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A Study of the Pantheon Through Time

Caitlin Williams

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A Study of the Pantheon Through Time

By

Caitlin Williams

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ABSTRACT

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I analyze the Pantheon, one of the most well-preserved buildings from antiquity, through time. I start with Agrippa's Pantheon, the original Pantheon that is no longer standing, which was built in 27 or 25 BC. What did it look like originally under Augustus? Why was it built? We then shift to the Pantheon that stands today, Hadrian-Trajan's Pantheon, which was completed around AD 125-128, and represents an example of an architectural revolution. Was it even a temple? We also look at the Pantheon's conversion to a church, which helps explain why it is so well preserved. My study aims for an understanding of the Pantheon in context of what it meant for the people of Rome, the empire, and modern day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: Agrippa's Pantheon.....	4
Chapter II: Hadrian's Pantheon.....	17
Chapter III: The Pantheon as a Church and Today.....	40
Conclusion.....	52
Bibliography.....	55

INTRODUCTION

As one of the most well preserved and continually restored buildings from antiquity, the Pantheon has become a vast subject of research, yet there are many questions that surround the building. The Pantheon's original purpose is still unknown. Was it for religious use, for government business, a memorial or something else? However, looking at the Pantheon through time, beginning 27 B.C. or 25 B.C. to the modern day permits us to analyze the Pantheon to see what the purpose of the Pantheon was at different points, why it is so well preserved, as well as its place in antiquity for the people of the Roman Empire.

The best way to start looking at this is by looking at Agrippa's original Pantheon. Even though this first Pantheon is no longer standing, it was in the same place the current Pantheon stands in the Campus Martius, so we can examine its relationship to other buildings. By looking at where the Pantheon is located and why it was chosen to be placed there, we can analyze the importance of its location. By looking at where the first Pantheon was built by Agrippa, we can use the limited knowledge we gain for analyzing a building that later became a very prominent and still well preserved part of antiquity. There is also still some knowledge about the Pantheon that can be found by looking at ancient sources such as Cassius Dio. Dio describes why the Pantheon is called the Pantheon. This leads us into looking at the debate of what the Pantheon was for based upon the meaning behind its name. In addition to this, I will look at Agrippa's role in building the Pantheon, which was almost named the "Augusteum" and why it was not named this. In regard to the religion of the imperial cult and its connection to the assassination of Julius Caesar, I

am going to look at such features as the altar, oculus, dome and statues. I will also contrast the original rectangular shape of the building with the current Pantheon's circular form, and discuss its significance. Finally, how did people interact with the unique architecture of the Pantheon?

After this initial investigation, I will look at how and who rebuilt Agrippa's Pantheon, which burned down in a fire in 80 A.D. and which was again struck by lightning in 110 A.D. In other words, what is the significance of how the building kept being rebuilt and replaced? I also will look at the controversy of who built the Pantheon that is standing today by looking at the brickstamps, the brick types that were used, and the inscription on the building. I also look at how people would have felt about and interacted with the Pantheon, depending upon who was the emperor at the time. I also look at how the architecture of the Pantheon represents the architectural revolution that occurred in Rome and the meaning of the materials used. By looking at the architecture, Cassius Dio, and the *Historiae Augusta* I analyze whether the Pantheon was for pagan worship or for other purposes.

Lastly, I will look at the reasons why the Pantheon is still well preserved, which I attribute to the Pantheon having been converted to a Christian church because the Popes sponsored renovations to help maintain and refurbish many parts of the building over its history. I explain who was behind the conversion, when this took place, and what type of Church the Pantheon was converted to. I also describe the celebrations and events that have occurred in the Pantheon after the conversion. I will analyze the differences in the Pantheon from a pagan worship to Christian worship by looking at Mary and Jesus in comparison with Venus and Mars.

Another difference I look at is the placement of an altar inside the Pantheon as a church and how there is no evidence of an altar for the Pantheon that can be found from antiquity. I also look at how the Pantheon has influenced modern architecture by comparing it to such other buildings as the Duomo of Florence, and I do not neglect to discuss how the Pantheon is used by people today.



The Pantheon today (Photo by Caitlin Williams)

CHAPTER I: Agrippa's Pantheon

The first Pantheon was part of a massive plan that included "Rome's first public bath building" by Marcus Agrippa.¹ It is believed to have been created in 27 or 25 B.C. by Agrippa.² Agrippa's Pantheon and the Pantheon that is currently standing today were both located in the Campus Martius, which translates to "the field of the war god Mars."³ The building's placement on the Campus Martius could have been meant to underscore Augustus's connection to Mars, and this would have remained true for the Pantheon that replaced the original as well.

In 80 A.D. the original building was destroyed by a fire, it burned again in 110 A.D., and, as a result, the original is not the building that can be seen standing today in Rome.⁴ This first fire occurred during the reign of Domitian, and "in the time of Trajan [the building] was struck by lightning and burned again. The restoration then carried out by Hadrian seems to have been an entirely new building, probably on an entirely new plan."⁵ Our knowledge of Agrippa's Pantheon is fairly limited, but it has been concluded that it was probably also a rotunda like the one that stands today.⁶ One thing that can be taken away from the fact that the building has been rebuilt throughout history is that it always retained use and importance from the time it was built to present day.

The identification of who built Agrippa's Pantheon and the Pantheon that stands today has been the subject of debates among scholars; however, there is a

¹ Perkins, 1977, 70.

² Marder & Jones, 2015, 5.

³ Marder & Jones, 2015, 4.

⁴ Perkins, 1977, 70.

⁵ Richardson, 1995, 283

⁶ Marder & Jones, 2015, 4.

memorial to the first Pantheon that is retained on the current Pantheon that can be recognized as a tribute to Agrippa's Pantheon, the predecessor of Hadrian's Pantheon, which is the current one standing. The inscription on the facade reads, "M. Agrippa L. F. Cos tertium fecit," which may be translated as, "Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, consul three times, made [this]."⁷ The heritage of the Pantheon has been debated over time and who the current Pantheon was built by has been the subject of examination for a long time. It has generally been decided that the Pantheon that stands today was built by Hadrian. This conclusion has mainly been cemented by the fact of the presence of "brickstamps, excavation, and literary sources."⁸

The Pantheon is one of the most well preserved buildings from antiquity and in Greek means "all gods," which is namely a temple dedicated to "all gods."⁹ However, according to Cassius Dio who "provides two readings" of the name Pantheon, "one deriving from celestial symbolism, and the other from statues of multiple divinities, consistent with the common perception of the Pantheon as a temple to all gods."¹⁰ The reading of the Pantheon as being dedicated to all gods shows Rome's inclusiveness of other gods within Rome's state religion.

Through further excavation and readings of such literary sources as Dio, there have been other possibilities of what the building would have been used for. Agrippa's building plan, which was previously mentioned, was part of "Agrippa

⁷ Boatwright, 2013, 19.

⁸ Boatwright, 2013, 19.

⁹ Jones, 2000, 179.

¹⁰ Jones, 2000, 179.

beautif(ying) the city at his own expense.”¹¹ Cassius Dio describes the Pantheon in his writings when talking about the plan and buildings that Agrippa had built for Rome. Dio states:

[regarding] the building called the Pantheon[, i]t has this name, perhaps because it received among the images which decorated it the statues of many gods, including Mars and Venus; but my own opinion of the name is that, because of its vaulted roof, it resembles the heavens. Agrippa, for his part, wished to place a statue of Augustus there also and to bestow upon him the honour of having the structure named after him; but when the emperor wouldn't accept either honour, he placed in the temple itself a statue of the former Caesar and in the ante-room statues of Augustus and himself. This was done, not out of any rivalry or ambition on Agrippa's part to make himself equal to Augustus, but from his hearty loyalty to him and his constant zeal for the public good; hence Augustus, so far from censuring him for it, honoured them the more.¹²

Dio is detailing the original Pantheon and discusses the meaning of its name, which has also been debated. He gives two possibilities of why the building was called the Pantheon: one possibility is because of the numerous statues of different gods within the building and the other possibility is because of the building's dome and oculus. He also expressed his personal opinion on why he thinks the Pantheon got this name and he attributes it to the “vaulted roof,” rather than it being for all gods. This is likely because there were no known temples that were built to worship all gods in antiquity because each god needed to be worshiped individually, so that responses from the gods in the form of omens could be attributed to the proper god. How could an omen associated with the temple of “all gods” have been associated with the correct god? However, the overall inconclusiveness about why the

¹¹ Dio, trans. of 1917, 265.

¹² Dio, trans. of 1917, 265.

Pantheon has this name is part of its mystery today. Dio also talks about the relevance of the Agrippa's Pantheon to Agrippa and Augustus's relationship with each other. He describes Agrippa's responsibility for his building project and how he also included Augustus in that project. He wanted to "honor" Augustus by putting a statue of him inside Pantheon; however, as a result of the careful line that Augustus towed as emperor in every way except name, he declined Agrippa's offer. This decision by Augustus resulted in Agrippa installing a statue of Julius Caesar inside. It also resulted in

put[ing] statues of Augustus and himself in the porch. From this it appears that the design of the building was in honor of Augustus's divine forebears, especially Mars and Venus, a forerunner of the Temple of Mars Ultor.¹³

Looking further into the relationship between their relationship. It is clear that the now Pantheon was actually intended to be called the "Augusteum" after a statue of Augustus was to be put in, but this would be too much of a "deification."¹⁴

Looking at the religious connections, one believes that the building never became the Augusteum, because Augustus could not accept a building that involved blatant worship for himself. As a result of Julius Caesar's extensive power and rule over the Roman Empire he was assassinated by his senators. Augustus in response to his adoptive father's cruel and unexpected death was more careful with how he ruled the empire. Agrippa, as his trusted advisor, was attempting to create a place to honor Augustus, while he was still alive; however, being honored as a god while still living is one of the reasons that Caesar was assassinated. In that period of Roman

¹³ Richardson, 1995, 283

¹⁴ Goldsworthy, 2015, 259.

history, the only acceptable way to be honored like a god would have been after one's death. Augustus was still able to be worshiped while he was alive, but only

his Genius was worshiped in Rome and he received cultic honors in many provinces, Augustus was not formally deified until after his death in 14 CE, when a temple and deification were decreed in his honor.¹⁵

Even though Augustus was widely loved by the citizens of Rome it was important for him not to make the same missteps that Caesar made so that he could avoid an unnatural and abrupt death and end of his reign.

Dio also brings up the concept of religious and imperial cults in this period. Based on Dio's description of the Pantheon, it seems that the building was actually intended to be a place for the emperor to be aligned with the gods. During the lifetime of an emperor there would typically be numerous imperial cults that would worship him. These imperial cults would make statues of the emperor and honor the emperor in order to usually gain favor with him; albeit, none of these cult places would be within the city of Rome itself. Upon the emperor's death, he would be deified and worshipped as a god. Dio also describes imperial cults and their impact on the rule of emperor. As Warrior summarizes,

Two centuries later Dio comments on the beginnings of imperial cult: Augustus meanwhile allowed precincts in Ephesos and Nicaea to be dedicated to Roma and to his father Caesar, naming him the hero Julius...He ordered the Romans living there to honor these divinities. But he permitted foreigners, whom he called Greeks, to consecrate precincts to himself – the Asians in Pergamon and Bithynians at Nicomedia. That is where this practice started and has been continued under other emperors, not only among Greek nations, but among others subject to Roman rule. In Rome itself and the rest of Italy, no emperor, no matter how worthy of renown, has so far dared to do this. However, when they die, those that ruled with integrity are also

¹⁵ Warrior, 2006, 113.

granted various divine honors in Rome and heroa (shrines to heroes) are built to them. (Dio 51.20.6-8)¹⁶

The imperial cult was a way for Augustus, the first princeps, and every future princeps to maintain support for themselves from Roman subjects throughout the empire. These cities that Dio mentions created temples and statues of Augustus in this case to worship him and gain favor with him. It was important for Roman subjects outside the city of Rome to be able to show the emperor that they supported him. This was a key factor in public works and a customary part of public life in the Roman Empire. The reasons that “no emperor, no matter how worthy of renown” would put a statue of himself in Rome or have an imperial cult within the city was because of the lesson all subsequent emperors had learned from “Caesar [who had] intended to be proclaimed king of Rome.”¹⁷ Because of these practical guidelines for an imperial cult of the emperor, it was possible for many cities to “share the emperor, and for the cult of the emperor to endure long and spread” far, but not in the city of Rome itself.¹⁸

On the other hand, Dio’s two different readings of the Pantheon bring up the question whether this was in fact a temple for all gods or was it instead a place for people to worship both the emperor and gods or was it neither of these? Even with the information that is available and the building itself, we cannot be certain what the building was actually intended for, although, we have, of course, educated interpretations of what its purpose was.¹⁹ There are other theories on what the

¹⁶ Warrior, 2006, 113-116.

¹⁷ Clifford, 2003, 149.

¹⁸ Clifford, 2003, 238.

¹⁹ Jenkyns, 2013, 352.

name Pantheon means and why it was chosen for this building. Because the statues that are believed to have been placed in the Pantheon that no longer exist, the name is harder to explain. People argue that it is “a temple of all the gods, a temple of the 12 Olympian gods, or a temple in which the image of a ruler stood in the company of such divinities.”²⁰

Included among these statues, were statues of Mars and Venus. The Venus statue was wearing earrings “made of halves of a pearl” from Cleopatra.²¹ The statues of Venus and Mars are significant because Augustus claimed these gods to be part of his lineage. Venus was believed to bestow charisma and charm and Mars was believed to give war intelligence. These statues underscore Augustus’s association with the building and connect him even further not only with the building itself, but also to his divine lineage. Inspecting Venus further, it is interesting that the statue wore earrings from Cleopatra. This could have been to highlight the victory Augustus had over Cleopatra and Mark Antony to gain his position of princeps after Julius Caesar was assassinated. This would further strengthen the Pantheon’s connection to Augustus, if Agrippa indeed included these trophies of war as features in the building.

Many of the interpretations of the Pantheon revolve around its use for religious purposes and the main piece of evidence for this is the dome and oculus. During Augustus’s time as princeps his goal was to reinstitute traditional Roman values back into the culture. Part of this reinstitution was bringing a “revival in the

²⁰ Marder & Jones, 2015, 4.

²¹ Richardson, 1995, 283.

religious life.”²² However, in this case, since we are looking at Agrippa’s Pantheon, it is unclear whether the building had a dome and oculus or exactly how much it looked like the Pantheon that stands before everyone today. Nevertheless, it is still interesting to look at the Pantheon in a religious aspect because Romans were usually careful to make sure temples served one specific god. In Roman religion, each god would respond to each person’s prayer in his or her own way, and each omen that would present itself, whether through a sacrifice, birds, lightning, or some other method, meant a different answer from the specific god associated with an individual temple. Because each temple was dedicated to just one god, so omens occurring in a temple could be associated with the correct deity. These events would be “opportunities for the exchange of messages – prayers from men to gods, warnings and messages of acceptance from gods to men encoded in the entrails.”²³ This concept in Roman religion becomes important when applying it to the Pantheon because it brings up the question of how this type of structure could possibly serve as a space of worship for all gods when it would be impossible to identify any omens as coming from a specific god? However, as Jenkyns writes

we do not actually know what function the building had. On the other hand, standard authorities, are confident about what it represented: order, harmony, unity, the emperor’s universal rule within a cosmos governed by the gods.²⁴

Another interesting aspect to consider with the Pantheon is that there was no known altar. Although it is widely perceived and believed that the Pantheon was a temple for “all gods” and “there are textual clues...no altar has been discovered in

²² Simpson, 1997, 171.

²³ Beard, North & Price, 1998, Volume I, 37.

²⁴ Jenkyns, 2013, 352.

front of the Pantheon.”²⁵ An altar would have been used to perform sacrifices: “animal sacrifice was the central ritual of many religious occasions.”²⁶ These animal sacrifices would “then [be] butchered, cooked, and eventually eaten by the worshippers” if the sacrifice showed “acceptable signs.”²⁷ It brings up an interesting question of what makes a Roman temple a temple because “Roman temples typically had altars in front of them.”²⁸ If this building was in fact a temple, the altar would have been one of the least important parts of the possible sacred space around the Pantheon. The Pantheon itself would have only housed cult statues and votive offerings. The most important aspect of religious worship would have required having an altar for offering sacrifices to the gods. It is possible that the lack of an altar can be attributed to the fire that destroyed Agrippa’s Pantheon, and after the fire perhaps an altar was never rebuilt. On the other hand, this lack of an altar could be attributed to the fact that Pantheon was never intended to be a temple for all gods, but instead, a place for Augustus to be honored, but not worshipped, as an associate of the gods, and this lack of formal religious purpose would explain the absence of an altar.

As much as we question whether religion was even part of the purpose of the building we may presume that the unique appearance of the building’s interior and exterior led people to experience this piece of architecture in different ways. The Pantheon was also a unique structure that was made of “the combination of three distinct geometric elements...a circular rotunda, a rectangular portico, and a fabric

²⁵ Marder & Jones, 2015, 4.

²⁶ Beard, North & Price, 1998, Volume I, 36.

²⁷ Beard, North & Price, 1998, Volume I, 36.

²⁸ Marder & Jones, 2015, 4.

that mediated between them.”²⁹ Although most people in Rome believed in the predominant polytheistic religion, it is also important to look at the Pantheon in terms of how the people who experienced it architecturally as a way to analyze its place in religion and in society.

Roman religion was polytheistic and included the worship of many gods and goddesses. Through the course of the empire the Romans were known for adding to their own religion additional gods that they came across through their conquest of foreign lands. Roman religion had its core Roman mythology that “as Rome grew in population, size, and wealth, so the number of temples increased, either by the building of new temples for old deities, or for new deities that had been introduced or recognized for the first time.”³⁰ As the territory of the Roman Empire expanded so did the deities that were included in the Roman religion. Some of these cults would adopt gods from outside Rome, including such gods as Isis and Osiris, whose cult became “one of the major new cults in Rome.”³¹ Roman religion “was based on tradition that went back earlier than the foundation of the city itself.”³²

Agrippa was Augustus’s right-hand man and received the power of *maius imperium proconsulare* (an authority that exceeded that of every other magistrate outside the city of Rome) at one point during his service under Augustus.³³ He was also Augustus’s son-in-law and it “implied a political closeness” and gave Augustus,

²⁹ Marder & Jones, 2015, 4.

³⁰ Beard, North & Price, 1998, Volume I, 87.

³¹ Beard, North & Price, 1998, Volume I, 264.

³² Beard, North & Price, 1998, Volume I, 2.

³³ Goldsworthy, 2015, 353.

as father-in-law, “a degree of superiority” in their relationship.”³⁴ As part of being Augustus’s right-hand man he played an important role in government. During this period of his activity in government he worked on building projects that “provided plenty of well-paid employment as well as a constant advertisement for the glory of Augustus and the peace his victories brought.”³⁵

Agrippa’s building was originally believed to have been rectangular and faced south; however, more recently it is believed that Agrippa’s Pantheon faced north and actually looked much more like the one that is standing today.³⁶ Through further examination it was found that the columns that exist today are part of a preexisting base, portico, and platform.³⁷ The fact that the temple always faced north instead of south and having been switched in the past is backed up by Roman religious beliefs that when a temple was inaugurated its location would be chosen specifically by sight lines and sacred space: switching orientations would have been incredibly irreverent according to Rome’s religious practices.³⁸ This is further supported by the fact that after the destruction of the original temple, the purpose of the reconstructed temple was not altered. Even though it is unclear what the Pantheon was for, its purpose can be assumed to have remained the same, which supports the conclusion that the building’s orientation was not changed.³⁹ The time of this flip from southern to northern orientation would have occurred under

³⁴ Goldsworthy, 2015, 353.

³⁵ Goldsworthy, 2015, 259.

³⁶ Marder & Jones, 2015, 5.

³⁷ Simpson, 1997, 170.

³⁸ Simpson, 1997, 171.

³⁹ Simpson, 1997, 171.

Hadrian.⁴⁰ Based on Hadrian's style of restoring monuments and buildings, he generally showed a lot of restraint, which can be noted in the inscription still "giving credit to the original builder but taking none for himself," he would have not been "party to such a dramatic alteration of a religious element."⁴¹

It is important to point out that because of "its north-facing orientation, Agrippa's Pantheon was aligned axially with the entrance to the Mausoleum of Augustus about half a mile away."⁴² This we may relate back to Cassius Dio's writing that discusses how Agrippa created this building for Augustus. If the building did actually face north instead of south, the symbolism of the relationship between the two buildings would show the importance of Augustus on the landscape of Rome. The Mausoleum of Augustus began to be built in 28 BC, which is right before the Pantheon was built.⁴³ The timeline of these two buildings being so close together can imply that they were intentionally planned to connect to each other since the Pantheon was originally supposed to be dedicated to Augustus.

Another result of the new possible connection between Agrippa's Pantheon and the Mausoleum of Augustus is the shape of these two buildings. As a result of current scholarship, the building is believed to have also "combined a round space with a portico" like the one that stands today.⁴⁴ Both are in a similar shape. The Pantheon is in a rotunda shape and the Mausoleum of Augustus is in a shape that is very similar to a rotunda, although it is not completely a dome shape; instead it is a

⁴⁰ Simpson, 1997, 171.

⁴¹ Simpson, 1997, 171.

⁴² Marder & Jones, 2015, 7.

⁴³ Richardson, 1995, 247.

⁴⁴ Marder & Jones, 2015, 5.

mound.⁴⁵ However, even though the Mausoleum of Augustus is not technically a rotunda, the resemblance in shape is uncanny. Since the Pantheon was originally planned to be a building dedicated to Augustus, and the Mausoleum of Augustus is a tomb for Augustus, we may wonder what the significance of the rotunda shape was to Augustus's rule. Another similarity that both these buildings share is that because they were continually used from antiquity to the present day they have both been preserved. Even though Agrippa's Pantheon is not the current Pantheon that stands today, the mere fact of its reconstruction shows how important it was to rebuild it so that it could continue to be used.

With the more recent belief that Agrippa's Pantheon was a rotunda instead of a rectangle, this building would have stood out among the architecture of Rome - even though Agrippa was creating many new buildings, including, "his baths, the Basilica Neptuni, and the Saepta Iulia."⁴⁶ It is important to clarify that "the relationships among these buildings are not at all clear, and their functions seem to have been very different from one another, but all seem to have been major monuments."⁴⁷ Not many buildings at the time were shaped like the Pantheon. At the time, Agrippa was commissioning many building projects to provide employment for Romans and ultimately continue to rally massive support for Augustus.

⁴⁵ Richardson, 1995, 247.

⁴⁶ Richardson, 1995, 283.

⁴⁷ Richardson, 1995, 283.

CHAPTER II: Hadrian's Pantheon

The Pantheon that stands today what is known as Piazza della Rotunda, was the Pantheon that is believed to have been completed during the reign of Hadrian around 125-128 A.D..⁴⁸ Through the Pantheon's presence in history, it has been rebuilt and refurbished multiple times by numerous emperors; however, the most well-known and documented is Hadrian's rebuilding of the Pantheon as a result of it burning down from a lightning strike in 110 A.D.. The building had been rebuilt by Domitian in 80 A.D. and then it was destroyed again by lightning in 110 A.D. and had begun to be rebuilt by Trajan , but was completed by Hadrian. The full extent to which Trajan contributed to the rebuilding of the current Pantheon that is attributed to Hadrian is unclear.⁴⁹ Until the late 19th century, when an excavation occurred, it was unknown that Hadrian provided such a large contribution to the rebuilding of the Pantheon.⁵⁰ In this excavation Roman brickstamps were analyzed and it was concluded that the rebuilding of the Pantheon had begun with Trajan in 110 A.D. and that Hadrian completed Trajan's project of rebuilding the Pantheon.⁵¹

Part of scholars difficulty with identifying Hadrian's connection to the building is the modesty he had while rebuilding and refurbishing monuments in Rome: "Although he built innumerable works everywhere, he never inscribed his own name except on the temple of Trajan."⁵² When he finished the rebuilding of the Pantheon he restored the original inscription on the temple instead of adding his

⁴⁸ Marder & Jones, 2015, 7.

⁴⁹ Richardson, 1995, 283.

⁵⁰ Marder & Jones, 2015, 7.

⁵¹ Boatwright, 2013, 19.

⁵² Boatwright, 2013, 21.

own inscription about himself. Hadrian is known as a “magnanimous restorers” and was well known for giving credit to the original builder when applicable.⁵³ Another part of the difficulty of identifying who rebuilt the Pantheon is that there was a lack of “procedure” or protocol that was in place when refurbishing or rebuilding these buildings: it was up to the “imperial restorer to decide whether to view the structure as his own creation or as *de jure* still the handiwork of the founder.”⁵⁴ In the case of the Pantheon this is relevant. Hadrian, like Augustus, is known for restoring Rome; however, this rebuilding by Hadrian involved mostly restorations, which resulted in him rarely putting his name on any of the buildings to mark his contribution.⁵⁵ In the *Historia Augusta* it describes and lists all the buildings Hadrian is credited with restoring, and notes how he did not sign any of them:

He [Hadrian] built public buildings in all places and without number, but he inscribed his name on none of them except the temple of his father Trajan. At Rome he restored the Pantheon, the Voting-enclosure, the Basilica of Neptune, very many temples, the Forum of Augustus, the Baths of Agrippa, and dedicated all of them in the names of their original builders.⁵⁶

But even with this difficulty there have recently been ground-breaking scholarly studies. Lise M. Hetland puts together many of these studies to show that the Pantheon was begun by Trajan and finished by Hadrian, which brings into question how much did Hadrian actually contribute to the rebuilding of the Pantheon. At one point Hadrian’s Pantheon was deemed to have only been rebuilt by Hadrian; however, this idea has been refuted. It is now believed that what is

⁵³ Stuart, 1905, 430.

⁵⁴ Stuart, 1905, 428.

⁵⁵ Hetland, 2015, 82.

⁵⁶ *Historia Augusta*, 1921, 61.

known as Hadrian's Pantheon was actually begun by Trajan. The same research that determined Hadrian's Pantheon to be exclusively Hadrian's has been used as an argument against it, that is, one the evidence of the brick stamps. Bricks in general were a common and ubiquitous part of the building of imperial buildings. They were overlaid with marble, but individual brick would have had been stamped, and these stamps can be used to date them.⁵⁷ Hetland looks at Bloch's research on brickmakers and how he creates a chronology of bricks both stamped and unstamped.⁵⁸ His research was used to create a stockpiling theory that looks at the order of bricks in buildings and when a building has used bricks from various time periods.⁵⁹ This theory was then applied to the Pantheon, which appears to have used bricks mostly from Trajan's time period rather than Hadrian's.⁶⁰ Another possible piece of evidence that contributes to the argument that the Pantheon was begun during Trajan's time instead of exclusively in Hadrian's is Hellmyer's hypothesis.⁶¹ This says that the Pantheon's style is similar to Apollodorus of Damascus's style, who was Trajan's master architect.⁶² However, it is not actually known who the architect of the Pantheon was. We have only theories that are primarily based on stylistic evidence.⁶³ For the purposes of this paper we will conclude that Hadrian's Pantheon was begun by Trajan and finished by Hadrian.

⁵⁷ Hetland, 2015, 83.

⁵⁸ Hetland, 2015, 86.

⁵⁹ Hetland, 2015, 90.

⁶⁰ Hetland, 2015, 93.

⁶¹ Hetland, 2015, 95.

⁶² Hetland, 2015, 95.

⁶³ Marder & Jones, 2015, 23.

In light of the detailed argument and research over who built Hadrian's Pantheon, it is important to acknowledge that the Pantheon was continuously rebuilt and refurbished through history anytime it was destroyed or significantly damaged. This constant upkeep shows the significance of the building to the Roman people, Rome, and the emperor. The Pantheon was in a very populated part of Rome and the central part of the capital of the Roman Empire. This centrality is possibly part of the reason why the building has been continuously maintained: it is an integral part of the architecture of Rome as a city. It is interesting to note that despite this upkeep of the building, it has never been explicitly documented what the building was used for over the almost two thousand years that it has remained standing.

Because the Pantheon was in a very populated part of the Roman Empire, i.e., Rome, the question arises of how people interacted with it. Just as today, not all citizens are equal, in the Roman empire there was even more discrepancy between statuses of citizenship in the Roman Empire. There were many classes of people and subdivisions within classes, but we may summarize: male Roman citizens, female citizens, free Roman subjects who were not citizens, slaves, and foreigners from outside the empire. It is important to acknowledge that within these groups there were subdivisions of poor, middle class, and elite. With different people of different backgrounds, it means that everyone would have had their own experience within the Pantheon.

If we make the most likely assumption, that the Pantheon was a temple, then we could start possibly making educated guesses about how different groups of

people interacted with it as a temple. It is easy to assume that being a Roman citizen is a two-dimensional concept. Because the Roman Empire was so expansive, it is important to keep in mind that the Roman citizens were multi-faceted and that there were different types of Roman citizens. This can be described as

the examination of the characteristics of Roman society and life in 'Roman' communities; [and]...the definition of 'Roman' can be constructed, for example, by reference to the foreign, Hellenic model, cultural institutional, which the Romans both infiltrated and dominated.⁶⁴

There are also other ways to describe and look at Roman citizenship in antiquity, as in the context of politics, to investigate how people would have interacted with this monument.⁶⁵

If we view the Pantheon as a temple for both the gods and the emperor, a person from a lower class could have walked into the temple to pray. It is also important to consider the time period when the Pantheon was rebuilt. Trajan and Hadrian were both emperors that were loved by the people and were responsible for many public works. They left their mark historically as being "good" emperors to the people and the empire. This person from a lower class would have been swarmed by images of not only their gods, but also of the emperor. This could have instilled pride since the emperor could be viewed as a god or maybe fear, depending upon who the emperor was at the time. It is important to note that while the person may have chosen to pray in a temple of all gods this person would have been constantly reminded of his or her place in society and would have been "watched" by the divine emperor during his or her time of prayer.

⁶⁴ Gardner, 1993, 1.

⁶⁵ Gardner, 1993, 1.

If, on the other hand, a noble person was to have walked in, this person would still have been bombarded with many different images and statues of the gods. This person, however, may not have felt as threatened by the image of the emperor because of their high standing and political rank in society. On the other hand, under a tyrannical emperor, high status individuals may have been under more scrutiny. Obscurity of person in Rome could have offered more security than nobility in some cases. This person could have felt a certain resentment to that emperor. Overall, the noble person would have felt more like an equal to the emperor than the lower class person would have. Each class would have experienced this building differently during different points in the empire. It is important to acknowledge that each person's interaction with the building would likely change with who the emperor was at the time in Rome. Later on it will be discussed how part of the reason the Pantheon still remains today is because it was switched from pagan worship temple to Christianity, so it could be used as a church.

Both the interior and exterior are architectural feats and interesting developments. Hadrian's Pantheon faces north and consists of four major parts: a portico, transitional block, drum and dome.⁶⁶ The intermediate block's only purpose is to connect the "rectilinear geometry of the portico and the circular geometry of the rotunda;" other than this and containing a staircase, it does not actually have a use.⁶⁷ The Pantheon's shape is unique in its appearance because the pronaos gives the appearance of a classical temple with its triangular pediment; however, this

⁶⁶ Waddell, 2015, 133.

⁶⁷ Marder & Jones, 2015, 13.

pediment is “exceptionally high and shallow to hide the dome behind it.”⁶⁸ It is not until you enter that the Pantheon reveals itself as a rotunda.⁶⁹ Between the pronaos and the intermediate block are large bronze doors for the main entrance, through which one still enters. This intermediate block also plays an important role with the triangular pediment in concealing the dome shape of the Pantheon from everyone before they enter.⁷⁰ Once one enters the rotunda of the Pantheon one will see the coffered cement dome ceiling with an oculus in the middle. The dome of the Pantheon would have been covered in bronze and the outside brick would have been covered in a marble sheathing, overall, giving the Pantheon an appearance of grandeur.⁷¹

The exterior and interior utilize marble heavily, which in themselves are very interesting to the architecture of the Pantheon because the marble used for the columns and flooring was shipped from around the Roman Empire. This aspect of the Pantheon shows its connectivity to the rest of the Roman Empire because the building was built with the cooperation of other regions and the diverse origins of the material represents a “visual reminder of the ample reach of Rome’s imperial dominion, its unity, and its collective wealth.”⁷² These marbles came from the modern day areas of Italy, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, and Tunisia.⁷³ The Pantheon was originally built when the Roman Republic had already transitioned to an Empire with Augustus as the first emperor. It is uncertain whether marble was used in the

⁶⁸ Richardson, 1995, 284.

⁶⁹ Richardson, 1995, 284.

⁷⁰ Richardson, 1995, 284.

⁷¹ Ward-Perkins, 1977, 152.

⁷² Marder & Jones, 2015, 17.

⁷³ Marder & Jones, 2015, 17.

original construction of the building. Under Augustus, the Empire had expanded to a size that Augustus felt should be maintained, rather than further expanded.

However, during the time the Pantheon was rebuilt under Trajan and Hadrian, the Empire had expanded dramatically. This “new” Pantheon visually represents that expansion in the architecture and the material that was used, specifically the marble. All these types of marbles would have been visually distinct in different appearances and colors, showing luxury and derivation from other areas outside of Italy.

The colonnade in the exterior of the Pantheon consists of marble, Corinthian, monolithic columns. Having these marbles and stones imported from all over the Roman Empire for a temple within the city of Rome shows the connectivity between Rome and the rest of Empire. It shows Rome’s great power over the rest of the Empire because they are able to import these expensive pieces of marble and stone from all across the Mediterranean. Even though the Pantheon is believed to have been a *Roman* temple, it is defined with resources from areas outside of Rome, but within the Empire, thus challenging the idea of it being exclusively Roman. The distance that the marble traveled displayed the vastness of the Roman Empire. The marble would have traveled most likely through coastal travel, which can be identified through looking at the “wrecks of ships carrying stone.”⁷⁴ Shipping stone was a very expensive process and would require a lot of wealth, which the emperor utilized in his choice of designing how the Pantheon would look. Trajan and Hadrian

⁷⁴ Robinson, Damian, & Wilson, 143.

choose to import marble from across the empire to Rome as a display of power to the people of Rome who would see the building on a regular basis.

The Pantheon is not just an impressive feat that shows the reach and connectivity of the Roman Empire, but it also is a visual representation of Rome's architectural revolution in terms of all the techniques and skills that had to be used to create a building of this caliber and detail.⁷⁵ The Pantheon uses concrete, which is a technological feat for the Romans in general. The development of concrete is partially what allowed the Pantheon to be built, and concrete was originally developed to make production of buildings more efficient and cheaper, and it was also exploited for many projects around the empire.⁷⁶ The concrete that Rome used was exceptionally light because it used a specific material called tufa, which is volcanic ash, to build bigger arches and buildings. This material is also what made the Pantheon possible.

Directly in front of the portico of the Pantheon there is believed to have been an arch called "the Arch of Piety."⁷⁷ It is believed that this arch was possibly part of a processional order.⁷⁸ It is believed to have not been a triumphal arch, but rather a memorial arch. The place where the arch is located was also associated with a story about "when the emperor [Trajan] was prepared to go forth to war in his chariot, a poor widow fell at his feet, weeping and crying."⁷⁹ The story goes on to describe that the widow wanted justice for her murdered son and wanted the emperor's help in

⁷⁵ Ward-Perkins, 1977, 142.

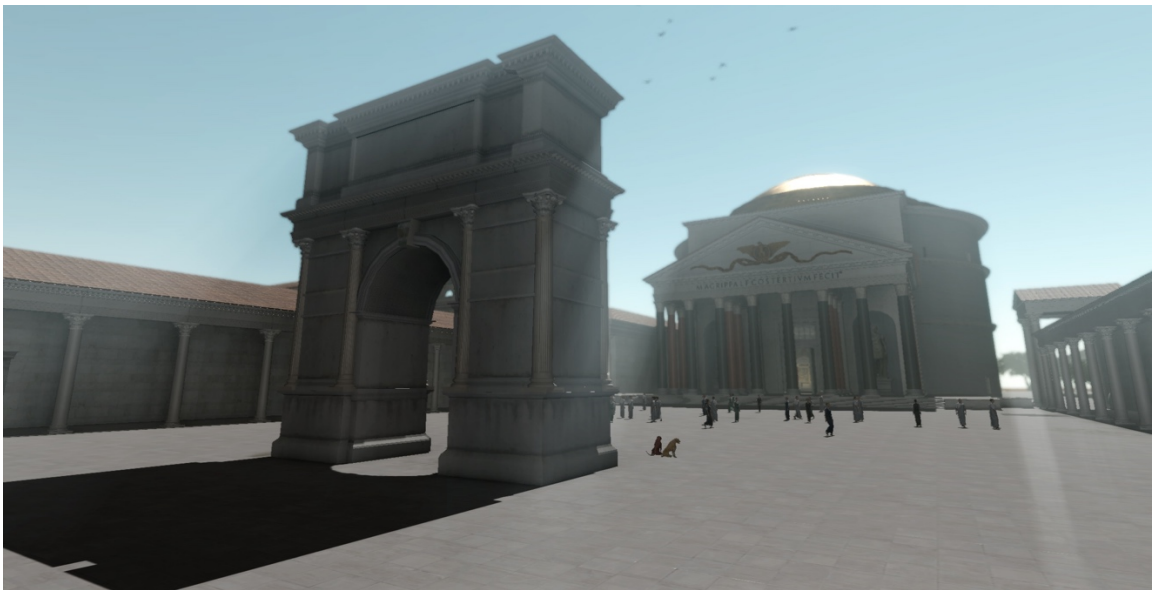
⁷⁶ Ward-Perkins, 1977, 142.

⁷⁷ Gardiner, 1986, 53.

⁷⁸ Gardiner, 1986, 53.

⁷⁹ Gardiner, 1986, 7.

getting this justice.⁸⁰ Trajan jumped out of his chariot and helped the woman get justice and sentenced the murderer to death.⁸¹ After this the woman asked if the murderer could not be killed, and she take him in as a son instead; Trajan agreed, and sent her away with “rich gifts.”⁸² Even though the arch was not part of the Pantheon in any direct way, it is important to note what the physical landscape would have looked like for Roman citizens approaching the Pantheon. There would have been a large arch that a Roman could go around or through and on either side on the way leading to the entrance of the Pantheon there would have been buildings flanking the sides, all of which, almost concealed the “surprise” of the rotunda shape that was held inside.



“Virtual reconstruction of the Pantheon from antiquity” (Virtual Roman Pantheon in Blue Mars/CryEngine)

⁸⁰ Gardiner, 1986, 7.

⁸¹ Gardiner, 1986, 7.

⁸² Gardiner, 1986, 7.

The Pantheon is a “hemispherical dome, of which a crown was exactly the same height above the pavement as the internal diameter of the building.”⁸³ The detailed measurements and intricacy in accuracy of producing this building had to be perfect in order to make it not only stand, but remain standing this long. The Pantheon, is an exceptional example of representing the technological advancements of antiquity. The Pantheon can fit a perfect sphere inside its rotunda because of the precise measurements used to build it. Many times, when looking at the Pantheon, we perceive its separation into two aspects of architectural analysis, ie., rectangular and spherical parts: the rectangular part includes the porch, intermediate block and anything outside the rotunda while the spherical part includes rotunda and dome.

The hemispherical shape of the building could be formed by making sure the distribution of weight throughout the building was never too much. This began by creating a sturdy foundation. The foundation of the Pantheon sits on a “solid ring of concrete, about 24 ft., wide at the base and 15 ft., deep,” and outer rings were added for any additional support that the building called for.⁸⁴ The idea of constantly distributing weight continued throughout the building of the Pantheon. The drum of the Pantheon carries most of its weight at the bottom, and as it grows in height it uses lighter materials to make sure that it does not collapse on itself: the bottom of the drum uses travertine then progress to layers of travertine and tufa to finally just tufa.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ward-Perkins, 1977, 152.

⁸⁴ Ward-Perkins, 1977, 155.

⁸⁵ Ward-Perkins, 1977, 155.

However, because of the large size of the Pantheon, alternating the material that was used in building the Pantheon was not enough. There were other precautions that were taken as well. Throughout the drum there are seven cavities in the drum to remove some of the weight by creating dead space within the interior.⁸⁶ On top of these cavities are relieving arches, which can be visually seen in the brick work on the exterior side of the drum.⁸⁷ Relieving arches work by creating a surface where instead of all the pressure hitting one spot in the structure, it disperses the pressure across the entire arch. This development allowed the construction of bigger structures to be able to be made because they could support more material.



“Visualization of the sequence of operations in building the Pantheon.” (Marder & Jones, 2015, ‘Plates Section’ 204)

⁸⁶ Ward-Perkins, 1977, 155.

⁸⁷ Ward-Perkins, 1977, 155.

The image above from Marder & Jones gives a visual representation of the method used to build the Pantheon from the bottom to the top. Within these steps, one can see the weight was a factor because each of these layers would have been built of lighter and lighter material as the building increased in height. The Pantheon's three primary layers in the hemispherical rounda dare also very prominent in this image. The issue of weight continued to be kept in mind when creating the dome as well. The coffers in the dome were used to relieve some of the weight of the dome itself so that it would not collapse. The geometry that was used by this structure creates a seamless and harmonious appearance.⁸⁸ Above the coffering, lighter concrete in the dome was also used.⁸⁹

When looking at the Pantheon in regard to its dome, it is important to acknowledge that the Pantheon is not the only domed building. Most of the domed buildings that existed in the Roman world were temples. They include: The Temple of Mercury in Baiae, the Temple of Venus in Baiae, the Temple of Diana in Baiae, the Temple of Apollo at Lake Avernus, and the Caldarium of the Baths of Caracalla.⁹⁰ It is important to keep in mind that not all these buildings existed at the time the Pantheon was built. These domed buildings were not all the same style as the Pantheon, but it is interesting to look at what other types of buildings used a similar dome shape. This shape was not very common; however, the buildings that do have it are mostly temples in Baiae. This could possibly be used as evidence to justify that

⁸⁸ Marder & Jones, 2015, 9.

⁸⁹ Marder & Jones, 2015, 21.

⁹⁰ Martines, 2015, 118.

the Pantheon does in some way follow the same path as other temples by having a dome. At the time that the Pantheon was built it was a “novel combination of elements from a half-dozen different building types: baths, tombs, basilicas, temples, triumphal arches, and theaters.”⁹¹ Some of the possible buildings that could have influenced the construction of the Pantheon were Trajan’s Baths, Trajan’s Market, the Domus Aurea and the domed temples at Baiae.⁹² Trajan’s Baths frigidarium is a triple vault that spans 85 Roman feet and has many other domes and half domes.⁹³ These large domes and vaults could have been used to inspire the creation of the Pantheon’s dome. Trajan’s market has 170 barrel-vaulted rooms and this expansive technique could have been applied to the Pantheon.⁹⁴ The Domus Aurea had an octagonal domed room and is viewed as a room to show the capability of concrete.⁹⁵ This capability of using concrete has clearly been built upon in its use within the Pantheon itself. The last major buildings that possibly influenced the Pantheon were the temples at Baiae, outside Rome. These temples had “thin shells” and did not have coffering, but these temples are examples of how a dome was used to cover a building like the Pantheon.⁹⁶

These parts of the architecture are interpreted by scholars as designed for religious purposes. The Pantheon’s dome and oculus were not just to “astound the Roman populace,” but also to represent “a universal cosmology...[or] as Dio intuits

⁹¹ Waddell, 2015, 132.

⁹² Waddell, 2015, 136-139.

⁹³ Waddell, 2015, 136.

⁹⁴ Waddell, 2015, 137, 139.

⁹⁵ Waddell, 2015, 139.

⁹⁶ Waddell, 2015, 139.

the celestial home of the gods.”⁹⁷ It is “the only source of light” and it is also meant to bring the person in the oculus “to the center of the space.”⁹⁸ To build on this, it is important to acknowledge that there were no windows in the Pantheon because “being denied visual contact with surrounding buildings puts the visitor in the realm removed from everyday reality.”⁹⁹ As previously described in the first chapter, Dio gives an explanation for the building’s name that has to do with the heavens, and this idea can also be attributed to the oculus. On the other hand, the oculus could have worked in tandem with the coffers on the ceiling to create a sundial:

the alignment of the sunbeam on the coffers above the eastern exedra in the late afternoon at the summer solstice and its highlighting of the transition between the perfect hemisphere of the dome and the cylinder of the drum at noon on the equinox offer strong indications that the building could have continued to serve as a sundial after the rebuilding, even if this is not consistently evident in the present state of the building.¹⁰⁰

The idea that the Pantheon could have been a physical sundial is an interesting take on the oculus and the coffering. The oculus has been mainly interpreted as an architectural choice to connect the Romans and all the gods through the center of the oculus. The oculus causes the Pantheon to become an open air space because it allows for all the elements to come into the dome. Part of this unbreakable connection can be interpreted to represent the connection between the people of Rome and the natural world, which is controlled by the gods. It is also intended to give the worshippers a closer presence to the gods by enabling one to look up to the sky, while confining one within the temple: “the Hadrianic

⁹⁷ Jones, 2000, 182.

⁹⁸ Martines, 2015, 100.

⁹⁹ Jones, 2000, 183.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas, 2017, 202.

Pantheon evoked the vault of heaven with the sun” and could be considered a “denoted area of the heavens” with “a cosmic orientation.”¹⁰¹

The oculus is also believed to interact with the coffering in a celestial aspect.¹⁰² The coffering of the dome is “divided into twenty-eight parts...and twenty-eight was considered ‘perfect’” because it was one of the only numbers “that equal the sum of their factors” and because twenty-eight was an approximate estimation that the Romans had for the number of days in a lunar cycle.¹⁰³ The idea of perfection, which is connected with the five rows of 28 coffers in the dome of the Pantheon also has a connection with

a tradition going back to the Pythagoreans, it was in Hadrian’s time that Nichomachus of Gerasa included in the first book of his influential *Introduction to Arithmetic* a discussion of perfect numbers...[which] are like ‘bridges’ and ‘stairways’ to knowledge.¹⁰⁴

The coffering that branches off the dome is also part of the “celestial and terrestrial themes” of the Pantheon, and its connection to the gods was not a coincidence. The Romans were famous for their meticulous planning of buildings, and the overarching structure of the Pantheon as well as its fluid connectivity to the gods from part to part represent additional pieces of evidence that show how Pantheon may have been planned to be used for the worship of some gods. This idea of perfection also brings up the constant concept of balance that was maintained in classical architecture.¹⁰⁵ Creating a temple or building that was aesthetically

¹⁰¹ Beard, North & Price, 1998, Volume I, 285.

¹⁰² Jones, 2000, 183.

¹⁰³ Jones, 2000, 183.

¹⁰⁴ Martines, 2015, 102-103.

¹⁰⁵ Martines, 2015, 103.

pleasing and of vast importance showed respect to the gods and could be an offering.

The interior of the Pantheon speaks to the inclusiveness of Roman religion and offers an answer to the question of what the building's function was. It can be interpreted as a visual representation of the inclusion of gods both within Rome and outside Rome. The nooks within the rotunda of the building would have housed statues of different gods. The interior and shape of the building was built as "the celestial home of the gods" and the architecture is clearly intended to create a connectivity between the gods and the worshippers of the temple.¹⁰⁶

Although the Pantheon is a very well preserved building, the cult statues that were possibly present in the building are not preserved, which adds to the problem of figuring out what the true use of the Pantheon was. Many of the statues are now missing because they have either been repurposed or destroyed during the building's conversion to a church.¹⁰⁷ There is discussion of what the statues in the Pantheon may have represented: were they cult images or were they images of the emperor, and part of this debate derives from our inability to identify the Pantheon's actual function.¹⁰⁸

One of these theories of what cult statues in the Pantheon represented is derived by retranslating and looking at the syntax of Cassius Dio's description of Agrippa's Pantheon.¹⁰⁹ Adam Ziolkowski looks at the syntax of the passage that describes Agrippa's Pantheon and the possible statues in it and concludes that

¹⁰⁶ Jones, 2000, 182.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas, 2017, 146.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, 2017, 147.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas, 2017, 148.

instead of Dio just referring to the two cult statues Mars and Venus being in the Pantheon, he was actually just “highlighting” those two statues in an overall reference to the image of many gods.¹¹⁰ This argument suggests that Mars and Venus would have just been the main two cult statues, but not the only ones. Nissen goes on to make the argument that each niche, exedra and intermediate tabernacle would have held different gods and deities, with Mars and Venus in the central niche.¹¹¹ Following this possible reconstruction of cult statues lining the walls of the Pantheon, they would have been placed along the walls by classification.¹¹²

Keeping in mind that this theory was based entirely on the dissection of syntax from Dio, it would nevertheless suggest that there would have been as many as fifteen cult statues in Agrippa’s Pantheon and thirty-four in Trajan and Hadrian’s Pantheon.¹¹³ In the image above, one can see the suggested placement of the cult statues within the Pantheon’s niches, as well as which gods were believed to have been displayed or honored within the Pantheon. Nissen was unsure exactly how to choose what cult statues would have likely been in the Pantheon, since only Venus and Mars were explicitly mentioned.¹¹⁴ However, Nissen did come up with a way to attempt to figure out what other statues would have been in the Pantheon:

He filled the other exedras and intermediate tabernacles with other deities selected from the lists of gods in the Acts of the Secular Games of 17 B.C. — Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno Regina, Apollo and Diana — and in the various classifications of the Romans’ penates by the late Republican authority Nigidius Figulus and the imperial antiquarian

¹¹⁰ Thomas, 2017, 149.

¹¹¹ Thomas, 2017, 149.

¹¹² Thomas, 2017, 149.

¹¹³ Thomas, 2017, 190.

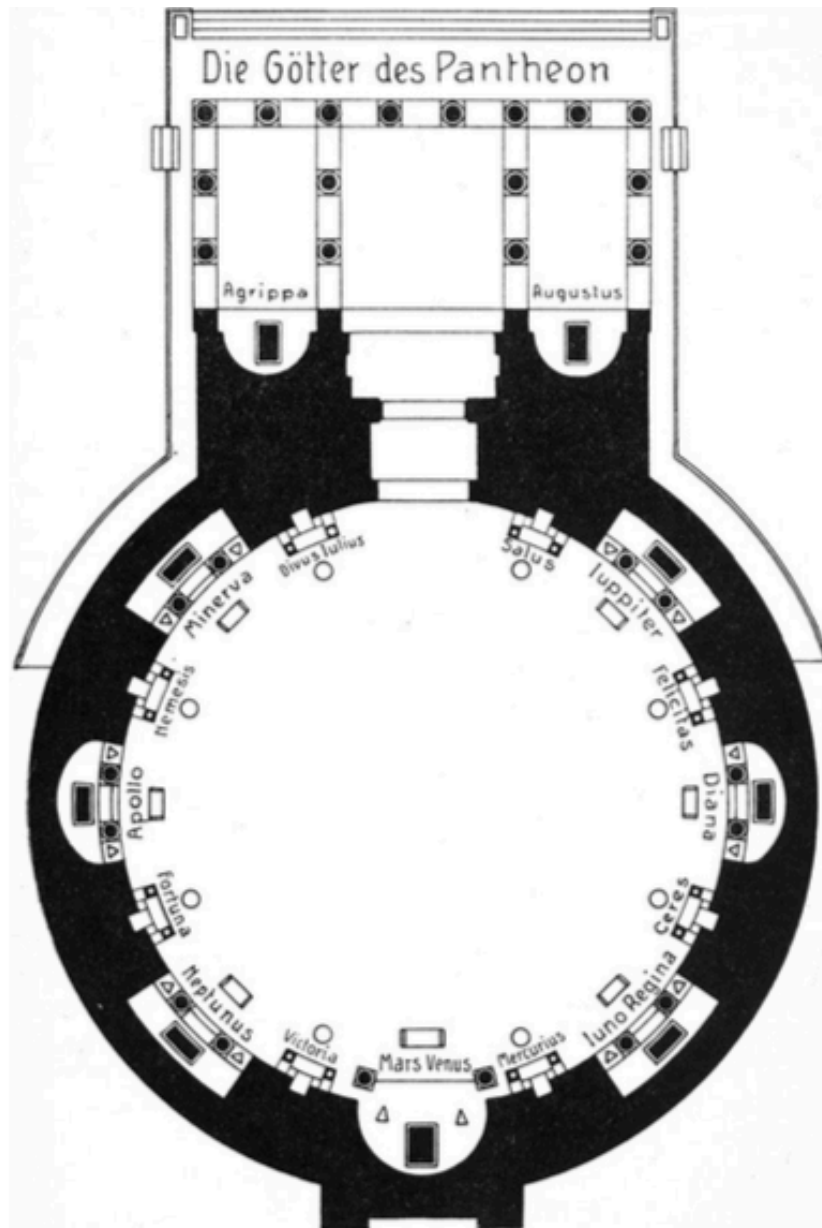
¹¹⁴ Thomas, 2017, 149.

Cornelius Labeo (who include Neptune), Varro (who adds Minerva), and the Republican historian Cassius Hemina (who identifies them with the Great Gods of Samothrace); and he drew further support from the combatants at Actium described by Virgil on the Shield of Aeneas: Neptune, Venus and Minerva; and Mars and Apollo. The statue of Divus Julius Nissen assigned to the niche immediately to the right of the entrance, justifying this placement by the argument that it would have suited the orientation of his comet, on the western side of north. Other particular positions around the rotunda he assigned on the basis of orientation or simply proximity. He gave the position of precedence, in the aedicule to the left as one enters, to the goddess Salus because of her importance in the sacrifices of the Arval Brethren. He was undecided whether or not minor deities stood beside the principal ones. Most of this, of course, was pure speculation.

Even though this method is not perfect and does rely heavily on deductive guessing, it provides us with an interesting and intellectual way of analyzing what possible cult statues were in the Pantheon. It is possible that even though this description of cult statues from Dio was applicable to Agrippa's Pantheon, it may apply to Trajan and Hadrian's Pantheon as well. Applying this similar method to Trajan and Hadrian's Pantheon, the argument goes more in depth as to how many statues would have been in each niche and exedra based upon its special appearance.¹¹⁵ By looking at the space, it is clear that the "rear exedra was designed for a special purpose," possibly to hold the cult statues of Venus and Mars.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Thomas, 2017, 190.

¹¹⁶ Thomas, 2017, 195.



"Reconstruction of statues in Pantheon by Nissen." (Thomas, 2017, 150)

However, despite extensive speculation and scholarly debate arguing that the Pantheon served a religious purposes as a temple, it is still uncertain what its true purpose was. As we have discussed, the word Pantheon means "all gods," which is part of where the interpretation that the Pantheon was a temple has come from, but, if we look at the physical appearance of the Pantheon, it does not look like many

other temples, “but finds parallels in imperial baths and palaces, and later mausolea.”¹¹⁷ Typically:

Few temples were circular, and those were relatively small. The question of size is relevant since interiors were intended primarily as homes for cult statues rather than for group worship (which focused on the altar outside), so large dimensions were not inherently necessary. Tradition demanded single occupancy, that is to say one divinity per room, explaining why temples to the Capitoline triad have three rooms and why the Temple of Venus and Rome has two. So the Pantheon, with its single vast canopy, is unlikely to have been a temple in the strict sense of the term, although this does not rule out a spiritual realm of some kind and temple-like associations...¹¹⁸

This aspect of Roman temples being dedicated to only one god and the specificity of buildings is very important to understanding the Pantheon. It presents the argument that the Pantheon being a temple is actually an incorrect way to look at the building, but that it is a hybrid of expressing religious devotion, but possibly not to one god in particular. It is important to look at other buildings in comparison to the Pantheon because when looking at the Pantheon as a possible temple it is important to look at what a typical temple would have looked like and what buildings the Pantheon does actually look like. The Roman customs for creating a temple would have been styled to house one god showing complete devotion to them in that one building. In relation to temples on Capitoline hill, it is interesting to look at the Terminus Temple.

When Romans were looking to build the Temple Jupiter Optimus Maximus, they needed a place to put the temple so at each current temple they asked each of the gods if they could take down the temple, every god accepted, except the god

¹¹⁷ Jones, 2000, 179.

¹¹⁸ Jones, 2000, 179.

Terminus, who is the god of boundaries. Therefore, as a result the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was built around the Temple of Terminus and the building was given an open roof so that the god could be connected to this building. This case is very relevant to looking at how two gods are housed in almost the same building, but given two rooms for separate devotion. It is also relevant for looking at an oculus. The Temple of Terminus is a religious building that is clearly defined by the fact that it has an altar and follows the typical temple format, but it has an oculus like the Pantheon. There is a distinct connection spiritual and architecture wise to having an oculus in a building to allow the gods and nature to inhabit a space and be with the worshippers.

One of the interesting uses of the Pantheon that is discounted many times when looking at what the Pantheon was used for is Dio Cassius's description of Hadrian's interaction with the Pantheon:

He [Hadrian] transacted with the aid of the senate all the important and most urgent business and he held court with the assistance of the foremost men, now in the Palace, now in the Forum or the Pantheon or various other places, always being seated on a tribunal, so that whatever was done was made in public.¹¹⁹

Many of the uses of the Pantheon are attributed to its possible religious function as a temple; however, with this description by Dio Cassius (as cited by Hetland) it is interesting to look at the Pantheon as a possible building that was possibly repurposed not just for religious uses, but also for government procedures and meetings. The Pantheon, in architectural terms, would have been both an impressive and spiritual building to hold meetings.

¹¹⁹ Hetland, 2015, 81.

The building's architecture would be a constant reminder of the far reach of the empire and the oculus could have provided a way for the gods to observe the people in the meeting as they were running the government. Based on this, it has been argued that the Pantheon was not specifically a temple, but rather for "a tribunal for the emperor."¹²⁰

As much as we question whether a formal and traditional religious purpose was ever part of the purpose of the building, we may presume that the unique appearance of the building's interior and exterior led people experience this piece of architecture in different ways. The Pantheon was also a unique structure that was made of "the combination of three distinct geometric elements...a circular rotunda, a rectangular portico, and a fabric that mediated between them."¹²¹ Although most people in Rome believed in the predominant polytheistic religion, it is also important to look at the Pantheon in terms of how the people who experienced it architecturally to analyze its place in religion and in society.

¹²⁰ Thomas, 2017, 147.

¹²¹ Marder & Jones, 2015, 4.

CHAPTER III: The Pantheon as a Church and Today

The Pantheon was believed throughout antiquity to have been a location for pagan worship or a temple to the gods. Today, however, it is a church. Hadrian's Pantheon is one of the most well-preserved buildings from antiquity and part of this long history can be attributed to the fact that it was converted to a church. The Pantheon's conversion into a church can also be viewed as a reflection of the city of Rome itself, which became Christian. The building was, however, converted to a church much later than the city was. In the Early Christian period or "sub-phase of the later imperial age, the temple-front porch, with its uncompromisingly pagan associations, had to go."¹²² Part of the reason the Pantheon is believed to have been converted to a church subsequently, however, in spite of this earlier destructive urge, is because "the desire of the popes to make Rome a monumental capital again, brought about the second, Renaissance phase of history."¹²³

The Pantheon was converted to a church in the middle ages by the decision of Boniface IV, who asked the emperor Phocas in Constantinople to make this change to the Pantheon.¹²⁴ Pope Boniface's request to appropriate the Pantheon to make it a church is found in the *Liber Pontificalis*:

He asked the emperor Phocas for the temple called the Pantheon, and in it he made the church of the ever-virgin St Mary and all martyrs; in this church the emperor presented many gifts¹²⁵

Through this we find out that he, being Boniface, had requested the conversion of the Pantheon from, most likely its status as a temple, to a church. This conversion

¹²² MacDonald, 1976, 104.

¹²³ MacDonald, 1976, 108.

¹²⁴ Thunø, 2015, 233.

¹²⁵ Davis, 2010, 62

was accepted and by looking at medieval liturgical calendars it can be determined “that the Christian consecration of the Pantheon took place on May 13 of 613.”¹²⁶

The year of the conversion is likely 613; however, some scholars argue that it occurred in 609 or 610.¹²⁷ The fact that the Pantheon was once a pagan temple was something that people wanted to push under the rug:

The collective dedication of the Pantheon to “all the martyrs” meant that the annual celebration of *S. Marae and martyres* on May 13 also became the origin of the Roman feast in honor of all saints. As the English historian the Venerable Bede declared about a century later, the collective dedication was aimed at replacing the earlier dedication of the buildings to the *pantheon* of the pagan gods and thus at substituting saints for demons, a claim that was repeated throughout the Middle Ages. The oft-repeated story that Pope Boniface had 28 cartloads of martyrs’ bones transferred here from the catacombs outside the walls of Rome was probably invented during the Counter Reformation a millennium later than the Christian consecration and bears little resemblance to the seventeenth century cult of relics in Rome.

This builds on the observation earlier that the Romans as well as other Europeans were making an active effort to almost erase the memory of the time when a pagan religion was celebrated. The extra effort to create a celebration around the consecration of the Pantheon becoming a church is to make sure that the public's attention and beliefs surrounding the building are all Christian. The celebration of the founding of the Pantheon is no longer practiced today; however, there is still celebrated on Saturday night and Sunday morning.¹²⁸ The church does put on a new spectacle of celebration called the Pentecost mass.¹²⁹ This celebration is not for the consecration of the church; instead, it “celebrates the descending of the Holy Spirit

¹²⁶ Thunø, 2015, 234.

¹²⁷ Thunø, 2015, 234.

¹²⁸ Events at the Pantheon, 2018.

¹²⁹ Events at the Pantheon, 2018.

of the disciples of Jesus Christ after his ascension.”¹³⁰ The celebration is very different from the first yearly celebration that was held there because this celebration no longer tries to prove the Pantheon is a church, but instead embraces its status by celebrating important Christian holidays. However, the celebration is still a huge spectacle: firemen go to the top of the dome and drop tons of rose petals through the oculus symbolizing how “the holy spirit [came] to earth and the rose reminds us how Jesus Christ shed blood for the people.”¹³¹



Rose petals falling from the oculus at 44 meters to celebrate Pentecost mass. (“Rose Petal Rainfall at the Pantheon, Rome,” Luxe Associates Travel)

It is interesting to look at the Pantheon being embraced as a church because it is believed to have once been a place of worship for Venus and Mars, and the emperors, but is now a place of worship for Jesus, Mary, and martyrs. The change is drastic when looked at beyond the scope of a “centralized single volumetric space”

¹³⁰ Events at the Pantheon, 2018.

¹³¹ Events at the Pantheon, 2018

for Christians to use to worship.”¹³² The two main Roman gods that were worshipped there together with the emperors are ironically opposites of the divinities that are now worshipped in the space. Venus, the goddesses of sex, Mars, the god of war, and the emperors, have no relation to Mary, Jesus, and the martyrs. On the other hand, does the opposite nature of the new divinities help us confirm that Venus, Mars, and the emperors were indeed the main focus of the Pantheon before its conversion? Not necessarily, but the difference in who was worshipped under the same dome should not be overlooked either. One of the starkest differences is that Venus, goddess of sex is replaced by Mary, the virgin. This clear opposition between figures is interesting to consider in comparing the pagan and Christian religions. Mars, who was the god of war, is replaced by Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and the martyrs, who were common Christians who died for their beliefs, replace the emperors, whose authority commanded their executions. The conversion of the Pantheon helps confirm Christianity’s complete opposition to paganism.

Preservation as a church would be the “salvation” for the Pantheon and keep it from falling victim to most other damage and pillaging, and would also provide it with restorations and repairs.¹³³ It is important to point out that even though the consecration of the Pantheon helped prevent the pillaging and destruction of the Pantheon. Conversion was not totally its salvation. Conversion provided, however, another layer of protection in keeping the Pantheon intact. One of the best examples of this protection is in the neoclassical period when a major remodeling of the

¹³² MacDonald, 1976, 104.

¹³³ Joost-Gaugier, 1998, 27, 28.

building occurred.¹³⁴ The renovation commenced because in the spring of 1705 a small area of a column was cleaned revealing a “gleaming surface” and Pope Clement XI Albani and the cardinals “gave an order to extend the work to the entire inner circle of the rotunda, up to the first cornice.”¹³⁵ This restoration cost an unspecified amount; however, it is described as “considerable.”¹³⁶ The effects of the restoration campaign that Pope Clement XI promoted and initiated are still visible today in the Pantheon: it is “the fruit of this extensive program of works carried out less than 300 years ago” that has allowed the Pantheon to stay so well preserved.¹³⁷ The program included replacing missing columns, re-facing the exedras, restoring altars and chapels, and major restoration of the main Christian altar of the Pantheon.

Without “papal-sponsored project[s] governing the restoration” of the Pantheon, it would have fallen back into a less preserved condition.¹³⁸ Because of the Pantheon’s status as a church it was given more attention for renovations. Another one of the large renovation projects was that of the dome and attic.¹³⁹ In 1756 the ceiling and attic of the Pantheon were repaired.¹⁴⁰

Some of the pillaging that occurred, even after the Pantheon was declared a church, began under the Emperor Constantinius II. In 663 the bronze roof tiles were

¹³⁴ Pasquali, 2015, 337.

¹³⁵ Pasquali, 2015, 337.

¹³⁶ Pasquali, 2015, 338.

¹³⁷ Pasquali, 2015, 338.

¹³⁸ Pasquali, 2015, 343.

¹³⁹ Pasquali, 2015, 342.

¹⁴⁰ Pasquali, 2015, 344.

removed from the dome.¹⁴¹ Even though there was some pillaging that occurred on the Pantheon, “at the beginning of the Middle Ages the Pantheon must have been one of the few monumental buildings of Imperial Rome to have survived the barbarian invasions intact.”¹⁴²

Because of its status as a church, the Pantheon underwent many different restorations and embellishments, not all of which lasted.¹⁴³ These changes began in the Middle Ages and progressed through the Renaissance period through seventeenth century and so on until today. The changes promoted the Pantheon’s embrace of its identity as a church instead of a Pagan temple:

In some sense, the frequency with which the interior of the Pantheon was remodeled and refurnished as a church could be construed as antithetical to the idealized descriptions and representations that Renaissance artists have left in their vedute, surveys, and drawings. Indeed, some of the same architects, sculptors, and painters who recorded “reconstructed” the ancient building and the piazza in front of it also participated in or contributed to their remodeling during this period. Yet it becomes evident that reflections on the pagan building were combined with the consciousness of the Christian alterations made to it over time and that both came to bear on attempts to understand the Pantheon. Thus, in astonishingly differentiated knowledge of the building was obviously available in which both traditions – Pagan and Christian – were analyzed.¹⁴⁴

These restorations and embellishments included the dome being recovered with sheets of lead in 1580, building three new columns in red granite in 1662, restoring the marble facing of the interior, and one of the most notable embellishments was two bell towers.¹⁴⁵ These bell towers were built in 1270 and Urban VIII had Bernini

¹⁴¹ Joost-Gaugier, 1998, 27.

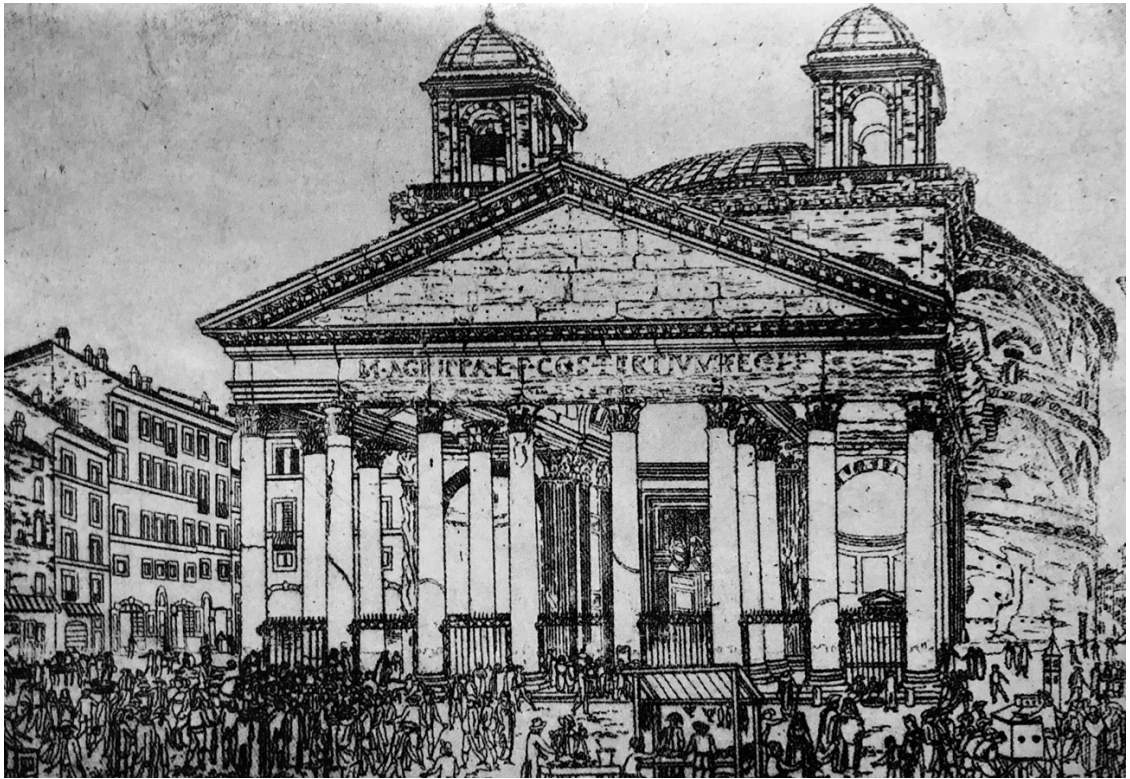
¹⁴² Vighi, 1962, 14.

¹⁴³ Vighi, 1962, 16.

¹⁴⁴ Nesselrath, 2015, 281-283

¹⁴⁵ Vighi, 1962, 16.

build the two bell towers that became nicknamed “the ass’s ears;” they were removed in 1883.¹⁴⁶ This restorations were undertaken by the Direction General of Antiquities and Fine Arts “to restore the interior of the monument to its proper simplicity and dignity.”¹⁴⁷



“The Pantheon after the 17th century restorations.” (Vighi, 1962, 17)

The change of the Pantheon’s purpose to serving as a church it resulted in new sculptures and the placement of additional items in the building:

from the sixteenth century onwards the Pantheon served as a place of burial for famous persons, and in particular of artists, following the example of Raphael the first to wish to be buried there. After the unification of Italy it was destined to receive the remains of Royalty, and in it were buried Victor Emmanuel II, Umberto I, veneration within the temple.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Marder, 2015, 296.; Vighi, 1962, 16.

¹⁴⁷ Vighi, 1962, 17

¹⁴⁸ Vighi, 1962, 16.

Raphael's request to be buried in the Pantheon resulted in a time period when "friends, disciples, assistants, and followers" were buried in the Pantheon with him, which in turn resulted in "[creating] the metaphorical meaning of *pantheon* as a building serving as the memorial of the famous dead: a shrine honoring great men and women."¹⁴⁹



"Interior view featuring pier with Raphael's tomb and flanking niches." (Marder & Jones, 2015, 211)

The image above shows Raphael's tomb, which was part of a new shift from using the exedra of the Pantheon for cult statues to using them for burial structures, and is an important change of identity for the Pantheon. Who is buried in the Pantheon has changed over time. Raphael is still included, but it is no longer includes people who

¹⁴⁹ Nesselrath, 2015, 257.

were associated with him. Raphael was likely not the first burial in the Pantheon: “there is good evidence of earlier burials ... for which medieval and early Renaissance tomb slabs are still preserved, having been removed from the floor during restorations.”¹⁵⁰ The “decorations” or ornaments around the Pantheon’s exedra and niches changed over time. They also included burials, like Raphael’s, as well as altars and frescos.

Because of these changes, the Pantheon is now a very elaborate hybrid of both Christian and pagan elements. It contains both the history of Christianity as well as antiquity’s pagan history. It is important to note that in the scope of alterations, there were some major ones, but none that could alter its fundamental shape: “the cylindrical space absorbed its new religious functions without any serious alterations of the layout by Hadrian’s architects.”¹⁵¹

Another one of these key changes includes the addition of an altar. One of the main reasons that it is not confirmed that the Pantheon was originally in fact a temple is the lack of evidence for an altar outside the Pantheon. There are other reasons historians are not totally sure the Pantheon was a temple, including its unusual shape compared to other temples, but the absence of an altar outside the temple is a huge piece of evidence. Its unusual shape is something that stands out in its use as a Christian church as well, as the shape of most Christian churches was not traditionally domed like this one. To have a church, as with a temple, one needs an altar, which the Church installed in the Pantheon. In the place of the cult statue that would have been directly opposite the main, an altar with a canopy was installed in

¹⁵⁰ Marder & Jones, 2015, 28.

¹⁵¹ Thunø, 2015, 241.

the Middle Ages.¹⁵² In the Middle Ages, it is also believed that four other side altars were installed in niches.¹⁵³ In the neoclassical period, the altar became a point of focus during the restorations, specifically the urn that “held the remains of the holy martyrs.”¹⁵⁴ The issue of the urn’s placement in relation to the altar was to “[recall] the Church’s definitive victory over the pagan world by the conversion of the urn to Christian use.”¹⁵⁵

The Pantheon is still a very popular modern attraction. Today tourists can frequent the building while it is open, and the building is still an active church. Tourists or people who want to experience mass at the Pantheon can also attend Christian services. The exact number of visitors the Pantheon receives for both touristic and religious purposes is unknown, but the Pantheon was until recently one of the last free monuments in Rome that could be explored. The Pantheon will soon charge 2 euro per entry, starting some time in 2018, for patrons to enter the temple, and experience the unique rotunda and dome shape.¹⁵⁶ The ticket revenue will be used to maintain the Pantheon and possibly also for future restorations of the building, if needed.¹⁵⁷

When tourists visit this building, it is not likely that their thoughts about the shape of the building go much beyond thinking that “it is amazing,” or that they analyze it at a deeper level. Looking beyond the surface of this impressive feat of the Romans in creating the Pantheon, the Pantheon has also had a huge impact on

¹⁵² Thunø, 2015, 243-244.

¹⁵³ Thunø, 2015, 243.

¹⁵⁴ Pasquali, 2015, 341.

¹⁵⁵ Pasquali, 2015, 340-341.

¹⁵⁶ Binnie, 2017.

¹⁵⁷ Binnie, 2017

building shapes in later history. Many buildings that are icons of different cities around the world today were influenced by the shape of the Pantheon, its building techniques, and its size, including the Dome of the Rock, St. Paul's Cathedral, the U.S. Capitol Building, numerous arenas, Hagia Sophia, the Duomo in Florence, and even the Nott Memorial at Union College. These buildings are very important landmarks for their cities, and they all owe a debt to the power and religious implications associated with the shape of the Pantheon.

One of the best comparisons one may make, I think, is of the Pantheon to the Duomo in Florence, which is regarded as another impressive archeological feat. The Duomo can be very connected to the Pantheon:

Florentines associated them[selves] with a distinguished past. They understood the Pantheon in Rome to be a typical temple...in a city increasingly fascinated by antiquity, a domed cathedral offered a means of creating a distinctively Italian alternative.¹⁵⁸

The connection between Florence and Rome is also prominent because “the Romans founded Florence.”¹⁵⁹ Filippo Brunelleschi is who designed the dome and it was a technological feat because it was the largest groin vault ever built.¹⁶⁰ Brunelleschi solved the mystery of how to make the dome by creating a two shelled dome: “a light outer shell encased a thick inner shell.”¹⁶¹ The Pantheon itself does not have a groin vault dome; however, the inspiration for the Duomo can nevertheless be attributed to the Pantheon both because of its association with Rome and because it has the same shape. Both domes were constructed using platforms, scaffolding, and

¹⁵⁸ James-Chakraborty, 2014, 32.

¹⁵⁹ James-Chakraborty, 2014, 32.

¹⁶⁰ James-Chakraborty, 2014, 33.

¹⁶¹ James-Chakraborty, 2014, 33-34.

both were technologically advanced for the time that they were built.¹⁶² The Pantheon has not only survived more or less intact physically, but its architectural form continues to inspire as well.

¹⁶² James-Chakraborty, 2014, 34.

CONCLUSION

Because the Pantheon is one of the most well preserved buildings from antiquity, it is important to look at the Pantheon's place across history. Whatever the Pantheon's original purpose, which is still a mystery, its meaning has changed over time. The main purpose of the Pantheon is believed to have been as a temple or place of pagan worship that was then converted to a space for Christian worship.

The first Pantheon was built at the beginning of the Roman Empire by Agrippa. It was burnt down by a fire in 80 A.D., and struck by lightning in 110 A.D. Because the first Pantheon was burnt down, there is limited knowledge known about its original purpose, even though it is now such a prominent building in Rome. As we have observed, however, the location of the first Pantheon was the same as the location that it has had throughout its subsequent history. Its central location on the Campus Martius allowed for it to have maximum interaction with the people of Rome. Cassius Dio explains that the word Pantheon means, "all gods," and what he believes the Pantheon was likely a place for worshipping all gods, because of its celestial symbolism and the multitude of statues in it. For this reason, I looked at the arguments for whether the Pantheon was in fact a temple. Dio, as an ancient source, provides a strong piece of evidence for the Pantheon having been a temple, but I compared this to how Roman religion was practiced and how it would have been impossible to identify omens as deriving from specific gods if multiple gods were housed and worshipped there. I also discussed how the Pantheon was a representation of a turning point in Rome's ancient history, because it was built under Augustus, specifically by Agrippa, as part of his wider building program. This

building project helped raise morale among the people and the reason why the Pantheon could not be called the “Augusteum” was because of the impact Julius Caesar’s assassination had on the presentation of Roman rulers in the city of Rome. Overall, the Pantheon played a large role in symbolizing a shift in government for the people of Rome, and there is, as a result, evidence for both and against its status as a temple.

Following this discussion, I looked at the arguably the most prominent period in the Pantheon’s history, which is when the Pantheon that is still standing today was built. By looking at the Pantheon’s reconstruction and refurbishment by multiple emperors, we were able to observe the important and critical place that the Pantheon had in history. In light of this, it is indeed interesting that there are no written records of what the Pantheon was used for in history. In particular, I looked at the debate that surrounds who built the Pantheon that stands today and conclude that it had been begun by Trajan and finished by Hadrian. I also built on the argument of whether the Pantheon was a temple or not by looking at the architecture of the building. The dome, oculus, and overall vast size of the building represent an architectural feat of the time and an advancement for the Romans. I also found that the materials used, specifically, the marble, represented the vast size of the empire and served to demonstrate the wealth and power Rome held over its territories. Looking at the architectural aspects of the Pantheon, I concluded that they appear to have had religious elements, but the absence of an altar, which is one of the pieces that prevents us from proving that the Pantheon was originally constructed as a temple. To balance this argument, I looked at other ancient sources

that describe that the building's use for government purposes by Hadrian. I also talked about how inspiration for the Pantheon's unique appearance was drawn from many different buildings and how Romans would have interacted with the Pantheon in different ways, depending upon who was emperor at the time.

To conclude our historical tour, I analyzed how the Pantheon is one of the most well-preserved buildings from antiquity because it was converted to a church. The building was converted by Boniface IV to the Church of Virgin St Mary and All Martyrs. Even though the Pantheon was still looted at times after its conversion to a church, its conversion provided a layer of protection to the building. As a church, the Pantheon was restored multiple times throughout history under the guidance of Popes. I also looked at the important differences between the Pantheon in antiquity, as a likely Pagan temple, compared to its use now as a Christian church. I looked at how Mary and Jesus, on the one hand, Venus and Mars, on the other, are almost complete opposites of each other, and how the altar, that would have been outside the Pantheon in antiquity, if there had been one, is now inside the Pantheon for Christian worship. And, finally, I talked about how the Pantheon, as the largest concrete dome ever built, has continued to live on and serve as an inspiration. It has is an architectural feat that has influenced not only buildings in antiquity, but buildings throughout history to the present day. Its shape is a representation of power, and in many respects a power that carries with it a religious aspect.

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