma Sotterranea*, Roma 1634, dedication to Carlo Aldobrandini, p. 5). Eventually, though, Bosio dismissed the idea and wrote his *Roma Sotterranea* in Italian. After its publication, however, having the reputation of the book grown so much, a translation in Latin had become necessary. Severano himself began to work on it between 1634 and 1637, but it was only a good fifteen years later that Bosio's treatise finally appeared in Latin (1651). Paolo Aringhi, the Oratorian translator, also manipulated Bosio and Severano's work, editing many parts and adding others, so that *Roma subterranea novissima* is actually rather distant from *Roma Sotterranea*, definitely more a polemical and

And by the time Cardinal Barberini had decided to charge him with the completion of Bosio's work, Severano himself had gained some scholarly fame with his recent work, the *Memorie sacre delle sette chiese di Roma* (1630).[78]

Severano's *Memorie* was one of those typical Oratorian works of sacred history in which solid antiquarian and historical erudition was in fact used to support the truth of the Catholic Church.[79] The *Memorie* aimed to legitimize current cults and liturgical practices of the Catholic Church by placing them in a direct *continuum* with the purest and most heroic time of the Church, an effort comparable (in its intentions though certainly not in terms of methodological sophistication and breath of scholarship) to Baronio's *Annales*.[80] And like the *Annales* – where ideological commitment does not mean lack of documentary prowess or philological scruples[81] –the *Memorie* were more than just a book of Catholic devotion, as I will discuss shortly.[82] Severano's book was also particularly appreciated by Bosio himself, who did not hesitate to recommend it for publication.[83] The story has been told

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apologetic tract than a work of historical and antiquarian erudition. See for instance Ghilardi 2001, p. 55, n. 144 and 146. For the fate of *Roma Sotterranea* in the century following its publication, see S. Nanni, *Roma religiosa nel Settecento. Spazi e linguaggi dell'identita' cristiana*, Roma 2000.

[78] G. Severano, *Memorie sacre delle sette chiese di Roma e de gl'altri luoghi, che si trovano per le strade di essa*, Roma 1630.

[79] For the use of history and antiquarianism in service of the Church, see for instance *Nunc alia tempora, alii mores. Storici e storia in eta' post-Tridentina*, edited by M. Firpo, Florence 2005; Ditchfield 2012; Guazzelli 2012; Guazzelli *et alii* 2012. For more bibliographical reference, see chapter 1, n. 1.

[80]Ditchfield 1997; Id. 2005. On Baronio and his *Annales* the literature is obviously quite extensive. For selected bibliographical reference, see above, p. 4, n. 10; see also chapter 1, p. 1, n. 1,2,4.

[81] Tutino 2014, pp. 74-88.

[82] See below, pp. 130-140.

[83] Valeri 1900, pp. 50-51 and 74-76; Ghilardi 2009, pp. 188-190.

several times: Bosio was requested by his good friend the abbot Giacomo Crescenzi –
particularly close to the Oratorians, and likely a key-player in the choice of Severano for
the completion of *Roma Sotterranea*[84] – to express his opinion on Severano's work, soon
due to be published.[85] From a letter written by Bosio to Crescenzi,[86] we learn that by the
end of February 1629 Bosio had revised Severano's manuscript, and that on April 7th he
signed the official *nihil obstat* for its publication.[87] In his letter Bosio praised Severano's
work, and even promised to remove from his *Roma Sotterranea* the material already
discussed by Severano: "I myself have discussed just about the same matters in my *Roma
Sotterranea*, but with much pleasure I will remove them".[88] He then offered suggestions of
historical and antiquarian nature, which Severano willingly accepted making sure to
integrate them in his text before sending it to the press.[89] The general tone of the letter
definitely points more to a learned exchange between two erudite antiquarians rather than
two intransigent advocates of Catholicism, and Bosio's praise of Severano's manuscript, "a
book (...) in which I find nothing but a great deal of erudition and exquisite diligence",[90]

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[84] On the abbot Crescenzi see above, p. 121, and n. 55.

[85] See above, p. 127, n. 83.

[86] The letter, which dates to February 28th 1629, is in the Vallicelliana Library, ms. G.20, f. 221r, and was first published by De Rossi 1864 I, p. 39 (who wrongly identified the recipient with Cardinal Barberini), and then again by Valeri 1900, pp. 50-51 with the right recipient, abbot Giacomo Crescenzi.

[87] The *nihil obstat*, requested to Bosio by the Master of the Sacred Palace Nicola Riccardi, is published in Valeri 1900, pp. 51-52.

[88] "Io nella mia opera de Roma subterranea havevo messe quasi l'istesse cose, quali con molto mio gusto levaro', rimettendomi a lui", in Valeri 1900, p. 51.

[89] Bosio's list of suggestion is in Valeri 1900, pp. 74-76.

[90] "libro (...) nel quale non trovo se non molta eruditione e diligenza esquisita et e' opera degnissima di mandarsi in luce", in Valeri 1900, p. 51.

does not necessarily suggest an overwhelming prevalence of devotional and ideological concerns. An additional letter from around the same time, only recently come to light,[91] further reinforces this impression of a friendly scholarly solidarity and mutual respect between Bosio and Severano, as we will see.[92] It is true that when Bosio gave his official approval for the publication of Severano's treatise (April 7th, 1629), he insisted on its doctrine and religious piety as much as on its erudition:

> "I, Antonio Bosio, having by order of the Master of the Sacred Apostolic *Infra* Palace [*Magister Sacrii Palatii Apostolici*], carefully read the treatise of the *Memorie delle sette Chiese di Roma, e d'altri Luoghi che si trovano per le strade di esse*, divided in two parts and compiled by the much reverend Father Giovanni Severano of the Congregation of the Oratorians; I have found it filled with erudition, doctrine and unique [religious] piety; so that from it the readers will not only receive great delight, but also great benefit and spiritual consolation. And thus, I so reckon that to the glory of the Lord, the honor of his Saints, and of this noble City of Rome whose obscure memories are being brought to light; that let it be given to the press as soon as possible for the public benefit".[93]

But I have no doubt that Bosio's emphasis on the more devotional aspect of Severano's treatise should simply be explained given the specific circumstances – his

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[91] The letter (Vatican Library, Autografi Patetta, 118) is published in I. Herklotz, "Antonio Bosio e Giovanni Severano. Precisazioni su una collaborazione", in *Studi Romani*, LVI, 2008, nn.1-4, pp. 233-248.

[92] See below, pp. 133-135.

[93] "Havendo io Antonio Bosio d'ordine del Reverendiss. Padre Maestro del Sacro Palazzo, letto, e riconosciuto diligentemente il Trattato delle Memorie Sacre delle sette Chiese di Roma, e d'altri Luoghi, che si trovano per le strade di esse, diviso in due Parti, e composto dal molto Reverendo Padre Giovanni Severano della COngregazione dell'Oratorio; l'ho ritrovato pieno di molta erudizione, dottrina, e singolar pieta'; di modo che da esso i Lettori ne cavaranno non solo gran diletto, ma anco gran frutto, e consolatione spirituale. E pero' giudico, che a gloria del Signore, honore de' supi Santi, e di questa alma Citta' di Roma, le cui oscure memorie si mettono in luce; si dia quanto prima alle Stampe per publico beneficio", in Valeri 1900, pp. 51-52.

opinion for the *imprimatur* having been requested by the ecclesiastical authority – rather than the exclusive devotional nature of Severano's work.

A necessary digression on Giovanni Severano

It is not my intention to deny here entirely that Severano's *Memorie* is indeed a book of devotion, in which the physical reality of early-Christian Rome is presented to the reader as the materialization of the uncorrupted spirituality of the pristine Church. After all, the second volume of the *Memorie* is basically a spiritual manual conceived to prepare and accompany the pilgrim during his devotional journey through the oldest and most sacred churches of Christianity. A guide meant to facilitate the "*lectio divina* of Rome's sacred landscape",[94] as the author himself explains:

> "in the second [part] I proposed a way to visit them [the seven churches], with many and diverse orations, meditations, and exercises that may encourage their devotion and veneration".[95]

The first volume, however, is on the contrary a book of considerable antiquarian and historical erudition, and the fact that most of Severano's sources were textual rather than material does not detract in any way from to the scholarly nature of his text. Moreover, Severano explains from the very beginning that the preservation of literary sources

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[94] Ditchfield 1997, p. 344.

[95] "Nella seconda ho proposto il Modo di visitarle, con varie, e diverse Orationi, Meditationi, & Esercitii, che possano aiutare alla divotione, e veneratione di quelle", Severano 1630, "Al benigno lettore", vol. I, p. 24v.

illustrating Early Christianity in Rome is in fact his main concern.[96] Hence, the ample use

of textual documents compared to the relatively few material documents cited in the book

does not belie Severano's full awareness of the importance that physical remains of the past

may have as evidence for ancient history. In more than one instance he makes use of such

evidence to verify and substantiate information derived from the literary tradition as, for

example, in the case of the Vatican *Naumachia* supposedly built by Emperor Nero in the

Vatican area.[97] To support the textual information collected from several ancient sources

(from the life of Pope Leo III in the *Liber Pontificalis* to the Acts of Saint Peter)[98] pointing

to the location of the *Naumachia* in the area near the church of San Pellegrino below the

Belvedere, Severano cites the toponym *Almachia* or *Almaccia* for that area explaining it as

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[96] "D'altra parte, si' come sono state innumerabili, e con successivo tratto perpetue, le attioni sacre operate, & accadute in quest'Alma Citta', degne di eterna memoria, cosi' pe'l contrario pochi sono stati quelli, che di proposito le habbiano scritte; e frequenti le rovine, & i naufragii de' sacri Libri, e delle Scritture Ecclesiastiche ne i tempi delle persecutioni della Chiesa, e negl'Incendii, e Sacchi di Roma, e quei pochi fragmenti, che avanzarono a tante calamita' si vanno tuttavia consumando, e distruggendo a poco a poco dal tempo: anzi quei rari vestigii delle antiche Memorie, che in qualche parte (come Indici delle Antichita') ce le additavano, le vediamo sensibilmente sparire avanti a gl'occhi. Questi sono i motivi, e le cagioni, per le quali io da molt'anni mi mossi a spendere le hore (...) in cercare con ogni diligenza possibile le MEMORIE SACRE di Roma in tutti quegli autori che ho potuto vedere nella nostra Vallicelliana, e nelle altre Biblioteche, e Archivii di questa citta' (...)", *Ibidem*.

[97] Severano 1630, I, pp. 11-12. The Vatican Naumachia was only known through ancient literary sources that mentioned the place of Peter's martyrdom "ad locum qui vocatur naumachia, juxta obeliscum Neronis" (*Passio Sanctorum Petri et Pauli*, in *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, edited by R.A. Lipsius, Leipzig 1891, vol. I, pp. 11-12, in O. Marucchi, *La crocifissione di San Pietro nel Vaticano*, Rome 1905, p. 147). It was only in the eighteenth century that traces of a structure lying just north-west of the castle of S. Angelo, possibly the naumachia, were finally excavated. See Buzzetti, "Naumachia Traiani", in *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, edited by E. M. Steinby, III, Rome 1996, p. 339.

[98] *Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction, commentaire*, edited by L. Duchesne, vol. I-III, Paris 1886-1957; *Acta apostolorum apocrypha* 1891, vol. I, p. XXX (cited in Baronio's *Annales*)

the corruption of the Latin word *naumachia*.[99] But, the only conclusive evidence of the

existence of Nero's *Naumachia* is found, for Severano, in a

> "(...) marble table upon which it is sculpted the map of the ancient Rome that was found at the time of Paul III among the ruins of the Temple of Romulus and Remus, and kept among the precious objects/things of the Farnese house/family. On it [the marble table] it is visible/observable the mentioned *Naumachia*, delineated/traced/sketched in the aforesaid area, where now the church of Saint Peregrine is."[100]

There are other examples throughout the volume of how Severano used material

evidence, although it is often in the form of ancient inscriptions, artifacts for which the

status of distinction between "material document" or "literary documents" is obviously

rather blurred. A good example is, for instance, that of the long-disappeared female

monastery of Saint Stephen near the Basilica of Saint Paul, whose existence is convincingly

proven for Severano by the fact that "it is mentioned in an inscription (...) of the donation of

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[99] "Pare ancora che si confermi piu' questa opinione dal commune vocabolo (se ben corrotto) con che si chiamano le vigne, & i luoghi vicini a detta Chiesa di S. Peregrino, cioe' Almachia o Almaccia insino i tempi nostri", Severano 1630, I, p. 11.

[100] "Ma quello che piu' l'autentica e' una tavola di marmo, nella quale e' scolpita la pianta di Roma antica, trovata gia' in tempo di Paolo III tra le rovine del Tempio di Romolo, & Remo, e conservata tra le cose preziose di casa Farnese. In questa si vede la detta Naumachia delineata nel luogo sopradetto, dov'e' hora la Chiesa di San Peregrino", *Ibidem*, p. 12. The "tavola di marmo (…) conservata tra le cose preziose di casa Farnese" is of course the *Forma Urbis Romae*, the marble plan of the city of Rome commissioned by emperor Septimius Severus. Completed between 203 AD and 209/211 AD, the gigantic marble plan was placed on a wall of the Temple of Peace. In the early 1560s a number of fragments of it were excavated in the Forum near the church of Ss. Cosma e Damiano, and given as a gift to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese who entrusted them to Fulvio Orsini and Onofrio Panvinio, respectively his antiquarian and his librarian. On the *Forma Urbis Romae*, see among others: G. Carettoni *et alii*, *La pianta marmorea di Roma antica (Forma urbis Romae)*, 2 vols, Rome 1960; E. Rodríguez Almeida, *Forma Urbis antiquae: le mappe di Roma tra Repubblica e Settimio Severo*, École française de Rome 2002 (305), Rome 2002; C. Davoine, "La Forma Urbis Romae", *Histoire urbaine*, 2007, Vol. 20, 3, pp. 133-152; R. Lanciani, *Forma Urbis Romae*, Roma 2007 (original ed. Milan 1893-1901).

Saint Gregory to the same church [*Basilica of Saint Paul*], of which we will speak later".[101]

But Severano was also a skilled antiquarian and knew how to derive information from the visual examination of a fragment: when examining the bronze doors commissioned in the eleventh century by Pope Gregory VII for the basilica of Saint Paul, for instance, he points out how one of the inscriptions on the door's panels must have been added at a later time, perhaps during a restoration, since "(…) those letters of the inscription are done later with the chisel (as it is visible) and not like the verses, melted/cast with the same doors".[102] While it is true that Severano trusted written documents over physical remains, thus belonging to a kind of literary and narrative historical scholarship rather than antiquarian,[103] it should be remembered here that the contraposition of literary and non-literary evidence was definitely more blurred in early modern scholarship than it is today.[104]

There is one more document that testifies to the antiquarian quality of Severano's interest in antiquity in general, and in Christian antiquity in particular, an interest that went far beyond any devotional or apologetic concern, namely the recently published letter that

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[101] "Si fa menzione di questo Monasterio nell'iscritione della donatione, che fece San Gregorio alla medesima Basilica", Severano 1630, I, p. 385. There are several other cases in which Severano uses ancient inscriptions as sources

[102] "(…) essendo quelle lettere dell'iscrittione fatte dopo col scarpello (come si vede) e non come li versi, fusi colle medesime Porte", *Ibidem*, p. 396.

[103] On the distinction between the two types of historical scholarships, see: A. Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian", in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* vol. 13, n.3/4 (1950), pp. 285-315. For a critical discussion of Momigliano's essay, and its implications for the understanding of early modern historical and antiquarian scholarship, see chapter 1, pp. 22-25 and *passim*; for bibliographical reference, chapter 1, p. 22, n. 40.

[104] See for instance below, pp. 146-150.

Bosio penned to him in the months preceding his death.[105] Bosio opens his letter on a very friendly note, promising to "write the approval [*nihil obstat*] the way you suggest",[106] thus confirming the impression of a mutual solidarity and esteem between two members of the intellectual world of Counter-Reformation Rome. He then addresses three specific antiquarian questions, evidently raised by Severano in a previous (and lost) missive. The first question concerns the recent history of the porphyry sarcophagus of Saint Helena, "l'arca di porfido di Sant'Helena",[107] moved from her mausoleum on the Via Labicana to the Lateran Basilica in the twelfth century where it had been used for the burial of Pope Anastasius IV in 1154.[108] The second question is about two fragments of lead pipes with inscriptions referring to Sextius Lateranus and his brother Tarquinus: "those memories of (if I remember correctly) Sextius Lateranus, which are made of lead".[109] The third and final question is on the *memorie* of the ancient church of San Saturnino on the Via Salaria.[110] Now, what the letter clearly communicates is the exquisitely antiquarian quality of the epistolary conversation between Bosio and Severano. In fact, while the sarcophagus of

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[105] Herklotz 2008.

[106] "(...) e faro' l'approvatione nel modo che mi sara' da lei accennato", in Herklotz 2008, p. 247.

[107] *Ibidem*.

[108] For the medieval history of the sarcophagus, see I. Herklotz, *"Sepulcra" e "Monumenta" del Medioevo. Studi sull'arte sepolcrale in Italia*, Rome 1985, p. 100 (and notes 76-77)

[109] "quelle memorie di (se ben ricordo) Sesto Laterano che sono in piombo", *Ibidem*. On the pipes' fragments, see V. Santa Maria Scrinari, *Il Laterano imperiale. Dalla "aedes Laterani" alla "domus Faustae"*, Vatican City 1991, p. 9; Id., *Il Laterano imperiale. Dagli "horti Domitiae" alla Cappella cristiana*, Vatican City 1995, pp. 332-333.

[110] On the church of Saint Saturninus, see D. De Francesco, "La basilica di San Saturnino sulla via Salaria Nova", in *Ecclesiae Urbis*, Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi sulle chiese di Roma (IV-X secolo), Roma 4-10 settembre 2000, edited by F. Guidobaldi and A. Guiglia Guidobaldi, Vatican City 2002, pp. 611-624.

Helena – mother of the Emperor Constantine, the founder of the Lateran Basilica and (according to Catholic propaganda) the first Christian Emperor and protector of the Church – can be easily related to more apologetic and religious preoccupations, the pipe fragments and the *memorie* of the church of San Saturnino are problems of a more erudite nature. The fragmentary pipes, excavated probably in 1595 *prope ecclesiam*, are in fact more important as material remains documenting the pre-Christian history of the area as *aedes Laterani*, than as Christian memories per se. It is not by chance that Fulvio Orsini, the erudite antiquarian and librarian of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in charge of supervising the construction of the new Lateran sacristy when the fragments were most likely excavated,[111] had them affixed on marble cartouches with the explanatory inscription HAEC VETUSTATIS MON(UMEN)TA PROPE ECCL(ESIAM) REP(ERTA) AN(NO) M.D.VC. CAP(ITULUM) P(OSUIT). [112] By requesting additional information regarding these fragments from Bosio, Severano shows that he fully understood the documentary importance of these otherwise negligible remnants.

As for the complex of the church of San Saturnino and catacombs of Trasone, it was evidently of some interest for Severano, although he did not include it in his *Memorie*, since he sought Bosio's help to find additional information other than those extrapolated

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[111] On the topographic localization of the archeological finding, see Herklotz 2008, pp. 242-244. On Fulvio Orsini, see G.A. Cellini, *Il contributo di Fulvio Orsini alla ricerca antiquaria*, Roma, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2004.

[112] In Herklotz 2008, p. 242.

from the *Liber Pontificalis*.[113] Bosio provided Severano with a couple of additional textual sources, while offering to show him all the information he had gathered on the church, "which I analyze in my work since it is very much part of my subject".[114] It is important to notice here, as an additional proof of the accuracy of their scholarship, that the sources discussed by Severano and Bosio – from the *Liber Pontificalis* to the 1289 Bull of Nicholas IV[115] – are still cited today as the most reliable documents for the history of the church.[116]

Too easily scholars have assumed that Severano was simply the good Oratorian willing to sacrifice documentary criticism and historical analysis on the altar of the Church's political and cultural agenda. As a result, Severano is often held responsible for having manipulated Bosio's lifelong work into a powerful tool of Catholic propaganda.[117] Comparable to some extent to Baronio's case, however, Severano is another victim of the long-lasting misunderstanding that ecclesiastical history as a scholarly discipline could not exist in the ideologically-charged post-Tridentine culture, and that ecclesiastical historians

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[113] From Bosio's words it is clear that Severano had already gathered some information on the church of Saint Saturninus. Write in fact Bosio: "Della chiesa di San Saturnino nella Via Salaria io non ho altra memoria se non quelle che lei ha veduto di Anastatsio (...)", in Herklotz 2008, p. 247.

[114] "Sto quasi in pensiero quando havero un poco d'occio e sara' commodo a S. S.ria Ill.ma di farli vedere quel tanto che io ho potuto trovare; giache' nella mia opera ne tratto particolarmente per essere materia propria di essa", *Ibidem*, p. 248.

[115] Bosio writes: "Questa Chiesa, essendosi abbruciata in tempo di Felice Quarto, fu da deto Pontefice rinnovata, come cosi' scrive nella sua vita il Bibliotecario (...) fu anche ristorata da Adriano Primo, dicendo il medesimo Bibliotecario (...) E da Gregorio Quarto il quale la riedifico' da' fondamenti , e la fece dipingere; cosi' dicendo l'istesso (...) Ho trovato nelli registri Vaticani una Bolla di Papa Nicola Quarto, nella quale si concedono certe Indulgenze a questa Chiesa di San Saturnino (...)", *Roma Sotterranea...* 1634, Book III, chapter LVII, p. 484.. For a list of ancient literary sources on the old church, see C. Huelsen, *Le chiese di Roma nel medio evo. Catalogo e appunti*, Firenze 1927, pp. 458-59, n. 46.

[116] See De Francesco 2002.

[117] See above, pp. 109-114.

(and antiquarians) were in fact not historians at all, capable of using historical documents with the sole purpose of attesting the dogmatic and theological truth of the Catholic Church.[118] It is the same misunderstanding found in the preconception that the interest in Christian antiquity was dictated by the necessity to justify the Catholic Church.[119] Such position, however, disregards the complexity of early modern historical thought, with its tension between facts and dogmas, documents and faith, natural knowledge and revelation, historical and divine truth. A tension between certainty and uncertainty in human experience that was, ultimately, one of the crucial elements for the development of the *historia sacra* in connection to the complex epistemological and hermeneutical changes emerging in the early modern historiography in general.[120]

If we actually take the time to look more carefully at Severano's work, we shall notice two important things that seem to encourage a different evaluation of his scholarship. First, Severano's philological criticism in examining textual sources, selecting only those he considered more reliable, and reading only the original sources, as he himself declares:

> "I have (...) spared no diligence nor pain in collecting and presenting information taken from trustworthy authors; and for all them I have made sure to

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[118] See for instance Ditchfield in *Sacred Space* 2005; Id. "Historia magistra sanctitatis? The relationship between historiography and hagiography in Italy after the Council of Trent (1564-1743)", in *Nunc alia tempora, alii mores…* 2005, pp. 3-23; Ditchfield in *Sacred History…* 2012. But see also above, pp. 109-114.

[119] Ditchfield in *Sacred History…* 2012, in particular pp. 85-86.

[120] On this, see for instance: *Historia. Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, edited by G. Pomata and N.G. Siraisi, Cammbridge (Mass.) 2005; *Nunc alia tempora, alii mores…* 2005; A. Grafton, *What was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2007; Tutino 2014.

see the original sources, and [*these authors*] are those that I am listing below (...)".[121]

Severano's preoccupation with the reliability of his sources echoes Baronio's philological preoccupation with documents – whether written documents found in the Vatican Library or physical remains – as historical evidence, traces of divine truth that manifests itself in human events.[122] In this regard Severano fits well into the model of post-Reformation ecclesiastical history, as it was being developed both in the Catholic and the Protestant side, proving himself well aware of the latest developments in historical scholarship in general, and ecclesiastical history in particular.[123]

Second, Severano's use of literary sources often combined with material evidence reflects the method developed by a group of Italian scholars from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, which programmatically combined a more traditional literary antiquarianism with the new interest in material objects as powerful tools for reconstructing events, institutions and monuments of the past.[124] Whether it was the Greco-Roman pagan past or the heroic past of the apostolic Church, it made no particular difference for those scholars in terms of

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[121] "(...) non ho perdonato a diligenza e fatica in ritrovare, e proporre le materie cavate da sicuri Autori; i quali ho voluto veder tutti in fonte; e sono quelli, che sarano registrati appresso (...)". Severano 1630, "Al benigno lettore", p. 25r.

[122] On Baronio's philological attention, see Zen 1994; *Baronio e le sue fonti* 2009; Tutino 2014. On the convergence of philology and history in early modern historical scholarship, see for instance: D.R. Kelly, "Philology and History", in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 3: 1400-1800*, edited by J. Rabasa *et alii*, Oxford 2012, pp. 233-243.

[123] For a discussion of post-Tridentine history and ecclesiastical history, see among others A. Momigliano, "The Origins of Ecclesiastical Historiography", in Id., *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, Berkeley 1990, pp. 132-152; *Nunc alia tempora, alii mores….* 2005; Tutino 2014.

[124] For a discussion of such method, see chapter 1, pp. 23-37 (with bibliographical reference)

their historical methods. After all, in early modern historical scholarship all human history was perceived as providential history, or the fulfillment of the divine will. Consequently, the truth of history was just the imperfect and fragmentary reflection of the truth of God.[125] Theology and historiography were, in the early modern world, parts of the same cultural universe. What was different was not the selection of historical tools used to investigate the past, but rather the degree of ideological commitment (and often personal involvement) found in a post-Tridentine work of *historia sacra*. And, as I have pointed out elsewhere, to expect impartiality and skeptical detachment from Catholic scholars who, though not necessarily "staunch wardens of the papacy"[126] were mainly based in Rome and connected to various degrees to the Church, would be naive if not absurd. But we will come back again to such fundamental question of material and literary evidence, and to the understanding of human history as the realization of God's design.

It is also important to keep in mind that post-Tridentine works of ecclesiastical history and Christian antiquarianism were complex works, very much reflecting the cultural and ideological complexity of their time – beliefs, doubts, conflicts – and serving various purposes.[127] While reconstructing the past, they also tackled various delicate aspects such as liturgical practices or theological dogmas and controversies.[128] Indeed a work of *historia sacra* could be either a powerful tool with a dogmatic and apologetic end or a scholarly investigation of the past, but more often it was both. Furthermore, it provided the devout

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[125] Tutino 2014, pp. 85-88.

[126] Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's 'Roma Sotterranea'…" (forthcoming).

[127] See for instance Ditchfield in *Sacred History…* 2012.

[128] *Ibidem*.

reader with an inspirational model to imitate, and with a powerful incentive to follow the holy path of the first Christians and martyrs. Finally, a work of sacred history provided an impulse to further investigate Christian antiquity for the greater glory of God (as it was openly proclaimed), but also for the sake of antiquarian and historical knowledge (as it was usually implied). Severano's book was no exception, addressing several needs at the same time, as claimed by the author himself: it was a pilgrim-oriented guidebook meant to offer a spiritual itinerary through the sacred memories of paleo-Christian Rome; a book of antiquarian and historical erudition to be enjoyed by the erudite reader; and, finally, an encouragement to the more scholarly oriented reader for further studies on early-Christian Rome.[129]

Given the "multidimensionality" of post-Tridentine and Counter-Reformation historical and antiquarian studies of the past, it seems therefore necessary to abandon the idea that their militant dimension should necessarily overcome their scholarly ambition. As it should be put aside, once and for all, the idea that Catholic authors cannot be considered as full historians and antiquarians, though certainly within the limits of their own time. To expect early modern scholars to approach history with the same sensibility towards, and critical awareness of, the highly problematic notion of "objectivity" that we may expect from contemporary historians is, of course, absurd.[130] It is probably time to accept, once

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[129] "Procuri ciascuno cavarne quel frutto spirituale, che se n'aspetta; & i piu' studiosi, & eruditi, se ne servano per motivo, e stimolo di perfettionar questo soggetto a maggior gloria di Dio...", Severano 1630, "Al benigno lettore", p. 25r.

[130] See for instance, Tutino 2014, p. 82. With regard to "historical objectivity", Momigliano has convincingly argued that ideology always mingles with reality in every act of the historical investigation, as does the projection of present- day problems with any kind of philological analysis of past events, A. Momigliano,

and for all, the profound interrelation between ideological and scholarly commitment, dogma and fact, typical of post-reformation Catholic works of history and antiquarianism. And it is precisely the hybrid nature of such works, resulting from the combination of erudition and devotion, which needs to be addressed differently. As for Bosio's treatise, while it may be true that Severano ultimately transformed it into an instrument of Catholic propaganda to an extent perhaps greater than what Bosio himself would have wanted, it may be revealing to look at *Roma Sotterranea* from a different angle, leaving behind the binary model of erudition/devotion, historical research/ideological commitment.

History as 'lux veritatis', or the Truth of the Catacombs

The main accusation against *Roma Sotterranea*, its "capital sin" repeatedly pointed out by scholars, is that it is based on textual sources more than material documents, and that even when scarce physical evidence makes an appearance in the book, it was deliberately altered when in contrast with the literary tradition upon which the vindication of the

"Biblical Sudies and Classical Studies: Simple Reflection upon Historical Methods", in *Annali della Scuola Normale Speriore di Pisa*, ser. 3, vol. II, 1981, pp. 25-32; Id. "L'histoire dans l'âge des ideologies", *Le Débat*, 23, 1983, pp. 129-146. On the fundamental question of objectivity in history, the literature is of course incredibly vast; it is certainly crucial the work of the German historian Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884), the "Kant of History". For Droysen historical objectivity is a chimera since it is nothing such as the "objective" nature of the past. Just like a chimera is the "understanding" of the past itself, which is always necessarily limited by the personal, cultural and even linguistic context of the historian. For an effective overview of Droysen's thought, see F. C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, Oxford – New York 2011, pp. 289-321. Among many others, see for instance: M. Bevir, "Objectivity in History", *History and Theory*, vol. 33, no. 3, Oct. 1994, pp. 328-344; M. Tamm, "Truth, Objectivity, and Evidence in History Writing", in *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 8, 2014, pp. 265-290 (both with further bibliography). Not being a historian myself, a book that I find of extreme help and interest in dealing with the many nuances of the concept of "objectivity" in history, is Ginzburg, Engl. transl. 2012. Finally, an important reference in terms of methodological reflections on history still remains, in my opinion, M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire, ou Métier d'historien*, Paris 1949 (*The Historian's Craft*, Engl. transl. by P. Putnam, preface by P. Burke, Manchester 2002)

Catholic Church was founded.[131] Hence, the conclusion that *Roma Sotterranea* is ultimately an apologetic work with no pretense of scientific neutrality, and a failed work of antiquarian scholarship. Let us momentarily ignore such conclusion, and focus instead on the use of the historical sources in *Roma Sotterranea,* a crucial aspect of a much larger issue at stake. The question of the tools used to investigate the past is directly connected to the question of the very possibility of gaining any form of knowledge and understanding of the past, given the fragmentary, scattered and diverse traces that the same past has left for the historian to collect and put together.[132] This was an issue that was being progressively articulated and debated in early modern historiography, following the increasing awareness that the understanding of the past is irremediably partial and incompletely based only on ruins and fragments (both material and textual).[133] It is in such intellectual context that I propose to assess and evaluate *Roma Sotterranea*, rather than as a more or less successful attempt to produce an antiquarian work on the catacombs.

By the time Antonio Bosio was at work on the ancient cemeteries of Rome, their ancient use and history,[134] the term *historia* had accumulated over two millennia a large and stratified semantic baggage. It stretched from *descriptio sine demonstratione* to *particularis*

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[131] See above, pp. 109-114.

[132] According to Droysen, for instance, the past leaves behind tree different traces: remains (Überreste); monuments (Denkmäler); sources (Quelle). See Beiser 2011, p. 299. On the question of skepticism in regard to historical knowledge, as well as in regard to the reliability of documentary evidence, see for instance Momigliano 1950; C. Borghero, *La certezza e la storia. Cartesianesimo, pirronismo e conoscenza storica*, Milan 1983; Ginzburg, Eng. transl. 2012, in particular pp. 7-24; pp. 78-93.

[133] See above, n. 132. See also Tutino 2014, p. 84 in particular.

[134] The title page of *Roma Sotterranea* reads, among other things, "Roma Sotterranea, opera postuma di Antonio Bosio Romano (...) nella quale si tratta de' sacri cimiterii di Roma, del sito, forma et uso antico di essi (...)", *Roma Sotterranea* 1634.

cognitio, from "philosophy taught with examples" (or *magistra vitae*) to "knowledge derived from observation and direct experience".[135] But the most durable definition of history is probably the one that originated from Aristotle's famous opposition of history as "particular" and poetry (and philosophy) as "general": *historia particularis notitia est, theoria universalis*.[136] In the Aristotelian view, history is in fact concerned with events as they actually happened, whereas poetry (like philosophy) is concerned with events as they should have happened and thus deals with universal representations (or ideas) of such events.[137] In the early modern period it was commonly accepted that history, as the study of facts (both past and present), implicated some form of knowledge of what exists (*cognitio quod est*) and of specific and causally connected facts and events (*cognitio singularum*).[138] It was a form of knowledge acquired through the investigation of things and events (*res gestae*), but also through the memory of such events preserved in their reports and accounts

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[135] See D.R. Kelley "Between History and System", in *Historia…* 2005, pp. 211-237; Id. in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing...* 2012; A. Grafton, "The Identities of History in Early Modern Europe: Prelude to a Study of the *Artes Historicae*", in *Historia…* 2005, pp. 41-74.

[136] R. Goclenius, *Lexicon philosophicum*, Frankfurt 1613, p. 626, cit. in Kelley, *Historia…* 2005 p. 213. On Aristotle and History, see for instance: C. Ginzburg, "Aristotle and History, Once More," in Id., *History, Rhetoric, and Proof*, Hanover–London 1999, pp. 38–53.

[137] "Da quanto si è detto anche risulta evidente che l'opera del poeta non consiste nel riferire gli eventi reali, bensí fatti che possono avvenire e fatti che sono possibili, nell'ambito del verosimile o del necessario. Lo storico e il poeta non sono differenti perché si esprimono in versi oppure in prosa: gli scritti di Erodoto si possono volgere in versi, e resta sempre un'opera di storia con la struttura metrica come senza metri. Ma la differenza è questa, che lo storico espone gli eventi reali, e il poeta quali fatti possono avvenire. [...] Perciò la poesia è attività teoretica e piú elevata della storia: la poesia espone piuttosto una visione del generale, la storia del particolare. Generale significa, a quale tipo di persona tocca di dire o fare quei tali tipi di cose secondo il verosimile o il necessario; e di ciò si occupa la poesia, anche se aggiunge nomi di persona. Il particolare invece è che cosa Alcibiade fece o che cosa subí", Aristotle *Poetica,* in Id. *Opere*, Milan 1973, pp. 31-33 *Poetica*, 1451b 1-15 [1451*b*]

[138] See Kelly in in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing...* 2012, p. 233.

(*narratio rerum gestarum*).[139] The fundamental distinction between actual events and their description, however, was soon to be lost, leading to a fundamental problem of methodology that was to become particularly urgent in the confessional conflict between Protestants and Catholics.[140] That is, the interrelation between the truth of the events and the truthfulness of their accounts – if and how it is possible to interpret, understand and represent truthfully and objectively the past – and the related problem of finding, selecting and refining the right tools to search for the truth in history, that is the traces or remains that past leaves behind.[141] To further complicate the matter, while in the early modern perception history was both *memoria* and *narratio* of past events, the difference between "remembering the past" and "understanding the past" was becoming increasingly articulated and pronounced. In turn, also the true nature of "evidence" began to be questioned, whether it was *memoria* (trace of the past), or *evidentia* (vivid narrative of the past).[142]

Since in early-modern perception history is both *memoria* and *narratio* of events that "truly" happened in the past, it was fundamental for the historian to find true traces, or memories, of past events. For the early-seventeenth century historian, there were two main

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[139] See for instance: Ginzburg 1999; Tutino 2014, in particular pp. 113-149.

[140] For both Protestant and Catholic scholars, it was obviously imperative to demonstrate the "truth" of their understanding and reconstruction of the past, which certainly resulted in a more refined method for the historical research. See for instance: I. Dorota Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)*, Leiden 2003.

[141] On this monumental question of the understanding of the past and its related issue of historical objectivity, see above, p. 140, n. 130. See also Tutino 2014, pp. 40-49.

[142] Momigliano 1950; Id., "The rise of antiquarian research.", in *The Classical Foundations…*1990, pp. 54–79; Ginzburg 2012, pp. 7-24; Tutino 2014, pp. 84-102.

sets of available evidence: material documents or "books of marble" [143]– monuments, of

course, but sometimes also simpler artifacts preserving the humble traces of daily life – and

written documents. Material evidence represented the main interest and source of

information for the antiquarians – who were increasingly developing sophisticated tools to

verify and use such material documents [144]– while more traditional literary historians

privileged the latter. [145] Unlike the antiquarians, who believed that contact with the physical

traces of the ancient past could give them a more direct and immediate access to that past

and its material culture, traditional historians were rather skeptical with regard to the actual

value of such relics of the past. They believed that, though preserving precious information

about facts and people of the past, material evidence was too scattered and fragmentary to

provide a good understanding of events and deeds, and to construct a truthful historical

narrative. Lamenting the derelict state of the physical remains of the past, ancient artifacts

devoured by time, the ex-Jesuit Agostino Mascardi observed for instance that "(...) nothing

is more corruptible than truth, and Saturn, that is, time, is said to be the father of truth

because he devours and consumes her along with his other children; therefore, it is not

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[143] "(…) Le pitture, le sculture, le iscrizioni, gli archi, le colonne, e somiglianti memorie pubbliche, erano un mutolo racconto d'imprese nobili e grandi, dalle quali senza rivolger libri, altri apprendeva ed apprende i fatti degli uomini valorosi (…)", A. Mascardi, *Dell'arte historica*, ed. Adolfo Bartoli, Florence 1859, pp. 9-10, cit. in Tutino 2014, p. 205, n. 62.

[144] A philological and critical sophistication that, as Momigliano has demonstrated, paved the way to the modern historical method. See Momigliano 1950. On the antiquarian method in the Cinquecento in general, see also above, chapter 1.

[145] As Momigliano, Ginzburg and other scholars have often remarked. Arnaldo Momigliano clearly identifies two types of historical scholarship: a "literary" type, based on textual documents and the prevalent interest in constructing a chronological narrative of the past events; and an antiquarian type, based on physical documents and with the purpose of reconstructing the material culture of the past. See Momigliano 1950. On this question, see the volume *Momigliano and Antiquarianism. Foundations of the modern cultural sciences*, edited by P.N. Miller, Toronto 2007.

surprising that truth incurs over many years the same risk that the marble themselves in the magnificent monuments are subject to".[146]

As convincingly argued by Stefania Tutino, by twisting the traditional concept of *veritas filia temporis*, Mascardi poetically voiced the painful perception of the past as absence and irrevocable loss inflicted by time, which will never again be recovered and understood in its entirety.[147] In Mascardi's perception, all historical evidence, fragmented and incomplete as it is – physical remains and written documents alike – are ultimately nothing more than a powerful reminder of such loss. But even more so are the material remains, a tangible and immediate token of the destructive power of time.[148] Hence, they must be combined with written documents, the less fragmentary memories of the past found in ancient books and archives. Written words – whether in the form of archival papers, ancient chronicles, or even harangues – were necessary for historians to make sense of objects and images from the past. According to Paolo Beni, also an ex-Jesuit theologian active at the turn of the sixteenth century, physical evidence of the past "does not deserve by any means the name of true history, but is rather an enigma (...) or some sort of image

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[146] "Niuna piu' agevolmente della verita' si corrompe; e Saturno, cioe' il tempo si dice esser padre della verita', perche' quella insieme con gli altri figliuoli si divora e consuma; non e' da maravigliarsi, se con la lunghezza degli anni corra quel medesimo risico la verita', a che veggiamo soggetti gli stessi marmi nelle fabbriche sontuose", Mascardi ed. 1859, p. 91, cit. in Tutino 2014, p. 205, n. 68. On Agostino Mascardi (1590-1640), ex-Jesuit and author of a ponderous five-volume treatise *Dell'arte historica* (1636), see: F. L. Mannucci, *La vita e le opere di Agostino Mascardi*, Atti della Societa' Ligure di Storia Patria, vol. XLII, Genoa 1908; M. Dono Garfagnini, 'Dell'arte historica' di Agostino Mascardi. Saggio teorico di storiografia del primo Seicento", in Id. *Il teatro della storia tra rappresentazione e realta'*, Rome 2002, pp. 325-370; E. Bellini, *Agostino Mascardi tra "ars poetica" e "ars historica"*, Milan 2002; Tutino 2014, pp. 40-73.

[147] Tutino 2014, pp. 58-61.

[148] A melancholic feeling already voiced some three centuries earlier by Petrarch in his *De remediis utriusque fortunae*. See above, chapter 1, pp. 25-26, and p. 26, n. 55; n. 56.

and shadow of history, especially since deliberations, motives, speeches, and many other things of this sort, which clearly pertain to historical events, can be explained through a narrative, certainly not by a picture".[149]

There are two important elements to be considered here. First, the position maintained by early modern historians with regard to the material relics of the past is exactly specular to the position that many contemporary antiquarians maintained in regard to literary sources. In order to overcome the inevitable limitations of the textual tradition, in fact, the antiquarians deemed necessary to combine written records with physical evidence, traces of material cultural that could help shed light on even the most obscure aspect of the past neglected in the literary sources.[150] In other words, both antiquarians and "literary" historians appear to have shared the same profound conviction that their only possibility to ever recover and understand (although only partially) the past, and construct a truthful and coherent narrative of it, depended on the skillful use of written and material documents combined together. Whether literary or non-literary evidence was considered more reliable – depending on the antiquarian or the historian side of the question[151] – it was nevertheless acknowledged that both *res* and *verba*, antiquarian relics and written texts, preserved in fact important traces of the past, and were both indispensable tools in uncovering the truth of historical events. Therefore, to contrast literary and non-literary evidence, or "text and

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[149] "Ita quidem germanae historiae nequaquam adhuc meretur nomen: sed aenigma (...) aut imago quaedam aut umbra tutius dicetur Historiae: praesertim vero quia consilia, causae, dictae & huiusmodi alia multa quae plane ad rem gestam pertinent, narratione (ut docui) aperiri quidem possunt, pictura nullo modo possunt", in P. Beni, *De historia libri quatuor*, Venice 1611, pp. 57-58, cit. in Tutino 2014, p. 220, n. 107.

[150] See chapter 1, p. 31ff.

[151] See for instance I. Herklotz, "Arnaldo Momigliano's 'Ancient History and the Antiquarian'; A Critical Review", in *Momigliano and Antiquarianism…* 2007, pp. 127-153, in particular pop. 136-141. See also above, chapter 1, pp. 19-26.

trowel", in early modern Catholic historical and antiquarian scholarship is indeed a false dichotomy, an anachronistic and misleading projection of current scholarship that should be abandoned. Baronio, Bosio, Severano and other early modern scholars did not discard *a priori* any type of evidence – whether material or literary – being fully aware that both written and non-written memories (testimonies) of ancient events, actions, and people were necessary to attempt a reconstruction and understanding of the past. According to Baronio, for instance, documentary evidence is a precious trace of the truth of God as it manifests itself in human history, and as such it can be found in written texts, preserved in libraries or archives, as well as in physical remains such as ancient artifacts and images.[152] Likewise, both Bosio and Severano believed that written and antiquarian sources alike preserved precious information that could guide the historian (or antiquarian) in his difficult search for the past, and Bosio hunted down literary sources – from the *Liber Pontificalis* to the various Acts and Passions of the martyrs – with the same effort and care that he had put in the exploration of the catacombs. Texts and artifacts represented in fact a sort of "Ariadne's thread" that could lead the historian to the (partial) recovery and reconstruction of the truth of history. Hence, while Bosio for instance relied heavily on written documents when describing Early Christian burial rituals in the first book of *Roma Sotterranea*,[153] he nevertheless made sure to combine textual information with his own first-hand observations, every time this was possible. Such is the case, for example, for the presence of objects like the Cross, the Holy Water, the glass *ampullae* containing the blood of the

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[152] See chapter 2, p. 104ff.

[153] *Roma Sotterranea…*1632 (1634), Book I, chap. XX, pp. 20-22.

martyr, or even branches of laurel (or other evergreens, symbols of eternal life), often buried with the martyrs according to the ancient texts and confirmed by Bosio's own actual findings.[154] Similarly, Bosio has no doubt that the iron pincers that he himself found in the cemetery of Calixtus, or the *ungula* previously found in the Vatican cemetery,[155] are tangible evidence of those torture instruments described in many ancient sources.[156] And

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[154] "(…) Nelli sopraddetti rituali si legge ancora, che sotto al corpo del defonto, si ponevano frondi di Lauro, ò di Ellera, ò d'altro, che sempre conserva il colore verde, ancorche' si secchi (…) Habbiamo di questo antico rito Cristiano molti esempii (…) *Et a' tempi nostri essendosi scoperto* (come si e' detto) il sepolcro, ove erano riposti li corpi de' Santi Simone, e Giuda, furono sotto li capi loro ritrovate delle foglie di lauro. *Il che fu da tutti i circostanti osservato* (…) Si ordina nelli medesimi Rituali antichi, che nel monumento si ponga ancora l'acqua benedetta, & il segno della Croce (..) Onde crediamo, che quelle ampolle di vetro, e quei vasetti di terra, *che spesso si trovano dentro li sepolcri; e tal volta anco murati per di fora ne' sacri Cimiterii*, fossero ivi posti con la detta acqua benedetta (…) Della Croce poi *abbiamo osservato*, che oltre alli segni di essa, che si facevano, ò di scultura, ò di pittura per di fuori ne' monumenti (de' quali tratteremo à suo luogo) si ponevano dentro la medesima Arca, e Tumolo; ò di sopra l'istesso monumento, Croci materiali, d'oro, d'argento, di metallo, ò di legno, ò d'altra materia (…) Ma bene si ponevano nelli sepolcri de' Sant Martiri, cose piu' pretiose, che oro, e gemme; cioe' il sangue da loro sparso (…) e *noi in piu' monumenti de' sacri Cimiterii habbiamo trovato il sangue*, posto alcune volte sopra il corpo, & altre riposto in vasi di vetro, ò di terra cotta, come appresso diremo", *Roma Sotterranea…*1632 (1634), pp. 2-21. That such ampules did not contain the blood of the martyrs is not as important here, as it is the fact that Bosio uses material evidence that he himself had seen in the catacombs, to confirm what was written in the ancient sources. The *vexata quaestio* of such ampules supposedly containing the blood of the martyrs, unfortunately often was only solved once and for all in the twentieth century with the publication of De Rossi's report: A. Ferrua, *Sulla questione del vaso di sangue. Memoria inedita di Giovanni Battista de Rossi*, Vatican City 1944. See also M. Ghilardi, '*Sanguine tumulus madet'. Devozione al sangue dei martiri delle catacombe nella prima età moderna*, Roma 2008; "Oratoriani e Gesuiti alla conquista della Roma sotterranea nella prima eta' moderna", *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pieta'*, Roma 2009, pp. 183-231.

[155] "(…) Fù ritrovata nelli sepolcri Vaticani un'Ungula (istromento per scarnificare le membra de' Martiri) la quale hoggidì si conserva nella Basilica Vaticana. E noi nel Cimiterio di Calisto, dentro un monumento rtrovammo una tanaglia, ò forbice di ferro, la quale donammo al Cardinale di Santa Susanna (…) In tempo di Papa Paolo Terzo, ne cavarsi detti fondamenti, si scopersero altri sepolcri, tra' quali fu trovata (come si disse) una Tanaglia di ferro lunga tre plami, con li manichi di legno lunghi mezzo palmo (il resto de' quali si vede esser consumato dal fuoco) della presente forma. Questo era un'istromento di martirio, chiamato Ungula; con il quale si scarnificavano i Santi Martiri", *Roma Sotterranea…*1632 (1634), p. 21; p. 26. A drawing of this *ungula* is in Chacon, Vat. Lat. 5409, f. 2v. See also, M. Ghilardi, *Forceps ferreus seu instrumentum ad torquendum martires*. La tenaglia del Vaticano tra devozion e apologetica e propaganda controriformista, *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae,* XVI, Città del Vaticano 2009, pp. 153-198.

[156] The fact that only few of such instruments were found in the catacombs, did not represent for Bosio a good reason to question their authenticity, as he never claimed that all martyrs were buried with such instruments: "(…) Questo costume poi fù seguitato da' Christiani nella primitive Chiesa, i quali (*quando fù loro possibile d'havere gl'istromenti delle passioni delli Santi Martiri*) li seppellivano nelli medesimi sepolcri, dove deponevano i loro corpi.", *Roma Sotterranea…*1632 (1634), p. 21. Moreover, Bosio was well aware of the fact that catacombs had been often sacked for sacred relics in the past, which could of course easily explain the scarcity of these holy instruments.

with regard to the Vatican cemetery, for example, there is another good example of Bosio's use of both textual and material documents in reconstructing events of the past. About the burial of Saint Peter, Bosio writes that

> "(…) from all authorities it is made clear that Saint Peter was buried in this exact place, where now is his Basilica. As for his sepulcher, that he was placed in a sarcophagus it is proved by the most ancient pictures that were in the ancient portico of the old Vatican Basilica…"

Here he combines written sources, the *autorita',* with material evidence, the ancient frescoes in the portico, in order to obtain the most accurate picture of a distant historical event (in this case the burial of the Apostle). It does not really matter that Bosio made a mistake in dating to the first centuries of the church frescoes that were in fact made in the twelfth-century, since what is important here is his method of combining both literary and non-literary evidence. We could, of course, debate whether Bosio's chronological mistake was genuine or rather the result of an unscrupulous manipulation of material evidence for a specific agenda. But even so, it would not change the fact that he was well aware of the importance of both written and material documents, so much so that he was even prepared to alter the latter to lend more credibility and strength to the former (assuming that he was mainly acting as an apologist for the catholic Church).

Every single page of *Roma Sotterranea* is filled with examples of Bosio's (and Severano's) method of combining all available documents, physical as well as textual, in an attempt to recover and reconstruct past facts and events. It is interesting to notice Bosio's

strong predilection for inscriptions – perhaps not surprisingly, since they are indeed the perfect combination of materiality and literacy, and can therefore potentially offer more complete information than just a literary text or a physical fragment – and always puts great care in searching for them during his explorations, and meticulously recording them afterwards. As he himself writes: "We have put the greatest diligence in finding any inscription for all the time we stayed in this cemetery".[157] He first makes sure to list all the inscriptions, or even fragments of them, found in the cemeteries; then, he uses all the written sources he is familiar with, both pagan and Christian, to understand the content of such inscriptions, identify the people named there and, ultimately, obtain important information about the cemetery itself. For instance, Bosio uses a group of inscriptions found in the cemetery of San Paolo, all referring to people of a certain rank, to conclude that mainly important people were buried in that cemetery, as also suggested – concludes Bosio – by the presence of a number of beautiful sarcophagi found *in situ*: "(..) thus it appears from these few relics, which remain of the cemetery of San Paolo, or Santa Lucina (as they want to call it) that people of quality were buried there; and especially so since there were noble marble sarcophagi, as it is possible to see from the few that still remains, of which we place here the drawings".[158]

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[157] "Grandissima diligenza abbiamo, fatta per tutto il tempo, che siamo stati in questo Cimiterio, per ritrovare alcuna iscrittione (…)", *Roma Sotterranea…*1632 (1634), p. 196.

[158] "Appare dunque da queste poche reliquie, che rimangono del Cimiterio di S. Paolo, ò di Santa Lucina, (come vogliono chiamarlo) che in esso si solevano seppellir persone di qualita'; massimamente perche' vi erano ancora Pili nobili di marmo; come si puo' raccogliere da quei pochi, che restano, de' quali porremo qui il disegno", *Roma Sotterranea…*1632 (1634), p. 154.

In the light of what has been said so far, I would thus argue that the undeniable preponderance of written sources in *Roma Sotterranea* is the result of a specific methodological attitude of the authors towards the documentary traces of the past (both literary and non-literary), rather than a deliberate attempt to manipulate them to support the Catholic agenda. Although it is also very possible that Bosio and Severano, like other contemporary historians, feared to some extent that all physical remains, in their fragmentary state, were more a testament to the irremediable loss of the past than a source of historical information. They probably distrusted the ability of fragmentary artifacts found in the catacombs to provide, alone, an adequate understanding of the ancient Christian cemeteries and their history. While necessary to trigger the remembrance of the past and to help make it present again for the modern reader, objects and images in their fragmentary state were not sufficient to provide an understanding of that distant past. Hence, they need to be re-integrated with written evidence, found in books and archives. It is also important to remember that ancient textual sources themselves – whether Graeco-Roman or Christian texts – were often treated by historians as primary evidence, and thus considered on a par with material traces.[159] Finally, it needs to be highlighted that Bosio's rigorous descriptions of the catacombs with the artifacts still *in situ*, paired with the meticulous perusal of the ancient texts conducted by both authors, still represent today an invaluable source of historical and archaeological information, despite all the errors and inaccuracies of *Roma Sotterranea*.

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[159] On this, see for instance C. R. Ligota, "From Philology to History: Ancient Historiography between Humanism and Enlightenment", in *Ancient History and the Antiquarian. Essays in memory of Arnaldo Momigliano*, edited by. M.H. Crawford and C. R. Ligota, London 1995, pp. 105-115.

There is a second crucial implication of the early modern concept of history as both *memoria* and *narratio* of past events that we need to consider in our reassessment of *Roma Sotterranea*: the role and individual contribution of the historian himself to the overwhelming and delicate task of making sense of past events, in moving from the "remembrance" to the "understanding" of the past. For the early modern perception, the historian is required to see through the inherent ambiguity of the incomplete, scattered (sometimes even deliberately manipulated) documentary traces that he must rely on to reconstruct an historical event. He is required to develop and refine the technical skills necessary to select, compare, and verify the authenticity of his sources in order to distinguish between false and true.[160] Additionally, the historian is also required to "understand" an historical event and provide an explanatory interpretation of its causes and consequences.[161] He must not act, however, as a "judge" but as an "interpreter": the historian does not condemn or praise human actions and facts. On the contrary, he simply interprets the traces of the past in order to provide his readers with memory and understanding (that is, knowledge) of that past.[162] Since evidence is never sufficient to provide a complete explanation of historical events and their causes, as mentioned above, the fundamental task of the historian is to make conjectures by means of which he can

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[160] Such paramount ability to distinguish true from false historical documents, whether literary or non-literary, was being perfected by early modern antiquarians, as mentioned, for instance, in Momigliano 1950. On the question of the historian as a "judge" of his sources and documents, see: C. Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian*, New York 1999; Id. 2012, in particular pp. 7-24 and pp. 165-179; Tutino 2014, pp. 58-61.

[161] Tutino 2014, pp. 61-73 It is interesting to recall here Droysen's conception of the past as only existing for us only through our understanding of it. On Droysen see above, pp. 140 n. 130

[162] At least among certain early modern historians, for instance among the Jesuits, there is a sense of uneasiness with the idea of the *histoire moralisee* à la Tacitus. See Tutino, pp. 61-65.

make sense of the past.[163] In other words, not only written and non-written evidence must be carefully selected and evaluated, they must be also combined with the historian's own conjectures.[164] Ultimately, the discernment of the historian is the fundamental component of the search for the truth in history. A truth that may be imperfect, as imperfect are the historical beings that create it with their actions and events, but that nevertheless maintains some pale reflection of the presence of God in all human events and deeds.[165] Obviously, the truth proposed by the historian cannot offer "infallible certitude" but rather "verisimilitude", since it is built on mutable foundations: documentary evidence as well as the historian's own opinion. But after all, warns Mascardi, we should not presume too much, and "leave to divine faith that undoubted truth".[166]

Hence, to blame the authors of *Roma Sotterranea* for their "creative misinterpretation" of material evidence is to ignore this crucial tensions between facts and

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[163] At least according to a specific declination of the *ars historiae* championed, for instance, by the ex-Jesuits Agostino Mascardi and Paolo Beni, where the documentary dimension of the historical research was necessarily complementary the narrative dimension of history writing. Tutino 2014, pp. 40-73.

[164] On the problem of the relationship between historical narrative, rhetoric and doucumentary evidence, see Momigliano 1950; Id., "The Herodotean and the Thucydidean Tradition", in *The Classical Foundations…*1990, pp. 29-53; Ginzburg, "Aristotle and History …" in Id., *History, Rhetoric…* 1999; Id. "Lorenzo Valla and the Donation of Constantine", in *Ibidem*, pp. 54-70; Ginzburg 2012, pp. 7-24; V. Pineda, "Rhetoric and the Writing of History in Early Modern Europe: Melo's *Guerra de Cataluña* and Mascardi's *Ars historica*", *European History Quarterly*, 2012, 42 (1), pp. 6-28; Tutino 2014.

[165] See for instance: Momigliano "The Origins of Ecclesiastical Historiography", in Id., *The Classical Foundations…* 1990; A. Grafton, "Church History in Early Modern Europe: Tradition and Innovation", in *Sacred History…* 2012, pp. 3-26; S. Tutino, "For the sake of the truth of history and of the Catholic doctrine: History, documents, and dogmas in Cesare Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiastici*, *Journal of Early Modern History*, no. 17, 2013, pp. 125-159.

[166] "(…) Si lasci alla fede divina la verita' tanto indubitata (…)", Mascardi ed. 1859, p. 96, cit. in Tutino 2014, p. 206, n. 77.

documents, loss and recovery, truth and interpretation. Not dissimilarly from Baronio,[167] Bosio and Severano saw documentary evidence as traces of the presence of God in human history, which only needed to be composed in a coherent pattern to reveal fragments of divine truth in people and facts. The pattern is obviously God's own impenetrable design, and it is the task of the historian who, by making conjectures based on documentary traces, constructs a narrative of past events that ultimately reveals small pieces of God's truth in history. This is precisely what both authors of *Roma Sotterranea* did: they collected, assembled and interpreted documentary evidence of the past – literary and non-literary evidence alike – and completed it with their own conjectures in an attempt to reconstruct and understand the history of the catacombs. They produced a historical narrative that was, to the best of their knowledge, truthful to the events as they really happened at the dawn of the Christian era. At the same time, it was also a vivid re-creation of the historical and physical reality of the catacombs as it was of the spiritual and heroic reality of the early Church, which they re-created for the modern reader, inevitably projecting their own present, and sensibility, onto that distant past.[168] It was through Bosio's and Severano's historical narrative, based on evidence as much as on conjecture, that the life of the primitive Church – otherwise lost forever – was made present again and almost tangible for their audience, as Severano acknowledge in his praise of Bosio's tireless work: "(…) how much we owe to him who with much labor and fatigue has discovered, and manifested to

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[167] See chapter 2, pp. 104ff.

[168] The same happens in the illustrations, where Bosio and Severano re-created – through their depiction of spacious, immaculate and pristine catacomb rooms (not at all what Bosio actually saw during his subterranean explorations) – empty stages that invited the reader to step in, and participate with an act of creative imagination, as well as spiritual identification, in the reconstruction of that distant past. On the illustrations of *Roma Sotterranea*, see Merz 2003; Oryshkevich "Antonio Bosio's Roma Sotterranea…" (forthcoming).

the world such great things and precious treasures such as the things that are contained in the sacred Cemeteries: ideas, indeed, and images that offer such vivid representation of the nascent Church".[169]

It has been remarked that such a preoccupation with the life of the nascent Church, mainly found in book I of *Roma Sotterranea*, a general introduction to the catacombs as well as the cults and rituals practiced by the early Christians heavily edited by Severano, was dictated by the necessity to demonstrate the unbroken continuity of the devotional and liturgical practices of the Catholic Church.[170] It was paramount to demonstrate that current Catholic liturgical practices, as sanctioned by the Council of Trent, were in conformity with the apostolic Church, and in order to do so – it is often claimed in the literature[171] – Bosio and Severano sacrificed the truth-value of historical knowledge. The intent of both authors was to reaffirm the legitimacy of the Catholic liturgical praxis in general, but also to shield the Church from the accusations of idolatry with regard to the cult of images and relics in particular. To this end, Severano's editorial policy was rather strict in omitting or altering much of Bosio's original passages, especially in Book I, mainly dedicated to the devotional life of the early Church.[172] In the eyes of the more rigid Severano, Bosio's sophistication in explaining the evolution of Christian cult practices from both Jewish and pagan rites could

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[169] "(…) quanto si deva à chi con tante fatiche, e sudori hà scoperto, e manifestato al Mondo cosi' grandi, e pretiosi tesori, come sono le cose, che si contengono ne' sacri Cimiterii: Idee veramente, & Imagini, che rappresentano al vivo la nascente Chiesa", *Roma Sotterranea…* 1632 (1634), "Al benigno Lettore".

[170] Spigno 1976; Ditchfield 1997; Ditchfield 2005, in particular pp. 178-192; Oryshkevich (forthcoming)

[171] *Ibidem*. But see also above, pp. 109-114.

[172] Spigno 1976; Ditchfield 1997; Ditchfield 2005.

represent a grave danger in the hands of anti-Catholic polemicists.[173] As a result, scholars

have usually held Bosio and Severano responsible, though to different degrees, for either

neglecting or only superficially considering material evidence in favor of the established

authority of the literary tradition, almost as an act of deceit towards the reader. Once again,

however, one should ask whether it is at all correct to judge Bosio and Severano as

antiquarians who, by error or deceit, ultimately failed in their investigation of the past, or

whether we should instead consider them as exponents of a specific approach to the

historical research, with a peculiar understanding of what we may call the truth-value of the

historical knowledge, although certainly very distant from current scholarship and historical

sensibility.

If the historian is required to make his own conjectures, one could ask what kind of

historical knowledge such blend of objective and subjective produces. The knowledge (we

can respond echoing Agostino Mascardi), of "verisimilar" rather than "true" events, that is

the knowledge of the "universal verisimilar" rather than the "truth of particulars" (i.e.

specific events). In fact, Mascardi writes: "conjectures, if judiciously adapted to the

circumstances of the affair (...), by establishing first a universal verisimilar, lead with its

guidance to the particular truth".[174] This remark is of radical importance since it deeply

redefines the epistemological status of history as it had been established in Aristotle's *De*

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[173] Ditchfield 1997, pp. 354-355.

[174] "(…) congetture; le quali se giudiciosamente alle circostanze del negozio si adattano (…) fermando prima un verisimile universale, con la scorta di lui ritrovar il vero particolare infallibilmente conducono", Mascardi ed. 1859, p. 114, cit. in Tutino 2014, p. 207, n. 88. On this, see Tutino 2014, in particular pp. 61-67. On the question of the "verisimilar" in history and poetry, see for instance: *Romance and History. Imagining Time from the Medieval to the Early Modern Period*, edited by J. Whitman, Cambridge – New York 2015; for a discussion of the "verisimilar" in poetry, see also E. Bellini and C. Scarpati, *Il vero e il falso dei poeti. Tasso, Tesauro, Pallavicino, Muratori*, Milan 1990.

Arte Poetica.[175] Aristotle had sanctioned the superiority of poetry over history on the ground that poetry deals with universals, things and actions as they ought to happen, while history concerns the particular truth of specific events: "poetry states more universal things whereas history states particular things".[176] Mascardi affirms on the contrary that the knowledge attained through history is that of a "universal verisimilar", that is, of how an event or action should have ideally happened, and not necessarily of how it actually happened at a specific point in time. In other words, according to Mascardi, the historian produces the knowledge of past events as "types" or "concepts" rather than "accidents", or particular manifestations of types, inevitably subjected to human fallibility. It is the knowledge of the universal types (concepts) of things that allows in turn a better understanding of the particular truth of human facts.[177] For early modern historians, such "universal verisimilar" that goes beyond the mutable condition of human existence is ultimately the manifestation of divine certainty, of God's truth as it emerges in the history of humanity. And, of course, there is no better place than ecclesiastical history – that is, the history of God's Church – in which divine truth and human history come together to makes sense of the contradictory truths of men.

Therefore, I would like to suggest that what Bosio and Severano did in *Roma Sotterranea* was something far more sophisticated than the simple manipulation of

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[175] *Aristotle Poetics*, ed. and transl. by S. Halliwell, Cambridge (Mass.) 1995.

[176] Aristotle, *Poetics* 9.1451 b5-7, transl. in T. Lockwood, "Aristotle on the (alleged) inferiority of history to poetry" (forthcoming). On Aristotle's Poetics see also, among others: M. Heath, "The Universality of Poetry in Aristotle's Poetics", *Classical Quarterly*, 1991, 41, (2), pp. 389-402.

[177] Tutino 2014, pp. 51-73. For more literature on the "verisimilar", see above p. 156, n. 174.

documentary evidence for ideological concerns. As historians in general, and ecclesiastical historians in particular, their ultimate aim was to recompose the perfect design of God for humanity by putting together the fragments of human facts and actions. They aimed to recover the truth of theology, to find the divine certainty hidden in the folds of history and oppose it to the fragile condition of human uncertainty and doubt. They looked into the desolate darkness of the catacombs to find the truth of the Church as it emerged luminous and unchanged from history before the eyes of the modern reader: *semper eadem*.

In this regard, it is certainly true that Bosio and Severano saw the catacombs as an "arsenal from where they took the arms to combat the heretics".[178] But, I would like to add, the heretics were not the Protestants, as others represented a far more serious danger for their world based on the unshakable certainty of faith. In fact, Bosio, Severano, Baronio – just like their Protestant counterpart – firmly believed that all human facts and events were the reflection of God's will, and that human history, as uncertain, imperfect and fallible as it was, always preserved the reflection of God's perfect design for men. They believed that documentary evidence could and should be used to recognize God's immutable presence in the midst of mutable human affairs, to appreciate the eternal perfection of God's mind in the imperfect chaos of historical facts and events. But there were other scholars who were beginning to doubt the possibility itself of knowing and understanding the past, and were developing a skeptical attitude towards the idea that divine certainty could reveal itself in

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[178] "(…) Arsenali, donde si pigliano le armi da combattere combattere contra gli Eretici", *Roma Sotterranea…* 1632 (1634), "Al benigno Lettore".

the contradictions and uncertainties of human history.[179] At a deeper level, though perhaps not yet fully articulated, it was the initial expression of the hermeneutical and epistemological doubt about the relationship between reality and its representation, truth and interpretation. In terms of early modern ecclesiastical history, such embryonic critical thinking began to question the very possibility for men to ever understand and represent the immutable certainty of God's truth, and therefore to write a true history of the Church, as a divine and ultimately unintelligible institution.[180]

This fundamental and deeply philosophical contraposition between certainty and uncertainty, faith and doubt is, I conclude, the only dichotomy that we should apply to *Roma Sotterranea*, certainly not the contingent and far more superficial opposition of scholars/Catholic apologists. It is indeed such a crucial aspect of the early modern historical debate that corroborates the perception of the Counter-Reformation as a "veritable laboratory of modernity".[181] And within this debate Bosio, Severano, Baronio, and the Protestant authors of the *Centuries* alike, all sided with the "believers", with those thinkers whose work was founded on the unshakable certainty in the presence of God in all human events and actions, and on the possibility to retrieve and acknowledge the divine presence in human history. If this was an act of faith on the part of these scholars, then it is (only) in this respect that I agree with Ditchfield's conclusion that *Roma Sotterranea* was "a work of

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[179] Ginzburg, for instance, speaks of the "(…) distrust in the possibility of being able (…) to evoke the pasta s an accomplished fact" and of the "awareness that our understanding of the past was uncertain, discontinuous, lacunar, based only on fragments and ruins", Ginzburg 2012, p. 24. See also Tutino 2014, in particular pp. 102-112.

[180] See for instance, Momigliano "The Origins of Ecclesiastical Historiography", in Id., *The Classical Foundations…* 1990.

[181] Tutino 2014, p. 111.

devotion as much as erudition"[182]. But, I would like to conclude, *Roma Sotterranea* was also a sophisticated expression of the post-Reformation crucial debate on the modes of understanding and representing the past and the truth of historical facts and events, still relevant today for its profound epistemological implications, and as such deserves to be evaluated and appreciated.

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[182] Ditchfield 1997, p. 360.

4

In Search of the Christian Past (III): Patrons and Artists.

Re-evoking Christian Antiquity in post-Tridentine Rome.

Having considered cases of the reception of Christian antiquity among antiquarians and historians, it is now time to turn the attention to the artists and their patrons. The interest in Early Christian artifacts and visual material, in fact, did not remain confined within the small world of antiquarian and historical erudition, but influenced the visual arts as well, deeply impacting post-Tridentine stylistic and iconographic choices. This chapter concentrates on Rome, since it is in Rome that we find the first and most compelling visual evidence of the new interest in Early Christian art and its consequences.[1]

Much ink has been spilled over whether there was a "palaeochristian revival" in Rome in the aftermath of the Council of Trent[2], but I suggest to address the matter in a

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[1] I use the definition "Early Christian" and "palaeochristian" as synonyms, referring to the artistic production of the first five centuries of Christianity, in accordance with the definition of the two terms found in P. Murray and L. Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, Oxford – New York 1996.

[2] On the revival of Early Christian art in the second half of the sixteenth century, see among others: T. Buser, "Jerome Nadal and Early Jesuit Art in Rome", in *Art Bulletin* 58, 1976, pp. 424-433; A. Zuccari, "La political culturale dell'Oratorio romano nella seconda metà del Cinquecento", *Storia dell'Arte*, 41, 1981, pp. 72-112 (a); Id. "La politica culturale dell'Oratorio romano nelle imprese artistiche promosse da Cesare Baronio", *Storia dell'Arte*, 42, 1981, pp. 171-193(b); *Baronio e l'Arte. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Sora 10-13 ottobre 1984*, edited by R. De Maio *et alii*, Sora 1985; A. Herz, "Cardinal Cesare Baronio's Restoration of SS. Nereo ed Achilleo and S. Cesareo d'Appia", *Art Bulletin*, 70, 1988, pp. 590-620; B. Agosti, *Collezionismo e archeologia Cristiana nel Seicento. Federigo Borromeo e il Medioevo artistico tra Roma e Milano*, Milan 1996. More recently, see: H. Röttgen, "Modello storico, modus e stile. Il ritorno dell'eta' paleocristiana attorno al 1600", in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio nell'eta' di Cesare Baronio*, ed. by P. Tosini, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Frosinone, Sora, 16-18 maggio 2007, Rome 2009, pp. 33-48; L. Spera, "Il recupero dei monumenti per la restituzione del cristianesimo antico nell'opera di Cesare Baronio", in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio*, 2009, pp. 69-86; I. Oryshkevich, "Cultural History in the Catacombs: Early Christian Art and Macarius' Hagioglypta", in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. by K. Van Liere, S. Ditchfield, H. Louthan, Oxford University Press 2012, pp. 250-266; B. Agosti, "La riscoperta dell'arte paleocristiana" in *I Papi della Speranza. Arte e religiosita' nella Roma del '600*,

different way and consider Early Christian art as one among the possible solutions to the

heated question of the reform of *arte sacra*.[3] Shortly after the closure of the Council of

Trent, in fact, diverse suggestions emerged as to how to reform the visual arts, and a great

variety of pictorial styles were explored in response to the strict and yet admittedly vague

recommendation issued with the famous 1563 decree on images that *"figures shall not be

painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust"*.[4] A number of treatises were produced in

the following years with the intent to clarify the Tridentine decree, while offering specific

guidance to artists and patrons alike in terms of suitable iconographic and stylistic models,

from *De picturis et imaginibus sacris* (1570, Joannes Molanus) to the *Instructiones

fabricate et suppellectilis ecclesiasticae* (1577, Carlo Borromeo), or the *Discorso intorno*

(Roma, Museo Nazionale del Castel di Sant'Angelo 2014), ed. by M.G. Bernardini and M. Lolli Ghetti, Rome 2014, pp. 31-41.

[3] On the reform of the art in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, the literature is extensive. See, among others: G. Scavizzi, "La teologia cattolica e le immagini durante il XVI secolo", *Storia dell'Arte*, 21, 1974, pp. 171-213; Id., "*Arte e Architettura Sacra. Cronache e documenti sulla controversia tra riformati e cattolici (1500-1550)*, Roma 1981; Id., "Storia ecclesiastica e arte nel secondo Cinquecento", *Storia dell'Arte*, 59, 1987, pp. 29-46; Id., *The Controversy of Images from Calvin to Baronius*, New York 1992; B. Toscano, "Storia dell'arte e forme della vita religiosa" in *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. III, p. I, Turin 1979, pp. 2740-318; M. Cali', *Da Michelangelo all'Escorial. Momenti del dibattito religioso nell'arte del Cinquecento*, Turin 1980, in particular chapter I, "Controriforma, Riforma cattolica e arti figurative: stato della questione e nuove prospettive"; A. Prosperi, "Teologi e pittura: la questione delle immagini nel Cinquecento italiano", in *La pittura in Italia. Il Cinquecento*, vol. II, Milan 1988, pp. 581-592; M. Beltramme, "Le teoriche del Paleotti e il riformismo dell'Academia di San Luca nella politica artistica dei Clemente VIII (1592-1605)", *Storia dell'Arte*, 69, 1990, pp. 201-233; F. Zeri, *Pittura e Controriforma. L'arte 'senza tempo' di Scipione Pulzone*, 2nd. ed., Vicenza 1997; *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art: Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, El Greco, Caravaggio*, ed. by M.B. Hall, New Haven 2011; C. Occhipinti, *L'arte in Italia e in Europa nel secondo Cinquecento*, Turin 2012; I. Bianchi, *La politica delle immagini nell'eta' della Controriforma. Gabriele Paleotti teorico e committente*, Bologna 2008; *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church*, ed. by M. B. Hall and T.E. Cooper, New York 2013; G. Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610*, Toronto 2003; P. Prodi, *Arte e Pieta' nella Chiesa Tridentina*, Bologna 2014.

[4] "Decree on the invocation, veneration, and relics of saints, and on sacred images", XXV Session (December 3-4, 1563), in *The canons and decrees of the sacred and oecumenical Council of Trent*, J. Waterworth ed. and transl., London 1848, "The Twenty-Fifth Session", pp. 232-89, in particular pp. 233-236.

alle immagini sacre e profane (1582, Gabriele Paleotti), to name just a few.[5] But even

among the Catholic authors there was not complete accordance as to how, for instance, to

reconcile conformity to religious content and artistic invention, devotional simplicity and

artistic sophistication, autonomy of the artist and ecclesiastical censorship.[6] Inevitably, the

complex process of the artistic reform after Trent was not to be a smooth process guided by

univocal directives from above. Rather, it was to derive from the ongoing, often conflicting

and problematic, dialogue between artists, patrons, and ecclesiastical authorities in an

attempt to elaborate a pictorial language that reflected the new Tridentine *pietas* and could

guarantee a necessary historical and scriptural "realism".[7] The result was the distinct

creative diversity that marked the artistic scene in Rome around 1600, as it has been

pointed out (perhaps with a touch of theatrical exaggeration): "in the decades before 1600 a

greater variety of styles was being used than ever before in the history of Central Italian

painting, as each artist went in his own direction to reformulate the rules of *arte sacra*".[8]

Early Christian art – with its pictorial language stripped of artistic sophistication and

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[5] For a general discussion of these treatise, see literature above n. 2. See also: P. Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte de Cinquecento, fra manierismo e Controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960-1962; C. Marcora, "Trattati d'arte sacra all'epoca del Baronio", in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, pp. 191-244.

[6] See for instance O. Mansour, "Censure and Censorship in Rome, c. 1600. The Visitation of Clement VIII and the Visual Arts", in *The Sensuous*… 2013, pp. 136-160.

[7] See M. B. Hall, "Introduction", in *The Sensuous*… 2013, pp. 1-20; Prodi 2014.

[8] Bailey 2003, p. 16. On the artistic scene in Rome around 1600, the literature is vast. See among others: C. Strinati, "Roma nell'anno 1600. Studio di pittura", in *Ricerche di storia dell'arte*, 10, 1980, pp. 15-48;
M.C. Abromson, *Painting in Rome during the Papacy of Clement VIII (1592-1605): A Documented Study*, New York 1981; A. Zuccari, *Arte e committenza nella Roma del Caravaggio*, Rome 1984; S. Macioce, *Undique Splendente. Aspetti della Pittura Sacra nella Roma di Clemente VIII Aldobrandini (1592-1605)*, Rome 1990; S. F. Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Rome: the Sistine and Pauline chapels in S. Maria Maggiore*, New York 1996; A. Zuccari, "I toscani a Roma. Committenza e "riforma" pittorica da Gregorio III a Clemente VIII", in *Storia delle Arti in Toscana. Il Cinquecento*, ed. by R. P. Ciardi and A. Natali, Firenze 2000, pp. 137-166; M. C. Terzaghi, *Caravaggio, Annibale Carracci, Guido Reni tra le ricevute del Banco Herrera e Costa*, Rome 2007.

lascivious details, and with its simplified compositions and archaic sense of space – was but one of the possible solutions adopted by artists and patrons to translate the Tridentine decree into images. And while it is true that several old mosaics and frescoes in Roman churches were damaged or restored beyond recognition in the years following the closure of the Council of Trent,[9] [fig. 49] many others were preserved, studied and copied in a clear effort to recreate and revive palaeochristian art, as we will see shortly. Sometimes, new frescoes were made to deliberately evoke, through a number of visual or iconographic elements, Christian antiquity, clearly revealing an unprecedented fascination with Early Christian imagery and pictorial language.[10] [fig. 50]

There is certainly no question that in the aftermath of the Council of Trent many in Rome saw palaeochristian art as the perfect model for the elaboration of the new "Tridentine art" whose task was the philological representation of the scriptural narrative content, characterized by stylistic simplicity and naturalism. Moreover, the sort of severe and unforgiving spirituality, a distillate of austere reason conceding nothing to the senses, typical of much of Early Christian art, made it the ideal response to the harsh Protestant contempt with the general lack of moral *decorum* of modern sacred images, *turpitudinis et obscoenitatis plena*,[11] especially where the stark contrast between the sensuous beauty of

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[9] From the damages inflicted to the mosaic on the triumphal arch in Santa Prassede, to the apse mosaic in Santi Cosma e Damiano, or the complete destruction of the apse mosaic in Sant'Agata de' Goti, titular church of Federico Borromeo, Santa Martina in the Forum, or Sant'Eufemia al Vico Patrizio to cite only a few examples. See for instance Zuccari 1985, p. 506, n. 41. But see also below, pp. 183-201.

[10] As in the apse of Santa Sabina, for example. See Santa Sabina, see below pp. 169-183. On the appreciation of Early Christian mosaics, see literature above n. 1; but see also, C. Savettieri, "Dal conoscere all'apprezzare: appunti sulla fortuna critica dei mosaici medievali di Roma in eta' moderna", *Polittico*, 2, 2002, pp. 5-26.

[11] Erasmus, *Dialogus Ciceronianus* in E. Panofsky, "Erasmus and the Visual Arts", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtald Institutes*, XXXII, 1969, pp. 199-227, in particular pp. 212, 213-214. See also C. Occhipinti, *L'arte in Italia e in Europa nel secondo Cinquecento*, Turin 2012, pp. 138-157, p. 138.

the forms and the spiritual content was all too evident.[12] In an attempt to defend the visual

arts and the use of sacred images from the Protestant attacks, Catholic theologians, Gabriele

Paleotti above all, proposed a new Tridentine art that was to be simple, free from that

"obscurity and intricacy" that had made Mannerist art impossible to understand "without

the help of a skilled professional philosopher or theologian", and emotional, so to appeal to

the emotions of the devout viewer.[13] Art was, in Paleotti's view, a language shared by all

men that teaches the mind and elevates the soul to God.[14] In rehearsing the old notion of

images as *Biblia pauperum*, and the traditional comparison between oratory and painting,

Paleotti claims that art should always "delight, teach, and move".[15] It teaches the Scriptures

and the history of salvation thorough the pleasure that comes from depicted figures and

events, and the emotion that inevitably arises from the contemplation of Christ's Passion or

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[12] Even in Italy many did not appreciate the lasciviousness and paganism of much of the Cinquecento artistic production, as it appears from the disappointment expressed by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in his *De Venere et Cupidine expellendis carmen* for the pagan, and naked, deities inhabiting the Cortile del Belvedere in the Vatican. See H. Gombrich, "The Belvedere garden as a grove of Venus", in *Gombrich on the Renaissance. Vol. 2: Symbolic Images*, London 1972, third ed. 1993, pp. 104-108. See also, Occhipinti 2012, p. 138.

[13] Gabriele Paleotti, in Scavizzi 1992, p. 135. On Paleotti and his treatise, see n. 2; see also, F. Bologna, *L'incredulita' del Caravaggio e l'esperienza delle "cose naturali"*, 2nd. ed., Turin 2006, in particular chapter 2, pp. 18-54.

[14] "(…) poi che la pittura (…) diffonde in tutti i soggetti la sua grandezza, communicandosi a tutte le materie, a tutti i luoghi, et a tutte le persone, quasi imitando in cio' la divina natura et eccellenza". G. Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre et profane diviso in cinque libri. Dove si scuoprono varii abusi loro, et si dichiara il vero modo che christianamente si doveria osservare ne porle nelle ciese, nelle cae, et in ogni altro luogo. Raccolto e posto insieme a utile delle anime per commissione di Monsignore Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Card. Paleotti vescovo di Bologna. Al popolo della citta' e diocesi sua MDLXXXII*, in G. Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane*, Bologna 1582 (ed. P. Barocchi, *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento*, II, Bari 1962, pp. 117-509, p. 149.

[15] *Ibidem*, Book I, chapter XXII "Della dilettazione che apportano le imagini cristiane", p.216; chapter XXIII "Che le imagini cristiane servono grandemente per ammaestrare il popolo al ben vivere", p. 221; chapter XXV Che le imagini cristiane servon o molto a movere gli affetti delle persone", p. 227.

the suffering of martyrs and young virgins.[16] Towards the end of the century, however, a

revitalized and newly energetic Church, made stronger by the Tridentine reaffirmation of

its theological foundations and ecclesiastical institutions, rapidly lost interest in a somewhat

monotonous art that limited itself to the didactic illustration of historical and scriptural

events at the expense of imaginative splendor and artistic inventions. It began to favor a

more dashing pictorial language better suited to glorify the triumph of post-Tridentine

Catholicism and celebrate the advent of a new "golden era" for Christianity.[17] At the end of

the sixteenth century, political and cultural circumstances more favorable for the Roman

Church account for the growing fortune of a new pictorial style that resulted, in the

following years, in the triumph of Baroque painting and the failure of the attempt to reform

the visual arts based on stylistic "simplicity" and adherence to the Scriptures.[18] The failing

of Tridentine art mirrored the ultimate failure of the more innovative forces of the Roman

Curia that had sought a complete spiritual and practical reform of the Church and the

Catholic world throughout the second half of the Cinquecento. As a result, at the end of the

century – beginning with the pontificate of Clement VIII Aldobrandini (1592-1605) – the

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[16] "Il sentir narrare il martirio di un santo, il zelo, et costanza d'una vergine; la passione dello stesso Christo, sono cose che toccano dentro di vero: ma l'esserci con vivi colori qua posto sotto gli occhi il santo martirizzato, cola' la vergine combattuta, et nell'altro lato Cristo inchiodato, egli e' pur vero che tanto accresce la divotione, et compunge le viscere, che chi non lo conosce e' di legno o di marmo". *Ibidem*, p. 228. On Tridentine art as the illustration of the history of salvation, see also E. Battisti in "Riforma e Controriforma", in *Enciclopedia Universale dell'Arte*, vol. XI, Venice-Rome, 1963, *ad vocem*; Id., *L'Antirinascimento*, Milan 1989.

[17] See for instance, Bologna 2006, chapter 1; Prodi 2014, in particular the introduction "Storia, Natura e Pieta', pp. 9-52 and chapter 2 "Postfazione alla "Ricerca sulla teorica delle arti figurative nella Riforma Cattolica", pp. 191-198. See also: *Dall'avanguardia dei Carracci al secolo barocco*, edited by A. Emiliani, Bologna 1988; C. Strinati, "Decorazioni pittoriche a carattere mitologico tra fine Cinquecento e grande stagione barocca", in *Dopo Sisto V. La transizione al Barocco 1590-1630*, Atti del Convegno Roma 18-20 ottobre 1995, Rome 1997, pp. 211-288.

[18] For instance, the conversion to Roman Catholicim of Henry of Navarre, future king of France as Henry IV, in June 1593.

more vital aspects of the Catholic Reform, all those cultural and social components not aligned with the newly established post-conciliar ideological and political order, clashed with the increasingly authoritarian post-Tridentine Church.[19] The inevitable consequence was the end of a genuine process of reform and of all hopes for a new Christian society, paired with a decisive retreat of the Roman Church into more conservative positions in terms of theology and religion, and the subsequent increasingly rigid control over all forms of individual beliefs and devotion, as well as of personal actions and social practices.[20] As for the visual arts, no longer part of the general process of Catholic reform, they became mainly a devotional tool and a means for religious and social control, as well manifestation of political power and absolutism.[21]

The interest in palaeochristian art, however, remained very much alive and possibly grew even stronger during the pontificate of Clement VIII, particularly in terms of preservation, restoration, and redecoration of the ancient basilicas where Early Christian imagery and modes of decoration were often used with the precise intent to revive and re-

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[19] Episodes such as the death of Giordano Bruno (1600), the abolition of the teaching of Platonic philosophy at the University of Rome (1597), the listing of the books of Tommaso Campanella and Bernardino Telesio in the Index, see Bologna 2006, chapter 2, pp. 14-18. On the political thought of the Counter-Reformation Church and on forms of resistance, see among others: L. Firpo, *Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento*, Florence-Chicago 1974; P. Prodi, *Il cardinal Gabriele Paleotti (1522-1597)*, vol II, Rome 1967; S. Zoli, *La controriforma*, Florence 1979; R. De Mattei, *Il pensiero politico nell'eta' della Controriforma*, I, Milan-Naples 1982; G. Galasso, "Prefazione", in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, pp. XXVII-XLIII; R. Villari, *Elogio della dissimulazione. La lotta politica nel Seicento*, Bari 1987.

[20] It is important to point out that a rigid opposition of Catholic Reformation and Counter-Reformation my not be the right way to understand the fractured world of post-Tridentine Catholic culture. On this, see for instance, S. Tutino, *Shadows of Doubt: Language and Truth on post-Reformation Catholic Culture*, New York 2014, and in particular the introduction, pp. 1-10.

[21] Prodi 2014. See also, M. Firpo and F. Biferali, *Navicula Petri. L'arte dei papi nel Cinquecento*, Bari 2009.

evoke Christian antiquity.[22] It was within the sacred space of these ancient churches that the old Christian image acquired, for the last time, new life and power as both artistic decoration of the liturgical space – though often charged with newly emphasized ideological and theological implications – and sacred image to be venerated.[23] The new fascination with Early Christian art emerging in the wake of the Council of Trent was partially dictated by the necessity to find a valid model for a reformed religious art. On the other hand, the antiquarians' incessant work on the physical and visual remains of the first centuries of Christianity – from murals and reliefs hidden in the catacombs to the dilapidated mosaics of many early basilicas –inevitably stimulated a new interest in the fading remains of ancient Christian art.[24] More importantly, it eventually challenged an audience still accustomed to the style of Cinquecento painting to look at such unfamiliar specimens of pictorial art, and find a way to assess their peculiarly unappealing formal

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[22] On the restoration of ancient churches during the papacy of Clement VIII, see in general Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, pp. 504-510; Zuccari 1984; S. F. Ostrow, "The Counter-Reformation and the end of the century", in *Artistic Centers of the Italian Renaissance. Rome*, ed. by M.B. Hall, Cambridge (Mass.) 2005, pp. 246-320, in particular pp. 296-314. See also A. Andreoli, "Pompeo Ugonio, Richard Krautheimer e le chiese di Roma", in *Ecclesiae Urbis, Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulle Chiese di Roma, IV-X secolo Roma, 4-10 settembre 2000,* edited by F. Guidobaldi and A. Guiglia Guidobaldi, III, Vatican City 2002, pp. 41-56.

[23] The sacred image, in fact, materializes through the artistic rendition its divine archetype, as clearly stated in the Tridentine decree on the images: "the honor which is shown them [*images*] is referred to the prototypes which those images represent". "Decree on the invocation, veneration, and relics of saints, and on sacred images", XXV Session (December 3-4, 1563), in *The canons and decrees* 1884, pp. 233-236. For a thorough discussion of images and prototypes based on the Byzantine theology of "eikones" of the prototype, and "tautotés" of the prototype, see D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago 1989. See also F. Boespflug, *Le immagini di Dio., Una storia dell'eterno nell'Arte*, Turin 2012; Prodi 2014, pp. 14-26.

[24] See for instance: A. Recio Veganzones, "Alfonso Chacón, primer estudioso del mosaico cristiano de Roma y algunos diseños chaconianos poco conocidos", in *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 50, 1974, pp. 296-329; L. Diego Barrado, "Luci rinascimentali: lo sguardo del Ciacconio (Alfonso Chacon) all'iconografia paleocristiana e altomedievale della Roma scomparsa", *Archivio della Societa' Romana di Storia Patria*, 127, 2004, pp. 133-176; C. Schuddeboom, *Research in the Roman catacombs by the Louvain antiquarian Philips van Winghe*, London 2004; Oryskevich 2012.

qualities, so distant from the Classical canon and often difficult to stomach even for those who despised the excessive license of modern painters. In his 1564 treatise *Degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'historie*, for instance, Monsignor Andrea Gilio – a most intransigent critic of the mistakes and indecent inventions of the artists, and of Michelangelo above all – still describes the work of the medieval artist as "vile, crude, plebeian, old, humble, with no genius or art", although he then goes on to praise the fact that these ancient artists created "honest and devout images", always close to the truth of a subject, and without seeking personal glory. [25] Though Gilio's words on medieval art were certainly harsh, his opinion was far more favorable than that voiced, for example, by Vasari some 15 years before. In the first edition of his *Lives* (1550), in fact, Vasari did not hesitate to describe medieval figures as "monstrous", "crude", "clumsy" to the point that "it was impossible to imagine anything worse",[26] while also indicating in the age of Constantine the true beginning of the decadence of the arts in the following centuries.[27]

The first evidence of a changing attitude towards Early Christian and medieval art did not remain confined to the restricted space of the written page, inevitably destined to a more sophisticated audience, but they also appeared on a monumental scale in Roman

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[25] "(…) vile, goffo, plebeo, antico, umile, senza ingegno et arte". A. Gilio, *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'istorie, e cin molte annotazioni fatte sopra il Giudizio di Michelangelo et altre figure, tanto de la nova, quanto de la vecchia Cappella del Papa. Con la dichiarazione come vogliono essere dipinte le sacre immagini*, in Barocchi 1960-1962, vol. II, pp. 1-115, p. 110-111.

[26] "(…) figure mostruose (…) cose c'hanno piu' del mostro nel lineamento, che effigie di quel che si sia (…) cose si' goffe e si' ree, tanto malfatte di grossezza e di maniera, che pare impossibile che imaginare peggio si potesse". G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' piu' eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri. Nell'edizione per i tipi di Lorenzo Torrentino Firenze 1550*, edited by L. Bellosi and A. Rossi, Turin 1986, pp. 130-131.

[27] *Ibidem*.

churches, as early as 1560 in the apse of the Basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome.[28] [fig. 51]

Commissioned from Taddeo Zuccari by Cardinal Otto Truchsess von Waldburg,[29] the apse

decoration features a subject matter so unusual for late Cinquecento painting – the

collegium of the Apostles and the *mons paradisiacus* – and a pictorial style so severe and

austere that it makes it difficult not to see the apse fresco in Santa Sabina as the earliest

example of a conscious use and appropriation of palaeochristian models in Rome.[30]

The apse fresco in the Basilica of Santa Sabina

Otto Truchsess, Cardinal titular of Santa Sabina from 1550 to 1561, paid particular

attention to the restoration of the basilica's dilapidated apse and its mural decoration, as

confirmed by a number of literary sources, from the now lost inscription at the base of the

apse arch,[31] to Chacon's *Vitae et res gestae summorum pontificorum*, and the *Relatione*

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[28] On Santa Sabina see J.J. Berthier O.P., *L'église de Sainte-Sabine à Rome*, Rome 1910; A. Muñoz, *La Basilica di Santa Sabina in Roma. Descrizione storico-artistica dopo i recenti restauri*, Milan 1919; Id., *Il restauro della Basilica di Santa Sabina*, Rome 1938; F.M.D. Darsy O.P., *Santa Sabina*, Rome 1961; R. Krautheimer, W. Frankl, S. Corbett, "*Santa Sabina*", in *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, IV, Vatican City 1976, pp. 69-94; G. Rubino, *La Basilica di Santa Sabina sull'Aventino. Un esempio di classicismo nella Roma del V secolo*, Rome 2002.

[29] On Cardinal Truchsees see N.M. Overbeeke, "Cardinal Otto Truchsess von Waldburg and his role as art dealer for Albrecht V of Bavaria", *Journal of the History of Collections*, 6, no. 2, 1994, pp. 173-179; M. G. Aurigemma, "Sacra in a Tower: The Cardinal of Augsburg's Paintings and Reliquaries in 1566" in *Sacred Possessions. Collecting Italian Religious Art 1500-1900*, ed. by G. Faigenbaum and S. Ebert-Schifferer, Los Angeles 2011, pp. 84-103; M. Nicolaci, "Il Cardinal d'Augusta Otto Truchsess von Waldburg (1514-1573) mecenate della Controriforma ", in *Principi di Santa Romana Chiesa*, ed. by M. Gallo, Rome 2013, pp. 31-42.

[30] "Incunabolo delle rivisitazioni di modelli paleocristiani nella Roma Controriformata", as Alessandro Zuccari defined the apse fresco in Santa Sabina. Zuccari in *Baronio e l'arte* 1985, p. 495. On the apse decoration, see: M. Salmi, "La pittura absidale di S. Sabina", in *Nuovo Bollettino di Archeologia Cristiana*, XX, 1914, pp. 5-10; C. Acidini Luchinat, *Taddeo e Federico Zuccari. Fratelli pittori del Cinquecento*, I, Milan 1998, pp. 115-116; G. Balass, "Taddeo Zuccari's fresco in the apse-conch in S. Sabina in Rome", *Assaph*, IV, 1999, pp. 105-124; Agosti 2014; M. Giandandrea, "Nuove strategie figurative. La decorazione pittorica tardoantica di Santa Sabina", in *Medioevo Natura e Figura. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Parma 20-25 settembre 2011*, edited by A.C. Quintavalle, Milan 2015, pp. 139-151.

[31] "OTHO TRUCHSES S. SABINE APSIDEM HANC PINGI IUSSIT. MDLC", in Berthier 1910, p. 356.

della Chiesa e convento di Santa Sabina.[32] The apse-conch fresco, work of Taddeo Zuccari and his workshop, features Christ seated on the summit of the *mons paradisiacus* and flanked by the Apostles, while sheep drink from the clear stream flowing from the mountain.[33] A group of three women on the left is balanced by a group of three men on the right, while in the foreground four ecclesiastics, two seated and two kneeling, are gazing upon Christ. [fig. 50] Although all the figures wear clothes of different colors and are characterized by different gestures and movement, the lack of specific iconographic attributes makes their identification extremely difficult, if not impossible. Two of the women could be Sabina and her servant Seraphia, while among the men only Saint Dominic clothed in the Dominican habit is easily recognizable, certainly included there to commemorate the donation of the basilica to the Dominican Order by Pope Honorius III in 1219. In the foreground, the group of the seated pope accompanied by a kneeling bishop on the left, may be identified as Pope Celestine I (422-432) during whose pontificate the construction of the church began, and the presbyter Peter of Illyria, founder of the church remembered in the mosaic inscriptions on the West inner façade.[34] [fig. 52] The group of

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[32] A. Chacon, *Vitae et res gestae summorum pontificorum*, Rome 1677, III, col. 694. In the *Relatione…* it says that "Otto Truchses de Waldeburg S.R.E. presb. card. Augustanus vetustate absidem collapsam restituit et ornavit MDLIX", *Relatione della Chiesa e convento di Santa Sabina*, Macerata, Biblioteca Comunale, ms. 5.3.B.7, cit. in Gianandrea 2015, p. 150, n. 7.

[33] For the literature on the apse fresco, see above p. 169, n. 30.

[34] The inscription on the West façade reads: CVLMEN APOSTOLICVM CVM CAELESTINVS HABERET / PRIMVS ET IN TOTO FVLGERET EPISCOPVS ORBE / HAEC QVAE MIRARIS FVNDAVIT PRESBYTER VRBIS / ILLYRICA DE GENTE PETRVS VIR NOMINE TANTO / DIGNVS AB EXORTV CHRISTI NVTRITVS IN AVLA / PAVPERIBUS LOCVPLES SIBI PAVPER QVI BONA VITAE / PRAESENTIS FVGIENS MERVIT SPERARE FVTVRAM. According to the *Liber Pontificalis* the church was completed and consecrated by Pope Sixtu III (432-440), as it is recorded in his life: "et huius temporibus fecit Petrus episcopus basilicam in urbe Roma santae Savinae ubi et fontem construxit", *Le Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction, et commentaire*, edited by L. Duchesne, I Paris 1886, pp. 235-236. However, it has been

the seated bishop and the kneeling deacon behind him on the right of the composition, finally, have been tentatively identified as the martyrs saints Eventius and Theodolus, whose relics were preserved in the basilica since the ninth century.[35]

Since the early twentieth century, Zuccari's fresco has been traditionally considered a close reinterpretation of the original fifth century apse mosaic[36]. Though in very poor condition, the Early Christian mosaic was still *in situ* by the middle of the sixteenth century, as proven by the fact that fragments of it incorporated in the layer of plaster prepared for Zuccari's fresco were discovered during the restoration works in the apse of 1918, and again in 1946.[37] In 1918, on the occasion of the restoration of the fresco,[38] it became clear that the color scheme of Zuccari's fresco roughly matched that of the old mosaic, with green mosaic tesserae found below the painted terrain, blue tesserae in the background corresponding to the sky, and a few colored tesserae corresponding to the

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recently suggested that the information about Pope Sixtus III may be a later and not entirely reliable addition to the *Liber*, see for instance Gianandrea 2015, p. 139.

[35] Berthier 1910, p. 357; Salmi 1914 p. 5 (but he doubts the identification of the relics); Krautheimer 1976, p. 75.

[36] See Salmi 1914; Balass 1999; Gianandrea 2015. The construction and decoration of Santa Sabina is traditionally dated between the pontificate of Celestine I (422-432) and Sixtus III (432-440) based on two sources, the inscription on the counter-façade and the life of Sixtus III in the *Liber Pontificalis.* See Gianandrea 2015, p. 139.

[37] Muñoz 1919, pp. 38-39; Muñoz 1938, p. 38; Darsy 1961, p. 100. In 1946, actually, a few mosaic fragments and tesserae where collected by Darsy and Matthiae and preserved in the Archivio Generale dell'Ordine dei Padri Predicatori (AGOP, XIV 950 DAR 14), where they have been found and analyzed in 2006 by Geraldine Leardi. See G. Leardi, "I mosaici e la decorazione ad opus sectile di Santa Sabina", in *La pittura medievale a Roma, 312-1431. Corpus. Vol I, L'orizzonte tardoantico e le nuove immagini (312-468)*, edited by M. Andaloro and S. Romano, Milan 2006, pp. 291-304, pp. 296-297.

[38] Muñoz 1919.

figures.[39] This evidence confirms that, while heavily damaged, the original mosaic must have been legible, at least in terms of its iconography and general composition, by the time Zuccari began working on the new apse decoration.[40] However, while the painter likely based his fresco on the fifth-century model, stylistically he did not recreate the original mosaic but rather offered a re-interpretation of it, mixing ancient and modern features and conjuring a more complex and varied image that was ultimately more palatable to his audience. While maintaining a symmetrical disposition of the figures on both sides of Christ, Zuccari arranged the crowd of apostles and saints, colorfully clothed, in a variety of postures and movements, thus avoiding the impression of monotonous repetition that typically accompanies Early Christian compositions. Instead of rigidly aligning the figures in a two-dimensional composition in imitation of palaeochristian models as, for instance, it was done in the apse-conch of Baronio's titular church Santi Nereo ed Achilleo [fig. 53], Zuccari arranged them in a three-dimensional space, creating a convincing illusion of depth. [fig. 50] Moreover, the ecclesiastics in the foreground and the lateral groups of saints, all close to the picture plane, act as a visual transition between the painted space inhabited by Christ and the apostles, and the real physical space of the church where the viewer is positioned. The composition is carefully articulated in such a way that the viewer, advancing along the nave towards the altar and the apse, finds himself visually aligned with

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[39] "Nei restauri del 1918 (…) avvicinatici con un castello all'affresco per consolidarne l'intonaco, potemmo rinvenire al disotto di questo varie porzioni di musaico, sparse qua e la' per tutto il catino, di colori corrispondenti all'incirca alla composizione a fresco, cioe' tessere verdi nel terreno, turchine nel fondo, colori diversi nelle figure.", Muñoz 1938, p. 38.

[40] Golda Balass suggests that Zuccari based his composition on Early Christian mosaics found in *other* Roman basilicas, since the one in Santa Sabina was by the middle of the sixteenth century in such bad conditions that had to be removed altogether, and it is impossible to know whether "Taddeo had seen its remnants, if any such remained by his time". Balass 1999, p. 106. However, I am definitely more inclined to believe that Zuccari had indeed the possibility to look at the original mosaic, still partially legible at the time.

the sheep – identifying himself with the apostolic flock – and placed in a privileged position to raise his eyes directly towards Christ in majesty, the focal point of the entire scene. The apostles flanking Christ, finally, are arranged along a sort of arch, obviously echoing the concave space of the apse-conch, in a visually and conceptually strong statement about the continuity of the apostolic Church (in the fresco) and the Roman Church (symbolized by the actual building of the church).

In Santa Sabina Zuccari refrained from engaging elements – asymmetrical perspective constructions, complex forms, bodies arranged in exaggerated poses, and unnecessary decorative elements – typical of his style, as seen for instance in the Oratorio del Gonfalone or at Caprarola, [fig. 54] as well as of Mannerist style in general.[41] The apse fresco is instead a remarkably simple and yet imposing composition, the perfect choice for the liturgically most prominent location in the church: a compressed composition that was at the same time direct and filled with *gravitas*, free of distractions and able to convey with extreme clarity and precision a crucial message to its audience, both literate or illiterate. In a way, Taddeo Zuccari found the perfect balance between Raphael's *Disputa*, with its extreme clarity and simplicity in illustrating complex theological concepts, and a catacomb mural, with its humble and yet powerful language conveying the intense spirituality of the primitive Church. With the decoration of the apse of Santa Sabina Zucccari appears to have realized, some twenty years earlier, Paleotti's wish for an art that becomes *libro popolare*,

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[41] As, for instance, in the Mattei Chapel in Santa Maria della Consolazione or the Frangipane Chapel in San Marcello al Corso. On Taddeo Zuccari's style, see Acidini Luchinat 1998. On the style of the Maniera in general, see among many others J. Shearman, "Maniera as an Aesthetic Ideal", in *Renaissance Art*, ed. by C. Gilbert, New York 1973, pp. 181-221; A. Pinelli, *La bella maniera: artisti del Cinquecetno tra regola e licenza*", Turin 1993.

simple and intelligible to "men and women, aristocrats and commoners, rich and poor, educated and uneducated people".[42]

The theme of the *collegium apostolorum* was highly unusual in Cinquecento painting, and it seems rather unlikely that it was spontaneously conceived by Zuccari or his patron.[43] It was, however, a familiar subject in Early Christian art.[44] Between the fourth and the fifth century, the group of Christ and the apostles – already largely present on sarcophagi and in catacombs[45] [fig. 13] – appears in a number of apse mosaics, from Santa Pudenziana (390, among the most ancient apse mosaics in Roman churches), to the lost apse decorations of Sant'Agata de' Goti (462-72), Sant'Andrea Catabarbara (second half of the fifth century), and perhaps Santa Balbina (ante 495) [figs. 55, 56, 67].[46] The theme

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[42] "(…) huomini, donne, nobili, ignobili, ricchi, poveri, dotti, indotti (…)", Paleotti 1582, c. 272v, cit. in Prodi 2014, p. 118.

[43] See for instance Gianadrea 2015.

[44] On Early Christian imagery in general, see for instance: B. Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christlichen Kunst des ersten Jahrtausends. Studeins zur Geschichte des Weltgerichtsbildes*, Wien 1966. More recently, see: *Temi di iconografia paleocristiana*, edited by F. Bisconti, Vatican City 2000.

[45] The iconography is present several times in at least 9 cemeteries in Rome, from the cemetery of Via Anapo to the catacomb of Callixtus and the so-called *Coemeterium Ostrianum* near the catacombs of Priscilla on the via Salaria. In Chacon manuscript with drawings from the catacombs, Vat. Lat. 5409, there are several drawings featuring the iconographic theme for instance *in coemeterio S. Zepherini Papae* (c. 22v; c. 25r) or *in Coemeterio Obstriano* (c. 10r). There is also a drawing of a sarcophagus from S. Maria Nova *in hortis*, featuring Christ among the aspostles (c. 49v). See literature below, n. 46.

[46] On the *collegium apostolorum* see for instance: P. Testini, "Osservazioni sull'iconografia del Cristo in trono fra gli apostoli. A proposito dell'affresco di un distrutto oratorio cristiano presso l'aggere serviano a Roma", *Rivista dell'Istituto di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, 11-12, 1963, pp. 230-300. More recently, F. Bisconti, "Absidi paleocristiane di Roma: antichi sistemi iconografici e nuove idee figurative', in *Atti del VI colloquio dell'Associazione Italiana per lo Studio e la Conservazione del Mosaico* (Venezia 1999), ed. by F. Guidobaldi and A. Paribeni, Ravenna 2001, pp. 451-459; Id., "Variazioni sul tema della *traditio legis*", *Vetera Christianorum*, 40, 2003, pp. 251-270. See also: F. R. Moretti, "La Traditio Legis nell'abside", in *La pittura medievale a Roma…* 2006, pp. 87-90; L. Hodne, "The 'Double Apostolate' as an Image of the Church. A Study of Early Medieval Apse Mosaic in Rome", *Acta ad archeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia Institutum Romanum Norvegiae, Universitas Osloensis Roma*, N.S. 6=20.2006 (2007), pp. 143-162. On Early Christian and Medieval mosaics in Roman churches in general, see also: *Die römischen Mosaiken und*

appears even outside Rome, as shown by the so-called sacellum of Saint Aquilinus in San Lorenzo in Milan (450 ca.).[47] [fig. 57] It is therefore possible that also the apse mosaic in Santa Sabina, coeval with the above-mentioned examples, featured Christ among the apostles, an image whose strong theological and ideological implications were particularly important for the Church at the turn of the fourth century.[48]

The hypothesis that the *collegium apostolorum* might have been the subject of the original apse mosaic in Santa Sabina is further reinforced by the reconstruction and analysis of the original iconographic program of the church's decoration in its entirety.[49] The only surviving portion of the original mosaics in Santa Sabina is the large inscription on the west façade, flanked by the personifications of the *Ecclesia ex circumcision* and the *Ecclesia ex gentibus* holding the Old and New Testament and symbolizing here the unified Church or *Ecclesia bipartita*.[50] [fig. 52] According to Ciampini, the mosaic on the west façade continued in the upper portion of the wall, featuring the symbols of the four Evangelists and the figures of Peter and Paul – who preached the Gospels among the Jews and the Gentiles

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Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert, J. Wilpert, edited by W. N. Schumacher, Freiburg 1976.

[47] On Sant'Aquilino see for instance: L. Fieni, *La costruzione della basilica di San Lorenzo in Milano*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milan) 2004; *"Non esiste in tutto il mondo una chiesa più bella" : conoscere, valorizzare e divulgare il patrimonio di San Lorenzo Maggiore a Milano: la prima fase di un progetto,* Milano, Università cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 12 dicembre 2015, edited by E. Neri and S. Lusuardi Siena, Milan 2015; E. Neri, *Tessellata vitrea tardoantichi e altomedievali: produzione dei materiali e loro messa in opera: considerazioni generali e studio dei casi milanesi*, Bibliothèque de l'antiquité tardive 32, Turnhout 2016.

[48] Testini 1963; Hodne 2006 (2007); Gianandrea 2015.

[49] See for instance Leardi in *La pittura medievale a Roma…*2006; Gianandrea 2015.

[50] On the meaning of the two *Ecclesiae* see for instance: F. W. Schlatter, 'The two Women in the Mosaic of Santa Pudenziana", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3, 1995, pp. 1-25; D. Goffredo, "Le personificazioni delle Ecclesiae: tipologia e significati dei mosaici di S. Pudenziana e S. Sabina", in *Ecclesiae Urbis…* 2002, III, pp. 1949-1962. For the transcription of the inscription see above, p. 11, n. 34. See also Leardi in *La pittura medievale a Roma…*2006, in particular pp. 293-297.

respectively – in line with the two *Ecclesiae* and flanking a five-arched window.[51] [fig. 58]

Certainly the original pictorial decoration in Santa Sabina was much more extensive than what is still visible today, as Ciampini himself speculated,[52] and there is no doubt that there was a mosaic on the triumphal arch, as both Ugonio and Ciampini confirm.[53] [fig. 59] Also decorated was most likely the central nave, where the space left *ab origine* between the *opus sectile* and the windows leaves only little doubt that it was filled with pictures.[54] [fig. 60]

On the triumphal arch, what is visible today is the early twentieth-century monochrome painting featuring fifteen medallions containing male busts flanked by the two heavenly cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, based on Ciampini's drawing and description of the original mosaic.[55] [fig. 51] It has been suggested that the decoration of the arch, copied in the seventeenth century by Ciampini, was in fact realized on the occasion of restauration works in the church during the papacy of Eugene II (824-827). A suggestion based on the general similarity between the mosaic in Santa Sabina and the

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[51] G.G. Ciampini, *Vetera Monimenta* I, Rome 1690, p. 191, pl.. XLVIII

[52] "Colligitur super totam Ecclexiam fuisse non solum picturis verum etiam vermiculates operibus decoratam, ut ex murorum concatenationibus, quas in angulis prope maiorem Portam (…) observavi; et uterque examinavimus: hodie vero destructae sunt", Ciampini 1690, p. 188.

[53] "Si vede anco nell'Arco della Tribuna, in due fregi che vi sono rimasti, segno del Musaico antico che pur e' verisimle fusse da principio fatto da quel Pietro Cardinale, che fondo' la Chiesa, si come il Musaico che e' rincontro sopra la porta maggiore", Ugonio 1588, p. 9r; see also Ciampini 1690, pl. XLVII.

[54] There are two additional elements that suggest the presence of a pictorial decoration in the central nave: 1) the height of the inscription on the counter- façade, corresponds to the height of the bare space between the *opus sectile* and the windows, thus pointing to the presence of a continuous decoration from the West wall along the walls of the central nave; 2) the fact that there are some 10 cm. left between the *opus sectile* and the wall with the windows, as if that space was filled with a mosaic. See Muñoz 1938, p. 29

[55] The painting was realized in 1914-1919 by Eugenio Cisterna during the first restoration works in the basilica, directed by Muñoz. See Muñoz 1938, p. 39.

mosaic on the entrance arch of the chapel of San Zeno in Santa Prassede (built by Pope Paschal I, 817-824), also featuring medallions.[56] [fig. 61] However, as pointed out by Krautheimer, it appears more plausible that the artist working for Pope Paschal I may have looked at the example of Santa Sabina, especially considering that there are examples of similar decoration in Early Christian and Byzantine churches, from San Vitale and San Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna to the Euphrasian Basilica in Poreč, or Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai.[57] [figs. 62, 63, 64]. Moreover, the analogous detail of the heavenly cities is found not far away, on the triumphal church in Santa Maria Maggiore (decorated under Pope Sixtus III, 432-440).[58] [fig. 65] The disposition of the medallions on the front of the arch in Santa Sabina may seem unusual for an Early Christian church, as they are more commonly found on the intrados of the arch; however, given the paucity of extant Early

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[56] G. Matthiae, *La pittura romana del Medioevo, secoli IV-IX*, Roma 1965, p. 40. But already De Rossi dated the mosaic decoration of arch to the 9th century, as referred by Muñoz: "(...) nel 1918 riproducemmo in pittura in quel luogo la stampa del Ciampini. Noi non dubitiamo che anche questo musaico appartenesse al V secolo, come pensava pure il P. Garrucci, mentre il de Rossi l'assegnava al secolo IX", Muñoz 1938, p. 39. On Pope Eugene II in Santa Sabina, the *Liber Pontificalis* says that "(…) tenuit autem presbyteratus sui tempore ecclesiam beate Savinae martyris positam in Adventino monte, quam, deo dispensante, post pontificalem sibi adtributam gratiam, ad meliorem cultum perduxit, et picturis undique decoravit (…) Fecit autem in ecclesia beate Savinae martyris ciborium ex argento purissimo, pensas libras CII", *Le Liber Pontificalis…*1886, II, Paris 1892, p. 69.

[57] See F. W. Deichmann, *Früchristliche Bauten und Mosaiken von Ravenna*, Baden-Baden 1958, pp. 219, 220, 226, 244; K. Weitzmann, "The Mosaic in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 110, 1966, pp. 392-405; C. Rizzardi, *Mosaici parietali esistenti e scomparsi di eta` placidiana a Ravenna: iconografie imperiali e apocalittiche*, "Corso di Cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina", XL, 1993, pp. 385-407, in part. 387-390; Id., *Relazioni artistiche fra Ravenna e l'Istria: i mosaici parietali*, "Corso di Cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina", XLII, 1995, pp. 817-836; *La Basilica di San Vitale a Ravenna*, Mirabilia Italiae 6, a cura di P. Angiolini Martinelli, Modena 1997, pp. 226-229; J. Elsner, "Encounter: The Mosaics in the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai", *Gesta*, 2016, Vol. 55, 1, pp. 1-3.

[58] In this regard, it is important to recall the fact that the *Liber Pontificalis* apparently points to a decoration and conclusion opf the church during the pontifica eof Sixtus III, that is at the same time of the decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore. See above, p. 11, n. 34.

Christian mosaics featuring such decoration, any conclusion in this regard would be rather forced.[59]

Ciampini describes the medallions in Santa Sabina as containing the busts of *togati viri (...) quale imagines Caesarum in numusmatibus esse solent*, with the image of Christ the Savior in the center – *medium in arco fastigio orbem obtinent Christi Servatoris effigies* – and *dua civitates, utraque portes patentibus, quorum ex arcu tre lampades pendent, figura partim rotunda, partim quadratae*.[60] He writes of *quindecim orbes (...) ac aliorum duorum vestigial apparent,* thus suggesting a total number of seventeen medallions, sixteen plus the central one containing the image of Christ. This number is apparently confirmed also by his drawing, in which it is possible to count 17 medallions in total. [fig. 59] The male figures in the medallions have been variously identified as popes, saints, apostles and evangelists,[61] but it remains very difficult to make any solid hypothesis, as the identity of the *viri* in this kind of decoration always varies from place to place, at times even representing real people and benefactors of that specific church as, for example, in San Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna [fig. 66] Based on their number, it has been suggested to identify the sixteen men with the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament, as an ideal pendant to the symbols of the Evangelists on the west façade and a visualization of the *concordia veteris et novi testamentis*.[62] This suggestion is particularly convincing in the

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[59] See for instance Gianandrea 2015, pp. 147-148

[60] Ciampini 1690, pp. 188-189.

[61] Leardi in *La pittura medievale a Roma…*2006, p. 303 (with bibliography)

[62]See for instance Gianandrea 2015, p. 147. Prophets are also depicted in the medallions in St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. For literature, see above, p. 17, n. 56.

light of the possible meaning of the entire iconographic program in Santa Sabina, as we will see briefly. As for the subject of the wall decorations in the central nave, any speculation is similarly problematic, though we can probably assume that it was a narrative cycle, similar for instance to that of Santa Maria Maggiore[63] or that of Saint Peter's and Saint Paul, both dated to the middle of the fifth century under Pope Leo I the Great (440-461).[64] A hypothesis that I find once again quite convincing in light of the entire decorative cycle in Santa Sabina is that the narrative murals may have featured scenes from the Old and New Testament, beginning on the West façade with the personifications of the two *Ecclesiae*, and ending in the apse with Christ among the apostles, where the Word preached on earth to Jews and Gentiles fulfills its promise of salvation. If such reconstruction of the iconographic program in Santa Sabina is correct, then the *collegium apostolorum* seems extremely appropriate for the original apse mosaic, and certainly reinforces the hypothesis that Zuccari's fresco is in fact based on the old mosaic.

One final remark on the iconography of the *collegium apostolorum*: its presence in the original apse of Santa Sabina becomes even more convincing if we consider the message that this iconography conveys in relation with the religious and political situation of the Roman Church in the early fifth century.[65] In fact, the image of the apostles gathered around Christ, symbolizing unity and cohesion, represents certainly the coherent culmination of an iconographic program delineating the image of a strong and unified

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[63] See above, p. 177, n. 58.

[64] See also Leardi in *La pittura medievale a Roma…*2006, p. 295.

[65] In general, see for instance C. Piétri, *Roma Christiana. Recherches sur l'Église de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311-440)*, II, Rome 1976.

Church: the only, true, and triumphant Church on earth, built on the harmony between the two *Ecclesiae* merged into the Christian community, and the double apostolate of Peter and Paul, as firmly proclaimed in the monumental inscription: *Culmen apostolicum cum Caelestinus heberet / primus et in toto fulgeret episcopus orbe*. [66] The image conveyed a firm message of political and religious stability, particularly important in the early fifth century when the Church of Rome was facing a very dangerous situation, with theological controversies threatening the unity of the Church itself and political tensions and conflicts questioning the supremacy of Rome. [67]

More unclear is whether the detail of the Mount of Paradise with the river and the sheep drinking from its waters was in the original mosaic, especially since it is found neither in catacombs nor in churches. The sole exception is the mosaic in Sant'Andrea Catabarbara in which Christ stands on what looks like the top of a little mountain from which flow four streams. [fig. 67] Moreover, a preparatory drawing of the Santa Sabina fresco that appeared on the French antiquarian market in 1988 shows only a generic

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[66] On the figure of Paul in relation to the "double apostolate" or *Concordia Apostolorum*, see for instance: C. Piétri, "Concordia Apostolorum et Renovatio Urbis", *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, 73, 1961, pp. 275-322; J.M. Huskinson, *Concordia Apostolorum. Christian propaganda at Rome in the 4th and 5th centuries. A study in early Christian iconography and iconology*, Oxford 1982; *Pietro e Paolo. La storia, il culto, la memoria nei primi secoli,* edited by A. Donati, Milan 2000; *San Paolo in Vaticano. La figura e la parola dell'apostolo delle genti nelle raccolte pontificie*, edited by U. Utro, Todi 2009; *Paulo apostolo martyri. L'apostolo San Paolo nella storia, nell'arte e nell'archeologia*, Atti della giornata di studi (Roma, Pontificia Universita` Gregoriana, 19 gennaio 2009), edited by O. Bucarelli, M.M. Morales, Rome 2011. On the ultimate meaning of the mosaics in Santa Sabina, see also: O. Steen, "The apse mosaic of S. Pudenziana and its relation to the fifth century mosaics of S. Sabina and S. Maria Maggiore" in *Ecclesiae Urbis…* 2002, III, pp. 1939-1948.

[67] I refer to Nestorianism, condemned as heresy at the Council of Ephesus (431) and again at the Council of Chalcedon (451), and to the political conflicts with the Eastern patriarchs, Costantinople in particular. See for instance: P. Galtier, "Le centenaire d'Ephèse. Rome et le Concile", *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 21, 1931, pp. 169-199; 269-298; E. Amann, "L'affaire Nestorius vue de Rome", *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 23, 1949, pp. 5-37; 24, 1950, pp. 235-265; L. Scipioni, *Nestorio e il concilio di Efeso: storia, dogma, critica*, Milan 1974.

landscape without the details of the mountain, the river, and the sheep, suggesting that in fact they were not included in the mosaic.[68] Perhaps Zuccari simply added the *mons paradisiacus*, a typical palaeochristian iconographic element, with the intention of creating a more convincing archaic Christian composition. An intentional manipulation of the original image would not be surprising, since Zuccari also added a number of figures certainly not included in the fifth-century mosaic – Sabina and her servant Seraphia; Saint Dominic; the martyrs Alexander, Theodolus and Eventius; the four ecclesiastics in the foreground – all meant to reinforce the ideological message of the new decoration with the presence of important protagonists of the basilica's long and venerable history.

If it is not the case that Zuccari responded to the original apse mosaic, then it has to be assumed that the *collegium apostolorum* was a specific request of his patron, Cardinal Truchsess.[69] It was certainly an appropriate iconographic choice for the apse-conch of an early fifth-century basilica like Santa Sabina, given the popularity of this theme between fourth and fifth century, but it was a choice that required a very sophisticated philological attitude towards the past and its appropriation, which perhaps we should not expect from Cardinal Truchsess, especially at such an early date (1559-1560).[70] Unless we imagine that the Cardinal was accompanied by a far more refined scholar, with a solid knowledge and deeper understanding of Christian antiquity. Someone like Onofrio Panvinio, perhaps, with whom Cardinal Truchsess had forged a friendly relationship since the summer of 1559

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[68] J.A. Gere, "Taddeo Zuccari: Addenda and Corrigenda", *Master Drawings*, XXXIIII, 1995, 3, pp. 223-323, n. 264-M, p. 318, fig. 101; Gianandrea 2015, pp. 142-143.

[69] For reference, see p. 168, n. 29.

[70] On Truchsess' cultural and artistic sensibility, see Nicolaci in *Principi di Santa Romana Chiesa…* 2013.

when he had welcomed the scholar in his home in Augusburg.[71] Panvinio, who had for instance spoken with admiration of the ancient mosaic in Santa Pudenziana (*cum Christi et Apostolorum imaginibus ... vetustissimus et admodus elegans*),[72] could have easily suggested the same iconography as an appropriate theme for the new apse decoration of Santa Sabina. Lacking any kind of documentary evidence to support Panvinio's active participation to the restoration of Santa Sabina, however, I am content – in the light of what I have discussed so far – to accept the consolidated scholarly tradition of Zuccari's fresco as being largely based on the original fifth-century mosaic.[73]

Even so, the case of Santa Sabina represents a pivotal precedent for the appropriation and use of palaeochristian models in Cinquecento Rome. It paved the way for other restorative interventions in a number of old Roman basilicas and also offered the first example of the integration of Early Christian imagery and stylistic features into an image that, while unequivocally evoking Christian antiquity, conveyed with unmistakable clarity a message whose ideological and political association with Christian antiquity were highly relevant for the Tridentine Church. Loosely based on the Roman imperial iconography of *liberalitas,* [fig. 68] the group of Christ and the apostles – whether all of them or just Peter and Paul, princes of the apostles, and whether Christ is seated or enthroned – is a scene that is found in a number of ancient apsidal mosaics in Rome. To the example already

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[71] D.A. Perini, *Onofrio Panvinio e le sue opera*, Rome 1899; J.L. Ferrary, *Onofrio Panvinio et les antiquités Romaines*, Rome 1996; Nicolaci in *Principi di Santa Romana Chiesa…* 2013, pp. 38-39. On Panvinio see above, chapter 1, pp. 36-47 (with bibliography).

[72] O. Panvinio, *De praecipuis urbis Romae sanctioribusque basilicis, quas septem ecclesias vulgo vocant liber*, Rome 1570, p. 266.

[73] Gianandrea 2015.

mentioned, it is possible to add the niche in Santa Costanza, Santi Cosma e Damiano, and even the lost mosaic in the apse of the Old Saint Peter's [figs. 69, 70, 71].[74] The presence of the apostles at Christ's side clearly visualizes the *concordia* between Christ and his vicars and, as mentioned above, is unmistakably a declaration of unity and stability of the Church, under the guidance of Christ in majesty.[75] Thus the *collegium apostolorum* signifies a strong and triumphant Church, and its iconographic popularity between fourth and fifth century is understandable against the important theological and political questions that the Roman Church faced at the time.[76] It is therefore tempting to see the re-use of such a peculiar iconographic theme strategically placed in the apse-conch (the most prominent and important space of the church) of Santa Sabina, in the same years of the Council of Trent, as a deliberate choice, a response to the difficulties that the Catholic Church, fragmented and under attack, was facing at the time. Against the Protestant heresy, in fact, the apse fresco in Santa Sabina becomes a visual manifesto proclaiming unequivocally against all its enemies – just like the original decorative program of the basilica may have done more than one thousand years earlier – the unity, universality, and supremacy of the Roman Church, as established by Christ through the apostles and governed by the successors of Peter, and outside which there cannot be any grace nor salvation, symbolized by the limpid waters of Paradise.

Early Christian monuments in post-Tridentine Rome:

[74] See above, p. 163, n. 9.

[75] See Testini 1963; Hodne 2006 (2007). But see also above, pp. 179-180.

[76] See above, p. 179, n. 66.

between restoration and destruction (Gregory XIII, Sixtus V, Clement VIII)

In the second half of the sixteenth century the approach to the physical remains of the Early Christian past was ambivalent. The old monuments were in fact either respected as historical documents or *monumenta*, and thus approached with "critical" attention, restored and preserved; or, they were neglected and even damaged beyond recognition when specific apologetic and devotional reasons dictated so.[77] Certainly the old, and even neglected, churches became suddenly the protagonists of countless and important restoration projects initiated in post-Tridentine Rome. An army of painters and draftsmen realized, between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the most extensive visual documentation of the Early Christian and medieval artistic patrimony preserved in Roman churches and catacombs ever produced before the advent of photography.[78] The fundamental motivations for such an interest in the state of the old monuments were the necessity to realize a new urban decorum for the Holy City, and to restore the image of material and spiritual magnificence of the Roman Church. Hence, it

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[77] On the restoration of old Christian monuments in the second half of the sixteenth century in the light of Tridentine indications, the literature is vast. Among many, see for example: P. Fancelli, "Demolizioni e 'restauri' di antichità nel Cinquecento romano", *Roma e l'antico nell'arte e nella cultura del Cinquecento*, edited by M. Fagiolo, Rome 1985, pp, 357-403; G. Miarelli Mariani, "Il "Cristianesimo primitivo" nella Riforma cattolica e alcune incidenze sui monumenti del passato", in *L'architettura a Roma e in Italia (1580-1621). Atti del III convegno di Storia dell'Architettura, Roma 24-26 marzo 1988*, edited by G. Spagnesi, I, Rome 1989, pp. 133-166; L. Marcucci, "L'opera di Francesco Capriani nella cattedrale di Volterra e la ristrutturazione di chiese in epoca post-tridentina", in *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura. Saggi in onore di Renato Bonelli*, 2, 1992, pp. 589-608; *Storia del restauro archeologico. Appunti*, edited by D. D'Angelo and S, Moretti, Florence 2004; S. De Blaauw, "Innovazioni nello spazio di culto fra basso medioevo e Cinquecento. La perdita dell'orientamento liturgico e la liberazione della navata", in *Lo spazio e il culto: relazioni tra edificio ecclesiale ed uso liturgico dal XV al XVI secolo*, edited by J. Stabenow, Venice 2006, pp. 25-51; M. G. Turco, "Cesare Baronio e i dettami tridentini nelle sistemazioni presbiteriali romane", in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio,* 2009, pp. 87-107. For a quick overview of the situation in Rome, it is also useful Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005.

[78] See for instance, M. Andaloro, "L'irruzione delle 'nuove' immagini", in *La pittura medievale a Roma…* 2006, pp. 15-31, p. 25-27.

was paramount to rescuing the crumbling Christian monuments from their dilapidated state, which were inadequate to project the ideological and material image of the new and triumphant post-conciliar Church. When the conditions of an ancient building made a restoration respectful of its material and historical identity too expensive or time-consuming, then the building, no matter how long and how venerable its history, was sacrificed in the name of a reckless politics of urban renovation.[79] This was, for instance, the fate of the old *patriarchium Lateranense* that, despite its long and sacred history as papal residence, Pope Sixtus V had demolished and replaced by a new palace (1585-1589).[80] [fig. 72] Sometimes, however, radical alterations or partial destructions of the ancient monuments could actually coexist with a more critical approach to some of its parts (the apse decoration, for instance), thus suggesting a more nuanced and articulated picture than the rigid opposition of "devotional" and "philological" restoration.[81]

Among a number of restoration works for his titular church of Santa Prassede,[82] for instance, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo commissioned in 1565 two new large marble *aediculae* as tabernacles for the relics of Praxedes and her sister Pudentiana, preserved in the church since the Middle Ages.[83] The imposing *aediculae,* emphasized by a marble balustrade, were

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[79] See below, p. 194ff.

[80] On the fate of several ancient monuments during the papacy of Sixtus V, see below p. 189ff.

[81] See Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985. More recently, see M. Braconi, *Il mosaico dell'abside della basilica di Santa Pudenziana a Roma. La storia, i restauri, le interpretazioni*, Tesi di Dottorato in Archeologia Cristiana e Medievale, Universita' degli Studi Roma Tre, 2014.

[82] The church was built by Pope Paschal I in 817, over the old *titulus Praxedis*. On its restoration, see M. Caperna, *San* "Carlo Borromeo, cardinale di S. Prassede e il rinnovamento della sua chiesa titolare a Roma", in *Palladio* 12, 1993, pp. 43-58.

[83] "(…) dalle due parti dell'arco della Tribuna ci pose le statue delle due sante sorelle Prassede, e Pudentiana, e sopra da quell fabrico' due poggioli cinti di balaustri, dove si conservano le reliquie della chiesa, accio' di

placed on the two sides of the triumphal arch in a visually prominent position, unfortunately destroying two portions of the medieval mosaic of Pope Paschal I (817-824). [fig. 73] In this case reasons related to the cult of the martyrs' relics and the apologetic glorification of the heroic Church of the origins prevailed on all kind of philological attention and critical respect for the original mosaic. Such a careless attitude towards the ancient monuments, considered expendable anytime specific circumstances required so, remained always present in Rome in the following years. Such was the case, for instance, of the destruction of the original Old Testament decoration of the atrium doors in Saint Peter's,[84] or the case of the fifth-century apse mosaic in Santi Cosma e Damiano where the original figure of Pope Felix IV was replaced with that of Gregory the Great, homonymous of the current pope, Gregory XIII. [85] Nevertheless, a new appreciation and respect for the remains of Christian antiquity was slowly emerging, becoming more evident during the papacy of Gregory XIII Boncompagni in particular (1572-1585).

Following the example of Santa Sabina, in fact, a number of old Roman churches were restored and decorated with murals that preserved, with more or less philological attention, a visual or iconographic memory of the original Early Christian decoration. The Jesuit Michele Lauretano, rector of the German-Hungarian College in Rome and a

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la' su' commodamente ne i debiti giorni si possino mostrare al popolo (…)". O. Panciroli, in *I tesori nascosti dell'alma citta' di Roma*, Rome 1600, pp. 703-704.

[84] While in Saint Peter's Gregory XIII had restored and preserved the original mosaic in the Oratory of John VII, an act particularly appreciated by Chacon, he did not hesitate to sacrifice the old pictorial decoration of the atrium doors and replace it with stories of Saint Peter, particularly appropriate for the confirmation of the Petrine primacy. See for instance Zuccari 1984, p. 37; A. Recio Veganzones, "La *Historica DescriptioUrbis Romae*", obra manuscript de fr. Alonso Chacon, O.P. (1530-1599), *Istituto Spagnolo di Storia Ecclesiastica*, Rome 1966, pp. 44-102, p. 66.

[85] See below, p. 184, n. 94, n. 95.

passionate admirer of Christian antiquity, supervised the restoration of a number of palaeochristian churches belonging to the College. [86] He commissioned architectural interventions to consolidate and renovate the old church of S. Apollinare, completely replaced in the eighteenth century by a new building, and hired Niccolo' Circignani (called Pomarancio, c.1530-1598) to paint a new fresco cycle featuring the life and deeds of the titular saint.[87] He also commissioned the new decoration of the apse of San Saba on the Aventine (1575), which Pope Gregory XIII had given to the German-Hungarian College two years earlier.[88] [fig. 74] The frescoes in the vault depicting Christ in the *mandorla* flanked by Saint Andrew the Apostle and Saint Sabbas with the apostolic flock below, are likely loosely based on the original mosaic decoration,[89] and reveal a specific philological concern towards the preservation of at least a visual memory of olden times. The frescoes

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[86] On Lauretano and his restoration projects, see for instance Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, pp. 496-498; Bailey 2003, in particular chapter four, pp. 107-152.

[87] The frescoes, lost when the old and much dilapidated church of Sant'Apollinare was entirely rebuilt in the eighteenth century, are mentioned in G. Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori, et architetti. Dal pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572 in fino ai tempi di papa Urbano Ottavo nel 1642*, Roma 1642, p. 41: "(...) A S. Apollinare dov'e' il Collegio Germanico, orno' di figure intorno tutta la chiesa con historie di quel santo. E l'altar maggiore con sua tribuna a fresco egli colori' (...)". See C. Mancini, *S. Apollinare. La chiesa e il palazzo*, in "Le chiese di Roma illustrate", 93,1967, pp. 13-17 in particular. On Pomarancio in general, see for instance: M. Cordaro, "Niccolo' Circignani", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 25, *ad vocem*, Rome 1981; M. Nimmo, "L'età perfetta della virilità di Niccolò Circignani dalle Pomarancie", in *Studi Romani* 32, 1984, pp. 194-214; L. Korrick, "On the meaning of style: Nicolò Circignani in Counter-Reformation Rome", in *Word & image*, 15, 1999, pp. 170-189. See also: L. Salviucci Insolera, "Gli affreschi dei martiri commissionati al Pomarancio in rapporto alla situazione religiosa ed artistica della seconda metà del Cinquecento", in *Santo Stefano Rotondo in Roma. Archeologia, storia dell'arte, restauro. Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma 10-13 ottobre 1996,* edited by H. Brandenburg and J. Pál, Wiesbaden 2000, pp. 129-137.

[88] See F. Strinati, "La ristrutturazione della chiesa di S. Saba tra il 1573 e il 1575. Il rapporto con l'antico tra Lauretano e Baronio", in *Baronio e le sue fonti. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Sora, 10-13 ottobre 2007*, edited by L. Gulia, Sora 2009, pp. 579-713. On the frescoes, see P. Testini, *San Saba*, Le Chiese di Roma Illustrate, 68, Rome 196, pp. 14-15; 56-59.

[89] As mentioned in Pompeo Ugonio in his *Theatrum Urbis Romae*, ms. Biblioteca Comunale di Ferrara, f. 1347; see Testini 1961, pp. 56-59; Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, p. 497 n. 17.

in the lower portion of the apse wall feature a number of saints flanking the enthroned Virgin and Child, while below painted illusionistic architecture made of square pillars frame yet more saints, depicted on a larger scale. Though of rather mediocre quality, the apse frescoes in San Saba are characterized by an interesting combination of archaic features in the vault, and of more naturalistic forms in the lower part of the wall, which most likely did not correspond to any portion of the original mural.[90] In the vault, the bare landscape, the flat and two-dimensional modeling of the figures showing a hieratic and rigid appearance, the sheep looking like monotonous silhouettes against a golden flat background, and the overall lack of spatial illusion in the composition, are certainly a concession to the style of the original decoration. In comparison, the saints below appear to possess a physical and three-dimensional quality, projecting shadows on the ground and seeming to occupy a real space, while there is also a noticeable attempt to create a convincing illusion of spatial depth, for instance with the architectural elements framing the larger saints. Finally, in 1582 Lauretano restored and saved in Santo Stefano Rotondo the original mosaic with the *crux gemmata* flanked by Primus and Felicianus (seventh century) [fig. 75], completing it with the philologically appropriate addition of the apostles flanking Christ in the section below.[91]

In the same year Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, a close friend of Cardinal Truchsess, commissioned the architect Giacomo della Porta with the reconstruction of the dilapidated

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[90] Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte*, p. 497.

[91] G. Basile and E. Anselmi, "Il restauro del mosaico di S. Stefano Rotondo a Roma", in *Mosaici a S. Vitale e altri restauri. Il restauro in situ di mosaici parietali*, edited by A. M. Iannucci and C. Fiori, Ravenna 1990, pp. 93-97; G. Basile *et alii*, "Il restauro del mosaico dei Santi Primo e Feliciano in S. Stefano Rotondo a Roma", in *Arte Medievale* 1, 1993, pp. 197-228; G. Basile, "Il restauro del mosaico absidale della Cappella dei Santi Primo e Feliciano in Santo Stefano Rotondo a Roma", in *Santo Stefano Rotondo* 2000, pp. 151-153.

medieval chapel of the *Scala Coeli* on Via delle Tre Fontane in Rome, on the site of the

apostle Paul's prison[92]. When, in 1591, the apse-conch of the new chapel was decorated,

[fig. 76] the Cardinal chose to preserve an echo of the original iconography by maintaining

the figure of the Virgin and a soldier saint (Saint Zeno) included in the medieval mosaic, as

recorded by Panvinio.[93] If the elongated figures with their elegant attitude and graceful

gestures bear no resemblance to the usually crude and rustic appearance of many

protagonists of ancient Christian painting and are obviously typical of late Mannerist

painting, the simplified composition with its bare landscape and flat golden background is

an open quotation of earlier pictorial models. Finally, Cardinal Farnese made a

philologically impeccable choice in preferring a mosaic over a fresco for the apse in the

context of the recovery of Early Christian and medieval antiquities. The same Cardinal

Farnese also commissioned a copy of the original portrait of Pope Felix IV in the apse

mosaic of Ss. Cosma e Damiano (526-530) [fig. 70] that – given its dilapidated conditions

due to the humidity that had damaged that area of the ancient mosaic – was heavily

restored.[94] In accordance with the wishes of Pope Gregory XIII himself, the portrait of the

ancient pope was replaced with that of Gregory the Great, his homonymous predecessor

and, as Ugonio remembers, Cardinal Farnese was so concerned with the loss of such an

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[92] On Cardinal Alessandro Farmese see above, chapter 1, *passim*. In general, see C. Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale: Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts*, New Haven 1992; see also Firpo 2009. On the restoration of the *Scala Coeli* in particular, see: F. Bellini, "Un'opera di Giacomo Della Porta: la ricostruzione dell'oratorio di Santa Maria de Scala Coeli nell'Abbazia delle Tre Fontane", *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura*, NS., 14, 1989 (13), pp. 31-42; Gianandrea 2015, pp. 141-142.

[93] "(…) in oratorii abside exstant signa B. Virginis Mariae et S. Zenonis", O. Panvinio, *De praecipuis* 1570, p.p. 88-89.

[94] V. Tiberia, *Il restauro del mosaico della basilica dei Ss. Cosma e Damiano a Roma*, Todi-Perugia 1991; Id., *Il mosaico restaurato. L'arco della basilica dei Ss. Cosma e Damiano a Roma*, Rome 1998.

important artistic and historical document that he commissioned a copy of it "(...) and kept [*it*] with great care until today [*the day of Ugonio's writing*]".[95]

With the advent of Pope Sixtus V Peretti (1585-1590) the attitude towards the physical remains of Christian antiquity changed, but this time unfavorably towards the ancient Christian evidence that was often destroyed or altered beyond recognition. The majority of the restoration works initiated in a number of ancient Roman churches at the time, in fact, were not particularly concerned with the preservation of the past, and often the original layout and decoration of the church was dismantled and replaced with new structures in accordance with Tridentine indications.[96] Sixtus V himself, for instance, commissioned additional renovation works in Santa Sabina that destroyed some of the original fifth-century marble decoration as well as several pieces of ecclesiastical furniture.[97] Sixtus' work in Santa Sabina was continued in the early 1590s by Cardinal Girolamo Bernieri, created cardinal in 1586, who unfortunately completed the destruction

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[95] "(…) ne fece fare un ritratto (…) che fin hoggi lo tiene, et religiosamente conserva". P. Ugonio, *Historia delle stationi di Roma che si celebrano la Quadragesima [...] dove oltre le vite de santi alle chiese de' quali e' statione, si tratta delle origini, siti, restaurationi, ornamenti, reliquie et memorie di esse chiese, antiche et moderne*, Rome 1588, p. 178v-179r. See F. Gandolfo, "Il ritratto di committenza", in *Arte e iconografia a Roma da Costantino a Cola di Rienzo*, edited by M. Andaloro and S. Romano, Milan 2000, pp. 175-192. In 1669-1670, however, Cardinal Francesco Barberini commissioned the mosaicist Orazio Manenti, from the Fabbrica di San Pietro, to reintegrate the portrait of Felix IV, see Agosti 2014, p. 35.

[96] On the restoration projects under Sixtus V and his attitude towards antiquity, see among others: Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, in particular pp. 499-505; I. De Feo, *Sisto V: un grande papa tra Rinascimento e Barocco*, Milan 1987; G. Simoncini, *Roma restaurata. Rinnovamento urbano al tempo di Sisto V*, Florence 1990; Id., *Topografia e urbanistica da Giulio II a Clemente VIII*, Florence 2008; *Roma di Sisto V. Arte, architettura e città fra rinascimento e barocco*, edited by M. Fagiolo - M. L. Madonna, Rome 1993. On Sixtus' patronage in general, see also S. Benedetti and G. Zander, *L'arte in Roma nel secolo XVI, vol. I: L'architettura*, Bologna 1990, pp. 459-521; Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, pp. 278-294. On the artistic culture in Rome during the papacy of Sixtus V, see *Roma di Sisto V. Le arti e la cultura,* edited by M.L. Madonna, Rome 1993.

[97] R. Lanciani, *Storia degli scavi di Roma e notizie intorno alle collezioni di antichita'*, Rome 1902-1912, vol. IV, pp. 167-169.

of the then surviving fifth-century mosaic decoration of the triumphal arch and of the western facade, leaving intact only the dedicatory inscription.[98] To add a few more examples: in 1589 a young Federico Borromeo, who was later to become one of the major experts of Christian antiquity of his time, demolished the apse mosaic of his deaconry of Sant'Agata de' Goti, commissioned in the fifth century by Flavius Ricimer;[99] in 1590 Cardinal Mariano Pierbenedetti, Titular Cardinal of Santi Marcellino e Pietro, completely altered the basilica's layout of the church, walling up the left nave and part of the right nave and transforming it into a single nave church, in line with post-Tridentine architectural directions for sacred building.[100] It is interesting to recall that shortly after the destruction of the mosaic in Sant'Agata de' Goti, however, Borromeo appears to have changed his mind with regard to Christian antiquity and its remains, as he began amassing copies of palaeochristian and medieval murals still existing in Roman churches, and in 1591 he even commissioned Chacon to write a complete report on the medieval frescos in the crypt of San Nicola in Carcere, which he planned to open to the public.[101] There are many other examples of the surprising indifference with which Early Christian artistic and architectural

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[98] *Ibidem*. At the end of the seventeenth century Ciampini laments that "(…) Colligitur super totam Ecclesiam fuisse non solum picturis verum etiam vermiculatis operibus decoratam (…) hodie vero destructae sunt (…)", Ciampini 1690, p. 188.

[99] Lanciani 1902-1912, vol. IV, pp. 169-170 Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, p. 506; Agosti 1996, pp.12-13; Id. 2014, p. 35.

[100] C. Cecchelli, "Ss. Marcellino e Pietro. La chiesa e la catacomba", in *Le chiese di Roma illustrate*, 36, Rome 1938; Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, p. 503; A. Negri, *Santi Martiri Marcellino e Pietro al Laterano*, Rome 1999.

[101] On Federico Borromeo's attitude towards Christian antiquity, see C. Marcora, "Il cardinal Federico Borromeo e l'archeologia cristiana", in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, V, 2, Città del Vaticano 1964, pp. 115-154; Zuccari 1984, pp. 93-94; Agosti 1996. Chacon's report on the crypt is in Vat. Lat. 5409, BAV, cc. 66r-71r.

evidence was often destroyed at that time, from the original apse decoration in Santa Balbina, representing a gemmed cross and replaced with a fresco featuring a completely different iconography, to the total destruction of the ancient church of Santa Maria in Aquiro in 1589, replaced with a new building by the architect Francesco da Volterra.[102]

And yet, it is important to clarify right away that this rapidly spreading indifference towards the remains of Christian antiquity should not be automatically taken as an unequivocal sign of disinterest in Early Christian art, or that such art was regarded as expendable. The papacy of Sixtus V saw in fact the destruction of so many ancient monuments, both pagan and Christian, that it is necessary to find a different explanation for the vast phenomenon. Ironically Sixtus V, who in his short papacy envisioned and realized a monumental "new" Christian Rome, an image of the triumphant post-Tridentine Church and symbol of a fortified Catholicism, was also one of the most ruthless popes when it came to the destruction of so many *monumenta* of either Christian or pagan Rome.[103] If the destruction of pagan memories can be easily contextualized within a perspective of triumphal celebration of the Christian Rome,[104] it may be more difficult to understand the

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[102] See for instance L. Lotti, "La basilica di S. Balbina all'Aventino", in *Alma Roma*, 13, 1972, 2-3, pp. 1-43; M. D'Onofrio and C. Strinati, "S. Maria in Aquiro, in *Le chiese di Roma illustrate*, 125, Rome 1972. See also Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, pp. 502-504.

[103] Lanciani, for instance, says that during the papacy of Sixtus V there was a "(…) spietato disprezzo delle cose del passato (…)", Lanciani 1902-1912, vol. IV, p. 160. See Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, p. 499; Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, pp. 278-294. For the literature on Sixtus V, see above, p. 189, n. 96.

[104] As it is known, Sixtus' interest towards Egyptian obelisks placed in strategically chosen urban locations, for instance, had a deeply symbolic meaning, as the obelisk – topped with a Cross and thus purified – was the tangible and visible manifestation of the Christian triumph over Paganism. Likewise, the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, symbols of Roman Imperial power, topped with the statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, became a symbol of the Christian faith victorious over pagan idolatry, as well as visualizing the Church's authority as Peter and Paul were the two "columns" upon which the Church was founded. See for instance, Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, pp. 281-286.

reasons for the destruction of so many palaeochristian remains, precious tokens of ancient Christianity. The most striking case is, without question, the destruction of the Lateran palace, the old and venerable (though very much crumbling) *patriarchium.* [105] [fig. 72]

The *patriarchium* was built in the fourth century along with the Constantine *Basilica Salvatoris*, later dedicated to Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist, but it was enlarged and embellished in the eight century by Popes Zachary (741-752) and Leo III (795-816) to become a suitable papal residence, even able to rival the imperial palace of Constantinople.[106] Abandoned at the time of the so-called "Avignonese Captivity" (1309-1377), the *patriarchium* was never again used as papal residence (which was transferred to the Vatican), and fell into neglect and indifference. By the late sixteenth century the old building was in such a condition that, deemed completely unworthy of papal dignity, it was demolished and replaced by a new palace designed by the Pope's trusted architect, Domenico Fontana.[107] Sixtus made sure to preserve the *Sancta Sanctorum*, the Duecento chapel containing a number of utterly precious relics (including Christ's *acheiropoieton*), and the *Scala Santa*, said to be made of the marble steps from the palace of Pontius Pilatus in Jerusalem ascended by Christ, but he was obviously guided by

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[105] See Lanciani 1902-1912, vol. IV, pp. 139-144.

[106] On the Patriarchium see for instance: M. D'Onofrio, "Aspetti inediti e poco noti del Patriarchio Lateranense", in *Medioevo. I modelli*, *Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Parma 27 settembre – 1 ottobre 1999*, edited by A.C. Quintavalle, Milan 2002, pp. 221-236; P. Liverani, "L'area lateranense in eta' tardoantica e le origini del patriarchio", in *Giornata di studio tematica dedicat ala patriarchio Lateranense: atti della giornata tematica dei Seminari di Archeologia Cristiana,* edited by P. Liverani, Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome. Antiquité 116, 2004, 1, pp. 17-49; M. Luchterhandt, "Vom Haus des Bischofs zum Locus Sanctus: der Lateranpalast im kulturellen Gedächtnis des römischen Mittelalters", in *The emperor's house: palaces from Augustus to the age of absolutism*, edited by M. Featherstone *et alii*, Boston 2015, pp. 73-92.

[107] On Sixtus V and the Lateran, see among others: *Il Palazzo Apostolico Lateranense*, edited by C. Pietrangeli, Florence 1991; C. Mandel, *Sixtus V and the Lateran Palace*, Rome 1994; J. Freiberg, *The Lateran in 1600: Christian Concord in Counter-Reformation Rome*, New York 1995.

devotional concerns rather than by a genuine interest in the archeological remains of Christian antiquity. Also the Vatican, the site of some of Sixtus' most important accomplishments from the completion of the dome of Saint Peter's (1588-1590) to the construction of the new Library (begun in 1587 by Domenico Fontana), is the setting of more appalling destruction of ancient and venerable Christian memories.[108] For instance, an ancient door belonging to the original basilica was sacrificed to provide the bronze for the new statue of Saint Paul placed on the top of the restored column of Marcus Aurelius, an obvious metaphor of the victory of Christianity over paganism.[109] [fig. 77] Clearly Sixtus' ambitious program of urban renewal – pursued through a restoration of old churches and the construction of new ones (along with new chapels and palaces), as well as commissioning their pictorial and sculptural decorations – could not be delayed by a few decrepit ruins of the past.

The remains of pagan Rome did not have a better fate, as the papacy of Sixtus V was catastrophic for them. From the baths of Caracalla and Diocletian to the Isola Tiberina, many ancient ruins provided countless marbles and *spolia* for the new Sistine buildings such as, for instance, the new papal chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore.[110] Indeed the Pope did not have any problem in authorizing Domenico Fontana to take "marbles, stones and similar whenever you find them (...) wherever they are" to carry out his projects "by our direct and specific order, and thus we do not want you to account for anything to anyone

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[108] For the literature on Sixtus' intervention in the Vatican, see above p. 189, n. 96.

[109] Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, pp. 499-500, but see also Lanciani 1902-1912, vol. IV, pp. 160-163.

[110] Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, pp. 500; Lanciani 1902-1912, vol. IV, pp. 164-167. On the Sistine chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore, see Ostrow 1996, pp. 23-117.

(...) and for the future for the service of our fabrics you will take more [marbles] wherever you will like and without any special permit".[111] The most illustrious victim of such policy with regard to the ancient ruins was certainly the *Septizodium*, the monumental entrance of the imperial palace built by Septimius Severus on the Palatine in the year 203.[112] [fig. 78] Given its dilapidated condition the ruin was no longer used even as a didactic model for young architects, and Domenico Fontana dismantled it extracting precious material used for the chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore, the new apostolic palace in the Vatican, and the church of San Girolamo degli Schiavoni among others.[113]

Sixtus' apparent insensibility towards the physical remains of antiquity has been explained as the consequence of the pragmatic and rational understanding he had of his mission, the construction of a new Holy Rome to project the image of the victorious Church. In order to do so, it was necessary to build new edifices and restore the old ones, following the precise indication to "get rid of the mutilated antiquities and restore those that

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[111] "(…) marmi pietre et simili dove li trovaste a proposito con che fossero poste in opera in qualunque loco fossero (…) il tutto essere stato d'ordine et espresso comandamento nostro, et percio' non vogliamo siate tenuto a renderne voi conto a nessuno (…) per l'avvenire per servizio delle nostre fabbriche ne leviate delli altri, dove a voi piacera' senza licenza alcuna", in M. L. Madonna, "Sisto V e l'antico", in *Roma di Sisto V. Arte, architettura e citta'...* 1993, p. 36.

[112] On the *Septizodium* see for instance C. Gorrie, "The Septizodium of Septimius Severus Revisited: the Monument in Its Historical and Urban Context", *Latomus*, T. 60, fasc. 3, 2001, pp. 653-670 (with bibliography)

[113] See Lanciani 1902-1912, vol. IV, pp. 137-138. See also Id., *Rovine e Scavi di Roma Antica*, ed. 1985, p. 168: "Il rimanente venne distrutto da papa Sisto V nell'inverno 1588-89 per mano del suo architetto Domenico Fontana. I lavori costarono al papa 905 scudi, abbondantemente compensati dal ricavato in peperino, travertino, marmi rari e colonne. Trentatré blocchi di pietra furono usati nella fondazione dell'obelisco di Piazza del Popolo; 104 blocchi di marmo nel restauro della Colonna Antonina, includendo la base della statua di San Paolo che la corona; 15 nella tomba del Papa nella Cappella del Presepio in Santa Maria Maggiore e altrettanti nella tomba di Pio V; la scalinata della Casa dei Mendicanti presso Ponte Sisto, il «lavatore» delle Terme di Diocleziano, la porta del Palazzo della Cancelleria, la facciata nord di San Giovanni in Laterano, con il cortile e la scalinata, infine la chiesa di San Giacomo degli Schiavoni, usufruirono delle spoglie del *Septizodium*".

were in need".[114] Hence, antiquities that were considered "difformi", or not useful, were simply demolished in order to save time and resources for the restoration of those that better served the Pope's plan. For instance, obelisks and columns, exorcized *in signo crucis*, were carefully and respectfully restored,[115] and strategically disseminated in the urban fabric as a visual reminder of the ultimate triumph of Christianity.[116] In other words, Sixtus's pragmatic and somewhat reckless approach to antiquity was dictated by his perception of the city as "the place for doing and not for contemplating".[117] However, Sixtus' ultimate indifference towards the archeological remains may very well also reflect his more conservative and anti-humanistic side, deeply clashing for instance, with the rational lucidity with which he envisioned a modern urban plan for Rome.[118] Sixtus' anti-humanistic and anti-historical approach to the past becomes particularly evident in his disregard towards ancient *monumenta* as material evidence and primary sources, a notion that by the late sixteenth century scholars had largely embraced.[119] This disregard did not spare even the Holy Scriptures, the most precious historical source of the Christian faith,

[114] "Egli voleva tor via l'antichita' diformi, con ristorante quelle che n'havevano bisogno", cit. in Madonna in *Roma di Sisto V. Arte, architettura e citta'...* 1993, p. 36.

[115] Ostrow in *Artistic Centers...* 2005, pp. 281-286. It has even been suggested that the beautiful drawings of the reliefs of the Column of Marcus Aurelio by Giovanni Guerra (*Rilievi della Colonna di Marco Aurelio*, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst (nn. VI, 25-26), were most likely made during the restoration of the column under Sixtus V and Guerra even took advantage of the scaffolding erected for the restoration, see R. Harprath in *Roma di Sisto V. Arte, architettura e citta'...* 1993, p. 37.

[116] See above, p. 25, n. 79. But see also P.J. Jacks, "Baronius and the antiquities of Rome", in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, pp. 77-96, in particular pp. 87-88.

[117] "(…) luogo del fare e non del contemplar", Madonna in *Roma di Sisto V. Arte, architettura e citta'...* 1993, p. 36.

[118] See Zuccari in *Baronio e l'Arte* 1985, pp. 501-502.

[119] See chapter 1.

which the Peretti Pope revised and manipulated, ignoring completely the refined philological work done by Cardinal Sirleto and his commission.[120] However, even during the pontificate of Sixtus V and among his closest collaborators, it is possible to recognize a continuity with that more critical attention towards the past and its remains observed during the papacy of Gregory XIII. Sporadically, it is possible to detect an approach to ancient monuments that, while always privileging post-Tridentine devotional concerns, reveals nonetheless a certain degree of attention towards material evidence of the past. In such instance, different choices more respectful of the existing material and its restoration and preservation were made, choices that would acquire a new strength with Clement VIII Aldobrandini (1592-1605) and his renewed policy of preservation of Christian antiquities.[121]

An interesting case is that of the ancient church of Santa Pudenziana, restored by its Titular Cardinal Enrico Caetani between 1586 and 1600, where it is possible to detect a fascinating combination of brutal renovation and surprisingly sensitive attention towards the recovery and conservation of the ancient remains.[122] The original structure of the church

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[120] Zuccari 1984, pp. 38-39. On Cardinal Guglielmo Sirleto, see for instance: P. Paschini, *Guglielmo Sirleto e il decreto tridentino sull'edizione critica della Bibbia*, Lecco 1935; I. Backus and B. Gain, "Le cardinal Gúglielmo Sirleto (1514 - 1585), sa bibliothèque et ses traductions de saint Basile", *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome. Moyen âge, temps modernes*, 98, 1986, 1/2, pp. 889-955. See also L. von Pastor, *History of the popes from the Close of the Middle Ages,* 5th ed., 40 vols, English transl. F. Antrobus and R. Kerr, London 1923-1953, vol. X.

[121] See below, pp. 201ff.

[122] On Santa Pudenziana in general, see: A. Ferrua, "La chiesa di S. Pudenziana", *La Civiltà Cattolica* 4, 1936, pp. 327-357; P. A. Frutaz, "Titolo di Pudente. Denominazioni successive, clero e cardinali titolari", *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 40, 1964, pp. 53-72; L. Marcucci, "Per un'ipotesi restitutiva della chiesa di S. Pudenziana a Roma prima del rifacimento cinquecentesco", *Palladio*, NS, 1994, 14, pp. 181-196.On the apse mosaic, see for instace: M. Andaloro, Il mosaico absidale di Santa Pudenziana" in *La pittura medievale a Roma…* 2006, pp. 114-124 (with bibliography). For Cardinal Caetani's restoration, see: E. Parlato, "Enrico

was dramatically transformed with the new vaulted ceiling, the insertion of the dome that radically altered the entire presbytery area, the lateral naves shortened to "regularize" the plan of the church, the new facade, and the transformation of the ancient sacellum of Saint Pastor into the Caetani family chapel.[123] No doubt devotional and celebratory reasons (the aligning of the old church to post-Tridentine architectural norms, and the glorification of the Roman Church, as well as of Cardinal Caetani himself and his family), prevailed here over all philological concerns related to the preservation of the historical and artistic identity of the original building. Nonetheless, even in Santa Pudenziana we can notice some unexpected restoration choices. The obliteration of the Early Christian architectural structure, now incorporated into a new and more regular "three-nave" church,[124] is in fact elsewhere balanced by a completely different approach, as in the case of the apse mosaic, admired by Panvinio and Ugonio, and described by van Winghe as a "most beautiful mosaic"[125] [fig. 55]

Caetani a S. Pudenziana: antichita' cristiane, magnificenza decorativa e prestigio del casato nella Roma di fine Cinquecento", in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…* 2009, pp. 143-164; Braconi 2014, in particular pp. 9-55.

[123] See L. Marcucci, *Francesco da Volterra. Un protagonista dell'architettura post-Tridentina*, Rome 1991, in particular pp. 160-169; Id., "Per un'ipotesi restitutiva… 1994, pp. 181-196. On the Caetani family chapel, see A. Cozzi Beccarini, "La Cappella Caetani nella basilica di Santa Pudenziana in Roma", *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura,* s. 22, fasc. 127-132, 1975, pp. 143-158; Parlato in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…* 2009, in particular pp. 148-153.

[124] It seems important, however, to mention here that the loss of the original architecture was not particularly resented since it was thought to be of mediocre quality, as confirmed by Pompeo Ugonio: "(..) questa Chiesa insino all'eta' nostra non ha avuto molto bel disegno", Ugonio 1588, p. 163r.

[125] "(…) musaicum pulcherrimum in quo Christus cinctus apostolis tenens librum, in quo Dominus Conservator Ecclesiae Pudentianae", Ms. Biblioteca di Bruxelles, n. 17872, p. 21, cit. in Braconi 2014, p. 62. For Panvinio's opinion on the mosaic, *vetustissimus et admodus elegans*, see above p. 16 and p. 16, n. 48. As for Ugonio, he wrote that the apse mosaic of S. Pudenziana was "opera si bella quanto ogni altra che sia hoggi in Roma", quite an extraordinary statement since he dated the mosaic to the pontificate of Hadrian III (884-885). Ugonio 1588, p. 164r.

When Cardinal Caetani commissioned the restoration of Santa Pudenziana, the mosaic was in such bad condition that not only the celebratory inscription commemorated how the cardinal "restored and adorned the church *crumbling with age*",[126] but also Panvinio noted that "in the apse there is the painted image of the Savior and the Apostles, among the most beautiful in Rome, although almost smelling of old age".[127] Apart from the two lateral mutilations caused by the construction of the architectural structure necessary to support the dome, and the original inscription at the base of the composition that – likely because of its very much ruined state ("fragments of letters", as annotated by Ugonio)[128] – was completely removed and replaced by two projecting molded parapets bearing the celebratory inscription, [fig. 79] the rest of the mosaic was the object of a carefully planned restoration, unexpectedly respectful of its historical and artistic integrity, with missing portions of the original mosaic replaced in paint.[129] Two seventeenth-century watercolor drawings recording the state of the mosaic after the Caetani restoration, in fact, have an important annotation on the parapet in the bottom right corner, *DI.PITTURA*, which clearly refers to the painted parts added during the restoration.[130] [fig. 80] Furthermore, and

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[126] "(…) restituit et exornavit ecclesiam vetustate collabentem", in V. Forcella, *Iscrizioni nelle chiese e d'altri edifici di Roma dal secolo XI fino ai giorni nostri*, XI, Rome 1876, p. 138, n. 264.

[127] "(…) in abside tribune est picta imago Salvatoris et Apostolorum de pulchriori musivo quod sit in Urbe, sed temporis vetustate fere exoluit", in O. Panvinio, BAV, *Vat. Lat.* 6780, f. 67r.

[128] "certi fragmenti di lettere […] di Musaico", Ugonio 1588, p. 164r.

[129] See Braconi 2014, pp. 62-69.

[130] For the two drawings, WRL 9196 and BAV, Vat. Lat. 14738, f. 4, see J. Osborne and A. Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities*, The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo, Series A. Antiquities and Architecture, 2 vols, vol 2, pp. 74-75, n. 176; Braconi 2014, pp. 67-69; p. 302, fig. 36 and p. 304, fig. 38. There is also a drawing by Chacon, recording the state of the mosaic after the Caetani restoration, which however does not have any annotation regarding the restoration technique, BAV, Vat. Lat. 5407, f. 154. On Chacon's drawing, see A. Ballardini, "Il mosaico absidale di S. Pudenziana in un disegno acquerellato con

significantly, in the 1829 estimate of all the interventions necessary in the apse conch, compiled by the architect Giuseppe Pio Marino for the restoration campaign conducted by the Vatican School of Mosaic and directed by Vincenzo Camuccini, there is a detailed list of all the areas of the mosaic that needed to be repaired with new tesserae replacing "patches of painted and incised plaster".[131] In other words, the "philologically" correct distinction between original and restoration work was maintained in the sixteenth-century, while the massive intervention on the mosaic, which erased the visual memory of such a large part of the original composition, belongs entirely to the nineteenth-century restoration campaign. A very intriguing hypothesis is that the painter commissioned with the integration of the Early Christian mural was in fact the same Niccolo' Circignani who was then working in the church at the decoration of the newly built dome. It is not at all a far-fetched hypothesis, considering that only a few years earlier Circignani was working on the fresco cycle of martyrdom in Santo Stefano Rotondo, where the Jesuit Lauretano had the mosaic of Saint Primus and Felicianus restored with the same technique of painted tesserae on incised plaster.[132] [fig. 75] Not surprisingly, Circignani's pictorial decoration of the

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annotazioni di Ciacconio (1595 ca.)", in *Christiana Loca. Lo spazio cristiano nella Roma del primo millennio*, ed. by L. Pani Ermini, II, Rome 2000, pp. 284-285; Braconi 2014, p. 300, fig. 34.

[131] "rappezzi di intonaco dipinto e graffito", ARFSP, *S. Pudenziana. Conto e misura dei lavori (22 agosto 1829)*, Arm. 64, A2, f. 135, cit. in Braconi 2014, p. 67. On the restoration directed by Camuccini, see Braconi 2014, in particular pp. 93-108.

[132] On the restoration of the mosaic of Primus and Felicianus, see above, pp. 187-188 and p. 188, n. 91. For Circignano's cycle in Santo Stefano Rotondo, see among others L.H., Monssen, "The martyrdom cycle in Santo Stefano Rotondo", *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia. Series altera in 8, Institutum Romanum Norvegiae*, 2, 1982, pp. 175-318; Salviucci Insolera, in *Santo Stefano Rotondo in Roma…*2000, pp. 129-137; N. Horsch, "Sixtus V. als Kunstbetrachter?: zur Rezeption von Niccolò Circignanis Märtyrerfresken in S. Stefano Rotondo", in *Kunst und ihre Betrachter in der frühen Neuzeit: Ansichten - Standpunkte – Perspektiven*, ed. by S. Schütze, Berlin 2005, pp. 65-92. See also: V. Tiberia, "Il restauro di affreschi martirologici in Santo Stefano Rotondo", *Annali della Pontificia Insigne Accademia di Belle Arti e Lettere dei Virtuosi al Pantheon*, 12, 2012, pp. 155-186.

dome in Santa Pudenziana shows some archaic traits, for instance the hieratic and iconic aspect of the saints decorating the springing of the dome, or the image of the Blessing Christ in the center of the dome, reminiscent of the figure of Christ in the Lateran Baptistery, certainly a visual nod and homage to the past of the ancient *titulus*. Two additional circumstances should be considered about Santa Pudenziana in terms of specific restoration choices guided by a philological interest as much as devotional concerns. First is the fact that Cardinal Caetani made sure, as we learn from Ugonio,[133] to preserve wherever possible the original black and white mosaic floor, still partially visible today in the lateral naves and in the ambulatory. Second is the use of *spolia* as in the case of the fragment of the medieval marble cornice (late 11th – beginning of the 12th century) used as trabeation of the new church portal, which anticipates the treatment of Santi Nereo ed Achilleo.[134] [fig. 81] The fragment is decorated with elegant floral volutes and five rounds featuring the *Agnus Dei* and the busts of Praxedes, Pudentiana, their father Pudens, and the priest Pastor, each one completed by an explanatory inscription. The Eucharistic Lamb, associated with the words "*mortuus et vivus idem sum pastor et agnus / Hic agnus mundum instaurat sanguine lapsum*" and reinforced by the *Agnus Dei* at the base of the mosaic between the two parapets [fig. 79], obviously refers to the eucharistic theme of human salvation through the blood of Christ, a theme particularly appropriate for the church of Santa Pudenziana given its strong association with martyrdom. While the original medieval façade and its

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[133] Ugonio wrote that the cardinal "(…) ha fatto dove e' stato bisogno assestare il lastrico vecchio composto parte di minuti quadretti di pietre nere & bianche", Ugonio 1588, p. 164v.

[134] See Caetani in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…*2009, pp. 146-147. For a stylistic, iconographic, and chronological discussion of the fragment in relation to the façade, see C. Angelelli, *La basilica titolare di S. Pudenziana. Nuove ricerche*, Vatican City 2010, in particular pp. 305-307; Braconi 2014, pp. 154-158;

portal were completely altered, Cardinal Caetani chose to preserve the medieval marble fragment recognized as important visual and epigraphic evidence of the ancient history of the *titulus Pudenti*.

The restoration commissioned by Cardinal Caetani for his titular church was completed only in 1603, after the death of the Cardinal himself and long after the death of Sixtus V, when the vast program of urban restoration and renovation he had initiated to reshape the urban *facies* of Rome and to make the entire city "a single holy shrine"[135] had reached its peak during the papacy of Clement VIII Aldobrandini (1592-1605). By then, however, the approach to the old Christian monuments had finally shifted from the ruthless pragmatism of Sixtus V to a more critical and historically informed respect for the remains of Christian antiquity, as we are about to see.

Clement VIII, Cardinal Alessandro Ottaviano de' Medici, and the recovery of ancient Christian memories

In preparation for the Holy Year of 1600, Clement VIII not only completed several restoration projects begun by Sixtus V, but he also initiated a large number of new projects with the intention of revitalizing the physical and monumental reality of Rome.[136] The Holy City and its monuments were in fact intended to serve as visual propaganda, and to leave them in dilapidated conditions would have been seen as a sign of physical and spiritual

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[135] Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, p. 281

[136] On the papacy of Clement VIII Aldobrandini in regard to urbanistic renovation, see among others: T. Magnuson, *Rome in the Age of Bernini*, vol. I, *From the Election of Sixtus V to the Death of Urban VIII*, Stockholm 1982; Zuccari 1984; Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, in particular pp. 296-314. See also A. M. Corbo, *Fonti per la storia artistica romana al tempo di Clemente VIII*, vols. 3, Rome 1975. For additional literature on the artistic patronage of Clement VIII, see above p. 162, n. 8.

decadence of the Catholic Church. This image of the Church was especially unacceptable in anticipation of the Holy Year, when it was imperative that the scores of pilgrims and visitors expected to travel to Rome would be presented with a splendid new image of the post-Tridentine Roman Church.[137] While the large-scale restoration campaign executed in Rome during Clement's papacy must be seen as a consequence of the traditional belief in the political and apologetic efficacy of the monuments and the visual arts, Clement VIII nevertheless encouraged a new and more modern approach to the physical remains of Christian antiquity. A more historically informed approach to restoration, meant to preserve and valorize the old monuments and their appearance, began to form at that time, and while calling it "philological" may be an exaggeration, it certainly was the sign of a more critical attention to the material past and its conservation .[138] Despite a few unfortunate episodes such as the extensive use of *spolia* in the renovation of the Lateran basilica, and in particular in the so-called "navicella clementina",[139] the pontificate of Clement VIII is characterized by a specific cultural, antiquarian, and artistic interest towards Christian antiquity, well represented in the historical and antiquarian work of Chacon, van Winghe, and l'Heureux, or in the artistic choices of Cardinal Alessandro Ottaviano de' Medici, future Pope Leo XI, close friend and counselor of Clement VIII.[140] With their erudite and sensible guidance, the importance of restoring and preserving Christian *monumenta* −

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[137] Magnuson 982; Zuccari 1984; Ostrow in *Artistic Centers...* 2005.

[138] *Ibidem.*

[139] Lanciani remembers the "navicella clementina" as "(…) mirabile opera, causa di tanti scavi e di tanti danni alle antichita' (…)", Lanciani 1902-1912, vol. IV, pp. 185-197.

[140] On the antiquarians see above, chapter 3. See also: Carletti 1951; Recio Veganzones 1974; Diego Barrado 2004; Schuddeboom 2004; Oryskevich in *Sacred History...* 2012.

already recognized during the pontificate of Gregory XIII as a demonstration of the continuity of the Church from the Early Christian period even in its physical manifestation – was programmatically strengthened with the introduction of a restoration method based on more sophisticated and historically informed criteria.[141]

Clement's preoccupation with the dilapidated state of many religious buildings was mainly dictated by his commitment to the reconstruction of the physical and spiritual image of Rome. A deeply religious man and a fervent paladin of the Roman Church, fully committed to the Catholic restoration, a few months after his election on January 30, 1592 Clement VIII inaugurated the apostolic visitation with the intention of restoring the religious life in his diocese and of re-establishing the ecclesiastical discipline to guarantee "the decorum of the House of God in all the churches of the City".[142] Between 1592 and 1600 the Pope visited a number of ecclesiastical foundations in Rome (twenty-four churches and three basilicas), being deeply concerned with their spiritual, functional, as well as aesthetic well-being. Rome was to be perceived as the incarnation itself of the celestial Jerusalem, and the spiritual renewal of the Church and its clergy was to be mirrored by the external appearance of its religious buildings: *si (…) interior animarum apparatus, ac fervens virtutum amore imitetur (…) exteriorem Ecclesiae cultu atque*

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[141] For a critical analysis of the new methodological approach to restoration during the papacy of Clement VIII, also important are the several studies devoted to Cardinal Baronio and the restoration of his titular church Santi Nereo ed Achilleo. See below, pp. 204-206; p. 205, n. 149.

[142] "(…) decor Domus Dei in Urbis Ecclesiis", *Decreta Sancti.mi D.ni Clementis Papae Octavi facta in visitatione Ecclesiarum Urbis*, ASV, *Miscellanea*, Arm. VII 3, f. 4r. On the apostolic visitation, see D. Beggiao, *La visita pastorale di Clemente VIII (1592-1600). Aspetti di riforma postridentina a Roma*, Rome 1978.

ornamentum.[143] Along with strict recommendations addressing the spiritual life of members of the clergy and the revitalization of cultural and liturgical practices, Clement also issued – in keeping with the Tridentine directives – several decrees concerning the restoration and renovation of all those churches whose conditions were deemed inadequate for the proper celebration of the liturgy.[144] Furthermore, with the approaching of the Holy Year of 1600, it was imperative to restore to their pristine conditions as many old churches as possible, since it was not advisable to welcome the pilgrims in a city where too many of its most venerable buildings were left in a neglected and crumbling state. One of the priorities was obviously the completion of Saint Peter's, from the lantern finished in 1593 with a colossal orb and cross, to the interior of the basilica, the crossing, the corner chapels, and the transept.[145] The architect Giacomo della Porta was charged with the refurbishment of the area of the high altar, which was consecrated in June 1594. Clement also commissioned a large program of interior furnishing and decoration, from several altars and tabernacles fitted in the transept and side naves, to their repaving with polychrome marbles and the stucco and gilded revetment of their vaulted ceilings along with a number of altarpieces featuring the Miracles of Saint Peter, and, among several other contributions, the decoration of the central dome and its pendentives.[146] Perhaps the most ambitious project of Clement VIII was the renovation of the Lateran Basilica, with the so-called *nave Clementina* (or

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[143] *Decreta…* f. 25v.

[144] See Beggiao 1978.

[145] On the intervention of Clement VIII in Saint Peter's, see for instance Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, pp. 296-300.

[146] *Ibidem*.

transept) whose dense decorative program was likely conceived by Cardinal Cesare Baronio, and the baptistery where the restoration was concentrated on the chapels around the inner octagon.[147] A few important churches were initiated *ex-novo* – the Theatine Sant'Andrea della Valle, for instance, or San Salvatore in Lauro – while many more were restored and redecorated.[148]

Among the restored and redecorated churches was the church of Santi Nereo ed Achilleo, titular church of Cardinal Cesare Baronio, object of one of the most historically informed restoration projects of the period. Cardinal Baronio, in fact, attempted to reconstruct a palaeochristian church – however loose his idea of an Early Christian church was – by both preserving the existing material and constructing new elements in close emulation to ancient Christian models.[149] [fig. 82] It was, of course, a rather fanciful and idealized reconstruction of an Early Christian church – and the church of Santi Nereo ed Achilleo, incidentally, had already been rebuilt in the Carolingian period – meant to evoke

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[147] On the transept, see Freiberg 1995; see also Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, pp. 300-303. On the Lateran baptistery and its restorations between sixteenth ans seventeenth century, see for instance: J. Freiberg, "The Lateran patronage of Gregory XIII and the Holy Year 1575", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 54. 1991, 1, pp. 66-87; F. R. Moretti, "I mosaici e le decorazioni ad *opus sectile* nell'atrio del Battistero Lateranense", in *La pittura medievale a Roma…*2006, pp. 348-354; S. Pennesi, " I mosaici delle cappelle del Battistero Lateranense", *Ibidem*, pp. 425-432; A. Borgomainerio, "Il contributo di Bernini nel restauro del battistero lateranense: Alessandro Borgomainerio", in *Porre un limite all'infinito errore. Studi di storia dell'architettura dedicati a C. Thoenes*, edited by A. Brodini and G. Curcio, Rome 2012, pp. 159-168; A. Ippoliti, *Il Battistero di S. Giovanni in Laterano*, Rome 2015.

[148] *Ibidem.*

[149] The literature on the restoration of Santi Nereo ed Achilleo is vast. See among others: R. Krautheimer, "A Christian triumph in 1597", in *Essays presented to Rudolf Wittkower on his sixty-fifth birthday*, edited by D. Fraser and H. Hibbard, 2 vols., London 1967, vol. 2, pp. 174-178; Zuccari 1981(b); Id. 1984, in particular pp. 51-108; Herz 1988; M. G. Turco, "La chiesa dei Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo nel parco dell'Appia antica. La definizione del progetto cinquecentesco nel manoscritto baroniano", *Palladio* 13, gennaio-giugno 1994, pp. 215-226; Id., *Il titulus dei Santi Nereo ed Achilleo. Emblema della riforma cattolica*, Rome 1997; Id., "Cesare Baronio e i dettami tridentini nelle sistemazioni presbiteriali romane", in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…* 2009, pp. 87-107; Spera in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…* 2009, pp. 69-86.

a spatial as well as devotional continuity with Christian antiquity.[150] Baronio completely

rearranged the entire presbytery area, building *ex-novo* the *confessio* and introducing

liturgical elements such as the raised presbytery, the *fenestella confessionis*, the canopy

over the altar, or the *synthronon* that did not previously exist in the church.[151] However, the

Cardinal knew very well that the arrangement of his *confessio* was "all'antica", historically

and liturgically appropriate for a palaeochristian church as proved by illustrious models

such as San Giorgio al Velabro, Santa Prassede, or the old Saint Peter's.[152] [fig. 83]

Furthermore, Baronio was careful to use only original elements of liturgical furnishing,

spolia taken from other Roman ancient churches such as the *transennae* from S. Silvestro

in Capite or the cosmatesque elements from the *confessio* in San Paolo f.l.M.[153] As for the

pictorial decoration, Baronio restored the original ninth-century mosaics on the triumphal

arch with sophisticate philological sensibility making sure that all modern integrations, in

colored stucco, remained immediately recognizable from the original material.[154] [fig. 84]

The apse mosaic, whose ruined condition was beyond restoration, was entirely replaced

with a new fresco by the painter Girolamo Massei featuring a giant gemmed cross – a

typical palaeochristian iconography likely based on the original mosaic – combined with a

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[150] On this, see Herz 1988.

[151] See S. F. Ostrow, "The 'Confessio' in post-Tridentine Rome", in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…* 2009, pp. 19-32, in particular pp. 21-22.

[152] It is interesting to note that some of Baronio's models, however, were definitely later, dating to the ninth century, as in the case of San Giorgio al Velabro or Santa Prassede. Ostrow in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…* 2009, p. 21.

[153] On Baronio's own idea of Early Christian antiquity, see for instance Krautheimer 1967. For the use of *spolia*, see Herz 1988, in particular pp. 594-604; p. 594, n. 33; p. 598. But also: Turco in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…* 2009.

[154] Zuccari 1981 (b); Herz 1988, in particular pp. 606-607.

number of ancient martyrs, thus creating a powerful composite iconography deeply rooted in Early Christian imagery.[155] [fig. 53] Along the nave walls Massei depicted scene from the lives of Saints Nereo, Achilleo and Domitilla; on the inner façade he depicted Saints Peter and Paul along with Pope Clement I and Gregory the Great, and on the façade he painted a *graffito* decoration featuring ancient instruments of martyrdom based on Gallonio's *Trattato degli istrumenti di martirio*.[156] [fig. 85] Far from being a *pastiche* of various ancient elements arbitrarily assembled, Santi Nereo ed Achilleo was a sophisticated and meticulously designed example of a coherent use of ancient Christian models to evoke and materialize the physical as well spiritual image of early Christianity, and bring back the people "to the truer Christian practice of the distant past".[157]

Following the example of Santi Nereo ed Achilleo, Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato undertook a complete renovation of his titular church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere in 1599, preserving as much as possible of the original structure and fresco decoration, even when it was not Early Christian.[158] This was the case, for instance, of the medieval frescoes

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[155] For the meaning of the iconography, see below, pp. 217-221. See also Zuccari 1981(b); Zuccari 1984, pp. 52-61; Herz 1988, pp. A. Zuccari, "Fonti antiche e moderne per le iconografie del Baronio", in *Baronio e le sue fonti…* 2009, pp. 867-932. On iconographic elements in Early Christian and early Medieval church decoration in general, see also C. Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei: vom 4. Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd. ed., Stuttgart 1992.

[156] A. Gallonio, *Trattato de gli instrumenti di martirio e delle varie maniere di martoriare usate da' gentili contro christiani*, Rome 1591. See Zuccari 1984, pp. 53-55.

[157] Herz 1988, p. 620.

[158] On the church of Santa Cecilia in general, see: G. Matthiae, "S. Cecilia", *Le chiese di Roma illustrate*, 113, Rome 1970; A. Ballardini, "Dai Gesta di Pasquale I secondo il Liber Pontificalis ai monumenta iconografici delle basiliche romane di Santa Prassede, Santa Maria in Domnica e Santa Cecilia in Trastevere", *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia e Patria* 122, 2000, pp. 5-67; *Santa Cecilia in Trastevere*, edited by C. La Bella, Rome 2007. On Sfondrato's restauration and decoration of the church, see: A. Nava Cellini, "Stefano Maderno, Francesco Vanni e Guido Reni a Santa Cecilia in Trastevere", *Paragone*, 227, 1969, pp. 18-41; Zuccari 1984, pp. 97-99; Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, pp. 306-308.

by Pietro Cavallini (c. 1293), restored following the same philological criteria used by Baronio in Santi Nereo ed Achilleo, the new pictorial decoration preserved the memory of the old decoration. In the oratory of the *balneum* the paintings with the life and passion of the martyrs Cecilia and Valerian betray several stylistic and iconographic suggestions from the now-lost twelfth-century pictures originally decorating the portico, as in Guido Reni's *tondo* depicting the "Coronation of Cecilia and Valerian" where the schematic pyramidal composition is certainly of medieval origin.[159] [fig. 86] Notoriously, it was during the works in the area on the *confessio* that the intact body of the young Roman martyr was excavated, an extraordinary event promptly celebrated as a miraculous confirmation of the cult of saints and their relics, and recorded in the learned volume composed by Antonio Bosio, the *Historia passionis b. Ceciliae virginis*.[160] The focal point of the new *confessio* is the poignant sculpture carved by Stefano Maderno (1600) representing the young martyr's body as it had been found.[161] [fig. 87] Gracefully lying on the right side with her head turned to the ground and covered with a veil, the drapery gently delineating the delicate contours of her body, Maderno's *Cecilia* is undoubtedly one of the most exquisite post-Tridentine works of art, a distillation of religious and human piety made even more emotionally intense by the extreme simplicity of the composition and the striking contrast between the pure white of the marble against the dark depth of the niche. Among the churches restored under Clement VIII there were also, for example, San Nicola in Carcere,

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[159] See S. Waetzoldt, *Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom*, Vienna 1964, pp. 30-31, figs. 19-32.

[160] A. Bosio, *Historia passionis b. Ceciliae virginis*, Rome 1600.

[161] On the scultpure, see Nava Cellini 1969; M. Smith O'Neil, "Stefano Maderno's *Saint Cecilia*: A Seventeenth-Century Roman Sculpture Remeasured", *Antologia di Belle Arti*, n.s. 25/26, 1985, pp. 9-21.

titular church of Cardinal Federico Borromeo, who asked Chacon to provide a detailed description and evaluation of the ancient crypt and its murals;[162] Santa Maria Maggiore, where Cardinal Domenico Pinelli restored the fifth-century mosaic cycle in the nave while also commissioning a new fresco cycle illustrating the Life of the Virgin (1593);[163] Sant'Agnese f.l.M, restored under Cardinal de' Medici (1602-1605) and Cardinal Sfrondato (post 1605);[164] Santa Prisca, restored just on time for the Holy Year by Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani, who paid particularly attention to the ancient *confessio* (1600).[165] Many other churches, from Santa Maria in Portico to San Marco, San Giorgio al Velabro, or San Lorenzo in Lucina to name only a few, were also restored or renovated at the time of Clements VIII, although today it may be difficult to detect exactly the scope and quality of those restorations. What is important to emphasize, however, is that in all these churches the visual memory of the original ancient Christian decoration was always maintained, whether through iconographic or stylistic choices or through some sort of historic veracity, by adopting for instance a typical Early Christian mode of decoration such as a mosaic.

In an attempt to bring to completion such an impressive number of architectural enterprises in time for the Holy Year, while also managing the financial costs for the Curia, Pope Clement called upon his cardinals, as well as lay patrons, to fund, direct, and oversee

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[162] See above, p. 191, and p. 191, n. 101. See also Zuccari 1984, pp. 91-94; Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, p. 305.

[163] See for instance S. Spain, "The Restoration of the Santa Maria Maggiore Mosaics", *The Art Bullettin* 45, 1983, pp. 325-328; Zuccari 1984, pp. 33; 43, n. 9.

[164] See Zuccari 1984, pp. 94-97.

[165] Zuccari 1984, pp. 92-93; Ostrow in *Artistic Centers…* 2005, p. 305.

several of the projects initiated following his apostolic visitation.[166] But the principal mind behind the politics of conservation and preservation during the papacy of Clement VIII, as well as the patron of a number of important restoration projects in Rome himself, was Cardinal Alessandro Ottaviano de' Medici (1536-1605). The offspring of a minor branch of the Medici family, Alessandro was ordained priest in 1567 and in 1569 was sent by his cousin Cosimo de' Medici, the grand duke of Tuscany, to Rome as ambassador to the Holy See.[167] A devout follower of Filippo Neri, whom he had met during his first stay in Rome in 1560, Alessandro de' Medici remained particularly close to the Oratorians, and to Cesare Baronio in particular, throughout his life.[168] Elected bishop of Pistoia in 1573 and archbishop of Florence in 1574, Alessandro de' Medici received the red hat in 1584, and became pope for less than a month with the name of Leo XI in 1605.[169] A fervent proponent of the Tridentine directives for the reformation of the Church, Alessandro de' Medici had succeeded in reforming a number of ecclesiastical institution in his dioceses of Pistoia and Florence, distinguishing himself as a wise and good, though rather rigorous,

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[166] For the literature on the artistic policy of Clement VIII, see above p. 162, n. 8; p. 166, n. 22; p. 201, n. 136.

[167] He was the son of Ottaviano di Lorenzo de' Medici e Francesca Salviati. For biographical information, see M. Sanfilippo, "Papa Leone XI", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 44, Rome 2005, *ad vocem*. But see also: *Vita del cardinale di Firenze che fu P. Leone XI scritta da un suo famigliare insino al tempo che fu mandato in Francia da Clemente VIII*, in Biblioteca Casanatense, 4202, c. 40r.

[168] On the profound devotion and friendship of Cardinal de' Medici towards San Filippo Neri and some members of the Oratory, Baronio above all, see: G. Incisa della Rocchetta and N. Vian, *Il primo Processo per san Filippo Neri nel codice Vaticano latino 3798e in altri esemplari dell'Archivio dell'Oratorio di Roma*, I-IV, Vatican City 1957-1963, *ad vocem* 'Leone XI', IV, 351. See also Zuccari 1984, pp. 94-97; Sanfilippo 2005.

[169] April 1st, 1605 - April 27th, 1605.

administrator.[170] In addition to his incessant work as spiritual reformer, he had also commissioned restoration works in several churches in Florence and, following his elevation to the purple, in Rome.[171] Clement VIII chose Cardinal Alessandro, with his experience as ecclesiastical administrator and artistic patron, to assist him in his apostolic visitation, giving him the task to supervise the projects of renovation and restoration initiated in Roman institutions.[172]

A true scion of the Medici family, Alessandro had an innate love and sophisticate taste for the arts as well as a fervent passion for antiquities and was very much inclined towards a life of elegance and privilege. At the same time, however, he was a sincere and devout Catholic, whose religious piety had been nurtured by the Dominicans of San Marco in Florence and further sustained by the pauperistic spirituality of the Oratorians in Rome. He was a sophisticated collector and patron, and in Florence, his hometown, he had amassed a large collection of both pagan and Christian antiquities.[173] He also protected a large circle of artists including Giorgio and Pietro Vasari, Giovanni Antonio Dosio, Giovanni Stradano (Jan van der Straet, 1523-1605), Agostino Ciampelli (1565-1630) and

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[170] See A. D'Addario, *Aspetti della Controriforma a Firenze*, Rome 1972, in particular pp. 243-327; D. van Sasse van Ysselt, "Il Cardinale Alessandro de' Medici committente dello Stradano (1585-1587)", *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 24, 1980, 2, pp. 203-236; Zuccari 1984, pp. 31-33, and p. 44, n. 12.

[171] The first important project in Rome was the restoration of his titular church Santi Quirico e Giulitta. Zuccari 1984, pp. 34-36; pp. 112-113.

[172] "[Clemente VIII] commise al cardinal di Firenze, visitando nel nome di S[ua] S[antita'] tutte le principali chiese di Roma [affinche'] ordinasse e comandasse a Rettori et titolari di chiese, quanto li pareva conveniente per la decenza del culto (…)", as Ottaviano Navarola, rector of the Novitiate of S. Andrea al Quirinale, writes in 1596. *Historia Domus Probationis Romanae ad S. Andreae ab eius fundatione ad anno 1612*, ARSI, *Rom.* 162. I, 134v, cit. in Zuccari 1984, p. 34.

[173] Van Sasse van Ysselt 1980; Zuccari 1984; Sanfilippo 2005.

others, some of whom followed him to Rome.[174] As archbishop of Florence, Alessandro initiated several renovation projects in the city,[175] while also commissioning the pictorial decoration of his private palace (today Palazzo della Gherardesca) to the painter Stradano, and the restoration of the archbishop palace to his favorite architect Dosio, whom he also recommended to the Oratorians for the construction of their church in Naples (church of the Girolamini, 1592-1602).[176] In Rome, Alessandro renovated and embellished several palaces, from the Palazzo di Firenze in Campo Marzio (first residence of the Florentine ambassador), to his private villa (Villa Silvestri, today Rivalti), and Villa Medici, the official residence of the Tuscan grand duke in Rome.[177] The first religious building restored by Cardinal Alessandro in Rome was the church of Ss. Quirico e Giulitta, which he received along with his cardinalate on December 12th, 1583.[178] Although in Ss. Quirico e Giulitta the new Cardinal commissioned some important works that heavily altered the original structure of the church, nevertheless he managed to preserve some portions of the original apse mosaic. He even repaired parts of it with stucco integrations, immediately

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[174] Zuccari 1984, pp. 109-112; Id. in *Storia delle Arti in Toscana…* 2000, pp. 137-166.

[175] "(…) Avendo cominciato il primo [*anno*] che fu Arcivescovo, fabrico' nell'Arcivescovado. Rifece e orno' una chiesetta, che s'include, molto bella, da fondamenti; fece l'Archivio et la Camarlingheria. Principio' un Palazzo nobilissimo per l'Arcivescovi (…) Rifece un'altra Chiesa unita all'Arcivescovadi e la forni' di paramenti e vasi sacri. Per il popolo eresse un'Oratorio (…) Rifece di nuovo le Prigioni. Riquadro' la piazza di San Giovanni con ritirare indietro la fabrica Vecchia (…)", *Vita del cardinale di Firenze…*cit.

[176] Zuccari 1984; on the Cardinal's private palace in Florence, and its decoration by Stradano, see van Sasse van Ysselt 1980, pp. 203-236.

[177] Zuccari 1984, p. 111.

[178] Zuccari 1984, pp. 34-36; 112-113. On Ss. Quirico e Giulitta, see also Krautheimer - Frankl - Corbett in *Corpus Basilicarum* IV, pp. 35-48; M. Bosi, *Ss. Quirico e Giulitta*, Le chiese di Roma illustrate, 60, Rome 1961; S. Benedetti, *Giacomo Del Duca e l'architettura del Cinquecento,* Rome 1973, in particular pp. 344-347; 355-356.

recognizable, anticipating Baronio's intervention in the apse of Santi Nereo ed Achilleo.[179]

It was the beginning of an innovative method of restoration that preserved a degree of visual coherence of the composition through the integration of the lacunas, while also maintaining a "philological" distinction between original and addition, as for example in the vault mosaic of the chapel of San Giovanni Evangelista in the Lateran Baptistery, where a few of the sixteenth-century integrations are still visible today.[180] [fig. 88]

As Alessandro Zuccari has pointed out, such a "philological" approach to the ancient fragment had been traditionally reserved only for the remains of classical antiquity – the privileged object of Renaissance antiquarian studies – and it was just then becoming to be applied also to Christian antiquities as well.[181] A similar respect for the original decoration is shown by Cardinal Alessadro in the church of Sant'Eustachio, where he explicitly requested that the medieval fresco cycle in the central nave was restored and preserved.[182] It is therefore quite possible that Cardinal Alessandro, one of the main protagonists of the artistic politics of Clement VIII, played an important role in encouraging new restoration choices based on a more philologically and historically correct evaluation of the monument, brought to an even greater level of sophistication in Santi Nereo ed Achilleo.

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[179] Zuccari 1984, p. 35.

[180] In the Archivio di Stato di Roma there is a document recording the restoration done on the vault mosaic in 1597-98 by the painter Giovanni Andrea Stabilini, who realized stucco and painted integrations. (ASR, Camerale I, - Giustificazioni di Tesoreria, B. 25, Reg. 3, cc. 18, 20, 24, 34; Reg. 1535, cc. 32, 38, 45) See for instance Pennesi in *La pittura medievale a Roma…*, in particular p. 428.

[181] In one f his decrees, Cement VIII recommends: "Musivum opus (…) qua ex parte ob temporis iniuriam, collapsum est, resarciatur ac restauretur simili opera musivo, vel picture", in *Decreta…* f. 14v, also cit. in Beggiao 1978, p. 116.

[182] "(…) Picturae quae mediae navis parietes utrinque instauretur et renovetur", in *Decreta…* f. 64v.

In 1600 Cardinal Alessandro became commendatory abbot of Sant'Agnese f.l.M and shortly afterwards began an important restoration and renovation campaign of the ancient architectural complex.[183] He first commissioned several works to reinforce the wall structures of the church and the monastery, as well as of the nearby mausoleum of Santa Costanza, and had the terrain around the church excavated creating a little piazza in front of the façade.[184] He then renovated the large staircase that leads to the right narthex of Sant'Agnese from the street level, most likely the evolution of an old ramp originally connecting the Constantine basilica to the martyrium of Agnes.[185] [fig. 89]. First mentioned in the early thirteenth century as *porticus ecclesiae sanctae Agnetis*, the staircase certainly

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[183] On Sant'Agnese f.l.M see: A.P. Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale di Sant'Agnese e Santa Costanza*, Vatican City 1960; 1976; Krautheimer - Frankl - Corbett, *Corpus Basilicarum*, I, pp. 14-39; D. Esposito, "La ripresa di interesse per Sant'Agnese nei secoli XV e XVI", in *La basilica costantiniana di Sant'Agnese*, edited by M. Magnani Cianetti and C. Pavolini, Milan 2004, pp. 41-53. On Cardinal Alessandro's restoration, see: ASR, Archivio Canonici Regolari Lateranensi, *Memoria della restaurazione della fabbrica di Sant'Agnese fatta dal cardinale di Firenze*, 1600 (written by Costantino Caetani). The *Memoria* is also published in D. Bartolini, *Gli Atti del martirio della nobilissima vergine romana S. Agnese, illustrati colla storia e coi monumenti*, Rome 1858, p. 110.

[184] In the *Memoria*, it is recorded that Cardinal Alessandro "(…) si mosse l'anno anto MDC. A procurare con le su eproprie sustanze di restaurare e ornare il luogo in tutte le parti, et prima riparo' e con grosa spesa alla rovina che minacciava il campanile incatenandolo, come si vede, con chiavi di ferro (…) di poi fortifico' le cantonate della casa et stanze fatte da Giulio secondo (…) et perche' la chiesa di S. Agnese era sepolta intorno intorno da quaranta palmi di terra, la fece levare, et portare con grande spesa al basso quanto e' larga la facciata della chiesa facendo piazza spatiosa intorno al fosso. Dipoi perche' dalla banda destra rimaneva il terreno fuori di quella piazza alto molti palmi, il quale non avva sostegno, vi fece un grosso muro a guisa di fortezza per sostenimento di quello, et dalla medesima parte della chiesa h alevato per larghezza due canne e mezzo di terra alte circa quaranta palmi quanto e' lunga la chiesa. Oltre a questo pe rpoter liberare dalla terra, che soprafaceva il tempio di S. Costanza, ha comperato una vigna, che li soprastava, et la fa tagliare parte di detta vigna, et abbassare il terreno intorno intorno con farvi due porte di nuovo che entrano in chiesa per il fianco: ha ritrovata e rifatta la scala che andava sopra il tempio, e dalla banda di tramonatana, dov'e' la porta principale, h afatto una larga strada, che ha da girare intorno al theatro antico. H afatto una nuova porta, forato nel mezzo il vecchio monasterio con un riscontro molto bello di tre altre porte (…)", *Memoria…*1600. On Cardinal Alessandro's restoration, see also: Frutaz 1960, *passim*; Esposito in *La basilica costantiniana…*2004, in particular pp. 45-46.

[185] "(…) Ha alzato al pari del cortile la vecchi aporta della chiesa di s. Agnese, et dipinta la volta delle scale, quali ha illuminato con molte finestre dall'una e dall'altra banda (…)", *Memoria…*1600. On the staircase, see: E. Gambuti, "Porticus Ecclesiae Sanctae Agnetis. Lo scalone di accesso alla basilica onoriana", *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura*, NS, 63 (2014-2015), pp. 5-18.

dated back several centuries, as suggested by the fact that the lower portion of its west wall is in *opus mixtum* – a masonry typical of late Roman times.[186] Both Panvinio and Ugonio mentioned it, also specifying that it had a pavement of *opus tessellatum*.[187] Although in 1470s-1480s Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere commissioned some restoration works for the staircase and had it covered with a vaulted ceiling, at the time of Cardinal Alessandro it must have been a rather gloomy and uncomfortably steep access to the church, with its 28-30 steps, and complete lack of apertures for light.[188] The Cardinal renovated it into a grander staircase with 47 broader marble steps, opened several windows that provide light still today, and decorated the walls with slabs and inscriptions excavated from the catacomb nearby.[189] [fig. 90] Finally, he commissioned the pictorial decoration of several rooms and the private chapel in the monastery, as well as the pictorial decoration of the four courtyards and the vaulted ceiling of the staircase.[190] As for the interior of the church, Cardinal Alessandro was adamant in maintaining the original aspect of the Honorian basilica as much as possible, preserving the painted martyrologium on the walls of the naves and upper galleries (*matronea*), and even opposing the Pope's request to have the

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[186] Krautheimer - Frankl - Corbett, *Corpus Basilicarum*, I, p. 19. See also: P. Saini ad D. Ravignani, "Il convento di Sant'Agnese: origini ed eta' medievale", in *La basilica costantiniana…*2004, pp. 54-63.

[187] O. Panvinio BAV, Vat. Lat. 6780, f. 2787; P. Ugonio, BAV, Barb. Lat. 2160, f. 129.

[188] Ancient sources do not agree on the number of steps, and if Panvinio notes that "Basilica S. Hagnetis ad eam discenditur plurimis gradibus quia imo loco sita est. (…) gradus non sunt continuati sed in V. V. VI. IX.V. autem divisi inter interstitial", Ugonio only recalls 28 steps, "per gradus (…) 28…", in Krautheimer - Frankl - Corbett, *Corpus Basilicarum*, I, p. 19, n. 7; n. 8; Frutaz 1960, p. 89, n. 65; Gambuti 2014-2015, p. 8.

[189] Krautheimer - Frankl - Corbett, *Corpus Basilicarum*, I, p. 19; see also Gambuti 2014-2015.

[190] "(…) le stanze fatte da Giulio secondo (…) le quali stanze orno' di pittura, et vi fece, dove era un camerino sopra la chiesa, un acappella privata tutta dipinta (…) dipinta la volta delle scale (…) Ha accomodato quattro cortili, che vi sono, con ornamenti di pittura (…)", *Memoria…*1600.

original columns of the ciborium removed to form part of his new chapel in Santa Maria sopra Minerva.[191]

But it is on the staircase of Sant'Agnese f.l.M. and its pictorial decoration that we now need to concentrate our attention as an exemplary case of the recreation of an Early Christian space meant to revive the spiritual image of ancient Christianity, while pointing to the unbroken continuity of the contemporary Roman Church with the Church of the origins. In fact, Christian antiquity – perceived and idolized as untouched by corruption and fortified by the heroic faith of the martyrs – was imaginatively evoked through a pattern of visual and mental tokens associated with the Christianity of the origins, and materialized as a physical space inhabited by its material remains and decorated with archaic forms and motifs.

The staircase of Sant'Agnese f.l.M.

The pictorial decoration of the staircase of Sant'Agnese provides a sophisticated example, though perhaps not of exquisite quality, of modes of appropriation and conscious manipulation of Early Christian art. It was not the case, and it never was with the so-called palaeochristian revival, of exact copies or explicit citations of actual Early Christian murals and painted images. Rather, it was the use of visual clues – stylistic features, iconographic motifs, or even modes of decoration – meant to evoke and suggest an Early Christian atmosphere, and help the viewers form a mental picture, of the ancient Christian past with

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[191] Zuccari, 1984, pp. 95-96.

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its pure and uncorrupted faith.[192] It was, of course, an imaginary picture of the past that never actually existed in this exact form. But it was not as important to provide historical veracity as it was to build a physical space that, easily recognizable as an Early Christian space, functioned as a powerful stimulus to evoke a mental and spiritual space in which modern viewers experienced the same intense faith of the first Christians. Old Christian motifs and imagery, employed to recreate an *all'antica* Christian space, were also often redeployed and combined into new and more complex pictorial compositions firmly rooted in contemporary post-Tridentine theological and political thought.

In his *Likeness and Presence*, Hans Belting famously argued that at the end of the Middle Ages the ancient Christian image "fell outside the new sphere of art through its age and appearance" and was transformed into a "memory from olden times" being replaced by the new art based on *concetto* and *disegno*.[193] This process was, according to Belting, particularly evident during the Counter-Reformation, when the old Christian image was placed outside the realm of art by virtue of its divine origin and the miracles it performed. And yet, while Belting's analysis applies to all the cases where the old icon was physically incorporated into a new artistic frame or altarpiece, there are several other cases in which the old Christian image remained very much alive as a powerful model to be imitated and recreated, both as artistic decoration of the liturgical space – usually charged with newly emphasized ideological and theological implications – and as sacred image to be

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[192] See for instannce Golda Balass 1999, p. 112.

[193] H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, E. Jephcott transl., Chicago 1996, p. 485 and p. 490. On the relationship between "image" and "art", see also Freedberg 1989. A recent and interesting reflection on "image" and "art" in relation to Belting and Freedberg, is in Andaloro in *La pittura medievale a Roma…* 2006, pp. 15-31, in particular pp. 16-20.

worshipped.[194] In other words, it is not always the case that art transcends the traditional image in post-Tridentine Rome, since ancient Christian art was at times looked upon as a source of artistic inspiration, and, like a phoenix reborn from its own ashes, given a new life through the original combination of old and new iconographic themes and symbolic connotations. This process is exactly what we see, for instance, in the pictorial decoration of the staircase ceiling in Sant'Agnese f.l.M – possibly the work of a Sienese painter named Sebastiano Folli[195] – featuring the gemmed cross, Saint Agnes, Christ the Savior, Saint Emerenziana, and the Latin Cross. [figs. 91, 92, 93] The latter, adorned with three symbolic crowns (an actual golden crown and two floral wreaths) and standing among flowers, with the palms of martyrdom behind it and stones and swords at its foot, is likely an adaptation of the archaic motif of the *florifera Crux*, already mentioned by Paulinus of Nola.[196] It was a well-known Early Christian motif derived from the peculiar image of the cross found in the Indian city of Mylapore where the apostle Thomas was allegedly killed in the year 72: "*crux in lapide incisa, in cuius fastigio columbae imago insidebat basis vero erat in specie quadam herbarum, quae diffundi latissimi videbantur, collocate; et tam fastigum. Quam*

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[194] The sacred image, in fact, materializes through the artistic rendition its divine archetype, as clearly stated in the Tridentine decree on the images: "the honor which is shown them [*images*] is referred to the prototypes which those images represent". "Decree on the invocation, veneration, and relics of saints, and on sacred images", XXV Session (December 3-4, 1563), in *The canons and decrees* 1884, pp. 233-236. On this, see Freedberg 1989; Boespflug 2012; Prodi 2014, in particular pp. 14-26.

[195] The attribution has been proposed by Alessandro Zuccari on stylistic ground as well as on the information, provided by both Mancini and Baldinucci, that Folli had in fact worked in S. Agnese for the Cardinal. Zuccari 1984, p. 96 and pp. 105-106, n. 35. Frutaz, however, had previously suggested the name of Agostino Ciampelli, Frutaz 1960, p. 90, n. 66.

[196] See for instance: T. Piscitelli – C. Ebanista, "Paolino di Nola e la croce pensile della basilica *nova*: aspetti teologici e motivi inconografici", in *Studia Humanitatis. In memoria di Mons. Andrea Ruggiero*, edited by T. Piscitelli, Naples 2015, pp. 155-232.

basis et brachia in liliorum formam desinebant".[197] Both Baronio and Macarius knew and mentioned the old image, and Macarius interestingly associated it with the now-lost fifth-century mosaic in the oratory of Ss. Rufina e Seconda in the Lateran baptistery (which had been restored by the same Cardinal de' Medici), and the twelfth-century apse-mosaic of the basilica of San Clemente featuring the life-giving Cross.[198] [fig. 94] The frescoes feature a particularly interesting choice of elements (Christ, the two Saints, the two Crosses) combined in order to visualize two pivotal Early Christian themes, that of martyrdom symbolized by Agnes and Emerenziana, and that of the Cross represented by both the gemmed Cross and the *florifera Crux*. While it is not surprising that Cardinal Alessandro, himself so much invested in the recovery and preservation of Christian antiquity, looked back to old forms and figures in a conscious revival of palaeochristian imagery, it is interesting to investigate what kind of message he intended to communicate through these images, which are the result of a sophisticated manipulation of archaic iconographic motifs.

The Cross, the most important motif in basilica decoration according to patristic literature, had always maintained strong theological as well as political implications; it was the *lignum vitae*, the instrument of Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of humanity, but it was also a symbol of victory, the physical and spiritual victory of Christ over death and sin. Within a more mundane sphere, the Cross was the sign of victory over physical enemies, as

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[197] J. L'Heureux (Macarius), *Hagioglypta, sive Picturae et Sculpturae sacrae antiquiores praesertim quae Romae reperiuntur*, edited by R. Garrucci, Paris 2856, pp. 201-202.

[198] "(…) quarum una est in abside S. Clementis, ubi herba in speciem vitis diffunditur per ejus spatium, et in medio crux cum columbis, habens Christum affixum. Altera ad porticum baptisterii S. Ioannis Lateranensis, ad dextram ingredientibus, herbam partiter circumquaque luxuriantem habens (…)", *ibidem*, p. 204. On the apse mosaic in San Clemente, see S. Riccioni, *Il mosaico absidale di S. Clemente a Roma "exemplum" della chiesa riformata*, Spoleto 2006.

in the case of Constantine's famous *in hoc signo vinces*.[199] Baronio even credited Emperor

Constantine with the gilded and jeweled cross allegedly erected on Mount Golgotha as

perpetual *memoria* of Christ's sacrifice and triumph.[200] With its imperial overtones the

gemmed cross stressed the connection between imperial and Christian Rome alluding to the

universalism of the Roman Church, while also celebrating the victory of the Church over its

enemies. But there is more here: the gemmed cross is paired with a wooden cross, crowned

and surrounded by many symbols of martyrdom, as well as with the depiction of the two

young martyrs themselves. The martyrs repeat with their own sacrifice Christ's sacrifice for

humankind, and revive his triumph over death, as clearly stated in the *Ecclesiae militantis*

triumphi, a series of engraved images of the Jesuit martyrdom cycle in Santo Stefano

Rotondo.[201] Moreover, in post-Tridentine terms, the presence of countless martyrs in the

soil of Rome is of course a powerful reminder of the legitimacy of the Roman Church, built

upon the blood they shed for the Christian faith. The iconographic motifs of the cross and

of martyrdom combined create a sophisticated and powerful visualization of strength and

triumph, which was particularly poignant in post-Tridentine Rome. As articulated by John

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[199] On the Cross and its many meanings, see for instance: G Scavizzi, "The Cross: A 16th Century Controversy," *Storia dell'Arte,* 65 (1989), pp. 27-43.

[200] The *crux gemmata* on Mount Golgotha, more likely erected by emperor Theodosius I, is already mentioned around 381-384 in the so-called *Peregrinatio Silviae*, in the description of the ceremonies of Good Friday and the veneration of the Cross and its relics on the Mount. See A. Lipinsky, "La "Crux Gemmata" e il culto della Santa Croce nei monumenti superstiti e nelle raffigurazioni monumentali", *Felix Ravenna* 3.Ser. 30, 81.1960, pp. 5-62; S. De Blaauw, "Jerusalem in Rome and the Cult of the Cross," in *Pratum Romanum*, edited by M. Gill and R. Colella, Reichert 1997, pp. 55-73l; F. Cappelletti, "L'affresco nel catino absidale di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme a Roma. La fonte iconografica, la committenza, la datazione," *Storia dell'Arte* 66 (1989), pp. 119-126. See also, C. Heussler, Storia o leggenda: l'invenzione e l'esaltazione della vera Croce e Cesare Baronio", in *Arte e committenza nel Lazio…*2009, pp. 241-254.

[201] The first engraving of the *Ecclesiae militantis triumphi* represents the *Rex gloriose martyrum*, the Crucifixion flanked by martyrs, and reads the words *tu vincis in martyrium*. K. Noreen, "Ecclesiae Militantis Triumphi: Jesuit Iconography and the Counter-Reformation," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* XXIX, no. 3 (1998), pp. 689-715, pp. 699-700.

Chrysostom, the Cross is triumph over death, "The Cross has broken our bond, has made the prison of death ineffectual",[202] as well as protection against evil and darkness (that is, heresy), "The Cross (...) extinguished the power of sin, delivered the world from error, brought back the truth, expelled the Demons (...) The Cross is the impregnable wall, the invulnerable shield, the safeguard of the rich, the resource of the poor, the defense of those who are exposed to snares, the armor of those who are attacked".[203] As for the martyrs, they also celebrate their triumph in the eternal glory of God, as indicated by the Tridentine decree: "the holy bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living with Christ, which bodies were the living members of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, and which are by Him to be raised unto eternal life".[204] Finally, both the Cross and the martyrs are a powerful link between God and men: the Cross is the instrument itself by which is possible to attain a mystical union with Christ through intense prayer, while the martyrs intercede with God for mankind. It is through their painted image, however, that their divine prototypes are made present and tangible to the faithful, as declared in the 1563 decree: "(…) by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover the head, and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ; and we venerate the saints, whose similitude they bear (…)".[205]

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[202] John Chrysostom, "Against Marcionists and Manicheans", in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church [2nd Series]*, P. Schaff – H. Wace ed. and transl., 14 vols. Grand Rapids, 1978.

[203] *Ibidem*. On the adoration of the Cross and its fortune in post-Tridentine and Counter-Reformation art, see for instance: R. Viladesau, *The Triumph of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in Theology and the Arts from the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation*, Oxford 2008.

[204] "Decree on the invocation, veneration, and relics of saints, and on sacred images", in *The canons and decrees… 1884*, p. 235.

[205] *Ibidem*.

As such, depictions of the Cross and of martyrs remain powerful cult images as much as "artwork[s] of the modern era",[206] relics of the past brought back to a new life.

There are other, more monumental, examples of such powerful iconographic associations of the Cross and martyrdom in post-Tridentine Rome, whose ample theological and political implications made it a perfect "manifesto" for the Roman Church and its praxis. This is the case in Santo Stefano Rotondo, for instance, where the seventh-century mosaic featuring a gemmed crossed flanked by Saint Primus and Felicianus is the focal point of the 1580s decoration with scenes of martyrdom, [fig. 75] or the apse decoration in Santi Nereo ed Achilleo realized by Baronio only a few years later. [fig. 95] Cardinal Alessandro dei Medici was certainly well aware of these more illustrious examples, as he deliberately chose to accompany the faithful entering one of the oldest martyrial basilicas in Rome with such luminous promises of victory and triumph over death and all physical as well as spiritual enemies.

It is only to be expected that in the aftermath of the Council of Trent Cardinals of the Roman Church chose to look at Early Christian art as a way to express the new Tridentine *pietas* and recreate a physical space that evoked, with its "aura" of Christian antiquity, the pure and uncorrupted faith of the origins. As mentioned above, palaeochristian art was one of the possible artistic models proposed for the hoped-for reform of the arts, and many saw in its austere style the only style that could express that historical and scriptural "realism" that several theologians advocated for the new sacred

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[206] Belting 1996, p. 16.

art.[207] While there is no question that apologetic and political reasons were very obviously much at stake in all the artistic and restoration projects initiated in Rome in the second half of the sixteenth century, what is important is that the artistic language used to give form to such reasons was that of Christian antiquity. This was a deliberate artistic choice, a conscious revival of the old Christian art that, with its apparent simplicity and lack of tempting elements, was perceived as the right language to illustrate the Scriptures and express the new rigorous spirituality of the post-Tridentine Church. Moreover, palaeochristian art provided the artist with a vast repertoire of long-existing and orthodox themes and iconographic motifs, so to appease the Tridentine preoccupation that the artists did not invent new and bizarre iconographies – the danger being that of obscurity or even heresy – as urgently recommended, for instance, by Paleotti in conformity with the conciliar decree: "(…) each novelty, although of profound things, should be always doubtful, and should not be accepted if not for specific reasons (…) cautiously will act who will abandon his imagination and will adhere to safe stories and approved matters (…)" since the Tridentine Council commands indeed, *nemini licere ullam insolitam ponem imaginem*".[208] As contradictory as it may appear, it was exactly through this attempt to re-create and revive forms and figures of the ancient past that the aspiration towards a renewed art manifested itself, in place of the failure of *maniera* as an appropriate style for

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[207] See above, pp. 160-168.

[208] "(…) ogni novita', se bene di cose profonde, deve essere avuta molto sospetta, ne' accettarsi se non opportunissimamente (…) cautamente fara' chi, lasciando le sue proprie imaginazioni, aderira' alle istorie sicure e materie approvate (…) quanto che il Concilio Tridentino espressamente commanda, *nemini licere ullam insolitam ponem imaginem*", Paleotti ed. 1961, p. 400-402.

sacred images.[209] Yes, it is true that Baronio's interest in palaeochristian art in Santi Nereo ed Achilleo was nourished by apologetic reasons as much as it was by artistic and antiquarian interest; and it is true that his reconstruction of the appearance of the ancient church, resulting from the arbitrary assemblage of diverse ancient fragments, manifested a hagiographical fantasy more than a critical and historical understanding of Christian antiquity and its art. Nevertheless, such deformation and idealization of a past perceived as a "Golden Age" betrayed, paradoxically, a strong impulse toward a new and reformed art, with a simplified language that – finally purged of all sensuous and imaginative elements – remained true to the scriptural content, as recommended in the Tridentine decree.[210]

Outside of the quiet and enclosed spaces of the old Roman churches, however, Early Christian art was inexorably disappearing from the animated artistic scene in Rome at the opening of the new century. The debate sparked by the crisis and failure of Mannerism was in fact unraveling around three major artistic episodes: Annibale and Agostino Carracci and their painting resulting from the eclectic combination of nature, classical antiquity and

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[209] On this, see for instance Bologna 2006, pp. 8-10. The desire for a renewal attained through the reproposition of the past, is an attitude detectable in all forms of political and cultural life of the time, as pointed out, for example, by Rosario Villari: " (…) aspirazioni al rinnovamento che si presentano sotto l'aspetto del ritorno al passato e; senza dubbio un segno die tempi, ma non un ostacolo insuperabil eal movimento e all'azione di riforma", R. Villari *Ribelli e riformatori dal XVI al XVIII secolo"*, Rome 1979, pp. 13-42, p. 34; Id., *Elogio della dissimulazione. La lotta politica nel Seicento*, Bari 1987. On the failure of the *Maniera* devotional art in the post-Tridentine context see, among others, the volume *The sensuous…* 2013.

[210] "(…) no images, [suggestive] of false doctrine, and furnishing occasion of dangerous error to the uneducated, be set up. And if at times, when expedient for the unlettered people; it happens that the facts and narratives of sacred Scripture are portrayed and represented; the people shall be taught, that not thereby is the Divinity represented, as though it could be seen by the eyes of the body, or be portrayed by colours or figures. Moreover, in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed, all filthy lucre be abolished; finally, all lasciviousness be avoided; in such wise that figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust (…) no one be allowed to place, or cause to be placed, any unusual image, in any place, or church, howsoever exempted, except that image have been approved of by the bishop (…)", *The canons and decrees* 1884, pp. 234-236.

Renaissance art (Palazzo Farnese, 1597-1606/7)[211], [fig. 96]; Caravaggio and his "good imitation of the natural things", reminiscent of his Lombard artistic and spiritual education;[212] [fig. 97] Rubens, who anticipated in the Vallicella (1608) the energy, drama, and visual richness of later Baroque painting in a powerful synthesis of North and South, ancient and modern, nature and idea.[213] [fig. 98] And yet, an echo of palaeochristian art remains detectable in a number of Caravaggio's paintings throughout his life, as in the *Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* (1599, Contarelli Chapel, San Luigi de' Francesi), [fig. 99] where Matthew's martyrdom is about to happen in front of an austere altar, in a gloomy and dark space clearly reminiscent of a catacomb; or in the *Burial of Saint Lucy* (1608, Santa Maria alla Badia, Syracuse), [fig. 100] where the bleak architectural setting unequivocally represents a catacomb, obviously evoking the martyrial dimension of the paintings. By using archaic motifs taken from an artistic language increasingly rejected and ignored by the official spheres, was Caravaggio intentionally trying to provoke a moment of dialectical rethinking among artists and patrons with regards to the fate of palaeochristian art? Or, was it, perhaps, simply an act of personal dissent and internal resistance against the triumphalism of the Counter-Reformation Church and its artistic celebration, on the part of

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[211] See among others: S. Ginzburg, *Annibale Carracci a Roma. Gli affreschi di Palazzo Farnese*, Rome 2000; Id., *La Galleria Farnese: gli affreschi dei Carracci*, Milan 2008.

[212] At the occasion of the 1603 trial, Caravaggio himself appears to have stated that when it comes to painting a good man is that who "(…) sa depinger bene et imitar bene le cose naturali", from the *Esame di Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio* (September 13th, 1603) published in W. Friedländer, *Caravaggio Studies*, Princeton 1955, reprint New York 1966. Cit. in Bologna 2006, p. 145. On Caravaggio, the literature is really vast. I personally consider seminal studies, though presenting different and conflicting interpretations: M. Calvesi, *Le realta' del Caravaggio*, Turin 1990 and F. Bologna, *L'incredulita' del caravaggio e l'esperienza delle "cose naturali"*, Turin 1992, revised edition 2006, both with vast bibliography.

[213] See for instance the recent *Rubens e la nascita del Barocco*, Milano, Palazzo Reale 26 ottobre 2016 - 17 febbraio 2017, edited by A. Lo Bianco, Milan 2016 (with bibliography).

an artist who always remained on the margins of what was socially and morally, as well as artistically, considered acceptable?[214] Whatever Caravaggio's intentions were, his interest in Early Christian art was becoming an increasingly isolated case.

With the refusal of a reformed Tridentine art, in fact, the sober crowd of Early Christian crosses and martyrs, briefly emerged from gloomy catacombs and crumbling churches to a new life, was soon to fade again into the shadows, replaced by the triumphant and gaudy figures of much of Baroque painting.

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[214] For a discussion of Caravaggio's artistic as well as moral and religious inclinations, see Bologna 2006, in particular pp. 11-92.

Conclusions

My dissertation came to be because of my growing irritation with the assumption, often found in the literature, that the new intellectual interest in Christian antiquity and its material legacy emerging in the second half of the sixteenth century in Rome was the consequence of post-Tridentine religious interests and apologetic reasons. I believed that the important shift in thinking by which the material legacy of Early Christian Rome began to be valued as interesting as that of the pagan Rome, could not be understood just as a byproduct of the agenda of the Catholic Church. It seemed to me diminishing, and historically incorrect, to confine the *antiquaria sacra* to the role of providing material evidence in support of the Catholic Church and its claim to legitimacy against Protestant accusations by demonstrating its continuity in Rome since the apostolic time. For all cultural phenomena, of course, there is never one single and simple explanation, but in my opinion the emphasis on the apologetic and religious purpose of sixteenth-century Christian antiquarianism was excessive and misleading. It often prevented sholars from recognizing that the method and critical tools for the investigation of the *antiquitas sacra* were the same as those used for the study of pagan antiquity. Furthermore, it did not acknowledge the impact that the discovery of Christian antiquity had on early modern Italian (and European) culture, leading to a fundamental revolution in the historical and antiquarian method. Sixteenth-century Christian antiquarians became in fact aware of the value of archaeological material and visual evidence not only in relation to the current religious debate, but also for any study of the past, either Christian or pagan. The result was a new "visual turn" in antiquarian and historical studies in which images and objects emerged as

key documents in themselves, encouraging a new methodological model based on the programmatic union of textual and visual material in a sort of "philology of things" for a better understanding of the "object". Perhaps the interest in the material and visual remains of Christian antiquity was born out of religious and apologetic concerns, to defend the Catholic Church while also evoking the pure and uncorrupted apostolic Church, perceived in the post-Tridentine religious climate as the ideal model to aim for and conform to. However, it went beyond that expanding into more scientific and scholarly directions and I wanted, with my research, to highlight exactly this aspect.

Likewise, I believed that it was necessary to look at the artistic phenomenon of the so-called "palaeochristian revival" with a different eye, in order to understand its real extent and significance. I wanted to put to test my impression that Early Christian art – with its simplified and austere pictorial language particularly apt to reflect the Tridentine *pietas* – was in fact perceived as a legitimate solution to the heated question of the reform of sacred art in the wake of the strict and yet vague recommendation issued by the Council of Trent. If Early Christian art was indeed considered as a possible solution to the problem of the *arte sacra*, if old mosaics and frescoes were restored and preserved, and if new pictorial works were deliberately made to evoke Christian antiquity through a number of visual or iconographic elements, then – I thought – it was possible to argue for a different evaluation of the so-called "palaeochristian revival". In conclusion, it was important for me to reassess, beyond well-established historiographic clichés, a specific historical and cultural moment – between the closure of the Council of Trent and the beginning of the seventeenth century – which saw a tremendous interest in the artistic remains of Christian Antiquity and the Middle Ages. It is in those years, for instance, that an extraordinary campaign of visual

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documentation, paired with extensive restorations on the majority of the extant old Christian monuments, took place in Rome giving a new visibility to an artistic era hitherto neglected.

As mentioned elsewhere, the ultimate scope of my research was to offer a different way to look at post-Tridentine culture and its nuanced relationship with the discovery of Christian antiquity, between scientific interest and apologetic reasons. I began this investigation into the past with the confidence to be able to comprehend and make sense of the intricate knot of cultural attitudes, religious inclinations (and perhaps also individual taste) that provoked the interest of certain scholars, artists, and patrons – men deeply immerged into the religious tensions and problems of their time – in Christian antiquity. I thought – comforted by Ingo Herklotz's optimistic encouragement to go back to the original documents – that archival papers and erudite treatises would provided me with all the answers I was looking for, if I only read them carefully and interpreted correctly. A naïve thought indeed, especially since this was by no means the first time that I was going to measure myself with primary documents, and so I should have known better. Very rarely do archival documents reward the hopeful researcher with straightforward information and clear answers. More often they offer only sparse clues that need to be analyzed, selected, and pasted together in order to make sense. Books may have a clearer voice, perhaps, but they inevitably speak the language of the time, and too often they end up becoming the object of the investigation, rather than its tools. Additionally, it is always difficult to recognize and understand the subtle nuances of the mind of men who lived centuries ago, and whose intellectual, religious, and social world is largely lost for us. This is even more difficult when trying to disentangle, for instance, a scholarly interest in a specific Early

Christian iconography from the religious beliefs and ideological reasons for which that same iconography is considered particularly important; and especially at the height of the controversy with the Protestants, when faith and religion were such a large and essential part of the life of every single person in Europe, let alone Rome.

After several months spent perusing Roman archives and immersing myself in the reading of books, at times abstruse and slightly boring, I had perhaps collected some interesting information. But to give them any value as symptoms of specific mental and cultural attitudes, they needed to be placed within a coherent context. In other words, I needed to reconstruct the intellectual world of the people whose thoughts and interests I was trying to understand, and of which the information I had gathered were, in my opinion, significant traces. Upon embarking on this second phase of the dissertation, I read avidly from several fields of scholarship – art history as well as history, literature, or religious history, for instance – trying to recompose in my mind a picture of the reality of post-Tridentine Rome, as distant as possible from the clichés about the artistic culture and intellectual life in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, found in much of the literature.[1] The scope of my research was in fact to offer a different way to look at post-Tridentine culture. By presenting some case studies concerning well-known figures (Alfonso Chacón or Antonio Bosio, for instance), I wanted to help reassess the cultural question of the discovery of Christian antiquity in the second half of the sixteenth century, and the relationship between the protagonists of post-Tridentine intellectual and artistic life in

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[1] For bibliographic reference, see for instance chapter 1, pp.10-11, notes 1, 2, 4, and chapter 3, p. 109, n. 1; p. 111, n. 10.

Rome and the discovery of Early Christian art in the shadow of the Church and its apologetic reasons.

Many directions of this research have remained unexplored, from the extensive restoration and redecoration of Sant'Agnese f.l.M commissioned by Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici as it is recorded in the archival documents, to Chacón's antiquarian drawings and notes, in particular on the Temple of the *fratres arvales* in the *ager romanus* (still today very little known), to the question of noblewomen collecting relics (and their precious reliquaries) in post-Tridentine Rome, a theme which I had only began to investigate when my first daughter was born. Directions that I still intend to follow, and sooner rather than later. As of today, however, I simply hope that this dissertation may contribute, even if only marginally, to a more accurate and sophisticated understanding of post-Tridentine culture, with its fascinating complexities and contradictions.
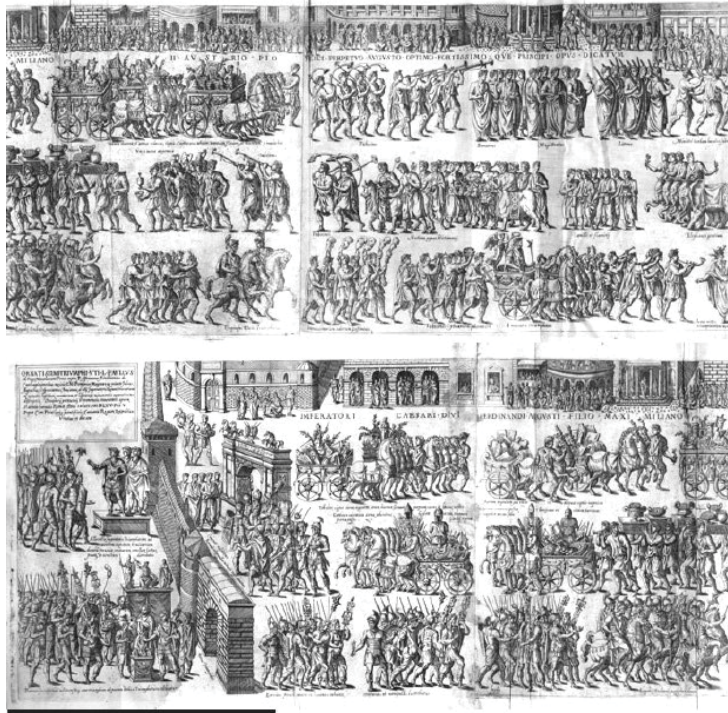
Fig. 1.   Onofrio Panvinio, *De Triumpho Commentarius*, 1571, the triumphal procession,
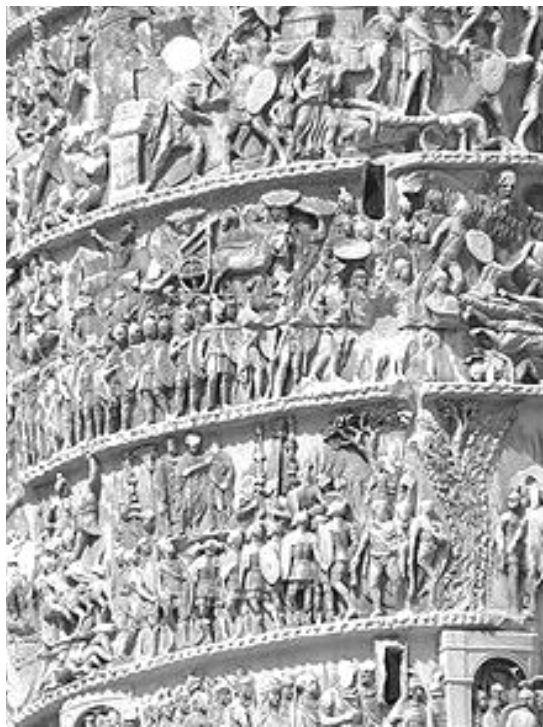   Fol. Delta 553, Oxford, Bodleian Library

Fig. 2.   Trajan's Column, Rome (detail)

Fig. 3. Onofrio Panvinio, *De Triumpho Commentarius*, the triumphal procession, Fol. Delta 553, Oxford, Bodleian Library (detail)
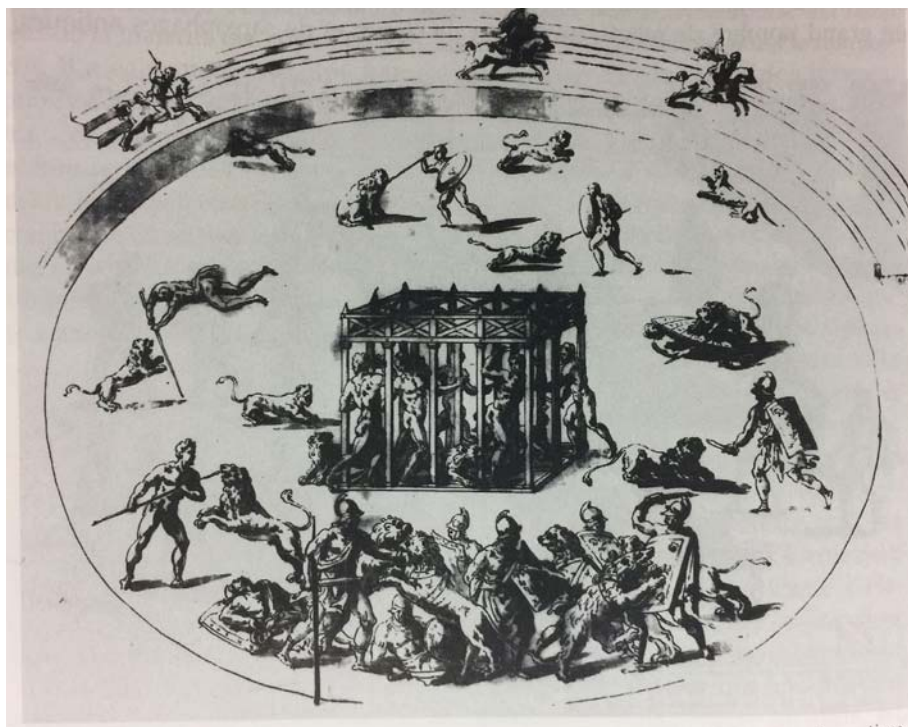

Fig. 4. Étienne Dupérac for Panvinio, Hunt Scene (*venatio*), c. 1565, BAV, Vat. Lat. 3493, f. 53

Fig. 5.   Étienne Dupérac for Panvinio, Hunt Scene (*venatio*), c. 1565, BAV, Vat. Lat. 3493, f. 53 (detail)

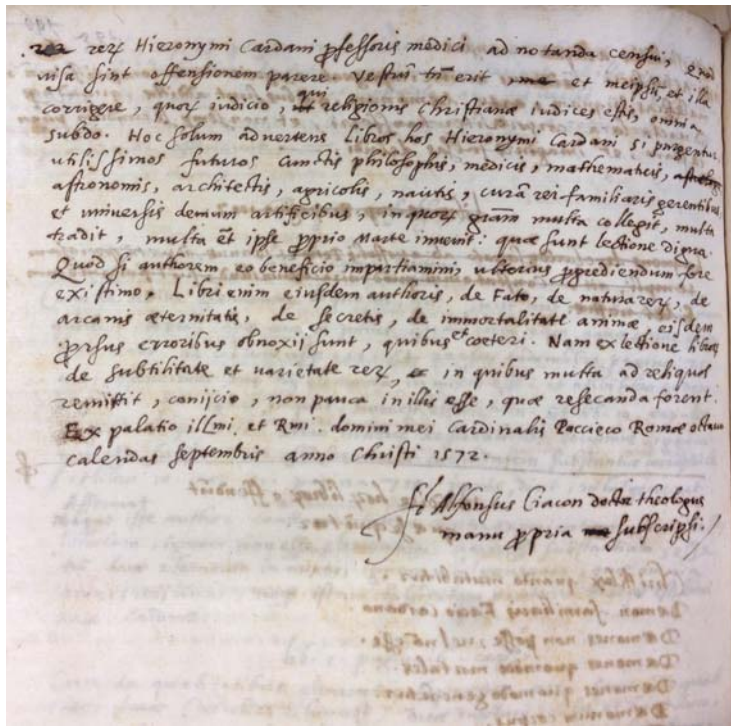Fig. 6.   *Gladiator and Bear*, relief, 2nd century

Fig. 7.   Alfonso Chacón, evaluation of Gerolamo Cardano's *De subtilitate rerum* and *De rerum varietate*, Rome, Archivio di S. Isidoro degli Irlandesi, Ms. 2/49
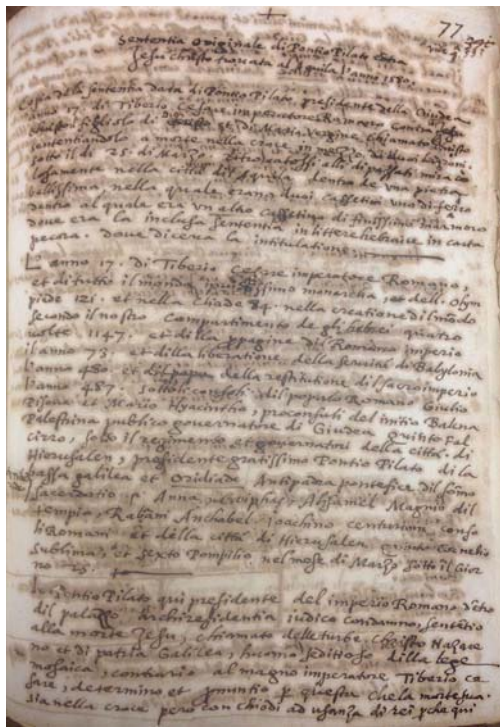

Fig. 8.   Alfonso Chacón, *Sententia originale di Pontio Pilato contra Jesu Christo trovata al Aquila l'anno 1580*, Rome, Archivio di S. Isidoro degli Irlandesi, Ms. 2/49

Fig. 9.   Alfonso Chacón, *Historia utriusque belli dacici*, 1576, plate 31

Fig. 10. Alfonso Chacón, *Historia utriusque belli dacici*, 1576, plate 75

Fig. 11. Alfonso Chacón, *Historia utriusque belli dacici*, 1576, plate 76

Fig. 12. Alfonso Chacón, *De Cimiterio Beatae Priscillae Roma inventu de Anno* 1578,
Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Archives of the History of Art, in Los Angeles,
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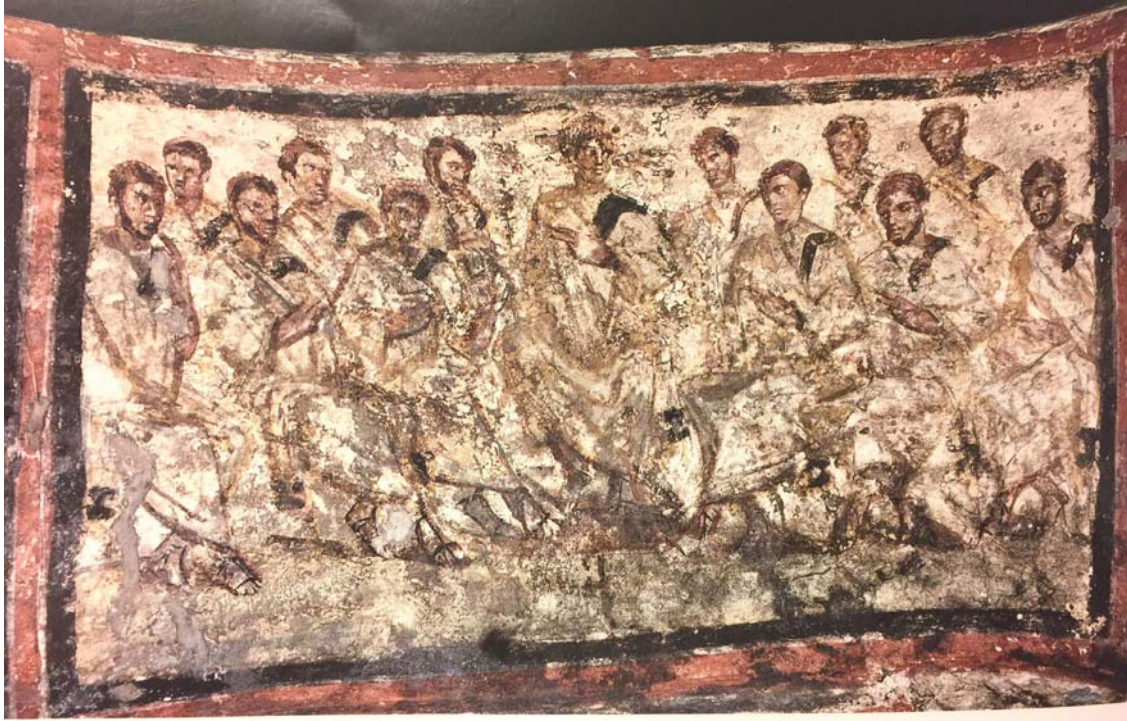
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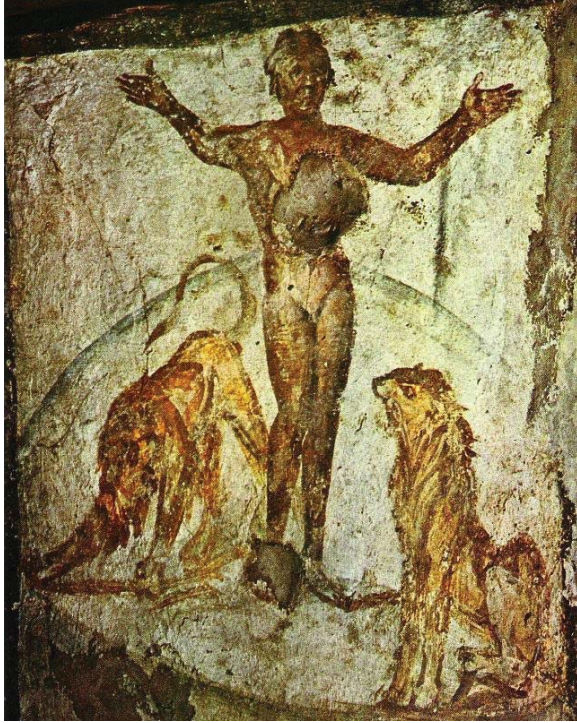
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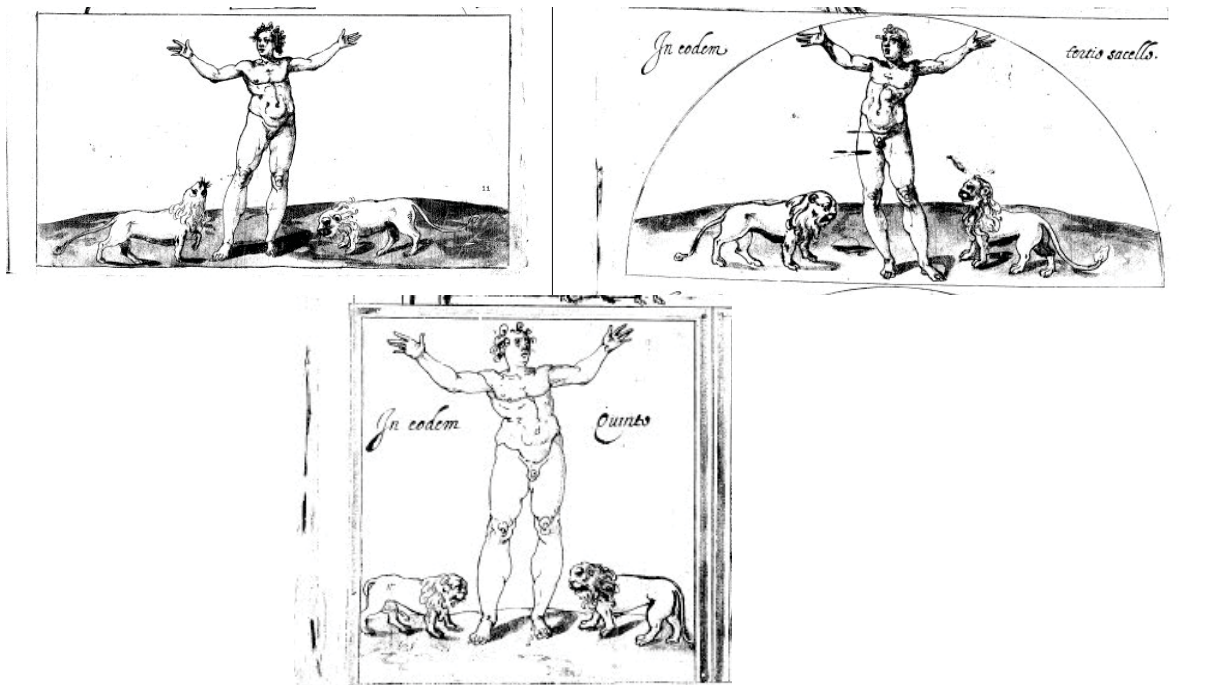
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Praefecti, in vico Patriarchae, ad Diui Petri.

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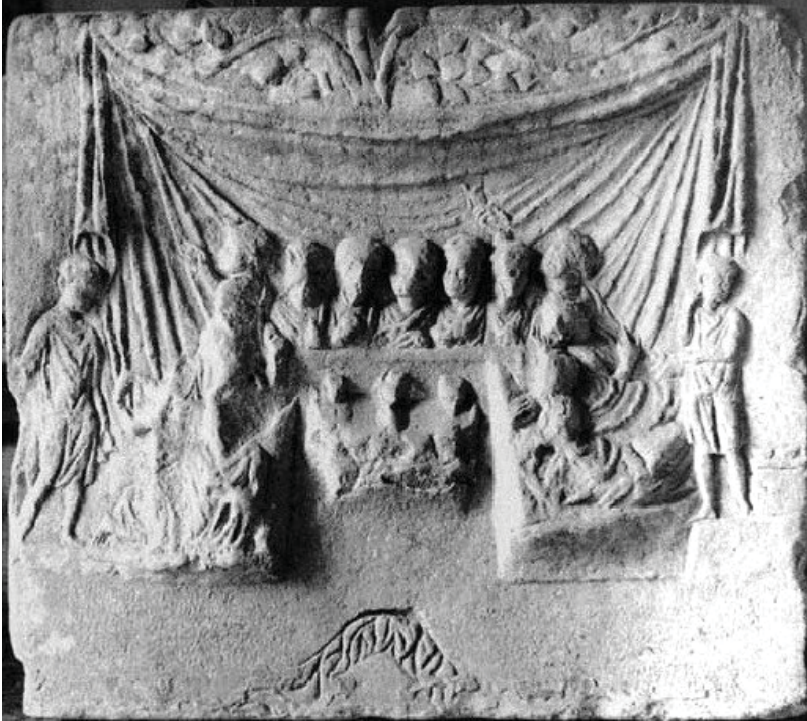
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Fig. 24. Drawing from Vat. Lat. 5409, f. 2r., Rome, BAV

CANDELABRI VETERIS TESTAMENTI, QVOD ANTE ARCAM
EXTABAT SIMVLACRVM. *Nam kibi* Compshit ex
camils 4. hominis, Leonis, Aquila, et Touri
que pia fefecit, quattuor Evangely
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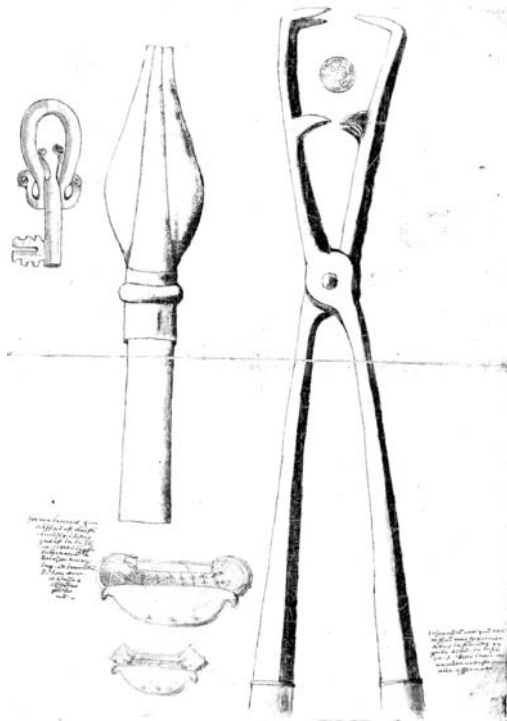
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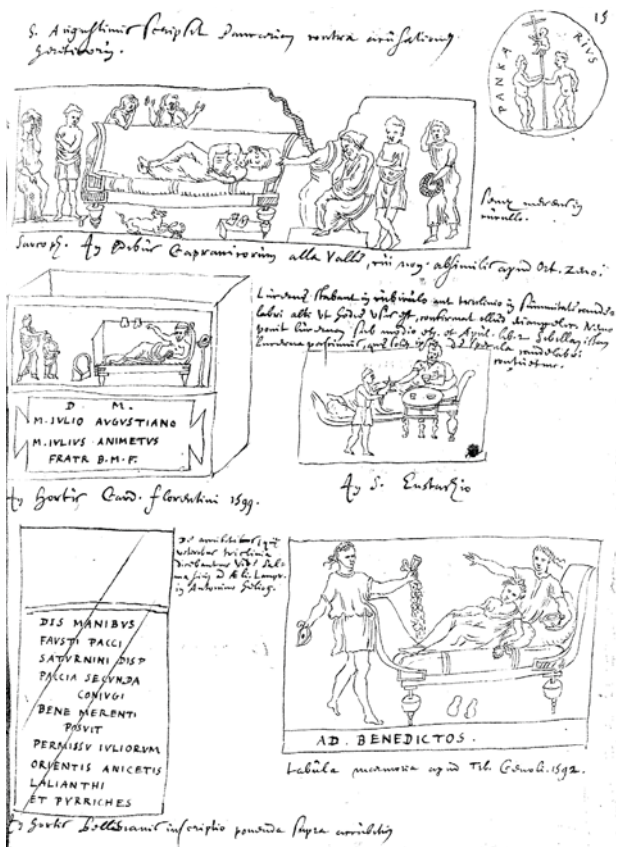
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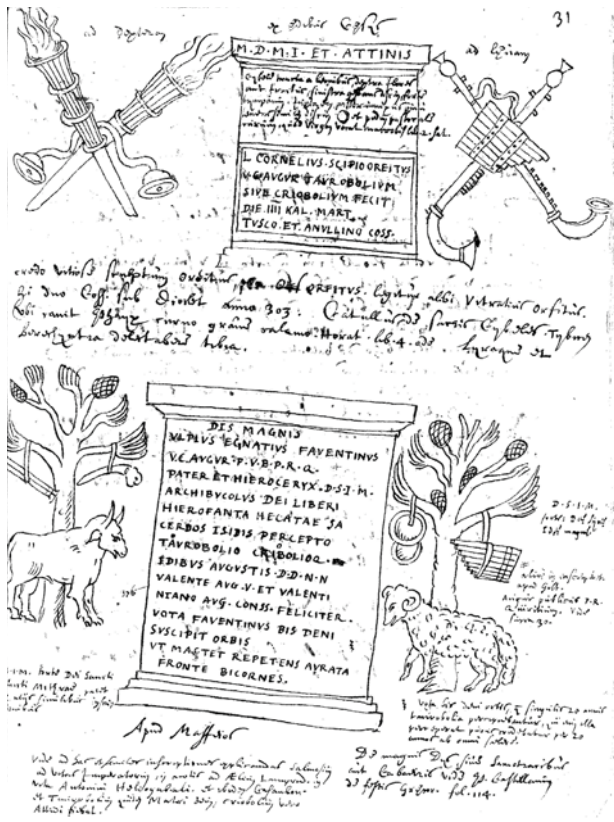
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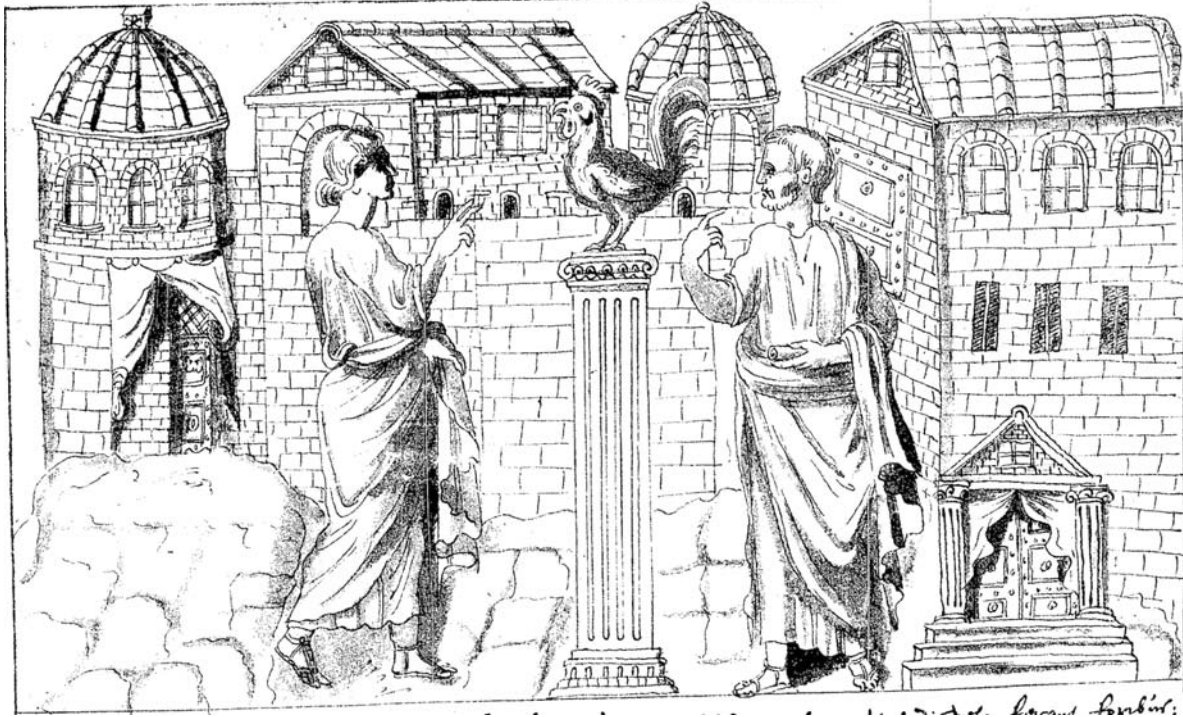
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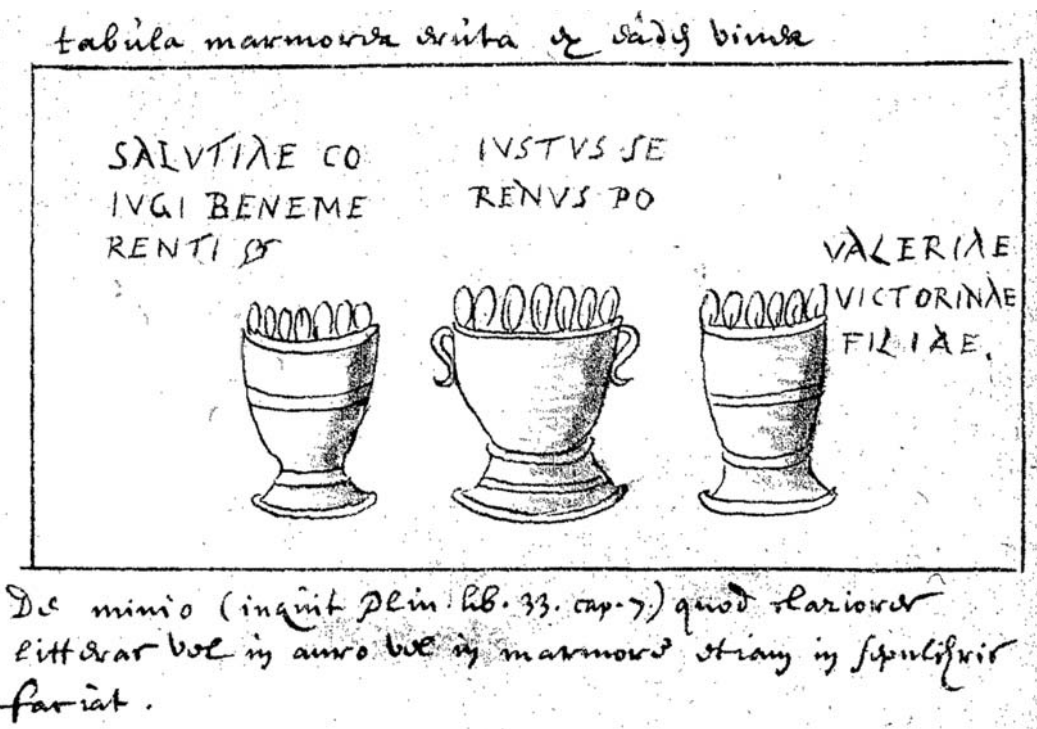
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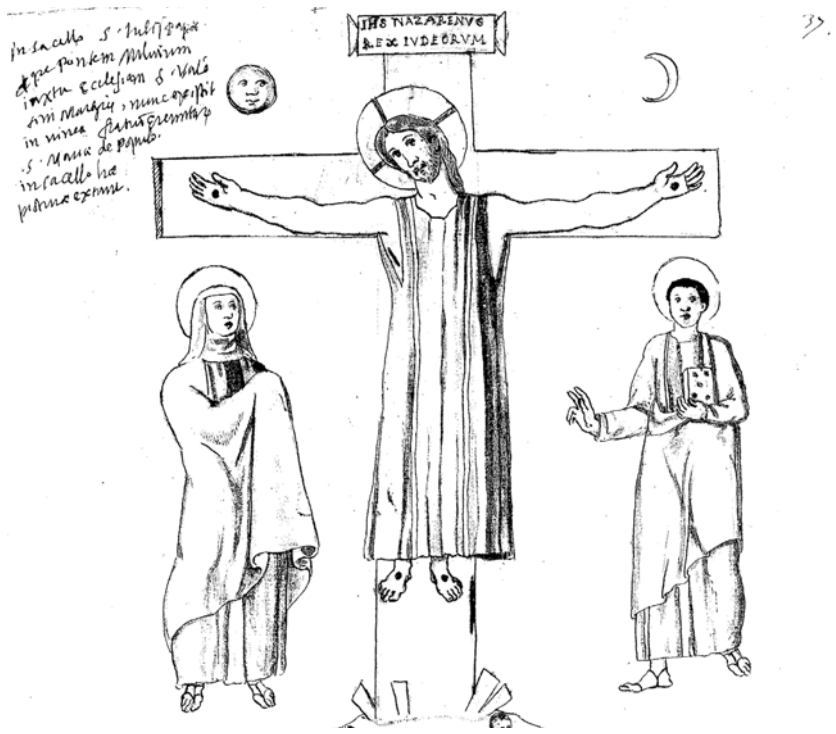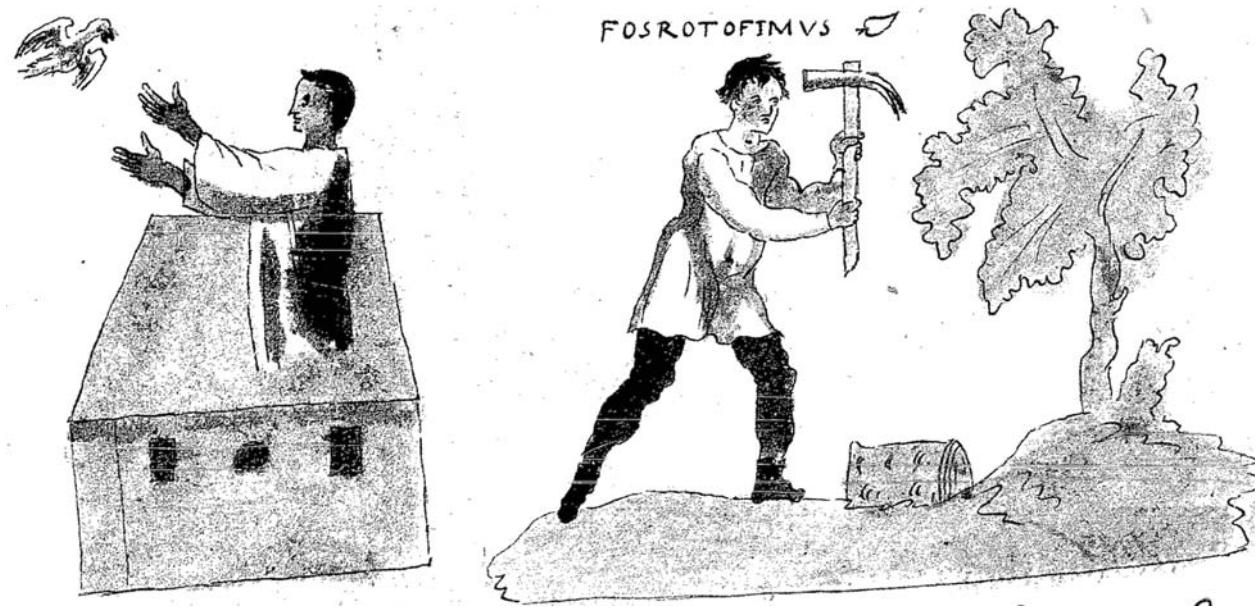Fig. 46. Drawings from Vat. Lat. 10545, ff. 187v; 188r., Rome, BAV

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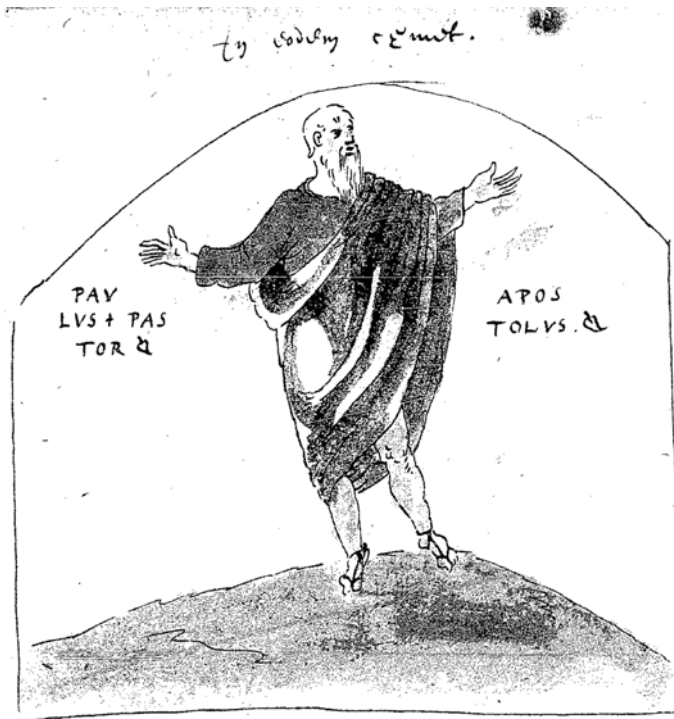
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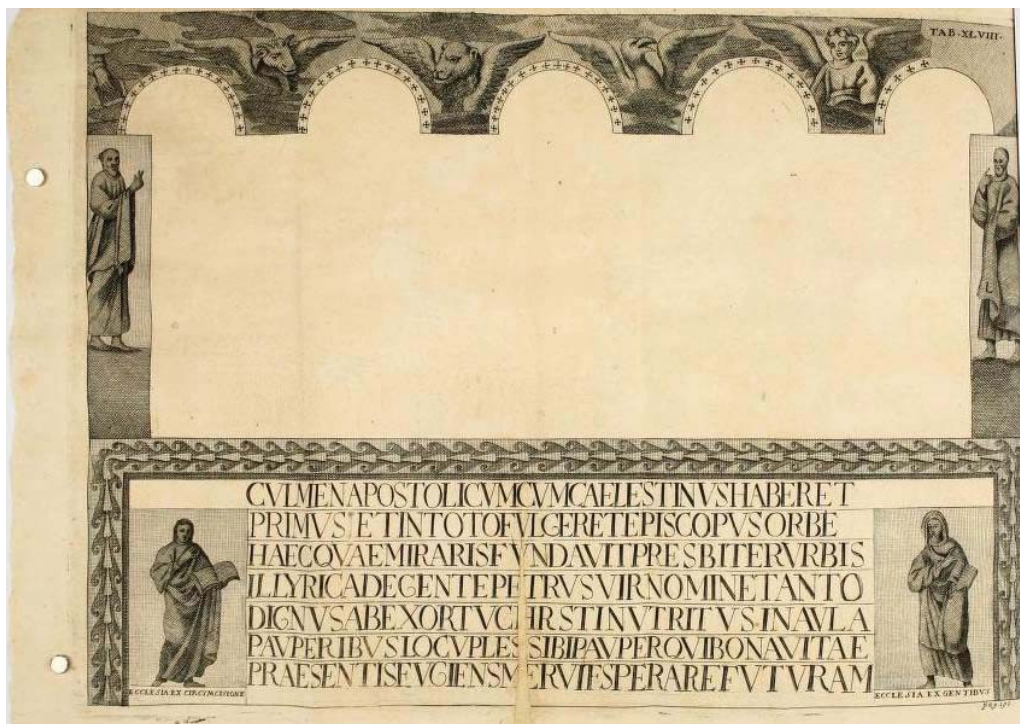
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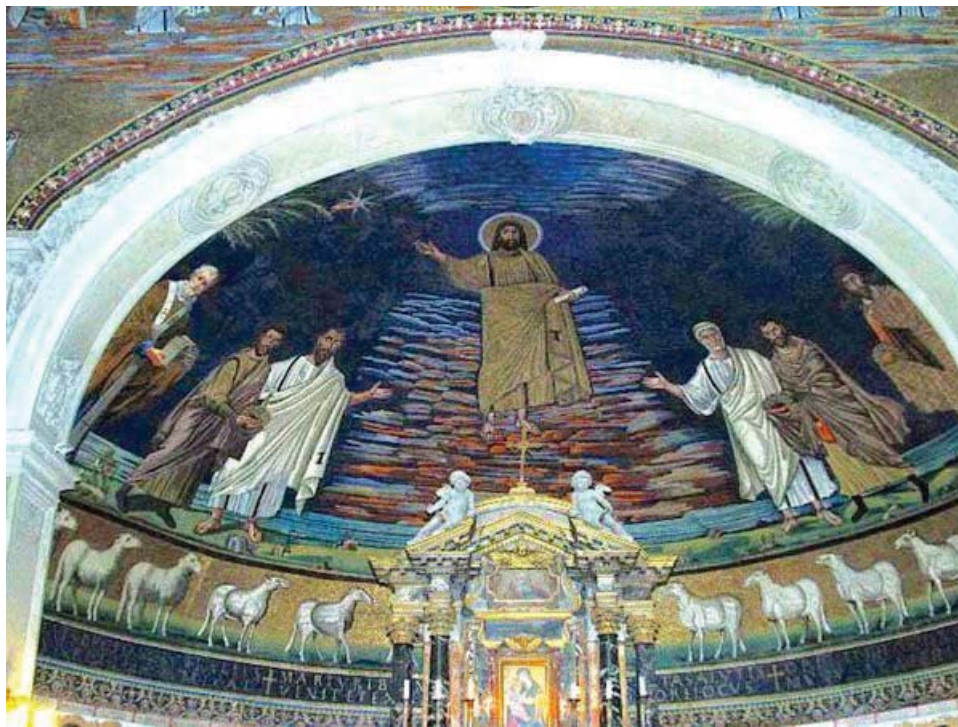
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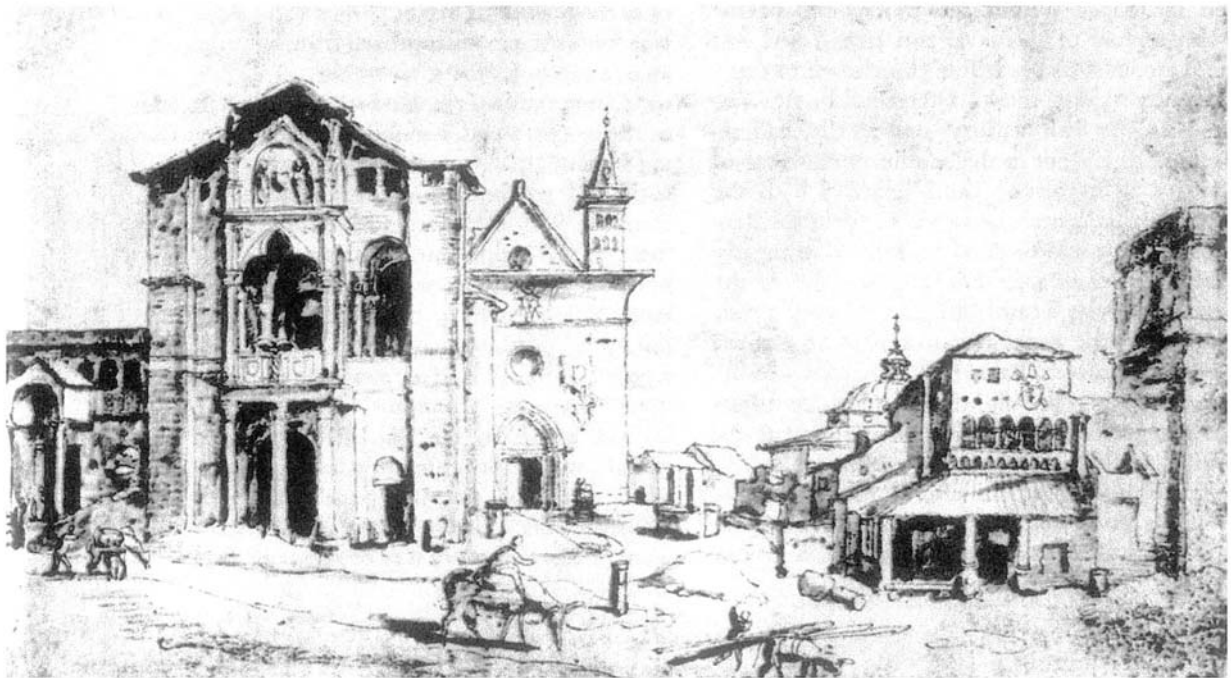
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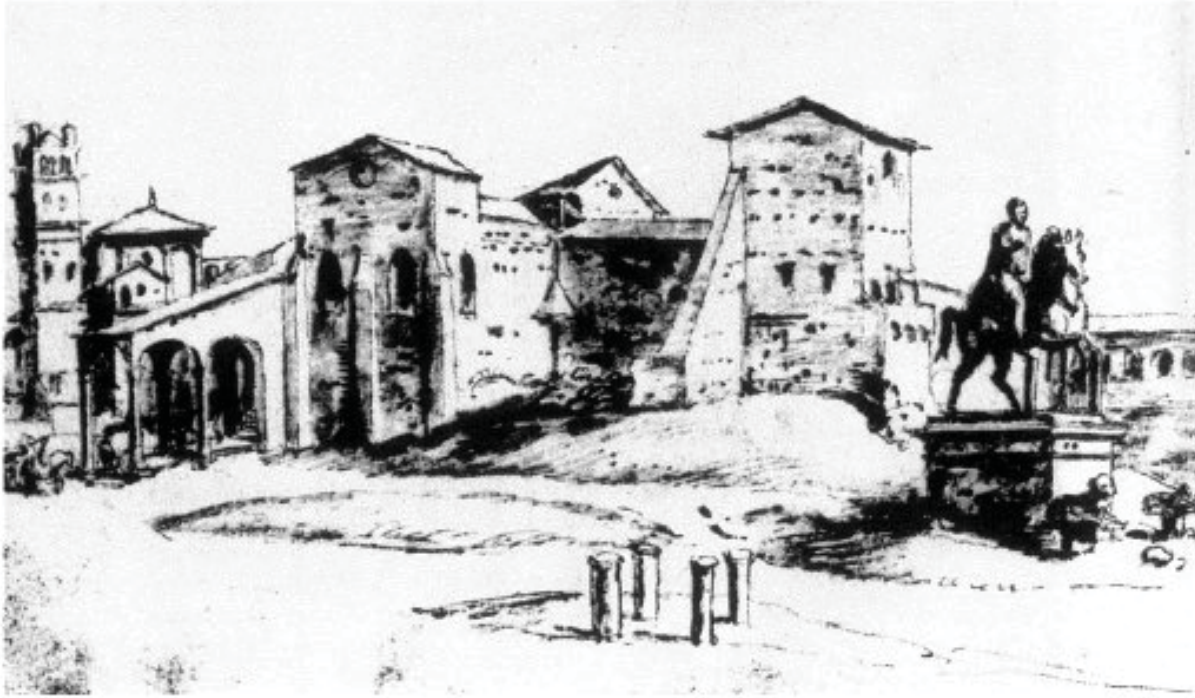
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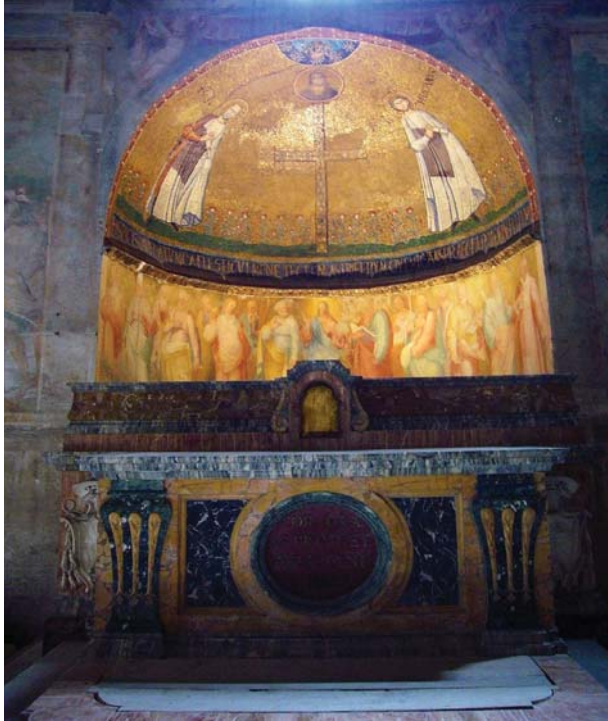
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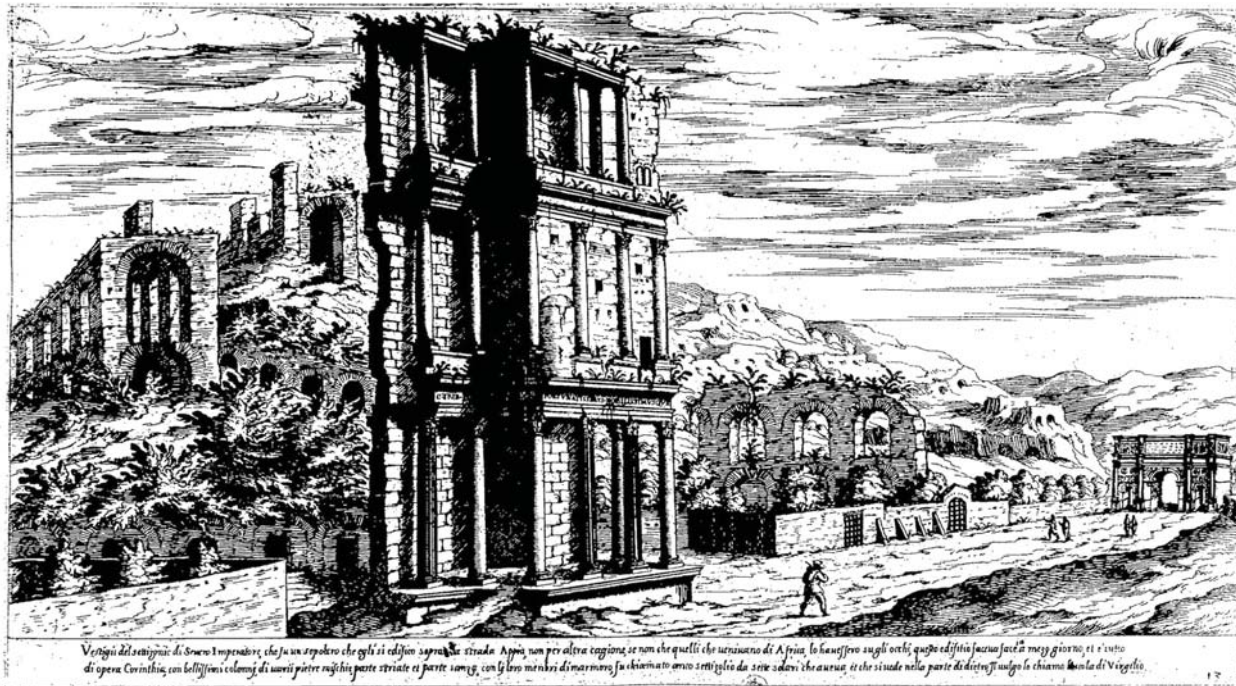
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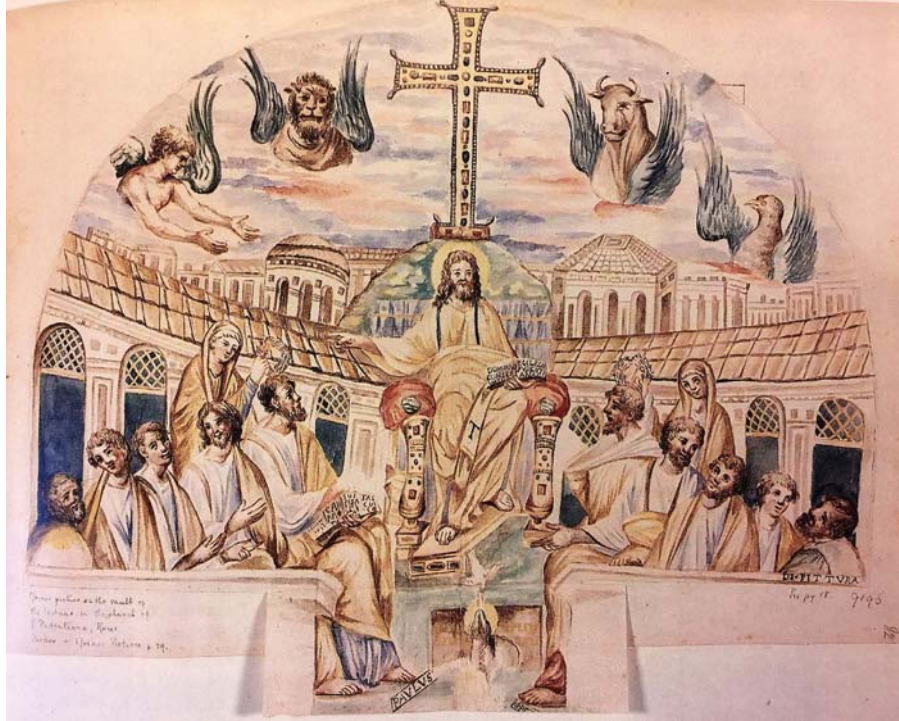
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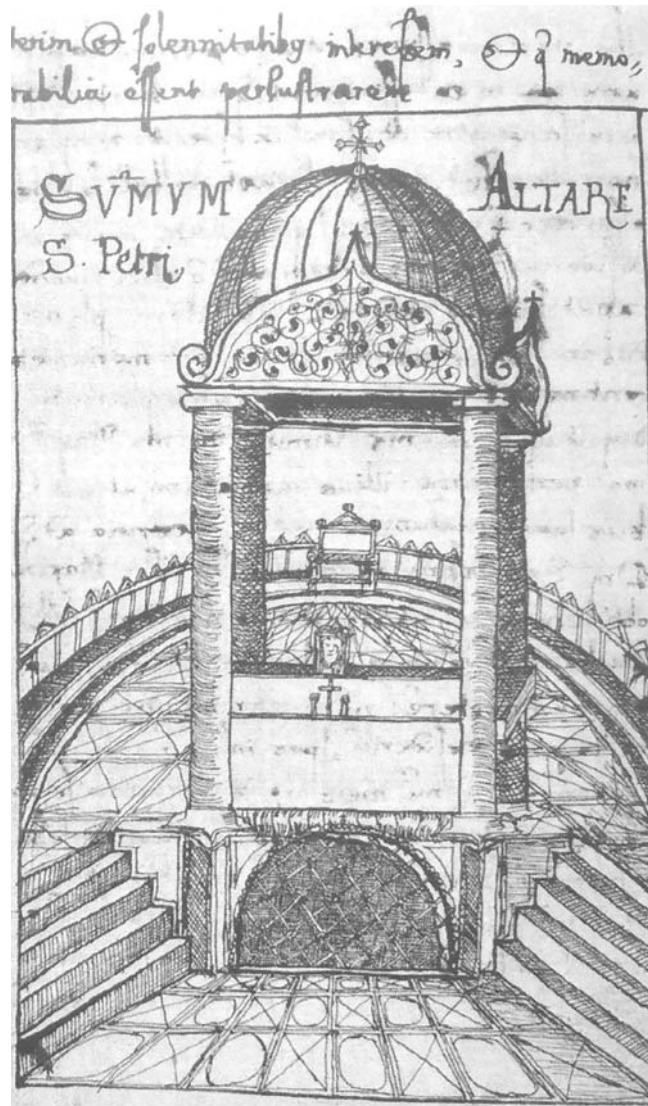
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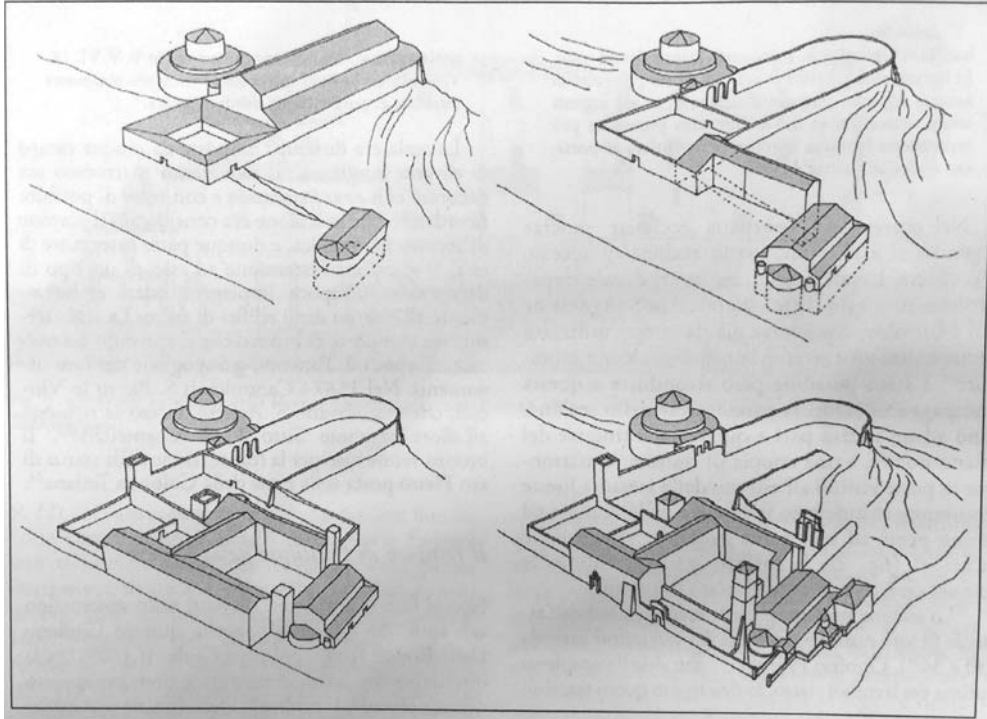
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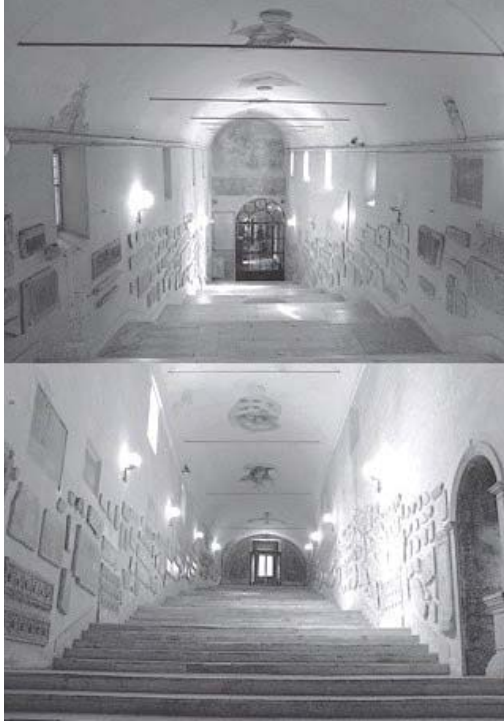
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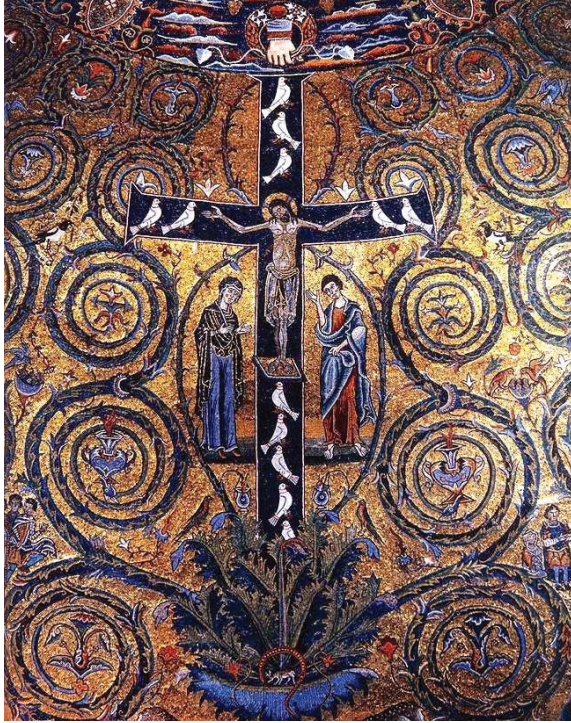
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