

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CHAPEL: DECORATION, FORM AND FUNCTION.

ACCEPTED A STUDY OF CHAPELS IN ITALY AND ISTRIA IN THE PERIOD
BETWEEN 313 AND 741 AD

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between decoration, architectural form, and function is investigated in depth in those early chapels of Italy and Istria which retain significant amounts of their decorative programmes. These include the Archbishops' chapel and the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan, the St.Matrona chapel at S.Prisco near S.Maria di Capua Vetere, Campania, and the chapels at the Lateran Baptistery, Rome. In addition, the chapels are set into a broader context through a survey of the many chapels which survive in less good condition, or are known only from archaeological and literary sources.

The decorative programme of each chapel is analysed for iconographic content. Themes reflect not only the basic vocabulary of the earliest Christian art, but more precisely, the hopes and aspirations of the chapel's builder. The vast majority of the surviving chapels were built as memorial or funerary chapels in connection with the cult of the dead, and expressed the soul's need for assistance in the attainment of heaven. The funerary cult was intimately connected with that of the martyrs, whose bodies and relics also rested in the chapels, and whose power in favour of those who were interred beside them was invoked in art in the chapels' decorative programmes.

Literary evidence confirmed that chapels had also existed in the dwellings of the lay aristocracy, though none had survived. On the other hand, clergy-house oratories were represented not only by the chapel of the Archbishops of Ravenna, but by the shrines of the two saints John at the Lateran Baptistery, Rome, which were identified as papal oratories adjacent to the home of the early popes at the Lateran Palace.

The total loss of the domestic chapels of the laity slanted the conclusions of the study not only towards clergy house oratories, but towards funerary and memorial structures, of which a greater number survived. It was found that the latter illustrate the chronological

sequence: martyr's *memoria*, funerary chapel, martyrrium. Some examples served more than one of these functions in turn, and possibly the full sequence.

Analysis of the iconographic programmes showed that themes and functions were closely interrelated. Even so, there were more similarities than differences in the iconographic programmes of chapels which clearly served different functions. Most importantly, three-dimensional decorative schemes were common to all types of chapel. In these compositions, the chapel's interior space represented a microcosm of the universe. These schemes were judged to be ancestral to the decorative schemes typical of centrally-planned churches in the Middle Byzantine period.

Annexed chapels formed the main subject of the study, and all those mentioned so far are of this type. However, the origin of chapels within the perimeters of church buildings, which occurred late in the period of study, is briefly discussed in the final chapter, where oratories, sacristies, and chapels inside auxiliary buildings are distinguished from one another, and from the annexed chapels which had previously been standard.

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Photos by author unless otherwise attributed.

LIST OF COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS OF JOURNALS

- AJA American Journal of Archaeology.
 ActaSS. Acta Sanctorum.
 Acta R.Norv. Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia.
 ArtB Art Bulletin.
 Atti della pont.acc.rom.di arch. Atti della pontificia Accademia di archeologia.
 Atti del R.Istituto Veneto di S.L.A. Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti.
- BAC Bulletin d'archéologie chrétienne = Bullettino di archeologia cristiana.
 BAR British Archaeological Studies.
 BZ Byzantinische Zeitschrift.
- CahArch. Cahiers archéologiques.
 CBCR Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae
 Cod.Top. Codice topografico della città di Roma.
 CorsiCRB Corsi di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina.
 CPER Codex Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis of Agnellus, ed. Testi Rasponi, RIS edition.
 CSEL. Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum.
- DACL Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie.
 DOP Dumbarton Oaks Papers.
 DOS Dumbarton Oaks Studies.
- ECBA. Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture.
- FSI Fonti per la Storia d'Italia.
- J.Eccl.Hist. Journal of Ecclesiastical History.
 JSocArchHist. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians.
 JWCI. Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes.
- Lexicon Niermeyer, Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus.
 Loeb Loeb Classical Library
 LP Liber Pontificalis, 3 vols., ed. L.Duchesne,
 LPER Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis of Agnellus, ed. Holder Egger, MGH edition.
- MGH Monumenta Germaniae Historica.
 AA Auctores antiquissimi.
 ScriptRerLangob Scriptores rerum langobardicarum.
 ScriptRerMerov Scriptores rerum merovingicarum.
 ScriptRerGerm Scriptores rerum germanicarum
 SS Scriptores.
- N&PNF A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.

NBAC Nuovo Bullettino (Bollettino) di Archeologia Cristiana.

nd. no date.

NOAB The New Oxford Annotated edition of the Bible with the Apocrypha.

np. no page numbers.

ns. new series.

ODCC. Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,

PBSR Papers of the British School at Rome.

PG. Patrologia Graeca, Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca, ed. J-P.Migne, 162 vols, Paris, 1857-1866.

PL. Patrologia Latina, Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina, ed. J-P.Migne, 217 vols., Paris, 1844-1855.

RAC Rivista di archeologia cristiana.

Rendiconti della Pont.Accad.Rom. d'Arch. Atti della pontificia Accademia de archeologia. Rendiconti.

RevArch Revue Archéologique.

RIS Rerum italicarum scriptores, ed. L.A.Muratori, Milan, 1723-1770.

RIS ns., Rerum italicarum scriptores, new series.

VAHD Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku.

Zbornik Radova Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta.

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INTRODUCTION

THE CHAPEL IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

The Edict of Milan of 313, which allowed Christianity legal status as a religion following the conversion of the emperor Constantine, marked the beginning of a period of remarkable change both in Roman society and in the Church. In this period the acceptance of Christianity by the imperial family, followed gradually by other powerful and wealthy Romans, was marked by a surge of patronage.¹ The provision of splendid new cult buildings, great basilicas for liturgical celebrations and baptisteries for initiation rites quickly followed. But other, less imposing structures were also built, the buildings which we know as chapels. This study will consider the functions of chapels, as revealed by their decorative programmes and their architecture, in the period between the Edict of Milan and the end of the reign of pope Gregory III (731-741). This period of rather more than four centuries saw the flowering of the cult of the saints, and the resulting proliferation of memorial chapels over the graves of the martyrs. Funerary structures for Christian burial beside the saints, shrines for the commemoration of martyr remains, and multi-purpose buildings combining funerary and memorial functions soon followed. But burial structures for the cult of the dead, while of primary importance, were not the only types of chapel to be built. Many others were built in domestic settings for the private devotions of the laity and clergy, and these chapels were also often sanctified with relics of the saints. Sacristies were also built in or beside congregational churches, to serve the practical needs of the sacred mysteries.

The purpose of this study is to bring together the scattered information about chapels in the West in the first four centuries of officially organised Christianity. The main focus geographically is on North and Central Italy. The coast of Istria, which formed an integral

1 For discussion of this change from pagan to Christian patronage, see Brian Ward Perkins, From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Oxford, 1984, esp. chapters 3/2, the rise of Christian patronage, and 4, churches.

part of the Upper Adriatic area in Late Antiquity, is also included. Naturally, the chapels which remain above ground, with their original decorations wholly or partly in place, form the major subject of discussion, and each of these decorative schemes is individually analysed for iconographic content. The case studies of individual chapels are also set within a broader context, by means of a survey of the numerous chapels which are known only from documentary or archaeological sources. These were situated both in the three imperial capitals, consecutively Rome, Milan and Ravenna, and in smaller centres: in this study the chapels of the cities of the upper Adriatic, between Verona and Pula, are discussed as typical examples of the chapels of provincial centres.

But before the subject of chapels in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages can be discussed at all, a fundamental question must be answered: what exactly is a "chapel"? Perhaps the image of a "chapel" that springs to mind most easily is that of a small, free-standing consecrated building which is "too small" to be a church. In our mind's eye, such a structure is adjacent to a church, with which it communicates by means of a door and, perhaps, a vestibule. It is also easy to visualise a space set aside within a church by means of a full or partial interior wall as a "chapel". Equally, perhaps, a room set aside in a dwelling place and furnished for private prayer evokes the image of "chapel". But do these stereotypes bear any resemblance to what was meant by a chapel in Late Antiquity?

This is at least partly a semantic question, which can be clarified by defining the word itself. When we use modern English as a starting point, with the obvious reservation that present-day usage will differ from that of the Early Christian period, a chapel is defined as a "place of Christian worship other than a parish church or cathedral, especially one attached to a private house or institution". It may also refer, in a later period, to "an oratory in a larger building, with altar", especially a "compartment of a cathedral, etc, separately dedicated".² This study will explore these two definitions of the

2 The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 5th ed., Oxford, 1964, 199.

chapel, and test their validity and completeness as concepts that also applied during the early centuries of the church.

The derivation of the word chapel is at once revealing and puzzling. It comes from the medieval Latin *cappella*, *capella*, which came into use in this context only in the seventh century. Initially, *capella* referred not to a building but to a specific relic, the cloak or cape of St. Martin of Tours, the *Capella Martini*, most precious possession of the Merovingian kings, which was carried in state before them when their itinerant lifestyle took them from one to other of their capitals. By extension, the word came to be used of the tent in which the relic was displayed.³ The word *capella* itself, then, did not at first refer to a generic building-type, but to the very specific contents of one particular temporary building, which was built and rebuilt for the sole purpose of housing one particularly venerated relic. It was only later, and initially in Gaul, that by extension any building containing sacred objects or relics was also called a *capella*, and that this word came to refer to a "church that does not have the full parochial powers".⁴ Chapels, however, had existed for centuries before the life of Martin, and in this early period a whole variety of words were used to express the different shades of meaning that are now covered by the single word "chapel". This rather confusing variety of words has its own usefulness, because the original meaning of a word often stands in a logical relationship to its sense in the Christian context. A survey of these original words should throw light on the ancient functions of the chapel, about which there are so few clues in the word *capella*. This should also enable us to recapture nuances of meaning which were once revealed semantically.

The Latin language accurately distinguished one chapel function

3 See Johannes Baptista Gattico, De Oratoriis Domesticis et de usu altario portatalis, Rome, 1746, 2nd ed. 1770, chapter 2, "De Nomine Capellae", p.8. See also F.Cabrol and H.Leclercq, Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie, (DACL), Paris, 1914, 3/1, cols. 407-410, and, for the cloak itself, cols. 381-390.

4 J.F.Niermeyer, Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus, Leiden, 1976, 130.

from another by use of such words as *oratorium*, *oraculum*, *cella*, *cubiculum*, *crypta*, *confessio*, and *memoria* or *martyrium*, with their precise shades of meaning.⁵ Thus an *oratorium* or an *oraculum* was a place set aside for prayer, and a *confessio*, originally a "confession of faith in martyrdom"⁶ came to mean a place where relics were kept,⁷ and by the fifth century, a "burial place of martyrs",⁸ the tomb of a martyr under an altar.⁹ *Memoria*, mortuary monument, tomb of a saint, or shrine containing relics of a saint, had a similar meaning, but was usually applied to the whole building, or to the altar dedicated to a saint there, rather than to the grave or relic container itself.¹⁰ More general terms sometimes used for the chapel included *crypta*, a subterranean vault or cave,¹¹ and *cella*, which, though originally merely a room, became a monk's cell or by extension, a minor monastery,¹² with *cellula*, a monk's dwelling, also coming to mean chapel, or even private church.¹³ *Cubiculum*, originally a resting or sleeping chamber, a bedroom, came to mean a chapel used for rest in the auxiliary buildings of a church, its annexes or colonnades.¹⁴ Here also in the funerary

5 Sources consulted in addition to Niermeyer, *Lexicon*, include: R.E.Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List*, Oxford, 1965; and A.Souter, *Glossary of Later Latin to 600 AD*, Oxford, 1949. For classical Latin, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1968-1976.

6 Niermeyer, *Lexicon*, 242.

7 Latham, *Word-List*, 760.

8 Souter, *Glossary*, 70.

9 Niermeyer, *Lexicon*, 242: the earliest example he cites is from the *Liber Pontificalis*, 242.

10 Niermeyer, *Lexicon*, 669.

11 Souter, *Glossary*, 84.

12 *Ibid*, 45 & 256.

13 Niermeyer, *Lexicon*, 164.

14 This study failed to find any *cubicula* from the period that were unequivocally inside the physical boundaries of a church. See Chapter 10.

context, the dead would sleep until the last trump: by extension, the word *cubiculum* was also used for the tomb itself that was the chapel's *raison d'être*.¹⁵ At a period beyond that of our present interest, the ninth century, private chapels which were adjacent to churches were described by the term *monasterium*, with a primary meaning of monastery, monastic community, abbey church, or even cathedral church.¹⁶ The prime user of the term is Agnellus, in his Chronicle of the Bishops of Ravenna, where many a building known on other grounds to have been an annexed chapel, and not a monastery or even a full-size church, is described as a *monasterium*. It is indeed a very common designation in the Chronicle, the most common word of all that Agnellus used for chapel.¹⁷ Implicit in this use is the idea that chapels were built most frequently by ecclesiastics, members of monastic communities, and, incidentally, with their own burial in mind, as emerges clearly from a study of Agnellus' Chronicle. Alessandro Testi Rasponi found that, while the ninth century usage refers above all to private structures used for private prayers and burial, the origin of the use of the term lay in the late fifth century, when groups of monks cared for the martyrs' graves. At the close of Byzantine rule at Ravenna, secular priests took over these duties, but the ancient names of the monastic communities were preserved, even though monks no longer served the chapels.¹⁸

Another term which acquired the meaning "chapel" relatively late is *altare*, the word for the altar itself, with the plural form *altaria*

15 Niermeyer, Lexicon, 284.

16 See Niermeyer, Lexicon, 702-703, for a total of nine meanings for this word in the ninth to eleventh centuries, including "chapel adjacent to a church".

17 A. Agnellus, Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis, ed. O. Holder-Egger, ScriptRerLangobard, MGH, Hanover, 1878. For example, p.328, referring to Maximian's construction of annexe chapels, ("*monasteria*"), at S. Stefano, Ravenna, "Ad latera ipsius basilicae monasteria parva subiunxit".

18 Agnellus, Codex Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis, ed. A. Testi Rasponi, RIS-ns, II:3, Bologna, 1924, 61, note 5.

also often used in the singular sense.¹⁹ In pagan times this meant a small above-ground building, which was reserved for the cult of an individual among the many gods, in whose honour sacrifices took place there.²⁰ An *ara* was a smaller altar that served rather for supplications and libations. The *altare* was mainly for the service of the gods, while the *ara* served the cult of the dead.

The word *altare* was adopted in just the same way for the cult of the Christians' god, and became the table where the liturgy of the One God was celebrated. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the liturgy embodies a commemoration of sacrifice. The *altare* had a flat, table like top surface, the *mensa*. The Fathers usually reserved the word *ara* for the pagan altar.²¹ It is interesting that by the late ninth century *altare* had acquired an expanded meaning: a lateral chapel of a church.²² There is considerable evidence, however, that as early as the mid-seventh century, and perhaps much earlier, extra altars inside actual church buildings were being provided with settings and embellishments, and coming to serve as chapels, places of the private liturgy, of private prayer, and even of burial. The prime example of this sort of "altar-chapel" is the chapel of pope John VII in St. Peter's, dating to the period 705-707.

In summary, it is clear that the great majority of all early medieval chapels to have survived until today are, broadly speaking, funerary in nature. They originated as *memoriae*, and while primarily concerned with the cult of a martyr or martyrs, were also almost immediately chosen as the most favoured places for burial. While the scattered evidence for the existence of domestic oratories will be presented in Chapter 1, and the solitary survivor of the type, the

19 A *plurale tantum*. See Joseph Braun, Der christliche Altar in seiner historischen Entwicklung, Munich, 1924, 369.

20 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, 1/2, "Autel", cols. 3185-3187, esp. 3185.

21 See Raymond Davis, tr. & ed., The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis), Liverpool, 1989, 107, "altar".

22 Niermeyer, Lexicon, *altare*, 38, 1: "Christian altar", 3: "lateral chapel of a church", with Niermeyer's example dating from 844: the beginnings of this usage will be discussed in Chapter 10.

chapel of the archbishops of Ravenna, will be discussed in Chapter 2, funerary structures form the major focus of this study. Their general characteristics, distribution and evolution are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, while surviving examples at Milan and Capua which have retained their decorative programmes are analysed in chapters 5 and 6. Particular attention is paid to the content of their iconographic programmes in terms of meaning. In general, *memoriae* tend to be free-standing chapels, which have often been joined to a basilica at a later date, usually by way of a vestibule. A special category of funerary chapel, the imperial mausoleum, is represented by the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia at Ravenna, which is analysed in Chapter 7. Shrines which probably honoured non-corporeal relics, and hence were without martyr graves or bones, will be discussed in Chapter 8. These chapels, the early group at the Lateran baptistery, may also have served as oratories for private prayer. The *martyrium* of S.Venanzio at the Lateran Baptistery, which also is neither a *cella memoriae* nor a funerary chapel, but was built to house relics that had been gathered together far from the martyrs' actual graves and long after their deaths, will form the subject of Chapter 9.

The difficult question of chapels built within the confines of church buildings is dealt with more fully in Chapter 10, where the three types of chapels within churches are discussed: the early *cubicula* in auxiliary buildings which were used both for prayer and for rest in life and in death; the internal *oratoria* and *altaria*, which are products of the later development allowing multiple altars each to act as a focus of a separate dedicated space; and *sacraria*, here loosely called sacristies, meaning chapels given over to the practical and auxiliary needs of the clergy and congregation.

Place of prayer, relic shrine, burial place, sacristy, these continued to be the main functions of the chapel throughout the Middle Ages. They form the subjects of this study, which examines the changing emphasis given to the functions of the chapel: place of prayer, martyr shrine and burial place, as revealed in the decorative and architectural

programmes of the few chapels to survive from the first four centuries of organised Christianity in Italy and Istria.

CHAPTER 1

THE DOMESTIC ORATORY

The existence of private oratories in Rome as early as the turn of the fifth century is proven by scattered references in saints' lives and contemporary chronicles. "Permansit tota nocte vigilans in oratorio domus suae, curvans genua usque in mane ac deprecans Dominum",¹ we read in the life of St. Melania the Younger (ca. 383-439), a Roman noblewoman, daughter of one of the richest families in Rome, the Valerii. This record of her night of prayer recalls Galla Placidia's night-time vigil in her palace church at Ravenna, as told by Agnellus.² Both cases underline the importance to pious women and girls of good family of having an oratory in or near the home, so that they could carry out their religious obligations without risk to their safety or reputation. St. Ambrose, when visiting Rome, would celebrate the liturgy at the house of a friend, a noblewoman who lived in Trastevere,³ while St. Gregory of

1 M. Rampolla del Tindaro, ed., with commentary, S. Melania giuniore, senatrice romana, Rome, 1905, 5-6. "Occasio evenit ut dies solemnitas et commemoratio S. Laurentii martyris ageretur. Beatissima vero fervens spiritu desiderabat ire et in sancti martyris basilica per vigilem celebrare noctem; sed non permittitur a parentibus, eo quod nimis tenera et delicata corporis hunc laborem vigiliarum ferre non posset. At illa timens parentes et desiderans placere Deo, permansit tota nocte vigilans in oratorio domus suae, curvans genua usque in mane ac deprecans Dominum cum multis lacrimis ut cordis sui desiderium adimpleret Dominus".

The occasion was the vigil of S. Lawrence at S. Lorenzo fuori le mura, Rome, which the young Melania had not been allowed to attend by her parents: she must have been less than 14 years old, since she was married in 397 at the age of 13 to Valerius Pinianus.

2 Agnellus, Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Scr. Rer. Langob., MGH, Hanover, 1878, 306, "Et dicunt quidam, quod ipsa Galla Placidia augusta super quatuor rotas rubeas marmoreas, quae sunt ante nominatas regias, iubebat ponere cereostatos cum manualia ad mensuram, et iactabat se noctu in medio pavimento, Deo fundere preces, et tamdiu pernoctabat in lacrimis orans, quamdiu ipsa lumina perdurabant".

3 Paulinus, Vita Ambrosii, 10, col. 32, PL, 14, 30, "per idem tempus cum trans Tiberim apud quamdam clarissimam invitatus, sacrificium in domo offerret, quaedam balneatrix quae paralytica jacebat, cum cognovisset Ibid. esse Domini sacerdotem, in sellula se ad eandem domum, ad quam ille invitatus venerat, portari fecit, atque orantis et

Nazianzus, in his eulogy to his sister Gorgonia, dating between 369 and 374, told of her cure when, arising from her sick-bed, she prostrated herself before the altar which contained the sacraments, taking the consecrated elements in her hand and applying them to her whole body.⁴ Though most records that mention chapels in homes do so in the context of the devotions of women, men too sometimes maintained private places for prayer. For example, Constantine the Great had a portable oratory with him on the field of battle,⁵ and also another in the inner part of his palace.⁶ Thus texts make it clear that, by the early fifth century, wealthy Christians maintained oratories in their homes for individual prayer, and that they also sometimes celebrated the liturgy privately at home with family and friends.

A further suggestion has been made that in the Early Christian period the sacrament was reserved in these domestic chapels. This suggestion is borne out by Gregory's account of his sister's devotions, though no evidence in the form of containers specially decorated or inscribed for reservation of the sacrament has survived to support this theory. However, the presence of an altar and the sacraments in

imponentis manus vestimenta attigit".

4 Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio VII, "In Laudem Sororis suae Gorgoniae", 8, (al.11), 18; PG, 35, cols. 810-811, tr. C.G.Browne and J.E.Swallow, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, 7, 1894, 243, "On his sister Gorgonia", "Resting her head...upon the altar...she then applied her medicine to her whole body, viz. such a portion of the antitypes of the Precious Body and Blood as she treasured in her hand". The translators, (Ibid., 238) date this between 369 and 374. It appears to be an allusion to the rite of baptism as practised in Antioch, where the priest anointed the entire body of each catechumen before baptism. See St.Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lecture, XX, On the Mysteries, II: Of Baptism, N&PNE, 7, 147, tr. E.Gifford, "Then, when ye were stripped, ye were anointed with exorcised oil, from the very hairs of your head to your feet...."

5 Eusebius, De Vita Constant. 2:12, PG, 20, 2, col 992; tr. C.D.Hartranft, N.&PNE, 1, p. 503, ocrates Scholarticus,. Hist. Eccl. 1:18, PG, 67, col.124; tr. A.C.Zonos, N&PNE, 2, Oxford, 1891, 1, XVIII, p.22.

6 Sozomen, Hist. Eccl., 1,8; PG, 67, col.80; tr. A.C.Zonos, N&PNE, 2, Oxford, 1891, 244-245.

Gorgonia's house certainly shows that, at least in the East, household chapels in the mid-fourth century could both have altars and be equipped for the Mass. What, then, were the differences between the fully-equipped chapel and the house-church or *titulus*? Would not the presence of the sacrament have automatically conferred the status of church on such a chapel? Leclercq's opinion is that from the apostolic age to the Peace of the Church "chapels" were really churches, since although they were in houses they were the sites of liturgical celebration.⁷ It seems that the distinguishing feature of a house-church or *titulus* that set it apart from a domestic oratory was that it was open to the public for the celebration of the sacraments. In fact, the private chapel sometimes evolved into a house church by acquiring a congregation. Kirsch has shown that the typical Roman *titulus* contained as nucleus a pre-existent chapel, often a private *memoria* of some sort, which typically was incorporated into the church as a *confessio*, a martyr shrine under the altar.⁸ Relics, since the *tituli* were within the walls of the city, were probably of the contact type, such as *brandea*. An exception among these core chapels, since it is built over the grave site of three saints, is the small structure, complete with late fourth century paintings and a *fenestrella* for the devotions of the faithful, which lies under the Roman church of SS.Giovanni e Paolo, the *Titulus Byzantium*, and forms its *confessio*. This has been described by Kirsch as a true domestic chapel.⁹ The *Titulus Aequitii*, S.Martino, lies over a cult centre of St.Sylvester, dating to about 500 AD, and occupying a room in the south-west corner of the church's substructure, while high up in the gallery below the church of S.Pudenziana, the *Titulus Pudentis*, there is a painted niche, its floor now vanished, which must

7 Cabrol/Leclercq, "Oratoire", *DACL*, 12/2, cols. 2346-2372, esp. 2355-2357.

8 G.P.Kirsch, "I santuari domestici di martiri nei titoli romani ed altri simili santuari nelle chiese cristiane e nelle case private di fedeli", *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*, ser.III, *Rendiconti*, 2, 1924, 27-43, esp. 28-29 & 36.

9 *Ibid.*, 28-29.

once have been a centre of the cult of the saints who later came to be venerated in the church above.¹⁰ All these chapels date from the fourth or early fifth centuries. Probably all the other *tituli* contained similar martyr shrines or chapels, sanctified, perhaps, not by physical remains but by contact relics or venerated objects connected to the saints' lives or deaths. None of these chapels has survived intact, and they will not be discussed further here, despite their possible connection with the beginnings of so many Roman *tituli* as churches within private houses, as the evolution of congregational churches from shrines in houses is outside the scope of this discussion.

Actually, if it were not for literary references such as those given above, it might be presumed that private chapels, defined as places of individual or family prayer in private houses, had never existed, since no sure traces of any have been found. The likelihood is, however, that chapels have not been found because they have not been recognised, either because they were undecorated, or because their decorations have not survived. Leclercq has suggested that Christians were reluctant to set aside decorated areas in private houses for worship because they wanted to set themselves apart from the pagans and their custom of worshipping at the shrine of the household gods, the *lararium*.¹¹ However, since there was little hesitation in taking over other religious customs, right down to the details of pagan iconography, which were freely borrowed and reinterpreted in a Christian context, it does not seem necessary to make this assumption.

Absence of physical remains of decorated chapels in the domestic setting can probably be explained by their failure to survive the last great persecutions, those of Diocletian in the early fourth century, as it seems reasonable to suppose that Christians would not have risked having visible proof in their houses that they belonged to a forbidden sect. In the absence of physical evidence to the contrary, it has been suggested that domestic chapels where the sacrament was kept in a formal setting did not exist in private houses before AD 313. But the literary

10 *Ibid.*, 34.

11 Cabrol/Leclercq, *DAFL*, 12/2, col. 2357.

evidence does not seem to imply that there was a great difference before and after 313 AD, as far as domestic oratories were concerned. Quite possibly domestic chapels were, and always had been, so normal a part of upper-class Christian life that they were rarely mentioned, except in passing as integral parts of other stories, such as those of Melania and Gorgonia. The texts do imply, however, that the uses of private chapels were varied and that the sacraments could be celebrated in them whenever a visit from a priest made this possible. Domestic celebration of the sacraments, however, was not limited to dedicated chapels in the fourth century. Although it is unclear from Paulinus' Vita Ambrosii whether Ambrose celebrated at Trastevere in a chapel or in an ordinary room, Tertullian tells us in De Fuga that in exceptional circumstances, and especially in times of persecution, Mass was celebrated wherever and whenever it was possible, even by night.¹² This is corroborated by our knowledge that Constantine had the necessities for celebration carried with him on campaign,¹³ a situation that clearly was exceptional.

A second important source of information about the private chapel is to be found in the Canons regulating their use and recorded in the early Councils of the Church. Although in earliest times, before the mid-fourth century, private places of worship do not seem to have been controlled, they later became the subject of discussion at the Church Councils, discussions which led to regulation. From those Canons which forbade certain uses of private houses or of chapels we can deduce that there were reasons for these proscriptions: that these uses were occurring, and that they had led to abuse. From the mid fourth century Council of Laodicea,¹⁴ Canon LVIII states that "The Oblation must not

12 Tertullian, De Fuga, 14, PL, 2, col. 142A. In this passage Tertullian answers the objection that those who fled persecution would miss the sacraments by suggesting that they rely on faith, or as a last resort that they assemble at night.

13 Eusebius, De Vita Constantini, IV, 22; tr. A.C.McGiffert, N&PNE, 1, 545, and 2, 12, "He (Constantine) pitched the tabernacle of the Cross outside and at a distance from his camp, and there passed his time in a pure and holy manner, offering up prayers to God."

14 Exact date unknown, but not earlier than 345, and probably at least

be made by bishops or presbyters in any private houses".¹⁵ At the Council of Gangra, probably convened around 345, but possibly as late as 381, Canon VI forbids the assembly of congregations privately outside the church if they perform "ecclesiastical acts", by which is presumably meant the celebration of the sacraments.¹⁶ This Canon is believed to have been formulated to counter a heresy, perhaps that of Eustathius (ca.300-377), who from about 357 is believed to have been bishop of Sebaste. Eustathians avoided public services, seeking an asceticism which declared itself in a choice of celibate clergy and in the shunning of the less ascetic members of the congregation.¹⁷ Soon after, in 387 or 390, the Council of Carthage forbade in its Canon VIII the celebration of Mass in private chapels without permission of a bishop.¹⁸

The fifth century Council of Chalcedon, 451, in an attempt to control the heretical monasticism of Eutychius, which like Monophysitism doubted the dual nature of Christ, proclaimed in its fourth Canon that "no-one anywhere build or found a monastery or oratory contrary to the will of the bishop of the city".¹⁹ The restrictions on unorthodox groups obtaining the services of a priest for heretical sacraments were enhanced by Canons V and VI, which restricted the rights of itinerant

20 years later. F.L.Cross and E.A.Livingstone, Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, revised ed., 1983, 799, "Laodicea".

15 The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church. tr. H.R.Percival, N&PNF, 14, Oxford, 1900, 158. The twelfth century Byzantine canonist and historian Zonaras, commenting on this Canon, says "The faithful can pray to God and be intent upon their prayers everywhere, whether in the house, in the field, or in any place they possess: but to offer or perform the oblation must by no means be done except in a church or at an altar". Percival, Ibid., xxi, citing Z.B.Van Espen, Tractatus de Promulgatione legum ecclesiasticarum, etc, Brussels, 1712.

16 N&PNF, 14, 94.

17 ODCC, 549, "Gangra". Also, N&PNF, 14, 94.

18 Code of Canons of the African Church. This was repeated in the African Code of AD 419: N&PNF, 14, 447, Canon X.

19 N&PNF, 14, 270-271.

bishops and priests, and made it obligatory that all priests and deacons be ordained to a particular charge, so that none should be outside the close supervision of the church hierarchy.²⁰

Thus, the repeated legislation on the dangers of private celebration in the fourth and fifth centuries reveals not only that there was continuous vigilance against heresy in centuries when it was particularly rife, but that private chapels did exist, and that it was by no means uncommon for the Eucharist to be celebrated in them. Direct evidence for this latter point comes from the proceedings of the Synod of Rome, August 430.²¹ Among the accusations against Nestorius heard by Pope Celestine I (422-432), was the statement by Bishop Cyril of Alexandria that Nestorius had condemned a priest, Philip, to be deposed for celebrating Mass in a private chapel: this, Cyril asserted, was improper because the practice actually was allowed when it was necessary.²²

In summary, it appears that there was an early period when little legislation controlled the private chapel, which functioned as a small private church. This was followed by a period in the mid-fourth century when the sacraments were absolutely banned from private oratories, which were to be used for private prayer only. Following this, the practice of celebration of Mass and even baptism in chapels came to be at the discretion of the bishop, as shown by Canon IX of the Council of Carthage. Bishops retained control by licensing priests only to stated

20 Council of Chalcedon, 451, Canon V declares that the Canons also apply to bishops and priests who travel from city to city; Canon VI, tr. Percival, N&PNE, 14, 270-271, "Neither presbyter, deacon, nor any of the ecclesiastical order shall be ordained at large, nor unless the person ordained is particularly appointed to a church in a city or village, or to a martyr, or to a monastery. And if any have been ordained without a charge, the Holy Synod decrees, to the reproach of the ordainer, that such an ordination shall be inoperative, and that such shall nowhere be suffered to officiate".

21 J.Héfèle, Histoire des Conciles, 2/1, tr. H.Leclercq, Paris, 1908, 260-264.

22 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, 12/2, col.2359-2360; P.Coustant, Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum, Paris, 1721, Epistola IX, dated 430, col. 1094-1099, esp.1098-1099.

benefices, and by banning them from travelling at large, where they might be available for unsupervised celebration of the sacraments among the unorthodox or even among heretics. This controlling supervision is defined in the thirty-first Canon of the Quinisext Council of 692: "Clerics who in oratories which are in houses offer the Holy Mysteries or baptize, we decree ought to do this with the consent of the bishop of the place. Wherefore if any cleric shall not have done this, let him be deposed".²³ That is, by 692 the bishops were willing to give permission for private chapels to be used for the full liturgy, including baptism, but only under licence.

A further source of information about the Early Christian private chapel is the physical evidence revealed by archaeology. This is disappointingly scanty. Two quite unsatisfactory pieces of physical evidence--a building and a group of floors--have been brought forward as physical proof of the existence of the domestic chapel and of the form it took. The building is the Chapel of the Monte della Giustizia, Rome, which for nearly a century was thought to be the only decorated private chapel to survive from Late Antiquity into our era. Evidence has also been adduced from mosaic pavements, of which several from Aquileia and Rome have been identified as the floors of chapels. These two topics will be presented in this order.

The chapel of the Monte della Giustizia had a checkered history as a historical monument almost from the moment of its discovery during the clearing away of an ancient pile of debris, the Monte della Giustizia, during the construction of Roma Termini railway station in 1873. The Monte was found to consist of the waste piled up during the construction of the early fourth century Baths of Diocletian, and contained a core of buildings, houses of the Imperial period, as well as a stretch of the Servian wall. Between two of the houses a painted Christian building of a later period was discovered, apparently communicating with one of the houses. Before the buildings were demolished to make way for the present Piazza del Cinquecento, the frescoes were removed to storage by

23 N&PNF, 14, 379.

the Società delle Strade Ferrate. Despite concerted efforts to find them by De Rossi,²⁴ by Wilpert,²⁵ and by Kirsch,²⁶ the location of the stored frescoes has been as completely lost as the building which they once adorned. Apart from a short note by Fiorelli,²⁷ only the brief preliminary article and a sketch by De Rossi remain as evidence for the structure and its decoration. Intending a fuller publication, De Rossi found the monument had been destroyed before he could finish his analysis of the building and its paintings. All subsequent discussion of the chapel depends on his original and unfinished work.

The chapel consisted of a long, narrow apsed building, only three meters wide, the width of a vicus, and at least ten long, though the rear wall was not preserved. There was a square half-transept on the left, but access was only through the upper floor of the right hand building, to which it was originally thought to have belonged. The painted decoration of the apse was in two registers, with Christ teaching the apostles, complete with *scrinium* and scrolls, above, and a deep band of river scenery below, including fish, boats, and fishing *putti*. Below again was a high socle painted to look like marble, and De Rossi's drawing also shows niches in the apse which appear to have contained shadowy figures.

From De Rossi's drawing it is evident that this decoration was an early one, probably done within a century of the Peace of the Church. If it could indeed be proved to be a domestic chapel, it would be of enormous importance in the context of Early Christian art and iconography. Unfortunately, the evidence that this structure actually was ever a chapel is scanty at best. Its size has obviously seemed

24 G. De Rossi, "D'un oratoire privé du quatrième siècle découvert sur le mont dit della Giustizia, près les Thermes de Diocletien", *BAC*, ser. III, 1, 1876, 45-63, esp. 45-46, and plate VI, facing p. 88.

25 J. Wilpert, "Un battistero 'Ad nymphas B. Petri'", *Rendiconti della Pont. Accad. Rom. di Arch.*, 2, 1923-1924, 73.

26 Kirsch, *Santuari domestici*, 41.

27 G. Fiorelli, "Notizie degli scavi di antichità", *Atti dei Lincei*, ser. II, 3/3, 1875-1876, 127.

significant: a width of only three meters would make it among the most miniature of Roman churches. Its location is another: it was far from the nearest known *domus ecclesiae*, the Tituli of Ciriacus and of Gaius, and there seemed to be no ready-made identity for it if it were a church. However, Pasquale Testini has pointed out that the "chapel" was built in the roadway of a public street, and did not really communicate with the buildings to either side, which he identifies as a shop and a public building, and not as mansions.²⁸ The "chapel's" location in a public thoroughfare suggests that it was built there in times when the urban order was breaking down, rather than with the approval of neighbours. Testini, concluding that the iconography limits the choice to the early fifth century at latest, has proposed that in fact the chapel was a small local church, serving a congregation on the Esquiline hill. The time-frame would suggest the period of disruption after the Gothic invasion of 410 as the time of construction, and indeed the Esquiline was the area favoured by the Gothic settlers, who were soldiers and slaves, and included many adherents to the Arian sect. Among churches occurring in the records, but never located, is one dedicated to St. Agatha: S.Agata in Esquilino. Known from the Itinerary of Einsiedeln, it lay between the Porta Tiburtina and the Suburra, on the way to S.Vito.²⁹ This is its only mention in the itineraries: perhaps it soon fell into disuse, most likely because of a change in land levels, or because it was in a marginal location on the edge of the *disabitato*. It did however donate its name to the area called the "Campo S.Agathae" later in the Middle Ages, and situated southwest of

28 P.Testini, "L'oratorio scoperto al "monte della giustizia" presso la porta Viminale a Roma", Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana, 1968, 219-260, esp. 250-251.

29 Silloge Epigraphica. Itinerario del cod. Einsiedlense, ed. R.Valentini and G.Zucchetti, Codice topografico della città di Roma, vol.2, 1942, 163-207, esp.189, "Sanctae Agathae" and note 3, "Una chiesa di S.Agata sull'Esquilino e sconosciuta. Però da un documento del Reg. Sublacense si ricava l'esistenza di un campo di S.Agata in vicinanza della "massa Iuliana" press'a poco nella località risultante dal nostro itinerario".

S.Maria Maggiore.³⁰ Testini has also argued convincingly that its iconographic programme fits this identification as S.Agata in Esquilino perfectly, since the apses of two other early Gothic churches in Rome, S.Agata dei Goti and S.Andrea Catabarbara were also decorated with a very similar principal theme, the Mission of the Apostles.³¹

The strength of Testini's argument removes the classic example of a domestic chapel building to survive into our times from consideration as such, despite the confidence of De Rossi, and later of Leclercq,³² and of Kirsch.³³ We are left with a series of small floors, inconclusively interpreted as chapels on account of their size and iconography, as the sole physical evidence for the existence and decor of the Early Christian domestic chapel.

In Rome, Leclercq has identified a few mosaic floors as belonging to chapels on the basis of their small size and their Christian subject matter. Most convincing is a mosaic from the Via XX Settembre. Relatively large at 8.40m by 6.70m, it had an off-centre cross which probably marked the position of an altar, surrounded by a border square filled with a design of repeated fish. Acanthus branches filled the rest of the ground, issuing from eight large, evenly disposed canthari.³⁴ The cross and fishes are early symbolic equivalents of Christ and the Christian souls, while the acanthus arises as a vine from vessels that represent both the womb from which Christ came, and the grave to which he will return. These allegorical meanings antedate the

30 Testini, Oratorio, 253-255.

31 S.Waetzoldt, Die Kopien des 17 Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom, Munich, 1964, figs. 1-13, S.Agata dei Goti, 462-470, built by Flavius Ricimerus, a Goth, and fig.15, S.Andrea Catabarbara, 468-483, also built by a Goth, Valila.

32 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, 12/2, cols.2346-2372, esp. col.2357f., "Oratoires privés".

33 Kirsch, Santuari domestici, 27-43.

34 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, 12, 2, 2363 & fig. 9119; G.Gatti, "Notizie di recenti trovamenti di antichità in Roma e nel suburbio" Bullettino della Commissione Archaeologica Comunale di Roma, 29, 1901, 86-89, esp. 87.

decor of funerary chapels such as that of S.Matrona, at S.Prisco, near Capua, where the same sort of imagery has come to decorate the vault, rather than the floor. The early date of this floor is confirmed by the presence of the cross on the floor, which was later proscribed in an imperial edict.³⁵ The floor is identified by Gatti as third century, and its Christian subject-matter made him think it an aristocratic chapel where the sacred mysteries could be celebrated in private, an unusual relic of the times of persecution.³⁶

A series of five decorated floors in Aquileia have also sometimes been identified as the remains of private chapels, although all five floors have ambiguous subject matter. The seeker for Christian symbolism will find it here, but equally there is nothing in the iconography that is at variance with a very traditional sort of Hellenistic thought. The floors all date from the early fourth to the early fifth century, on the evidence of style, iconography and stratigraphy.³⁷ Two of them, both on the Via Giulia, the ancient *Cardo Maximus*, have circular central fields with the Good Shepherd, or simply a pastoral scene, as subject. In the first, this is surrounded by a vine wreath, openly drawn and containing birds: peacocks, pheasants, smaller birds among the grapes. The Shepherd, green-haloed, wears the imperial *chlamys* of purple, belted and full-length. His status as shepherd is signalled by his crook; damage has destroyed a probable pan-pipe in his other hand. Menis identifies this type of shepherd as intermediate between the rustic Early Christian shepherd with a lamb on his shoulders and the shepherd in imperial dress in the entry lunette at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia: thus it is midway between the simple functional shepherd and its later variant which has taken on overtones of the cult of Christ as Emperor. The other floor with this iconography features a rather differently styled central shepherd in imperial dress,

35 Edict of Theodosius II, AD 427. Mango, Sources, 36.

36 Gatti, Notizie, 87-88.

37 G.C.Menis, I mosaici cristiani di Aquileia, Udine, 1965, 30; p.31, fig.7; detail, pl.27.

with animals, surrounded by abstract woven designs of ribbons and twists outlining octagonal and square spaces.³⁸ The octagons contain portraits, along with animals, dolphins, and fish, and the squares contain knots, waves and other abstract fillers. Opposite the apse, on the chapel's threshold, appears a peacock in an octagon: the prophylactic sun-bird which gives out light. It represents immortality because its flesh was believed to be incorruptible.³⁹ It symbolises the resurrection of the body because its plumage is reborn in the spring after the moult, and paradise because of its splendid beauty.⁴⁰

Dolphins occupy the central octagons of the two sides. Thought of as fish which rode out storms, they symbolise the safety of the soul amidst the perils of life. Two pairs of fish follow, alternating with spotted sheep: fish to represent, perhaps, the souls of the four young women shown in the mosaic, who may have been the ladies of the house. Other octagons contain the standard repertory of late antiquity:--the ducks, partridges and geese, the full and empty footed cups with paired birds and vine scrolls, while near the altar is a single Lamb. It is a floor of great complexity and beauty, and in its variety of classical and Christian motifs hints at the quality of the building which it once adorned, and which has now so completely disappeared.

A third oratory at Aquileia had been heavily damaged both from its proximity to the soil's surface, and by burning at the time its roof collapsed. Its central tondo held a fishing scene. Fish swim at large in the sea; *putti* fish from boats with line and trident. It represents the allegory of the soul dear to the fourth century Christian, couched in a neutral vocabulary of traditional art. The framework surrounding it consists of open Greek crosses containing plied cruciform twists. In

38 Menis, Mosaici, 31, fig.6.

39 Augustine of Hippo, De Civitate Dei, VII, XXI, IV, Loeb Classical Library, London and Cambridge, Mass., tr.W.Green, p.15, note 3, "For who if not God, the creator of all things, has granted to the flesh of the dead peacock immunity from decay"?

40 For a discussion of the symbolism of these Aquileia floors, see G.Brusin and P.L.Zovetto, Monumenti paleocristiani di Aquileia e di Grado, Udine, 1957, 220-225, where they are also illustrated.

the octagonal interstices are beasts of all sorts, drawn true to life. Sheep, rabbit, ibex and ram, male and female tigers, are all shown with unsurpassed fidelity to nature. Among them, and on the entry axis, is a phoenix, symbol of resurrection. The floor can be interpreted in pagan or in Christian terms, and in its ambiguity may belong to the period of persecutions, or to the period when Christian iconography was becoming established: every element of the design of this mosaic, or equally none, could be held to be Christian. A floor for safety, perhaps, and yet full of hidden meaning, probably cryptochristian, but meant to masquerade as neutral subject matter.

Despite the ambiguity of much of the physical evidence, private oratories definitely existed, as literary references and the Church Councils' controlling edicts prove beyond a doubt. It is most unfortunate that no example has survived from the early period, and that even for the period around 500 AD we must look, not at a layman's domestic place of prayer, but at the oratory within the palace of the Bishops of Ravenna, which was built by and for the upper echelons of the clergy, and dates from the turn of the sixth century.

CHAPTER 2

CLERGY HOUSE ORATORIES: THE ARCHBISHOPS' CHAPEL, RAVENNA

The only decorated chapel in Italy to survive from Late Antiquity and to be securely identified as a private chapel is that in the Archbishops' Palace in Ravenna, though chapels for the use of bishops must have been common, perhaps universal, in their palaces. Outside Italy, Gregory of Tours (ca.540-594), mentions his new private oratory at Tours, in which he placed the relics of various saints,¹ while in central Italy, the existence of an episcopal chapel in Narni is recorded by Gregory I.² In Rome itself we learn in passing of a chapel dedicated to St.Caesarius in the imperial palace on the Palatine, which had been newly repaired under Platon, the *cura palatii urbis Romae*, father of pope John VII (705-707).³ The Lateran palace itself, residence of the popes, bishops of Rome, had three chapels by the late seventh century. One was built by pope Theodore (642-649), and dedicated to St.Sebastian.⁴ By the year 687, a chapel dedicated to St.Sylvester was situated in the portico to the right of the great entrance.⁵ A third chapel, dedicated to St.Peter, was in need of redecoration by the time of pope Gregory II (715-731), who gave it new mosaics as well as images

1 Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, I, tr. O.M.Doulton, 255; also *Liber Vitae Patrum*, PL, 71, cap. II/3, col. 1019, "Dedicaverat igitur oratorium infra domum ecclesiasticam urbis Turonicae in primo sacerdotii suo anno, in quo cum reliquorum sanctorum pignoribus hujus antistitis reliquias collocavit..."

2 Gregory I, *Homil. in Evang.*, II, *Homil.* 37,9, PL, 76, col. 1281.

3 LP, I, 371, The election of Sergius, (687-701), took place "in oraculum beati Caesarii Christi martyris, quod est intro suprascriptum palatium", tr. R.Davis, *Book of Pontiffs*, 83. See also LP, I, 386, note 1.

4 R.Davis, *Ibid*, 68, "He also built an oratory to St Sebastian inside the Lateran Episcopium, and there too he bestowed gifts".

5 LP, I, 371, and 377, note 8; Davis, *Book of Pontiffs*, 83, "...Paschal held the outer parts (of the patriarchate) from the oratory of St Silvester...."

in silver of the twelve apostles.⁶

The Ravenna chapel is the sole survivor of this once numerous category. Since it is situated on the upper floor of a building inside the city walls, it can never have been intended for burials. Rather, it was certainly built for the private devotions of the bishops, and later of the archbishops, of Ravenna, forming part of their Tricoli palace. The bishops could access their chapel from the palace proper, and also, probably, by means of an elevated walkway from the upper floor of the adjacent turret of the Porta Salustra (fig.v).⁷

The chapel consisted of a cruciform chapel proper, preceded by a full-width, narrow narthex. (Plan, fig.4). Beneath it, there are two similar rooms on the ground floor. The smaller room, under the narthex, was accessible only from above, by way of a trapdoor in the vault, and was presumably used for the storage of ecclesiastical treasures.⁸ In this, the Archbishops' chapel was not alone: recent work at S.Vitale and S.Appolinare in Classe has identified similar, windowless chambers, designed equally to escape detection from inside and outside the building.⁹ The original function of the larger room at the Episcopium, which, like the chapel, is cruciform and has cupboard spaces in the corners, as well as access to the garden, is unknown, though according to Gerola it seems not to have been sacred.¹⁰ Below again, in the cellar, rooms with massive arches act as foundations for the floors

6 LP, I, 402. This chapel survived until the destruction of the Lateran Palace, and was described by Panvinio. See P.Lauer, Le Palais du Latran, Paris, 1911, 486.

7 Giuseppe Gerola, "Il ripristino della cappella di S.Andrea nel palazzo vescovile di Ravenna", Felix Ravenna, ns, 2-3, 1931-1932, 71-132, esp.86.

8 Gerola, Ibid, 122. Gerola's plan shows three rooms, one a closed space under the apse.

9 Janet Charlotte Smith, "Form and Function of the Side Chambers of Fifth- and Sixth-Century Churches in Ravenna", Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 49, 1990, 181-204, esp. 199-200.

10 Gerola, Ripristino, 76.

above.¹¹

The identification of this chapel with the chapel of St. Andrew mentioned in the texts--most notably in the Liber Pontificalis of the bishops of Ravenna, written in the ninth century by Andrea Agnellus,¹² rests on three sources: the inscription which he saw in the chapel's narthex; the portrait of the donor bishop Petrus, which was then present in the west lunette; and the monogramme PETRUS which can still be seen in the mosaic above the altar. (fig.2)

Agnellus writes that a bishop named Peter built the episcopal palace, the Tricoli,¹³ and not far away a chapel in honour of Andrew the apostle, displaying his own portrait over the door.¹⁴ The chapel's walls were covered with Proconnesian marble, and in the entry way was a metric inscription in 20 hexameters, which Agnellus records.¹⁵ Fragments of this were found by Gerola in the restorations of the early 20th century.¹⁶ This inscription includes the attribution to bishop Petrus.¹⁷ His, too, is the mosaic monogramme over the altar in the narrow mosaic panel beneath the arching vault, and the one facing it

11 Gerola, Ibid, 76-78.

12 Agnellus, Codex Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis, ed. A. Testi Rasponi, I, 149, note 1, "Fecitque non longe ab eadem domo monasterium sancti Andree apostoli; suaque effigies super valvas eiusdem monasteri est inferiori depicta".

13 So called from its large triclinium. CPER, ed. A. Testi Rasponi, 149, note 1.

14 Agnellus, CPER, 148-149, "Iterumque fundavit domum infra episcopium Ravennae sedis, que dicitur Tricoli, eo quod tria colla contineat; que hedificia nimis ingeniosa inferius structa est. Fecitque non longe ab eadem domo monasterium sancti Andree apostoli; suaque effigies super valvas eiusdem monasteri est inferius teselis depicta".

15 Agnellus, CPER, 149, "Totis vero parietibus proconnessis marmoribus decoravit, et in ingressu ianue extrinsecus super liminare versus metricos continentes ita, videlicet". The verses are recorded in CPER, 149-150.

16 Gerola, Ripristino, 107.

17 AUCTORIS PRECIO SPLENDESCUNT MUNERA PETRI....FUNDAMEN PETRUS, PETRUS FUNDATOR ET AULA Agnellus, CPER, 149-150.

across the chapel.

Tradition, already recorded by Agnellus, identified this Petrus with the famous Ravenna bishop, Petrus Crysologus, Peter III. However, Agnellus' confusion over the bishops of this name led him to omit the second Petrus, (494-518 or 520). It is to this bishop that the chapel is now usually attributed, giving it a probable date in the first decade of the sixth century.¹⁸ Agnellus also associates bishop Maximinian, (546-ca.556), with the chapel, insisting that he must have finished the building, apparently on the basis of a *pulvino* or secondary capital with this archbishop's monogramme: this piece, however, though stored in the chapel, could have originated elsewhere in the Tricoli, or even in the cathedral.¹⁹ But although he was not responsible for the building or its decorative programme, it is to Maximinian that we probably owe the dedication to St. Andrew. The original dedication is not known, though there is a strong possibility that it was to the apostle Peter, patron of the founder.²⁰ If this is so, the change symbolised a change in focus of the Ravenna bishopric, confirming its links with Justinian's Constantinople, whose patron saint was Andrew. Maximinian had brought back a famous relic of this saint from a visit to Constantinople,²¹ and founded S. Andrea Maggiore, Ravenna, near the city's Roman forum. Relics of Andrew were also placed in Maximinian's foundation, S. Stefano (550),

18 Agnellus, CPER, 70, note 2, and 138, note 3.

19 Gerola, Ripristino, 72.

20 F.W.Deichmann, "Studi sulla Ravenna scomparsa" Felix Ravenna, 103, 1972, 61-112, esp. 66, note 25, strongly supports this idea. Raffaella Farioli, "Ravenna paleocristiana scomparsa", Felix Ravenna, ser.3, 31, 1960, and 32, 1961, 5-88, suggests a dedication to All Saints, on the basis of the medallion saints in the soffits, and of the inscription on the two capitals in the chapel PETRUS EPISC. SCE. RAVENT COEPTUM OPUS A FUNDAMENTIS IN HONORE SCORUM PERFECIT, though she herself admits the provenance of the capitals is dubious.

21 Agnellus, CPER, 195. Testi Rasponi, Ibid, 189, note 2, notes that Maximian made frequent visits to Constantinople. The remains of Andrew, along with those of Timothy and Luke, were found at the Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantinople, on July 28, 548, as recorded by Procopius, Buildings, I/4, 18, and Maximian probably obtained his relics after this date. See also CPER, 192, note 17.

in the imperial quarter.²² It seems likely, then, that the dedication dates to the mid-sixth century, though Deichmann would prefer to place it even later, in line with the spate of other dedications to St. Andrew in the seventh and eighth centuries.²³ The problem of the original dedication is compounded by the lack of a special image of either Peter or Andrew, although both apostles appear among the twelve apostles of the east soffit. One may surmise that an image of the patron saint would have occupied a place of honour in the chapel, such as its apse or a major lunette. The decoration of these sites has not survived.

The cruciform main chamber of the chapel contains relic cupboards in the SE, NW, and SW angles of the cross, with a passage-way occupying the NE corner (fig.4). It is preceded by a narrow, full-width, tunnel vaulted narthex: the entry door is in the north wall, with a lunette above. The south wall once included a window, which was blocked in the Middle Ages. The west wall was also pierced by the door which probably gave access to the gate turret by way of a wooden walkway. This doorway may have been closed during the major alterations of the sixteenth century.²⁴

The main chapel also suffered fundamental alterations at this time, since its orientation was reversed. The apse was replaced by an entry door from the palace; the door from the narthex to the chapel was eliminated and replaced by a wide arch, and the altar was moved to the west wall of the narthex. The altar became the site of a mosaic of the Virgin, which had been removed from a lower register of the apse mosaic of the Basilica Ursiana, cathedral of Ravenna, in the restoration of 1734. In the chapel, it was flanked by portrait medallions of Peter and Paul from the same early twelfth century composition.²⁵

22 Agnellus, CPER, 191.

23 Deichmann, Studi, 66-67.

24 Details of building history in Gerola, Ripristino.

25 These fragments can be seen in the Archiepiscopal museum. See G.Gerola, "Il mosaico absidiale della Ursiana", Felix Ravenna, 1/5, 1912, 177-190, for the history of the mosaic, which was dated to 1112, and 180, pl.13 for an engraving after a lost drawing by Gianfrancesco Buonamici of the apse and tribune mosaics *in situ*, which identifies the

The twentieth century restoration has returned the chapel to its original orientation. Research on the fabric around the entry-way revealed the start of the springing of a semidome of *tubi fitilli*, interlocking terracotta tubes used for lightness in the construction of domes, and the chapel was therefore restored with a hemispherical apse rather than a rectangular niche. The walls were reclad in marble with two appropriate stucco friezes.²⁶ The window was restored to its original shape, and the narthex once more became the main point of entry of the chapel.

Large areas of mosaic decoration remained intact throughout these extensive alterations. These areas included, in the chapel itself, the vault and the soffits of the four arches of the truncated cross (figs.1, 2).²⁷ Four upper wall areas shaped like inverted crescents also survived (fig.2). Lost, in addition to the apse, were the lunettes in the north, west and south arms of the cross. Some traces of the mosaics' edge were found by the restorers in the north and south lunettes, but not enough to draw any conclusions except that these areas were indeed clad with mosaic in terre-verte on a gold ground.²⁸ The west lunette, according to Agnellus, contained the founder's portrait. The subject matter of the other two lunettes and of the apse remains a mystery, though it does not seem unlikely that the patron saint was depicted in one or other place.

In the narthex (fig.3), the tunnel vault retained a design of birds in the interstices of a network formed of shaded spheres and lily flowers, based on a textile, probably one of the diagonally diapered silks popular at that time.²⁹ The upper wall on each side had been the

portions saved in the Archbishops' chapel.

26 Gerola, Ripristino, 104-105.

27 Illustrated in Deichmann, Ravenna, III, plates 219-243.

28 Gerola, Ripristino, 111.

29 A.Gonosovà, "The formation and sources of Early Byzantine floral semis and floral diaper patterns reexamined", DOP, 39, 1988, 227-237, esp. 230. See also the mosaic of Theodora's court in San Vitale, Ravenna, mid-sixth century: the court lady second from Theodora wears a

site of the metric inscription recorded by Agnellus, which survived into the sixteenth century in fragmentary condition. Small areas of this mosaic inscription which were found during restoration corresponded to the ends of the last five verses of the dedicatory poem recorded by Agnellus.³⁰ This discovery was the authority for the restoration which we see today, where the painted text is divided between the two long walls of the chapel, and the lines of gold capital letters on deep blue are separated by lighter blue stripes, with each section of text framed in gold and deep blue. The restored mosaic ornament also follows the original.³¹ Delineating the vault is a wide double band of ribbon motif framing cross-shaped, lily-based motifs, like those in the vault. Above the entry door, is a tall, narrow lunette, framed by a band of twisted gold and blue ribbon on red, and outlined with white and blue on each side. The lunette bears an image of Christ, carrying a red cross on his shoulder and holding an open book with the words "Ego sum via, veritas et vita" (fig.4).³² The lower half of Christ is conjectural, based on traces of military dress found at the lower edge of the torso, but on the authority of Ravenna precedents such as a stucco in the Orthodox Baptistery, the panel has been completed with the trampled lion and serpent beneath his feet.³³ The text for such an image comes from Psalm 91, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot", a text that prophesies Christ's victory over the forces of evil. This image of Christ trampling his

dress of fabric patterned with birds facing alternate ways and alternating with crosses. For illustrations, see G.Bovini, I Mosaici di Ravenna, Milan, 1956, pl. 36, and Deichmann, Ravenna, III, 216-218.

30 Gerola, Ripristino, 108. The extent of the original shown in Corrado Ricci, Monumenti, tavole storiche dei mosaici di Ravenna, V, Cappella Arcivescovile, Rome, 1934, pl. XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX and, esp., XL.

31 Ibid, 107.

32 "(Jesus said to him,) 'I am the way, the truth and the life; (no one comes to the Father, but by me)'" John, 14:6.

33 Gerola, Ripristino, 108. Ricci, Tavole, V, pl. XXXV.

enemies parallels late Roman imperial imagery.³⁴ Perhaps as early as the start of the fifth century, and certainly by the year 610, the emperors incorporated the *calcatio colli*, ritual trampling, into their triumphs.³⁵ In this year the usurper Phocas was ritually trampled by the emperor Heraclius before his execution.³⁶ Significantly, the emperor Justinian II dealt with his defeated rivals in 706 by trampling on their necks while the people intoned the verses from Psalm 91 that are illustrated in the Archbishops' chapel: "You will tread on the lion and the adder". The usurpers were then led away to execution.³⁷

The tunnel vault follows the diapered silk not only in its diagonal reticulum, but also in the varied birds which are diagonally disposed within it. Paired examples face alternately left and right inside the slanting net. They include green parrots with red legs and bills and with red stripes on their wings and necks; checkered blue-grey guinea-fowl with sharp four-feathered tails, blue legs and red combs and wattles; mallard-type drakes and ducks, the drakes blue and green, the ducks speckled grey, as in life; peacocks with crested heads, dark wings and multicoloured tails; greenish quails or partridges; grey and white ring-necked doves with red eyes and crests; cranes, grey with light tails, and two-tone black and white "doves". This repertory of birds is typical of late antiquity. For example, at the chapel of S.Giovanni Evangelista (ca.468), at the Lateran Baptistery, Rome, the choice is similar to that at the Archbishops' chapel, and pairs of parrots, mallards, doves and partridges occupy green platforms in the golden vault: there they will be found to symbolise the four elements, fire, water, air and earth respectively.³⁸ An even richer variety of birds,

34 As suggested by S.J.B.Barnish in his review of M.McCormick, Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West, Cambridge, 1986, in J.Eccl. Hist., 41, 1990, 79-81.

35 M.McCormick, Triumphal Rulership, 57-58.

36 Ibid, 70.

37 Ibid, 73.

38 See Chapter 8.

still making the same allusions, is found a little later in the presbytery vault at S.Vitale, Ravenna (ca.549), this time inside a framework of acanthus, rather than in a cloth-based framework.

A modern replacement completes the decorative scheme of the narthex. In the south lunette, facing the figure of Christ across the narthex, a pair of doves amid boughs with apples and pomegranates bears the monogramme PASCHAL, that of Pasquale Morganti, archbishop at the time of the 1913 restoration. This design is not based on exact knowledge of the original design in this location, but was inspired by the decorations which survive in the crescent-shaped upper walls of the central room of the chapel.

These crescents all bear related designs. Above the apse the monogramme of Bishop Petrus is flanked by a pair of large white doves, a parrot and a small grey dove, set among leafy boughs with pomegranates and apples (fig.2). Similar decorations in the side crescents are centred on the Agnus Dei, flanked by large grey birds, perhaps pelicans, their wings outstretched. Here also the vegetal scroll contains stylised fruits, single "cherries". The west crescent, also centred on the monogramme of Petrus, has paired peacocks with, on the left, a duck and apples, and on the right, a stork and pomegranates. The symbolism of these birds and fruits relates to paradise: peacocks for immortality, pelicans for Christ's sacrifice as celebrated in the Eucharist, doves for peace and for the human soul; while the pomegranate, symbol of Proserpine's return to earth at winter's end, came in Christian thought to represent the hope of immortality and the resurrection of the Christian soul.³⁹ The apple, also, can have a connotation of salvation, based on the Song of Solomon, 2:3: "As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among young men...and his fruit was sweet to my taste", which is interpreted as an allusion to Christ.⁴⁰ Christ shown as the Lamb is a reference to the apocalyptic vision of St.John, and the discreet, though central, monogramme of the founder marks his

39 G.Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art, Oxford, 1954, 15, 23, 37.

40 Ibid, 28.

hope of inclusion in paradise at his time of judgment, as well as his very human desire to record his gift of the chapel and its mosaic for posterity.

The apse, as reconstructed by Gerola, has been adorned with a central cross floating among the gold and silver stars of a blue firmament (fig.2). The authority for this reconstruction was the discovery of blue and silver tesserae on the edges of the original area, while its inspiration was the vault at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. Above, a totally reconstructed crescent shaped arch displays another twentieth century addition: the monogramme of bishop Paschal among acanthus scrolls.

Two major areas of decoration do survive from the time of bishop Petrus II (figs.1, 2). These are the main vault, and the four soffits or shallow tunnel vaults of the arms of the cross, the former with its well known composition of four angels holding up a Chi-Rho symbol in outstretched arms, the latter with the named medallion portraits of the apostles, female martyrs and teachers of the church, six by six, flanking Christ or his symbol.

The vault design contains two interlocking elements. The angels, dressed in white, stand on tiptoe in the angles of the golden vault on small, grassy hillocks. Their brown wings are folded, and they are haloed in white. Their upraised hands grasp the edges of a frame--centrically edged in blue, white and red--that allows a glimpse of blue beyond: on this blue a gold *chrismon* floats, symbol of the presence of Christ. As usual with such compositions, the impression is given of an oculus, through which a glimpse is afforded of another world: the world of the highest heaven, abode of God.⁴¹

This composition, where the ribs of the vault bear caryatids which appear to hold it up, has its origins in the floor and vault compositions of the Romans, and before them of the Etruscans. A possible pagan antecedent of the Archbishops' chapel vault existed at

41 A.Grabar, "L'Iconographie du Ciel dans l'Art chrétien de l'Antiquité et du Haut Moyen Age", CahArch, 30, 1982, 5-25; also, K.Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven", Art Bulletin, 27, 1945, 19.

S.Croce at the Lateran Baptistery, where a preexisting building was reused as a chapel under Pope Hilarus,⁴² and its vault cherubs were reinterpreted as angels.⁴³ Later Pope Paschal I (817-824), would reuse the composition in his mother's burial chapel at S.Prassede, Rome. The contents of the oculus are the main compositional variant: apparently, there was a cross at S.Croce, where the opus sectile decoration of the walls was also rich in crosses;⁴⁴ a Chi-Rho at S.Andrea, Ravenna, and, for the first time among surviving monuments, the anthropomorphic image of Christ at S.Prassede's S.Zeno chapel. The symbol of Christ is frequently displayed framed at the top of vaults at Ravenna, for example in the side niches of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. It is held up by pairs of angels above the presbytery arches at S.Vitale, where it is also framed, as if it were a monogrammed shield: there it also carries a connotation of victory.

A unique feature of the composition at the Archbishops' chapel is the alternation of the angels with evangelist symbols, which in later medieval art would themselves become the main subject of quadripartite vaults, as in the crypt of Anagni cathedral and the chapel behind the altar at S.Pudenziana, Rome. The four beasts of the Apocalypse symbolise the evangelists in the way explained by St.Jerome, based on the opening words of their respective gospels--Matthew by a man or--as here in the east quadrant--an angel. Mark's lion is in the west. The north segment holds the Eagle of St.John, the south, the Ox of St.Luke. They float among the wisps of red and blue cloud in the symbolic gold of heaven on paired brown wings. Each is nimbed, and carries a jewelled book in its arms.

The iconographic details of these symbols underwent an evolution in the period between 375 and 500 AD. At first they had six wings, three pairs each, as in the text from Revelation.⁴⁵ At this period the

42 R.Krautheimer, Three Christian Capitals, Berkeley, 1983, 115.

43 R.Krautheimer, Rome. Profile of a city, Princeton, 1981, 51.

44 See Chapter 8 for a discussion of S.Croce.

45 Revelation, 4:6-8

books were not included. Symbols of this type loom in the upper apse at S.Pudenziana, Rome (ca.390), and in the side lunettes at the S.Matrona chapel at S.Prisco (ca.410-425). The next evolutionary step is the loss of the supernumerary wings, as at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna (ca.425-450). Finally, as at S.Andrea, they acquire haloes and codices, attaining the form which they will keep throughout the Middle Ages. The iconographic content of the vault composition, then, expresses Christ's presence in the realm of Heaven, his monogramme both revealed and raised up by the attending angels which link heaven and earth. The evangelist symbols, moreover, show that the message of salvation is revealed in the Gospels, and that it is through them that the soul will attain heaven.

The medallion saints in the soffits include the apostles in the east and west, six and six. In the east soffit, on Christ's right, is Paul with James and John, while Peter takes the less important left side with Andrew and Philip. Paul often appears in the primary location in Ravenna, in contrast to Roman custom.⁴⁶ It seems that even at this period there was an attempt to distance Ravenna from the primacy of Peter, and thus from subservience to Rome.

The less important apostles are relegated to the west soffit, arranged on either side of another bust of Christ. Both medallions of Christ show him with his hair falling on his left shoulder, a purple, imperial robe with gold clavi, and with a golden halo enclosing a jewelled cross (fig.1). The example at the altar end also has white rays striking inwards from the halo's rim: this use of white recalls Christ's white "halo" in the right lunette at S.Aquilino, Milan. Here, as in Ravenna, where the white nimbus distinguishes Christ in both the

46 The status of Paul at Ravenna is discussed by J.M.Huskisson, Concordia Apostolorum. Christian Propaganda at Rome in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries. A Study in Early Christian Iconography and Iconology. BAR, 148, Oxford, 1982, 29. He attributes Paul's status in Ravenna to a special devotion of the Theodosian house, previously manifested in their building of S.Paolo fuori le Mura, Rome, and shown in Ravenna in Paul's position on such sarcophagi as the Liberius sarcophagus used as a high altar in S.Francesco, Ravenna, where he receives the Law from Christ in place of Peter, and the early fifth century example in S.Maria in Porto Fuori, where Paul alone is shown receiving the Law.

chapel and its narthex, it must be more than a technical device to set off the golden halo from the golden background. The halo originated in the luminous circle with which pre-Christian religions invested their deities to signify their mystical powers. Thus, it seems likely that here too it represents the mystical white light, derived from the light of the sun, which marks Christ's humanity with the light of the Deity.⁴⁷ Indeed, in one of the best-known images in Early Christian art, Christ was portrayed as the Sun God himself, riding his chariot in the sky.⁴⁸

The six women martyrs in the left arch are, from left to right, Cecilia, Eugenia, Euphemia, Daria, Perpetua and Felicitas (fig.2). Pride of place is given to Euphemia, martyr of Chalcedon, and Daria, Roman virgin martyr. Cecilia and Eugenia, like Daria, were Roman, while Perpetua and Felicitas, her slave, met death in Carthage. All six were later included in the procession of female martyrs at S.Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, and, Daria excepted, among the medallions at the Basilica Euphrasiana at Poreč in Istria. Four of them, (Daria and Eugenia excepted), were among the saints of the Canon of the Ambrosian Mass, as used at Ravenna. From 550 the relics of both Euphemia and Eugenia were preserved in Ravenna in bishop Maximinian's church of Saint Stephen.⁴⁹ It is not easy to explain the choice of saints, except to surmise that all were either connected with the Ravenna liturgy, or that their relics were venerated nearby, perhaps even in the Archbishops' chapel itself.

47 J.E.Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, tr, J.Sage, New York, 1962, 130, on haloes; and 50-57 on the mystical significance of colours, esp. 55-56, on white: "The function of white is derived from that of the sun:...it comes to signify intuition in general, and, in its affirmative and spiritual aspect, intuition of the Beyond." Cirlot's work draws upon wide and varied sources to unravel the ancient beliefs of many cultures, some of which were influential upon the thought of the early church. See Ibid, introduction, esp.xix-xxii, "Symbolism in the West".

48 The mosaic of the Tomb of the Julii in the Vatican cemetery, Rome, illustrated in Michael Gough, The Origins of Christian Art, London, 1973, 19, pl.10.

49 Agnellus, LPER, MGH edition, 327-328, "Collocavit autem hic merita apostolorum et martirum, id est ...sanctae Eufimiae...sanctae Eugeniae, qui orent pro nobis".

Each portrait, on a deep blue background, is framed concentrically in black, orange and white; white and red, red and gold, and gold.⁵⁰ Each saint's name is written above the frame: omission of the title SCA, SANCTA, suggests an early date. The outer edge of each of the four arches is delineated by a line of "jewelled chain": alternating oblong green and oval blue jewels punctuated by pairs of pearls. The overall effect of the quadripartite decoration is of four miniature triumphal arches: medallion saints were popular around the openings of such arches, as at S.Sabina, Rome (ca.390), or under the soffit, framing the apse, as at Poreč (ca.550), where a dozen women saints were featured. Women, also, were the subject of a similar decoration, now almost entirely lost, at the chapel of S.Maria Mater Domini, Vicenza, of which the remains were discovered above a false ceiling in 1937. There, beside a fragment of the lion of St.Mark, consisting of its head with a blue nimbus and two wings, against a gold background with red and blue clouds (fig.5), is a medallion portrait of a young, unnamed female saint (fig.6). Damage has obliterated the upper part of her face.⁵¹ The saint may well have represented one of the four female saints whose relics were kept in the chapel: Cassia, Innocenza, Gaudienza and Neofita.⁵² S.Maria Mater Domini has been dated to the early sixth century on various grounds, including style of the medallion image, which is remarkably similar to those in the Archbishops' chapel in style, technique and clothing.⁵³ The medallion portrait, then, was not exclusive to any one type of Early Christian chapel, as S.Maria Mater Domini was a funerary structure in the Christian cemetery around the palaeochristian basilica of SS.Felice e Fortunato, to which it is now

50 Alchemy, perhaps coincidentally, found the series black-white-red-gold denoted the path of spiritual ascension. Cirlot, Ibid, 53.

51 A.Edoardo, Catalogo delle cose d'arte e di antichità d'Italia-Vicenza, I. Le chiese, Rome, 1956, 88-89.

52 Attilio Previtali, San Felice: Una dimora dello spirito. Le simbologie di un antico monumento cristiano: la basilica e il martirion dei SS Felice e Fortunato in Vicenza, Vicenza, 1988, n.p.

53 See Chapter 4.

attached. It seems that the medallion image was equally at home wherever a donor wanted to invoke the presence of a particular saint, be it in a private chapel, a martyrrium, a funerary chapel or a basilica, quite apart from its use in sculpture, on such items as sarcophagi and the products of the minor arts.

Which other saints were chosen and named at S.Andrea, Ravenna, and what determined the choice? The apostles were an obvious and very standard choice, frequent in Early Christian art, but as Megaw and Hawkins have pointed out, there was little uniformity in their iconography up to the sixth century.⁵⁴ The choice of exactly which of the apostles to include also caused difficulties. To accomodate Paul, who had not been one of the Twelve, a minor apostle had to be displaced. Judas Iscariot obviously had to be replaced, and sometimes, especially in the East, the Evangelists were all included, despite the fact that only two of them belonged to the original Twelve. Invariable were Peter, Paul, James, John and Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, approximately in this order. The other places were filled by three of the following:--James son of Alphaeus, who was usually dropped; Simon Zelotes, sometimes dropped for Matthias or Jude; Thaddeus; Judas brother of James; Matthias; Mark and Luke. At the Archbishops' chapel, the altar arch held the favourites; the opposite arch, the also-rans, James, Taddeus, Thomas, and Matthew (fig.1).

The Archbishops' chapel is unusual in its choice of six male saints for the window arch (fig.2). Chrysanthus, Chrisologus and Cassianus, Damianus and Cosmas, and Polycarpus are arrayed on either side of Christ's symbol. Cassianus (ca.360-435), the saint of Imola, a dependancy of the Ravenna See, and Polycarpus (ca.69-ca.155), were also shown in the martyrs' procession in S.Apollinare Nuovo; Cosmas and Damianus were not only included in the Ambrosian Canon of the Mass, but in the Roman as well. Chrisologus, the Ravenna bishop Petrus Chrisologus (ca.400-451), was an obvious choice as the most illustrious predecessor of the founder in the See of Ravenna, and he also had an

54 A.H.S.Megaw & E.J.N.Hawkins, The Church of the Panagia Kanakaria at Lythrankomi in Cyprus, DOS, 14, Washington, 1977, 108.

intimate connection with Cassianus, having died in the course of feast-day celebrations at his shrine at Imola.⁵⁵

A major problem at this chapel is our complete ignorance of the subject-matter of the apse and side lunettes. Without this information the iconographic programme can only be analysed in the most general terms. The vault, a representation of heaven, shows the start of the hierarchical arrangement of the holiest beings in the highest locations, which later came to typify Byzantine church decor. Christ is symbolised in the highest sphere of heaven, and is followed by the angels which span the vault of the sky, and are connected to earth by the grassy meadows on which they stand. Christ also occupies the crown of each tunnel vault, his human form alternating with the symbolic *chrismon*, complete with the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, a further reference to him.⁵⁶ The Lamb, which also appears in this composition, also symbolises Christ, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world", and has a central place in the apocalyptic vision.⁵⁷ The evangelists and the Gospels--gateways both to the Christian faith and to heaven and salvation--loom in the sky above each arch, where also the Lamb takes his place among the symbolically powerful vegetation and bird-life of Paradise. Finally, in the soffits below, are roundels with images of the apostles and martyrs, human witnesses to the faith for which they lived and died.

The question of how this chapel's decoration differs from that of a funerary chapel of the Early Christian era is difficult, if not impossible, to answer, both because of its incompleteness, and because of the lack of comparative material from other non-funerary structures. This chapel's decoration, for example, has many of the same features as that of the St. Matrona chapel at S. Prisco: paradisaical vault, evangelist symbols, alpha and omega accompanying Christ, apostles (at S. Matrona symbolised by doves), and so on. It also converges with the S. Maria

55 He died there on July 31, 451. CPER, 153 and note 22.

56 Referring to Revelation, 1:8, "I am Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God."

57 John, 1:21.

Mater Domini fragments, as represented by the clipeate saint's image and the Evangelist symbols. The only ingredient that seems to set it apart is the series of medallions of non-Biblical male saints, who are liturgists, scholars and physicians from Italy and the East, appropriate subjects for the interest of the upper-level clerics who commissioned the design. Otherwise the chapel speaks the universal language of Early Christian art--the heavenly vision; the emphasis on the teachings of the gospels and on the apostles and saints as witnesses to these teachings. The chapel, interestingly enough, is not anonymous, but contained ample evidence of the donor--his monogramme and his portrait--and of his ideas, as set out in the inscription in the narthex. These personal touches are interesting forerunners of the apse inscriptions in Roman churches of the early Middle Ages, such as those of Paschal I and Gregory IV in the ninth century. They also anticipate the placing of donor portraits in churches, both for propaganda purposes, and to ensure that the donors are mystically present among their chosen saints on Judgment day.

CHAPTER 3

MARTYR SHRINE TO FUNERARY CHAPEL

The improved conditions for the Christian community after the Edict of Milan in 313 led directly to an increased interest in the cult of martyrs. It now became possible to honour them by marking their burial places and the scenes of their martyrdom. The sacred sites of the martyrs' graves which had long been neglected or hidden because of the persecutions now came to be honoured by the erection of small chapels. There was nothing new or specifically Christian in this idea: the tradition of building mausolea over the tombs of wealthy or important people had a long history in pagan Rome, and was taken over by the Christians, along with many other funerary customs, as soon as the political situation made it possible to do so. The occasional tomb, such as that of Peter, had been venerated even earlier. Now, though, the cult of the important Christian dead, the martyrs, spread rapidly, and they were venerated openly by the whole Christian community. As heroes of the cult it was natural that they received in death the honour due to those who had proved themselves by their heroic sacrifice to be both leaders and examples in the faith.

The veneration of the martyrs' graves followed a common pattern. The first stage was the erection of a small building, as much for shelter as in honour of the illustrious dead. These small *cellae memoriae* then became focal points for the piety of other Christians, who wanted to be buried near the saints, and whose graves clustered around the martyrs' tombs.¹ Sometimes the chapel had to be enlarged to accommodate the many people who wanted this privilege. Finally, it seems, burial beside the saints came to be reserved for the great: archbishops, bishops and the most wealthy laity. By the early sixth century, it was rare for anyone except the upper echelons of the clergy, and the imperial family, to be buried *ad sanctos*. This was another time of much building, when many of the smaller chapels were enlarged and

1 A famous example is the cluster of graves around the tomb of St. Peter in the Vatican cemetery.

redecorated, frequently with attention to the symbolic power of architectural form and of the decorations that evolved to adorn them. The presence of the individuals who joined the martyr at his tomb was noted in portraiture, inscriptions or verses, and decorations were devised that embodied the hopes of the new occupants for salvation and eternal life.

Structures of the early type--dating to the fourth and early fifth centuries--were confined to the cemeteries outside the walls of cities, where Roman law had long required burials to be made.² In Rome, for example, they clustered around the cemetery basilicas which had been built in the time of Constantine above the tombs of the martyrs who lay in the catacombs below (fig ii).

The situation at Rome is complicated by the three-dimensional nature of the burial sites. This is associated with the many layers of below-ground catacomb galleries in which both ordinary Christians and the saints were buried. The above ground chapels in many cases probably served only as memorials, and possibly doubled as family burial chapels, since evidence suggests that there was great reluctance to raise or interfere with the bodies of the martyrs in Early Christian Rome: this evidence, in the form of imperial edicts forbidding the transfer of martyrs' relics, implies that this practice was common.³ Almost all the chapels have disappeared, leaving only fragmentary evidence on which to base an analysis of the Roman situation. The information that survives about chapels above the ground at the Roman cemeteries will be assembled here, though a clearer picture will emerge from a study of the smaller centres, especially Milan and Ravenna.

Among the Roman chapels at the top level of patronage that still

2 For general information see J.M.C Toynbee, Death and Burial in the Roman World, London, 1971. For specific laws, see The Theodosian Code, tr. Clyde Pharr, Princeton, 1952. esp. 240, 9.17.6, of emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius, July 30, 381, banning the bodies of apostles and martyrs from the city, on pain of penalties that included heavy fines and the removal of the remains.

3 Ibid., 240, 9, 17, 7, same emperors, February 26, 386, "No person shall transfer a buried body to another place. No person shall sell the relics of a martyr; no person shall traffic in them".

survive are the Mausoleum of Constantine's daughter Constantina, at the left flank of the original cemetery church of S.Agnese on the Via Nomentana, and, in ruins, a structure that was similarly attached to the narthex of SS.Pietro e Marcellino on the Via Labicana, the mausoleum of Helena, mother of Constantine. These structures along with the other imperial mausolea in Milan and Ravenna, constitute a special category of funerary chapel, which will not be covered in this study. On a more humble scale, however, also located beside SS.Pietro e Marcellino, there is a small, rectangular, apsed chapel, now dedicated to the Roman martyr Tiburtius,⁴ and in use as the chapel of the Sisters of the Holy Family. Its southeast corner touches the outer curve of the basilical apse, but it is off axis to it, and may antedate it. Since it rises over the tomb chapel of Peter and Marcellinus in the catacomb below, to which it is connected by a monumental staircase, it may well be their original memorial, and Guyon believes its altar held their relics.⁵ Nothing remains of its original decoration. It is the sole survivor of a whole group of chapels on the Via Labicana, many of which were discovered in the excavations of 1896.⁶ These included a circular structure five meters in diameter, with the remains of a sarcophagus, and a groin-vaulted cruciform chapel with four niches, which was seen by Antonio Bosio,⁷ and was probably the two storey structure, already in ruins

4 Krautheimer et al., CBCR, II, 196-198. St.Tiburtius is first recorded from this catacomb in an epigram of Pope Damasus, (366-384). See ActaSS, June 2, 173f. The chapel is no. VII in Jean Guyon, Le Cimetière aux Deux Lauriers, Rome, 1987, 208, fig.115, which shows the overall plan of the excavations between 1896 and 1984.

5 Guyon, Ibid., 440-445, esp.449, and fig.244, "La basilique inferieure", the *basilica ad corpus* of Peter and Marcellinus; also 449, fig.253, for section drawing showing relationship between the upper and lower chapels.

6 P.Crostarosa, "Le Catacombe Romane", NBAC, 3, 1897, 113-130, esp. 122-125.

7 Krautheimer, CBCR, II, 196. A.Bosio, Roma sotteranea, Rome, 1632, 322f. Also see Guyon, Ibid., 21-29, for an account of the excavation of "mausoleum XII", which, on the evidence of its floor mosaics, probably dated from the second century.

before 1569, that was illustrated by P.Ligorio.⁸

The situation at SS.Pietro e Marcellino is paralleled by that at S.Lorenzo fuori le mura in the Campo Verano where excavations have revealed a Constantinian funerary basilica with its annexed chapels, while two other shrines discovered in the nineteenth century and now lost revealed traces of the decoration, in one case, and of the dedication, in the other. The decorated chapel was a small, rectangular, apsed structure which retained traces of the lower part of fifth or sixth century decorations, evidently of standing saints.⁹ The other chapel was a triconch, discovered in 1857 near the north corner of the S.Lorenzo quadriporticus, and believed to date from shortly after 384 AD.¹⁰ Its function as a martyr shrine of an otherwise unknown Leo, Bishop of an unidentified diocese outside Rome, was revealed by De Rossi, who was able to match a partial inscription found at the site with another large fragment found at S.Gregorio Magno, but originating at the Campo Verano. Together, they consisted of the text of a poem engraved on the upper part of a transenna, the funerary inscription of the martyr. The shrine remained in use at least until the late eighth century, when it was repaired by Hadrian I (772-795);¹¹ it then disappears from the records.

Traces of chapels, attached along the north wall, have also been discovered at the cemetery basilica of the Campo Verano. Their ruined walls reveal nothing of their function or decoration, though their location makes it almost certain that they were funerary chapels.¹²

8 For P.Ligorio, *Bibl.Naz.Napoli*, Cod.XIIIB10, Libro 49, see Guyon, *Ibid.*, fig.25.

9 G.De Rossi, "Sepolcri antichi nell'agro verano", *BAC*, 1, 1863, 16.

10 G.De Rossi, "Il monumento d'un ignoto S.Leone, Vescovo e martire, nell'agro verano", *BAC*, 2, 1864, 54-56 and text illustration, p.55; Also Krautheimer, *CBCR*, II, 120-121, also pl. 1 & 2, & fig.90.

11 *LP*, I, 508, "Immo et aeccliesiam sancti Stephani iuxta eas sita, ubi corpus sancti Leonis episcopus et martyris quiescit, similiter undique renovavit una cum cymiterio beatae Cyriacae seu ascensum eius."

12 Krautheimer, *CBCR*, II, 107-108.

At the funerary basilica *ad catacumbas* on the Via Appia, originally dedicated to the Apostles, but now known as S. Sebastiano, much more survives of the annexed chapels, which may be seen as typifying the Roman situation in this period. The earliest of them antedated the basilica, and were either obliterated when it was built, or annexed to it as accessory structures. One small chapel on each side, slightly off axis both to the basilica and to the other, falls into the latter category.¹³ Krautheimer found that as soon as the perimeter wall of S. Sebastiano had been completed, chapels sprang up along its sides, especially on the south, where a large apsed chapel was entered from the ambulatory by a surviving, but bricked up, triple arcade.¹⁴ This chapel was soon replaced by two smaller apsed structures, which survive in the present-day convent, converted to secular use. Another large and slightly later chapel was reached through a narthex with apsed ends. Slightly later still, but still of early date, as evidenced by its brickwork, is the so-called Mausoleum of the Uranii. Partly rock-cut, and with lateral niches, it measures twelve meters across, and bears the same relationship to the cemetery basilica as does Constantina's mausoleum, which it strongly resembles, to S. Agnese.¹⁵ Three more mausolea, separated by a gap and by one of the "off-axis" chapels, were positioned near the apse. The two nearest the apse survive, but underground, and may be substructures for surface chapels now lost.¹⁶ A last major structure at this end of the church is the "Platonica", an apse-shaped structure reached through its flat side, originally by means of a trapezoidal narthex. This has nine large, rectangular niches in the thickness of its walls, and a later descending staircase at the rounded end.¹⁷

13 *Ibid.*, IV, 136-139 and pl. VII, *cellae* 53 and d.

14 *Ibid.*, IV, 136-139 and pl. VII, *cellae* 43-45.

15 *Ibid.*, IV, 137, and pl. VII, 41. Krautheimer dates it around 350.

16 *Ibid.*, 138, and pl. VII, 46, 48, 49.

17 *Ibid.*, 138, fig. 126, and pl. VII, 51. It was the burial site of the Pannonian martyr, Quirinus.

The nearby cemetery of S.Callisto on the Via Appia also retains an above-ground chapel, a triconch, re-roofed and in use as a small church.¹⁸ It is one of two surviving in that area. A similar triconch chapel is known from mile nine on the Via Tiburtina, where foundations of an early Christian basilica have been revealed lying apse to apse with the older trichoran structure, believed to be the martyrdom of S.Sinferosa.¹⁹

Stripped of decoration, or lying in ruins, these examples do little more than underline the popularity of both the centrally planned, and the apsed chapel in the funerary setting. The situation at S.Sinferosa, however, gives unequivocal proof, unique for Rome according to Grabar, that the triconch was an architectural form especially chosen for the *memoriae* of martyrs, for here the triconch had no communication with the exterior save through the sanctuary of the basilica.²⁰ Thus the altar of the church was sanctified by the proximity of the martyrs' remains, which were those of Sinferosa and her seven sons.²¹ Choice of the triconch form, closely associated with the architecture of the dining chamber of classical times, with its multiple sigma couches placed in niches, is probably connected to the custom of the funerary banquet or *refrigerium* which was celebrated at the graveside on the anniversary of death.²² The basilica must have been added to house the

18 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, 1/1, 186 and diagram. This is probably one of the structures drawn by Montano, Scielta de varii Tempietti antichi, Rome, 1624. no.10 "Tempio antico nella Via Appia, poco lontano da capo di Boue" or 20, "Tempio antico fuori di Roma nella Via Appia, a mano manca passato Capo di Boue".

19 E.Stevenson, "La basilica doppia di S.Sinferosa", Bulletin d'archéologie chrétienne, ser.III, 3, 1878, 80-87 and pl.IV.

20 A.Grabar, Martyrium, Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique, I, Paris, 1946, 103-104.

21 D.Thierri Ruinart, Acta Sincera, 1711, 23, places the cult of Sinferosa and her sons at the ninth mile of the Via Tiburtina, still known popularly as "a sette fratte" in Bosio's time, Bosio, Roma Sotteranea, 401.

22 I.Lavin, "The House of the Lord. Aspects of the role of palace triclinia in the architecture of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages", Art Bulletin, 44, 1962, 1-27, esp. 21, note 170.

crowd of pilgrims visiting the site of the martyr tombs, which it was not thought expedient to disturb.

Another Roman martyr with seven sons who was twice celebrated in a painted chapel was St. Felicitas. One, in the catacomb of Maximus (now called St. Felicitas) on the Via Salaria, was built by pope Boniface I (418-422), to mark the saint's actual grave.²³ The other was discovered in 1812 in a room of Nero's *Domus Aurea*, facing the Colosseum on the Oppian hill beside the Baths of Titus. Its paintings, which have now disappeared, were recorded in drawings,²⁴ and although originally thought to be of the fourth or fifth century, have more recently been assigned to the seventh century, on the basis of their iconography.²⁵ It is believed that this chapel marked a specific site in the passion of St. Felicitas: the place of her imprisonment.

These examples of early chapels associated with the cemeteries outside the walls of Rome can give only the faintest idea of the richness and variety of the funerary structures which once sprang up in all the Christian graveyards along the roads out of the city. None survives with decoration: few even retain their dedications, and little can be inferred from their architecture when so few of the chapels which survive come securely documented as to function or donor. The situation is also complicated by the presence of martyrs' burials below in the catacombs. In fact, perhaps the best idea of the lost architecture and

23 Rediscovered by G. De Rossi in 1856, "Scoperta d'una cripta storica nel cimitero di Massimo *ad sanctam Felicitatem* sulla via Salaria Nuova" *BAC*, 1884-1885, 149-184, and pl IX-X. *LP*, I, 227, "Hic fecit oratorium in cimiterio sanctae Felicitatis, iuxta corpus eius, et ornavit sepulchrum sanctae martyris Felicitatis et sancti Silvani" See also J. Osborne, "The Roman Catacombs in the Middle Ages", *PBSR*, 53, 1985, 316-317.

24 De Rossi, *BAC*, 1884-1885, pl. XI & XII, combined in Cabrol/Leclercq, *DACL*, 5/1, fig. 4327, cols. 1283-1284. Grabar, *Martyrium*, III, pl. XIX, mistakenly identifies this drawing by Ruspi as the decoration of the catacomb chapel.

25 Grabar, *Martyrium*, II, 17, note 2, "cette fresque du VII^e siècle décore la niche absidiale de l'oratoire-martyrium de Sainte-Félicité". Also, Krautheimer, *CBCR*, I, 219; C. Ihm, *Programme*, pl. XXVI/3.

decoration of the chapels on the surface can be gained from the subterranean structures in the catacombs. One catacomb particularly, although relatively small and simple in its layout, and not sheltering a martyr's remains, is remarkable both for its architecture, rich in chapels, and its paintings. This is the catacomb discovered in 1955 on the Via Latina. The catacomb was constructed in several stages, starting in the early fourth century, and probably completed before the turn of the fifth.²⁶ It consists of a set of galleries which open out at various points into small rooms with arcosolia (fig.iii).²⁷ These rooms also serve as antechambers for other small chapels, about a dozen in all. All except two are stuccoed and painted. Some retain their marble sarcophagi and are demarcated by marble transennae. Loculus burial is kept to a minimum, with only the entrance and one other gallery devoted to these graves. Christian and pagan burials occur in a random fashion, and it is necessary to pass through pagan areas to reach Christian chapels, and vice versa. Not surprisingly, the themes of salvation and the afterlife are common to both religious groups. It is evident that the Via Latina catacomb was a private cemetery for people of means. Tronzo has especially drawn attention to the fourth and last construction phase, which appears to have been a commercial venture.²⁸ Its architecture was of an unusual type for Rome, hinting at an Eastern influence. Yet this diversity of architecture is what best reflects the little that we know of the above ground funerary buildings and martyria of late fourth century Rome.

The architectural variety is also the result of the particular conditions in the tufa: underground there is freedom from functional constraints which would otherwise require that columns and lintels were weight bearing, that vaults would be supported so that they could not

26 W.Tronzo, The Via Latina Catacomb, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1986, Chapter 2, "The Building of the Catacomb", 5-22, and plan, fig.1.

27 A.Ferrua, Le pitture della nuova catacomba di Via Latina", Vatican City, 1960, pl.CXX, gives a schematic drawing of the layout of the catacomb, reproduced in Tronzo, fig.1.

28 Tronzo, Ibid., Chapter 2, esp. p.10.

collapse, and so on. When a chapel is carved out of solid tufa, the space is hollowed out and an illusion of support is created, but the pillars and capitals, the bases and lintels are all equally illusory, doing nothing structural but satisfying the eye that is used to architectural spaces being composed from these standard components. Thus vaults billow and chapels leave the safety of square and rectangular form for the hexagon, sometimes irregular; for lobed and pleated spaces and for arcosolia pushing out the walls of square and rectangular chambers, with the illusion of depth and space magnified by the painted decoration. Nevertheless, it is the use of the standard components of "real" architecture that make us sure that the subterranean chapel copies the surface one, and then indulges in flights of fancy, rather than the reverse.

It is not, therefore, the more creative spaces of the Via Latina catacomb that are most relevant to our theme, but the basic shapes that relate most directly to above-ground architecture: the square vaulted chamber with a column "supporting" the vault in each corner,²⁹ and the rectangular cubiculum with a terminal arcosolium forming a rectangular apse, framed with columns or left plain.³⁰ Also of interest are the basic cross-shaped structure, square with an arcosolium-niche pushing out each of the three walls across from the entry, which is itself positioned in a fourth.³¹ This type of structure, immensely popular in above ground architecture, persisted through Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, to be revived by Renaissance architects.³² Hybrids between these types also existed in the Via Latina catacomb, such as the terminal cubacula of the two galleries, which are rectangular, have a shallow rectangular niche on each side, and a deep terminal niche with

29 Cubiculum B from Tronzo's phase II; Ferrua's D, (which lost two columns in a later renovation), from phase III, and N from phase IV.

30 As in E and B, respectively, of Ferrua's plan.

31 Ferrua, Catacomba, A.

32 See the drawings of Baldassarre Peruzzi, for example, reproduced in A. Bartoli, I monumenti antichi di Roma nei disegni degli Uffizi di Firenze, 6 vols., Rome, 1914-1922.

its own tiny apse.

Just as the subterranean architecture mimics that of the world above, so also does the painted ornament relate to the sculptural or mosaic enrichments of the above ground buildings. Painted imitations of real coffered ceilings occur in the Via Latina catacomb in the barrel vault of the entrance corridor to Phase IV, and from the same phase, in the large hexagonal chamber of six columns and six exits.³³ Mosaic vaults are also imitated in paint: the vault of cubiculum N has an interlocking pattern of crosses and large and small hexagons which is identical with that of the entrance bay at S.Costanza, which also dates from around AD 350. The latter probably represents an application of mosaic floor technique to a vault, but appears not to be a true floor pattern, but a reminiscence of real architectural coffering, an imitation of exactly the same sort as the Via Latina painted vaults.

It goes without saying that the third element of the decor of the chapels, the figural painting with religious content, must also have reflected the decoration of the above-ground mausolea, of which so little survives, in content and iconography. Salvation imagery, with parallels from the Old Testament, will in all probability have constituted the major theme above ground, just as it does in the catacombs.

In summary, our knowledge of the Early Christian cemetery chapel in Rome, whether martyrrium or funerary chapel, can only be gleaned from the fragmentary remains of a representative few above ground, backed up by our knowledge of the subterranean *cubicula* which are closely related to them. Outside Rome, however, the situation is very different, for chapels actually survive from the cemetery areas outside the ancient walls of Milan, Ravenna and Capua which have retained substantial amounts of their original decorations. These are S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro in Milan, the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, and the chapel of S.Matrona at S.Prisco, near S.Maria in Capua Vetere.³⁴ These,

³³ Ferrua, Catacomba, pl.LIV, for tunnel vault of corridor H; Tronzo, Catacomb, fig.26 for cubiculum I, and figs. 27 & 28 for cubiculum N and the S.Costanza vault.

³⁴ These three chapels form the subjects of Chapters 5, 7, and 6,

all of which have retained their decorations, epitomise others known only from archaeological or literary evidence, or surviving with little or nothing of their decorative programmes intact. Milan and Ravenna both have numerous examples of these. In addition, palaeochristian chapels survive in Verona, Vicenza, and Padua, and in Istria at Poreč and Pula, and archaeological remains give us some idea of similar structures at Concordia, Grado and Aquileia.³⁵ Not far away, at Rimini, an Early Christian chapel, cruciform in shape with narthex and two corner rooms, was excavated in 1860 and then lost.³⁶ In central Italy, there are remains of Early Christian chapels at Ancona³⁷ and at Narni,³⁸ while in the South, the church of S.Maria della Croce at Casaranello, Apulia, incorporates a fifth century chapel, complete with its mosaic decoration, in the crossing of the transept.³⁹ San Leucio, Brindisi also incorporates an early chapel,⁴⁰ and near Siracusa, Sicily, two

respectively.

35 For the chapels of north-east Italy see Chapter 4. For the north-west, esp. Pavia, see Brian Ward-Perkins, From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Oxford, 1984, 79-80.

36 See P.Verzone, Architettura, 28-30, and plan, fig 11, with references to Tonini's excavations of 1860.

37 See G.Bovini, "La `memoria antiqua S.Stephani' e l'oratorio paleocristiano di Corso Garibaldi di Ancona", CorsiCRB, 1966, 7-26, esp. 20, where Bovini suggests this was a late fourth century cult centre, rather than a private chapel.

38 Most recently, M.Salmi, "Un problema storico-artistico medievale", Bolletino d'arte del ministero della PI, 3, 1958, 213-231, shows that this was originally the *cella memoriae* of the local saint Giovenale (d.376), and was the site of burial *ad sanctos* of his four immediate successors in the bishopric.

39 See, most recently, M.M.Trinci Cecchelli, "I mosaici di S.Maria della Croce a Casaranello", Puglia paleocristiana, 3, Bari, 1979, 413-448, esp. 414-416. Excavations which reveal the original pavement of the fourth or fifth centuries, define this chapel as built in the form of a Latin, rather than a Greek, cross.

40 See R.Jurlaro, "Un martyrium a Brindisi", RAC, 45, 1969, 89-95. A trichoran martyrium of Early Christian date lay under the nave of the basilica of S.Leucio, Brindisi, and formed its crypt.

undecorated Early Christian chapels of Latin cross form survive,⁴¹ while near Noto a triconch chapel, the Trigona of Maccari, associated with the catacombs there, has been tentatively dated to the sixth century or a little later.⁴² It is clear that such chapels were widespread in Italy and Istria, but many of them have vanished from our knowledge.

At the imperial capital city of Milan, as at Rome, there was a cemetery on each of the major roads leading out of town. The most important was in the *Hortus Philippi* outside the Porta Vercellina: here the Basilica Ambrosiana, originally dedicated to the Martyrs, arose in the *Coemeterium ad martyres*. Other cemeteries were situated outside the Porta Orientale, centred on the Basilica of the Saviour, later known as S.Dionigio; on the Via Romana, around the Basilica of the Apostles; and outside the Porta Comasina, around the Basilica Vergine, now S.Simpliciano (fig.iv).

The largest Christian cemetery, and the one about which the most is known, is the *Coemeterium ad martyres*. The graves of various martyrs were honoured there after the Peace of the Church by the erection of *cellae memoriae*. All but one of these have disappeared. The solitary survivor is the chapel of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, now incorporated into the enlarged church of S.Ambrogio, as a chapel to the right of the apse. It was previously an independent structure. The lost chapels included those of saints Nabor and Felix, Valeria, and Vitalis, all known from texts and archaeological remains, and all, like S.Vittore, orientated to the street-plan of Roman Mediolanum.

The chapel of S.Vitale was probably built by Ambrose for the remains of saints Vitalis and Agricola which he found in Bologna in 393 and brought back to Milan.⁴³ It lay about 70 meters behind the apse of the Ambrosiana,⁴⁴ and has been convincingly identified with the

41 P.Orsi, "Chiese byzantine del territorio di Siracusa", Byzantinische Zeitschrift, 7, 1898, 1-28, esp. 2.

42 Ibid., 8.

43 Ambrose, Exhortatio Virginitatis, I, PL, 16, 275-278, esp col. 351-352.

44 See Reggiori's plan in his La Basilica Ambrosiana, Milan, 1941, 171.

"Basilica Faustae" to which Ambrose took the newly discovered bones of saints Gervasius and Protasius, passing a night of vigil over them there.⁴⁵ This structure was referred to as "Ecclesia Fausti in Vinea, ista ecclesia nunc dicitur S.Vitalis" in the later Middle Ages.⁴⁶

Approximately 40 meters away beside the present Via S.Valeria, another small *cella memoriae* survived until 1786: it was dedicated to Valeria, who according to tradition was wife to Vitalis, an officer in the imperial army. Vitalis, his Acts tell us, died at Ravenna, buried alive at a place known as the Palm tree.⁴⁷ Valeria herself suffered martyrdom on her way back to Milan after his death. However, an inscription from this chapel, recorded but lost, mentions its occupants as Aurelius Diogenes and Valeria Felicissima, Confessors of the Faith,⁴⁸ casting doubt on Valeria, the martyr, and suggesting her identity as a member of the Valerii, a wealthy family. This would identify this structure as an aristocratic burial chapel, rather than a martyrium.

Beyond this again, out to the back of the Ambrosiana apse, to the south of the Via Vercellina, lay another martyr chapel, dedicated to saints Nabor and Felix. This is the building mentioned by Ambrose in his letter to his sister Marcellina, in which he describes finding the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius, the sons of Vitalis, "before the chancel screen of saints Felix and Nabor".⁴⁹ The remains of this chapel

45 Ambrose, Epistola XXII, "To his sister Marcellina", PL, 16, cols. 1062-1069, esp. 1063, "transtulimus vespere jam incumbente ad basilicam Faustae: ibi vigiliae tota nocte".

46 Galvano Flamma, (Galvanei Flammae), Chronicon Maius, in Miscellanea di storia italiana, 7, Turin, 1869, 506f.

47 This Life is based on the fifth century Letter of Pseudo-Ambrose, PL, 17, Epist. III, (alias LIV), col.747, which creates a dynasty of saints for Ravenna, borrowing the patrons of Milan and other places and setting up a place of martyrdom for them to rival the Colosseum, at a site which supposedly now lies under the church of S.Vitale.

48 V.Forcella, Seletti iscrizioni cristiane in Milano anteriori al IX secolo, Cologne, 1897, 34, no.37.

49 Ambrose, PL, 16, Ep. 29, col.1062, "eo loci, qui est ante cancellos sanctorum Felicis atque Naboris" Tr. H.de Romestin, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 10, Oxford & New York, 1896, 436. The recognition of

have been found under S. Francesco Grande at the Catholic University.⁵⁰

This group of pre-Ambrosian and Ambrosian chapels at the *Coemeterium ad martyres* is the largest but not the only group of Milanese martyr chapels of the fourth century to survive in fact or in memory. At the Basilica Vergine, (now S. Simpliciano), on the Como road, the cruciform structure attached to the east side of the left transept has now been revealed as a palaeochristian chapel. There is little doubt that it was used by Ambrose's successor, Simplicianus, bishop 397-400, as a martyrdom for the Trentine saints, Sisinnius, Martirius and Alexandrus, who were martyred in Val di Non (Anaunania) on May 29, 397. The remains of these decapitated martyrs were divided between Trento and Milan, the bodies being sent by Bishop Vigilius of Trento to Simplicianus, who had educated and ordained them, while the heads remained in Anaunania.⁵¹ The chapel was originally a detached structure, adjacent and parallel to the apse of the church.⁵² It was unusual for a martyrdom in that it took the form of a *croce libera*, with no atrium, and possibly took the place of an earlier and very modest building, since reused material was included in the walls.⁵³ Almost certainly the original chapel was pre-Ambrosian, and the basilica was built beside it in honour of the saints buried there.

the saints by their larger than life-size bones is reminiscent of the return to Sparta of the bones of Orestes, son of Agamemnon, which were also recognised by their heroic size. Herodotus, *History*, I, 67-68, Loeb Classical Library, London and New York, 1926, 79-83.

50 A. Calderini & F. Reggiori, "Scavi alla ricerca della basilica dei SS. Nabor e Felice", Ritrovamenti e scavi per la Forma Urbis Mediolani, 2, Milan, 1951, 3-5.

51 F. Savio, Gli antichi vescovi d'Italia: Milano. Bologna, 1913, 147-148. For Vigilius' letter describing the martyrdoms, see Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis, Brussels, 1898-1901, 7994-7996.

52 See G. Traversi, Architettura paleocristiana milanese, Milan, 1964, 38-40.

53 Paolo Verzone, L'architettura religiosa dell'alto medioevo nell'Italia settentrionale, Milan, 1942, 65.

On the Via Romana, the cemetery around the Basilica Apostolorum (S.Nazaro), which probably extended as far as the Via Ticinese, inscriptions record various *cellae memoriae*, which probably included one now incorporated underneath the present S.Calimero, marking the place of martyrdom of the fourth bishop of Milan, who died here around 200 AD. Another inscription marked the place of martyrdom and burial of Nazarius and Celsus, which according to the mid-fifth century chronicle of St.Celsus was "extra portam foras portam Romanum in locum qui dicitur tres moros"⁵⁴ Whereas the body of Nazarius, his head miraculously uncorrupted, was moved to the Basilica Apostolorum by Ambrose, it seems that that of Celsus was left in the *cella memoriae* which rose over the actual place of the saints' death under Nero, around 57 AD. St.Eustorgius, also, is presumed to have been buried outside the Porta Ticinese, with the Romanesque basilica probably occupying the site of his *memoria*.

This sort of replacement was a normal development. *Cellae memoriae* often became the nuclei of new church buildings as the martyr cult expanded. The passionate desire of the faithful to be buried beside the martyrs caused this to become the burial of choice for both bishops and nobility. And in the Milan area in Ambrose's time it was obviously acceptable to move martyr bones in certain circumstances. These included pious reasons, such as for the consecration of new churches. Gervasius and Protasius, for example, were not left in peace before the chancel screen at the chapel of Nabor and Felix where they were found, but were moved to the Basilica Ambrosiana, where they still lie beside the remains of Ambrose himself, under the high altar. Nevertheless, whether the martyrs' remains had been removed or not, the sites of martyrdom and of burial continued to be venerated, and the simple memorial chapels underwent transformations into the lavishly decorated shrines of which a few representative specimens survive today.

For Milan, aside from the now undecorated chapel at S.Simpliciano,

54 *ActaSS*, July, VI, 508; also M.Caffi, *Storia di Milano*, Milan, 1953-1954, 623.

the type-specimen for the martyr shrine is S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, a chapel with fifth-century decorations which will form the subject of Chapter 5. The simpler structure that it supplanted, dating from the time of Ambrose, consisted of an apsed trapezoidal structure, roughly five meters wide and eight long, and orientated from NE to SW, in accordance with the Roman street plan. Its low apse was supported on the outside by buttresses and was framed at one time by paired columns on the inside of the arch, of which only the bases survive.⁵⁵ The chapel was lit by three arched windows in the apse and another in each of its long sides. An upper set of three taller windows on the same axes in the apse, with two more on each of the side walls, were at a later date blocked with masonry, while the lower ones were heightened in compensation. This change was probably associated with an early change to a semi-domed from a pyramidal apse roof.⁵⁶ The original roof of the trapezoid was probably also of wood, like the first apse, and was later replaced by a small cupola made of *tubi fitilli*, hollow for lightness, and arranged in a series of circular courses. This change probably dates from the period when the chapel was vaulted so as to receive its mosaic decoration.⁵⁷

The purpose of these building campaigns was twofold. The primary purpose, of course, was to shelter and honour the martyrs' remains. Equally important, these holy tombs were to be made safely accessible to the faithful. This was done at S.Vittore by placing them in the crypt, where they became the focus of pilgrimage, and, though physically separated from the devotees, were visible to them through a grating or *fenestrella confessionis*. But S.Vittore demonstrates, in a clearly documented fashion, a further step in the evolution of the funerary

55 F.Reggioli, La Basilica Ambrosiana. Ricerche e restauri, 1929-1940, Milan, 1941, 244, 248.

56 Reggioli dates the change to the late fifth or early sixth centuries. Ibid, 181f. & fig, p.83; also Verzoni, L'architettura religiosa, 64.

57 Reggioli, Ibid, 177; also G.Bovini, "Gli edifici di culto milanesi d'età pre-ambrosiana", VIII Corso di cultura sull'arte Ravennate e bizantina, Faenza, 1961, 47-72, esp. 69.

chapel from the martyr shrine: the burial of the distinguished dead beside the saints, burial "ad sanctos". At S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro the reason for the chapel's rebuilding, for its redecoration, and even for its survival to the present day is the burial beside Victor of Satyrus, the brother and helper of Ambrose, who devoted his life to the practical affairs of the family and who died on his return from family business in Africa, probably in AD 387.⁵⁸ Satyrus' burial beside Victor is recorded in an epitaph that was formerly on the the grave, and its text is attributed to Ambrose himself. This epitaph was seen and copied by a Pavian traveller, Dungalo, who visited S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro around the year 820. It ran:--

"URANIO SATYRO SUPREMUM FRATER HONOREM/ MARTYRIS AD LAEVAM DETULIT
AMBROSIUS/ HAEC MERITI MERCES UT SACRI SANGUINIS UMOR/ FINITIMAS
PENETRANS ABLUAT EXUVIAS.⁵⁹

On evidence from contemporary and later sources Reggiori concludes that the funeral service of Satyrus occurred at S.Ambrogio, where Ambrose spoke the eulogy, inviting the mourners to proceed to the grave which implies a burial site nearby, such as the chapel of S.Vittore. This choice would also satisfy Ambrose's stated desire to bury his brother beside a martyr, whose power and prayer would help his soul's repose. Archaeology has confirmed the location. Two loculi have in fact been found in the floor of the crypt at S.Vittore. One, almost dead-centre, is smaller, 1.15 by 1.08m., and presumably held Victor's bones, while the other, to the right of it when facing the apse, is a larger rectangular site, and is presumed to be the grave of Satyrus.⁶⁰ The bones of the two saints appear to have been moved to an antique sarcophagus in the chapel during the eighth or ninth century, and later still, the bones of Victor were translated to the nearby church of S.Vittore al Corpo. At this time, presumably, the dedication of the

58 Ambrose, De Excessu Fratris sui Satyri, PL, 16, cols. 1345-1414, tr. H.de Romestin, N&PNF, 10, Oxford & New York, 1896, 159, gives Oct 17, AD 379 as the date of Satyrus' death.

59 Ms. in Biblioteca Ambrosiana; see Reggiori, Basilica, 191.

60 Plan of excavations and findings, Reggiori, Ibid., 197.

chapel passed to Satyrus, who remained its patron from perhaps the ninth to the eighteenth centuries.⁶¹

The burial of Satyrus beside the martyr Victor is an important example of a practice which must have been widespread. Its documentation throws interesting light on late fourth century attitudes to burial beside the saints. Satyrus, to whom Ambrose was deeply devoted, as evidenced by his words in De Excessu, had not adopted the religious life, and indeed had not yet received baptism. Nor did he die a martyr's death. As elder brother and head of the family, he took care of the family's far flung estates, thus allowing his brother and sister freedom to follow the religious life.⁶² Ambrose's deep devotion for his brother, so evident in De Excessu, caused him to arrange the most efficacious burial for him. This burial, full of supernatural power, was to be immediately beside the body of a saint, if possible in actual physical contact with it, so that the blood of the martyr might penetrate and wash, and thus redeem, the mortal remains of the dead man.⁶³ It is rare indeed to have the motivation, practice and purpose of such a custom explained on a personal level by one of the foremost thinkers and theologians of the day, and interesting that Satyrus, the selfless man of affairs who was not even at the time of his death a full initiate into the Christian faith, acquired enough merit by burial *ad sanctos* to acquire the status of a saint, with his own cult, largely, it seems, by means of his contact after death with a martyr's remains.

Other Milanese *memoriae* were converted into funerary chapels for the early bishops. The fourth century bishop Maternus,⁶⁴ for example, was buried in the chapel of Nabor and Felix, while bishop Monas, another early fourth century incumbent, was buried at St.Vitalis. His body

61 Reggiori, Ibid., 196.

62 N&PNF, 10, 170, note 48.

63 Ambrose, Epitaph, see p.56 and note 59.

64 F.Savio, Gli Antichi Vescovi d'Italia: Milano, Florence, 1913, 10, places his twelve year bishopric within the period 314 to 343.

remained there until the deconsecration of the chapel in 1576.⁶⁵ Others of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, among them Mirocles, (ca.314), Protasius, (ca.343-344), Ambrose, and Eustorgius (ca.344-355), also lay in the cemeteries outside the walls, though not in the *memoriae* of the martyrs. The law requiring burial outside the walls was adhered to in Milan, but it is less clear that there was any reluctance to relocate or even divide up the martyrs' bodies. The bodies of the Trentine martyrs, as we have seen, were sent to S.Simpliciano; their heads were kept for Trento.⁶⁶ Likewise, the Lodi martyrs, Nabor and Felix, were transferred to the episcopal centre, Milan. The relics of Bishop Maternus were divided after death, the head going to the cathedral, while the body remained at S.Nazaro.⁶⁷

Ravenna is the third great capital which will be surveyed for evidence of the cult of martyrs and of the chapels connected with the cult, two of which, the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia and the Archbishops' chapel of Sant'Andrea, survive almost intact with their mosaic decoration. These decorations are discussed separately: the Mausoleum in Chapter 7, while the Archbishops' chapel has been discussed as the prime example of a place of private prayer, an *oratorium*, in Chapter 2.

One of the most interesting features of the removal of the imperial court to Ravenna in 402 was its effect upon religious life and architecture in the new location. Ravenna, a city founded by Augustus, was more easily defended and provisioned than Milan, as it commanded both the Via Emilia and the mouth of the Po river. But before 402, it had remained small, surrounded by walls and divided by canals. Soon after the relocation of the capital, new land was added to the city (fig.v). A zone outside the walls to the north-west, Regio II, the imperial quarter, was the site of a new palace and of the palace church, S.Croce, as well as of many other new churches and chapels, mostly

65 *Ibid.*, 94.

66 *Ibid.*, 148.

67 *Ibid.*, 102.

founded by the emperors, with a few built by clerics upon land given by the emperors to the church.⁶⁸ Regio II was probably, for a while at least, outside the walls of the city.⁶⁹ This was the region where the Honorian family built chapels to commemorate the saints whose relics and cults they had brought with them from Milan. The saints were those dear to Ambrose, who had deeply influenced the faith of the imperial family. Chapels and churches also proliferated at Classis, the nearby Adriatic naval base, home port to 250 vessels; and in Caesarea, the area between Classis and Ravenna, where the suburban cemeteries of both cities spread out along the road that joined them.

Although it is obvious that the imperial family felt a deep need for the patronage of the saints, and for their *praesentia*,⁷⁰ a need which led them both to carry their relics to Ravenna with them, and to build shrines there to house them, it is not known what exact form these relics took: bodies, body parts or contact relics. Ambrose himself, in a letter to his sister Marcellina, makes it clear that he accepted the moving of the physical remains of saints if he was persuaded that it was God's will.⁷¹ Thus, when following a dream he found the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius before the chancel screen of the Naboriana, he had no hesitation in moving them into his new basilica, although they were already buried in consecrated ground.⁷² Although one would like to

68 S. Maria Maggiore appears to have been founded on land given to the bishop by Honorius. Agnellus, *LPER*, 318, "in sua proprietatis iura haedificavit ecclesia". See also *CPER*, ed. Testi-Rasponi, 163-165, note 2.

69 P. Verzone, "Ipotesi di topografia ravennate", *CorsiCRB*, 1966, 433-444, esp. 441.

70 Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, Chicago, 1981, 86.

71 Ambrose did receive a sign, a vision or dream, that his action was pleasing to God, as Augustine recounts in his *Confessions*, IX, 7. and *De Civitate Dei*, 8. He was further reassured by miracles at each resting place of the remains. Ambrose, *PL*, 16, *Epistola* 22, "To his sister Marcellina", cols. 1062-1069, esp. col. 1063.

72 *Ibid.*, col. 1063, "formidantibus etiam clericis jussi eruderari terram eo loci, qui est ante cancellos sanctorum Felicis atque Naboria."

make the distinction that, in general, saints' bodies were only moved to save them from danger or dishonour, it is difficult to deny that Ambrose also needed Gervasius and Protasius for his own ends: both for the dedication of his church,⁷³ and to sanctify the space under the altar. This was the site which he had chosen for his own grave, on the grounds that the priest should be buried in the place where he had celebrated the sacred mysteries during his life-time. Although Ambrose did give the saints the place of honour within the grave, it is clear that he was planning a burial *ad martyres* on a very grand scale for himself.⁷⁴ Nor was it even inconceivable that saints' bodies could be divided up, as we have seen in the cases of the Trentine martyrs, where the bodies were translated while the heads remained at the place of martyrdom. In this respect the practice of Milan during the life-time of Ambrose, ca. 339-397, differs markedly from that of Rome two centuries later under Gregory the Great, ca. 540-604, if his letter to Constantina Augusta⁷⁵ does represent his real views on the moving and dismemberment of martyrs' bodies, rather than an exaggerated stance designed to protect Rome's treasured relic, the head of St. Paul, from the covetousness of Constantinople.⁷⁶ Unfortunately there is no direct evidence for Roman practice in the fourth century. In Milan, however, the same letter of Ambrose to Marcellina informs us that the practice of creating "contact relics" by allowing cloths and garments to absorb sanctity by being placed on the bodies of the saints was widespread. The creation of these relics was regarded as a miracle which was central to the practice

73 *Ibid.*, col.1062. The congregation was asking him to consecrate the church in the same way as he had consecrated the Basilica Romana, (S.Nazaro).

74 *Ibid.*, col.1066. "Hunc ego locum praedestinaveram mihi; dignum est enim ut ubi requiescat sacerdos, ubi offerre consuevit: sed cedo sacris victimis dexteram portionem, locus iste martyribus debebatur."

75 Gregory I, *PL*, 77, Lib. IV, *Epistola* 30, cols.700-705.

76 J.M.M. McCulloh, "The Cult of Relics in the Letters and Dialogues of Pope Gregory the Great: a Lexicographical Study". *Traditio*, 32, 1975, 158-184.

of miraculous healing.⁷⁷ Contact relics did not lose their popularity; they were also used in Rome at the later period, as Gregory's letters prove.⁷⁸

Although theoretically the palace in Ravenna was in an area outside the walls, where burials of human remains would have been legal, the scanty evidence seems to point to the relics having been non-corporeal. The actual relics have in all cases disappeared. However, the small size of the container in the relic altar of the shrine of Vitalis beneath S.Vitale, which was only 15 cm. deep, suggests that here, at least, the relics cannot have consisted of a whole body, nor of any of the major bones of the saint.⁷⁹ One may therefore hypothesise that the emperors did not take the saints of Milan away in complete physical form. Rather, it seems likely that the relics consisted of objects such as *brandea*, cloths that had been in contact with the martyrs' bodies and so acquired their merits.

Among the group of chapels with Milanese dedications in the imperial patrimonium at Ravenna the best known is that beneath S.Vitale. Knowledge of its existence was probably never entirely lost, and it could be contacted through an opening or "well" in the floor of the sixth century church, at a depth of seventy centimetres below the later floor, which was installed in 1539.⁸⁰ The part that was visible consisted of the base of the altar, with its reliquary box and traces of the four colonnettes that had held up the *mensa*, and the mosaic around

77 Ambrose, PL 16, Epistola 22, Lib. IV, cols.1062-1069, "Cognovistis, imo vidistis ipsi multos a daemoniis purgatos: plurimos etiam, ubi vestem sanctorum manibus contiguerunt, iis quibus laborabant, debilitatibus absolutos: reparata vetusti temporis miracula, ... umbra quadam sanctorum corporum plerosque sanatos cernitis. Quanta oraria jaclitantur! quanta indumenta super reliquias sacratissimas et tactu ipso medicabilia repossuntur! Gaudent omnes extrema linea contingere; et qui contigerit, salvus erit"

78 Gregory I, PL, 77, Ep.30, Lib.IV, col.700-705.

79 G.Gerola, "Il sacello primitivo in San Vitale", Felix Ravenna, 2, 1913, 427-434 & 459-471, esp 461-463.

80 Ibid, esp. 430. See also R.Farioli, Pavimenti musivi di Ravenna paleocristiana, Ravenna, n.d., fig.26, p.73.

this base, which included a central panel with a large *cantharos*, surrounded by scanty vegetation and brilliantly coloured paradise birds: peacocks, parrots, pheasants, partridges and doves. On either side of this panel was a tract of ornamental mosaic: one in meander design, signifying eternity, the other, a fragmentary strip only, is of woven tresses, while a twist pattern passed behind the altar. Further excavations have revealed that the first chapel was an apsed rectangular structure, 8^{1/2} m. long, which was later modified into a Latin cross, perhaps, judging by the brickwork, in the third decade of the sixth century.⁸¹ The mosaic of the original chapel has been dated to the fifth century, three centuries after the supposed date of Vitalis' death, April 28, 171, in the persecutions of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. According to tradition the chapel occupies the site of Vitalis' grave, though this is open to doubt, for Vitalis was one of two saints whose bodies were brought to Milan from Bologna in AD 393 by Ambrose.⁸² The cult of Vitalis then made a further transition, to Ravenna, while that of his companion, Agricola, stayed in Milan.

The history of the cult of Vitalis in Ravenna is central to understanding the place of the small memorial chapel within the piety of the fifth century. We learn that a fifth-century legend gave Ravenna, pitifully short of martyrs, a whole family of patron saints who supposedly suffered martyrdom there. This legend connected the saints of the imperial chapels into a family dynasty, and had them suffer death for their faith at a place called "the Palm-tree", which is now covered by Justinian's church of S.Vitale. The lynch-pin of this legendary tale, which first appeared in an anonymous letter formerly attributed to Ambrose,⁸³ was Vitalis, whose martyrdom is there described. He

81 For the 1911 excavations, see Gerola, Sacello, 459-463. For subsequent work, see F.Di Pietro, "Il prisco sacello di S.Vitale", Boll.d'Arte, ser.II, 5, 1926, 241-251, and 243, fig.1, for a plan of the excavations.

82 G.Gerola, Sacello, 427. The date 393 constitutes a *terminus post quem* for the "Letter of Pseudo-Ambrose".

83 Pseudo-Ambrose, Epist.III, alias LIV, PL, 17, 747. See also: "Passio sanctorum Vitalis, Valeriae, Gervasi, Protasi et Ursicini", Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina, Brussels, 1901, pp. 524, 1216 & 1255f;

supposedly suffered torture on the rack and death at the Palm-Tree, for encouraging his confessor, Ursicinus, in martyrdom. Vitalis' wife Valeria has already been encountered in Milan: according to the Ravenna legend, she died for her faith on her way home from Ravenna, as a result of refusing to eat meat sacrificed to the pagan gods. Gervasius and Protasius have also already been encountered, this time in the writings of Ambrose, who described the discovery of their bodies in Milan. In the Pseudo-Ambrose text, Vitalis is their father, Valeria, their mother. Savio has deduced that the letter of Pseudo-Ambrose was written in Ravenna, away from Ambrose's home ground, Milan, where a forgery would have run greater risk of being exposed, and that its origins lay in the struggle of the Ravenna bishopric for independence from Milan in the time of Peter Chrysologus, soon after 425.⁸⁴ This sort of fabrication is evidence for the growing interest in the cult of saints, source of power for good in a malevolent world.⁸⁵ Saints were believed to look after their own devotees, whether emperor or bishop, and whether they asked only for individual salvation or for the good of the congregation or the state. It was obviously necessary to provide the capital of the West, seat of the Augusti, with the prestige of its own dynasty of martyrs and its own place of martyrdom to rival Rome's Colosseum. As far as the date of this development is concerned, it would have been especially appropriate at the time of construction of S.Vitale in AD 526, dignifying the site of the church as an especially holy place of martyrdom.⁸⁶ Certainly by the mid-sixth century its site at the Palm-Tree was associated both with the death of Vitalis, and with the

and also ActaSS, April, III, 562-565. The letter has been variously dated: after the arrival of the Augusti in Ravenna in 402; after 425 (Savio); "much later" than 393 (Gerola), after 526 (Testi-Rasponi); but anyway before 548 (the verses of Venantius Fortunatus forming a *terminus ante quem*).

84 F.Savio, "Due lettere falsamente attribuite a S.Ambrogio", NBAC, 3, 1897, 153-178, esp.166.

85 A theme developed by Peter Brown in The Cult of the Saints.

86 Agnellus, CPER, ed. Testi-Rasponi, 163-165, note 6.

martyrdom of the other Ravenna saints. Indeed, the church building itself probably supplanted not only the original shrine of Vitalis, but three of the other chapels which the Honorian family had dedicated to their patron saints.⁸⁷

These other chapels were those dedicated to Nazarius and Celsus, to Gervasius and Protasius, and to Ursicinus. Thus the sixth-century domed side-chambers or sacristies at S.Vitale probably retain the earlier Milanese dedications of two previous chapels on the site, that on the left being dedicated to Gervasius and Protasius, and that on the right to Nazarius and Celsus, while the cult of Ursicinus, "martyr of Illyria",⁸⁸ was centred below the arcade to the left of the altar. Both Corrado Ricci and Giuseppe Gerola, in fact, would go as far as to suggest that the layout of S.Vitale was deliberately orientated so as to absorb all four of the Honorian sites.⁸⁹ It seems, though, that the only primitive chapel of which physical remains have been found is the one dedicated to S.Vitalis. The S.Vitale side chambers will be discussed with the other sixth century chapels of Milan and Ravenna, as well as with other sacristies in chapter 10.

To return to the early period, we know of several other chapels of the emperors' choice clustered around the palace and its church. Testi-Rasponi describes the chapels around S.Croce as "una corona di sacelli che rammentavano i santuari che a Milano non erano discosti da quel palazzo imperiale".⁹⁰ These chapels were not dedicated to Milanese saints, but to John the Baptist, his father Zachariah, and Stephen, whose relics were discovered in 415 at Kapper-Gamala.⁹¹ This last must have become the core chapel of Maximinian's AD 550 Basilica of

87 Di Pietro, F., Sacello di S.Vitale, 245, and Gerola, Sacello, 465.

88 Agnellus, CPER, ed.Testi-Rasponi, 121.

89 G.Gerola, Sacello, 464. See also C.Ricci, "La cappella detta Sancta Sanctorum nella chiesa di S.Vitale in Ravenna", Rassegna d'Arte, 4, 1904, 104-108.

90 Agnellus, CPER, ed.Testi-Rasponi, 120.

91 Ibid., 120 and notes.

St. Stephen. The chapel attached to the narthex of S. Croce was probably dedicated not to the Roman Lawrence, but to Vincent of Saragossa, as I will suggest in chapter 7. Behind it lay a dodecahedral shrine of the Virgin, which probably dates from soon after the Council of Ephesus, 431. Part of this chapel survives as the nine-sided apse of the church of S. Maria Maggiore, which consists of a later nave of the time of Bishop Ecclesius, attached to the remains of the dodecahedron in the place of its missing three sides.⁹² Round or polygonal structures were chosen for shrines of the Virgin in the Middle Ages on account of their symbolic meaning. According to Richard Krautheimer, various of the centrally planned churches which are dedicated to the Virgin have a common origin.⁹³ They relate back to the circular shrine in the Valley of Josaphat in Jerusalem, which had been erected over Mary's tomb, and was still standing in 870 when it was seen by the monk Bernard, beside an adjacent basilica.⁹⁴ Krautheimer traces this pair of structures back to the sixth century *Itinera Hierosolymitana*,⁹⁵ though the date of construction is not known, and archaeological evidence has not yet been forthcoming. By Crusader times, the shrine had been rebuilt as a longitudinal basilica.⁹⁶ It seems most likely that the circular shrine

92 Ecclesius' alterations were probably built soon after 526, according to Testi-Rasponi. OPER, 165, note 2.

93 R. Krautheimer, "Sancta Maria Rotunda", Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art, New York, 1969, 107-114.

94 Bernardus Monachus Francus, Itinerarium in Loca Sancta, PL, 121, cols. 569-574, esp. 572-573. "De Hierusalem in Valle Josaphat milliari, et habet villam Gethsemani cum loco nativitatis sanctae Mariae in quo est in honore ipsius ecclesia permaxima. In ipsa quoque villa est ecclesia sanctae Mariae rotunda ubi est sepulchrum illius, quod supra se tectum non habet, pluviam minime patitur".

95 Breviarius Hierosolyma, (Itinera Hierosolymitana), ed. P. Geyer, CSEL, 39, Vienna, 1898, 155, "refers to two distinct structures, the "Basilica sanctae Mariae" and, introduced by a new "ibi", her tomb, "sepulchrum eius"". (Krautheimer, note 96, *supra*).

96 Staale Sunding Larson, "Some functional and iconographical aspects of the centralised church in the Italian Renaissance", Acta ad Arch. et Art. Hist. Pert., 2, 1965, 203-253, esp 220, "Iconographical aspects in centralised buildings".

at the Virgin's tomb must be the primary reference, whose form the Ravenna builders intended to imitate, but that other symbolic meanings also accrued to its polygonal shape: for example, the temple in Jerusalem, which had also been rebuilt in a circular form after its destruction by Titus in AD 70, symbolised much of significance in the Virgin's life:⁹⁷ her childhood in the Holy of Holies,⁹⁸ her presentation, her betrothal, as well as her virginity and her symbolic identity with the Church.

Krautheimer, in his 1969 postscript to the earlier paper, mentions the Ravenna apse as "a decagon, dated 534" that would require further documentation to prove that its original dedication was to Mary. Originally an even greater polygon, a dodecahedron, it is obvious that bishop Ecclesius went to considerable pains to save it and incorporate it into the new church. This implies either that it was of unusual beauty, or that its dedication as a shrine of the Virgin fitted in with his plans for a larger church in her honour, or probably both. At any rate, it must surely have existed before the basilica, and have dated from much earlier than 534. History does not identify the relic that must have been kept in this shrine.

Another chapel founded by the Augusti was dedicated to the father of the Baptist. Agnellus, writing in the ninth century, attributes it to Singledia,⁹⁹ niece of Galla Placidia, though no such relative is known.¹⁰⁰ It is, however, possible that the name is a corruption of

97 See the "Book of James", a mid-second century infancy gospel of Mary, in M.R.James, The Apocryphal New Testament, Oxford, 2nd. ed. 1953, 38-49. Also, ODCC, 723.

98 Jerome, PL, 22, Ep.47, col.493-511, "To Pammachius", tr. W.H.Fremantle, N&PNF, 6, 66-79, esp. 78, "She is the east Gate...always shut and always shining, and either concealing or revealing the Holy of Holies".

99 Agnellus, CPER, 119, The words imputed to Singledia: "in illo loco non longe ab...Sancta Crucis ecclesia...quantum iactum sagita est, construe michi monasterium,"

100 Galla Placidia had two brothers: Honorius was childless, Arcadius' children did not include a Singledia.

Sounigilda, wife of the Goth Odoacer, who may later have been buried there. The chapel, literally an arrow's flight from Galla Placidia's S.Croce, was probably cruciform,¹⁰¹ or at least decorated with crosses: it owned liturgical vessels given by Galla Placidia herself,¹⁰² suggesting she may have been the patron. The chapel was probably built soon after 415, when there was a resurgence of interest in the cult of Zachariah, resulting from the discovery of his tomb.¹⁰³

Nearby, so close that Testi Rasponi refers to them as "due sacelli quasi abbinati",¹⁰⁴ was the chapel of Zachariah's son John the Baptist,¹⁰⁵ where Galla Placidia interred her own confessor, Barbatianus. This chapel was later known as St.Barbatianus, and survived until the early 16th century.

One more chapel in the imperial region first appears in the historic record for the seventh century, when Agnellus mentions it in the biography of Bishop Reperatus, 671-677.¹⁰⁶ Northernmost of the

101 Though Testi-Rasponi thought the reference was to its cruciform altar base. CPER, 119.

102 These were later moved to the Basilica Ursiana, Agnellus, CPER, 119. The chalice bore the inscription OFFERO SANCTO ZACHARIA GALLA PLACIDIA AUGUSTA.

103 Testi Rasponi, "Note Agnelliane", Felix Ravenna, 18, 1915, 773-789, esp. 782.

104 Agnellus, CPER, 121.

105 Agnellus, CPER, 151, "Temporibus Galle Placidie auguste, sicut scriptum reperimus, corpus beati Barbatiani, idem Petrus Crisologus cum predicta augusta aromatibus condiderunt et cum magno honore sepelierunt, non longe ad posterulam Ovilionis; consecravitque ecclesiam sancti Iohannis Barbatiani quam Baduarius hedificavit". Testi-Rasponi, Ibid, note 10, says S.Giovanni Battista was certainly one of the many founded around the palace by the Augusti: the attribution to Baduarius he explains as perhaps recording an epigraph from the place where Barbatianus' body was later kept.

106 Agnellus, CPER, ed. Holder-Egger, 353, "De monasterio sancti Apolenaris quae situs est, hic Ravenna non longe a posterula Ovilionis in loco qui vocatur Moneta publica, exinde abba fuit. Et istius ecclesiae vicedominus fuit, post pontificem similiter tenuit principatum."

"crown of chapels", it was dedicated to Apollinaris, Ravenna's only truly local saint. Its site was near Ravenna's western gate, and to the public mint, which gave the chapel its designation, *in Veclo*. There is some doubt whether this chapel was an Honorian foundation, especially as Cortesi, who found its presumed remains, dated it to the seventh century. It was cruciform, appropriately for a funerary chapel.¹⁰⁷ By the late eighth century it had become part of a monastery, from which Bishop Gratiotus came to the bishopric around 785.¹⁰⁸

To sum up, the imperial family's piety and devotion to the saints gave rise to an extraordinary cluster of chapels in or near their new quarter in Ravenna. They continued in their devotion to those saints which Ambrose had discovered and made popular in Milan: Gervasius, Protasius, Nazarius and Celsus, as well as Vitalis and Victor, whom he had brought there from Bologna. They also built shrines for important biblical figures whose cults were emerging in the early fifth century: Stephen the Protomartyr, the two saints John, Zachariah, father of the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary, as well as for Vincent of Saragossa, to whom Galla Placidia seems to have owed particular devotion. Almost all these buildings were outside the early fifth century walls of Ravenna: theoretically it is possible that all housed, and were sanctified by, corporeal relics of the saints. It seems even more likely, however, that contact relics or other items hallowed by proximity with the saints were involved, since they were believed to absorb the actual power and presence of the holy being. Several of the structures had already, in the time of the emperors, become mausolea: this may be true of S.Zaccaria, with the burial of Singledia (or Sounigilda?), and was certainly the case at S.Giovanni Battista, where Galla Placidia laid her confessor, Barbatianus, to rest. Galla Placidia also built her own well-known chapel at S.Croce: its decoration shows it to have been

107 G.Cortesi, "I principali edifici sacri ravennati nei secc. V e VI", Corsi CRB, 29, 1982, 63-107, esp.106. "Cruciforme nell'impianto, esso ha tutte le caratteristiche del sacello già in funzione sepolcrale".

108 Ibid., 383. "Ex monasterio beati Apolenaris (Gratiotus) abba fuit, quod est fundatum non longe ab ecclesia sanctae redemptricis Crucis ad Monetam veteram, unde sanctissimus Reperatus fuit".

designed as a mausoleum, though it is not known if any-one was ever buried there, or even precisely for whom it was destined. The evidence is usually thought to point to the projected occupant being the empress herself, together with some other member of her family, perhaps her second husband, Constantius II. Another possibility is that it was built for the the burial of Theodosius, (b.414 or 415, d.415), son of her marriage to the Visigoth, Ataulf. This idea will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Archaeological remains survive of a second chapel opening from the north end of the S.Croce narthex. Its cruciform groundplan persuaded Di Pietro that it, also, was a funerary chapel.¹⁰⁹ This is borne out by the design of its floor mosaic, which displays a funerary allegory, that of the soul's fight against death, as symbolised by a fight between a soldier and a mythical beast, the hydra. Cortesi would go further and identify this chapel as S.Zaccaria.¹¹⁰ He also maintains that S.Croce itself, far from being Galla Placidia's palace church, was just another cemetery basilica outside the walls of Ravenna,¹¹¹ an idea which fits well with its cruciform shape and its annexed mausolea, but which would then leave unsatisfied the whole question of the whereabouts of Galla Placidia's palace, with its adjacent church where she had passed her nights in prayer.¹¹²

Although the greatest number of the chapels built in Ravenna in the early days were imperial benefactions, other wealthy patrons were also responsible for the construction of churches and chapels. Among the best documented buildings, now lost, was the basilica of S.Lorenzo, built by Lauricius, a court official of Honorius, just outside the city in Caesarea. According to Agnellus, Lauricius misappropriated imperial

109 Filippo di Pietro, La Capella palatina di Palermo--i mosaici, Palermo, 1954, esp 15-16.

110 "I principali edifici sacri ravennati in funzione sepolcrale nei secc. V e VI", CorsiCRB, 29, 1982, 63-107, esp. 103-104, and 94, fig 9.

111 Ibid., 103-104.

112 Agnellus, CPER, 123; text in Chapter 1, note 2, *supra*.

funds for his building, which was luxuriously decorated and equipped with chapels. One of them, dedicated in 435 to saints Stephen, Gervasius and Protasius, was used for Lauricius' own burial.¹¹³ It is one of the few lost chapels about which we have information on the decorative programme. Agnellus tells us it was marvellously decorated with golden mosaic, with different kinds of stone, perhaps marble intarsia, and with stucco reliefs. His account of the architecture is confusing, leaving it unclear whether the chapel had an anteroom or narthex before the chamber where the sarcophagus lay.¹¹⁴ The room, or perhaps the antechamber, had an epitaph in gold letters to the right of a mosaic picture of three boys.¹¹⁵ These three boys have been identified, by Testi-Rasponi for example, as the three boys in the fiery furnace; a common salvation motif in Early Christian funerary art. Testi-Rasponi suggests that the picture may have been balanced by another on the other side of the inscription: Daniel in the Lions Den. Since the description is vague, it has also been suggested that the picture of the three boys may have been of the three dedicatory saints.¹¹⁶ Gervasius and Protasius, earlier shown in Milan as of markedly different age in S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, had by this time in Ravenna achieved iconographic stability as young men, twins.¹¹⁷ Stephen was also always depicted as a young man. The coincidence of having a

113 Agnellus, CPER 94-96, esp 96, "Sepultus est in monasterio sancti Gervasi et Protasi, iuxta predictam ecclesiam, mirabiliter decoratam musiva auream et diversarum lapidum genera singullaque metalla, parietibus iuncta".

114 As would be normal in Ravenna, where, for example, the Archbishops' chapel of S.Andrea has a narrow narthex with an inscription and mosaic scenes in its two lunettes.

115 Agnellus, CPER, 97, STEPHANO PROTASIO GERVASIO BTO MARTIRIO ET SIBI MEMORIA ETERNA LAURICIUS HUIUS DEDICAVIT SUB DIE TERCIO KAL. OCTUBRIS THEODOXIO QUINTO DECIMO ET PLACIDO VALENTINIANO. The date reads 29 September, 435.

116 H.L.Gonin, Excerpta Agnelliana. The Ravennate Liber Pontificalis as a source for the History of Art, Utrecht, 1933, 73.

117 See "Letter of Pseudo-Ambrose", PL, 17, Epistola 2, cols. 747-749.

triple dedication to three youthful male saints, and a single picture of three young boys, might seem to favour the latter interpretation. However, there are many precedents in funerary art for depiction of the boys in the fiery furnace. It seems most likely that this was another image of deliverance, comparable to the many pictures in the Roman catacombs where the three boys, orant figures in short tunics, stand at prayer among the flames;¹¹⁸ a most eloquent symbol of deliverance through prayer and of belief in the power of God.

The chapel Lauricius built was only one of a number, probably all funerary, which existed around the basilica of S.Lorenzo, a typical fifth century funerary basilica in the cemetery outside the walls, which survived until 1553. In Agnellus' extraordinary story of the building of the basilica using the misappropriated imperial funds, he recounts how Lauricius tries to hide the fact from the emperor that he was building a church and not a palace. He quotes Lauricius as saying that the "palace" he is building has, among other rooms, "cubilia promiscua ad ipsius domus suffulta",¹¹⁹ describing his church as if it were a dwelling, but in the reference to "cubilia promiscua" indicating that there were many chapels, comparable to bedrooms, of which his own was probably the grandest, since he was the founder.

Other early chapels seem to have been ecclesiastical, rather than court benefactions. One such "monasterium" or chapel, probably of the late fourth century, lay just outside the city, not far from the Porta Nova. It was dedicated to the Illyrian, S.Pullione. It is mentioned only once, as the burial place of the late fourth-century bishop Liberius III.¹²⁰ Little is known of this bishop except that his

118 For example, that in the Catacomb of Priscilla, J.Wilpert, Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IX-XIII Jahrhundert, Freiburg, 1917, pl.78:1. The scene also probably occurred at the Mausoleum of Helena, Rome, as well as at Centcelles, Spain.

119 Agnellus, CPER, 94-97, esp. 95.

120 Agnellus, CPER, 63, notes 4-7, "Sepultusque est in monasterio Sancti Pulionis quem suis temporibus edificatum est, non longe a porta que vocatur Nova, cuius sepulchrum nobis cognitum est" See also LPER, 288, note 4, "in regione S.Salvatore prope murum civitatis sito". Also Fantuzzi, Monumenti Ravennati, 5 vols, Venice, 1801, I, 336; VI, 248.

portrait may have been displayed over his tomb, since Agnellus gives a physical description of him.¹²¹ However, another source for the likenesses of the bishops existed in Agnellus' time: an altar frontal with embroidered portraits of the 28 early incumbents.¹²² Given by Maximinian to the Basilica Ursiana, it showed all his predecessors in office, and could well have been Agnellus' source. The frontal itself, though, must have been based on its own sources: in all probability the portraits, now lost, over the burial chambers of the bishops.

Liberius' predecessor, Florentius, was also buried in a funerary chapel, that of S.Petronilla on the Via Caesarea, which followed the course of the Padenna canal.¹²³ In Testi-Rasponi's opinion, this chapel must later have been annexed to the Basilica Apostolorum (now S.Francesco), which was built in the early fifth century by Bishop Neon.

Outside the walls of Classis, in the cemetery area between that city and Ravenna, lay the cemetery basilicas of S.Probo, a furlong from S.Apollinare in Classe, and S.Severo, between that church and the Ponte Nuovo, Ravenna. Both of these cemetery churches were associated with

121 Agnellus, LPER, 288, "Pulcher fuit in forma, clarior in sensu". See also G.Bovini, "Le imagines episcoporum ravennae ricordate nel Liber Pontificalis di Andrea Agnello", CorsiCRB, 21, 1974, 53-62, analyses the physical descriptions of the bishops of Ravenna given by Agnellus, and finds that monumental sources are recorded for the physiognomy of 14 bishops among the total of 46 listed, (ending with George, d.846). Of the remaining 32, 16 were not described, and possibly Agnellus had no pictorial source for them. The other 16 descriptions may have been based on minor arts, including a portrait on a processional cross, and the embroidered *endothis* or altar cloth of Maximinian that showed the bishops.

122 Commissioned by Maximinian, this has not survived, though the so-called "Velum of Classis", preserved in the National Museum, Ravenna, is a similar cloth, bearing portraits of the bishops of Verona. See G.Bovini, "Le 'Tovaglie d'altare' ricamate ricordate da Andrea Agnello nel Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis", CorsiCRB, 21, 1974, 77-90.

123 Agnellus, LPER, ed. Holder-Egger, 288, "Sepultus est sanctus vir in monasterio sanctae Petronillae, haerens muris ecclesiae apostolorum". Testi-Rasponi, CPER, 61, remarks that the dedication "è una manifesta imitazione di quello vaticano, le cui origini di dedica sono posteriori al V secolo".

earlier chapels. Near S.Probo, for example, was the "ecclesia" of S.Eleucadius, first burial place of the saint, an early bishop of Ravenna.¹²⁴ It probably consisted of a funerary chapel, from which his body was later moved to S.Probo.¹²⁵ Bishop Severus, also, had been laid to rest in a *memoria*, that of S.Ruphilus, on his death in the mid-fourth century.¹²⁶ The site was later chosen for the funerary basilica of S.Severo, to which the chapel was annexed.¹²⁷ Severus' body was placed in the new altar, and a ciborium was placed over it by bishop Johannes II, 573-595. In a similar fashion, the sole survivor of the many cemetery basilicas, S.Apollinare in Classe, was built in the sixth century beside or perhaps above the *memoria* of Apollinaris.¹²⁸

The imperial period in Ravenna came to an end with the conquest of the Goths, who brought their Arian religion with them. Not surprisingly, there are few records of church building in this period,¹²⁹ and none of chapels, other than those in the Orthodox and the Arian bishops' palaces. The latter has not survived. It must remain an open question whether any of the other structures mentioned by Agnellus were Arian in origin. In light of Theoderic's extensive building programme, recently elucidated by Mark Johnson, it seems likely that they were.¹³⁰ If so, knowledge of their heretical beginnings had been

124 Agnellus, CPER, ed. Testi-Rasponi, 32, "Sepultus est extra muros Classis, ubi usque hodie laudem et nominis eius ecclesia hedicata et Deo consecrata."

125 Agnellus, CPER, ed. Testi-Rasponi, 161-162.

126 M.Mazzotti, "Chiese ravennati scomparse", Almanacco Ravennate, 1958, 365.

127 CPER, ed. Test-Rasponi, II, 10.

128 Ibid., 366; Also R.Farioli, "Ravenna paleocristiana scomparsa", FR, 31, 1960; 32, 1961, 5-88.

129 The Arian Cathedral of the Anastasis, now S.Salvatore, and its baptistery, are obvious exceptions. So are the Mausoleum of Theodoric, and the lost S.Andrea Gothorum.

130 Mark J.Johnson, "Toward a History of Theoderic's building programme", DOP, 42, 1988, 73-96.

lost by the time of Agnellus.

Shortly after the Arian period, however, there was a second great surge of building activity in Ravenna. This followed Justinian's victory in 526 and the subsequent re-establishment of orthodoxy. On a smaller scale, the situation was similar in Milan.¹³¹ Some chapels were enlarged, and others were built from new foundations. Many chapels came into being along with the great new churches of the era, which still stand or are known from archaeology. For example, side chambers and other chapels were built at the sixth century basilicas of S.Vitale and S.Stefano in the imperial quarter at Ravenna, and at S.Apollinare in Classe. The S.Vitale and S.Apollinare side chambers have been found by Janet Smith to fulfil various functions, including burial, and will be discussed in Chapter 10.

Another source of information on chapel building in the Byzantine period is Agnellus. As one might expect, his information is largely concerned with the burial of bishops. By the fifth century a layman needed the specific, and rarely given, permission of the bishop to be buried inside a Ravenna church.¹³² However, the bishops had always taken advantage of their own exclusive powers to build themselves funerary chapels, in which they hoped to find "tranquil living space" for eternity.¹³³ Among the chapels recorded by Agnellus but now lost, several are known from recorded dedicatory inscriptions to have functioned as mausolea. Most important, perhaps, as the joint burial place of the Ravenna bishops, was the chapel of saints Marcus, Marcellus and Felicula at the south end of the narthex of S.Apollinare in Classe.¹³⁴ It was built and decorated by Archbishop John II, 578-595,

131 For instance, S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro was rebuilt, and the chapel of S.Sisto, burial place of Milan's bishops, was added at S.Lorenzo.

132 Agnellus, ed. Testi-Rasponi, CPER, 173, note 4.

133 G.Cortesi, Principali edifici, 65.

134 Gerolamo Fabri, Le sacre memorie di Ravenna antica, Venice, 1664, 98-99, "Le reliquie dei santi...sotto un altare a loro nome...sotto il portico...a mano destra entrando".

who was buried there,¹³⁵ along with many of his successors.¹³⁶ Over the doors was an inscription which proved the participation of the exarch Smaragdus, who left Ravenna in 590, returning in 592.¹³⁷ Testi-Rasponi therefore suggests this chapel was started before 590 and dedicated after the exarch's return in 592, being set aside for burials and also for the use of the monks serving the great basilica. This would have been a similar usage to the Roman, where at the tombs of the martyrs both alternate and regular clergy officiated. The epigraph commemorates the transfer of relics of the titular saints, which Gregory I gave to the chapel in 599.¹³⁸ The dedicatory poem, carved in marble, was last seen in the early 16th century, but the whole chapel had vanished by 1589.¹³⁹

Private bishop's burial chapels are also recorded from Classis. Two of pre-Byzantine date were redecorated during the Byzantine period. They were situated beside the baptistery of the Basilica Petriana in Classis, the early cathedral of the city, which dated from 493-519. At the *monasterium* of St. James, Petrus II was buried beneath his portrait, which was on the wall behind the sarcophagus, with the inscription DOMNUS PETRUS ARCHIEPISCOPUS.¹⁴⁰ The sarcophagus was of Proconnesian

135 Agnellus, CPER, 245.

136 This was not the first joint burial place of the bishops. Maximian had buried some of his predecessors beside the body of St. Probus in the cemetery church of S. Probo in Classe, Agnellus, LPER, 330. When Classis declined as a port, these burials were moved by way of S. Apollinare in Classe and S. Severo in Caesarea to the Ravenna cathedral, the Ursiana. Ibid, 200, note 2. This transfer occurred between the seventh century, when burial became acceptable inside the city, and Agnellus' time.

137 CPER, 245.

138 Gregory I, to Castorius, his notary, Registrum Epistolarum, ed. L.M. Hartmann, MGH, Epistolae, II, Berlin, 1899, 166-167.

139 Farioli, Ravenna scomparsa, 31-32.

140 Agnellus thought it was a portrait of Petrus I, but this is improbable since the title Archiepiscopus was not used in the first half of the fifth century. Petrus III was buried in the narthex at S. Probo. Agnellus, CPER, 74, also 103-108.

marble, with a cypress wood box inside, where Agnellus actually saw the body of Petrus lying, to his great terror. Beside this chapel was the *monasterium* of St. Matthew. Each chapel was embellished with an apse mosaic by Archbishop Agnellus (556-569).¹⁴¹ Unfortunately, we know nothing further about these chapels or these mosaics.

Chapels known from other documentary sources than the *Liber Pontificalis* of Ravenna have also been placed in the Byzantine period. Deichmann, for example, assigns the "monasterium S. Johannis qui appellatur ad Naviculum", founded by the Byzantine official John the Primicerius and his wife Stefania, to the years around 700.¹⁴² Nothing further is known of its location or purpose, though it may well have been a funerary chapel. A chapel dedicated to S. Nicholas of Myra, dating from the early eighth century at latest, was situated near the Arian Baptistery.¹⁴³ The baptistery itself, taken over by the Catholics after 560, was rededicated as the chapel S. Maria in Cosmedin, a name which it already carried before the time of Archbishop Agnellus (556-569).¹⁴⁴ Another chapel of Mary, S. Maria in Xenodochio, existed at the hospice at the Porta S. Laurentii. Although only documented for the first time in 939, Deichman is convinced it dates from Byzantine times.¹⁴⁵ Yet another similar dedication, S. Maria Ipapanti, near the cathedral, also seems to date from that period. The dedication recalls the feast of the Presentation of Christ, the *Ipapanti*, which since 534 had been celebrated each February 2 in the Chalchoprateia at

141 CPER, "Monasterio vero in civitate Classis, que lateribus fontique ecclesia Petriana iuncta sunt, sancti Mathei et Jacobi, ipse tessellis ornare iussit", According to Testi-Rasponi, Agnellus was responsible for the decoration of both chapels. The inscription in S. Matteo ran: SALVO DOMNO PAPA AGNELO DE DONIS DEI ET SERVORUM EIUS QUI OPTULERUNT AD HONOREM ET HORNATUS QUORUM APOSTOLORUM ET RELIQUA PARS DE SUMMA CERVORUM QUI PERIERANT ET DEO AUTORE INVENTU SUNT HEC ABSIDA MOSIVO EXORNATA EST".

142 Deichmann, Ravenna, Kommentar, II, 331.

143 Fabri, Rubei Hist. Rav. p. 227, Deichmann, Ibid, 74-75.

144 Agnellus, LPER, 379.

145 Deichmann, Ravenna, Kommentar, II, 348; Studi, 75, note 58.

Constantinople, which likewise stood before the door of the cathedral, S.Sofia. Deichmann suggests that the Ravenna chapel could have been purpose built for the Presentation ceremony,¹⁴⁶ which introduces the intriguing idea of chapels functioning as miniature churches, and being built for definite liturgical ends.¹⁴⁷ However, this structure is first referred to as a "capella" only in the eleventh century.¹⁴⁸ Perhaps it was a small church if it was built as an analogue of a specific church in Constantinople, as Deichmann suggests. Building for a liturgical purpose would seem to exclude it from our idea of a chapel, as defined in Chapter 1.

The sixth-century situation at Ravenna was echoed at Milan, where up to that time the burial of bishops in the *memoriae* of the saints seems to have been the norm. At S.Lorenzo, which was almost certainly the palace church of the Theodosian family before the move to Ravenna,¹⁴⁹ there are three major annexe chapels, to the east, north and south. Despite their superficial similarity as octagons, only the east and south chapels are contemporary with the late fourth-century church, while the north chapel is a sixth century addition. The south chapel, S.Aquilino, is a typical Late Antique imperial mausoleum, taking the form of a tall two storeyed octagon. It is a close copy of an older structure which until 1576 stood at the nearby church of S.Vittore in Corpo, where it served as a chapel.¹⁵⁰ This structure was without doubt

146 Deichmann, Ravenna, Kommentar, II, 342-343; Studi, 73.

147 An idea perhaps within the role of the chapel as defined by Gordana Babić, who saw the annexe chapel in the East as serving for the commemoration of particular feasts and saints' days. Babić, Les Chapelles annexes des églises byzantines. Fonction liturgique et programmes iconographiques, Paris, 1969, 14.

148 Fantuzzi, Monumenti, II, 332, no. 143, 19, from April 7, 1087, D.Bertha Abbatisa S.Andreae, "...unam mansionem Rav. in regione Ercolana ante cappellam S.Mariae quae vocatur Ipapanti".

149 Suzanne Lewis, "San Lorenzo Revisited: A Theodosian Palace Church at Milan.", JSocArchHist., 32, 1973, 197-222, esp 204-205.

150 The resemblance has been made clear both by excavation and by identification of a drawing by an anonymous Dutch artist, (ca.1570),

an imperial mausoleum, and probably served the tetrarch Maximian, (283-305, 307-308), who lived for considerable periods in Milan, though he died in Gaul.¹⁵¹ The extremely similar S.Aquilino probably dates to the reign of the emperor Gratian (367-383), and may well have served in the late fourth century as the mausoleum of the imperial family in the West.¹⁵²

S.Lorenzo's eastern chapel, which lies behind the main altar and is dedicated to Hippolytus, the jailer of St.Lawrence, has no early documentation, and thus presents problems similar to those of its mother church. It is simply not known if its original function was as a shrine for relics of St.Lawrence, though this seems likely, since the cult of Lawrence, together with those of his companions Hippolytus and Sixtus, was already mentioned in the writings of Ambrose.¹⁵³ The chapel could well have been originally designed as a martyrium, separate from but attached to the basilica, and sharing its dedication, as Suzanne Lewis has convincingly argued.¹⁵⁴ The relics would then have sanctified the whole complex.¹⁵⁵ Its form, a cross inscribed within an octagon, as well as its barrel-vault supported by columns of African *braccia* with Corinthian capitals, support this view. It also once possessed a mosaic decoration, according to medieval sources of the eighth to the eleventh century.¹⁵⁶ Its interest to us here is that already by the mid-fifth

Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie, Graphische Sammlung, Inv.5781r. See C.de Fabriczy, "Vedute cinquecentistiche di alcuni monumenti milanesi", Rassegna d'Arte, 6, 1906, 87-90.

151 See Mark J.Johnson, Late Antique Imperial Mausolea, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 1986, 55-59, and, for Maximian, 261-263.

152 Johnson, Mausolea, 110-118.

153 Ambrose, Hymns to Sixtus and to Lawrence: 72, "De S.Sixto"; & 73, "De S.Laurentio", PL, 17, col.1215-1216. Also, De Officiis, PL, 16, cols 90-92, and Epistola 37, PL, 16, col. 1139.

154 Lewis, San Lorenzo, 211-215.

155 Grabar, Martyrium, I, 347.

156 Lewis, San Lorenzo, 214, "From the eighth century Laudes Mediolensis Civitatis through the eleventh century chronicles of

century it had come to be used for the burial of bishops, presumably because the court had moved to Ravenna, and abandoned their palace church.¹⁵⁷ In support of this theory we have the evidence of a medieval chronicle that Bishops Eusebius (d.ca.465) and Theodore (d.489) were buried there.¹⁵⁸

The shift from imperial interest in this great complex of church and mausolea to episcopal ownership is confirmed by the creation there, sometime between 489 and 512, of a third and smaller octagon for the common burial of Milan's bishops. This chapel, S.Sisto, can be dated by a sixth century epigram to the period before the death of bishop Laurentius in 511-512.¹⁵⁹ Its walls are windowless and articulated with alternating rectangular and semicircular niches; its access to the exterior is by way of a central door, facing the entry into the main church. Nothing is known of its decoration, but its position as the burial-place of Milan's sixth-century bishops shows that the trend here, as in Ravenna, was away from individual funeral chapels and towards communal facilities.

The situation in the successive capitals of the West, where the greatest amount of chapel-building took place, and where trends can most easily be detected because of the quantity of material, reveals a clear-cut evolution of the martyr grave to a shrine and thence to a burial chapel, available to the elite, and especially to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The same situation also occurred in smaller centres, many of which had only a single martyr shrine. Lacking comparative material within their own walls, they yet share many features with other centres of the same size, and indeed in a simpler form the same processes are

Benzonis Albensis and Arnulphus, the martyrrium of S.Lawrence is described as being covered with gold mosaics".

157 Lewis, Ibid, 213.

158 Catalogus Archiepiscoporum Mediolanensium, ed. W.Wattenbach, MGH, Scriptores, Hannover, 1848, VIII, 102f.

159 Magnus Felix Ennodius, Opera, ed. F.Vogel, Auctorum Antiquissimum, 7, MGH, Berlin, 1885, 120, XCVI, Carmen 2,8, "Versus in basilica sancti Syxti, facti et scripti, quam Laurentius episcopus fecit."

found to be active in each town and city in Late Antiquity. The desire to honour the grave of the local saint, the need for a patron and protector for the city, and the hope of the upper classes to enrol this latent power for good on their own behalf worked wherever there was a martyr grave to inspire devotion. These smaller paleochristian sites, with special emphasis on north-eastern Italy and Istria, will be the subject of the next chapter.

Thus, the combined evidence of archaeological and literary sources supports the information contained in surviving buildings and their decorations, and defines the place of the funerary chapel in the milieu of late antiquity, and its relationship to the martyr shrine. Perhaps the most important of all chapel types, the funeral chapel embodied the central beliefs of its era about salvation and the afterlife. The emphasis on the role of the saints in this context draws attention to an almost universal desire among Christians to find ways of ensuring a favourable personal outcome on the day of judgment, while the evolution of ecclesiastical privilege in this important area reflects the growing power and centralisation of the church.

CHAPTER 4

CHAPELS IN THE PROVINCES: THE NORTH-EAST

The main focal point of chapel building in the Early Christian period in Italy was clearly the imperial capital of the West, in turn Rome, Milan and Ravenna, where records, archaeological remains and scattered survivors are rich sources of information on the *cella memoriae* and its close relative, the funeral chapel. These large centres, however, were not the only places in Italy where chapels were built in response to the cult of the saints, for this custom was widespread. One area where a clear pattern of chapel building in Late Antiquity emerges is the Upper Adriatic, now divided between Italy and Yugoslavia. Reaching around the north end of the Adriatic into Istria, in an arc stretching from Brescia¹ and Verona to Pula, each city in Late Antiquity had at least one memorial chapel of a local saint, which may have doubled as a funerary chapel; one chapel that was purpose built for burial, but sanctified with relics of the saints; or one martyrrium, where the relics of saints were gathered up and venerated. The region will be considered as representative of the situation all over Italy, and will be discussed in those terms. Its centres with surviving chapels will be considered one by one, west to east, and where decoration survives an attempt will be made to correlate it with the function of the chapel. It will be found that an overall pattern of use emerges much more clearly in the smaller centres than in the imperial capitals, perhaps because of the more personal ties between a smaller population and its local saint. The connections between the saint and his cult, his martyrdom, his relics and his *memoria* are more likely to be unbroken in the smaller centres than in the capitals, where we have seen that saints' relics, legends and even bodies were quite commonly imported for political and propaganda purposes, even in the earliest period. The chapels founded by the imperial family and upper-level clerics in the capitals were rich with such imported relics. They stand outside the

1 A cruciform martyr chapel found in excavations at St. Filastrius, Brescia, was dated to the fifth century. A. Grabar, *Martyrium*, I, 406.

mainstream of devotion to local saints, not only because of their exalted ownership, and private status, but also, perhaps, because the focus of devotion and the holiness they embodied held an impersonal element, being products that power and money could import from elsewhere. Local, personal involvement may be the reason for the long history of unbroken devotion to the Upper Adriatic shrines, each of which seems to embody some or all of the steps of evolution of a shrine of the funerary cult: *memoria*, funerary chapel and martyrrium. These appeared, and to varying degrees replaced one another, as the cult of the saints became codified and attained growing importance in the life of the region. Undoubtedly, one of the most important factors in the evolution of this pattern was the public nature of these shrines. Perhaps they should be recognised as local forerunners of the great medieval pilgrimage centres, in that here the devotion of the local populace was concentrated and focussed on their protectors, the saints, who would intervene for the good of the individual or the community.

The ancient city of Verona retains one such chapel, much altered (figs.7,8). This is the chapel of saints Tosca and Teuteria at the SS.Apostoli, a Romanesque church occupying the site of a paleochristian cemetery church outside the Porta dei Borsari on the Roman Decumanus of the city.² The chapel's original dedication was probably to the Ravenna saint, Apollinaris, which makes a late fifth or sixth century date probable:³ the dedication to Tosca and Teuteria, martyred in 263, can be traced to 1160, when the saints' remains were discovered in the adjacent cemetery, and placed in the chapel.⁴

2 Paolo Verzone, L'architettura religiosa dell'alto medio evo nell'Italia settentrionale, Turin, 1942, 14-15.

3 Verzone, Ibid., 15 and note 8, citing Rhythmica Descriptio, RIS, II ed., 12.

4 The translation is recorded on two lead sheets in the urn, giving the date and recording the inscriptions on the burials: TUSCA INNOCENS, and THEUTERIA VIRGO.

Like so many other palaeochristian chapels, SS.Tosca e Teuteria is situated beside and ahead of the apse of its basilica,⁵ and now lies more than two metres below the level of the street. Now an apsed square, the chapel was originally cruciform, with a groin vault and equal barrel-vaulted arms. The only surviving walls of this first phase, those of the ends of the cross-arms, form the middle sections of its present outer walls. They are easily distinguished by their construction of alternating layers of brick and smooth pebbles, laid obliquely in imitation of *opus spiccatum*. Though the alterations of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries have transformed the chapel into a small, triple apsed, three naved basilica, it retains its original cupola, resting on the four central piers which were its original supports, and the original Greek cross plan is still defined by an ancient pavement of various coloured marbles and by the clear differences in wall structure. The pavement gives no evidence of any graves, but the chapel may have held an above ground sarcophagus burial. First secure knowledge of a funerary function dates to the period after the extensive alterations of 1160, when the chapel became the mausoleum of the Bevilacqua family.

As far as dating is concerned, the fourteenth century documents which record the chapel's original consecration as taking place in 751⁶ are quite suspect, in view of the many factors which favour an earlier date. Among these are the details of the wall construction, which suggest a date around the turn of the sixth century.⁷ The similarity in form to the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna and to the chapel at S.Maria Formosa, Pula, would also suggest the fifth or early sixth century.

5 As at S.Simpliciano, Milan; S.Maria Formosa, Pula, S.Prodocimo, Padua, etc. See also P.L.Zovatto, "Il sacello paleocristiano delle SS. Tosca e Teuteria a Verona", *Felix Ravenna*, 33, 1961, 133-142.

6 As stated in the *Psalter* of the SS.Apostoli, not earlier than 1349, Verzone, *Ibid*, 15.

7 Verzone, *Ibid*, 15.

S.Maria Mater Domini at SS.Fortunato e Felice, Vicenza has already been mentioned in Chapter 2, where its fragmentary mosaics were compared with those of the Archbishops' chapel, Ravenna. The Vicenza chapel is a vaulted Greek cross, four metres square, with an apse, a cupola and a barrel-vaulted, rectangular narthex entered from either end. It was built beside the cemetery basilica of saints Felix and Fortunatus on the Via Postumia (fig.9), and probably dates from the mid-sixth century.⁸ As with so many other small vaulted chapels of the northeast, it survived major disasters during its history, among them the attack of the Huns in 899 during which the basilica itself was destroyed, and the major earthquake of 1117. Its survival, as in most similar cases, probably results from its small size and its strong, stone-built vaulted construction.

During recent renovations the Roman windows in the north and south arms were re-opened; the one in the south is original. The uneven octagon of the vault merges into a hemisphere containing four more small windows (fig.10), two of these are original, and one more is covered with an ancient *transenna*. The lower part of the chapel is partially clad in Proconnesian marble: a remnant, with the mosaics, of a sumptuous decoration contemporary with the chapel.

The building has been seen as a typical martyrion, dedicated to the cult of relics, rather than a cemetery chapel, built over the grave of one particular martyr.⁹ This was a development that came somewhat late in the evolution of the martyr shrine, and suggests that S.Maria Mater Domini, at least in its present form, postdates the foundation of its church, SS.Fortunato e Felice, and that the later dates proposed for the chapel, (early- to mid-sixth century), are probably correct. Never-

⁸ Though Deichmann and Arslan would place it in the sixth century, Lorenzon prefers the mid-fifth, while de Capitani and Bettini prefer the late-fifth, E.Arslan, Catalogo delle cose d'arte e di antichità d'Italia, Vicenza. I. Le Chiese. Rome, 1956, 88-89, with bibliography.

⁹ Giovanni Lorenzon, "Il gruppo monumentale dei martiri Felice e Fortunato di Vicenza", in G.P.Bognetti, B.Forlati Tamaro and G.Lorenzon, Vicenza nell'alto Medio Evo, Venice, 1959, 15f., esp.28, "il sacello... raccoglieva le reliquie dei Martiri di tutto il territorio". Also see Grabar, Martyrium, I, 406, 423, and Arslan, Catalogo, 88-89.

theless, even if the chapel itself is from this late a period, there is considerable evidence that relics of Felix and Fortunatus, who died in the persecutions of Diocletian, were physically present in Vicenza from the time of the persecutions. A plain sarcophagus dated to the early years of the fourth century, with an inscribed cover which reads BEATI MART/ URES/ FELIX ET/ FORTUNA/ TUS,¹⁰ has been found in the pagan cemetery on the road to Verona. This tomb is equipped with a hole whereby the faithful could maintain contact with the relics.¹¹ It is not clear when the saints' remains were moved to the basilica, though the earliest, fourth century church took the form of a hall surrounding the *memoria* of the martyrs. The bones of Felix now lie under the altar of S.Maria Mater Domini. A recent "recognition" showed that the casket contains the skeleton of a single individual, dead by decapitation.¹² This would fit the known circumstances, for although both saints were once present in Vicenza, their bones came to be divided between Vicenza and Aquileia. Aquileia received the bones of Fortunatus, and by the sixth century each saint was firmly installed in his separate home, as we learn from the poems of Venantius Fortunatus.¹³

The sixth-century date for the chapel is also suggested by the dedication inscribed on its now lost pergula, which was recorded in the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁴ The text read +HOC ORATORIUM B.M.MATRIS DOMINI GREGORIUS/SUBLIMIS VIR REFERENDARIUS A FUNDAMEN/TIS AEDIFICAVIT, CHRISTI+ NOMI/NE DICAVIT.¹⁵ It is important to note that Gregorius

10 "The blessed martyrs Felix and Fortunatus", De Rossi, Roma Sotteranea, VIII, p.436. Lorenzon, Ibid, 23, dates it to 310-320.

11 Lorenzon, Ibid, 23.

12 A formal "recognition" in 1979 confirmed the contents of the casket. Lellia Cracco Ruggieri, in Broglio and Cracco Ruggieri, Storia di Vicenza, I, Vicenza, 1987, 299f.

13 Venantius Fortunatus, b.ca. 530, Vita S.Martini, II, vv. 658-660, MGH, AA, IV, I. Also, Carmina, 8:3, vv.165-166.

14 By F.Barbarano, Historia ecclesiastica della città, territorio, e diocesi di Vicenza, Vicenza, 1649, I, 13, and 28-29, not available to me; cited by Arslan, Catalogo, 88.

15 "Gregorius, *Sublimis Vir* (and) *Referendarius*, built this chapel of

built the chapel "from the foundations", implying that there was no predecessor chapel on the site. In further support of the sixth-century date is the office, *referendarius*, held by Gregorius, which is known from the reign of Justinian (527-565).¹⁶ The period of peace between 543, when Totila destroyed Vicenza, and 568, the year of the Lombard invasion, seems to be a possibility, though an earlier date might better fit the close stylistic similarities of the chapel's mosaics to those of S.Andrea, Ravenna.¹⁷

These mosaics, preserved in fragmentary condition under a false ceiling when the chapel was transformed into a sacristy in 1754, consist of the Lion of St.Mark (fig.5) and a medallion saint (fig.6) in the north-west squinch, with extremely fragmentary vine tendrils and pomegranates in the south-west and south-east, as also beneath the saint's medallion in the north-west.¹⁸ The west (entry) vault of the chapel also bears some fragments of non-figural painting, which have been scored for overlying plaster: a series of pleated canopies between twisted ribbon borders is represented, in white and red on gold.

A second area of original, painted decoration is the painted frieze of cornucopias which extends over more than a square metre of the narthex wall, at the level of the springing of the vault. The ornaments are tied with ribbons, which support hanging crowns on a yellow background between lanceolate leaves. Vertical, spiral ribbons complete the pattern. The designs are close to those of mid sixth-century Ravenna, resembling the ornament at both S.Apollinare in Classe and S.Vitale. And finally, the iconography of the evangelist symbol with its single

the Blessed Mary, Mother of the Lord, from the foundations, (and) dedicated (it) in the name of Christ".

16 Barbarano, *Ibid*, see Arslan, *Catalogo*, 88. Niermeyer, *Lexicon*, 898, *referendarius*: "a court dignitary who receives petitions", *Cod.Justin.*, 1, 50, 2, *Novell.*, 113-124.

17 G.Frasson. "Di un importantissimo monumento paleocristiano a Vicenza", *Atti del R. Istituto Veneto di S.L.A.*, 96/2, 1936-1937, 459-462. Also see Chapter 2. Arslan, *Catalogo*, 88-89.

18 Attilio Previtali, *San Felice: una dimora dello spirito*, Vicenza, 1988, II, *Martyrion*.

wings, halo and codex is also appropriate to the early sixth century.

What can be deduced from these fragments of decoration of the purpose for which the chapel was built? Regrettably, few conclusions can be reached except that S.Maria Mater Domini shared its basic vocabulary with other paleochristian chapels. The formula includes a vault, (here sprinkled with painted stars in *intonaco*, perhaps replacements for mosaics which fell in the 1117 earthquake), supported by the evangelist symbols at the base, as at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan. This basic formula was accompanied by the medallion portraits of saints, perhaps portraits of those whose relics rested below. Close as it is in these features to the Ravenna Archbishops' chapel, it seems certain that its primary purpose was different: the creation of a sacred space as a setting for the images and the relics of the local martyrs, in honour of their sacrifice.

At Padua, also, an Early Christian chapel, S.Prodocimo, is associated with the ancient tradition of devotion to local saints (fig.11, interior). It is situated at S.Giustina, a fifth-century foundation rebuilt many times throughout the centuries, notably in the twelfth, and even more completely in the fifteenth and sixteenth. Like most of the other churches discussed in this chapter, S.Giustina originated as a funerary basilica in the cemetery outside the city walls. Its chapel, which is dedicated to the first bishop of Padua, Prodocimus, is situated to the right of the sanctuary. Although originally a separate building, it is now attached to the basilica by a complex of rooms and corridors.

An inscription in its narthex records that the patrician Opilio built both the basilica and the oratory in honour of the local martyr Justina. The text occupies the central roundel of a triangular marble tympanum (fig.12) which was originally supported on two columns, forming the lintel of the chapel's entry way in the west arm, a position it still retained in the fifteenth century.¹⁹ The roundel is edged by a

19 As seen by Guglielmo Ongarello, Chronica di Padova, 1441, ms.bibl.civ.Padova, BP,396,33v., "La quale è di su do collone sopra la porta la quale va la cappella de S.Prodocimo." Text in Maria Tonzig,

carved wreath, and the triangular slab itself, by a leafy border. Both resemble borders on Ravenna sarcophagi of the early sixth century closely.²⁰ The text is flanked by two Latin crosses cut into the stone: each supports a hanging *alpha* and *omega* and two smaller crosses from its horizontal beam. The text, expanded to eliminate abbreviations, reads "OPIILIO VIR CLARISSIMUS ET IN LUSTRIS PRAEFECTUS ATQUE PRETER (or patricius) HANC BASILICAM VEL ORATORIUM IN HONORE SANCTAE JUSTINAE MARTYRIS A FUNDAMENTIS COEPTAM DEO IUVANTE PERFECIT."²¹ Two individuals named Opilio are known, both consuls²² according to their surviving inscriptions of 453 and 525.²³ Although each of these has been suggested as the Opilio of the chapel, the second is the more likely, because the later date could link this inscription with texts showing that a certain Opilio gave lands to the monastery and church of St. Justina on May 23, 523.²⁴ Opilio's tomb, supported on two columns,

La basilica romanico-gotica di Santa Giustina in Padova", Padua, 1932, 5.

20 For example, the border on the "Lamb" sarcophagus in Sant'Apollinare in Classe. M. Lawrence, The Sarcophagi of Ravenna, 33, and pl. 54-56.

21 A. Simioni, Storia di Padova, Padua, 1968, 138. Actual text: + OPIILIO VC/ET IN L.PP ADQ/PATRICIUS HANC.BASILICAMVEL ORA/TORIUM IN HONORE SCAEIUSTINAE MARTYRIS A FUNDAMENTIS/COEPTAM.DED. IU/VANTE PERFE/+CIT+. "Opilio, *Vir Clarissimus* and Prefect *inluster* and *Praetor*, (or *Patricius*), undertook eagerly (to build) this basilica and also (this) chapel from the foundations in honour of S. Justina the Martyr (and) accomplished (it) in the time of youth".

22 The title *inluster*, originally reserved for consuls, in the Christian period could be given to other exalted personages. Andrea Gloria, "Nuove esame della donazione di Opilione alla chiesa di S. Giustina in Padova", Rassegna Padovana di Storia, Lettere ed Arti, 1, 1891, 101.

23 These inscriptions, found at Gemona and Milan, match the epigraphy of the S. Prosdocimo lintel. Simioni, Ibid, 138.

24 The three documents recording this gift, (two copies of the donation, and a request that Opilio be permitted to rent back the lands of his gift), are in the Archives of the Padua Museo Civico, and date from the 11th century. Despite the late date, and eleventh century phrasing, Gloria argues for an authentic original, destroyed perhaps in the sack of 899, and rewritten from memory. Gloria, Ibid, 97, and 102-103.

survived in the atrium of the basilica until the fifteenth century, where it was seen by Ongarello.

It is not known when Justina's remains were moved from the chapel, where they rested in Opilio's time, to the basilica, where they were discovered in the twelfth century. Perhaps the transfer happened after one of the numerous devastations in the church's history.²⁵ Somewhat ironically, the chapel withstood these disasters, and the saint's remains may well have remained there in safety through much of the Middle Ages. Apparently, the remains were once again returned to the chapel after their rediscovery in the basilica, for Ongarello saw them there in 1441.²⁶

Both Justina and Prosdocimus are shadowy figures, whose life stories, known from late medieval texts, are full of inconsistencies.²⁷ Justina, a local princess, is believed to have died in the persecutions of Maximian: her existence in Padua in the early Middle Ages is documented by Opilio's inscription, and by her appearance in the poems of Venantius Fortunatus.²⁸ However, her life and passion cannot be verified in the written sources of the following six centuries. Her Acts probably date from the discovery of her remains in the high altar in 1174. This was an era rich in such discoveries at S.Giustina. The relics of St. Daniel the Martyr had been discovered there in 1074, while those of Luke and Matthew came to light in 1177. But even though Justina's legend lacks early documentation, the late medieval version must surely have incorporated local tradition and belief, and one can assume it contains a kernel of historic truth.

25 Simioni lists its destruction in 452 by the Goths, in 601 by the Lombards, and in 899 by the Huns. A. Simioni, Storia di Padova, 116.

26 G. Ongarello, Ibid, 33, "Edificó ancora S. Prosdocimo uno Oratorio Grande in lo quale repuose el corpo di S. Justina Verzene et martire Rezina di Padova...". See Alessandro Scrinzi, "Di un tempietto bizantino del VI secolo a Padova", L'arte, 29, 1926. 75-84, esp. 78.

27 See ActaSS, Justina, October, III, 790-826; Acta, "Justinae genus et martyrum", 824-826. Prosdocimus, ActaSS, November vol. III, 350f.

28 Venantius Fortunatus, Carmina, VIII, 3, 169.

This certainty is the more probable because Justina was the subject of an important cult in north-eastern Italy in the early Middle Ages. She was invoked both in the Ambrosian Canon of the Mass and in the Ravenna Litany. In the mid-sixth century, she was important enough in the upper Adriatic region not only to appear among the twenty-two virgin martyrs of the nave procession at S. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, but among the women saints pictured in medallions around the sanctuary arch at Poreč in Istria.

Tradition declares Prosdocimus to have been the first bishop of Padua.²⁹ His relics have been neither found nor documented, and were perhaps hidden centuries ago during the barbarian threat, and then lost. The rediscovery in 1957 of a paleochristian sculptured plaque (fig.13) in the chapel is perhaps the best proof of the existence of Prosdocimus and of his connection with the chapel. The plaque features a portrait bust of the saint, between palm trees, in shallow-cut relief.³⁰ The inscription PROSDOCIMUS/ EPS. ET CONFESS. has not, however, generally been accepted as contemporary with the sculpture, and the plaque should probably be seen as an idealisation of the bishop, rather than a true portrait.

The cruciform chapel has its arms covered by tunnel vaults and its central crossing by a cupola supported on four angular squinches alternating with windows. This type of cupola was popular in the early sixth century, and the brickwork of the exterior is appropriate to this date.

The small pergula (fig.11) which delimits the left niche is supported by four columns with two Byzantine and two later foliate capitals. The uprights are squared, and fitted for the attachment of *plutei*, which have not survived. The beam, with a central horseshoe arch, has a foliate pattern on either side of the inscription which

29 According to the earliest list of Paduan bishops, in the Cronica di Rolandino Patavini, RIS-ns, VIII, appendix 4, "La serie dei vescovi di Padova edita dal Muratori". This dates from 1267 or 1268, cited by Simioni, Ibid, 116. He believes the list, while full of inaccuracies, kept the tradition of Prosdocimus' apostolic connection alive.

30 See C. Semenzato, Padua: Art and History, Padua, n.d., plate facing p. 18.

occupies its entire length. This border is identical in detail with that on the Opilio lintel; the inscription, however, appears to be later. Its inscription identifies the chapel as home to the relics of apostles and martyrs which were gathered together there.³¹ Tradition declares that the relics of Matthew and Luke, along with a famous icon of the Virgin painted by St. Luke, were brought to Padua from Constantinople in the time of iconoclasm by a priest, St. Urius.³² The pergula may date from this time, and perhaps also the medieval dedication to the Virgin, which may commemorate the icon's presence in the chapel.³³ The many relics kept in S. Prosdocimo were transferred to individual chapels in the rebuilt basilica at various times up to the mid-sixteenth century.

The relics of the apostles were obviously the inspiration for the decoration which once made the interior of S. Prosdocimo bright with mosaics, for the decorative scheme is known from old descriptions to have included the twelve apostles, perhaps in the cupola, as at the two Ravenna baptisteries. However, an anonymous writer of the twelfth century described the chapel as built in honour of God, the Virgin Mary and the host of apostles, mentioning the "almost celestial palace" and "green fields of Paradise" that were shown there.³⁴ It is only in

31 "IF HOC LOCO CONLOCATAE SUNT RELIQUIAE SANCTORUM APOSTOLORUM ET PLURIMUM MARTYRUM QUI PRO CONDITORE OMNIQUE FIDELIUM PLEBE ORARE DIGNENTUR". "In this place are gathered together relics of saints, apostles and many martyrs who deign to pray for the founder and all faithful people".

32 For Urius, who was himself formerly buried in the chapel, see ActaSS, Oct., III, Justina, 816.

33 See also Simioni, Storia, 142-143.

34 "Oratorium sive templum mire pulchritudinis constructum in honore Dei et beatae Mariae semper Virginis et plurimorum Apostolorum, in quo sancti Prosdocimi corpus tumulatum jacet cuius parietes humo tenuis in circuito vario suis marmoree crustati, pars vero superior que testudineo clauditur arcu longe lateque deaurata relucet, et opere Musoleo depicta quasi celeste Palatium ac viridantia Paradisi prata demonstrat". F.S. Dondi Dall'Orologio, Dissertazione sopra i riti, discipline, costumanze della chiesa di Padova, Padua, 1816, from diss. III, doc. XXXVI, p. 50, written by Francesco dei Donnetti, a fourteenth-century monk of S. Giustina. Text from M. Tonzig, Ibid, 16-17.

another account, that of Girolamo da Potenza, who wrote in 1619, more than a half century after the redecoration of 1563-1564, that the pictures of the apostles are mentioned. He describes how the chapel's walls had been encrusted with beautiful marbles, with mosaics above depicting the twelve apostles.³⁵ I can find no evidence that the apostles were shown full length as at the Ravenna baptisteries: it seems equally likely that they were shown in medallions, as at the Archbishops' chapel at Ravenna. Medallions feature in the painted soffits that replaced the mosaics at S.Prodocimo. Greek key and twisted ribbon borders which resemble the motifs of Late Antiquity are also present, and are possible quotations from the original decoration. If the apostles were shown in the soffits, the twelfth century mention of the mosaics depicting a near celestial palace among green fields is intriguing. It calls to mind the mosaics at the Great Mosque of Damascus, or those of the cupola at St.George's, Salonica.

The anonymous twelfth century account confirms that the body of Prodocimus lay in the chapel at that time, and indeed it was to honour this saint that in the mid-sixteenth century the ancient decoration of marble and mosaic, blackened with smoke and age, was either removed from the walls and vault, or, just possibly, covered with plaster,³⁶ to be replaced by the paintings which are still *in situ*. The ancient sarcophagus now in the chapel was recut, the walls were hollowed into niches and filled with statues, and the ancient floor was replaced. This Renaissance decor remains in the cupola and soffits, but on the lower level it has recently been stripped away, and the chapel returned

35 Girolamo Da Potenza, Cronica Iustiniana, 1598, Padova, Museo Civico, BP 829c13, p.13f., "...era tutta crustata di marmi da capo a basso di bellissimi lastroni: il cielo o testudine di sopra tutto mosiato, isculiti li dodici apostoli". Text given by S.Bettini, Monumenti paleocristiani delle Venezie e della Dalmazia, Padua, 1942, 231; also by Verzone, L'architettura religiosa, 25-26, "Padova, la cappella di S.Prodocimo".

36 M.Tonzig, Basilica, 100. Since very few figural fragments were among the great quantities of mosaic fragments found in the excavations of 1928, it is possible that the apostle mosaic is immured under the painted replica of 1565.

to its original state. Here, the sole decorations are now the pergula and the recut sarcophagus, which is used as an altar and bears the bas-relief of Prosdocimus as altarpiece.

In conclusion, one may surmise that the chapel of S.Prosdocimo is a second-generation martyr chapel, built in the first place for the martyr Justina, and chosen by the early bishop Prosdocimus for his burial *ad sanctos*. It was entirely rebuilt in the early sixth century by Opilio, and possibly even served in its turn for his own burial beside the saints. The remains of Justina were later moved to the high altar of the basilica. Other relics, among them those of the apostles Matthew and Luke and of three of the Holy Innocents, as well as of the second bishop of Padua, St.Maximus, and of St Felicity and St.Daniel, were also honoured in the chapel, and gave it the role of *Sancta Sanctorum* of Padua. The mosaic decorations of the vault, as well as the marble cladding of the walls, were probably the gifts of Opilio. The chapel obviously fits into the pattern *cella memoriae*--burial *ad sanctos*--funerary chapel--shrine for relics, and in the absence of really clear documentation, I would hazard the opinion that it fulfilled all these roles in turn.

North-east of Venice near Portogruaro, the Roman city of Iulia Concordia Sagittaria, which was destroyed in the floods of 586, has left interesting archaeological remains of its Early Christian monuments. Among these was a triconch chapel, with a cruciform relic container. Originally a *memoria* opening from the right corner of the sanctuary of the *Basilica Apostolorum* in the cemetery, at a later date it was turned into a small basilica by the addition of a short arcade of five pairs of columns, round which a continuous narthex and twin aisles were wrapped. This renovation probably followed the destruction of the church by the Goths in 452. The new church, like its predecessor, served a formal, walled graveyard which has also been excavated.³⁷ It is not known what

37 Details from P.L.Zovatto, "La trichora paleocristiana nel nuovo complesso monumentale di Concordia", Felix Ravenna, 86, 1962, 74-95, and Italo Furlan, "Architettura del complesso paleocristiano di Iulia Concordia: revisione e proposte" Scritti storici in memoria di Paolo Lino Zovatto, Milan 1972, 79-95, esp.88, fig.5.

saint or relics sanctified this place.

At Aquileia, no traces of martyr or funerary chapels have come to light, and the mosaic pavements that have been claimed, somewhat dubiously, to be the remains of domestic oratories have been discussed in Chapter 1. One pavement, however, situated beneath the tower of the basilica, is believed to date from the late third century, and to represent the *domus ecclesiae* of early Aquileia.³⁸ The nearby city of Grado, on the contrary, is rich in paleochristian chapels of the martyr shrine and funerary type. Its cathedral of St. Euphemia has a small, heart-shaped *cella trichora* to the left of the apse. T.G. Jackson described it as having once been a detached building with three apses paved with mosaics, connected by a paved walkway to the front of the left aisle of the church. In Jackson's time, the late nineteenth century, nothing remained above ground-level of the ancient building, and much of its site was occupied by a workshop.³⁹ The triconch has recently been reconstructed in Early Christian style, with a little cupola of *tubi fitilli*, over the ancient mosaic pavements of the chapel and its connecting passage way, which probably both dated from the late sixth century bishopric of Elia (571-586).⁴⁰ The pavement in the chapel and its main apse displays geometric motifs enclosed in an interlace of squares and circles, while the mosaic floors of the lateral apses are enriched with imbrication. The anteroom, like the nave of the church, has a *pelta* wave design.⁴¹ The chapel's position and its architectural form inform us that it originated as a *cella memoriae*, and it seems that from the time of Heraclius, who gave a relic-throne to the patriarch of

38 G. Brusin, Aquileia e Grado, Padua, 1959, 27.

39 T.G. Jackson, Dalmatia, the Quarnero and Istria, Oxford, 1887, III, 431, and plan, 413, fig. 125.

40 G. Cuscito, Grado e le sue basiliche paleocristiane, Bologna, 1979, n.p.

41 P.L. Zovatto, Grado, antichi monumenti. Bologna, 1971, 21, figs. 69, a & b.

Grado in 630, the saint honoured was Mark.⁴² Devotion to the evangelist is also recorded from Grado's pre-Venetian days in an inscription dated 807 and the patriarchate of John *iunior*. This inscription occupies the fragments of his pergula which is preserved in the *trichora*.⁴³ However, the original dedication of the chapel may well have been to saints Ermacora and Fortunatus, the evangelists of the Veneto region, who were honoured in both Aquileia and Grado, and whose relics are still kept in the Grado cathedral treasury.⁴⁴

At S.Euphemia a second chapel, probably the original sacristy, was later converted to a funerary chapel, while new side chambers to the south took over the old functions. This chapel lies beside the altar, at the head of the right aisle, and is built in typical Upper Adriatic style with a polygonal apse, semi-circular inside. This apse has a mosaic pavement with a central cantharus which gives rise to a lively vine-scroll.⁴⁵ The rectangular main floor is centred on the monogramme of the donor of the floor, bishop Elia, and is similar to the triconch chapel floor; interlaced squares and circles contain geometric motifs, all framed by a wave meander of aquatic plants. Elia's own grave was

42 Grado had two thrones; one, "of St.Mark", was "taken from Alexandria to Constantinople and offered to the Patriarch of Grado by the emperor Heraclius in 630", D.Gaborit-Chopin, "Sedia di San Marco", The Treasury of San Marco, Venice, Milan 1984, 98-105, esp.105. Bibliography of Heraclius' gift in S.Tavano, "Le cattedre di Grado e le culture artistiche del Mediterraneo orientale", Antichità Altoadriatiche, 12, 1977, 445-489.

43 +AD HONORE BEATI MARCI E(VANGELIS)TE IOHANNIS IUNIOR SOLA DE(I) SUFFRAGENTE GRATIA D(...X)V IN D(ICTIONE). Cuscito, Ibid, fig.42., text Ibid, beside fig. 43.

44 The so-called Throne of St. Mark, once in Grado, (see Cuscito, Ibid, figs 44-45,) takes its name from its present location, S.Marco, Venice, where it was placed in 1451, after the dissolution of the Grado patriarchate, and is not believed to be the reliquary chair of St.Mark, gift of Heraclius to the Patriarch of Grado in 630. This was covered with ivory plaques, as the fifteenth century chronicle of Giovanni Candido tells us. See note 42, *supra*. For relics of other saints, some contained in fifth and sixth century reliquaries, see Cuscito, Ibid, figs 31-39.

45 P.L.Zovatto, Grado, antichi monumenti, Bologna, 1971, figs. 63-66.

not found in the excavations of 1966, but the chapel did contain the tomb of bishop Marcianus in an alcove in the wall adjacent to the main apse of the basilica. It is marked by a mosaic inscription.⁴⁶ The tomb was intact, unusually for a paleochristian burial. Marcianus' body lay in an unpretentious limestone sarcophagus, the skeleton oriented to the east with arms extended and hands crossed.⁴⁷ He had died at Grado, probably in 578, after spending forty of his forty-four years in his bishopric in exile.⁴⁸ The pavements of the two funerary chapels at S.Euphemia, which, judging by their designs are contemporary with one another, are rich in the symbolism of eternity in their interlace, their knot motifs,⁴⁹ and their circles.⁵⁰ The apse of the "sacristy" chapel has a further design where the altar once stood, a cantharus giving rise to a luxurious grapevine, which symbolises Christ and his blood, offered at the Eucharist at the altar above.⁵¹ This was a concept that was expounded by several of the Church Fathers. The third-century Roman theologian, Hippolytus (c.170-c.236), for example, saw Christ as the vine, and its shoots as the believers, with the martyrs represented as the bunches of grapes.⁵²

46 See Cuscito, *Ibid*, np, "HIC REQUIESCIT IN PACE CHRISTI SANCTAE MEMORIAE MARCIANUS EPISC(OPUS) QUI VIXIT IN E/PISCOPATO ANNOS XLIIII ET PEREGRINATUS/ EST PRO CAUSA FIDEI ANNOS XL. DEPOSITUS AUTEM IN HOC SEPULCHRO +/ VIII KAL(ENDAS) MAIAS INDICT(IONE) UNDECIMA". Marcianus may have been the bishop of that name consecrated in 534 to the see of Augusta (Augsburg), capital of Rezia Secunda, then under Vandal rule, by Macedonius, bishop of Aquileia.

47 Zovatto, *Grado*, 21; G.Brusin and P.L.Zovatto, *Monumenti paleocristiani di Aquileia e di Grado*, Udine, 1957, figs 57-58; 487-489.

48 Zovatto, *Grado*, 1971, 21.

49 J.E.Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, tr. J.Sage, New York, 1962, 164, "the sign for infinity (is) at once interlaced and also knotted".

50 G.Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols*, 153, Circle or ring: "Universally accepted as the symbol of eternity and never-ending existence".

51 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman", John, 15: 1-7.

52 Hippolytus, *On the Benedictions of Isaac, Jacob and Moses*, ed. R.Graffin, tr. M.Brière, L. Mariès and B.Ch.Mercier, *Patrologia*

Investigation of the site has shown that Grado's lost paleo-Christian church, the Basilica of Piazza Vittoria, also had its "sacristy" converted into a relic chapel, a renovation which should probably also be attributed to bishop Elia, who is known to have transferred relics to the churches of Grado.⁵³ At S.Maria delle Grazie, also, where twin side chambers are joined behind the apse to present a flat east facade, mosaic floors were given to the chapels in the late sixth century by individually named donors, as the mosaic inscriptions record.

Chapels also survive from the Early Christian period in Trieste and its region. In the city itself, a chapel was built in the early fifth century and dedicated to S.Maria del Mare: it was soon followed by a church. At San Canzian d'Isonzo a shrine was raised in the cemetery area over the graves of the three martyrs of Canzian. At first, in the early fourth century, this consisted of a small, simple building with no apse, as was normal in the Aquileia tradition. At Timavo, a chapel was dedicated to the Baptist at the start of the fifth century; by the early seventh century this had become the site of a basilica and monastery.⁵⁴

Poreč (Parenzo) is the site of another typical Upper Adriatic chapel, at the Basilica Euphrasiana, (539-550). This church was rebuilt on old foundations by bishop Euphrasius, who added a *cella trichora* to the left of the apse.⁵⁵ This chapel, now dedicated to St. Andrew, was probably originally not only the *memoria* of the Parentine saints Maurus

Orientalis, 27, p.99, "La vigne spirituelle, c'était le Sauveur, les sarments et les pampres...sont les saints, ceux qui croient en Lui; et les grappes, ses martyrs...".

53 Brusin & Zovatto, Monumenti, 503-510; see Chapter 10 for details of this relic translation.

54 G.Bovini, Antichità cristiane di S.Canzian d'Isonzo, S.Giovanni al Timavo e Trieste, Bologna, 1973, p.2, *memoria* of St. Proto; p.22-23 for San Canzian and p.29 for S.Giovanni al Timovo.

55 Illustrated in M.Prelog, The Basilica of Euphrasius in Poreč, Zagreb, 1986, pl. 63, 64.

and Eleutherius, who lie there in a sarcophagus dated 1247,⁵⁶ but also the mausoleum of Euphrasius himself. Much restored, it consists of a triconch preceded by an oval atrium, rectangular on the outside, with a window in the polygonal south wall. There is a stubby tower over the crossing of the triconch, and its three apses are polygonal outside and round inside, each with two windows. Traces of geometric mosaic pavement have survived, but appear to be later and cruder than the chapel itself.⁵⁷ There is no other decoration.

In addition to the triconch chapel, Poreč possesses one of the oldest paleochristian chapel floors to have survived anywhere: as at Aquileia it dates from the late third century, and is basically a pagan pavement which has been altered by the later insertion of fish into the geometric design. These inserts, filling two square fields of the mosaic, are placed on either side of the altar site, which is marked by the traces of its four supports. The symbolic fishes, and the position at the lowest level under the pavements of the church, reveal this as the floor of the earliest place of worship at the site.⁵⁸

At Pula, also in Istria, there is a chapel which, although now isolated, is the only surviving portion of the sixth century basilica of S.Maria Formosa. This church was built by bishop Maximinian of Ravenna, a native of Vistro (Vistrum), Istria, who came to the Ravenna bishopric from the diaconate at Pula, and also founded a monastery dedicated to saint Andrew on an islet in Pula harbour.⁵⁹ The monastic community was

56 The status of Maurus' remains is unclear. They were stolen by the Genoese in 1354, and supposedly remain in S.Matteo, Genoa: they are also claimed by the Lateran baptistery chapel of S.Venanzio, Rome, see Chapter 9.

57 Verzzone, Architettura, 53.

58 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, 12/2, cols. 2346-2372, "Oratoire", esp. 2363, f., fig. 9120. Also O.Marrucchi, "Le recenti scoperte nel duomo di Parenzo", NBAC, 2, 1896, 19. A fish illustrated in colour in M.Prelog, The Basilica of Euphrasius, pl.58, captioned "Fourth century mosaic with a symbolical fish", is a detail from this pavement.

59 Agnellus, LPER, 329. "Aedificavitque ecclesiam beatae Mariae in Pola quae vocatur Formosa, unde diaconus fuit, mira pulcritudine et

transferred to the city and to S.Maria Formosa in the twelfth century, with the last abbot of the monastery being installed in 1258, supporting the supposition that the church and community suffered severely in the Venetian sack of 1243. By the early seventeenth century the church was in ruins, its marbles, including the columns of its nave, having been requisitioned by Venice for her own building needs.

The two aisles of the church terminated in four-niched "sacristies" beside the altar, and applied to the outer corners of these were a pair of identical chapels on the Latin cross plan, of which the one to the right of the altar survives, dedicated to the Virgin. The other was dedicated to St.Andrew.⁶⁰ The single door of each chapel, in the centre of the long arm of the cross, opened to the exterior rather than into the church. The ground plan included a central apse, a miniature version of the main one, polygonal outside and semicircular within. The remaining chapel (fig.14) has rectangular transepts, ornamented with blind arcading, and articulated with vertical pilasters on the corners. The crossing is crowned with a squat central tower, each face of which is articulated by a wide arched window under a large, hemispherical relieving arch. Small single windows light the interior of the chapel's three arms, and a non-figural mosaic floor survives.

This chapel, known since the twelfth century as S.Maria del Canneto from the reed-bed by the shore in which it stood, and now simply and rather confusingly, as S.Maria Formosa, is little more than an intact but empty shell, though it is possible to recreate a considerable part of its decorative programme from the fragments and records that remain.

A large and important fragment of mosaic from the conch of the apse survives, though not *in situ*.⁶¹ Central on the gold background among clouds of glory is the head of a young, short-haired and beardless

diversis ornavit lapidis.

60 Pietro Kandler, "Della basilica di S.Maria Formosa in Pola", *L'Istra*, 32, 1847, reprinted in *Notizie storiche di Pola*, Poreč, 1876, 171-177, esp. 176.

61 It has been removed to the Pula Archaeological Museum.

Christ, nimbed with a jewelled and inscribed halo. His head is slightly inclined to his right, where the fragment also includes a second haloed head: that of Peter, to judge by the short grey beard and fringed hair style. Antonio Morassi, who apparently saw the mosaic before it was removed, suggested that this is the remnant of a *traditio legis*, the giving of the law to Peter.⁶² He adds the information that Christ was depicted in the centre of the conch. The relative positions and gestures of the heads suggests that Peter was in the position of *proskynesis*, possibly in the act of receiving a scroll from Christ, as Morassi suggests. There are, however, two compositions in Early Christian art that show Christ bestowing a gift on Peter: the Giving of the Law and the Giving of the Keys, the *traditio clavium*. Either would be possible, although it is more usual, especially in the Ravenna context of which S.Maria Formosa forms part, for Paul to receive the Law, and Peter the keys. In Constantina's mausoleum in Rome, (S.Costanza), the two lunettes in the ambulatory show the giving of scrolls to Peter and to Paul respectively, but it appears that restoration has wrongly replaced Peter's keys with a scroll.⁶³ The *traditio clavium* would better fit the programme of the chapel, which appears to have been a mausoleum since a sarcophagus survived inside it until the sixteenth century,⁶⁴ and Christ's gift to Peter of the keys to heaven is a clear reference to the possibility of salvation. Paul receiving the Law might seem the logical completion of the composition: and it seems that Testi-Rasponi actually saw a second figure beside Christ which he did interpret as Paul, though he read the composition as the *traditio*

62 Antonio Morassi, "La chiesa di S.Maria Formosa o del canneto in Pola", Bollettino d'Arte, Ser. II, 4, 1924, 11-25, esp.16, and plate p. 23, for the mosaic.

63 H.Stern, "Les mosaïques de Sainte-Constance", DOP, 12, 1958, 157-219, esp.160.

64 Pietro Kandler, L'Istra, 32, 1847, 130, notes the presence of a bishop's sarcophagus in the chapel in the sixteenth century. See also Anonymous of Pola, Dialoghi sulle antichità di Pola del 1600, ed. P.Kandler, Cenni al forestiero che visita Pola, Trieste, 1845, 78, "oltra delle quali è illustrata d'un mausoleo di un Vescovo".

legis.⁶⁵

The mosaic conch was separated from a painted composition below by a stucco string-course which is still in place. It bears a repeat design of paired birds, probably doves, their heads twisted back to hold garlands of flowers and fruit beak to beak with the adjacent pairs. The vault was also decorated with a central garland in stucco, and bands of leaves in the corners.⁶⁶

The lower part of the apse was also painted, though Morassi describes the paintings as in decay in 1924. They showed the twelve apostles, six in the hemicycle and three on each side wall.⁶⁷ On the left wall, quite well preserved, was the figure of the Baptist, with a scroll reading "Ecce agnus dei", while on the right Paul appeared with a sword, symbolising his martyrdom. The lowest register was occupied by painted draperies. Since the apostle frieze was represented within an arcade of pointed, slightly decorated arches, it seems likely that these paintings were later than the mosaics and stuccoes, and perhaps contemporary with the twelfth century apostle friezes at Torcello and Trieste.⁶⁸

The chapel at Pula, a documented funerary chapel from the mid-sixth century, thus displays in its cruciform shape with crossing tower a symbolism of architectural form that speaks of Christ's death and the

65 Agnellus, *CPER*, ed. Testi-Rasponi, 194, note 17, "E rimasto anche il rudere di uno di due *monasteria*, portante un frammento, a composizione musiva, colla testa del Redentore imberbe cinto dal nimbo crociato, e avente ai fianchi due figure che sembrano essere gli apostoli Pietro e Paolo, forse la scena della *traditio legis* cosifrequente sui nostri sarcofagi".

66 Morassi saw these in 1924. I was not able to confirm this or the paintings in 1987.

67 Morassi, *Ibid*, 17-20. Morassi, who saw them in a ruined condition, thought the paintings could have been part of the original decor.

68 Though the sculptures on Ravenna sarcophagi of the fifth century, such as the two in S. Francesco, Ravenna, the former *Basilica Apostolorum*, frequently chose this theme, portraying the apostles standing in arcades of the type Morassi describes, the arches are always semicircular.

redemption that stems from it. It exhibits almost exactly the same architectural vocabulary as the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia a century earlier, itself an aristocratic burial place. The points of similarity with the Ravenna mausoleum, as well as the former presence of a sarcophagus within, identify the Pula chapel as a funerary chapel, while its decoration of birds and garlands was appropriate paradise imagery for a place of burial. This conclusion is not contradicted by the fragmentary mosaics of the conch, which also speak of the hope of salvation through the command of Christ to Peter, that he keep the doors of heaven on behalf of the flock of the saved.⁶⁹ We cannot tell if this chapel was a martyr shrine in origin: the building's documentation implies that it was not, since no relics are mentioned by Agnellus, despite his listing of the numerous relics which the same patron placed within the church of St. Stephen, Ravenna. Nor were relics mentioned in the original charter of the church of S.Maria Formosa that survived in the Pula archives until 1657.⁷⁰ Probably this chapel belongs to the generation of funeral chapels which were built for burial, and sanctified as necessary with relics. As to who were the intended occupants of the burial chapels, we have no answer. Maximinian, we know, died in 556 or 557, and was buried in Ravenna beside the altar of his church of St. Andrew, which he had endowed with a precious relic: the beard of the apostle.⁷¹ But there is some doubt whether he built S.Maria Formosa while bishop at Ravenna, or earlier. Its foundation deed, now lost, but signed by Maximinian, read "Servus Christi Maximinianus per gratiam Dei episcopus sanctae ecclesiae Ravennatis inclitae urbis". The date of this document was read as 21 February, 546. However, we know Maximinian did not become bishop until October, 546,⁷² which casts doubt on the

69 Matthew, 16:19, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven".

70 Morassi, *Ibid*, note 5; Kandler, *L'Istra*, 32, 1847, repr. *Notizie storiche*, 172.

71 Agnellus, *LPER*, 332, "sepultusque est in basilicae sancti Andreae apostoli iuxta altarium, ubi barbas praedicti apostoli condidit".

72 Agnellus, *LPER*, 325. *CPER*, 193-194. Kandler, *L'Istra*, 32, repr. *Notizie*, 172: the "Pola Anonymous" saw this document in Pula in 1657.

accuracy of this reading: probably the date of the lost document was misinterpreted. It seems possible that Maximinian, finding a great treasure as Agnellus recounts,⁷³ spent some of it on S.Maria Formosa, planning his own tomb there, only to be elevated to the Ravenna See, where he died.

We have seen that S.Maria Formosa also possessed paired circular side chambers beside the altar, which have been described as "sacristies". A late sixteenth century observer described these chambers as being clad in figural mosaics.⁷⁴ Perhaps, as at S.Vitale, Ravenna, the chambers doubled as shrines dedicated to particular saints, or, as at Grado, one or both of them were later used as burial chapels. A pair of niches, stripped to the stone, together with the thick wall behind them, survives from each structure, and that on the right forms an integral part of the wall of the remaining outer chapel. They will be discussed as sacristies in chapter 10.

Poreč and Pula are by no means the only Istrian cities to have the remains of paleochristian chapels, though theirs are the best preserved. The northern Adriatic coast has all sorts of small chapels, obviously *memoriae*, in the form of the cross or the triconch. Subterranean chapels are recorded from Koper (Capodistria), Novigrad (Cittanova), and Pican (Pedena), though their dates are uncertain, and they may not be paleochristian.⁷⁵ In addition, there are the chapels of St.Agnes in

73 Agnellus, LPER, 326. Agnellus believed that the whole treasure was sent to Justinian, who rewarded the deacon's honesty with the appointment to the Ravenna See.

74 According to the "Pola Anonymous", writing in the late sixteenth century, paraphrased by Pietro Kandler, L'Istra, 32, 1847, reprinted in Notizie storiche di Pola, Poreč, 1876, 174, "sono queste due celle perfettamente rotonde, a volta, con finestra che dà scarsa luce, con quattro nicchie che s'aprono nel grosso del muro di dimensioni differenti. Erano queste celle rivestite nel pavimento e nelle muraglie di mosaici a belle figure e scompartimenti, dei quali siamo giunti in tempo di vedere frammenti. Avrebbero dovuto servire per deposito di sacri arredi e di sacri libri...l'Anonimo...assicura che in quelle nicchie vi fossero collocati statue, e che le porte in queste celle fossero bellissime."

75 P.Kandler, L'Istra, 16, 1852, repr. Notizie, 179.

Betica, and St. Catherine on the island of the same name, both in the Pula region, while further north, near Rovinj is the chapel of St. Thomas. These all exhibit different variants of the three apsed structure.⁷⁶ A sumptuous mausoleum or martyrion of the sixth century, S. Caterina, was situated in Pula harbour, on an islet connected by bridge to Maximinian's island monastery of St. Andrew. Both structures now lie under nineteenth century fortifications in the harbour. In Kandler's time, the mid-nineteenth century, S. Caterina was in ruins. He found its mosaic tesserae had fallen from the walls and lay on the ground both inside and around the building, which he took for evidence there had been glass mosaics on the exterior as well as inside.⁷⁷ This would make it unique among all known early medieval chapels. Later, the ninth-century S. Zeno chapel at S. Prassede, Rome, would present a mosaic facade; nearer at hand, the decoration of the mid-sixth-century Basilica Eufhrasiana, in nearby Poreč, included a mosaic programme on both its exterior gables.

In conclusion, it seems obvious from the surviving evidence that the Upper Adriatic area was especially rich in chapels that were founded as *memoriae* over the graves of martyrs in the heyday of the cult in the fourth to sixth centuries. These structures were often converted to

76 Ante Šonje, "La chiesa paleocristiana nella insenatura marina di Sepen presso Castelmuschio (Omišalj) sull'isola di Veglia, (Krk)", 1, Felix Ravenna, 111, 1976, 137f., esp 152f. Apparently these chapels have lost their decorations.

77 P. Kandler, Osservatore Triestino, nd., repr. Notizie Storiche di Pola, Poreč, 1876, 232, "Era questo tempietto, così nell'interno come nell'esterno coperto da mosaici a tesselli vitrei colorati, come la facciata della basilica Eufhrasiana di Parenzo, e come la Marciana di Venezia, quanto alla materia di rivestitura delle pareti; quanto agli disegni eseguiti col mosaico, nessuno traccia, dacchè i tesselli erano tutti staccati ed ingombravano il terreno interno e circostante. A sole lucente l'aspetto deve essere stato meraviglioso". See also Notizie, 187, repr. from Conservatore, N. 517A, 1871, "S. Andrea o scoglio grande di Pola", with details of chapel. Its ground plan may be found in D'Agincourt, Architecture, pl. XXVI, fig 8, (not available to me), as cited by Jackson, Dalmatia, III, 300.

funerary chapels for the use of early bishops. Similar, later chapels were purpose-built in the same form as the *memoriae* for use as funerary chapels or as homes for relics, *martyria*, which need not even have been built over an actual martyr grave or site. These chapels were of two predominant architectural types, those with a cruciform groundplan, and those with the related three-lobed shape of a *trichora*.⁷⁸ The rise to popularity of both of these architectural forms is probably associated with the great popular interest in the discovery of the wood of the True Cross. The cruciform form in architecture, with its appropriate symbolism, came to be preferred for any building that celebrated the deaths of martyrs as imitations of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

This chapter has dealt only with one representative area, the Upper Adriatic and north-east Italy. It has revealed a rich legacy of chapels connected with the martyr and funerary cult. There is no doubt that other regions of Italy must have been equally endowed with chapels, which must also have been built in the service of the martyrs and their cults, and served in their turn for burial beside the saints.⁷⁹ Constraints of time and space, however, prevent me from considering other regions in detail in this study.

78 The flowering of these architectural forms on the eastern Adriatic coast is thought to have led to the development of the typical, centrally-planned early Croatian churches, such as Sv.Krz at Nin, (Anania) and Sv.Donat, Zadar, (Jader). see Šonje, *Ibid*, 153.

79 Brian Ward Perkins From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Oxford, 1984, 79f., discusses a cluster of annexed mausoleum chapels built by the Lombard rulers in Pavia: among others, the son, (d.688), grandson, (d.700), and great-grandson, (d.712) of Aripert I, 653-661, were buried in a mausoleum beside S.Salvatore; Ansprand, (d.712) and Liutprand, (712-744), were buried in S.Adriano beside S.Maria in Pertica.

CHAPTER 5

SAN VITTORE IN CIEL D'ORO, MILAN

The importance of the chapel of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan, to any study of the Early Christian chapel has already been recognised. I would go as far as to say knowledge of it is fundamental to our understanding of martyr shrines and funerary chapels in general, since its documentation casts light on the role of the *memoria* in the cult of the saints and on those practices such as burial *ad sanctos* which evolved in response to it. The unique importance of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro stems from its links with St.Ambrose, and it is his writings that explain the concepts of martyr shrine and of burial beside the saints, in the context of the burial of his brother Satyrus at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro beside the grave of St.Victor.¹ This chapter will examine the decoration of the chapel, in the hope of reading its iconographic programme, and discovering the intentions of the patron.

The mosaic decoration of the dome of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro is the most complete surviving example of the sort of decor deemed appropriate for an Early Christian martyr chapel in Italy. Although some parts of the decoration have been completely lost, including the marble sheathing the lower walls and the mosaics of the apse and of the curvature at the base of the dome, the important dome mosaics and those of the interfenestrations below survive in near original condition. Minor restorations include, in the central medallion, two areas of Victor's clothing and one of his cheek, and in the side walls, the hand of St.Nabor, while the frieze at the base of the dome has suffered crumpling from compression. Unfortunately, the mosaics of the supporting areas of the dome had suffered much more damage. They were replaced on the basis of scanty remains in the nineteenth century. The iconographic programme of these areas will be discussed below.²

1 See chapter 3.

2 For information on the state of the mosaics, see Ferdinando Reggiori, La Basilica Ambrosiana. Ricerche e Restauri 1929-1940. Milan, 1941,

Opinions differ as to the date of these mosaics; all, however, place them within the late fourth, fifth or early sixth centuries.³ Toesca suggested a late fifth or early sixth century date,⁴ a period also favoured by Reggiori, who traced stylistic parallels between these mosaics and those of Theodoric's era at S.Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna.⁵ More recently, Carlo Bertelli has also favoured the late fifth century.⁶ Wilpert, however, on the basis of the lack of nimbi and of the abbreviation of the adjective "sanctus" to SCS, as well as the shape of the two mosaic crosses in the summit of the vault, preferred the beginning of the fifth century.⁷ Certainly, the absence of haloes and of the adjective "sanctus", as well as the palaeography of the inscriptions,⁸ seem to point to an earlier rather than a later date, and there seems to be no difficulty with assigning a date soon after the death of Ambrose in 397. Many similarities of iconographic detail exist between the mosaics of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro and the Naples Baptistery (ca.405), for example; similarities which include the absence of haloes, the absence of the abbreviation SCS, (though at Naples inscriptions are altogether omitted), and the position and "open-winged" composition of the evangelist symbols in the pendentives or their equivalents.

220f.

3 For a summary of opinion on the dating of the mosaics at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro see Reggiori, Restauri, 228, 234, and 236-238.

4 P.Toesca, Storia dell'arte italiana: il medioevo. Turin, 1965, 219.

5 Ferdinando Reggiori, Restauri, 236-238, discusses this question in detail.

6 Carlo Bertelli, "Mosaici a Milano", Atti del 10° congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medio evo, Spoleto, 1986, 333-351, esp. 340.

7 Wilpert, Die Römischen Mosaiken und Malereien, I, 82.

8 These letter forms point to the fourth or early fifth centuries, according to A.Ratti, "Il più antico ritratto di S.Ambrogio", Ambrosiana; scritti varii pubblicati nel XV centenario dalla morte di S.Ambrogio, Milan, 1897, 1-74, esp. 26-32.

Battisti's argument, that the head of Ambrose is a later insertion, allowed him to propose a date even earlier than 397, the year of Ambrose's death, perhaps as early as 387, the probable date of Satyrus' burial in the chapel. Certainly this would seem an obvious occasion for alterations and a new and sumptuous decoration.⁹ However, Battisti's argument is by no means generally accepted, and a date after Ambrose's death is certainly to be preferred. The portrait-like quality of Ambrose's likeness, which contrasts with the more hieratic quality given to his companion saints, supports a date early after the saint's death, perhaps in the first decade of the fifth century, as proposed by Achille Ratti.¹⁰

It seems logical to suppose that the mosaics date from the same time as the alterations which are revealed by the traces of a former window layout in the chapel's walls. At that time, also, the roof of the trapezoidal first chapel building was replaced by a vault constructed of *tubi fitilli*. This ensured a construction light enough to be supported by the wooden cross-beams that bridged the corners of the trapezium below.¹¹ This building phase was almost certainly completed by the early fifth century, and it is likely that the mosaics date from shortly afterwards, since they are obviously designed to fit the reconstructed dome and the upper lateral walls of the main body of the chapel directly beneath. Each of the upper side walls below the cupola is divided by two tall windows into three approximately equal spaces, and these are occupied by the six standing saints of the lower part of the decoration. The apse must once have also been decorated with mosaic, of which no trace has survived; Bertelli has suggested that Satyrus would have been portrayed, but this seems unlikely if an early date is correct.¹²

9 E. Battisti, "Per la datazione di alcuni mosaici di Ravenna e di Milano", Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di M. Salmi, Rome, 1961, 119f.

10 Ratti, Ritratto, 22.

11 See Chapter 2.

12 C. Bertelli, Mosaici, 339.

Above the windows, the dome itself now rests upon horizontal granite beams. These are nineteenth century replacements for the original wooden supports which had survived until then. At that time the last fragments of the beams' original mosaic decoration were lost. The present decoration, showing symbols of the four evangelists, was based partly on the scant remains then to be seen: a single fragment of one wing, thought by Luigi Biraghi to have belonged to the Ox of St. Luke.¹³ The main source, however, was Giulio Ferrario's drawings of 1824, which were followed closely. Ferrario depicted full-face symbols with outstretched wings, one pair each, just as we see in the restoration (fig.15).¹⁴ Unfortunately it is not possible to tell whether Ferrario's drawings copied the originals in every detail, since by 1824 the mosaics were in the last stages of decay. If the mosaics at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro were contemporary with those of S.Pudenziana, Rome (ca.390), or the Naples Baptistery (ca.405) it would seem likely that, as in those two buildings, the Beings would have the six wings that are considered a hallmark of an early date. This date would also be supported by another early feature, the absence of books and haloes.¹⁵ But instead of six wings, the Beings at S.Vittore are shown

13 Luigi Biraghi, Ricognizione dei gloriosi corpi dei santi Vittore, Mauro, Satiro, Casto e Polemio, ecc., Milan, 1861. See also Reggiori, Restauri, 220.

14 Giulio Ferrario, Monumenti sacri e profani dell'Imperiale e Reale Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio in Milano, Milan, 1824, plate facing p.177. Ferrario's plates are also reproduced by Reggiori, Ibid, p.216.

15 Six-winged symbols occur also at S.Pudenziana, Rome, (ca.390), and S.Matrona at S.Prisco, S.Maria di Capua Vetere, (early fifth century; see chapter 6). The six-winged evangelist symbol also occurs in other media, for example book-covers and ivories, where it exhibits a similar chronology. In the gallery of the bishops at the catacomb of S.Gennaro, Naples (fig.16), there is an arcosolium-portrait of an African bishop in mosaic, which shows him holding a gospel-book. This book has its cover divided into four fields, each with an evangelist symbol, and each symbol has six wings. Fasola has identified the bishop as Quodvultdeus, bishop of Carthage, who died in exile in Naples around 454 after an exile there of 25 years. U.M.Fasola, Le Catacombe di S.Gennaro a Capodimonte, Rome, 1975, 155-160, esp 160 and pl.XIII. The mosaic must bear a mid-fifth century date at latest: it may represent an existing book-cover of earlier date. In ivory, six-winged symbols without books

with outstretched single wings. This feature, in combination with the lack of books and haloes, implies a date nearer to the supposed date of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, in the second quarter of the fifth century. However, since the great surge of patronage in Milan was probably contemporary with the presence of the court there before 402, it is possible that the loss of the supernumerary wings had already occurred there before the move to Ravenna, or, indeed, that they were lost in the copying. Lack of any comparative material from Milan, as well as doubts about Ferrario's accuracy, permits one only to conclude that if the symbols were correctly copied from the originals, a date a little before that of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia seems most likely, perhaps soon after the turn of the fifth century.

The mid-nineteenth reconstruction also extended to the triangular areas beside the east and west arches, which received medallions of the evangelists, each appropriately positioned beneath his symbol. Another, though rather different, example of this rare juxtaposition of the symbol and the human likeness was also seen in the mid-fifth century chapel of the Baptist at the Lateran Baptistery, Rome.¹⁶ At S.Vittore, the profile likenesses are set among tendrils of acanthus, and may in some details have followed traces of the ancient design.¹⁷

The vault of the chapel is well described as a "ciel d'oro" or golden sky. At the base it is girdled by a frieze with a repeated design of 24 oval medallions containing full-face portraits, cameo style (figs.17, 18). Each cameo is set on a support between opposed doves and framed by tendrils of acanthus. Above, each unit is surmounted by a

or haloes appear in the top corners of a diptych from the start of the fifth century in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan, illustrated in C.Bertelli, ed., Il Millennio ambrosiano, I, Milano, una capitale da Ambrogio ai Carolingi, Milan, 1987, pl. 138. The late fifth century ivory Diptych of Five Parts in the Treasury of Milan Cathedral, illustrated in Bertelli, Ibid, pl.139-141, already has six winged symbols with the addition of books and haloes. See Chapter 6 for further discussion of the iconography of the Evangelist symbols.

16 See Chapter 8, and fig.36.

17 Reggiori, Restauri, 220.

shell-shaped feature in imitation of a sculptured niche. Some of the same components are present, differently arranged, as in the upper walls of S.Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, where also each inter-fenestration holds a standing figure, with a shell-shaped "umbrella" above and paired doves.¹⁸ In both places the umbrella symbolises immortality or resurrection,¹⁹ but although von Simson sees the paired doves as the apostles, it seems more likely that in these considerable numbers (64 at Ravenna, 48 at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro,) they represent the souls of Christians, perhaps at Milan the souls of the martyrs.²⁰ The S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro frieze seems, then, to be a gallery of saints, unnamed in contrast to the named figures above. The medallion gallery perhaps expresses the same idea as a collection of ancestor masks, and commemorates the heroes of the past, and more specifically those "whose names are in the book of life".²¹ Above the frieze, the laying of the gold tesserae is in concentric circles all the way up to the central medallion (fig. 18), the focal point of the iconographic programme.

The medallion of Victor is framed by a large wreath or crown, tied at its narrowest point with a red ribbon which wraps around three times in each direction and then twists freely across the golden ground, before ending in two small ivy leaves, symbolic of death and also of immortality.²² Such ivy leaves are known from other fifth century

18 A decoration believed to date from the late years of the reign of Theoderic (490-526), when this church was his palace chapel.

19 O.von Simson, Sacred Fortress, Chicago, 1948, 81.

20 Number at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro (in restoration, 1988) from J.Wilpert and W.N.Schumacher, Die Römischen Mosaiken der Kirchlichen Bauten vom IV-XIII Jahrhundert, Freiburg, 1916, 1970, 320. For iconography of doves see chapter 6.

21 See Rev. 3:5, NOAB, note, p.1496, also Rev. 21:12; a similar thought inspires the martyr lists on the S.Prassede marble slab in Rome, which records the named and the unnamed martyrs transferred to the church by Paschal I, June 20, 817. LP. II, 64, "Quorum nomina sunt in libro vitae".

22 G.Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art, Oxford, 1954, 33, "Symbolically, the ivy has always been closely identified with death and immortality. Because it is forever green, it is a symbol of fidelity and eternal life".

monuments.²³ The wreath is made up of plants: lilies and roses, ears of wheat, grapes on the vine, and branches of olives, which together symbolise the four seasons, and hence, the passage of time. Eternity is indicated by the circular shape of the crown, without end or beginning, where the seasons follow each other in an endless succession. Such vegetal crowns, which in classical times were used as visible signs of personal victory, also have roots in Hebrew culture, where wreaths of plants were important in the celebrations of the Feast of the Tabernacles.²⁴ Daniélou has traced texts which make it clear that the feast of tabernacles survives in the Christian rite of baptism, so that its decorations are appropriate for a funerary structure which is also concerned with the passage into salvation.²⁵ In New Testament times, too, texts show that crowns were equated with victory prizes, as well as having connotations of the afterlife.²⁶ Even more importantly, perhaps, outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition vegetal crowns were seen both as attributes of the Gods and as constituents of the rites of death.²⁷ So

23 They are present at the Naples baptistery and on the sarcophagus of Barbatianus, confessor of Galla Placidia, at Ravenna. M. Lawrence, The Sarcophagi of Ravenna, Art Bulletin Monographs, II, New York, 1945, 23. The Rinaldo sarcophagus, (Ibid, 30), has the same motif on its left end.

24 J. Daniélou, Primitive Christian Symbols, tr. D. Attwater, Baltimore, 1964, ch. 1, 1-25, "The Palm and the Crown", esp. 4-9. This feast took place at the vintage, and had an extended meaning which was rooted in the Book of Exodus. The celebration referred both to the Jews' deliverance from Egypt and to the coming of the Messiah and the joys that were expected thereafter. The special celebrations included the building and the garlanding of tabernacles, which were symbols of the life to come.

25 Daniélou, Ibid, 17-18.

26 For example, I. Cor. 9:24-25, "in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize...they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable...". But see also Revelation, 2:10, "be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life", where the crown has clear eschatological significance.

27 See, for example, the gold wreath with oak leaves and acorns from the burial of Philip II of Macedon. The Search for Alexander, an Exhibition, ed. K. Rhomiopoulou, A. Herrmann and C. Vermeule, New York, 1980, colour plate 36.

it seems entirely appropriate that the crown and garland should play such a major role in the decoration of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, a role which underlines not only the idea of eternity, but the four "last things" of eschatological thought: death and hell, judgment and resurrection.

Other details of the wreath at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro also repay analysis. At the top, a candle flame, seen as a jewel in previous studies,²⁸ burns in an oval frame above the head of the man who is pictured in the wreath below. The flame, which burns with a white heat at the centre, and is shaded to red, is clearly shown within an aureole of light, framed in gold. Here there is a possible allusion to the Paschal candle, which is lit to symbolise that Christ is risen.²⁹ The martyr imitating Christ in his sacrifice and his reward is also represented by this flame and the light it radiates. This martyr is Victor, the Vittore of the popular name of the chapel, shown in the midst of a "golden sky", visionary symbol of a state of glory. From earliest times, and through a variety of cultures, gold has represented celestial light.³⁰ In medieval art, gold mosaic in the vault both captures and diffracts the incident light and symbolically recreates the celestial light of heaven. All these levels of meaning of gold seem appropriate to the location in which it is found in S.Vittore in Ciel

28 M.van Berchem & E.Clouzot, Mosaïques Chrétiennes, Geneva, 1924, 111, "une pierre précieuse ovale"; Reggiori, Restauri, 220, "una grossa gemma variopinta".

29 Ferguson, Signs, 162. "According to their use and numbers the teaching of the Church is expressed symbolically...examples (include) the Paschal candle, symbolical of the Risen Christ in the Easter season".

30 René Guenon, Man and his Becoming according to the Vedanta, tr. R.C.Nicholson, London, 1945, 101, note 1. Guenon describes the origin of the cosmic light from the *hianyagarbha*, literally the "golden embryo", Brahma. Guenon also points out the remarkable, presumably coincidental, similarity of the Latin word *aurum*, gold, to the Hebrew *eor*, light. In alchemy, too, the metal gold corresponded to the light of the sun: see C.G.Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Collected Works, 12, London, 1932.

d'Oro: the vision of heaven, the victory of the spirit in martyrdom, the light this victory of the spirit brings to earth. And the location chosen for the bust of Victor, high in the apex of the vault of heaven, lit by a burning candle above the brow, and framed in a victory wreath, is not accidental. The intention is to stress the rewards that crown the martyr's sacrifice.

The saint's portrait is shown, not only within a crown of victory, but receiving another from the hand of God above. A jewelled crown, trailing a second set of ribbons, is held above Victor's head by a hand that emerges from the clouds of glory in the highest part of this high heaven, the home of God. This image is an image of victory on several planes; victory earned in the struggle of martyrdom, victory bestowed by God and rewarded by him in a well-understood gesture, and, it seems likely, a play on words also, for on the open book held in the saint's left hand the word VICTOR is written, both the given name of the saint himself, and the generic term for conqueror.³¹

The saint is shown as a fully frontal bust length figure, with short hair and beard, tonsured and wearing a white tunic with dark blue clavi. In his right hand he holds a large gold Latin cross, of unique form. Its upright shaft is split at either end: the top right half is elongated and bent over. The cross-bar has extra vertical pieces on the ends, and bears the inscription PANECIRIAE. The overall outline of the cross can be seen as reading IH, the first two letters of Jesus, INSOUS, in Greek. Such monogrammes, far from being late developments, were among the earliest symbols of the Christian faith. The sign or *sphragis* with which the Christian was marked on the brow in the sacraments at baptism, confirmation, the eucharist and at the last anointing, by unwritten tradition goes back to the time of the apostles.³² Use of the

31 During the controversy in the early years of the twentieth century over the possession of the relics of Victor between the Ambrosiana and S.Vittore in Corpo, the image was interpreted as representing Christ Victorious. See Reggiori, Restauri, 237-238, for discussion and total rejection of this idea. For summary of arguments put forward by Achille Ratti in favour of an interpretation as Christ, see F.Savio, Vescovi: Milano, 765, note 1.

32. J.Daniélou, Symbols, 136.

sign by the individual was believed to protect him or her against evil. The earliest sign was the letter tau, last letter in the Hebrew alphabet, which in the time of Christ could be written as a T, and also as either an upright or a diagonal cross. Ezechiel refers in his apocalyptic prophecies to the mark put by God's messenger upon the foreheads of the righteous men, the mark tau, which already had the meaning Yahweh, God.³³ In New Testament times tau retained the same symbolic meaning, sometimes sharing it with the Greek letter omega, which likewise was the last letter of the alphabet. Aside from tau's liturgical and personal use, by the early third century it was already used as a symbol in art,³⁴ and its meaning was discussed by the Church Fathers in terms of the prophecies of the Old Testament.³⁵ Study of tau's development as a symbol reveals that it originally had nothing to do with the gallows-cross or with crucifixion, but symbolised the word of God, which for Christians was embodied in Christ, the Logos, to whom they were dedicated in baptism.³⁶ The symbolism, then, was attached to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter tau. It was only later, and in the Greek world, that this Hebrew letter lost its original meaning, and acquired a pictographic sense from its likeness to the Cross. It was in the Greek world, too, that the Hebrew tau came to be confused

33 Ezechiel, 9:3-4; New Oxford Annotated Bible, 1008, note v.4.

34 See examples in Cabrol/Leclercq, DAcL, 3/2, cols. 3056-3060, "Croix et crucifix". Leclercq found about 20 representations of the cross which dated from before the start of the fourth century. Earliest, perhaps, was in the Hypogeum of Lucina, fig. 3360. This example is of a Greek cross, and despite Leclercq placing it in the second century, cannot be dated before the early third century date of the earliest catacombs. The Tau cross occurs on two marbles in the Cemetery of Callixtus: De Rossi, Roma Sotteranea, II, pl. 39, and pl. 43:14.

35 Among them Tertullian, (c.160-c.225), Adversus Marcionem, ed. and tr. Ernest Evans, III, 22, 240-241, Oxford, 1972. "and afterwards all the faithful, sealed with that mark of which Ezekiel speaks: ...for this same letter tau of the Greeks which is our T, has the appearance of the Cross, which he (Ezechiel) foresaw we should have on our foreheads in ...Jerusalem. ...all these are found in use with you also, the sign on the foreheads and the sacraments of the churches..."

36 Daniélou, Symbols, 141-142.

with the Greek letter which looked most like it, the letter chi, X, which also happened to be the first letter of the word *Christos*. From this point on, the process of attaching significance to letters was elaborated, and Daniélou finds the first reference to a primitive use of the symbol IH, standing for the first two letters of the name Jesus in Greek, as early as the late first century, in the Epistle of Barnabas, where the writer comments on the significance of the "eighteen and three hundred" of Abraham's servants to be circumcised, as numerological equivalents to the letters of Jesus' name.³⁷ After this, the use of monogrammes proliferated, continuing through the fifth century, and then gradually disappeared.³⁸

In view of this widespread interest in monogrammes in Early Christian times, it seems highly probable that the cross in Victor's right hand is monogrammatic, the shaft representing *iota*, I, the cross-bar with its terminations *eta*, H, and the hook at the top right the letter *sigma*, S, making IHS. A slightly different reading, dependant on the hooked character being a *rho*, R, would make the monogramme read IH and XR, Jesus Christ.³⁹ Whichever reading is correct, the exact form at S.Vittore seems to be unique among surviving monogrammes. This does not pose a problem, however, for an extraordinary number of variants are known from Early Christian funerary art and inscriptions, and many more must have been lost.

The success of this interpretation of the left hand cross encourages a similar analysis of that on the right. This cross also takes a unique form. Slightly the larger of the two, like its fellow it

37 Epistle of Barnabas, 9, "Of Circumcision", tr. Maxwell Stamford, Early Christian Writings, the Apostolic Fathers, Harmondsworth, 1968, 205-206. Also see Daniélou, Ibid, 143. The Epistle dates from 70 to 100 AD. ODCC, 134.

38 Max Sulzberger, "Le symbole de la Croix et les Monogrammes de Jésus chez les premiers Chrétiens", Byzantion, 2, 1925, 337-448, esp. 448.

39 van Berchem & Clouzot, Mosaïques, 1924, 112, also suggested, without further explanation, that this cross was monogrammatic, and contained the first two letters of the names of Jesus and of Christ. I have looked for parallels to this particular cross without success.

has split verticals and an inscription on the cross-piece. The two inscriptions will be discussed later. Its cross piece is framed by paired loops, a unique configuration which has as yet defied explanation.

It seems entirely possible that the same sort of thinking that endowed the cross on the left with a monogrammatic content, would also build a cryptic significance into that on the right. A possible clue to a hidden meaning lies in the fact that the name Jesus could also be symbolised by a monogramme combining the cross with waw, the archaic sixth letter of the Greek alphabet. This obscure letter was considered to have a hidden significance. Because it came sixth in the Greek alphabet, it represented the name of Jesus, *Ihsous* with its six letters.⁴⁰ A monogramme combining the cross with waw was discussed by St. Jerome (342-420), in his De Monogramma XPI,⁴¹ a companion piece to his recension of the Commentarius in Apocalypsim of Victorinus, d.304.⁴² Jerome saw significance in the combination of the cross with the double curve of the letter waw, finding it reminiscent of the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up on a pole in the wilderness.⁴³ At S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, the outer loop of the right hand cross appears to terminate in a pointed tail by the stem of the cross, suggesting that this double loop may also have represented Moses' serpent, to which Christ was

40 Daniélou, Symbols, 143.

41 This text, on the monogramme of Christ, is known from both British Museum, cod.Harl.3049, and Oxford, Merton College cod.26. It was first attributed to Jerome by D.Germain Morin, "Hieronymus de Monogrammate", Revue Bénédictine, 2, 1903, 225-236, an attribution accepted by later scholars such as Daniélou. See Morin, Ibid, 231 for Jerome's additions to Victorinus' text on "Sign of the Cross", and 232, where he discusses the text of Cod.Harl.Mus.Brit 3049, in which there is a marginal monogramme of combined cross and waw added by Jerome.

42 Victorinus, Commentarius in Apocalypsim, Victorini Episcopi Petavionensis Opera, ed. J.Haussleiter, CSEL, vol.49, Vienna, 1926.

43 A.Dupont-Sommer, La Doctrine gnostique du "waw", Paris, 1946, ch. 3, "De la mystique des lettres", 72. Dupont-Sommer discusses the variants of the letter waw, among which are forms where the letter was formed like a serpent "dressé sur sa queue", and others where the ends of the "serpent" were joined to form a circle.

likened in John 3:14, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." Daniélou stresses both the authority of this Gospel text and the interest of the Fathers in it and the monogramme with the cross and the serpent.⁴⁴ One must conclude that this second cross can also be read as a cryptogramme of the name of Christ. This need not preclude a more mundane explanation, for on another level, the circles behind the cross may well represent *dona militaria*, given in the form of armbands, *armillae*, which were awarded in pairs for merit on the field of battle, and were often depicted on the funerary monuments of veterans.⁴⁵ After 212 AD, when the *Constitutio Antoniniana* extended Roman citizenship to all free-born men, the eligibility for *dona* was also extended,⁴⁶ and Victor, a low ranked *miles* of African race, may actually have been the recipient of this award. More likely, though, the armbands were included in the iconographic programme as symbols of military merit, appropriate for a veteran, victorious in martyrdom.⁴⁷ Even the Church Fathers compared the cross with military trophies.⁴⁸ Incidentally, *armillae* were commonly fashioned in the form of snakes, which would fit the context of the gospel's comparison of Christ raised on the Cross with Moses' raising of the brazen serpent. The cross could thus have embodied different levels of meaning: monogrammatic, military and symbolic, which were not mutually exclusive, but separately and in sum represented Christ and his name, as well as the sacrifice in death

44 Daniélou, Symbols, 144.

45 Valerie A. Maxfield, The Military Decorations of the Roman Army, London, 1981. *Armillae*, 89-91, figs. 9 and 10; also pls. 8c and 9c.

46 Maxfield, Ibid, 253.

47 After 212 they were awarded only sporadically, but were known both from the mid-fourth and early fifth centuries, when given out by Julian (355-363), and Valentinian III (425-455).

48 Justin Martyr, (ca.100-ca.165), Apol. I, 56, tr. E.B.P., The Works now extant of St. Justin the Martyr, Oxford, 1861, 42-43, "And your symbols in what are called banners and trophies, display the power of this form, (the cross)".

of his martyr Victor.

Daniélou has pointed out that the meaning of the cross as a symbol originates in an allusion to Christ's divinity and not as a reference to his passion.⁴⁹ This then is the overall meaning of these two crosses in the hands of Victor: they stress Christ's glory, having first named him by the cryptic language of the monogramme. And by positioning Victor between these two symbols, it is made plain that the saint has joined Christ in his glory.

The names inscribed upon the crosses are also quite problematic, and although they have been extensively studied, a satisfactory solution has been elusive. PANECIRIAE and FAUSTINI may be the names of donor-families, who are thus recommended to God by Victor.⁵⁰ The unusual name Panicyrius is known from a fourth century funerary inscription in S. Sebastiano, Rome.⁵¹ It may, however, have a meaning in terms of the composition as a whole, for it appears to be a composite word meaning "Lord of All", derived from *pan* and *kyrios*, the Greek words for "all" and "lord" written in Latin letters.⁵² A meaning for the word Faustini has been sought in the context of Milanese history, and its similarity to the name Faustus or Faustinus has suggested its identification with the "Basilica Faustae" of Ambrose's letter to Marcellina.⁵³ According to one tradition, this name refers to a child of Philippus, who, along with his children Portius and Faustus or Fausta, was an early convert in Milan of the apostle Barnabas.⁵⁴ This Philippus was also the man whose

49 Daniélou, Symbols, 145.

50 Wilpert and Schumacher, Mosaiken, 320, "Beide Namen im Genitiv Panegiriae--Faustini nennen uns das Stifterpaar, das sich dem heiligen Victor empfiehlt".

51 Reggiori, Restauri, 193.

52 I thank Iva Matković for this suggestion.

53 Ambrose, PL. 16, Epistola 22, "To his sister Marcellina", 875, col. 1063.

54 This legend is recorded for the first time in the eleventh century Historia Datiana. See M. Caffi, Storia di Milano, 592, notes 1 and 2, for bibliography.

garden, the *Hortus Philippi*, became the site of the *Coemeterium ad Martyres*, the Early Christian cemetery.⁵⁵ An alternative suggestion is that the *Basilica Faustae* was named for Faustus, recipient of a letter from his relative, bishop Ennendus of Pavia, (then a deacon in the Milanese church), who told of his miraculous cure by means of oil from the lamps hanging in the shrine of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro.⁵⁶ These divergent theories show it to be impossible to identify these names with a specific donor individual or family at the present time. Moreover, the *Basilica Faustae* is now not usually identified as S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, but as the chapel of St.Vitalis. The great antiquity of S.Vitale is confirmed by the burial there of Mona, bishop between 306 and 314.⁵⁷ Perhaps there is a simpler explanation for the inscription FAUSTINAE, allowing it to be understood literally, for *faustinus* means favourite, of good omen, attended by good fortune. All these epithets could surely apply to St.Victor.

By contrast to the confusion over the inscriptions, the identity of Victor himself is known from a poem of Ambrose, who describes him as the companion in arms of Nabor and Felix.⁵⁸ All three were soldiers from Mauretania,⁵⁹ who died together for their faith at Lodi (Laus

55 Caffi, Storia di Milano, I, 591.

56 Reggiori, Restauri, 194.

57 F.Savio, "De alcune chiese di Milano anteriori a S.Ambrogio" NBAC, 1896, 163-173. Although a tradition exists that S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro is the *Basilica Faustae*, as believed in the fourteenth century by Galvano Flamma, Savio decides for S.Vitalis on the basis of an inscription recorded by Puricelli, that a certain Faustinus had built the chapel of S.Vitalis in the time of archbishop Mona. Mona's tomb was discovered there in 1018.

58 Victor, Nabor, Felix pii. Opera S.Ambrosii, V, ed. Paolo Ballerini, 679. Text, with English translation, in van der Meer, Atlas of the Early Christian World, 151. See also F.J.E. Raby, A History of Christian Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the close of the Middle Ages, Oxford, 2nd. ed., 1953, 34, note 1, where it is listed among the 18 genuine hymns of Ambrose, with sources for this conclusion.

59 Victor, ActaSS, May, vol 2, 3rd. ed., 285, "Erat autem ibi quidam miles, Maurus genere, nomine Victor". See also V.Saxer, "Victor, Titre d'honneur ou nom propre", RAC, 44, 1968, 209-218. He discusses the question of whether saints named Victor were really called Victor, or

Pompeia), during the persecutions of Maximian. Since there was no bishop at Lodi, their bodies were later translated to Milan with full triumphal honours, probably in the time of bishop Maternus, who held office sometime between 313 and 343.⁶⁰ The ancient tradition that Maternus buried Victor's body is founded on the *Passio* of St. Victor, and Maternus was therefore the likely builder of the first-phase chapel, which would explain his depiction in the decoration of the later chapel.⁶¹ His interment nearby of Victor's companions Nabor and Felix would also qualify him for inclusion in the programme of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro. All three martyrs were described by Ambrose as revered not only in Milan but throughout the whole world.⁶² In this mosaic, Victor is not shown as an African, or attired as a soldier: earthly realism was apparently not desired, especially when the saint was shown victorious in heaven.⁶³

The lower part of the decoration consists of the approximately life-size figures of six standing saints, including Maternus, Nabor and Felix, one to each interfenestration, and each named over his head. The

are anonymous martyrs victorious in the faith. He points out that there are 136 Victors in the Hieronymean Martyrology, of whom 25 appear to be African.

60 *ActaSS*, May, vol.II, 286-290, esp. 288, legend of S.Victor, and 290, for statement that Maternus was builder of the chapel."Postquam vero permissum est, ut sepeliretur corpus Martyris, abiit sanctus et beatissimus vir Maternus et invenit...ipsum, quasi eadem hora fuisset decollatus...et sepelierunt in pace." The author makes Victor contemporary with Maternus, though this would have made him die after the Peace of the Church, for Maternus held office sometime between Mirocles (313-314) and Protasius (342-344). See also Savio, *Vescovi: Milano*, 101.

61 Savio, "Di alcune chiese..." 166, note 2. Savio believes Maternus buried the saint and built the first chapel over his grave, even if Victor's death had occurred at an earlier period.

62 Ambrose, *PL*, 15, cols.1746, and 1453, 178. "in omnem terram exivit sonus eorum". (Psalm 18:5)

63 Though we may compare the mosaic portrait over the tomb of the African bishop Quodvultdeus in the Catacomb of S.Gennaro, Naples, which shows him as a dark-complexioned man. See note 15, *supra*, and fig. 16.

title SCS is not used and all six lack haloes. On the right (when facing the present altar), Ambrose occupies the central position, flanked by Protasius and Gervasius. On the left, Maternus stands between Felix and Nabor.

Ambrose stands on a tiny blue cloud, his feet clad in *campagi*. His face which appears to be a portrait, is dominated by his large brown eyes with central, pin-dot black pupils. The balding head, dark, fringing beard and jutting ears, as well as the pale orange outlines given to the lips, the tip of the nose, and the inner corner of the eyes, give his face depth and individuality. The blue of the background gives way to a lighter shade around his head, creating the impression of an incipient halo. This paler zone suggested to Eugenio Battisti that the saint's head was a later insertion, though the setting does not support this. He thought Ambrose's figure might have replaced that of Vitalis, who would then have been seen between his two sons.⁶⁴

Protasius, on Ambrose's right, to the rear of the chapel, is shown as elderly and white haired, while Gervasius is a dark-haired, clean shaven youthful figure, who holds a scroll vertically between his hands. The pronounced difference in age of the brothers is an early iconographic feature. Before long, they were always shown as twins, as described in the legend of Vitalis' life, that not only gave him a Ravenna martyrdom but a wife and twin sons, Gervasius and Protasius. These family members were also saints with Ravenna connections, as told in the Letter of Pseudo-Ambrose, written in the second half of the fifth century.⁶⁵ The marked age differentiation not only suggests that

64 E. Battisti, Datazione, 119-122. Vitalis, though, would not have fitted the overall programme of the chapel, which makes a more balanced composition when the central places, opposite one another, are given to the two bishops of Milan who were most active in the cult of the saints, flanked by the particular subjects of their devotion. In addition, these same two bishops were equally involved in the building and rebuilding of this chapel.

65 Pseudo-Ambrose, PL, 17, Epistola III, alias LIV, cols. 747-749, is about Vitalis and Agricola, his companion in martyrdom, while Epistola II, alias LIII, cols. 742-747, tells of Vitalis and his family. "Ego servus Christi Philippus intra domum meam sanctorum corpora, quae cum filio meo rapui, sepelivi. Quorum mater Valeria et pater Vitalis sunt dicti: quos uno ortu geminos genuere, et unum Protasium, alterum

the mosaic antedates the Letter, but also effectively negates the theory that the central figure on this side of the chapel was once Vitalis, as the Letter was the earliest source which claimed he was father to the other two saints.

Across the chapel the central figure is Maternus, shown as a venerable old man. He also stands between two saints. Felix, nearer the altar on his right, a young, dark haired man, holds an open book with orange ribbons in his left hand. Its text has defied interpretation, and appears to be an imitation of writing, rather than a specific text.⁶⁶ Nabor, on Maternus' other side, also holds an open book with a second enigmatic text, in which the words LUMINA IN MH... have been tentatively distinguished.

The window embrasures, on the Maternus side, are decorated with twisted ribbon scrolls or with leaves, in red or blue on beige (fig.15, R.); on the Ambrose side there are white and black borders separating the windows from the deep blue ground behind the figures, but further decoration is lost.

The meaning of these two matching compositions, each of three saints, is to be sought in the identity of the central figures, the Milanese bishops, Ambrose and Maternus.⁶⁷ Ambrose, we have seen, discovered the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius before the chancel screen of the chapel dedicated to Nabor and Felix, the Naboriana, and reinterred them under the high altar of his church, later S.Ambrogio. The Naboriana was the funeral chapel of the early fourth century bishop Maternus.⁶⁸ He it was who had discovered the remains of Nabor, Felix and

Gervasium vocaverunt." See also F.Savio, "Due lettere falsamente attribuite a S.Ambrogio", NBAC, 3, 1897, 153-178, and "Il culto di S.Vittore a Ravenna", NBAC, 7, 1901, 189, note 2. See also Chapter 3.

66 The "texts" are discussed by Reggiori, Restauri, in the captions to the illustrations of Felix and Nabor, Ibid, 230-231. Bertelli, Mosaici, 339, surmises that each book represents the Acts of the saint in question.

67 Savio, Vescovi, on S.Vittore, 100.

68 Though his head was later moved to the cathedral, S.Maria Maggiore, Savio, Ibid, 102.

Victor in Lodi, and who brought the remains of the three saints to Milan, burying Victor in S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro,⁶⁹ and the other two in the Naboriana, later S.Francesco Grande.⁷⁰ Both Maternus and Ambrose therefore have connections with Victor and with this chapel. Maternus was responsible for the original burial of the saint; Ambrose for choosing Victor for the *ad sanctos* burial of his brother Satyrus. Maternus appears between Nabor and Felix because he brought their bodies to Milan, honoured them with a memorial chapel, and chose it for his own burial. Ambrose, guided by a vision, found the bodies of Protasius and Gervasius before the chancel screen of the same chapel, and interred them in the burial place he had prepared for himself in his own church, planning his own burial beside them. In the mosaics, each bishop is shown between his own patron saints, with whom he had arranged to spend eternity. In life, as in the space of this chapel, each of the four patron saints was also connected with Victor: Nabor and Felix directly, by being his companions in arms and in martyrdom, and Protasius and Gervasius indirectly, acquiring continuity with the earlier saints and hence with their companion in martyrdom, Victor, from their burial in the *memoria* of Felix and Nabor, the Naboriana.

To summarise, the iconographic programme of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, a typical martyr shrine from around the turn of the fifth century, is concerned with proclaiming the reward of the martyr's sacrifice: his raising up to be with God in heaven. His status in heaven is marked by his wreath of victory and his crowning by God, by the burning light that proclaims his glory, and by his white robes that symbolise the saved. His path to glory is expressed by the presence of the monogramme of Christ, as well as by the symbol of Christ's death, the cross. The gospels, representing the Christian faith, are shown in the critical supporting areas of the dome, while a whole gallery of unnamed saints bear witness to the anonymous multitude of those who also suffered for this faith. Below, lifesized images of Milan's most famous bishops stand between the windows where the light of revelation enters,

69 Victor, ActaSS, May, vol. 2, 752 & 761. Savio, Vescovi, 101.

70 Savio, Ibid, 100.

and also between their patron saints, who link them with the martyr himself, his power for good, and the possibilities for his intercession for humanity on judgment day.

CHAPTER 6

THE SAINT MATRONA CHAPEL AT SAN PRISCO, CAPUA VETERE

The chapel of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro at Milan shows all the hallmarks of a *memoria* in its decoration: the martyr Victor in glory in heaven, crowned and wreathed, and holding Christ's cross, and supported by the symbols of the Christian faith, the four evangelists. These elements are set in a golden vault which recreates a likeness of heaven in the chapel's internal space. The heavenly vault is integrated with earth and with the present day by the inclusion on the side walls of locally important saints and of the clerics who had cared for their remains and initiated their cults. However, S.Vittore was not only a *memoria*; it evolved from memorial shrine to funerary chapel, and this phase of transition is documented in the writings of St.Ambrose, who explains its secondary use for the burial of his brother. Thus the initial stage in the series *memoria*/funerary chapel/martyrium is clarified by reading the chapel's decoration as a document, and the second phase, that of burial chapel, is revealed in the writings of the patron himself.

The other early chapel that has survived to illustrate the martyr-grave, funerary chapel sequence differs in having virtually no documentation, except in the lives and legends of the saints. These sources are not securely dated and are not contemporary with the chapel. The patron, despite legendary tales of a saint and of her grateful community building this chapel as her tomb, cannot be said to have a firm, historical identity, and indeed the question of patronage remains wide open. Using the decorative programme itself as a document, I shall show that the chapel, far from being constructed as a *cella memoriae*, was built primarily as a burial chapel, whether of a local ecclesiastic or of the aristocratic leader of a local community of religious women. Whoever he or she may have been, there is absolutely no evidence in the decoration to support the conclusion that the occupant was either a saint or a martyr. Rather, the atmosphere generated by the decorative

scheme may be compared to that of an aristocratic Christian grave in the catacombs.

The St. Matrona chapel is attached to the parish church of San Prisco in the village of the same name near S. Maria di Capua Vetere in Campania. The village has grown up around a church on the site of the Christian cemetery of Capua, a church which, though masked by a Baroque restoration, is an Early Christian funerary basilica. The St. Matrona chapel is a rare survivor in that it retains a large part of its original mosaics. These cover, with some areas of loss, the entire vault and the four lunettes between its springings with a coherent series of images. Investigation of the decorative programme reveals the chapel's purpose as a setting of great luxury, beauty and spiritual power for Christian burial.

The chapel consists of a small, square room, crowned with a groin vault. The corners are provided with mismatched marble columns, evidently spoils. One is beige, two are of white marble veined with light grey, and a fourth is veined with dark grey. They bear a matched set of leafy, Corinthian capitals, which in turn sustain a plaster cornice, painted bright green in imitation of malachite. The bases of the columns are almost buried in a later floor of marble intarsia squares in two shades of grey. There are two doors: the small, rectangular one opening into the nave of the church is probably original; the other leads into the front of the right aisle, which is a later addition.

There are four lunettes. Two, aligned with the main axis of the church, are framed in deep soffits. The others, being in shallower niches, are subtly de-emphasised. The walls must once have been covered with marble revetment, which had disappeared by 1630.¹ No early inscriptions are recorded from the chapel itself or its church.² The

1 See Michael Monachus, Sanctuarium Capuanum, Naples, 1630, for an account of the chapel's appearance in the seventeenth century.

2 A late inscription is recorded by Monachus, Sanctuarium Capuanum, 144, repr. ActaSS, March, vol 2, 392. It attributes the building of the basilica to Matrona, in honour of St. Priscus. Confusingly, it dated

chapel does, however, contain an antique bath, traditionally believed to be the sarcophagus of Matrona, a locally honoured saint, who gives her name to the chapel.

Tradition tells that the chapel was built to house the grave of a Lusitanian princess, Matrona, who was cured at this place of a long-standing illness. Her flow of blood had lasted for twelve years when an angel led her to the bones of St. Priscus, one of the seventy disciples of Christ, who had come to Italy with the apostle Peter.³ The angel told her to travel from her home to Campania, and to dig where she would find two untamed bullocks pawing the ground.⁴ There Priscus' body was found, and it was there that the princess built a funerary basilica in his honour.⁵ At the same site she also built a house, where she spent the rest of her life with her maidens, honouring the saint who had cured her, and following the example of the blessed Therasia, wife of St. Paulinus of Nola.⁶ When eventually she died there from natural causes her community built the chapel onto the right nave of the basilica for her remains, which have lain there ever since.⁷

It is difficult to substantiate this legend. It seems that Rechiarius, king of the Suevi, a Lusitanian tribe, from 448-456, was the

construction to the year 506, and to the reigns of both pope Gelasius (492-496), and the emperor Zeno (474-491). It also promised indulgences to those who visited the basilica in the year 1102.

3 Mission of the Seventy disciples: Luke, 10:1-16. Priscus is believed to have been the first bishop of Capua. His remains, translated from their resting place in Matrona's church, were discovered in the cathedral of St. Stephen, Capua, by Archbishop Nicolaus Caracciolus on May 9, 1712. There they had lain in wooden containers along with relics of other Campanian saints: Quartus, Quintus, Rufus, Carponius and Decorosus. ActaSS September 1, 99-108, esp.104.

4 ActaSS, March 15, 392-398, esp.392. Also, M.Monachus, Sanctuarium Capuanum, 143.

5 ActaSS, Ibid, 392.

6 Emile Bertaux, L'art dans l'Italie Méridionale, 3 vols., 1, 1903, repr., Paris and Rome, 1968, 51.

7 Details of the saint's life in ActaSS, March 15, 392-398.

first barbarian king of that region to embrace orthodox Christianity. After 468, however, his successors fell under Visigothic, and hence Arian, control. Nothing at all is known of these rulers in the period between 470 and 550, though the royal house then again emerges as the local champion of orthodoxy.⁸ Unfortunately, history does not record a daughter, Matrona, of this house. So the sole evidence for her existence comes from the chapel and its legends, and indeed the seventeenth century chronicler, Michael Monachus, admits to having pieced together her story from the paintings, of uncertain date, which were then still visible in the basilica of San Prisco.⁹ There seems to be no other inscription, nor any documentation for her life or even for her very existence, and the name Matrona itself is suspect, a generic term meaning "matron", "wife" or even "young girl of superior rank".¹⁰ Even Priscus, although by tradition the first bishop of Capua, who lived and performed miracles at the place now called San Prisco,¹¹ cannot be securely documented, while the sarcophagus within the chapel, when opened in the seventeenth century, proved to contain only a glass urn full of many small bones, rather than the entire body that was expected.¹² Nevertheless, the chapel's mosaic programme reveals a meaning that tells, in general terms at least, of the purpose of its building and of the ideas and beliefs that are illustrated there. The evidence suggests that it was built as a funeral chapel, with this function taking precedence over its possible role as a martyrrium.

Emile Bertaux has suggested that the theme of the decoration is

8 H.V.Livermore, The Origin of Spain and Portugal, London, 1971, 15-16. Also, E.A.Thompson, "The Conversion of the Spanish Suevi to Catholicism", Visigothic Spain: New Approaches, ed. Edward James, Oxford, 1980, 77-92, esp. 78-79.

9 ActaSS, Ibid, 392.

10 Oxford Latin Dictionary, Oxford, 1976, 1084.

11 ActaSS, Ibid, 392. Michael Monachus is here quoted as giving the early sixth century as the date when San Prisco's relics were translated by Matrona to the church she built for the purpose.

12 ActaSS, Ibid, 393.

Christ, who appears in a medallion over the "west" door, flanked by the apocalyptic alpha and omega (fig.19).¹³ This doorway into the aisle is a simple but imposing gothic arch, which must postdate the chapel. The original door was probably the one which opens into the nave of the basilica. The lunette above this door bears the throne and two evangelist symbols, Ox and Eagle (fig.20): the remaining two, the Man and the Lion, the latter totally lost except for two fragments of its accompanying clouds of glory, flank the oval window in the opposite lunette (fig.21). The altar occupies what is not only the most important position in the chapel today, on the evidence of the veneration of St. Matrona that is centered there, but what must always have been the prime location, parallel to the east end of the basilica, site of the high altar.¹⁴ The chapel's altar, a classical bathtub, complete with non-functional, carved "lifting rings" and a drain hole, was obviously reused as a sarcophagus, with a matching fitted lid of beige marble, which now serves as the table-top of the altar. It may always have been used as an altar for celebration of the Eucharist, since this was standard practice in cemetery churches.¹⁵ By the early fifth century, the idea of sanctification of altars by means of physical relics was certainly current in general terms. Paulinus of Nola, (353-431), for example, wrote about his church at Fundi that "the holy ashes of the blessed relics of apostles and martyrs will give their consecration in the name of Christ to this little church".¹⁶

13 Bertaux mistakenly places this medallion image among rinceaux of acanthus.

14 In the absence of information on the orientation of the church, it will be discussed as if it was conventionally orientated with its apse to the east.

15 Ejnar Døggve, "L'Origine del Cimitero entro la cinta della Città", Atti dello viii Congresso di studi bizantini, Palermo, 1951, repr. in Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neocellenici, Rome, 1953, 137-141. Døggve describes the rise of the funerary cult of martyrs as occurring in churches such as S. Prisco that were built outside the city walls, conforming to Roman burial law.

16 Paulinus of Nola, Epistola 32, to Sulpicius Severus, dated 403. Paulinus' Churches at Nola, tr. R.C. Goldschmidt, Amsterdam, 1940, 46-47, repr. in C. Davis-Weyer, Early Medieval Art, 300-1150, Sources and

The important size and position of the altar-sarcophagus in this chapel suggests that the decoration which occupies the space above it--the lunette--contains the key to the iconographic programme. This decoration has completely disappeared. Fortunately its appearance was recorded by Michael Monachus in 1630, when he chose it as the subject of the solitary illustration of the chapel in his account of S. Prisco (fig. 22).¹⁷ The central subject was a cross, of flat, lobate form with five major jewels, standing upon a small hill. Four rivers flowed from its foot, and it was flanked by six doves on each side, arranged three and three. This composition may well reflect a well known antecedent in the Holy Land, Constantine's jewelled cross on Golgotha, or local monumental decorations based on it, which, though now lost, could also have inspired Paulinus' compositions at nearby Nola.¹⁸ These, which likewise have failed to survive, are explained in Paulinus' own writings,¹⁹ and their layout has been reconstructed by Wickhoff.²⁰ More recently, Rizza has proposed a rather different reconstruction.²¹

The apse-mosaic of the Basilica Apostolorum at Nola-Cimitile, which Paulinus built shortly before 403 over the grave of St. Felix, included, as central feature, a large jewelled cross; below it stood the

Documents, Englewood Cliffs, 1971, 20-23.

17 M. Monachus, Sanctuarium Capuanum, wood-engraving facing p.128.

18 The Palestinian ampoules frequently show the triumphant cross between symbolic equivalents to the apostles: twelve stars (C. Ihm, Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts, Wiesbaden, 1960, fig 22); or clipei containing apostle bust-portraits. (Ibid, fig 21, p. 87) See also A. Grabar, Ampoules de Terre Sainte, (Monza-Bobbio), Paris, 1958, Ampoule 10, reverse. pl.X; ampoule 12, reverse, pl.XXIII.

19 R. Goldschmidt, Paulinus' Churches: Nola, 38-39; Fundi, 46-47.

20 F. Wickhoff, "Das Apsismosaik in der Basilika des hl. Felix zu Nola," Römische Quartalschrift, 3, 1889, 158-176, figs. p.169, repr. Ihm, Ibid, figs. 16 and 17, pages 80-81.

21 G. Rizza, "Pitture e mosaichi nelle basiliche paoliniane di Nola e di Fondi", Siculorum Gymnasium, 1, 1948, 311-321.

Lamb upon the Hill of Zion, from which flowed the customary four rivers. Paulinus, in his dedicatory poem upon the apse, explained the wreath-like circle of birds around the Cross as "the image of the apostles expressed in a chorus of doves", a symbolic rendering of a motif that is well-known from other fifth and sixth century chapels and churches.²² Elsewhere in his church, above the entrance to the basilica, he refers again to doves. Here, they are equated with the human soul: "the doves perched above the heavenly sign (the cross) intimate that the Kingdom of God is open to the simple of heart,"²³ and "us too wilt thou make doves pleasing to Thee, Christ, if Thy followers have strength through purity of heart."²⁴ The paired dove motif was common in Roman funerary art: the single dove a favourite element of Early Christian art in the catacombs. In funerary settings, these single doves often carry garlands or twigs in their beaks; at other times pairs of doves drink from vessels overflowing with water.²⁵ It is not entirely clear whether doves embodied a symbolic meaning in pagan art, but the role of the dove in both the Old and the New Testament was to transfer the word of God from heaven to earth. Thus, the message of peace, the olive-branch, which Noah received heralding the retreat of the Flood was carried by a

22 "Crucem corona lucido cingit globo/ Cui coronae sunt corona apostoli/ Quorum figura est in columbarum choro".

This composition is also reminiscent of the mosaic at the early Christian baptistery of Albenga, where the altar niche features a chi-rho symbol surrounded by a wreath of twelve doves. Raffaella Farioli, "La decorazione musiva della capella di S.Matrona nella chiesa di S.Prisco presso Capua", *CorsiCRB*, 14, 1967, 267-291, has also drawn attention to similar compositions in Gaul, which are relevant in light of Paulinus' Gallic origin. A series of twelve doves also decorated the soffit of the apse arch at the sixth-century church of S.Michele in Africisco, Ravenna, in an equivalent position to the portrait medallions of apostles and other saints found, for example, at Lythrankomi, Cyprus, as well as at the Archbishops' Chapel and at S.Vitale, Ravenna.

23 "Quaeque super signum resident caeleste columbae/ simplicibus produnt regna patere dei". tr. Goldschmidt.

24 "Nos quoque perficies placitas tibi, Christe, columbas/ si vigeat puris pars tua pectoribus". tr. Goldschmidt.

25 These motifs were popular in classical decorative schemes, as at Pompeii and at Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli.

dove. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit also appears as a hovering dove, and a gold or silver dove was suspended over the font to symbolise the descent of the Spirit at baptism. From the earliest period of Christian funerary art, doves also represented the soul that had attained celestial bliss.²⁶ All of these meanings are illustrated in the decorative programme of the chapel at S.Prisco, as well as in other monuments, some of which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

At S.Matrona, the doves must surely have represented the twelve apostles, and it is difficult to deny that their position in the 'apse', as at nearby Nola, indicates the influence of Paulinus' shrine of St.Felix, especially as there too the mosaic included the Cross, the Hill of Zion and the four rivers. Another level of meaning of the doves, however, may also be suggested by Paulinus' writings, for the epigrams over the doors which he composed declare that the simplicity and purity of heart of the dove-like soul will lead to its ultimate reward: attainment of the kingdom of heaven. In short, for Paulinus a level of eschatological meaning existed within the symbolism of the dove. It is likely that this was also an important factor in the choice of doves for the St.Matrona chapel, where the soul's fate was obviously of paramount interest.²⁷ Thus, behind an orthodox image of Christ's cross triumphant acclaimed by his apostles was hidden the message of hope for the fate of the individual soul in eternity, an appropriate concern in a burial place.

The four rivers which here flow from the foot of the cross itself also have several well-defined meanings in early Christian thought. First, they stand for the waters of baptism. As in the garden of Eden a single river gave rise to four, which watered all the earth,²⁸ so Christ is the River which is announced on earth by the four evangelists. The

26 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, 3/2, col.2202.

27 The number twelve, too, may have a secondary meaning; legend tells that the number of maidens in Matrona's Capua congregation was also twelve: though, of course, since the legend is late, the number of maidens may even have been suggested by this decoration.

28 Genesis, 2:10.

gospels are the rivers which flow from the foot of the cross, leading the faithful to baptism and through grace to salvation,²⁹ and these waters in art also represent the garden of Paradise which the soul hopes to reach after death.³⁰ In addition, the rivers symbolise the blood of Christ which gushes forth in the triumph of the cross,³¹ for the redemptive cross, promising forgiveness of sins, is also the triumphant cross, victorious over death. The cross, the tree of Golgotha, has now become the new centre of the world at the hilltop site of the crucifixion, which is also the Hill of Zion. The cross is made of wood, as a tree,³² yet is precious as gold and clothed with garnets as by a garment or by Christ's blood;³³ it grows from earth yet it is blazoned with heavenly jewels: the dual symbolism is as profound and complex as the dual nature of Christ himself.

We have already compared the cross, as shown by Monachus, with the monumental crosses of the Holy Land, which are also reflected in the mosaics at S.Pudenziana, Rome (ca.390) and S.Apollinare, Ravenna (ca.550). These crosses are also embossed in miniature on the the holy oil ampoules at Monza and Bobbio, souvenirs brought by pilgrims from the shrines of the Holy Land. But it is obvious that the huge mosaic "jewelled" crosses in the apses at Rome and Ravenna, as well as the

29 These ideas are expressed by, for example, St.Cyprian, "Has arbores rigat quattor fluminibus id est Evangeliiis quattor quibus baptismi ...". Cyprian, Epistola 73:10, CSEL, 3, Vienna, 1866, 785.

30 See Gordana Babić, "North Chapel of the Quatrefoil Church at Ohrid and its Mosaic Floor", Zbornik Radova, 13, 1971, 271f.

31 Cyprian, Epistola 73, tr. Rose Bernard Donna, Saint Cyprian: Letters. (1-81), The Fathers of the Church, 51, Washington, 1964, 268-285, esp. 274, "the Lord cries out that whoever thirsts should come and drink from the rivers of living water which have flowed from within him". See also John, 7:37-38.

32 As is shown in some of the Palestinian ampoules, where the cross is shown with its trunk jointed like a palm-tree. See Grabar, Ampoules, for numerous illustrations.

33 See James Smith, "The garments that honour the Cross in the "Dream of the Rood", Anglo-Saxon England, 4, 1975, 29-37, for development of this idea.

cruder copies on the pilgrim flasks, are quite different in proportion and scale from the one in Monachus' drawing, with its flat, lobate shape. It seems that it was unimportant whether the cross was an exact copy of the Cross of Golgotha. This allowed it to take a variety of shapes, and follow a variety of models, which could include both liturgical crosses and jewellery. Closest in form and decoration to the S.Matrona cross is a piece of jewellery, a pendent. It seems that an object similar to the early sixth century pendent cross now in Baltimore, with its flat, trilobed arms decorated with five red jewels, could well have been the inspiration at S.Prisco.³⁴

The medallion image of Christ, blessing and signed with the alpha and Omega, which faces the altar (fig.19) is of a type common to Early Christian decorative schemes in both Rome and Ravenna. It appears not to be a "Pantocrator", for that type came later, and was always so inscribed.³⁵ Rather it is an illustration of a specific text, one of Christ's metaphorical revelations of himself in the apocalyptic vision of St.John. This text is identified by means of the alpha and omega as Christ's words "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end", words also given to God the Father in the same work, and so, perhaps, also illustrating that Christ is one with the Father.³⁶ The alpha and omega also appear at the Naples Baptistery, as well as on the Byzantine silver of the period, where they accompany Christ's image or the chi-rho symbol.³⁷ The use of this text fits the pattern typical of the earliest Christian art, that of illustrating Christ's own words as recorded in the gospels or the Apocalypse, rather than illustrating narrative scenes of his life.

34 This cross is in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. See Michael Gough, The Origins of Christian Art, London, 1973, 142, pl.134.

35 See J.Matthews, "The Byzantine Use of the Title Pantocrator", Orientalia Christiana Periodica, 44, 1978, 442-462.

36 Revelation, 21:6, the words of the Nameless One upon the throne. See also Rev. 1:8, and Isaiah, 44:6.

37 For example, the Dish of Paternus, (ca. 518), J.Beckwith, Early Christian and Byzantine Art, Harmondsworth, 1970, 97, pl.79.

In addition to this medallion, Christ's presence must have been symbolised in a second position in the vault, which is centred on a circular, though fragmentary, frame ornamented with the Greek key pattern (fig.23). The contents of the frame have not survived. This frame takes the place of the vegetal wreath at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, but it is evident that it has a different iconographic content from that of a victory wreath in imperial imagery. It obviously represents the bronze frame of an oculus in a domed building, which allows the sky to be seen through a central opening.³⁸ This sort of building was thought to represent a microcosm of the universe, with the vault as firmament, and the heavens as a higher region to be glimpsed beyond. At the St.Matrona chapel, one would have looked through the illusory frame of the oculus in the vault into the limitless space beyond, the highest heaven where God resides.³⁹ Although it has been suggested, on the precedent of S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, that Priscus was depicted in glory in this space, this would surely only have been possible if this chapel had been his *cella memoriae*, for which there is at present no evidence. By contrast, many precedents in chapel and catacomb decorations would suggest that the central frame in the S.Matrona chapel contained the Lamb, the Cross, or the chi-rho symbol, all of which were seen as symbolically and mystically equivalent to Christ,⁴⁰ or even the Good Shepherd with his sheep, a popular composition in the vaults of catacomb *cubicula*.⁴¹

38 See Karl Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven", *Art Bulletin*, 27, 1945, 1-27 esp.19.

39 Lehmann, *Ibid* esp. 3-12.

40 For example, the cross was featured at the Lateran Baptistery chapel of S.Croce, and the chi-rho at the Naples baptistery, as well as at the Archbishops' Chapel in Ravenna. All were within wreaths.

41 For example, in the stucco vault from the catacomb of Apronianus, illustrated in Farioli, *S.Matrona*, 273, fig 3.

Christ is not the only member of the Trinity to appear in the chapel, for in the left lunette the Dove of the Holy Ghost, wings outspread, occupies the throne's centre back (fig.16). It is not clear whether God the Father was also present in the programme to complete the Trinity, as André Grabar suggested.⁴² Grabar interpreted this throne as a Trinitarian symbol, an attempt by Early Christian iconographers to portray the abstract idea of the Trinity in visual terms. In this argument, the empty throne, here as at S.Maria Maggiore, Rome,⁴³ symbolises the presence of God the Father, just as the empty throne in the Roman law-courts symbolised the earthly emperor. The scroll, Grabar suggested, stands for the Son and the Dove for the Holy Spirit. He believed that this iconographic combination was an attempt to illustrate the same concept, the Trinity, as the Nola apse mosaic of Paulinus. There are several problems with Grabar's theory. First, it is difficult to explain why the iconographer did not borrow the Nola layout, close by and obviously known to the iconographer at St.Matrona. More importantly, the Church Fathers had decided, after much debate, that the "Nameless One" upon the throne was Christ the Logos, who would then appropriately, be present in the scroll as his Word, the Gospels.⁴⁴ At St.Matrona, there is no doubt that it is Christ's throne, not the Father's, since its arms terminate in rosettes containing his monogramme, the chrismon.⁴⁵ There is no problem, either, with the interpretation of the Dove as the Holy Spirit, for it depends on the text from the Gospel of John, "I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove".⁴⁶ An added richness of interpretation, though, is

42 A.Grabar, Christian Iconography, 114-116.

43 Where, however, the dove is missing, making it inappropriate as a symbol of the Trinity.

44 See F.van der Meer, Maiestas Domini, Vatican City, 1938, 236, citing Jerome, Hippolytus and other Fathers.

45 In a form identical in detail to that in the vault at the Naples baptistery. The backposts of the Capua throne terminate in two more medallions, these appear to contain "cameo" portraits, though their condition makes this hard to confirm.

46 John 1:32.

suggested by van der Meer. He pointed out that in the fifth century the dove could represent both the Logos and the Spirit, and thinks that at Capua the former is intended, making the throne there purely a Christological symbol. Perhaps, on the other hand, his theory would only add some subtle nuances of meaning; Christ and his spirit being visualised alongside the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷

If one rejects Grabar's theory, the triple image of throne, scroll, and dove can be interpreted well in non-trinitarian terms. The key to meaning is the scroll, which far from being a gospel book, has seven clearly visible bands and seals. It is undoubtedly the scroll of Revelation 5:1, which reads "And I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll....sealed with seven seals."⁴⁸ This is also the scroll of Ezekiel, 2:9-10, "containing the fixed purposes of God for the future", both "unalterable and unknown to others", and prepared for the Messiah to open at the second coming.⁴⁹ This confirms that the throne is apocalyptic, as are the evangelist symbols and the scroll itself, and that the composition is an image of judgment, the earliest to survive on the inner surface of an entry wall. This meaning also ties in with the apocalyptic content of the rest of the programme, which draws most of its elements from the Book of Revelation. This interpretation also fits the eschatological purposes of a burial chapel programme and is to be preferred.

The side lunettes of the chapel are notable for their conspicuous renderings of the evangelist symbols. Three of the four survive, with only the lion of St. Mark missing. Evangelist symbols have often been used in dating. The criteria used are the presence or absence of nimbus and gospel book, and the form and number of the wings (figs.20,21). In general, early examples are closest to the apocalyptic text, and clearly

47 van der Meer, Ibid, 231-236.

48 Rev. 5:1.

49 See the notes to this chapter of Revelation in the NOAB, 1493f, esp. 1497.

portray the symbols with the six wings of the beasts of the Apocalypse.⁵⁰ Some of the earliest, those of S.Pudenziana, Rome, the Naples baptistery, and perhaps also those at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan, were portrayed with open wings. In other media, too, such as ivory, a diptych in Milan dating from the turn of the fifth century also has clearly defined six-winged evangelist symbols, which lack gospel books and nimbi.⁵¹ The symbols at the St.Matrona chapel, while exhibiting six wings, are shown in three-quarter view with their wings folded, suggesting either constraints of space, or a slightly later date, or both. Similar evangelist symbols, but without the extra pairs of wings, are present in the North at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, with a possible *terminus ante quem* of 450, the date of her death, which seems to provide evidence for an early fifth century date for the decoration of the S.Matrona chapel.⁵² Yet much nearer at hand, another Campanian example in the catacomb of San Gennaro, Naples, shows six-winged, three-quarter view evangelist symbols in mosaic in the arcosolium portrait of the African bishop Quotvultdeus, who died in Naples in about the year 454. Displayed on the cover of the book he holds, they identify it as the Gospels (fig.16).⁵³ Evidently, the early iconographic variant was still current in the South in the third quarter of the century. We have already noted that the Beasts at the Ravenna

50 Revelation 4:6-8, "...and around the throne...are four living creatures...the first living creature like a lion, the second..like an ox, the third.. with the face of a man, and the fourth...like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings...never cease to sing, 'Holy, Holy, Holy'....".

51 See Chapter 7. The early diptych is the Castello Sforzesco's 'Resurrection' diptych. In the later "Five Part" diptych in Milan Cathedral treasury, the symbols have six wings, but have acquired books and haloes.

52 This would depend on absolute proof of Galla Placidia's patronage, which is unlikely to be forthcoming See Chapter 7. Even without this proof of patronage, though, an early fifth century date for these mosaics is not in doubt.

53 See U.Fasola, Le catacombe di S.Gennaro a Capodimonte, Rome, 1975, chapter 6 and colour plate XII.

Archbishops' chapel are shown with Gospel books by the turn of the sixth century. Thus, the dated examples from Campania suggest that the six-winged Symbol is a regular feature of the first half of the fifth century there, but could linger on past mid-century, and hence that it cannot be used to prove a date earlier than mid fifth century for the mosaics at S.Matrona.

As far as the exact equivalency between the symbol and the evangelist is concerned, here too there is some uncertainty in the very earliest times, for although the apocalyptic animals were already connected with the evangelists in the second century writings of St.Irenaeus, (ca.130-ca.200), it was some time before they achieved definite one-to-one identities. St.Jerome (d.420) is responsible for linking the symbols with the opening words or thoughts of the four gospels in the relationship Matthew--Man; Mark--Lion; Luke--Ox; and John--Eagle.⁵⁴ The same opening words were recited during the preparation of the catachumens for baptism, specifically at the fourth scrutiny in Lent, the "opening of the ears".⁵⁵ The four books were placed on the four corners of the altar by four deacons, who then in turn read out the opening words of the appropriate gospel. The priest commented on each text, explaining the meaning of the symbols attributed to the evangelists.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, there is no precise information on the date of origin of this liturgical usage, nor do we know whether it dates back to the earliest rites of the catachumenate.⁵⁷ Since there are not any inscriptions at S.Matrona, one cannot say for sure whether Jerome's are the identifications intended here, though it seems

54 Jerome, Comm. in Ezech., cap.1, PL, 25, 21. See also J.A. Herbert, "The Emblems of the Evangelists", 162.

55 The "*in aurium apertionem*". For ceremonies of Christian initiation see Duchesne, Christian Worship, 292f, esp. 301.

56 M.Andrieu, Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age, II, Louvain, 1971, 392, and Ordo XI, 44-45, 428-433.

57 Andrieu, Ibid, 396. Andrieu suggests that the later form of the preparation of the catachumens for baptism that is inserted into Ordo XI conserves the vestiges of the early rites.

probable, and Jerome's writings were contemporary with, or just anterior to the chapel. The meaning of the iconographic programme of the chapel would not in any case differ according to which creature represented which evangelist.

The lunettes in the chapel are related to each other in theme, particularly in pairs across the chapel. They are also tied together by the decorated vault above them, as well as by borders of abstract pattern, which contain their own symbolic meaning. The vault is covered with mosaic vine scrolls, bearing bunches of grapes. This vegetal *schema* is divided into four segments by palm trees, one following each of the four groins of the vault. The palm trees, fruiting date palms, symbolise paradise, and are rendered in the same way as those that arch above the lunettes at the Naples Baptistery.⁵⁸ The scrolls in each quadrant of the vault arise from a large, centrally-placed golden *krater*, on either side of which a bird within the scroll pecks at the grapes. Above, the central "wreath" frames an empty space which must once have contained Christ's symbol.

This vault decoration descends directly from similar compositions found in the vaults of catacomb cubicula at Rome and Naples. Raffaella Farioli, for example, has drawn attention to the stucco vine which decorated the vault of a cubiculum in the cemetery of Apronianus⁵⁹ on the Via Latina in Rome.⁶⁰ There, cupids play among vines bearing grape clusters which fill the quadrants of the vault. A similar decoration in mosaic at S.Costanza, Rome, occupies sections of the ring-vault of the ambulatory. Here, even more explicitly, putti gather the grapes and crush them: an allegory of harvest which can be endowed with Christian

58 For illustrations, see Jean-Louis Maier, Le Baptistère de Naples et ses Mosaïques, Fribourg, 1964.

59 This catacomb, containing many fine stuccoes, was discovered in 1937. It dates from the end of the third and the early fourth centuries. G.P.Kirsch, The Catacombs of Rome, Rome, 1946, 120-121. See note 41, *supra*.

60 Farioli, S.Matrona, 274, and fig.3, p.273.

meaning in terms of Christ's words "I am the True Vine, you are the branches".⁶¹ Thus the grapes which are to be pressed for the vintage are the newly baptised, the fruit of the gospels.⁶² The vintage is obviously a metaphor for Christ's blood, shed for humanity.

These ideas are also illustrated at the S.Matrona chapel. The deep blue of the vault tells of the sky-blue firmament; the oculus, of the realms beyond. Even the vase from which the grape vine springs may symbolise the Virgin's womb, which is often appears in metaphor as a closed vessel, and in this vault by giving rise to the Vine suggests the idea of Christ's miraculous birth. The vine-scroll with its leaves and fruit appears to be trained overhead as on a trellis, causing the physical confines of the billowing vault to seem dematerialised, and adding to the illusion of a heavenly vision. There is a text for this interpretation too: the words of S.Zeno of Verona tell that the vine was planted by God to be "conformable to his will, our mother the church". "He tended it... and having suspended it on the blessed wood he trained it to bear an abundant harvest. And so today among your number, new shoots are trained along their trellises, bubbling like a sweet stream of fermenting must they have filled the Lord's wine-vault".⁶³ And from the words of Asterius the Sophist, "The divine and timeless vine has sprung from the grave, bearing as fruits the newly baptized, like bunches of grapes on the altar".⁶⁴

The metaphors embodied in these quotations and the many others to be found in the writings of the Church Fathers include Christ as the

61 John 15:1-7.

62 "The divine and timeless vine has sprung from the grave, bearing as fruits the newly baptised, like bunches of grapes on the altar... the vine has been harvested and the altar loaded with fruit like a winepress." Asterius the Sophist, Homilies on the Psalms, tr. Marcel Richard, Oslo, 1956.

63 Zeno of Verona, Tractatus, "In Isaiam VII", PL, 11, lib. II, 28; cols. 471-472. tr. J.Daniélou/ D.Attwater, Primitive Christian Symbols, 37-38.

64 Asterius the Sophist, Homilies on the Psalms, tr. Marcel Richard, Homily 14, 1-2, 105.

vine and as its support; Christians as shoots, bearing grapes, the product of the harvest. Christ's resurrection from the grave is visualised as a vine springing from a vase. The wide-mouthed *krater*, as well as symbolising the Virgin's womb, is a form of vessel often shown in connection with water, even overflowing with it, making it a symbol of baptism, another form of rebirth, as well as a metaphor for the grave within the tomb.

On either side of the vessel in each quarter of the vault, the vine is also home to a pair of birds. They are well differentiated into separate species. In their naturalism, they remind us of the lifelike paired birds which flank fruit baskets in the vault of the Naples baptistery. They also recall the pairs of doves which flanked crosses above the doors at Nola, as well as the paired peacocks which, sole surviving fragments of Paulinus' mosaic complex there, decorated the spandrels of a *fastigium* around the tomb of St.Felix.⁶⁵ Lifelike birds seem to have been typical of Campanian mosaic work, and their abundance sets it apart from other regional schools of mosaic, including that of Rome. The origin of this naturalism is seen in Pompeian-style Roman painting, where numerous examples of birds set in their natural surroundings survive in secular and domestic settings.⁶⁶

The S.Matrona chapel contains another superb example of naturalism. In the intrados of each of the two deeper lunette niches, around the Cross and around Christ, baskets give rise to leafy fruit-bearing festoons or garlands on a cold yellow ground (fig.21). The varied fruits and grains are easily recognised: they include citrus fruits, at this date probably citrons;⁶⁷ apples and pears; pomegranates, several sorts of figs; medlars, peaches and apricots, as well as wheat

65 Illustrated in Paola Pariset, "I Mosaici del Battistero di S.Giovanni in Fonte", *CahArch*, 20, 1970, 1-73.

66 A recently discovered example is the complex of rooms beside the pool at Poppeia's villa at Oplontis, wonderfully painted with olive trees, birds and fountains on a golden yellow background.

67 H.N. and A.L.Moldenke, Plants of the Bible, Waltham, Mass., 1952, repr. Mineola, N.Y., 1986, 185-186.

and oats. A similar garland ornaments the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna (fig.25). Although garlands with fruits symbolising the four seasons were commonly included in pre-Christian decorative schemes, it is not hard to see them in the Christian funerary setting as an illustration to Revelation 22:2, "on either side of the river stood a tree of life which yields twelve crops of fruit, one for each month of the year..." Again the imagery is of paradise; the text is the Apocalypse.

The S.Matrona chapel is also rich in ornament. Concentric border patterns frame the vault and the lunettes (fig.19). Between the fruit garlands and the east and west lunettes is a radial pattern of golden bowls or amphorae on a dark blue ground (now largely destroyed), while to the vault side of the garlands are three rich borders, one of a variant jewelled chain, jewels alternating with lilies; a second featuring large S-shaped golden symbols back to back on dark blue, while the third, which outlines all the inner edges of the decoration alternates paired pelta shields with golden circles containing each a leafy cross. These patterns are subtly different from those of Rome and Ravenna. They use much less gold, and there is a tendency even here to substitute plant forms for geometric details. The use of pelta and S-forms is also unique. Parallels must be sought among Campanian mosaics, of which so few survive. The closest parallels, again, are found in S.Giovanni in Fonte, Naples. There, the whole dome is outlined with a band of back-to-back S-pattern, while the lower edge of the mosaic zone is demarcated by a pattern of bowl-shapes. Further East, similar patterns occur at Salonica in the rotunda of St.George, again suggesting a Greek influence on Campanian mosaic art, though this influence has not been precisely defined.

This brings us to the consideration of the place of the S.Matrona chapel within the corpus of Campanian art, and perhaps to an assessment of the place of the chapel and its iconographic relatives within the broader milieu of the Early Christian artistic world. The meaning of the iconographic programme as a whole must also be sought, as confirmation or rebuttal of the legends about its funerary purpose and its connection with St.Matrona. Further, the building itself must be

examined for symbolic content which may confirm or deny the conclusions based on the other evidence.

Records and in some cases drawings give us considerable information about the other mosaic schemes of the early Christian period in Campania. The most relevant, apart from the Naples baptistery and Nola, are the lost decorations of the cathedral at S.Maria di Capua Vetere, and the mosaics and paintings of the basilica of San Prisco itself.⁶⁸ The cathedral retained its apse mosaic into the eighteenth century. The whole apse was covered with vine scrolls, in the centre of which was seated a figure of the Virgin enthroned with the Child on her lap.⁶⁹ The inscription, SANCTAE MARIAE SYMMACUS EPISCOPUS, which is known to have been present in large letters at the top of the mosaic,⁷⁰ dates the composition to the episcopate of Bishop Symmachus, of whom we know nothing except that he was present at the death-bed of St. Paulinus at nearby Nola, on June 22, 431.⁷¹ This date, the year of the Council of Ephesus, a likely catalyst for a composition centred on Mary alone with her child in the centre of an apse, suggests both that this Symmachus was the bishop-patron and also that the composition dates from not long after 431. If so, this composition may have been made around a quarter of a century after Paulinus' own mosaics. Its use of vine scrolls to demarcate the heavenly zone in which the Virgin reigns

68 The apse decoration at the Basilica Severiana, Naples, (between 366 and 412), known only from a description of Johannes Diaconus, and featuring Christ between the twelve seated apostles, above four prophet figures, will not be discussed. See Ihm, Programme, 175, for text from Chronicon Episcoporum Ecclesiae Neopolitanae. The transfiguration mosaic at the Ecclesia Salvatoris, Naples, (S. Restituta), which dated to 535-555 and was recorded in the same source, will also not be considered.

69 The sketch of this mosaic is reproduced in Ihm, Programme, 56, fig 10.

70 E. Müntz, "Notes sur les mosaïques chrétiennes de l'Italie", IX, "Les mosaïques de Siponte, de Capoue, de Verceil, d'Olona, et d'Albenga", Revue Archéologique, 1891, ser. 3, vol. 17, 79.

71 Uranius, Epistola ad Pacatum, PL, 53, 859-866, describes the death of Paulinus, which he witnessed.

suggests a continuity of thought with the S.Matrona chapel, and its subject matter, with the original apse decoration at S.Maria Maggiore, Rome. Unfortunately, no further information has survived about colour, style or ornament.

Since so much at the S.Matrona chapel, right down to the drapery style, is reminiscent of the mosaics at the Naples Baptistery,⁷² it is tempting to see the decorations of the St.Matrona chapel as taking place quite soon after those of S.Giovanni in Fonte, which, being made in the last years of the episcopate of Severus (362-408), were contemporary with Nola. On the whole, though, the S.Matrona mosaics are carried out with coarser, and perhaps more provincial, workmanship. Possibly the two programmes stem from a common model, now lost. We have also noted that in general terms, the S.Matrona iconography is also close to Paulinus' compositions at Nola and Fundi, though this relationship cannot be fully explored, since the latter only survive in literary sources.

The church of S.Prisco also had mosaics in its apse and in a dome in front of the sanctuary, which were recorded by Michael Monachus in 1630,⁷³ and survived until 1759. The apse composition featured twelve male saints, holding up objects in their outstretched hands.⁷⁴ Monachus' engraving fails to precisely identify these objects, which appear to be loaves of bread, rather than the traditional crowns. Perhaps they represent the loaves which were brought by Christians as their Eucharistic offerings. These were traditionally not only crown-shaped but known as *coronae*.⁷⁵ Curiously there seems to have been a

72 Bertaux, *L'art*, I, 52, and Müntz, *Ibid*, 75.

73 Monachus, *Sanctuarium Capuanum*, 104.

74 The saints, approach from either side, led by Peter and Priscus and the child saints, Quintus and Quartus, and watched by Agnes and Felicitas in the wings. The saints are Campanian, except for Peter and Lawrence and the women. Ihm, *Ibid*, pl.27:2.

75 O.von Simson, *Sacred Fortress*, 99, discusses *coronae* in the setting of S.Prisco. "The martyrs and virgins are shown offering crowns; the eucharistic bread offered at the altar by the men and women of the

void at the centre of the composition, and the saints carried their enigmatic offerings towards each other rather than towards Christ, as might be expected. At S.Prisco it seems that the saints were bringing their offerings to the altar, presided over by the Holy Spirit, for above them in the bowl of the apse a single dove fluttered, the symbol of the Holy Spirit and the central focus of the composition. The dove was surrounded by two concentric bands of decoration: an inner one of olive branches and pomegranates; an outer comprising eight rolled up scrolls, probably the writings of the evangelists and the major prophets, from whom the saints received their inspiration.

The cupola at San Prisco was also decorated with mosaics.⁷⁶ Above a wide girdling wreath with cupids, the whole ground was divided into zones like a checkerboard. Only alternate compartments were filled with mosaic, and the other areas originally bore paintings,⁷⁷ though they were shown as empty by the engraver. A damask effect resulted, generically similar to the vault of the Naples baptistery. At San Prisco, the mosaic panels of the two lower zones contained pairs of figures conversing. In the lowest zone eight pairs of martyr saints sat upon rocks holding their crowns; above them, but alternating, pairs of standing prophets and apostles held books.⁷⁸ Above this again, the upper two zones alternated pairs of motifs; roses and the ubiquitous birds flanking vases. The whole scheme was crowned with a second garland framing an "oculus", through which an object on a starry background could be seen. Bertaux interpreted this as a throne, but Lehmann has more convincingly identified the object as a "Sphere of

congregation was also shaped like a crown, and ...actually called corona." This crown-shaped offering also expressed the fact that the saint accepted Christ as his crown. Refusal to wear a pagan crown of laurel was a distinguishing mark of a Christian among the military. See Tertullian, Liber de Corona, PL, 2, cols. 93-123, 7,1; 9,7.

76 Illustrated in Grabar, Martyrium, III, pl. XLIV, 2, and in Lehmann, Dome of Heaven, fig.17, facing p.9.

77 Monachus, Sanctuarium Capuanum, 136.

78 Müntz, Notes, Rev.Arch., 1891, 74-75, identifies these figures: the names of the saints are inscribed beside them.

Heaven" with a canopy, a classical feature known also from Hadrian's villa at Tivoli.⁷⁹ The whole *schema* of this vault with its imitation coffering, obviously has a strong classical component: roses, for example, were the standard sculptured infill of many a classical coffer vault, and roses of this elongated type are conspicuous elements in the painted stucco vault decoration of the second century Tomb of the Pancratiae on the Via Latina, Rome. This relationship is not really surprising in an Early Christian composition. The choice of saints, too, is markedly Campanian, with six martyrs of Capua and four more from Campania, including Felix and Priscus who occupy a single "coffer". In the absence of any other documentation it seems these images of local saints identify this once funerary basilica, built in the graveyard of Capua, as the martyrrium of that city, built to shelter its graves and relics of the saints. Probably the site was chosen specifically because it was the location of the grave or the first *memoria* of St. Priscus.

Enough has been written about the mosaics of Capua, Naples and Nola to reveal a certain unity of subject-matter and style. They are characterised by classicism, both in their layout and in their preference for faithfully illustrating nature, both birds and plants. These features reveal an uninterrupted legacy from the world of classical antiquity, its motifs being reinterpreted with new Christian meaning. As early as 1905, Emile Bertaux was talking of a Campanian school of mosaic existing from the beginning of Christian art,⁸⁰ and the evidence would seem to support his claim. Where within this school should the Matrona chapel be placed and what is its date relative to the other works of which records remain? This difficult question may well be impossible to answer, since in the whole of Campania only the St. Matrona chapel and the Naples baptistery retain any mosaics. The chapel is probably later than both Nola and Fundi (ca. 403), and the Naples baptistery (ca. 405), because it appears to derive much of its iconographic vocabulary from them. In the present state of knowledge it

79 Lehmann, *Ibid*, figs. 5, Hadrian's Villa; and 17, S. Prisco; also previous note.

80 Bertaux, *L'Art*, I, 54-55.

is impossible draw any conclusions on the relationships of the S.Matrona mosaics with those lost from the apse and dome of its mother church of San Prisco, apart from again remarking on the strong vein of naturalism and classicism that is evident in both, which would favour an early date, perhaps near the start of the fifth century.

It has been suggested by Giuseppe Bovini that San Prisco, far from being the work of an undocumented and legendary congregation of nuns, was part of the building programme of a known patron, Symmachus, bishop of Capua.⁸¹ We have seen that Symmachus was the donor of the apse mosaic of S.Maria Suricorum, Capua, the cathedral of his diocese, in or soon after the year 431. It is tempting to see this apse as but one of his gifts to his diocese, in which case, he may well have also been responsible for the mosaic decoration of the martyrrium of San Prisco in the cemetery on the Via Aquaria outside the city. In this case, its attached chapel may well have been prepared as his own tomb. Certainly, there is no physical evidence for the involvement of Matrona, though her relics may possibly have sanctified the chapel, if indeed she existed at all. A connection with Symmachus would fit with the most probable date for the chapel's mosaics, the early to mid-fifth century, not too long after the other Campanian mosaics known to us, which date between 403 and 431. Although scholars have put the S.Matrona mosaics as early as the late fourth century, and as late as the first quarter of the sixth century,⁸² Farioli, most recently, dates the chapel to the mid-fifth century.⁸³ She sees the chapel as an integral part of the decor of the martyrrium church: the basilica illustrating the glory of the martyrs in heaven and the chapel, the individual soul's salvation.

The chapel's decoration, then, recreates the "resurrection

81 Giuseppe Bovini, "Mosaici della chiesa di S.Prisco a S.Prisco", CorsiCRB, 14, 1967, 36f.

82 Dating: dates from late fourth century (de Francovic) to fifth (Van Berchem and Clouzot; Bovini) to fifth to sixth (de Rossi), early sixth (Bertaux) and sixth (Ihm) have been proposed.

83 Farioli, S.Matrona, 288.

atmosphere" of a *cubiculum* from the catacombs,⁸⁴ and includes the same iconographic ingredients. The symbols of Christ, his Vine, the emblems of paradise, all are as old as the first Christian art. The texts, however, are precise and taken from the Apocalypse: texts about judgment and the hope of salvation, and about the mysteries of the vision revealed to St. John. The programme, then, derives from Western theology, since the Apocalypse did not enjoy early canonical status in the East. It seems that the S.Matrona chapel is an aristocratic, above ground survivor of the sort of Late Antique tomb which the catacombs copied in their carved-out tufa architecture and in their decorations. The St.Matrona chapel, annexe of a small and somewhat provincial cemeterial basilica, which nevertheless was probably an important regional martyrion, appears to reflect ordinary, upper-level patronage: the sort of setting which would be considered efficacious for the resurrection of an aristocratic Christian soul on judgment day.

84 Farioli, *Ibid*, 284, "...qui, nella piccola cappella riscontriamo l'atmosfera di resurrezione dei cubicole cimenteriale."

CHAPTER 7

THE MAUSOLEUM OF GALLA PLACIDIA AT RAVENNA

The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia is very different from the typical mausoleum of a Late Antique emperor, vast, two-storeyed, and centrally planned. Obviously, its identification as an imperial mausoleum must depend on other evidence. I will show from its iconographic programme that it was designed as a funerary chapel.¹ In addition, its privileged location within the imperial precinct at Ravenna is highly suggestive of imperial patronage. I shall also show that a precedent already existed in Constantinople for the mausoleum's new direction in size and architectural form. I will therefore discuss it in these terms, both as a mausoleum, and as an imperial one, a position which will be justified in the course of this chapter.

The chapel differs from previous imperial mausolea in both its minuscule size and its cruciform shape.² The latter choice may be rooted in the growing piety of the imperial house. There is no doubt that the mausoleum's presumed patron, the empress Galla Placidia, (b.ca.388-393,d.450), was devoted to the Cross, since she chose it for the ground-plan and the dedication of her palace church, S.Croce,³ while she also enriched the Roman basilica of S.Croce in Gerusalemme with

1 Details of the architecture also confirm the chapel's funerary function. For example, F.W.Deichmann, Ravenna, I, 64, cites the presence of the pine cone as finial on the central tower of the chapel. This is the traditional funerary acroterium, symbolising immortality.

2 Mark J.Johnson does not include it in the corpus of Late Antique imperial mausolea in his dissertation, Late Antique Imperial Mausolea, Princeton, 1986. However, he briefly discusses the theories of Galla Placidia's places of burial, with bibliography, on p.302-303.

3 This church, too, owes its attribution to Galla Placidia to Agnellus, writing 500 years after the event, Agnellus, LPER, 306, "Galla vero augusta haedificavit ecclesiam sanctae Crucis...". See Deichmann, Ravenna, II, Kommentar, I, 51f. S.Croce's identification as Galla Placidia's palace church has been questioned by G.Cortesi, "I principali edifici sacri ravennati in funzione sepolcrale nei secc. V e VI", CorsiCRB, 29, 1982, 63-107, esp. 103-104. He prefers to see it as a cemetery church.

mosaics.⁴ Even her gold coins and medallions portrayed her with a monogrammatic cross upon her shoulder.⁵

In the early fifth century, the cross was the preferred architectural form for funerary chapels and for martyrs' *memoriae* in general.⁶ This is confirmed by archaeological studies, such as those at S.Vitale, where the original *memoria* of Vitalis, an apsed rectangle, was converted into a cruciform building in the fifth century.⁷ More importantly in the context of the mausoleum of Galla Placidia, precedents for a small cruciform mausoleum existed in the imperial burial precinct at Constantinople, as described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus.⁸ We learn that in addition to the well-known

4 The mosaic and the dedicatory inscription beneath were still visible in the 15th century, and read "REGES TERRAE ET OMNES POPULI/ PRINCIPES ET OMNES IUDICES TERRAE/ LAUDENT NOMEN DOMINI/ SANCTAE ECCLESIAE HIERUSALEM VALENTINIANUS/ PLACIDIA ET HONORIA AUGUSTI VOTUM SOLVERUNT". De Rossi, Inscriptiones, II, p.435. These mosaics, which must have antedated Honoria's disgrace in 444, were probably situated in the chapel of St.Helena, which still exists below the basilica, and may have been Helena's private palace chapel. R.Krautheimer et al., CBCR, I, 168.

5 As was pointed out in this context by D.P.Pavirani, Memorie storiche della vita e governo di Galla Placidia, Madre e tutrice di Valentiniano III, Ravenna, 1848, reprint. 1977, 238, "Placidia pure era si divota della S.Croce, che come si vede nella sue medaglie la portava per distintivo nella spalla destra, come se ogni suo conforto si riponesse nella croce". Galla Placidia's gold *solidus* with the Chi-Rho on the shoulder, dating ca.430, is illustrated in J.P.C.Kent, Roman Coins, London, 1978, pl.188.

6 The cruciform plan in architecture may be seen as a by-product of the structural requirements of a square base crowned by a cupola: the outward forces generated by the weight of the cupola needing counteracting forces, such as rooms or niches which opened out symmetrically from the four sides of the square. This type of architecture while not invented by the Christians was adopted by them because it reproduced the symbol of their faith. J.Lassus, Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie, Paris, 1947, 116.

7 See Chapter 3.

8 See Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Book of Ceremonies, II, 42. The list of imperial tombs is translated with commentary by G.Downey, "The Tombs of the Byzantine Emperors at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople", Journal of Hellenic Studies, 79, 1959, 27-51, esp. 30-37.

centrally-planned mausoleum that stood to the west of Constantine's cruciform church of the Holy Apostles, two other structures in the precinct also served for the burial of emperors and their consorts in Late Antiquity.⁹ These buildings, which Constantine called *stoai*, were pillared structures to the north and south of the church.¹⁰ The northern chapel sheltered the tombs of Julian the Apostate (360-363), and Jovian (363-364). The southern chapel was the burial place of Galla Placidia's half-brother Arcadius, emperor of the East 395-408, his wife Eudoxia, who died in 404, and their son Theodosius II (408-450). Downey interprets these two structures as small, independent, colonnaded buildings within the precinct of the Holy Apostles. Each was round, trefoil-shaped or cruciform, with its entry in the west. The south chapel, he suggests, was cruciform, with the three burials in the terminals of the arms of a cross. In other words, it was very much like the mausoleum of Galla Placidia. Eudoxia, who died first, lay in the east, with Arcadius in the south and Theodosius in the north.¹¹ The empress, a well-known patron of architecture,¹² may have commissioned the mausoleum, as Downey suggests; alternatively, her central position may simply result from her having been the first of the three to die.

This mausoleum, recently built when Galla Placidia fled to Constantinople with her children after Honorius' death in 423, may well have inspired the Ravenna mausoleum, an inspiration reinforced by the

9 Downey, *Ibid*, esp. 45-48.

10 Johnson, *Mausolea*, fig. 86, shows these *stoai* in plan. Although he interprets the north stoa as an area set aside in the terminal part of the north arm of the "transept", the south stoa is shown as a cruciform structure attached to the end of the south arm of the Holy Apostles Church.

11 Downey, *Ibid*, 31, and 33, "The stoa to the south of the same church. In this lie the sarcophagi of Arkadios, Theodosios, his son, and Eudoxia, his mother. The tomb of Arkadios is to the south, that of Theodosios to the north, that of Eudoxia is to the east." (Presumably the entry was in the west).

12 Downey, *Ibid*, 48. Eudoxia's great commission in Gaza that bore her name was unfinished at her death.

patron being Placidia's own sister-in-law.

Unlike this possible prototype at the Holy Apostles, lost for ever beneath the Mosque of the Conqueror at Istanbul, the chapel at Ravenna is one of the best-preserved Early Christian buildings to survive anywhere, and has been exhaustively studied. As long ago as 1924 the bibliography of the chapel already contained over 200 entries, an indication of the early interest in the chapel.¹³ Nevertheless, problems remain, especially in the area of patronage, and may be incapable of solution. There is no contemporary evidence, for instance, that Galla Placidia, who died in Rome on November 27, 450, was actually buried in the chapel that bears her name, or even that she built it. Since it almost certainly did not shelter her own tomb, were other members of the imperial family buried there, and if so, who? And how secure is the attribution of the structure to Galla Placidia? The first text to mention the empress in connection with the chapel is Agnellus' Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis, which dates from almost 500 years after her death, and refers to verbal tradition. No inscription was then extant.¹⁴ However, while there is no late antique documentation to suggest that Galla Placidia was the patron, scholars find the idea quite possible, as Friedrich Deichmann cautiously states,¹⁵ or even "universally accepted", to quote the words of William

13 See Giovanni Bovini, Saggio di Bibliografia su Ravenna Antica, Bologna, 1968; Raffaella Farioli, "Principale bibliografia su Ravenna pre-romana, romana bizantina ed altomedioevale", Felix Ravenna, 117, 1979, 117-128. M. Van Berchem and E. Clouzot, Mosaïques Chrétiennes, Geneva, 1924, 92, note 2., state that C. Ricci, Mausoleo, 1913, supersedes all that was written earlier. Deichmann's multi-volume work, Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes, I-IV, 1969-1974, summarises all significant previous work, and so brings the bibliography up to the seventies.

14 Agnellus writes that many people claimed that the empress was buried before the altar of the *monasterium* of St. Nazarius, (the mausoleum), LPER, 307, "sepulta est Galla Placidia in monasterio Sancti Nazarii, ut aiunt multi, ante altarium infra cancellos, quos fuerunt aerei, qui nunc lapidei esse videtur".

15 Deichmann, Ravenna, II, Kommentar, I, 65, concludes that Galla Placidia's sponsorship cannot be excluded.

Seston.¹⁶ A further mystery which may also have significance in terms of the chapel's patronage is iconographic. The decorative programme is centred on an enigmatic mosaic panel which has until recently defied interpretation, though usually considered to represent the martyrdom of the Roman martyr Lawrence. However, it has not been easy to reconcile this identification either with the overall iconography of the mosaic panel, or with the scanty information that has come down to us about Galla Placidia's life and interests.¹⁷ A recent interpretation of the panel as illustrating the martyrdom of the Spanish saint Vincent of Saragossa strengthens the case for the patronage of the empress, who had Spanish and Visigothic connections.¹⁸ This question will be considered in depth later in this chapter.

The chapel is built of brick,¹⁹ on a cruciform ground-plan with a square tower over the crossing. The exterior is plain, relieved only by blind arcading (fig.24). The interior, however, is ablaze with the colours of mosaic and of the precious marbles which panel the walls below (fig.25).²⁰

16 W.Seston, "Le Jugement Dernier au Mausolée de Galla Placidia", *CahArch*, 1, 1945, 37-50, esp. 37, note 2, "L'attribution à Galla Placidia, contestée autrefois, est aujourd'hui universellement acceptée". Despite his certainty, this acceptance is far from universal.

17 Sources for Galla Placidia's life: Olympiodorus, *History*, lost, but excerpts survive in Photius' library. See Photius, *Bibliothèque*, ed. & tr. R.Henry, Paris, 1959, and Warren Treadgold, *The nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius*, DOS, 18, Washington, 1980, 82. Also, Sozomen and Zosimus, whose histories drew on Olympiodorus' work. A summary of these sources in J.F.Matthews, "Olympiodorus of Thebes and the History of the West, (AD 407-425)," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 60, 1970, 79-97. See also S.I.Oost, *Galla Placidia Augusta, A Bibliographical Essay*, Chicago, 1968.

18 See Gillian Mackie, "New Light on the so-called St.Lawrence Panel at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna", *Gesta*, 29, 1990, 54-60.

19 The brick format is unique, and so cannot be used for dating the building. Deichmann, *Ravenna*, II, *Kommentar*, I, 66.

20 Both revetments and alabaster window panes are replacements.

There are three antique sarcophagi in the chapel, occupying the three short arms of the Latin cross. Unfortunately, rather than revealing the identity of the former occupants, the sarcophagi are mute on this point, and raise more problems than they solve. Moreover, their presence in the chapel has given rise to legends about the occupants that cannot be confirmed by documentation. One ancient tradition identified the tombs as those of Galla Placidia, in the centre, with her brother Honorius, (d.423, in Rome, and buried in the family mausoleum there), and her husband Constantius (d.Sept.2,421, in Ravenna), on either side.²¹ A fourteenth century commentator believed that she lay between her husband Constantius and her son Valentinian III, who was assassinated near Rome in 455, and presumably buried in the family mausoleum at St.Peter's.²² By the sixteenth century it was believed that she was interred with her two children by Constantius: Valentinian and Honoria.²³ Perhaps the best known legend maintained that the central sarcophagus contained the mummified body of the Empress, dressed in her imperial robes, and seated on a cedarwood throne. The body could be seen through a hole at the back of the sarcophagus,²⁴ this same hole being the port of entry of the taper of some curious children, who set the remains on fire in 1577.²⁵

The legendary quality of all the earlier theories is underlined by the fact that the sarcophagi do not form part of the chapel's original furnishings. Evidence for this statement includes on the one hand,

21 John B.Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, 2 vols., London, 1923, repr. New York, 1958, I, 263.

22 Medieval sources are listed by Deichmann, Ravenna, I, 169-170. For Rinaldi di Concreto, Archbishop of Ravenna, 1303, Tractatus, 574, see note 33.

23 Giampietro Ferretti, d.1577, Galla Placidiae augustae vita, Bibl.Classense, Mob.3,2,F2-5, cited by Ricci.

24 Rinaldi, Tractatus, 574. G.Rossi noted in his sixteenth century history of Ravenna that he could not verify this because the hole had been plastered over.

25 J.B.Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, I, 263-264.

their position on a later floor, inserted above the original one, and on the other, the internal evidence of the sarcophagi themselves, which, if they were made for the chapel, should match in style, materials and workmanship.²⁶ This is far from the case. The central sarcophagus is rough-hewn and may once have been under ground. The other two, though both of the figural type with symbolic lambs, do not match each other in decoration or design. Although both are only partly finished, even in this feature they are not a matched pair. The tomb on the left, of "Constantius", which has a design of lambs flanking the Agnus Dei on the front, has no decoration on its right end or back. The "Honorius" tomb, on the other hand, is decorated with a design of three arches. A lamb in the centre stands in front of a cross flanked by doves, and the back bears an unfinished design. In addition, Marion Lawrence has dated the "Honorius" sarcophagus to the sixth century on stylistic grounds, a century later than the chapel. The fact that there is a masonry foundation under each of the sarcophagi, between the two floor levels, also weighs against the theory that the sarcophagi were part of the original furnishings.²⁷ In fact, they were probably moved from the adjacent S.Vitale site, when the church was built in the mid-sixth century. Since S.Vitale rose on the site of several *memoriae*, one may even speculate that the sarcophagi came from these chapels,²⁸ though this cannot be proved any more than we can even confirm that the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia was originally furnished with sarcophagi.

Since the patronage of Galla Placidia is the reason for identifying this chapel as an imperial mausoleum, rather than as an ordinary funerary chapel, we must ask where she was buried, if not in her chapel. Again, there are numerous theories, none of which can be securely documented. Actually, there is no evidence that the empress' body was ever brought back to Ravenna from Rome, though the translation

26 M.Lawrence, The Sarcophagi of Ravenna, Art Bulletin Monographs, 2, 1945, deals with these ideas about dating and matching the sarcophagi.

27 M.Lawrence, Sarcophagi, 32.

28 See chapter 3 for a discussion of the chapels on the S.Vitale site.

of the remains of emperors and bishops was quite common in the fifth century. It seems more likely that she was interred in the Honorian family mausoleum beside St. Peter's, and archaeological evidence supporting, though not proving, this view, will be presented. In favour of Ravenna, Agnellus wrote that she was buried before the altar in the "monasterium", meaning chapel, of S. Nazarius.²⁹ This *monasterium* may possibly have been the mausoleum itself.³⁰ Another and unfounded tradition had her buried not in Ravenna but in Milan, at S. Aquilino, in a pagan sarcophagus which was only later recut in the Ravenna style.³¹ This theory probably originated during the period when S. Aquilino retained imperial burials from the late fourth century, among them, perhaps, that of Galla Placidia's mother, the empress Galla, whose memory could have been confused with that of her more famous daughter.

The first direct statement that claims Galla Placidia as the patron of the mausoleum named for her dates to 1279, when Tomasso Tusco wrote that the empress had had "this most beautiful chapel" built.³² Soon after, in 1317, came another mention of Placidia having been buried in the chapel, now identified as the one at S. Croce.³³

29 Agnellus, LPER, 307.

30 Deichmann, Ravenna, II, Kommentar, 63, remarks that it was known as *Monasterium S. Nazarii* until the 16th century, though its original dedication, if any, is completely unknown.

31 Lawrence, Sarcophagi, 32f, thinks it was recut in the mid-sixth century.

32 Though Agnellus had quoted hearsay that she was buried there. See note 3, *supra*. Tomasso Tusco, Gesta imperatorum et pontificum, MGH, 22, Hanover, 1872, 511. "In hoc monasterio est quedam capella pulcerrima, quam hedificari fecit Galla Placidia, opere mosaici decorata, in qua de alabastro sunt tria sepulcra, in quorum uno imperatoris Theodosii corpus est positum, iuxta quem ensis eius cum vexillo tale preferente insigne est positus. In alio est seu corpus uxoris cum suarum duarum corporibus filiarum..."

33 Raynaldus, (Rinaldo da Concareggio, Archbishop of Ravenna, d.1321), Tractatus, 1317, L.A. Muratori, RIS, 1/2, Milan, 1725, 573f., esp. 574, "Construxit praeterea Placidia Ravennae juxta habitationem suam Ecclesiam in honorem Sanctae Crucis Domini, à qua habet nomen, & formam, in cujus Altari est lapis ex alabastro pernitidus, & in ipsa Ecclesia stans. orationibus vacabat prolixius. Secus eam Ecclesiam construxit

Archaeological evidence shows that the mausoleum was attached to the right end of the church's narthex by means of an open portico with two columns.³⁴ The archaeologists were of the opinion that the church and chapel were part of the same building programme.³⁵ The little chapel is a miniature of the basilica, which was also cruciform. Traces remain of a matching cruciform chapel at the other end of the S.Croce narthex, which has not survived. These three structures are among the first Christian churches known that express the symbolism of the cross in their architecture, appropriately if they were the work of Galla Placidia.³⁶

There are usually thought to be two periods when the empress could have built her church and mausoleum: between 417, (date of her marriage to Constantius III) and 421 (date of his death), when she returned to Constantinople; and after her return to Ravenna in 425 when she assumed the regency for her son Valentinian III. The latter period is favoured by Marion Lawrence, for example, who suggests that the date of construction was probably after 425 and closer to 450, when she died.³⁷

Sacellum miro opere speciosum Beatis Martyribus Nazario et Celsio dicatum, in quo tria videntur Augusta mausolea. Horum in maximo corpus Placidiae per cavum inspicitur in sede Regali residens. In duobus reliquis elegantibus nimis requiescunt corpora Augustorum, altero Constantii Viri Placidiae, altero Placidi Valentiniani eorum filii...Obiit autem Ravennae V. Calendas Decembris, & in sacello, quod construxerat secus Basilicam Sanctae Crucis, est sepulta." Also see G.Gerola, "Galla Placidia e il cosidetto suo mausoleo in Ravenna", Atti e Memorie della deputazione di storia patria per le provincie di Romagna, 1912, 273-320, esp. 275-276.

34 As discovered in 1865 by R.Lanciani in 1865. G.B.De Rossi, "Scoperte negli edifici cristiani di Ravenna, 7. 4, Mausoleo di Galla Placidia e chiesa di S.Croce", BAC, 4, 1866, 74.

35 Deichmann, though, basing his opinion on the same evidence, suggests that the chapel is an addition, and thus later than S.Croce. Ravenna, II, Kommentar, 66, "das Mausoleum ist an deren Vorhalle angebaut, also später errichtet als die Kirche".

36 R.Krautheimer, "Introduction to an iconography of Medieval Architecture", JWCI, 5, 1942, 1-33, "certain architectural patterns are related to specific dedications", for example cross-shaped churches of the Holy Cross.

37 Lawrence, Sarcophagi, 32.

The period after the death of Constantius in 421 has been seen as the most probable, precisely because there would have been a need for a burial place for an emperor at that time. However, a possible reason for favouring the earlier period is Placidia's need for a burial-place for the only child of her first marriage: Theodosius, her son by the Visigothic king, Ataulf.³⁸

The story of Galla Placidia's captivity among the Goths and her subsequent marriage to their king is relatively well known from the account of their wedding in Narbonne in 414, celebrated in the Roman style that the Visigoths admired.³⁹ The bare facts of their move to Barcelona; of the birth of a baby son whom they named for Placidia's father, the emperor Theodosius I; of the baby's death at a few months of age, and of Ataulf's death shortly after, murdered in his stable by a groom; are also known. Both deaths occurred in 415, Ataulf's probably in September of that year. In addition we learn that the baby was buried in a silver coffin in a church outside the walls of Barcelona. After the death of Ataulf, his successor Singeric forced Galla Placidia to walk on foot out of Spain.⁴⁰ However, he died a mere seven days into his reign, and his successor Wallia gave Galla Placidia sanctuary in Toulouse during the negotiations for her release to Ravenna. Her stay in Toulouse lasted well into 416, and she returned to Ravenna only in time to marry Constantius on January 1, 417, supposedly against her will.

There is evidence to suggest that Galla Placidia did not forget her first child. Among the portrait medallions in mosaic of her family that she placed on the triumphal arch of her votive church of S.Giovanni Evangelista, Ravenna (424), alongside portraits of two of her brothers,

38 For sources for Galla Placidia's life see note 17, *supra*.

39 Olympiodorus, frg. 27; Photius, *Bibliotheca*, ed. R.Henry, Paris, 1959-1977.

40 This was another borrowing from Rome, this time from imperial victory rites, which humiliated captives by making them walk in front of the riding ruler. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 86, note 27.

dead in infancy, was a third, entitled Theodosius Nepos (THEODOSIUS NEP), which is presumed, in the absence of other candidates of that name, to have been a representation of her infant son.⁴¹ More tenuously, perhaps, around the time of her death in Rome in November 450, a Theodosius was interred in the family mausoleum there, with honours that included the presence not only of a "Placidia", but of the Pope and the Senate as well, marking it as the funeral of a member of the imperial house.⁴² It is to Stewart Oost that we owe the suggestion that the Theodosius mentioned here was Galla Placidia's baby son, on the grounds that we know the burial places of the other imperial holders of the name: Theodosius I, who died in Milan, but whose body was moved to Constantinople in November, 395, and Theodosius II, nephew of Galla Placidia, who died at Constantinople July 30, 450, and was interred at the Holy Apostles.⁴³ No other members of the imperial family with that name are known. The presumption, if Galla Placidia transferred the body of her baby son to Rome, must be that she also planned her own burial in the family mausoleum there, a presumption that Mark Johnson also supports without reservation.⁴⁴

If we accept that the baby's body was the one interred in Rome, we must make one further assumption, that Galla Placidia had the coffin with her in Ravenna. It is quite legitimate, therefore, to ask where it was kept during the years that she resided there. I would suggest that the tomb of an "emperor" of that name recorded in the thirteenth century

41 The mosaics were pulled down in 1568, but votive inscription and subject matter were recorded by G.Rossi shortly before that date. See C.Davis Weyer, Early Medieval Art, 300-1150, Englewood Cliffs, 1971, 15-17. Also Ihm, Programme, fig.2, for a possible reconstruction.

42 Chronicle of Prosper, "Theodosius cum magna pompa a Placidia et Leone et omni senatu deductus et in mausoleo ad apostolum Petrum depositus est". Prosper Tironis, Chronicon, Reichenau additions, Chronica Minora, saec. IV, V, VI, VII, ed. T.Mommsen, MGH, Auctores Antiquissimi, 9, Berlin, 1892, 489.

43 S.I.Oost, "Some Problems in the History of Galla Placidia", Classical Philology, 60, 1965, 1-10, esp.7.

44 Johnson, Mausolea, 302.

by Tommaso Tusco in Galla Placidia's "capella pulcherrima"⁴⁵ may have been that of this child, despite the sword and standard and title 'imperator', which Tommaso says that he saw, for again the infant Theodosius seems to be the only one of the name who could have been buried here, since both Theodosius I and his great-nephew, Theodosius II, were buried in Constantinople. Similarly, a tomb of a Theodosius, inscribed TEODOSIUS IMPERATOR in the pavement, was observed by Riccobaldo in a chapel at Honorius' church of S.Lorenzo in Caesarea.⁴⁶ Ricci thought these two tombs were probably one and the same.⁴⁷ Speculatively, one may ask if the child's title NEP, as contracted at S.Giovanni Evangelista, Ravenna,⁴⁸ was read as IMP by these two early chroniclers, allowing a wrong attribution of the tomb. If so, perhaps we have a reference, if not an exact location, for the temporary resting place of Galla Placidia's eldest child, which may even have been at her mausoleum.

A curious and late confirmation of the sequence of events outlined above is to be found in the diary of Nicolo della Tuccia, a native of Viterbo, who wrote a journal of happenings in Rome and its surroundings in the mid-fifteenth century.⁴⁹ Nicolo records a find made in the Honorian Mausoleum at St.Peter's, (S.Petronilla), during excavations for

45 For Tommaso Tusco, see note 32, *supra*.

46 Riccobaldo, Pomarium Ravennatis Ecclesiae, RIS, 9, Milan, 1726, col.219. "Vidi ego in Ecclesia Sancti Laurentii sacello, quod est apud Ravenna, sepulchrum nobile; iuxta id in pavimento erat petra scripta literis celatis, dicens sic TEODOSIUS IMPERATOR. Vidi et legi." In col. 221, Riccobaldo states definitely that this S.Lorenzo was the basilica at the palace of Honorius in Caesarea.

47 Corrado Ricci, Il Mausoleo di Galla Placidia in Ravenna, Rome, 1914, 12-14.

48 C.Ihm, Programme, fig.2, for possible reconstruction.

49 Nicolo della Tuccia, ed. Francesco Orioli, Cronaca de' principali fatti d'Italia dell'anno 1417 al 1468 di Nicolo della Tuccia, Viterbese, Rome, 1852, 283, (June 27, 1458).

the grave of a member of the clergy in the month of June, 1458.⁵⁰ A marble sarcophagus of great beauty was found, enclosing two cypress-wood coffins, one large, the other small, and each sheathed in silver, with a combined weight of 832 pounds of silver. The bodies in the coffins were covered with fine cloth of gold, weighing a total of sixteen pounds. Although it was immediately suspected that the bodies were those of Constantine and one of his infant children, this did not prevent the pope of the day from sending the precious materials--both gold and silver--to his mint.⁵¹ Nicolo's brief notice is the sole record we have of this wonderful find.

We now know that there is no possibility that the burial was that of Constantine and his child. Constantine died in Constantinople and was buried at the Holy Apostles; the building of the Honorian mausoleum postdated his death by several decades. Unfortunately, one can only speculate, on the basis of the evidence given above, on an alternative identity for these plainly imperial burials. To summarise the evidence in reverse order: the burial of a Theodosius in this mausoleum; Galla Placidia's death in Rome, and presumed burial there in the same year; her continued interest in her first-born son a decade after his death; inscriptions, now lost, attesting to the burial of a Theodosius in two separate, imperial structures in Ravenna, and the baby Theodosius' original interment in a coffin made of silver, surely a most unusual material for the purpose.⁵² This chain of evidence, even though

50 Ibid, "il Li 27 di Giugno si disse in Viterbo come alli 27 detto morì in san Pietro di Roma un penitentiero, e volendolo sepellire nella cappella di s.Petronilla, ove sta una tribuna a man dritta, nel qual luogo è pinta anticamente la storia di Constantino imperatore, cavandosi li fu trovato un avello di marmo bellissimo, e dentro una cassa grande et una piccola di cipresso coperta d'argento fino d'undici leghe che fa di peso libbre 832. Li corpi, che erano dentro, erano coperti di drappo d'oro fino tanto, che pesò l'oro libre 16. Dicevasi fosse il corpo di Constantino, et un suo figlietto: et altro segno non ci fu trovato, se non una croce intagliata fatta in questo modo +. Tutte queste robe hebbe il papa, e mandolle alla sua zecca".

51 Either Calixtus III, 1455-1458, who died 6 August, 1458 or, possibly, his successor Pius II, elected 3 September, 1458.

52 Personal communication, Philip Grierson, 1989.

extremely tenuous, suggests that Galla Placidia took the coffin of her child from Barcelona to Toulouse and then to Ravenna, where it may have lain in a chapel at S.Lorenzo or even at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia; that she had it transported to Rome at some time around 450, date of her death; and that she was interred with the child in a marble sarcophagus, where they would rest together in the mausoleum, signed only with a simple cross,⁵³ until June 27, 1458, when the material evidence of their passing would be lost for ever in the crucibles of the papal mint.⁵⁴

Thus, while it is clearly not possible to establish with absolute certainty either the empress as patron, or the intended occupant or occupants of the mausoleum in Ravenna, it has been shown to be entirely possible that Galla Placidia was the patron of this building. Analysis of the iconographic programme will confirm that the chapel was designed for burial and that the intention was to build a funerary chapel with two burial places. The identities of the intended occupants will possibly never be known: however, it seems possible that one was the infant Theodosius, whose journey from Barcelona to Rome in his silver coffin must surely have been by way of Ravenna, where the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia may well have been purpose-built as a suitable setting for his coffin.

The next section of this chapter will analyse the iconographic programme, which, seemingly mute as a document, can reveal its meaning to our scrutiny, giving us an important extra source of information about the chapel and the intentions of the patron in building it.

The mosaic decoration of the chapel covers every surface of the vaults and shallow dome, as well as the walls above the marble revetment, which is a twentieth-century replacement. The complex

53 See above, note 50: "una croce intagliata fatta in questo modo +".

54 Johnson, *Mausolea*, 9-10, points out that only one child is known to have been buried in this mausoleum: Theodosius, son of Galla Placidia and Ataulf, an identification which he accepts. Johnson also accepts the idea that the burial discovered in 1458 was probably that of Galla Placidia and her son.

cruciform shape with a vaulted drum above the crossing provides a number of areas for decoration.⁵⁵ The shallow vault rests on narrow pendentives, between which are four tall, arch-shaped sections of upper wall. Below these, four wide tunnel vaults open up, each roofing one arm of the cross. Each vault ends in a lunette. The marble sheathing reaches to the bottom of the springing of the tunnel-vaults and the pendentives. Three of the lunettes and each of the upper wall sections contains a small rectangular window, fitted with a replacement pane in alabaster and set in a deep, decorated embrasure. The fourth lunette, windowless, is over the door. The artificially raised floor level, which alters the proportions of the building, also brings the mosaics closer to view than would otherwise be possible.

One of the most striking features is the decoration of the central vault (fig.26). Set with deep blue tesserae in imitation of the firmament, it is strewn with a multitude of golden stars, concentrically arranged to fill the space, and becoming larger as they near the bottom, creating an optical illusion of great height. In the centre is a plain Latin cross in gold, its long stem towards the arm on the left of the entry, the East. This has been taken as a sign that the altar lay in this arm of the chapel: discussion will return to this point.

The vault programme is completed by half-length winged figures, one in each pendentive. These are also in plain gold, detailed in white. Each floats upon a bank of clouds. Eagle and Man flank the vault opposite the door, across from the Lion and Ox. They are the symbols of the Evangelists (fig.26).

These Beings, the winged beasts of the Apocalypse, came to symbolise the evangelists as early as the second century writings of St.Irenaeus (ca.130-ca.200). The mystical ideas were further developed by St.Jerome (d.420).⁵⁶ The types of evangelist symbol found here

55 For illustrations of this chapel see Deichmann, Ravenna, III, plates 1-31.

56 Jerome, Comm.in Ezech., PL, 25, ch.1, 21. A good brief summary of the history of this symbolism is found in J.Beckwith, Early Christian and Byzantine Art, Harmondsworth, 1970, 33-34.

typify the early iconography, and lack the haloes and gospel books that had become universal by the mid-sixth century. However, they lack one important feature common to the very earliest evangelist symbols: the six wings that are described in the Book of Revelation. In point of fact, each Being has only a single pair. As we have seen, at the Naples baptistery (ca.405), they display three pairs each, as at Rome's S.Pudenziana (ca.390). Six also occur at the St.Matrona chapel, Capua Vetere, which should probably be dated to the second quarter of the fifth century. In the medium of ivory, two examples from Milan bring us closer to Ravenna and the period of Galla Placidia. These are the Castello Sforzesca 'Resurrection diptych', dating from shortly before the turn of the fourth century, and the slightly later Milan cathedral 'Five-Part diptych'.⁵⁷ In both cases, the evangelist symbols are shown with six, well defined wings. It would seem that the loss of the extra pairs at the Ravenna mausoleum would fit well with a date within the span of Galla Placidia's patronage, say 416-450. Some overlap of dating is to be expected, since Ravenna, as capital in the West, would be a likely point of origin for new imagery, which would take time to reach the provinces.

To return to the cross which floats in the centre of the starry firmament, at a basic level it must symbolise the presence of Christ himself, the all-ruler. A second, and more specific meaning, though, is suggested by the belief of fourth and fifth century theologians that a cross in the sky would be the first sign that Christ's second coming was imminent, and that the day of judgment was at hand.⁵⁸ The cross would go ahead of Christ in his triumph,⁵⁹ just as it was carried in front of

57 Illustrated in F.van der Meer and Christine Mohrmann, Atlas of the Early Christian World, London, 1959, figs.195, & 202-203.

58 See Julia Valeva, "La Tombe aux Archanges de Sofia", CahArch, 34, 1986, 5-28, esp.12, for a general discussion of this iconography. See also Tania Velmans, "L'image de la Déisis dans les églises de Géorgie et dans le reste du monde byzantin", CahArch, 31, 1983, 129f, esp. 130-131.

59 See Erik Peterson, "La croce e la preghiera verso oriente", Ephemerides Liturgicae, 59, 1945, 61f., esp. 62-63, for a discussion of the connection of the presence of the cross in the East with the direction of prayer. He comments "ma quand'è che la croce precede

the Byzantine emperor in procession, and when going to war.⁶⁰ It is significant that the cross at the mausoleum is shown to be on the same plane as the stars in the sky, and among them, a unique situation for an Early Christian vault-symbol. It is not enclosed in a clipeus or wreath to reveal that its location is in a higher heaven, where God resides in the celestial space beyond the stars.⁶¹ This fine shade of difference suggests that the meaning of the cross within the programme is eschatological: it is a sign of Christ's second coming.⁶² This content is also confirmed by the orientation of the Cross. Rather than following the north-south main axis of the chapel, it faces towards the East and Jerusalem, which in fourth and fifth century thought was the expected direction of Christ's return.⁶³

The upper walls (fig.25) also have a deep blue background. Pairs of male figures, two flanking each window, making eight in all, gesture with their right hands towards the cross which blazes among the stars in the height of the vault. They follow the standard iconography of the

l'arrivo del signore? La risposta non più esitare un momento: il giorno del suo secondo arrivo nel mondo."

60 W.Seston, Ibid, 49, "Elle précédera le Christ dans son triomphe comme la grande croix d'or qu'on portait dans les processions de Byzance devant l'empereur quand il se montrait à ses sujets à l'Hippodrome". By the late sixth century, "the army and the emperor marched behind the imperial battle standard, a gilded war cross containing a relic of the true cross", McCormick, Triumphal Rulership, 247, and note 71. The origin of the cross as standard must lie in Constantine's victory by the cross at Milvian Bridge.

61 K.Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven", Art Bulletin, 27, 1945, 1-27, esp. 13-19.

62 Christ himself taught his disciples that his return would be preceded by the cross: "then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven,...and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory...", Matt. 24:38.

63 Among the Fathers who commented on Christ's words from Matthew on his second coming was Eusebius, Vita Constantini, 1, 32, PG, 20, 947. See also Peterson, Ibid, 61, citing the Acta Hipparchi, Philothei et sociorum, ed. St.E.Assemani, Acta sanctorum martyrum orientalium et occidentalium, 2, Rome, 1748, 124-148, "Christus veniens ex oriente praeceditur cruce".

apostles, allowing recognition of Peter, Paul and Andrew.⁶⁴ The four evangelists, present as their symbols, were probably seen as completing the mystical number twelve, as is also assumed at the Naples Baptistery.⁶⁵ The decorative formula of pairs of witnessing apostles was also known from the chapel of S.Croce at the Lateran Baptistery, Rome, which was pulled down in 1588.⁶⁶ Information about the S.Croce composition is limited, though it seems that there too the cross occupied the centre of the vault, and the two compositions appear to have illustrated the same concepts. At Ravenna, anyway, it is clear that the apostles are present as witnesses to the portent in the sky, the Cross, to which they gesture.

Beneath the windows in each upper wall we see a pair of doves flanking an overflowing vase, or drinking from it. As we have seen in the writings of Paulinus of Nola, the dove represents the human soul in its struggle to attain the Kingdom of Heaven.⁶⁷ Water overflowing from vessels is symbolic of baptism, and this was a sacrament linked with death in the Early Christian mind, as both represented a farewell to an older, less perfect way of life, and rebirth into the Christian promise. The paired bird motif, which derives ultimately from Roman painting, where it was extremely popular,⁶⁸ is popular in both funerary and baptismal settings.

64 See A.H.S.Megaw and E.J.N.Hawkins, The church of the Panagia Kanakaria at Lythrankomi in Cyprus: its Mosaics and Frescoes, DOS, 14, 1977, 107, for a discussion of the iconography of the apostles.

65 For Naples, see Jean-Louis Maier, Le baptistère de Naples et ses Mosaïques, Fribourg 1969. Other precedents include a sarcophagus from Arles, Wilpert, Sarcophagi, I, pl.34:3, where the twelve apostles, seated, include four who hold books or scrolls inscribed with the evangelists' names.

66 This chapel is discussed in Chapter 8.

67 Paulinus of Nola, Epistola 32, 15-16, see Chapter 6.

68 For example, see the mosaic from Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, (after 124 AD), a copy of a Greek original by Sosus, and now in the Capitoline museum, Rome. It is illustrated in M.Wheeler, Roman Art and Architecture, London, 1964, fig.186.

The summit of each upper wall contains a shell-shaped motif. This is a device borrowed from sculpture to suggest the existence of a three-dimensional space below, emphasising it like a niche. It also serves to set the scene within the heavenly realm above the sky.⁶⁹ Each "shell" here is plainly an awning of gold cloth stretched between poles; at its summit is a looped rope of pearls, above which a dove's head, pointing down, emerges from the undulating border pattern. These doves must represent the Holy Spirit, the divine inspiration of the evangelists below.⁷⁰ They illustrate the text from the Gospel of St. John, "I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove".⁷¹

The tunnel vaults are decorated as two pairs. Those of the lateral arms to either side of the door contain a sumptuous pattern of golden vegetal scrolls on a deep blue background, while the other two carry the symbolism of the sky further, and their deep blue background bears a profusion of complex stars like varied snowflakes.

The triple acanthus bases at either side of the vegetal side-vaults give rise to grape branches with leaves and fruit. The acanthus represents the unbroken tie with classical tradition, while the grapevine, typical in pagan times of Dionysiac decorations, here has been imbued with the Christian symbolism that stems from Christ's words "I am the True Vine".⁷² Each volute-base has a stiff central stem between its paired volutes, on this a golden prophet-figure stands. The four together must represent the four major prophets. In the summit of each side vault is a chi-rho symbol, with alpha and omega, inside a laurel wreath, symbols of Christ's presence, his eternity and his victory.

69 Lehman, Dome of Heaven, 13-14.

70 Ricci, Mausoleo, commenting on varied interpretations as eagle, dove or Holy Spirit, thinks the latter impossible because of the duplication on the four walls. He prefers a neutral, plainly decorative interpretation. This seems unlikely to me. The motif is also known from floor mosaics, for example in the apse of the right aisle at the Basilica Euphrasiana, Poreč.

71 John 1:32.

72 John 15:1-7.

Each of these two vaults represents the arch of the firmament, where the vine has been stretched as on a trellis over the grave-site below, "bearing as fruits the newly baptised"⁷³ and where the central and highest point has been opened up as in a vision onto the eternity of heaven to which the soul aspires. This symbolic setting for burial was completed by the decoration of the lunettes behind the sarcophagus sites (fig.28). Each lunette was centered on a window with a deep embrasure decorated with double grape-bearing volutes. Springing from below the window was a pair of acanthus stems on each side, the most luxurious yet, while caught in the plants, like "rams caught in a thicket"⁷⁴ were stags, bending to drink from the stylised waters below the windows, two horizontal streams to a side. The symbolism of these lunettes is clear. The reference is to baptism and to the words of Psalm 42:1: "As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God", a meaning that is confirmed by the mosaic panel from the baptistery at Salona in Dalmatia, where a pair of deer, drinking, are actually captioned with this verse.⁷⁵ Use of this imagery in a funerary setting, together with doves and grape-vines overhead, demonstrates the congruence in the theologians' minds between death and the resurrection which they hoped would follow, and the rebirth which was already received at baptism, when the unregenerate soul dies and the Christian soul is born through "water and the spirit".⁷⁶ This congruence was also illustrated in the architectural forms, for early baptismal piscinas, such as those at Salona, were cruciform; the catachumens entered and were immersed in the

73 A symbolism current in the writings of the Fathers. See J.Daniélou, Primitive Christian Symbols, chapter 2, "The Vine and the Tree of Life", esp. 37-38. The vine here, as at the S Matrona chapel at S.Priaco, Capua Vetere, is stretched across the blue of the "sky" as if it were tied to a trellis: in the words of Asterius the Sophist "the divine and timeless vine has sprung from the grave, bearing as fruits the newly baptized, like bunches of grapes on the altar..." Asterius, Homilies on the Psalms, Marcel Richard, ed., Oslo, 1956, esp. Hom. XIV, 1-2, 105.

74 Genesis, 22:13.

75 See chapter 9.

76 John, 3:5.

water of the lateral arms of the font, while the priests stood at the head of the cross. The submersion with water in the baptismal rite has even been equated with the throwing of earth on the coffin: "submersion is a death, the waters close over the catachumen as the grave over the dead man; the catachumen dies away from the old Adam, buries himself in Christ in the closest intimacy with him, whose blood is symbolised by the baptismal water, and like Christ he is resurrected to a new life, reborn on stepping up from the piscina"⁷⁷

The programme of the lateral arms of the chapel, with their "resurrection atmosphere",⁷⁸ identically decorated and also complementing each other to make an iconographic whole, suggests that these areas were prepared as luxurious settings for burial. The mingling of baptismal imagery with the sepulchral confirms the thought behind the decoration, which stems from the words of Paul to the Romans: "so many ...as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death ...for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection,"⁷⁹ and the inclusion of the four rivers also gives a hint of paradise, for in the art of the fifth century these waters symbolised the paradise garden where the elect would join Christ.⁸⁰ At the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia the quality of the golden vegetation also suggests the realm of the blessed.

Each of the two lateral arms is approximately the size of a

77 E.Dyggve, History of Salonitan Christianity, Oslo, 1951, 55-56. See also Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem, (ca.315-386), Catechetical Lectures, tr.E.H.Gifford, N&PNE, 7, 14-18, Lecture III, "On Baptism", and Lecture XX, "On the Mysteries, II. Of Baptism."

78 Farioli, S.Matrona, 284, "riscontriamo l'atmosfera resurrezione dei cubicula cimiteriali", a phrase she uses of the chapel of St.Matrona, but equally applicable here.

79 Romans, 6:3-5. See also Cyril, Catechetical Lecture, XX, II/4, tr. Gifford, N&PNE, 7, 147-148, expounding on the text from Romans, 6, "And at the self-same moment ye were both dying and being born; and that Water of Salvation was at once your grave and your mother".

80 Gordana Babić, "North Chapel of the Quatrefoil Church at Ohrid and its Mosaic Floor", Zbornik Radova, 13, 1971, 271f.

cubiculum in the catacombs, and excavation down to the original floor level should reveal, as there, the remains of a *trabeculum* before each sarcophagus site, marking it off as a burial chamber. In fact such a foundation was found in the left niche by Corrado Ricci in his excavations of 1898: he thought it the foundation of a pergula, but it could equally well be that of a *transenna*. The foundation, in any case, defines a *cubiculum*-like space.⁸¹ The space is further defined and protected by the small greek-key design which frames each side tunnel vault, and runs around the lateral arms just above the revetment: a maze or labyrinth in gold on blue. These, and the great multicoloured maze within the main arch can be seen as defining those areas in which "unwanted and possibly mischievous spirits" must be kept in their place.⁸² This prompts the question, if the side arms of the chapel were burial sites, what function accrued to this third, and most important niche, which faced the door of entry, and was decorated with the panel which has been described as "una delle più enigmatiche dell'arte cristiana"?⁸³

Here, too, an approach which has borne fruit for the lateral arms of the chapel, which together form a whole, will be utilised, and the panel across from the door (fig.25) will be considered along with its companion over the entrance-door (fig.29). This latter shows a scene of paradise. Christ, the Good Shepherd, dressed in gold and imperial purple, with a plain gold halo, and holding a tall, golden cross, sits in an idealised landscape of grassy slopes and shrubs, tending six sheep, to one of which he extends his hand. The concept of Christ as Shepherd, an image of protection, was commonly illustrated in Early Christian times, and the iconography was taken over from classical painting.⁸⁴ Its inclusion is common to both funerary and baptismal

81 Some examples of this sort of arrangement survive in the mid-fourth century catacomb on the Via Latina, Rome.

82 W.K.C.Guthrie, The Greeks and their Gods, 230.

83 Ricci, Mausoleo, 84.

84 A.Grabar, Christian Iconography, 11.

programmes, with the baptismal the earlier, and the funerary use following, perhaps under the influence of Psalm 23, which opens with the words "The Lord is my shepherd".⁸⁵ In the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, in addition to symbolising the salvation of the individual Christian soul, to whom Christ puts out his hand, and the celestial bliss of those who are saved, the position of the image right over the entry-way gives it a prophylactic function guarding the doorway from any evil which might enter. Finally, and most importantly, in view of the image's place above the door, it illustrates Christ's words in John 10:7-9, "I am the door...through me whoever enters will be saved".⁸⁶ Thus, there are many layers of meaning in this panel, which far from merely depicting a standard Early Christian paradise scene, the most typical of all funerary decorations, has an extra prophylactic meaning, as well as illustrating the personal hope of salvation.

By contrast, the panel facing the door presents many problems which have been the subject of scholarly discussion. The three main subjects are presented in a unique juxtaposition of images which has no parallels in Early Christian art, so that a lack of comparative material compounds the difficulty of interpretation. In the centre, beneath the window, a wheeled grill sits in a vigorously burning bed of flames. On the right, a youngish man runs towards the fire. He carries an open codex on his left forearm, while his right hand supports a long-stemmed cross that rests on his shoulder. On the left, a cupboard is shown, its doors ajar. Within, labelled with their author's names (Marcus, Lucas, Matteus, Ioannes), the ribbon bedecked gospels lie, two to a shelf.

Attempts at identifying the running figure fall into two main groups. These either argue that the figure is Christ, or identify him as a martyr who has met death upon the gridiron that is shown below the window. The most convincing of the "Christ theories" is inspired by the idea that the panel should be seen in apocalyptic terms, as an image of

85 L.de Bruyne, "La décoration des Baptistères paléochrétiens", Atti del V congresso internazionale di archeologia cristiana", Aix-en-Provence, 1954, Paris, 1957, 345f., esp. 348-350.

86 See Ricci, Ibid, 91.

Christ's second coming. This idea makes special sense in a funerary setting.

Among the apocalyptic theorists, the most recent, and the most credible, is William Seston, who saw the subject of the panel as Christ himself, hurrying to the Second Coming.⁸⁷ André Grabar was taken enough with his theory to call it "très séduisante"⁸⁸ and indeed of all the suggestions, Seston's is the one which would best fit a funerary programme. According to him, the panel is a Last Judgment composition. The gridiron, instead of being the symbol of martyrdom, is interpreted as the Jewish altar of holocausts, on which sinners will be immolated, in contrast to the altar of perfumes in the sky around which the blessed will cluster.⁸⁹ This Old Testament imagery is seen as a prefiguration of the judgment that will follow Christ's second coming. The theory is based on the details of the holocaust altar as described in the Book of Exodus. The account in the Vulgate version of St. Jerome describes it as hollow, with horns and a grill on top; this description bears little resemblance to the flaming grill pictured in the chapel, which has wide-spaced bars and a leg at each corner, terminating in a wheel. By contrast, in the Syriac version of Exodus the altar differs in having its grill and lifting rings on the base.⁹⁰ Seston sees the wheels which terminate the legs of the chapel's grill as these rings, through which poles could be slid for lifting. One trouble with this theory is that it depends entirely on Eastern sources, the Syriac Bible and the commentaries of St. Ephrem, a Syrian Father who has no known connection with Ravenna or with Galla Placidia. Furthermore, and importantly, the figure is completely at variance with the Ravenna formula for Christ. All the other twenty-eight images of him at Ravenna, including the Good

87 See W. Seston, "Le Jugement Dernier au Mausolée de Galla Placidia à Ravenne" CahArch. 1, 1945, 37-50.

88 See Grabar, Martyrium, II, 35-36, note 1.

89 Exodus, 27:1-8.

90 According to the Syrian exegete Ephrem, in his Commentary on Exodus (Opera omnia, V, Syr. lat. p.43).

Shepherd in the opposite lunette, are dressed in imperial purple and gold.⁹¹ At the mausoleum, the figures in the opposing lunettes both carry processional crosses, and have plain gold haloes, but these similarities could stress typological connections between Christ, the Good Shepherd, and the unknown "saint" without implying that both are one and the same. The "saint's" hairstyle and facial features are also quite inappropriate for Christ. As for the so-called altar, a better explanation for its wheels is that they are what they seem to be: wheels designed for moving the device around. They look more suitable for rolling than for lifting, especially since they are well below the centre of gravity. Courcelle has identified them as the wheels of a *craticula*, a kind of gridiron for roasting meats which the Fathers described as possessing wheels.⁹² It seems clear that under Roman law a red hot gridiron could be used for torture, but that execution by burning alive, as tradition describes for the death of St. Lawrence, was rare.⁹³ But even for torture a grill large enough to lay a man on would be needed. Since a grill of this size would be unwieldy, it would need wheels for mobility. The identification of the grill as this sort of *craticula* has been confirmed by Jean Lassus who has pointed out the similarity between the grill in the mosaic and a surviving Etruscan gridiron from Orvieto, dating from about 500 BC.⁹⁴ As in the mosaic the short legs of this rectangular grill terminate in small wheels. Lassus describes the everyday use of such an object, for preparing meat

91 Ricci, Mausoleo, 85.

92 See P. Courcelle, "Le Gril de Saint Laurent au Mausolée de Galla Placidia", CahArch, 3, 1948, 29-40, esp. 36, and notes 7 and 8. Also Augustine, Sermo CCCIII, 1, PL. 38, col. 1394. "Craticula admota est, et tostus est" and Pseudo-Fulgence, Sermo LX, PL. 65, col. 931, "Craticula habebat rotas".

93 Though it appears from the writings of Tertullian that in Africa the penalty of fire was quite often used against the Christians. M.M. Barnay, Some Reflections of Life in North Africa in the writings of Tertullian, Dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington, 1968.

94 J. Lassus, "Craticula Habebat Rotas", CahArch, 16, 1966, 5-8.

away from the flames before wheeling it into position for cooking, and shows that such a structure reflects its function. For example, the Etruscan grill even has ornamental rings on top for securing the meat while moving the gridiron about. Lassus thinks there was an additional significance in the portrayal of this sort of grill. He suggests that, in the fifth century, memories of human sacrifice were not far distant, and that its use as a torture device would evoke memories of sacrifice to the pagan gods. Courcelle suggests one final level of meaning in the symbolism of the grill: the wheeled gridiron as the chariot on which the martyr's soul would rise to heaven at its resurrection. Thus it would be symbolically equivalent to the chariot of Elijah's ascension, or to that of Christ, when he is shown as Sun God.

But if the running figure is not Christ, he must presumably be both a saint, and a martyr, in view of the gridiron. An acceptable identification, though, must not ignore the other elements of the composition, and especially the presence of the gospel books. A specific reason is required for their presence. It is not enough, in my opinion, to say that they are symbols of the Christian faith. A viable interpretation must provide adequate explanation of all the components of the composition, with nothing left over.

In actual fact, the books themselves have also given rise to a set of theories. According to the "heresy theory", the book-bearing figure, be he a saint or Christ himself, is running towards the grill to cast a heretical book into the flames.⁹⁵ The relevance of the suppression of heresy to a funerary programme is not clear, nor can it be tied to any particular heresy, or to what we know of Galla Placidia.⁹⁶ Would a grill even be necessary for burning books? And even if it were, the book in this panel is being carefully held open as if it were displayed on the altar, and shows no sign of being consigned to the flames.⁹⁷ Moreover, the clearly written names on the books in the cupboard

95 C.Diehl, Ravenne, Paris, 1903, 32.

96 Seston, Jugement, 45.

97 Courcelle, Craticula, 29.

identify them as the gospels: they are not books of heresy. So it seems better to understand the books on literal terms, as four actual books, bound codices, rather than as divine revelations, the words of the evangelists. This distinguishes them from the gospels as revelations which have their own iconography: they are always represented as the four Beings, the symbols of the evangelists.

This leaves us with the third group of theories about the running figure: those identifying him as a saint. The favourite choice, on account of the gridiron, is St. Lawrence, a deacon like the mystery figure, with its attributes of processional cross and altar book. Above all, though, Lawrence was chosen because of the widespread conviction that he was the only one among the great Western saints who suffered on the gridiron.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, this identification presents grave difficulties. Most importantly, scholars have totally failed to find a specific explanation for the presence of the gospel-books. None of the texts that tell of Lawrence's martyrdom mention the gospels at all. Deichmann attempts to deal with this difficulty by interpreting not only the books, but the other images as well, in symbolic terms. The grill would then symbolise martyrdom; the running deacon, the faithful cleric and martyr; and the gospel-books, the faith for which he died.⁹⁹

At another, more literal, level of meaning, the books could represent the actual altar books, bound to the deacon's care. By a further allegory, they could also be symbols of the riches of the Church which, according to legend, Lawrence gave to the poor during the days before his death. But it is clear from early sources on the martyrdom of Lawrence, including Prudentius' poem in the Peristephanon Liber, that Lawrence identified the treasures of the Church for which he died as the Christian poor, whom he produced in place of the gold and silver that

98 Courcelle, Ibid, 39, "Le seul en Occident des grands martyrs par le feu".

99 Deichmann, Ravenna, II, Kommentar, 77-78.

the judge demanded at his trial.¹⁰⁰

The choice of Lawrence also poses an iconographic problem. Throughout the early Middle Ages he is portrayed on the gridiron, lying face-down, but rearing up on his elbows as he is held down by torturers. The famous moment of Lawrence's bravado as told by Prudentius is illustrated, when he challenges the torturers to turn him over and grill him on the other side. Even the earliest surviving image of the martyrdom of Lawrence, on a fourth-century lead medallion from the catacombs at S.Lorenzo fuori le mura, Rome,¹⁰¹ employed this formula, and 500 years later the same iconography was still in use, virtually unchanged, in the crypt chapel at San Vincenzo al Volturno, Molise.¹⁰² It is, in fact, the only early medieval iconographic formula known for this often illustrated scene, if we exclude the composition at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. This, it seems, is so totally different, both from the known formula, and from the details of literary accounts of Lawrence's martyrdom, that it must illustrate some other text altogether, even, perhaps, the sufferings of a different saint.

I have recently suggested that there is another saint and another text that fits the mystery lunette perfectly in all its details.¹⁰³ This saint too is a deacon, tortured on a gridiron, and a martyr whose cult was popular throughout the Roman world in the early fifth century.¹⁰⁴ His also is a martyrdom sung by Prudentius in his

100 Prudentius, Opera, II, Peristephanon Liber, II, "Hymnus in honorem passionis Laurentii beatissimi martyris", tr. H.J.Thomson, Loeb Classical Library, London and Cambridge, Mass., 1961, 108-143, esp. 118-127.

101 Formerly in the collections of the Vatican Museums. G.de Rossi, "Les médailles de dévotion des six ou sept premiers siècles de l'église", BAC, 7, 1869, 34-38, and fig.8.

102 Illustrated in A.Pantoni, San Vincenzo al Volturno e la cripta dell'abate Epifanio, 824-842. Montecassino, 1970, 38.

103 Mackie, New Light, 54-60.

104 Augustine, PL, 38, Sermo CCLXXVI, col.1257, "Quae hodie regio, quaeve provincia ulla, quo usque vel romanum imperium vel cristianum nomen extenditur natalem non gaudet celebrare Vincentii?".

Peristephanon, "Crowns of Martyrdom".¹⁰⁵ This individual is St. Vincent of Saragossa, the premier martyr of Spain, who suffered death in the persecutions of Diocletian at the start of the fourth century. His passion is described in his *Vita*,¹⁰⁶ as well as by Prudentius, and these two sources provide a remarkably accurate text for the mysterious images of the lunette. It is clear that the lunette illustrates the story that Prudentius put into verse sometime around the year 400, dwelling on every grisly detail. As will be demonstrated, the text explains all the constituents of the panel, making a coherent whole, and leaving nothing unexplained. There is no need to fall back on the symbolic content of the story, though that indeed could constitute a second level of meaning.

How likely is it that a saint from Spain, in the periphery of the Roman world, would be the main subject of an imperial decorative scheme in Italy? Prudentius' interest in Spanish martyrs in his Peristephanon has been explained by the fact that he himself was a Spaniard. It is less well-known, perhaps, that Galla Placidia was also of Spanish descent, as well as having the poignant connections with Spain which have been mentioned earlier in this chapter. But even in non-Spanish circles, the cult of Vincent was widespread by the fifth century. This is proved by the numerous sermons eulogising the saint that survive among the works of St. Augustine of Hippo and Pope Leo I.¹⁰⁷ On both these counts it seems natural that the cult should appeal to the empress and be included in the programme of her mausoleum. She may well have acquired relics of St. Vincent during her stay in Spain, and put them in

105 Prudentius, Peristephanon Liber, V, "Passio Sancti Vincenti Martyris", tr. H.J. Thomson, Loeb, London and Cambridge, Mass., 1961, 168-203.

106 See H. Delehaye, Les Origines du culte des martyrs, Brussels, 1933, 92, for sources and a discussion of his epic passion, and Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri, "A proposito della Passio S. Vincentii levitae", Note Agiografiche, Studi e Testi, 65, Vatican City, 1965.

107 Augustine preached sermons on 4 successive feast days of St Vincent: Sermons CCLXXIV-CCLXXVII, In festo martyris Vincentii, PL, 38, cols. 1252-1268. Leo I, 440-461, also preached a sermon on the saint's Passion, In natali S. Vincentii martyris, Sermon XIII, PL, 14, cols. 501-504.

the altar of her chapel, which presumably was beneath the lunette with the mysterious composition.

The lunette mosaic illustrates the main features of the saint's martyrdom. The deacon Vincent had defied the imperial order to sacrifice to the pagan gods, as promulgated by Datianus, governor of Spain, Vincent's judge. His sentence was torture on the rack, and to be torn with hooks. When he remained steadfast, he was ordered to disclose his "secret writings" and "hidden books", that "the teaching which sows the vicious seed may be burned with the fire it merits".¹⁰⁸ Vincent replied that the destruction of the sacred books would be avenged by God, who would consign his judge to hell. Here surely is a precise text for the mosaic's gospel cupboard, a very satisfactory alternative to Deichmann's allegorical interpretation.

Next Prudentius tells of the judge's frenzied reaction to Vincent's counter attack. Datianus orders the last degree of torture "with fire and bed and plates".¹⁰⁹ The *grabato* or bed is the gridiron, sometimes described as with sharpened bars to cut the victim's flesh, and here as with spikes, "its teeth wide spaced....a cruel bed" where "a great mass of coals exhales its burning breath".¹¹⁰ The text again applies to the mosaic scene: the flaming grill below the window fits the poem's words exactly. To this ultimate torture "Vincent hurries with quick step. Joy gives him speed and he outstrips the very ministers of torture. Now they have reached the wrestling ground where the prize is glory".¹¹¹ Here too, the mosaic's hurrying figure illustrates the text, while the absence of torturers also fits the details of the poem.

Although Vincent does not die on the grill, he is released as a prelude to fresh torture, which is precluded by his death: surely the result of the torture on the gridiron. Even then his ordeal was not

108 Prudentius, Peristephanon, V, Loeb, 180-184.

109 Ibid, 206-208.

110 Ibid, 217-220.

111 Ibid, 209-213.

ended, for the governor was determined that his body must not be allowed to find rest. First it was offered to the wild beasts, but to no avail, for God mercifully sent a raven to guard it from predation. At last it was sewn into a shroud and committed to the sea, a final attempt to deny Vincent's soul its resting place. And here another element of the story seems to have special relevance for Placidia, who had been saved, along with her children, from certain death at sea by divine intervention.¹¹² The body of Vincent, rather than being denied Christian burial, was borne by divine command towards the shore, flying through the water until it reached land at Valencia, where a sanctuary was built and the blessed bones were laid to rest.

Prudentius tells a story whose main events are perfectly illustrated by those mysterious images: the scriptures, the bed of coals and the eagerly running saint. The images are explained separately, but more importantly, their meaning is enhanced by their common relationship to the same text. The scriptures are not merely the Gospels that symbolise the faith, but the secret books of Vincent's interrogation, the books he will willingly protect by undergoing further torture. The flaming grill is described by Prudentius down to the coals, crackling fire and widespread teeth. The saint who runs so eagerly to martyrdom is so described in the poem, where Vincent is identified as a deacon, just as the mosaic portrays him, complete with altar book and processional cross. Finally, his deliverance even after death from the sea reflects what Placidia obviously regarded as a miracle in her own life. Her residence in Spain at what must have been a crucial period in her life provides a geographic context in which she could have acquired a devotion to Vincent, and even some physical relics of the saint. As we have seen, the cult of Vincent was well known in Italy during Placidia's lifetime. Relics of the saint were to be found in Ravenna a century after her death,¹¹³ and by that time he had also attained

112 As recorded on the lost mosaics of her church of S. Giovanni Evangelista, Ravenna. Agnellus, ed. Testi Rasponi, CPER, 128-129. This incident probably occurred in 424, when Placidia returned to Italy from Constantinople.

113 Agnellus, CPER, 191-192. The relics were among those of 20

inclusion in the Canons of both the Ambrosian and the Visigothic Mass, as well as in the Ravenna Litany. He had also been portrayed among the saints in procession on the nave wall at S.Apollinare Nuovo.¹¹⁴ This evidence makes it more than possible that Vincent was the subject of Placidia's devotion and her mosaic. Curiously, despite Vincent's popularity, no other images of him from this early period survive, except a gold glass orant figure inscribed with his name.¹¹⁵ It was not until the later Middle Ages that his martyrdom became a popular subject for illustration.

One question remains: what exact purpose in the overall iconographic programme of the chapel does this image fulfil? It seems obvious that the primary purpose of portraying a saint, the symbols of his passion and a shortened narrative of his claim to glory must relate to the patron's need for his mystical presence in the chapel and for his help in fulfilling its purpose. This purpose was the facilitation of the occupants' passage to eternal life. We can only surmise what furnishings originally lay below this mosaic panel. Certainly, if the decoration betrays the function, as I believe, a third sarcophagus would not have been part of the original equipment. An altar for the funerary rites seems the most likely answer. The particular image chosen implies that this altar was sanctified with relics of an important saint: certainly the saint whose passion is so graphically illustrated above. If this saint is indeed Vincent of Saragossa, as seems likely, then his would be the relics enshrined below, brought here perhaps by Galla Placidia on her return from Spain in 416.

In view of its central position in the chapel, facing the entry door, the panel of Vincent, his gridiron and the gospels should be the key to the chapel's decorative programme. Its position, across from the Good Shepherd panel, links its meaning to that paradise scene and to the

important saints and apostles placed in St.Stephen's church, built by Maximinian and dedicated in 550.

114 O. von Simson, Sacred Fortress, 84-85.

115 Hermann Vopel, Die altchristlichen Goldgläser, Freiburg, 1899, no. 401. "VINCENTIUS AGNES POLTUS" (Hyppolytus), from the catacomb of S.Callisto, Rome.

expected bliss of the hereafter.

The inclusion of Vincent must have had some special meaning in Placidia's life, and indeed we have located several possible areas of significance for her in his story, most relevantly his Spanish nationality and his delivery from the sea. In the realm of speculation, if this chapel were built not for the empress herself, but for her baby son, its Spanish connection would be well explained, as well as its position beside the palace church, where Placidia was wont to pray at night. Its difference in size, scale and plan from other imperial mausolea in Italy would also be explained, if it were built not for an emperor but for the child of a barbarian king. The changes could well be interpreted as personal choices made on behalf of an occupant who had no official status, and who therefore had no need of a mausoleum of vast dimensions, designed for the funerary and commemorative rites of an emperor. Galla Placidia's son could have been such an occupant, and would have had no need of such a setting. The second change of chapel form, to a cruciform shape, may well have been the personal choice of a pious Christian, who, it has recently been suggested, sought to emulate in her devotion to the Cross the piety of Helena, the mother of Constantine.¹¹⁶

Thus the mausoleum of Galla Placidia can best be understood as a purpose-built funerary chapel, decorated as a microcosm of heaven, and expressing in symbolic terms the Christian hope of life after death in the realms beyond the stars. In the chapel's assumption of the shape and symbolism of the cross it states that the cross provides the way of salvation: in its devotion to Vincent it shows the means whereby Christians by grace and sacrifice may tread the path to eternity. These must have been the aspirations of Galla Placidia as she commissioned this burial place, whether for herself or for members of her family. There the deceased would have lain in their funerary chambers as in the chapels of the catacombs, surrounded by the imagery that would give Christian meaning and hope to their deaths. Galla Placidia died far

116 Lesley Brubaker, paper on the patronage of Galla Placidia presented at the Byzantine Studies Conference, 1990.

away, and we shall probably never know if any part of the planned use of the chapel was fulfilled, and whether any member of her family was buried there. At least it seems time to drop the "so-called" from the chapel's usual name, and call this structure what it plainly is: the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia.

In the last three chapters, the funerary structures that have survived with their decorations from Late Antiquity have revealed different aspects of the series *cella memoriae*, funerary chapel, martyr shrine, and it has been possible to explore the attitudes to death and burial current in the upper levels of Late Antique society through their decorative programmes. This has allowed a depth of understanding that was not possible in the survey chapters, which of necessity were based on much more fragmentary data. San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, S.Matrona, and the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia reveal the aspirations of their creators both in their iconographic language, and, particularly in the case of S.Vittore, in the contemporary literary sources. But even where documentation has not survived it has been possible to discover literary, biblical, liturgical and patristic texts related to the iconographic programmes, texts which reveal the beliefs of the founders about death, burial and the afterlife.

The next chapters will focus on chapels at the Lateran baptistery, Rome, using their decorative programmes and surviving documentation to unravel the mystery of the purposes for which they were built.

CHAPTER 8

THE LATERAN BAPTISTERY CLUSTER, I: THE FIFTH CENTURY CHAPELS

The decision to discuss the Lateran baptistery chapels at Rome as a group was taken primarily because of their importance as a cluster of oratories around a core building. Although this arrangement of chapels around funerary basilicas was common in the fifth and sixth centuries, no other group has survived with even vestiges of its original decoration, or with documentary evidence that they were the work of the same patron. By contrast, at the Lateran Baptistery the earlier members of the group are the work of the same fifth century pope, and will be identified in this chapter as votive chapels sheltering non-corporeal relics. The seventh century chapel of S.Venanzio, important as a well-documented martyrium, will be discussed separately in Chapter 9.

The Lateran baptistery, then, is unique in still possessing three of the four chapels with which it was endowed in Late Antiquity (plan, fig.29). These are a pair of chapels dedicated in the fifth century to the two saints John (fig.29, c & d), and an earlier structure which was renovated and redecorated in the seventh century to house relics of a group of Dalmatian and Istrian martyrs (fig.29,h). One other early chapel, dedicated to the Holy Cross, has failed to survive (fig.29,f). However, some idea of its architecture and its interior decoration can be obtained from the descriptions and drawings of Renaissance scholars and artists, made before it was destroyed in 1588 on the orders of Pope Sixtus V. This cluster of chapels is of unique interest because large areas of decoration remain *in situ* or can be reconstructed from documentary evidence. All three of the early chapels are due to the patronage of Hilarus I (461-468), while the fourth, in its present state, is securely documented to the reign of the Dalmatian pope, John IV (640-642).

The biography of Pope Hilarus records that he built and endowed three vaulted chapels at the Lateran Baptistery in Rome, dedicating them

to the two saints John and to the Holy Cross.¹ To each of the former he gave a silver *confessio* and a golden cross, while their vaults were enriched with the gold and the brilliant colours of glass mosaic. The chapel of S.Croce was also endowed with rich gifts in gold, silver and gems:--a *confessio* with silver doors for the relic of the cross; a golden cross with gems; a gold candelabrum with dolphins to hang before the *confessio* and a lamb elevated on an onyx arch above it by means of columns--all of these as well as the four lamps were also of gold. On the vault four angels held up an image of the Cross on a golden mosaic ground.² The chapel was also set in surroundings of great luxury. It was approached, by way of a portico with giant porphyry columns, from a courtyard provided with three fountains made of precious materials. This space was decorated with marbles and mosaics, railed in bronze and shaded on three sides by a colonnade of white, yellow and porphyry columns. Of all this splendour only the chapels of the saints John survive, shorn of all but the mosaic vault of the one, (S.Giovanni Evangelista, fig.29,c) and the original bronze doors of the other (S.Giovanni Battista, fig.29,d). The chapel of S.Croce (fig.29f) and its forecourt (fig.29e) are entirely lost, along with the vault-mosaic of the Baptist's chapel, and all the other decorations and furnishings of the surviving chapels. However, enough information remains in the drawings and descriptions of the chapels and their dedicatory verses, in the buildings themselves, and in the vault-mosaic at S.Giovanni Evangelista, to give a good idea of both the original decoration and the function of each individual chapel.

S.Croce was built by Hilarus as a shrine for a fragment of the

1 LE, I, 242-248, esp. 242; tr. R.Davis, Book of Pontiffs, 38-41, and Davis-Weyer, Early Medieval Art, 34-37.

2 Onuphrius Panvinus, (O.Panvinio), De sacrosancta Basilica, Baptisterio et Patriarchio Lateranensi, IV, De Oratorio S.Crucis, ch.9, ed. Philippe Lauer, Le Palais du Latran, Paris, 1911, 467-468. Also Giuliano da Sangallo, Bibl.Vat., Barb.lat.4424 fol.33r., c.1500; see Il Libro di Giuliano di Sangallo, Codice Vaticano Barberiniano Latino 4424, ed. Christian Huelson, Leipzig, 1910, repr. Vatican City, 1984. R.Krautheimer, Rome, fig.47.

True Cross.³ Devotion to the Cross was a major preoccupation of the fifth century Roman church: its wood had been discovered by Constantine's mother Helena on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the early fourth century, perhaps as early as 325-326, and was venerated and endowed with mystical significance. It cannot be by accident that the building chosen for this reliquary-chapel was cruciform, and that its architectural form symbolised its holy contents. It was a Greek cross, with four small chapels enclosed within the angles of its arms. A single entrance occupied one arm: in Panvinio's time, the verse INTROIBO, DOMINE, DOMUM TUAM ET ADORABO AD TEMPLUM SANCTUM TUUM IN TIMORE TUO was inscribed above this door, which was framed by a pair of antique, fluted columns.⁴ This entry gave access to the other three arms: further doors at the crossing led to the smaller chapels, making a total of seven, a number symbolic of perfect order, as well as of the three-dimensional cross.⁵ According to the ground plan and drawings of Baldassare Peruzzi, 1481-1536,⁶ the corner chapels were hexagonal (fig.30). Giuliano da Sangallo, however, shows them as hexagonal inside, inscribed within the angles of the octagonal ground-plan of each corner chapel, which were within the arms of the interior cross.⁷ An anonymous fifteenth century plan which shows the chapels as round must be incorrect (fig.31):⁸ it probably reflects the ruinous condition of S.Croce at that time, for Panvinio, in the first half of the sixteenth century, noted that the corner chapels beside the entrance had

3 LP, I, 242, "Oratorium sanctae Crucis: confessionem ubi lignum posuit dominicum."

4 Panvinio, De Sacrosancto Basilica, ed. Lauer, Latran, 467.

5 J.E.Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, tr. J.Sage, New York, 1962, 223.

6 Alfonso Bartoli, I monumenti antichi di Roma nei disegni degli Uffizi di Firenze, 6 vols., Rome, 1914-1922; vol II, pl.CVIII, fig 193; 2 and 3 are Peruzzi's drawings of the interior and 4, of the exterior of S.Croce; 1 is the anonymous plan of the chapel.

7 Giuliano da Sangallo, Bibl.Vat.,ms.Barb.lat.XLIX, fol.30v.c.

8 Bartoli, Monumenti, I, pl.II, "Ignoto A, sec.XV, 1,2 and 3, esterno, interno e pianta dell'Oratorio della Croce al Laterano".

collapsed, while only those at the altar end remained standing.⁹

A fair amount is known about the interior decoration of S.Croce. The mosaic of the central vault, with its angels holding up a roundel, may have been converted from a pagan scheme, for Sangallo's drawings show the "angels" as semi-naked putti in the classical tradition (fig.32). On the other hand, Sangallo may have seen an Early Christian scheme through the classicising eyes of the Renaissance. He presents the central field as an empty oculus,¹⁰ though Panvinio, with the possible concurrence of Ugonio, noticed a cross inside this roundel.¹¹ Panvinio's observation has led to the design being considered ancestral to later vault compositions of the same type, as at the Ravenna Archbishops' Chapel and the S.Zeno Chapel, Rome.

Ugonio also observed varicoloured birds, perhaps in a design of foliage, on the vault.¹² Below these designs, each angle of the crossing bore a large *intarsia* cross, and the cut stone work extended to the major arches below the mosaic.¹³ The subsidiary chapels to either side of the main altar also carried traces of very beautiful designs in cut marbles.¹⁴ Of the chapels flanking the entrance, that to the right was sketched by Peruzzi, who located it as "A" on his ground plan (fig.30), and shows it with 3 windows each framed by paired columns

9 Panvinio, De Basilica, ed. Lauer, Latran, 468, "Inter quatuor absidas erant totidem oratoriola antiqua, ex quibus duae portae propinqua diruta, duo versus aram maiorem cum duabus aris integra".

10 Sangallo, Bibl.Vat.,ms.Barb.lat.,XLIX, fol.30 & 31.

11 O.Panvinio, Ibid, 467-468, "Tectum est testudinatum et elegantissimo aureo musivo pictum, cum quatuor angelis sanctam Crucem tenentibus". Also, P.Ugonio, Bibl.Vat.,ms.Barb.lat.,XXX, 67, ed. P.Lauer, Latran, 580, "La volta di supra si vedono 4 angeli che tengono in mano forse una croce alta onde venne detto di Santa Croce"

12 Ugonio, Ibid, 580, "...et un [fogliame gentilissimo?] con ucelli di varij colori contesto". Ugonio's hand here is, as so often, virtually impossible to decipher.

13 Ugonio, Ibid, 580. O.Panvinio, De Sacrosancto Basilica, ed Lauer, Latran, 468.

14 Ugonio, Ibid, 580.

supporting an entablature. Above were two zones of richly patterned panels, presumably carried out in *opus sectile*, while the domed vault above was pierced by an open oculus. Sangallo shows the decoration of one wall of the left chapel--the lower area bore two zones of lozenges in *opus sectile* below the springing of the vault and the oculus.¹⁵ Most of this had disappeared by the time Panvinio described the chapels. The chapel drawn by Peruzzi had fallen; that to the right of the altar was described as having a marble pavement and whitewashed walls, while that on the left had also lost the marbles from its walls, which were now covered with "inept" paintings.¹⁶

The main drum below the vault is described as having had four broad windows in Panvinio's time, three of which had been blocked up: the spaces between were the site of mosaic figures of eight apostles and saints: Peter and Paul, John the Evangelist and John the Baptist, Lawrence and Stephen, James and Philip.¹⁷ Panvinio's description is our sole source of information on this point, as the figures are not shown between the windows in the drawings of either the anonymous artist, Peruzzi, Sangallo, or Lafréri.¹⁸ Lafréri's engraving, for instance, shows the view into the altar end of the main chapel, clearly depicting the area around the wide window over the main apse (fig.33). The areas of marble revetment are drawn with care, but neither figures nor crosses are shown there. The vault shows candelabra on the groin ribs, not angels, and a group of three figures is sketched indistinctly in the vault area over the window. It is difficult to reconcile Lafréri's version with those of the other artists. Sangallo's drawings clearly show the vault design, while the Anonymous shows the crossing, looking

15 Sangallo, *Bibl.Vat.,ms.Barb.lat.,XLIX, fol. 30v.,d.*

16 Panvinio, *Ibid*, 468. tr. C.Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art*, 35-37.

17 Panvinio, *De Basilica*, "Fenestrarum interstitia e musivo omnia cum picturis SS.Petri et Pauli, Joannis Evangelistae et Baptistae, Laurentij et Stephani, Jacobi et Philippi."

18 A.Lafréri, *Speculum romanae magnificentiae*, 1575, illustrating S.Croce as seen in 1568. See Georges Rohault de Fleury, *Le Latran au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1877, pl. XXXV.

into a side arm. High up on its curved wall we see one of the large *opus sectile* crosses that were mentioned by Panvinio. The rich encrustation of marble occupied five zones of various widths separated by mouldings: the cross formed a part of the top and widest band. We must stress that none of these detailed drawings shows the saints which Panvinio saw between the windows, saints which have been compared with those in the upper tympani at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. Perhaps, despite Panvinio's statement, they were above the windows here too, and can be identified as the indistinct figures which both Lafréri and the Anonymous show in the mosaic zone of the vault.

What was the significance of the choice of these particular apostles and saints? Peter and Paul as patrons of Rome do not pose a problem. The two saints John are presumably here for the same reasons as the dedications: the Baptist because of the nearby Baptistery; the Evangelist as Pope Hilarus' special protector. Philip and James, who share a feast day, often also shared a dedication in the East, and in Rome also the basilica of the SS.Apostoli was originally dedicated to these two martyrs, whose relics still lie under the high altar.¹⁹ A more specific Roman connection has not been defined, and nor has any special connection to Pope Hilarus. Lawrence and Stephen, both deacons and martyrs; Lawrence the local Roman saint and subject of special devotion in the city, and Stephen, the first martyr, are also often honoured together in the same monuments.²⁰ S.Croce, however, is the earliest decorative programme on record to pair them in this way.

Although Panvinio's account that the vault showed angels holding up a roundel with a cross has been generally accepted, the only artist to depict the roundel clearly, Sangallo, shows it as an empty oculus,²¹

19 Ugonio, Historia delle Stationi di Roma, Rome, 1588, 82, "Reliquie della chiesa de Santi Apostoli. Sotto l'altar maggiore, vi sono i corpi de santi Apostoli Filippo, e Iacomo il minore".

20 Though all other surviving examples are of later date, for example that in the crypt chapel at S.Vincenzo al Volturno, from the abbacy of Euphаний, 824-842.

21 Sangallo, Bibl.Vat., Barb.lat.4424, fol.33r.

just as Peruzzi depicts an unmistakable oculus in the corner chapel "A". Krautheimer has suggested that the origin of S.Croce was as a garden pavilion of the second or third century:²² it seems likely that that both the main and annexed rooms of this structure originally had open oculi, and were reflections in miniature of the second century Pantheon. The cross-bearing roundel could have been a later insert into the central opening, where perhaps it was more vulnerable to the ravages of time than the remaining vault mosaics.

The chapel of S.Giovanni Evangelista, built as a thank-offering by Pope Hilarus, is another small, cruciform structure, this time preceded by a narrow, windowless narthex. By contrast, its companion chapel, S.Giovanni Battista, has a vaulted oval interior, with two apses. According to Panvinio, this chapel in the sixteenth century was a "small square building", its vault supported by four columns in the corners, one of marble and the others of alabaster. The mosaic vault "had beneath it an elegantly stuccoed little apse", and also two other apses at the sides with later paintings.²³ The designs of the original mosaic vaults of both chapels have survived: the one at S.Giovanni Evangelista is still intact though with areas of restoration (fig.34, 35), while the related one at S.Giovanni Battista is known from the engraving of Ciampini (fig.36).²⁴ In each case, the decoration is centred on the Lamb, which occupies the highest point of the vault, haloed and enclosed in a wreath of seasonal fruits and flowers. In the Baptist's chapel, the vault was subdivided into fields by intersecting bands of decorative mosaic. The axes of a central square around the Lamb and its wreath were prolonged until they intersected with the frames of the two lunettes, and this rectangular network interlocked with a wide, diamond-shaped frame whose points touched the upper extremities of the same lunettes. A candelabrum motif bearing peacocks

22 Krautheimer, Three Christian Capitals, 115.

23 Panvinio, De Basilica, III, 7-9, ed. Lauer, Latran, 466-467.

24 Giovanni Ciampini, Vet.Mon. I, 1690, p.241 and pl.LXXV.

occupied each of the responds of the vault: birds and flowers inhabited the triangular spaces created by the vaults' mosaic framework. Doves and peacocks, partridges and parrots, lilies and acanthus filled these spaces. In each end lunette a window was flanked by standing evangelists with haloes and open books: Matthew and Luke facing Mark and John, named by inscription and further identified by their symbols which reared up from the clouds above their heads.

The golden vault of S.Giovanni Evangelista is also centred on a Lamb, its feet towards the altar in the East, and framed by a leafy wreath (fig.35). This wreath contains fruits of the seasons, lilies and other flowers, olives, wheat and grapes. The composition was in widespread use in other media in the fifth century.²⁵ The mosaic is enclosed in a square framework of brown, decorated with paired dark-blue curlicues alternating with small blue crosses highlighted in red. A similar border frames each of the four lunettes, and is joined by a vertical to the frame above. Broad brown bands matching the other elements of the framework in the groins of the vault bear candelabra, ornamented with small red flowers centred in yellow. Each candelabrum springs from a gold circle which contains a red square on a dark-blue background, as from a dark-blue shield with a red blazon. At a point one third up the candelabrum is a gold rectangle framed in blue, and bearing blue volutes back-to-back. Further up is a pair of blue dolphins, head to head. The candelabra end in finials, and the brown bands are edged by a blue vegetal border.

The brown framework of four diagonal and four intermediate supports holds up a hollow square which not only frames the Lamb, but acts as a support for rich hanging swags of seasonal fruits and flowers. The whole structure seems to represent a tent-frame.²⁶ The eight radial supports define eight golden areas, as if one looked out from inside the

25 A very similar example in ivory forms the central panel of the "Five-Part Diptych" in the treasury of Milan Cathedral. See C.Bertelli, (ed.) Il millenio ambrosiano. Milano, una capitale da Ambrogio ai Carolingi, Milan, 1987, p.120-121, pl.139 & 141.

26 It is interesting that the Psalms use "tent" as a poetic synonym for the temple in Jerusalem. NOAB, Psalm 27:6, and note, page 674.

tent through a transparent veil into an infinity beyond, an infinity symbolised by the mystic gold chosen to represent it. In each segment of this vision of infinite space a green platform floats, and on it, a pair of birds peck at fruits piled in a high-footed vase. The choice of birds reflects the ancient idea of the four elements: earth, air, fire and water,²⁷ made up of the three states of matter, and the agent--fire--that transforms them.²⁸ These are the constituent elements of the universe, and in Christian thought, represent the infinity of God's creation. Two pairs of parrots, symbolising fire, preen themselves with orange beaks; their well-modelled plumage is enlivened by wing patches, and they wear the collars of exotic pets. Water is illustrated by ducks--apparently mallards, three female and one male, much restored. The birds of air are four grey doves with orange beaks and legs. The earth is represented by partridges or quails, grey above, rosy below with orange feet and beaks. The vision out into infinity is bounded at the bottom by a blue cusped band, which seems to be intended as the selvedge or embroidered border of a gauze drapery.

It is not fanciful to see these frameworks on the vault of S.Giovanni Evangelista, and the similar but lost design at S.Giovanni Battista, as three-dimensional tent structures arching over the space of the chapel. The reality of the framework as tent frame is betrayed by its colour, the natural brown of wood. The trophies displayed upon its corner-posts, and the garlands suspended from its roof-frame further define it as the framework of a visionary dwelling from which one looks out at the infinity of heaven, symbolised by the golden dome of the vault. This idea of a vision of the eternity of Paradise glimpsed from within a defined space that symbolises the world of the present is not an invention of Christian or even of Roman art, and the only thing which distinguishes the Christian version in these chapels is the central vision which is the Lamb. The mechanism for defining this sort of revelation remains the same, and can be traced back, ultimately, into

27 Rohault de Fleury, Latran, 313-315.

28 Cirlot, Symbols, 90-91.

the funerary art of the Etruscans. Many an Etruscan tomb features painted tentpoles and ridgepoles, which define the interior space and delimit it from the Beyond, which although different in meaning and content from the Christian heaven, yet shares an iconographic language which is expressive of the soul's journey after death and of human hope of happiness in that realm. The Tomba del Cacciatore at Tarquinia, for example, takes the form of a room with an inner ceiling and upper wall-frieze (fig.37).²⁹ The ceiling is decorated with squares of red, blue and white, reminiscent of fabric, finished at the lower edges by a frieze of animals in the same colours. The tent's support structure is clearly indicated in red-brown: a tentpole in the centre of the end wall articulates with a ridge-pole, beams or trusses hold the squared "fabric" taut, and the gable end is further supported by a pair of horizontal struts. From the lower edge of the roof awning hangs the transparent curtain through which the paradise of the hunter is glimpsed: undulating hills, trees and game animals, while from the curtain rail dead ducks hang by their beaks as trophies. The curtain's transparency is indicated by repeated motifs, a small red square circumscribing a cross, imitating the medallions that were sometimes woven into plain gauzes.³⁰ The transparent curtain defines the invisible boundary between the Here and the Other; a concept which the Romans inherited and which was still expressed in the same visual formula almost a millenium later in the time of Pope Hilarus.

Many intermediate stages in the inheritance of these ideas have been documented by Karl Lehmann, who found two particular elements persisting from Etruscan and pagan Roman times to become reorganised and reinterpreted in Christian terms. These are the "canopy of heaven", a central, carpet-like motif which can be seen as the descendent of the

29 Stephan Steingraber, Catalogo ragionato della Pittura Etrusca, Milan, 1985. Tomb 3700, no.51, pl.52-53, date 510-500, BC.

30 Gauzes which were still being made in late Roman times: a fine sixth-century example in plain weave ornamented with small black medallions, hangs in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

roof-awning, and the diagonal figures or supports which hold it up, giving an illusion of heaven as some sort of pavilion in the sky.³¹ These diagonal supports, which are often supplemented by intermediate members, are only a hair-breadth away from the Lateran chapels' full tent-frames. A further evolutionary change affects the colour of the sky. "Gleaming and visionary late antique gold"³² comes to supplant earlier colours, such as the red of Etruscan ceilings which symbolised light,³³ and garlands of flowers, as at S.Giovanni Evangelista, come to supplant or supplement the fringes and lappets of the earlier carpet motifs. Furthermore, temporary structures, painted to mimic the heavens, were erected in both Hellenistic and Roman antiquity,³⁴ and form another link between the painted tents of the Etruscan tomb and the late antique frameworks at the Lateran.

An example of four-seasons imagery symbolising the passage of time by means of the cycle of the fruits of nature throughout the year is found in the wreath surrounding the Lamb, where olives, grapes, flowers and wheat are depicted. Lehmann identifies this type of imagery as the last in a venerable series of personified seasons in Roman vaults and floors--containing a hidden allusion to the passage of time, with its relationship to the world of experience, which would later be supplanted by imagery that reflected the eternal and transcendental. For example,

31 Karl Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven", Art Bull., 27, 1945, 1-27. Among Lehmann's intermediate examples are the Pompeian ceiling, fig.25, before 79AD, with a central opening surrounded by a square awning edged by lappets and held up by corner "candelabra"; the vault from Hadrian's villa known from a drawing by Ponce, fig.5, second century, with candelabra and genies holding up an awning, also centrally parted to show the starry heavens; and the decoration of the dome of the Naples baptistery, ca. 405, fig.30, an eight fold composition, but also based on a supported awning, pierced in the centre to reveal the starry sky and the presence of Christ's symbol, its pleated edge pulled up and parted to reveal a vision of heavenly scenes beyond.

32 Lehmann, Ibid, 10.

33 Lehmann, Ibid, 9, and note 62, discusses the ceiling of the Tomb of the Monkey, Chiusi, in this context. Steingraber, Catalogo, 279-280, no.25.

34 Lehmann, Ibid, 10-11.

the seasonal trees that represented spring, summer, autumn and winter gave way to the unchanging year-round palm trees of the eternal heaven.³⁵ However, in the baptismal context, as at the Lateran, the garland may have a more immediate meaning. We read in the Odes of Solomon,³⁶ that the neophyte is urged to "come into his Paradise and make (himself) a garland from its tree and put it upon (his) head" This has been accepted as an allusion to the Eastern baptismal rite, which included the crowning of the neophyte with flowers.³⁷ These Odes, which have many allusions to such crowns, have been identified as baptismal hymns; the series was recited by the catechumens in a fixed order, one hymn for each of the days of Lent, in preparation for their baptism.³⁸ By the early fourth century these Odes were almost certainly in use in the West in a Latin version, which was quoted by Lactantius before 310.³⁹ They are therefore a possible source for the idea of garlands in this location. According to the Church Fathers, baptism was the means whereby Paradise was regained, cancelling out the Fall of Man. Therefore imagery appropriate to baptism (the garlands) and to Paradise (the vision of the Lamb, the golden vault, vases of plenty, and birds symbolising earth, air, fire and water), come together to express an idea dear to the early Christians: that baptism is in a very real sense the equivalent of death, both events being thresholds, the one to paradise regained on earth, the other to the real Paradise attainable through salvation.

This must be the key to the meaning of a decorative programme based on funerary symbolism in the setting of a baptistery. The content of such a programme, which appears on the surface to be funerary--from the vision of the Beyond where Christ reigns, to the idyllic golden dome

35 Lehmann, Ibid, 16, particularly paradise imagery, such as the palm trees in the vault of the S.Matrona chapel at S.Prisco.

36 J.H.Bernard, Odes of Solomon, Cambridge, 1912, XX, 7-8.

37 See also Ephraim, "Hymn of the Baptised", N&PNE, 13, 285.

38 Bernard, Odes, 18-19; also, ODCC, 1288.

39 Bernard, Ibid, 4.

of heaven--could equally well represent the paradise regained on earth by the neophytes at their initiation into the Christian mysteries.

An interesting problem remains unsolved: the function of these chapels in the Lateran baptistery complex. Their location suggests that they must have played some part in the sacrament of baptism. This idea has engaged scholars in past times. The 17th century liturgical scholar Jean Mabillon, for example, proposed that one of the chapels, S.Giovanni Battista, had been a changing room for the catechumens, who would have required such a facility since baptism was by total immersion. The candidates removed their clothes, for the state of nakedness held a symbolic meaning: the candidate must put off the old garment that represented the sinful body, and stand as a child beside the font. Equally, he or she by undressing eliminated the "badges of social difference".⁴⁰ The candidates were then ready for immersion in the font and after the ceremony each received a white garment, symbolising their new found purity. Duchesne added a further twist with a Victorian flavour to the "changing room theory", and suggested that men changed their clothes in one chapel, women in the other.⁴¹ Mabillon's theory depends on the old name of one of the chapels, which was known in the ninth century writings of Alcuin as S.Giovanni *ad vestem*.⁴² The *vestis* concerned, though, was probably the garment of St.John, which, it seems, may have been housed as a relic in the chapel.⁴³ Further evidence

40 Peter Brown, The Body and Society, New York, 1988, 96 and note 54.

41 L.Duchesne, Christian Worship, London, 1912, 312, n.2, "as there were two similar chapels, it is possible that they were both used, one for the men, the other for the women"

42 D.Johanne Mabillon, Museum Italicum, II, Antiquos Libros Rituales Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae, Paris, 1687, appendix to Ordo Romanus III, 33, Feria Coenae Domini, 37f. "Deinde dicit sacerdos orationem & tunc vadunt ad sanctum Johannem f. ad vestem, canentes ant. Lapidem quem reprobaverunt, deinde All. cum psalmo CXIII." and "f, Deest in quibusdam ad Vestem. Apud vulgatem Alcuinum, "ad sanctum Iohannem ad Fontes seu ad Vestem". Exstat nunc quoque oratorium sancti Iohannis Baptistae ad Fontes Lateranenses, a beato Hilario papa constructum, quod, quia fortasse baptizandi vestes ibi deponebant, easdemque jam baptizati ibidem resumebant, dictum est "Sancti Iohannis ad Vestem"."

43 See note 57.

against the two changing rooms theory is the fact that whenever possible women were baptised by deaconesses in a separate ceremony, eliminating the need for paired changing rooms.⁴⁴ Possibly the candidates' clothes were cared for by the godparents, who accompanied the candidates to the font. No trace remains of the partitioned benches typical of classical bath buildings, though admittedly they would have been unlikely to have survived the alterations of centuries. Dyggve has shown that a small annexe at the Salona Baptistery did have such niches under the masonry benches.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, if such rooms for changing were essential to the rite of baptism, they should be found at all baptisteries. The converse is true, and annexe chapels at baptisteries are very much the exception, being virtually unknown except at Rome and Salona.⁴⁶

A non-baptismal function suggested for the two chapels is that they were libraries. This is because the Liber Pontificalis biography ascribes two such libraries to Hilarus.⁴⁷ The text is topographically confusing, and the libraries may not even have been at the Lateran, but at the monastery founded by pope Hilarus at S.Lorenzo fuori le Mura.

44 Although no specifically Roman source for this survives, separation of the sexes for modesty's sake is described in the Didascalia Apostolorum, an early third century "Church order" written in Syria, but surviving in part in Latin too, and known in the west. Didascalia Apostolorum, tr. from Syriac by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, London, 1903, 76, "It is not permitted to a woman to baptize" (on account of John, not Mary, baptising Christ), but see also 78, "Of the appointment of Deacons and Deaconesses", "but when there is a woman, and especially a deaconess, it is not fitting for the women that they be seen by the men...let it be a Deaconess...who anoints the woman...and when she that is baptised arises from the water let the Deaconess receive her, and teach her and educate her, in order that the unbreakable seal of baptism be with purity and holiness".

45 Dyggve, Salonitan Christianity, 30.

46 See the plans of paleochristian baptisteries in A.Khatchatrian, Les Baptistères paléochrétiens, Paris, 1962.

47 LP, I, 245. "Hic omnia in basilica constantiniana vel ad sanctam Mariam recondit. Hic fecit monasterium ad sanctum Laurentium et balneum et alium sub aere et praetorium. Fecit autem et bibliothecas II in eodem loco. Item monasterium intra urbe Roma ad Luna."

Ferrari, following Duchesne, prefers the S.Lorenzo site, which was first distinguished by its location only, "hic fecit monasterium ad sanctum Laurentium...fecit autem et bibliothecas II in eadem loco", but was later known according to its dedication as St.Stephen's, St.Lawrence's, St.Cassianus', or combinations of these.⁴⁸ According to Duchesne the exact location was near the south-east corner of the present basilica of S.Lorenzo.⁴⁹ Duchesne suggested that Hilarus had also chosen this place as the site of a papal country retreat, or *praetorium*, where according to custom he built two libraries, one for Greek books and the other for Latin. Ferrari also found this a reasonable assumption. Another group of Liber pontificalis texts, however, appears to favour the idea of the libraries being at the Lateran.⁵⁰ After *praetorium* we find the words "sancto Stephano. Fecit autem oratorium Sancti Stephani in Baptisterio Lateranense. Fecit autem et Bib.II in eadem loco". If this is the original reading, it places the libraries at the Lateran Baptistery, where one might speculate that they occupied the chapels of the two saints John, as sixteenth century authors such as Ugonio did in fact assume.⁵¹ However, nothing about their architecture or decoration supports this assumption: on the evidence from Ravenna, niches with slots for shelving might be expected, as well as dry or heated spaces.⁵² These are not present. The two chapels' differences in form also make it unlikely that they were purpose-built as an pair for identical usage.

This leaves the more obvious theories as to the uses of these

48 G.Ferrari, Early Roman Monasteries, Vatican City, 1957, 182.

49 LP, I, 249, note 3.

50 LP manuscripts BCDE.

51 Pompeo Ugonio, Historia delle stazioni di Roma, Rome, 1588, p.46v. "Fece ancora Papa Hilario in questo luogo, come scrive il Bibliothecario, due librerie per uso de Pontifici onde si vede quanto sia antico costume di tener le librerie nel palazzo Pontificale, e quanto è da laudare la providenza del sommo Pontefice Sisto V. il quale rinnova hoggi di l'esempio di Hilario, ornando il Vaticano della nuova Libreria...".

52 Janet Charlotte Smith, "Form and Function of the Side Chambers of Fifth- and Sixth-Century Churches in Ravenna", JSAH, 49, 1990, 181-204, esp.195-197.

chapels. Probably, as we have seen, they were built as shrines for relics of the patron saints. Février has also recently commented, on the basis of the chapels' silver *confessios*, that all these three chapels must have contained relics, though he did not identify them, except for the fragment of True Cross at S.Croce.⁵³ Although it is possible that the relics were used to sanctify the altars of chapels intended for other purposes, it seems more probable that the primary function of these chapels was to act as shrines for the relics themselves. The Lateran owned relics of both the saints John in the Early Middle Ages. The Baptist was the patron of the baptistery itself, as of most such buildings,⁵⁴ and his relics are listed in the correspondence of Pope Gregory I. The pope offered hairs from the Baptist's beard to Rechared, king of the Visigoths.⁵⁵ He also sent blood, ashes, hair and a tooth of John to Theodolinda, the Lombard queen.⁵⁶ John the Deacon lists the Baptist's camel-hair garment among the Lateran's possessions in the twelfth century.⁵⁷ It is not clear

53 P.A Février, "Baptistères, martyrs et reliques", *RAC*, 62, 1986, 121.

54 Almost all baptisteries were dedicated to him. Exceptions include the second baptistery at Milan, dedicated to Stephen, who also claimed Albenga and Lyon. At S.Probus, Classe, the baptistery was dedicated to S.Euphemia. Février, *Ibid.*, 126, suggests that any other dedication than to the Baptist must relate to the local possession of specific relics of a martyr.

55 Gregory I, *PL*, 77, lib.IX, *Epistola* CXXII, col.1052-1056, "Ad Recharedum visigothorum regem", esp. col 1035, "Crucem quoque dedit latori praesentium vobis offerendam, in qua lignum dominicae crucis inest, et capilli beati Joannis Baptistae...".

56 Gregory I, *Epistola* XXX, *PL*, 77, lib.IV, indict. XII, col.701, note f, citing Ripamonte, *Hist.Eccl.Mediol.*, VIII, 522-523; "Theodelindae Langobard. reginae Gregorius...concessit augustissimas reliquias...quas inter visuntur ipsius Baptistae reliquias, liquidus in ampulla cruor, cineres cremato corpore, et cum dente modicum quid e calvaria...sunt demum linteamenta quae martyrum sanguinem ebibere et ossium fragmina..." The jewelled reliquary in the cathedral treasury at Monza was probably made for these gifts.

57 For relics of the Baptist present in the Lateran in the late twelfth century see Giovanni Diacono, *Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae*, in *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, III, ed. Valentini and Zucchetti, *FSI*, 90, Rome, 1946, 319-375, esp. 336-339, "De arca et

whether any of these relics were already owned by the papacy in the mid-fifth century, but it seems more than likely that Hilarus had relics of the Baptist to place in his chapel of S.Giovanni Battista.

The chapel of S.Giovanni Evangelista was built as a thank-offering by Hilarus, who had taken refuge in the basilica of St. John at Ephesus when he was menaced by a rioting crowd, and attributed his safety to the Evangelist.⁵⁸ This makes it probable that its *confessio*, also, contained a special relic of the saint. According to John the Deacon, who was active between 1159 and 1180, two major relics of St. John the Evangelist were at the Lateran during the Middle Ages.⁵⁹ These were his tunic and a vessel full of the manna that issued from his body in the tomb. At that time both were in or below the silver covered wooden altar at S.Giovanni in Laterano.

The manna which had started flowing from the tomb of the saint immediately after his death at Ephesus was still in continuous production in the second century.⁶⁰ Hilarus could well have brought

sanctis sanctorum, quae sunt in Basilica Salvatoris". The list includes (p.337) "de sanguine sancti Iohannis Baptistae; de pulvere et cinere combusti corporis eiusdem praecursoris Christi; cilicium eius de pilis camelorum".

58 This information comes from the inscription above the marble doorway of the chapel, which reads LIBERATORI SUO BEATO IOANNI EVANGELISTAE HILARUS EPISCOPUS FAMULUS CHRISTI—"To his liberator Saint John the Evangelist from Hilarus bishop and Christ's servant", tr. Davis-Weyer, Sources, 36.

59 Giovanni Diacono, Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae, Cod.top, 336-339, "De arca et sanctis sanctorum, quae sunt in Basilica Salvatoris". The list includes (p.338) "De manna sepulturae sancti Iohannis Evangelistae ampulla plena. Tunica eiusdem apostoli et evangelistae, qua supposita corporibus trium iuvenum, surrexerunt; mortui enim fuerant propter venenum quod biberant".

60 M.R.James, The Apocryphal New Testament, Oxford, 1924, Acts of John, (II sec.) 270, "and forthwith manna issuing from the tomb was seen of all, which manna that place produceth even unto this day." Also, Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha, ed. C.Tischendorf, Leipzig, 1851, p.276, "Postea vero inventa est fovea illa plena, nihil aliud in se habens nisi manna; quam usque hodie gignit locus ipse et fiunt virtutes orationum ejus meritis, cum omnibus infirmitatibus et peniculis liberantur omnes et precum suarum consequantur effectum".

some back from Ephesus to sanctify the chapel of his vow. Rome's continuing interest in this relic is illustrated by the medieval painting, "The formation of the miraculous manna", that was discovered in the foundations of the Sancta Sanctorum in the chapel of S. Sebastiano.⁶¹

The tunic, John the Deacon tells us, was found during the reign of Hadrian I, 772-795, when an ancient altar of the Virgin was moved from the atrium into the chapel of S. Giovanni Evangelista: it is not clear if this was a chapel at the basilica, as Lauer thought, or the one at the baptistery, as seems more likely. Two small sealed boxes were found inside the altar, one of which contained some garments, a tunic and a dalmatic.⁶² John the Deacon thought the tunic was genuinely the Evangelist's, while the dalmatic probably belonged to St. Paschasius, whose clothing had performed miracles in the time of pope Symmachus, according to Gregory I.⁶³ Even if the tunic was genuine, however, it may not have been in the Lateran since the time of Hilarus, since a letter from Gregory shows that he asked John, abbot of S. Lucia, and later bishop of Syracuse, to send him the one that he had.⁶⁴ History is silent about whether the Sicilian abbot parted with the tunic: if he did, obviously this could have been the one found at the Lateran in the eighth century. Many other questions remain to be answered: the date of acquisition of the relics that were rediscovered in the reign of Hadrian I; the date of the altar's dedication to the Virgin and the reason for its transfer to the chapel; the identification of the St. John tunic with the one pope Gregory requested, and with one later found in the relic

61 P. Lauer, "Les fouilles du Sancta Sanctorum au Latran", Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'histoire, 20, 1900, 279-287. Vatican City, Archivio fotografico, N.VI.39:21.

62 Lauer, Latran, 77.

63 Gregory I, Dialogue, "De Anima Paschasii diaconi", PL, 77, Lib. IV, Cap. XIV, cols. 396-397, esp. 397. See also Joannes Diaconus, Vita sancti Gregorii, I/III, cols. 57-60.

64 Gregory I, Epistola III, PL, 77, Lib. III, cols. 605-606, tr. C. L. Feltoe, Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, 12, New York, 1895, 123.

altar of the Sancta Sanctorum; and so on. Nevertheless, it does seem certain that a relic of the Evangelist--whether one of those discussed or something else--was within this chapel. The building's cruciform shape suggests a funerary function, but this hardly seems possible as early as the fifth century inside the walls of Rome. We must conclude that the chapel was built for the veneration of a non-corporeal relic, the focus of pope Hilary's gratitude for favours received from the Evangelist, and that while this could well have been a garment, as the ninth century name *ad vestem* suggests, it was also quite likely to have been the pot of manna from his grave which is known to have been present in early medieval Rome.

Hilarus' dedicatory inscription at S.Giovanni Evangelista explains his purpose in building this chapel, which is a votive offering to the saint, in gratitude for favours received. Both Hilarus' other chapels also had personal dedicatory inscriptions, which are recorded. The Baptist's chapel was inscribed "to the holy people of God" on its stone lintel.⁶⁵ This chapel was twice dedicated to St.John, once in the surviving inscription of its original bronze doors: "Bishop Hilarus, servant of God, makes this offering in honour of Saint John the Baptist",⁶⁶ and again on the apse, which had already lost its mosaics in Panvinio's time.⁶⁷ In addition, Hilarus added a quotation from the Psalms to the doorways of S Giovanni Battista and S.Croce. "Lord, I have loved the beauty of thy house" at the Baptist's chapel,⁶⁸ and "I will come into thy house, I will worship towards thy holy temple in thy fear", at S.Croce.⁶⁹ These inscriptions seem on the surface to refer to

65 HILARIUS EPISCOPUS SANCTA PLEBI DEI. Text recorded by Panvinio, De basilica, ed. Lauer, Latran, 467.

66 IN HONOREM BEATI JOANNIS BAPTISTAE/ HILARIUS EPISCOPUS DEI FAMULUS OFFERT.

67 BEATO IOHANNI BAPTISTAE HILARIUS EPISCOPUS DEI FAMULUS FECIT. G.De Rossi, Inscr. christ. II, p.164, n.46.

68 DOMINE DILEXI DECOREM DOMUS TUAE. Psalm 26:8. Tr. C.Davis Weyer, Sources, 35.

69 INTROIBO, DOMINE, DOMUM TUAM ET ADORABO AD TEMPLUM SANCTUM TUUM IN TIMORE TUO, Psalm 5:7. Tr. Davis Weyer, Ibid, 36.

the chapels themselves as places of worship and beauty. But it is surely no coincidence that these verses are both quotations from psalms that are "prayers for deliverance from personal enemies".⁷⁰ I would suggest, then, that all three of Hilarus' chapels were personal votive offerings. The inscription that refers to the help of the Evangelist needs no further explanation; the verses from the psalms perhaps also stem from Hilarus' experience at Ephesus and ask that God will continue to protect him from his enemies in a dangerous world.

We have found a plausible function for these three early chapels at the Lateran baptistery. It remains to be asked whether the possibility that any of the chapels were built to play an integral part in the baptismal ceremony can be excluded. To answer this question, it is necessary to attempt to place the important parts of the ceremony within the complex at the Lateran. We have seen that most paleochristian baptisteries did not have attached chapels, though architectural evidence shows that they were quite often in the centre of complexes of rooms.⁷¹ The only place where a whole baptismal complex has been analysed as to the function of individual rooms is the paleochristian city of Salona in Dalmatia, though a recent study has also considered a free-standing baptismal hall, the Neonian baptistery at Ravenna, in terms of the liturgy.⁷² In Salona, Dyggve has interpreted the suite of rooms that encircle the baptistery in terms of the baptismal rite, linking it with the narthex of the nearby cathedral.⁷³ Surviving catachetical literature confirms that the basic

70 NOAB, 659 and 674.

71 See Khatchatrian, Baptistères, Paris, 1962.

72 A.J. Wharton, "Ritual and Reconstructed Meaning: The Neonian Baptistery in Ravenna", Art Bulletin, 69, 1987, 358-376. See also Victor Saxer, Les Rites de l'initiation chrétienne du II au VI^e Siècle, Spoleto, 1988, esp. 500-501, on the early fourth century baptismal complex at Aquileia.

73 Ejnar Dyggve, A History of Salonitan Christianity, Oslo, 1951, 30, "the group of rooms in a unique way illustrates the process of the early Christian baptismal act".

elements in the baptismal rite were stable through the Early Christian world.⁷⁴ Dyggve's findings are therefore relevant to the situation at the Lateran, and enable us to make tentative correlations between the architecture and the rites for which they were built. At Salona, the catachumens, fresh from their exorcism in the narthex, assembled in an area to the west of the baptistery which had a free-standing semi-circular seat for the clergy, who performed a second exorcism there. The initiates then passed across a threshold which bore the famous mosaic inscription "SICUT CERVUS DESIDERAT AD FONTES AQUARUM ITA DESIDERAT ANIMA MEA AD TE DEUS", with a pair of stags, illustrating the text from the psalms, "As a hart longs for flowing streams so longs my soul for Thee, O God".⁷⁵ All through the Christian world this psalm was the final canticle that the candidates for baptism chanted as they proceeded to the baptistery from the Easter vigil.⁷⁶ Dyggve suggested that the neophytes circled the font, passing on the way through the bishop's chamber into the dressing room which has already been discussed, and then, disrobed, returning to the steps of the cruciform font. Descending into the water, they were baptised after a final exorcism with saliva. Robed in white, they proceeded to the *consignatorium*, a niche to the east of the font, where the bishop anointed them with oil and blessed them, and thence through a side door into the cathedral, previously barred to them as catachumens, to participate in the ultimate Christian mystery, the Eucharist itself.

Can the complex at the Lateran similarly be interpreted in terms of the baptismal ceremony, which in essence consisted of assembly, disrobing, baptism, re-robing, confirmation and communion?⁷⁷ If so,

74 Wharton, Neonian Baptistery, 360.

75 Psalm 42:1. The mosaic, which has been destroyed, (personal communication, Iva Matković), is illustrated in F. Van der Meer and C. Mohrmann, Atlas of the Early Christian World, 125, fig. 395.

76 L. Duchesne, Christian Worship: its origin and evolution. A study of the Latin Liturgy up to the time of Charlemagne. tr. M.L. McLure, London, 1912, 309.

77 Our main sources for Roman baptismal usage are the following:

what role should be assigned to the various annexes and chapels? Do they play an integral part in the baptismal ceremony, which would make them unique among chapels, or are they self-contained entities which were annexed to the baptistery for other reasons than liturgical necessity?

Assembly must have taken place in the portico, sometimes confusingly called "of S.Venanzio", which originally formed the main entrance and antechamber to the Baptistery and faced towards the Constantinian basilica (fig.29,a). A twin-apsed room, once fronted by an open colonnade, it was splendidly decorated with *opus sectile* in red and green porphyry and serpentine, and with mosaic panels in its two apses, the symbolic vine on the right, and the Good Shepherd on the left.⁷⁸ The next step must have been to pass into the baptistery itself where the candidates would have proceeded to the font. The problem of disrobing has already been discussed in connection with the chapel of S.Giovanni Evangelista. Once baptised, by immersion or by aspersion by deacons or deaconesses, according to sex, who stood at the seven streams of water that gushed from the mouths of silver stags, the neophytes, now dressed in symbolic white, proceeded to their confirmation by the bishop. This ceremony included the anointing with chrism and the signing of the cross on the candidates' foreheads. Renaissance authors would place this ceremony in the chapel of S.Croce, a conclusion supported by Duchesne.⁷⁹ These authors considered the decoration of

1. Ordo Baptismi, Mabillon VII, PL, 105, 781. 2. Sacramentary of Pope Hadrian, which adds details. 3. Gelasian sacramentary, which largely agrees with the Ordo Baptismi. Duchesne, Christian Worship, 294, suggests that the details of the earliest rite of baptism to survive, including infant baptism, the Nicene Creed, and the presence of acolytes, rather than exorcists, date it at earliest to the 7th century.

78 *Opus sectile* panels and the vine mosaic survive; the Good Shepherd mosaic is known from the drawing of Alfonso Ciacconio, made about 1590, Bibl.Vat.,ms.Lat.,5407, 195 and 200; repr. S.Waetzoldt, Die Kopien des 17 Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom, Munich, 1964, Catalogue nos. 259-260.

79 Duchesne, Christian Worship, 314. "From 461-468...this was in the S.Croce chapel".

this chapel with its *opus sectile* crosses, and its mosaic cross in the vault, appropriate for its supposed function, the signing of the neophytes with the Cross. Perhaps there had also been a late medieval use of this chapel as *consignatorium*, though this remains unclear. The layout of the baptistery complex, with the chapel beyond a porticoed courtyard at the back, makes it unlikely that the *consignatorium* was originally situated there, as it does not fit in readily with the proposed circulation of the candidates in the course of the ceremony. Indeed, a second locality within the Lateran complex has also been suggested as the *consignatorium*, and is positioned much more logically if this circulation is kept in mind. This is the right apse of the portico, now known as the chapel of SS.Ruffina e Secunda (figs.29 a; 38). The mosaic in the bowl of the apse is of acanthus scrolls, enriched with numerous small crosses, and small mosaic crosses also "hang" in a row from the pleated "canopy of heaven" above.⁸⁰ A niche close to the font itself seems to have been the preferred place for confirmation in numerous other paleochristian baptisteries, as at Salona and at S.Gennaro, Naples. At the Lateran, too, it was on the most direct route for the neophytes as they proceeded to the Basilica for the Eucharistic celebration.

Hilarus' chapels at the Lateran Baptistery, then, appear to have had a primary function as shrines, sanctified by the relics of the saints that were the reason for their existence. The chapel of S.Croce, shrine of the True Cross, almost certainly housed the fragment brought to Rome by Helena in the fourth century. The chapels of the two saints John, also, which seem to be redundant in the context of baptism, must surely have been built to house some of the Papacy's important relics of the saints. The choice of site for these chapels was probably determined by two factors. The dedication of the baptistery itself to the Baptist makes it a natural site for a shrine in his honour.

80 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, 3/2, "Confirmation", cols. 2515-2553, esp. 2521, suggests that this niche probably fulfilled this function at first, and that according to Ordines X, XI and XII, it was only later taken over by a chapel adjacent to the baptistery. The identity of this chapel is not revealed; it may well have been S.Croce.

Dedications and images of the two saints John seem often to have been paired, making it natural to design a second annexed chapel here beside the first. The presence of S.Croce was probably more fortuitous. A splendid survivor from classical times, it was obviously chosen for its beauty and refurbished to suit its contents. Despite being off-axis to the baptistery, it was integrated with the baptismal complex by the provision of a splendid approach worthy both of its magnificence and of the extraordinary importance of its contents. It is surely no coincidence, though, that these three special chapels, dedicated by Hilarus with relics in thanks for the intervention of the saints and in the hope of favours to come, should have been built at the Lateran palace where he resided, and where he could have access to his chapels for his private devotions.⁸¹

81 Gregory of Tours reported that his relative, Bishop Gregory of Langres, liked to retire to pray to the baptistery beside his house, where there were numerous relics of the saints. Liber vitae patrum, VII, MGH, ScriptRerMercy., I/2, 687-688.

CHAPTER 9

THE LATERAN BAPTISTERY CLUSTER, II: THE SAN VENANZIO CHAPEL

Pope Hilarus is known to have built a fourth chapel at the Lateran Baptistery, in addition to the three that were discussed in the previous chapter. This chapel was dedicated to St. Stephen.¹ It was probably situated in or behind an extension of the main portico, to the right of the original south entrance of the baptistery, though its exact location has not been determined. The portico extension, we shall find, was enclosed in the days of the Dalmatian pope John IV (640-642), who built a martyrium there. The saints that he honoured were natives of Dalmatia and Istria, whose relics he ordered collected and brought to Rome since the Avars had overrun their homeland. This martyrium, which survives today, is dedicated to Venantius, a Dalmatian saint and early bishop of Salona (plan, fig.29, h).

What is known of the early days of its predecessor, Hilarus' chapel of St Stephen? Its location has been identified more precisely as the small inner room behind the portico, adjacent to the chapel of S. Giovanni Evangelista.² The Lateran plan shows the S. Venanzio chapel in its original, open form with central steps.³ The chapel had an inner room to the right of the altar, and this in turn communicated with a room of complex shape which filled the space around the back of S. Giovanni Evangelista. A second access to the S. Venanzio chapel lay through the south-east end of the S. Giovanni Evangelista atrium, while a third aperture led directly to the baptismal font by way of a diagonal passage. Today this is the main access to S. Venanzio, which is no longer in direct communication with the chapel of St. John. Interesting possibilities in terms of function are opened up by this layout. In

1 LP, I, 245, also 247, note 11, manuscript variant # 2, "Fecit autem oratorium Sancti Stephani in baptisterio Lateranense".

2 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, 8/2, col 1576.

3 G.B. De Rossi, Mosaici Cristiani e saggi delle chiese di Roma anteriori al secolo XV. "Abside dell'Oratorio di S. Venanzio", Rome, 1899, 2, fig 1.

early days the open portico--later S.Venanzio--acted as atrium for the inner sanctum, which probably held actual relics of St.Stephen: the spacious portico may well have had a second function connected with the preparations for baptism, which lasted for the whole of Lent. The initiation process included the gathering together of candidates and the instruction leading to their catechumenate; the prayers and repeated exorcisms of the seven days of the "scrutinies"; the instruction in the Gospel, Creed and Lord's Prayer known as the "Opening of the Ears"; and, on the day before Baptism, normally the Vigil of Easter, the special ceremonies that included the exorcism *effeta* in which the lips and ears of the candidates were touched with saliva, the anointing with saliva of back and breast, the renunciation of Satan, the *Redditio Symboli* or recitation of the symbol and the prayers.⁴ There is little or no evidence, unfortunately, to suggest which of these ceremonies took place in the portico room, later S.Venanzio. Since the baptismal hall was kept sacrosanct for the baptismal mystery itself,⁵ one may only speculate that the portico room was well used during the forty days of instruction.

Our real interest in S.Venanzio, however, lies not in this early and highly speculative period, but in the seventh century reconstruction which made it a martyrium, gave it a decoration, and thus allowed an analysis of its function and of the circumstances around its creation. Many questions arise about the building and its structural history, as well as about the translations of the saints' relics, the purpose of the transferrals, their place within the policy positions of the seventh century papacy, and of course, what the decoration of the chapel can reveal of the reasons for its founding, and of its place not only among

4 For a full account of the ritual of baptism see Duchesne, Christian Worship, 292-308. See also M.Andrieu, Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age, II, Les Textes, Louvain, 1971, ch.2, 380, "L'ordo XI et les sacramentaires romains," and ch.3, 409, "Origine et destination de l'ordo XI. Date."

5 A.Wharton, "The Neonian Baptistery in Ravenna", Art Bulletin, 69, 1987, 361f.

the Lateran chapels, but among the martyria of its day.

Brick studies undertaken when the mosaics were restored shortly before 1946 have revealed that the lower half of the apse wall of the chapel dates from the third century, while the upper levels of the wall and its three windows are of fifth century brick and tufa construction.⁶ The construction data also show that the apse itself was added in the seventh century, and therefore probably in the time of John IV.

The fifth century phase is probably that of Hilarus. It appears that Hilarus inserted his chapel into a pre-existing building, raising its walls and putting in windows above the altar. Study of the construction reveals that there were windows low down in the end wall beside the apse which were part of the original third century structure. There was also an arcade of five openings on the Lateran side, and a pair of arches near the altar on the other side, towards S.Giovanni Evangelista. The latter once opened into the inner room where the relics of St. Stephen probably lay. So the new side walls, formed by the bricking-up of the arcades under John IV,⁷ in effect converted an open portico into a closed-in chapel and martyrrium. Panvinio, writing in the late sixteenth century, mentioned the "ancient and not inelegant" pictures that clothed all walls apart from the apse, and especially that on the left.⁸ Leclercq took this to mean that the paintings must have dated from before the time of John IV, for to him the seventh century could not have produced "most elegant" paintings. This argument, however, is not tenable, not least because the paintings could only have been produced after the walling up of the arcades, which occurred at earliest during the renovations of John IV, and maybe later. Cesare Rasponi gives us a solitary fragment of information on the iconography

6 Anon., "Restauri di mosaici fuori del Vaticano", Atti della pontificia Accademia de archeologia. Rendiconti. 23-24, 1947-1949, 402-405.

7 Cabrol/Leclercq, DAcL, 8/2, col.1576.

8 O.Panvinio, De septem Urbis ecclesiis, Rome, 1570, 167, "De Ecclesia Sancti Venantij", also reprinted in Lauer, Latran, 468. "habet...parietes a tribus lateribus vetustissimus et non inelegantibus picturis praesertim a parte sinistra".

of these paintings as they appeared in 1656, when nothing remained of them except a picture of the Virgin.⁹ This probably survived from the later Middle Ages, when the dedication of the chapel was to the Virgin, and so provides no clue as to the original decoration. The lowest register of decoration survives, however, and is visible below the present floorline. It consists of red and green marble panels imitated in paint, and extending down to the black and white mosaic of the original floor, about two metres below the present floor level. Some unreadable remains of the upper register paintings also survive--traces of plaster and painting within the two arches on the left, S.Giovanni Evangelista side of the chapel, which are divided by a sole survivor among the original columns, rising from a base at the lower floor level, and now embedded in the wall. Traces of paint in red and ochre on white plaster also remain on the right wall of the chapel. These minimal traces reveal nothing about the original subject matter of the paintings.

The mosaic decoration of the apse and apse wall, then, constitutes the only surviving visual evidence for the iconographic programme of the chapel, as rebuilt and redecorated by John IV (fig.39). The rebuilt chapel, however, is unusually well documented, both by texts in the Liber Pontificalis,¹⁰ and by the mosaic inscription in the apse itself.¹¹ The chapel was prepared, according to these texts, for the

9 Cesare Rasponi, De basilica et patriarchio Lateranensi, Lib.IV, Rome 1656, 238.

10 LP, I, 330, "Iohannes, natione Dalmata, ex patre Venantio scolastico, sedit ann.1, mens. VIII dies XVIII. Hic temporibus suis misit per omnem Dalmatiam seu Histriam multas pecunias per sanctissimum et fidelissimum Martinum abbatem propter redemptiorem captivorum qui depraedati erant a gentibus. Eodem tempore fecit ecclesiam beatis martyribus Venantio, Anastasio, Mauro et aliorum multorum martyrum, quorum reliquias de Dalmatias et Histrias adduci praeceperat, et recondit eas in ecclesia suprascripta, iuxta fontem Lateranensem, iuxta oratorium beati Ioannis evangelistae, quam ornavit et diversa dona obtulit".

11 MARTYRIBUS XPI DNI PIA VOTA IOHANNES/ REDDIDIT ANTISTES
SANCTIFICANTE DO/ AC SACRI FONTEIS SIMILI FULGENTE METALLO/ PROVIDUS
INSTANTER HOC COPULAVIT OPUS/ QUO QUISQUIS GRADIENS ET XPM PRONUS
ADORANS/ EFFUSAQUE PRECES MITTAT AD AETHRA SUAS.

relics of martyrs who had died at Salona or, in the case of Maurus, in Istria, in the times of persecution, for the most part under Diocletian. These remains, which were believed in Rome to have been left in the martyr shrines of the cemeteries outside the walls of Salona, were obviously at risk when the city fell to the Avars. This occurred sometime between 612, as recorded on the last dated monument there, and 640, when John became pope, and probably, as recent work shows, nearer the end of this time period. According to the Liber Pontificalis, John sent an emissary, Abbot Martinus, to the Dalmatian coast, with two missions: to gather up the martyrs' remains, and to ransom Christian prisoners.¹² The population of Salona had fled, some to the Dalmatian islands, while others took refuge in Aspalathos (Split), inside the abandoned but still fortified palace of Diocletian. Indeed, local belief to this day is that the cathedral of Split possesses the relics from the martyr shrines.¹³ However, the abbot did succeed in obtaining some relics of the Salona saints and of bishop Maurus of Parentium, Istria, which he took back to Rome with him. By this time, relics, even those that were of a bodily nature, could be buried inside the walls of the city. In fact, in a complete reversal of policy, every altar now needed martyr relics for its sanctification.¹⁴ I will return to the question of what exactly was meant by *reliquias* in the S.Venanzio chapel.

The character of the S.Venanzio chapel as a martyrrium is made

12 Martinus is not known from any other source, LP, I, 330, note 2.

13 E.Ceci, I monumenti cristiani di Salona, Milan, 1963, 84-93. Also, E.Dyggve, History of Salonitan Christianity, Oslo, 1951, 85-90.

14 Gregory I, Epistola XLIX, "Ad Palladium Episcopo", PL, 77, Lib.VI, col. 834, tr. James Barnby, N&PNE, 12, 202. According to Dyggve, this development was in response to the popularity of the martyr graves in suburban cemetery churches, where every tomb was an altar, and where the populace believed in the "power for good of the martyrs, who "solved earthly and heavenly problems". Dyggve, History, 33-34, and "L'origine del cimitero entro la cinta della città", Atti dello VIII Congresso de studi bizantini, Palermo, 1951, 137-141, though the usefulness of this short article is limited by the absence of both notes and bibliography.

clear not only by the inscription and the Liber Pontificalis text, but by the mosaic decoration itself.

The mosaic covers both the apse and the surrounding wall or apse arch (fig.40). The decoration of the apse is in three zones: Christ between angels in the clouds above; standing saints on either side of an orant Virgin below; and the donor inscription along the bottom. The row of standing saints extends out onto the wall on either side, while above on the arch, in a typically Roman composition, are the cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and higher up again between the windows, the single-winged symbols of the evangelists, complete with books and haloes. Spaces around the figural mosaics are filled with acanthus scrolls and there is a wide band of formalised ornament containing crosses and lilies around the opening of the arch.

The largest figures are those of Christ and the archangels who appear as a vision in the gold of the vault, supported by red, blue and white clouds from which they emerge, floating above the smaller figures below (fig.41). It has been suggested that the Christ is a copy of the Christ in the original apse mosaic of the Lateran basilica,¹⁵ and that the angels, too, are copied from that decoration. At first glance this seems unlikely, as there are considerable differences between the two compositions, but the image at the Basilica has undergone many changes and accidents over the years, which will be summarised here. The information about the original composition in the apse of the Lateran will be found to support the idea that the S.Venanzio image resembles the original at the Basilica, and is possibly even a copy of it.¹⁶

The mosaic at the Basilica survived an earthquake in the reign of Stephen VI, 896-897, which destroyed the entire nave,¹⁷ and underwent a radical restoration in the reign of Nicholas IV, 1288-1292. That the restoration actually extended to the entire rebuilding of the apse is

15 De Rossi, Musaici cristiani, "S.Venanzio", 6.

16 For bibliography, see Y.Christe, "A propos du décor absidal de S.Jean du Latran", CahArch, 20, 1970, 197-206.

17 LP, II, 229, "Huius tempore ecclesia Lateranensis ab altare usque ad portas cecidit".

clear from the inscription under the mosaic: "PARTEM POSTERIOREM ET ANTERIOREM RUINOSAS HUIUS SANCTI TEMPLI A FUNDAMENTIS REEDIFICARI FECIT". Wilpert takes this to mean that the entire apse is new,¹⁸ and not, as Müntz thought, a restoration of the old apse with some reuse of the old mosaic, notably in the river scene.¹⁹ From another inscription of Nicholas IV in the ambulatory around the apse it seems that the "sacred face" was a separate unit, an *emblema* which could be taken down as a unit and reused,²⁰ and this was borne out by the findings of the second major restoration, that of 1875-1886. Wilpert records that the head was set on a block of travertine, held in place by four iron clamps.²¹ John the Deacon had described it similarly.²² This special arrangement may date from the time of Nicholas IV, as by this time the image had acquired the status of a miraculous image, that had appeared on the Lateran apse without help from human hands during the dedication ceremony. Unfortunately, this image that had survived the thirteenth century restoration more or less intact, seems to have been destroyed or lost in the restoration of the nineteenth.²³ Only a photograph taken before the restoration,²⁴ and an engraving done about 1876, which

18 J.Wilpert, "La decorazione constantiniana della basilica lateranense", RAC., 6, 1929, 42-127, esp.107.

19 E.Müntz, "Mosaiques chrétiennes de l'Italie", II, Sainte Constance de Rome", RevArch., 30, 1875, 224-230, esp. 226.

20 Ciampino, De Sacris aedificiis a Constantino Magno constructis, Rome, 1693,8f. J.Wilpert, Decorazione, 108.

"ASTREMO QUAE PRIMA DEI VENERADA REFULSIT VISIBUS HUMANIS FACIES HAEC INTEGRATA SISTENS/ QUO FUERAT STETERATQUE SITU RELOCATUR EODEM"

21 Wilpert, Ibid, 110, quoting his "La nuova abside lateranense", Voce della Verità,1, 1886, 12.

22 Iohannes Diaconus, PL, 194, col.1545f.

23 P.J.Nordhagen, "Un problema di carattere iconografico e tecnico a S.Prassede", Roma e l'età Carolingia, Rome, 1976, 159f, esp. 161.

24 For Parker collection photo, (cat. 1749, Archives of the British School at Rome), see J.H.Parker, The Architecture of Rome, XI, Medieval Church and Altar Decorations in Rome and Mosaic pictures in Chronological Order, Oxford, 1876, pl.X, (wrongly labelled as from S.Stefano Rotondo).

plainly shows the disposition of the mosaic cubes and the outline of the *emblema* give some idea of its original appearance.²⁵ Eugène Müntz, who also saw the image from the scaffolding before its destruction, was convinced of its antiquity, despite the traces of numerous restorations. He described Christ as dressed in a cloak of violet brown with a gold *clavus*. In contrast to the present staring face, he wrote that the general expression, while serious, lacked severity.²⁶ He also noted that the tesserae were very large in comparison with those used by Jacopo Torriti, who had been responsible for the restoration under Nicholas IV.

The main clue to the early origin of this image, which makes it a relevant comparison for the S.Venanzio Christ, lies in this mild expression, which was lost in the reconstruction. Close analogies have been found between this face and catacomb paintings, such as one of late fourth century date from the catacomb of Domitilla.²⁷ These parallels support the idea that the Lateran Christ dated from Early Christian times. Although the earliest covering of the Constantinian apse was of unbroken gold, the decoration that included the *emblema* could possibly date from the mid-fifth century when pope Leo I had the vault remade after the sack of the Vandals in 455, though there is no specific mention of mosaics. At least the image appears to be early enough to antedate the S.Venanzio chapel, so that a valid comparison can be made. The halo provides additional evidence for an early date, since it is transparent to the gold and clouds behind Christ's head (fig.40), and above all, since it lacks the inscribed cross: this lack was normal in Rome up to about 530, as shown in the apse of SS.Cosma e Damiano, though by the last quarter of the sixth century the inscribed cross had become

25 Gersach engraving, repr. Oakeshott, Mosaics, pl.32.

26 E.Müntz, "Notes sur les mosaïques chrétiennes de l'Italie", RevArch, ns., 36, 1878, 273-278, and 38, 1879, 109-117, esp. 109-111. See also G.J.Hoogewerff, "Il mosaico di S.Giovanni in Laterano", Rendiconti della Pont.Accad.Rom. d'Arch., 27, 1952, 297-326, esp. 311 and 313, fig.2.

27 Cecchelli, Abside lateranense, 17, fig.7.

the standard iconography, and appears, for example, at S.Lorenzo fuori le mura, in the mosaics of Pelagius II (579-590).²⁸

The S.Venanzio image and the early Christ from the Lateran Basilica, in so far as we can reconstruct it, share the following characteristics. They exhibit the same facial type, hair and beard, clothing, attitude and above all, the large, empty and transparent halo that allows ghostly, muted cloud shapes to show through it. The mode of representing transparency--a checkerboard of grey and white replacing the gold in the outer halo--might also have been critical evidence of a direct relationship, had the *emblema* survived.

It is less fruitful to compare the archangels accompanying Christ in the two apses. Those at S.Venanzio bear no resemblance to the half-dozen angels and one seraph that crown the apse at S.Giovanni in Laterano. These obviously date from a later restoration and appear to be faithful nineteenth century copies of the work of Jacopo Torriti, closely related to his angels in the apse of S.Maria Maggiore. Wilpert, realising that the angels dated only from the thirteenth century composition, has reconstituted the original arrangement of the Lateran apse.²⁹ The seraph is replaced by the Hand of God, the wreath of angels by two archangels, one on either side of Christ. This indeed seems the most likely arrangement, and one which it is easy to see as ancestral to the S.Venanzio apse, though of course the S.Venanzio composition itself may have inspired Wilpert's reconstruction, which he presents to the reader without comment.

The S.Venanzio angels emerge from horizontal red, blue and white clouds. Their hair is light yellow defined in dark blue, and their faces are highlighted in orange, shadowed in white, and outlined in red. The pupils of their deep, staring eyes have orange tesserae among the black producing the effect of red eyes that are signs of the angels' otherworldly status.³⁰ These red eyes are unique among the angels of

28 Mosaic on reverse of triumphal arch at S.Lorenzo, see Oakeshott, Mosaics, pl.77.

29 Wilpert, Decorazione, fig 32.

30 Lehmann, Dome of Heaven, 11, "We may remind the reader of the use of

Rome, and totally unknown among mortals. The angels are of a distinctive Early Christian type, with noble melancholy expressions and huge far-seeing eyes, and can be most closely compared with the angels of Ravenna, attending on Christ and on the Virgin in S. Apollinare Nuovo. Their garments and their wings are lost in the clouds: each gestures towards Christ with both hands. The angels' gestures reveal that they are part of the theophany vision and that their role is to acclaim it. They are a whole order of magnitude larger than the human figures below. While they float at a lower level than Christ, their deep-blue, white and red wings reach up into the clouds that symbolise God's realm and mark the invisible boundary of the highest heaven beyond the sky. The clouds cross and recross the figures of the angels: the majesty of the vision is unmistakable.

Above, in separate panels on the arch, the symbols of the evangelists rear up, two to a side, from their own bed of clouds, while on the outer corners, the cities, gemmed and towered, sparkle behind their pearly gates. The Beings symbolise the mysteries of Christ: the cities, Jerusalem and Bethlehem, from which come the Old and the New Dispensations.

Below this celestial zone, zone of visions and of the benediction of Christ, are displayed the fully-frontal images of the saints and martyrs who were transferred to the chapel by John IV (640-642). These images are accompanied by the two popes of the donation, John IV and his successor, Theodore (642-649) who finished the work, the one holding a model of the church, the other with a book. Between the popes stand the two saints John, honoured at the nearby baptistery, basilica and chapels, and Peter and Paul, patrons of Rome. In the centre stands the Virgin, who raises her hands in a gesture of prayer.

This praying figure was interpreted by Garrucci as the personification of the Roman church, standing between its founders, Peter and Paul, and in the act of receiving the new martyrs from Dalmatia into its maternal bosom. He based this idea on the stole Mary wears, which, since he thought it was decorated with a cross, he

red to symbolise heavenly light".

interpreted as a papal pallium.³¹ Mary's garment, however, cannot be interpreted as a pallium, on the basis of the ill-defined blurr on her white stole, now cleaned, being seen as a cross. De Rossi, moreover, found this idea too abstract for the seventh century.³² Others have noted the inevitable comparison with the Ascension scene in the Rabbula Gospels--another example of a theophany vision with witnesses, but evidently not the one portrayed at the S.Venanzio chapel. Here, André Grabar suggests, the vision is the Incarnation, with the angels repeating the *agios*, "holy", three times in the *Trisagion*.³³ Grabar links this to the prophecy of Isaiah "a Virgin has conceived a son and has called him Emmanuel".³⁴ It is therefore natural that Mary should form part of the composition, taking her place as the mother of Christ.

The Incarnation is also the subject of the compositions in which already by the sixth century an enthroned Mary could take her place with the Christ-Child on her lap in the apse of a church. She thus holds court at the Basilica Euphrasiana, Poreč (ca.550), and was once so shown at S.Maria Suricorum, Capua and, almost certainly in the original apse of S.Maria Maggiore, Rome. Notwithstanding her presence, the focus was on Christ, and the Incarnation was the real subject of the composition. Mary was present only to witness to the reality of the Word made flesh, and as the vessel through which this had been accomplished. A Virgin *orans*, by herself, would later become the subject of the apse, as at Nea Moni, Chios (ca.1150), or at S.Donato e Maria, Murano, from the first half of the thirteenth century. At Nea Moni, a centrally planned church, where Christ was portrayed above in the dome, the image of Mary expressed her prayers, her intercession with him for the sins of humanity. Later, in Western churches of longitudinal plan, either Christ appeared above Mary in the apse, or if she appeared alone, as at Murano, her prayers on behalf of humanity were addressed to the

31 R.Garrucci. Storia dell'arte cristiana, Prato, 1873-1881. IV, 87.

32 De Rossi, Mosaici Cristiani, "S.Venanzio", 6.

33 A.Grabar, Martyrium, II, 210-212.

34 Isaiah, 6:3 and 7:13-15.

invisible Christ in heaven above.

At the S.Venanzio chapel, the Virgin with her arms upraised in prayer acts as a link of intercession between man and God: yet, even without the Christ-child upon her knee, she also represents the reality of the Incarnation. Christ in the heaven above was fully made man through the reality of his birth from her human body. Yet her attitude of prayer, arms outstretched, ties in also with the similar gesture of the martyr who imitates Christ's sacrifice upon the Cross. For example, the similar gesture made by S.Apollinare in the apse mosaic at S.Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, has been described as an imitation in symbolic form of Christ crucified.³⁵ Mary, of course, was by no means a martyr in the usual sense of the word, but something similar can be seen in her gesture of imitation, which symbolises the pain, sorrow and sacrifice that she suffered not at Christ's birth, which tradition tells us was without pain, but at his death which she had both to accept and to witness.

Witness appears to be the primary subject of this part of the composition. As the upper part of the apse is filled with the larger than life vision of Christ's divinity and his presence in the other world, so is it necessary that this vision should be attested to by witnesses, at least two, according to Jewish law, and here a total of seventeen. The reality of the supernatural aspect of the incarnation can only be proved by the impeccable authority of his mother, who bore him without sin, and of his apostles, who accompanied him during his earthly ministry and witnessed to his resurrection. The popes who gave the chapel itself and the mosaic are commemorated as witnesses to the gift and to the authenticity of the relics. The martyrs of Salona, by the presence of their relics and their images, bring the "holy" right into this space, made for them and in honour of their sacrifice.

Who were these martyrs, lined up here like a guard of honour for our inspection, their forms and features brought along with their bones from their homeland across the Adriatic? Within the apse, Salonitan bishops Venantius and Domnus, both carry books, and each stands beside

35 O.von Simson, Sacred Fortress, Chicago, 1946, 54-55.

an unnamed pope, probably John on the left, Theodore on the right. John IV reigned for less than two years; obviously the work at S.Venanzio was carried to fruition by his successor, Theodore. Venantius, first bishop of Salona, was missionary to the Dalmatians and died among them in the time of Valerian (253-260), or Aurelian (270-278). Frane Bulić, the great Dalmatian archaeologist, believed he met his death at Delminium, in present day Herzegovina, in the spring of 270 AD.³⁶ Venantius' preeminent place in the chapel is probably explained by the fact that the father of John IV bore the same name.³⁷ Domnus (Domnio), second bishop of Salona, came from Nisibis in Mesopotamia,³⁸ and died in the Salona amphitheatre on April 10, 304,³⁹ Domnio afterwards became patron saint of Aspalathos, later Split, where his grave was in the church of St.Domnus, the ex-Mausoleum of Diocletian, as early as 950 AD, according to Constantine Porphyrogenitos' account of Dalmatia.⁴⁰ Earlier, the body was at Manistirine, among the graves of the other early bishops of Salona.⁴¹

The other five martyrs of the Salona amphitheatre, the four soldiers of Diocletian's personal body-guard, Antiochianus, Gaianus, Paulinianus and Telius, and the priest Asterius, are also pictured

36 Ceci, Monumenti cristiani, 69. F.Bulić, "Kronotaska solinskih biskupa" Bulletino di archeologia e storia dalmata, 35, 1912, and "Anno e giorno della morte, condizione e numero dei martiri Salonitani", Bulletino di archeologia e storia dalmata, 39, 1916, 126. Also, Mučenici Solinski, Broji stalisi, godina i dan smrti mučenika solinskih, Dodatak k Vjesniku za arheologiju i povijest Dalmatinsku, 1917, Zagreb, 1919, 1-31, esp. 9-10. J.J.Wilkes, Dalmatia, London, 1969, 427, disagrees on the ground of insufficient evidence.

37 For John's parentage see LP I, 330.

38 Wilkes, Dalmatia, 429.

39 Bulić, Mučenici Solinski, 8, gives the evidence for this date.

40 Constantine Porphyrogenitos, De Administrando Impero, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, tr. R.J.H.Jenkins, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, vol.I, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, 1967, XXIX, 136-137, also, Vol.II, F.Dvornik et al., ed.R.J.H.Jenkins, Commentary, London, 1962, 108-109.

41 Dyggve, History, 73. Bulić, Mučenici Solinski, 7, records an inscription with the name Domnius.

here.⁴² Their deaths also took place during the persecutions of Diocletian, who was probably present in Salona at that time, on his way back to Nicomedia from Rome, where he had celebrated his *vicennalia* in 303. He returned to Nicomedia, his capital, in the later part of 304,⁴³ probably journeying by way of Salona to visit the palace that was under construction for his retirement, planned for May of the following year. The four guards are shown in the court dress of the Emperor's personal bodyguard, white with distinctive black tablions. They hold crowns of martyrdom and have identical and unusual haircuts, bushy at the sides and flat on top. Their presence in Salona is additional evidence that Diocletian was there at the time of their arrest, since their duty was to accompany his person. According to legend, they were sent to arrest Bishop Domnius; refusing, they suffered martyrdom with him, April 10, 304.⁴⁴ Asterius' date of martyrdom is not known: Bulić has suggested 304, a year in which many priests were martyred in Salona.⁴⁵ A further cleric depicted on the mosaic is Septimius, a deacon clad in a dalmatic and with a book in his hand. According to an inscription from Salona, he died there on April 18, 304,⁴⁶ a date confirmed in the Hieronymean Martyrology. He was interred under the main altar at Manastirine, where archaeology has revealed his *confessio*.

The last two saints on the S.Venanzio apse wall are those in the important locations nearest to the apse itself: the Istrian bishop Maurus on the right, Anastasius on the left.

Anastasius, a wealthy fuller,⁴⁷ according to legend was a native

42 Martyrology of S.Girolamo, see Ceci, Monumenti cristiani, 75.

43 Diocletian's itineraries from Timothy D.Barnes, The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine, Cambridge, Mass., 1982, 55-56.

44 Ceci, Monumenti cristiani, 82.

45 Ceci, Ibid, II, 81; Bulić, Dodatak k Vjesnik za Arheologiju, Zagreb, 1919, 12.

46 Ephemer. Salonit. 26, pl.1, fig. 1.

47 Dyggve, History, 104.

of Aquileia,⁴⁸ who, hearing that persecutions were underway at Salona, hurried there to give himself to martyrdom. On arrival, he made no attempt at concealment, marking his belief by signing his door with a cross. He was tied to a millstone and thrown into the bay at Salona on March 26, 304.⁴⁹ His aristocratic status, despite being a tradesman, is marked by the mosaic's golden garments, where others are shown in the simpler white, and by his burial: a noble lady Asclepia and her husband interred him in their private mausoleum at Marusinac, a short way from Salona's northern boundary.⁵⁰ In the fifth century a cemetery church was dedicated to him at Marusinac, and he was re-interred there beneath the main altar. Soon after 400 AD the attacks of the barbarians, Goths and Huns, became more frequent, and both Manistirine and Kapljuč were destroyed. In each case the graves were consolidated into a smaller sacred area, an "emergency church" within the great basilica, and the martyrs were moved to safety.⁵¹

One more saint, Maurus of Parentium (Poreč), represents Istria in the S.Venanzio chapel, fitting the text of the Liber Pontificalis which specifically mentions relics of Istrian saints. Patron of his city, Maurus by long tradition had a corporeal presence there in the Basilica Euphrasiana. His remains were stolen by the Genoese in 1354, and re-interred in Genoa in the church of S.Matteo. For this reason as well as his status as patron saint of his city and diocese, it seems unlikely that John IV's emissary managed to take the body of the saint to Rome, just as historical evidence makes it seem unlikely that the people of Aspalathos parted with the body of S.Domnio.

48 Antonio Nieri, "Santi aquileiesi e veneti in Dalmazia", Antichità altoadriatiche, 26, 1985, 261-288, esp.269, finds that all sources that refer to Anastasius as an Aquilaeian date from after 1000 AD. Whatever his origin, archaeological evidence for his presence in Salona has been discovered.

49 ActaSS, 7 Sept, 21-22. Dyggve, History, 73.

50 A.Nieri, Santi, 273, also finds that he is not even described as a fuller in the early sources.

51 Dyggve, History, 83.

Salona has offered unique opportunities to archaeologists to confirm the existence of the martyrs that are portrayed in the S.Venanzio apse mosaic, and the events recorded in their legendary Lives have in many cases been corroborated by archaeological findings. For example, inscriptions proved that Domnio was buried with other martyrs at Manastirine, just outside the city walls, in a memorial tomb with eight loculi. The four guards and Asterius were all interred in the cemetery basilica of Kapljuč, close to the amphitheatre. Dyggve suggests that this was a *basilica discoperta*, an uncovered, porticoed space, with an altar for the Mass, and benches around the sides.⁵² A covered basilica was later raised above the martyrs' graves.⁵³

The amphitheatre martyrs were also commemorated in the south-east chapel of the Salona amphitheatre itself, which came to light in 1911. This chapel was built in a space that was probably once one of the gladiator shrines, which would typically in the pre-Christian era have been dedicated to the goddess Nemesis.⁵⁴ Other nearby sites in Dalmatia and Pannonia retain traces of this cult, among them Pula, Carnuntum and Aquincum, and at Salona too an altar inscribed to Nemesis was discovered in the amphitheatre itself.⁵⁵ In the 1940's, the chapel still had

52 R.M.Milenović, "Der altchristliche Friedhof Marusinac", suggested it was an ordinary covered church: but the columns being only 40 cm thick would not have been capable of holding up a roof. VAHD, 51, 1930-1934, 237f.

53 The "Basilica Cinque Martyrum", J.Brönsted, Recherches à Salone, I, 179.

54 Similar pagan shrines are known from the Colosseum, Rome, and from Durres, Albania, (Dyrrachium), where also one was converted into a Christian chapel. See Nicole Thierry, "Une mosaïque à Dyrrachium", CahArch, 18, 1968, 227-229; Maria Andaloro, "I mosaici parietali di Durazzo o dell'origine constantinopolitana del tema iconografico di Maria Regina", Studien zur spätantiken und byzantinischen Kunst, III, ed. O.Feld and V.Peschlow, Rome, 1986, 103-112; and, especially, Ivanka Nikolajević, "Images votives de Salone et de Dyrrachium", Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta, 19, 1980, 59-70, who suggests a sixth century date and also discusses the Salona amphitheatre chapels, with line drawings of the paintings.

55 Bulić, "Escavi dell'Amfiteatro romano di Salona", Bull.Dalm., 1914, 22f, esp. 31. The altar is now in the Split archaeological museum, Ceci, Monumenti pagani, 108. Bibliography on other gladiator shrines in

barely legible, early medieval frescoes on its walls, overwhelming evidence that it had been put to Christian use. The decoration of the west wall, the best preserved, consisted of a row of three-quarter life-sized standing saints, on a layer of pink-painted plaster that was itself superimposed on an earlier layer imitating marble. Best preserved was the image of Asterius; less distinct were the images of two more saints, one a palace guard, named by inscription Telius.⁵⁶ When the amphitheatre chapel was first excavated, there were traces of a smaller figure, perhaps a boy, beside the saints. Perhaps this was a donor figure, comparable to those at the Dürres amphitheatre chapel.⁵⁷ Since the images bore a remarkable likeness to those on the apse wall at S.Venanzio, Dyggve proposed that the emissary of John IV not only brought the relics back to Rome, but the martyrs' likenesses as well. By May 1987 these paintings, which were in an unroofed location, had entirely disappeared, leaving only a few painted plaster fragments to mark their former location.

Detailed iconographic resemblances between these gravely damaged figures and the S.Venanzio saints convinced all the scholars who saw the paintings before they disappeared that they were indeed the source for the Lateran "portraits". Among these scholars were Bulić, Brönsted and Dyggve.⁵⁸ Their only difference of opinion was over the date assigned to the paintings, basing their opinions largely on the evidence of plaster layers. Brönsted preferred an extremely early date, before 350, whereas Dyggve chose the first half of the sixth century, a date in keeping with the style of the clothing. It also accords with the date suggested by Ivanka Nikolajević for conversion of the gladiator chapel

Ceci, Monumenti cristiani, 244, note 6.

56 See Dyggve, History, p. 49, fig IV. The inscription read SCS ASTERIUS SCS T LIU .

57 Nikolajević, Images Votives, 70. Also F.Bulić, "Escavi dell'amfiteatro romano di Salona negli anni 1909-1912 e 1913-1914", Bull. di arch. e storia dalmata, 27, 1914, 22 and pl. XII.

58 See Ceci, Monumenti cristiani, 243 for references.

at the Dyrrachium amphitheatre to a Christian chapel.⁵⁹ Dyggve suggested a specific occasion, the visit of Justinian's general Constantianus to Salona in 536, when the city's fortifications against the barbarians were improved. Similarities of the plastering of these fortifications to that of the chapel support this date. If the sixth century date is in fact correct, it eliminates the chance that the paintings were true portraits, but this quality of true likeness was probably not considered important in the early Middle Ages, if indeed it were known at all. It certainly need not have deterred the emissaries of John IV from using them as revered, because "ancient", models. The resemblances on which the "pattern sheet" theory are based include the proportional size of haloes to faces; the gold or yellow martyr crowns; the distinctive hairstyles; and the clothing. Asterius in both Rome and Salona appears as an older man with a pointed beard and a tonsure; Telius with thick, dark hair and a white garment with a shoulder patch. Of the third saint little remained but a tiny fragment of halo and of a light yellow garment. Vague remnants on the facing wall included a terracotta coloured garment and a cruciform ornament, suggesting a further set of three saints there. The slope of the roof would have allowed only three saints to a side. The matching south-east chapel may have had a matching decoration, bringing to twelve the number of saints portrayed.

It seems very likely on the basis of these findings that John IV received information, probably in the form of sketches, about the physical appearance of these saints, based on their pictures in the shrines at their scene of martyrdom. The Roman mosaics depict highly individualised figures, showing costume with detailed attention to rank, ornament, colour and style, so much so in fact that they have been used as the standard examples in studies of the characteristic dress of the day.⁶⁰ This attention to detail would be explained if the intention really were to distinguish these saints one from another by means of

59 See above, note 54.

60 See C.Cecchelli, La vita di Roma nel Medio Evo, 1/2. Le arti minori e il costume, XVII, "Il costume", Rome, 1960, 1076.

their clothing and ornament, hair and beards, in accordance with the information received from Salona. In the case of the palace guards, their identical clothes give an impression of sumptuous but repetitious uniformity, belied only by their sharply individualised faces and complexions.

The San Venanzio chapel is the most fully documented martyr chapel of its century to survive complete with relics and a major part of its decoration. It is therefore one of the best sites at which to explore the attitude of the papacy and the church to relics in the mid-seventh century. It is obvious that it was acceptable in the particular circumstances surrounding the translation to move relics of the martyrs and to give them a new setting of highest honour in the pope's own establishment at the Lateran. The circumstances of the pagan conquest of Dalmatia have been shrouded in mystery, as have the actual nature of the relics. These are called *reliquias* in the early sources. When they were rehoused in the Renaissance period, however, they were described as *corpora* on the plaque of their casket which was placed in a sarcophagus in the altar of the S.Venanzio chapel. What exactly was meant by *reliquias* and *corpora* as applied to these martyrs and what exactly were the relics that John IV honoured in his chapel? How available to relic hunters were the bones of the Dalmatian saints, and how acceptable was it at that time to move them from one place to another? Were there guidelines governed by the needs of the saint, of the congregation, or of the church hierarchy that determined what might be done in the way of translations? Did the acceptability of translation depend on the motivation of the mover--service to one's own purposes in building a place of prayer or burial for oneself perhaps contrasting with service to the martyr, the protection of his or her remains from danger? Was the moving of remains complicated by the desire of those who owned them not to lose their powerful *praesentia* and power for good; a question particularly apposite in the case of the patrons of important cities, such as Domnus and Maurus?

Much confusion has been generated by the belief that the word *reliquias* of the Liber Pontificalis statement must refer to *reliquias ad corpora* or corporeal relics, bodies or body-parts of saints, for if

Abbot Martinus took the actual bodies of the saints to Rome around 641, then obviously their homelands were deprived of them, providing, that is, that at least in the West saints' bodies were not being dismembered and distributed in pieces as relics. Our authority for this supposition is the papal correspondence of a half-century earlier, reacting to requests from the rulers in Byzantium for corporeal relics of the apostles Peter and Paul, as I have already mentioned. In 519, the papal legate in Constantinople had responded to a request by Justinian for relics of the apostles and St. Lawrence by asking pope Hormisdas to send contact relics, objects that had been in contact with the tombs of the saints. The legate had explained to the emperor that it was contrary to Roman custom to provide bodily relics of the saints.⁶¹ The second instance, much closer to the date of the S. Venanzio chapel, is the reply of Gregory I to the request of Constantina, wife of the Byzantine emperor, for the head of St. Paul to sanctify the chapel she had built.⁶² As I have mentioned in connection with earlier translations of saints' bodies in Milan, Gregory replied that it was totally contrary to Roman custom to disturb the bones of the saints, and that he neither could, nor did he dare to do so, because of the untoward effects such disturbance could have, which he illustrated graphically with examples. Indeed, he continued, one ought not to dare even to look at the bodies of the saints. The custom in the West, he said, was to consecrate cloths by placing them in the tomb by the body, thus creating relics that were as powerful as the bodies themselves. These relics were used for the same purpose as corporeal relics, that is, for the sanctification of altars.⁶³

There has always been some doubt about whether this letter should

61 J.M.M. McCulloh, "The Cult of Relics in the letters and Dialogues of Pope Gregory the Great: A Lexicographical Study", *Traditio*, 32, 1975, 158-184, esp. 147; and *Epistulae imperatorum pontificum*, *Epistula* 218; CSEL, 35, 679-680.

62 Gregory I, Epistle XXX to Constantina Augusta, tr. N&PNF, 12, 1895, 154-156.

63 For the question of what is meant by Gregory's letter see McCulloh, *Cult of Relics*.

be taken at face value, or whether Gregory was exaggerating the position of Rome so as to justify refusing an imperial request for the major relics that were central to the power of the papacy. Does this letter, then, reflect actual practice in the West, as Gregory seems to claim? McCulloh has examined Gregory's correspondence and his Dialogues, to discover his attitudes to translations or dismemberments of saints' bodies, attitudes which might contradict the position he takes in his letter to Constantina.⁶⁴ He found many references to tombs and burials, but only a single reference to a translation, that of St. Donatus, whose remains were carried away by the bishop and congregation of Euria in 603-604 when invaders forced them to flee their homes.⁶⁵ Gregory granted them permission to bury the saint's body in their camp, and return for it when things returned to normal. This, the only place where Gregory mentions a translation, is strictly comparable to the Salona situation, where saints were exhumed and reburied in safer places in times of emergency by their own congregations: the action was at least partly altruistic, the aim being to save the remains from loss or desecration during times of exceptional danger. On the question of "relics" (such as those of the Salona martyrs whose *reliquias*, we are told were put in the S. Venanzio chapel), the texts of Gregory reveal two distinct meanings: parts of a saint's body, corporeal relics, and contact relics such as *brandea*, cloths which had been saturated with the holiness of proximity to a saint's remains. Since Gregory deplors the dangerous practice of touching a saint's body, even though he admits that the Greeks allowed it, he was left with contact relics, which could be created and were as holy and powerful as the bodies themselves, to use on all occasions that required sanctification or the special protection and blessing of the saints. This then was the position around the turn of the seventh century, if Gregory's sincerity is to be believed: translations were rare and undertaken only in unusual circumstances; *reliquias* meant contact relics much more often than

64 McCulloh, Cult of Relics, 151-153.

65 Gregory I, Ep. 14.7, 8.13. II, 425-428, 432-433. McCulloh, Cult of Relics, 151.

corporeal fragments.

The question of what exact form the relics of the Dalmatian saints took acquires new importance in this context, as evidence of papal attitudes that would either agree with Gregory's official position, or disprove it. The interval of just under forty years is not long, and it would seem likely that papal policy would not have greatly changed in the interval. The ingredients for a physical transfer of bodies were there: a time of great danger when the saints remains might have been lost or desecrated. Discussion of the contents of the relic container in the S.Venanzio chapel has until recently been hampered by lack of tangible evidence. Consensus of opinion from the late Middle Ages through the Renaissance was that the actual bodies--*corpora*--were present in the chapel. According to the inscription on the lead cover of the casket⁶⁶ to which the remains, in their cherry wood box, were transferred in 1698, as well as to the words of Panvinio (1570), the ten bodies were physically present.⁶⁷ There was a recognition ceremony in 1713, but apparently no records were kept. Bulić, despite repeated efforts through his long life, was denied permission to investigate the contents of the reddish-yellow marble sarcophagus. It was not until 1962 that the ecclesiastical authorities agreed to another recognition of the relics. The sealed reliquary was opened and the contents examined at the request of the bishops of Split and Poreč.⁶⁸ Surprisingly, the box contained less than a kilogram of small bones, both human and animal, plus dust, and two small, unidentified Byzantine coins. There were no documents. The relics included neither skulls nor long bones. It seems extremely unlikely that the major bones were once

66 The lead coffer and the inscription were provided for the remains after the building of a new altar in 1674.

67 The inscription reads in part *CORPORA SS MM VENANTII DOMNIONIS* (the other names follow), E.Ceci, *Monumenti cristiani*, 91.

68 Makso Peloža, "Rekognicija relikvia Dalmatinskih i Istarskih mučenika, u oratoriju svetog venancija kod baptisterija Lateranske bazilike u Rimu 1962-1964 godine", *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku*, 64, 1962, 163f. Acts of the "recognition" are in the *Archivio Capitolare*, Rome.

here and given out as relics. We are forced to the conclusion that Abbot Martinus brought back either tiny corporeal relics; contact relics such as *brandea*; soil or dust from the tombs; or even animal bones gathered up in ignorance from the ruined shrines, which were pillaged during the barbarian invasions, probably after being emptied of relics by the fleeing Christians. In such unsettled conditions, nothing outside the walls was safe, and none of the numerous large stone sarcophagi in the Salona cemeteries remains intact. In these circumstances, it is obvious that the martyrs' remains were taken to safety by the retreating population, either to Aspalathos, to Iader (Zadar), or to the islands off the Dalmatian coast, which remained under Roman control, and were administered for Ravenna from Iader as the Theme of Dalmatia.⁶⁹

There is some recent evidence that the fall of Salona, far from happening soon after the last recorded burial at Salona, in 612, took place only a year or two before the accession of John IV. John's delegation, it will be remembered, was charged with a double mission. It was not only to rescue the relics of the saints, but to ransom Christian prisoners from the barbarians. Marović has pointed out, quite reasonably, that prisoners taken soon after 612 are unlikely to have survived almost three decades until 640, so as to have needed ransom then.⁷⁰ The existence of the prisoners in 640 in fact implies that the prisoners were captured not longer than a few years before this date, that is, not much earlier than 635. Ivan Marović has analysed the distribution of coins of Heraclius, 610-641, found in Salona, and now in the Split museum. He deduces that commerce was still being carried on, and thus that the city was inhabited long after 614, the date previously suggested for its destruction. The latest coin in a hoard⁷¹ found in a

69 Wilkes, *Dalmatia*, 437. These communities retained their Roman character into the Middle Ages.

70 Ivan Marović, "Reflexions about Year of the Destruction of Salona", *VAHD*, 77, 1984, 293-315.

71 F.Oreb, "Archaeological Excavations in the Eastern Part of Ancient Salona in 1979", *VAHD*, 77, 1984, 25-35, esp. 28-29.

water drain of a late antique complex of buildings at Solin (Salona) in 1979, is dated to 630-631.⁷² Although this evidence cannot be used to give a *terminus post quem* for the fall of Salona, as Marović suggests, the presence of this scatter of Heraclian coins, some from late in the reign, does imply that there was occupation of the site at least until well into the 620s. In support of this, a recent topographical analysis of the account of the fall of Salona in Constantine Porphyrogenitos' tenth-century De Administrando Imperio has suggested a date of 626 for the fall of the city.⁷³ Its end probably came even later than this, if prisoners were still awaiting ransom in 642.

Abbot Martinus then would have found a dispersed Christian community on the islands and in Aspalathos, and the martyrs reinterred in new and safer surroundings. This would explain the enduring belief of the Croats that they have, and have always had, the bones of their martyrs in the cathedral at Split. The Parentines' beliefs about Maurus' relics would likewise be vindicated.

So the S.Venanzio chapel was sanctified with relics which were tokens of the saints whose spiritual power they represented, and symbols of the beleaguered churches across the Adriatic which had always been within the sphere of influence of Rome. The presence of these relics and of the "authentic" pictures of their originals in Rome guaranteed protection, assistance and intercession to the pious hands who had installed them here. Moreover, they forged invisible threads of contact across the Adriatic, binding Istria and Dalmatia mystically to Rome, as the images also looked West into the heart of the city of Rome, where all roads led, and where the pope was vicar of Christ on earth. The political implications of this are clear: the mosaic is a statement that as the Illyrian saints looked to and protected Rome, so would the papacy care for Christians in the beleaguered homelands across the sea.

72 Marović, Ibid, 293, coin 45, with facing portraits of Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine.

73 Nikola Jakšić, "Constantine Porphyrogenitos as the source for destruction of Salona", VAHD, 77, 1984, 315-326.

CHAPTER 10

CHAPELS WITHIN THE CONFINES OF CHURCHES

This chapter is concerned with various categories of chapel which share a single and rather artificial feature: their location within the perimeter of a church. This distinction allows us to include chapels built for a variety of liturgical purposes. To these will be added sacristies, or "side chambers", to use Janet Smith's recently defined neutral term. These may also be situated inside the main structure of the church, and, like oratories, could be used for prayer and occasionally for burial. However, they had additional functions peculiar to their role as sacristies. These functions were extremely varied, and were often expressed in their architecture. As to sacristy decorative programmes, the scanty evidence suggests that sacristies could be just as richly decorated as other types of interior chapel.

The chapels will be discussed in three groups: *cubicula*, chapels of mixed use situated in auxiliary buildings of churches; *oratoria*, chapels built within churches for liturgical purposes including the Eucharist, private prayer, and Christian burial and its rites; and sacristies, broadly speaking, serving all sorts of utilitarian functions in connection with the preparation of the Eucharist and the storage of the belongings of the church and clergy.

The available data in all these three areas is scanty. *Cubicula* are known from records of the building activities of early medieval popes and other patrons. They are also occasionally identified in the archaeological record. It was discovered, rather surprisingly, that for doctrinal reasons oratories were not built inside churches in the first three centuries of the period under consideration. However, the limited data from the seventh and early eighth centuries illuminated the beginnings of a new development: that of subdivision of the church interior to accommodate new altars, altars which would eventually become enclosed in their own rooms within the church buildings. As for sacristies, which were included in the study for the sake of completeness, as interior rooms whose functions overlapped with those of

other internal chapels, surprising evidence came to light that in Italy sacristies were the exception, rather than the rule, and that their presence implied upper level, Eastern patronage.

I. CUBICULA.

It is difficult to trace the beginnings of the internal chapel, built for liturgical purposes and occupying part of the main body of a church, for it transpires that all the earliest examples which seem to fall into this category, were actually built into such auxiliary buildings of the church as its external colonnades. They are not only chronologically earlier, but seem to be fundamentally different from true chapels inside actual church buildings. The difference is highlighted by the use of the word *cubiculum* rather than *oratorium* or *altare*, a semantic distinction that implies their origin was as resting-places rather than as places of prayer or the sacraments. This rest, of course, might refer to rest and meditation in life, and also to the long rest after death. This is clear from the information given by both literary and archaeological sources, which come together at Nola. There, the *cubicula* of the Basilica Apostolorum are the best understood of all the groups of chapels inserted into church buildings in the Late Antique period, on account of the writings of Paulinus of Nola. We learn of the chapels from Paulinus' letter to Sulpicius Severus, in which he not only described building them, but explained the purposes they would serve.¹ Shortly before 403 AD, a set of four *cubicula* were inserted, two to a side, into the lateral colonnades of the Basilica Apostolorum, which was then under construction. The chapels' first function was for private prayer and meditation, but they were also intended for the burial of members of the religious community and their families.² Paulinus told Sulpicius Severus that the outer lintel of

1 Paulinus, Epistula 32, text and translation from R.C.Goldschmidt, Paulinus' Churches at Nola, Amsterdam, 1940, 40-41.

2 Attribution "Cubicula intra porticus quaterna longis basilicae lateribus inserta secretis orantium vel in lege domini meditantium, praeterea memoriis religiosorum ac familiarium accommodatos ad pacis

each *cubiculum* was marked with two lines of appropriate verse, though he failed to record them.³ One of Paulinus' cubicula has been identified in the excavations and found to be a long, narrow room, provided with an apse at each end, and communicating by a wide entry with the side-aisle of the basilica:⁴ it thus doubled as an annexed chapel opening from the aisle of a cemetery basilica (A, fig.41). The need for quiet places set apart from the church for private use such as prayer and meditation, as well as for the graves of the religious community is underscored by Paulinus' description of the noisy and drunken behaviour of the illiterate peasants who came to Nola to worship at the shrine of St. Felix.⁵ Prudentius, too, in his Hymn on the Passion of Hippolytus, describes the three-aisled basilica built over that martyr's remains in these words, "Even when it is full (it) scarcely admits the struggling waves of people and there is turmoil in the confined space at the packed doorway where she opens her motherly arms to receive and comfort her children and they pile up on her teeming bosom".⁶ We are also reminded of Jerome's description of the pandemonium at the shrines, where dramatic spiritual conflicts between the saints and the demons of possession so terrified the congregations.⁷ Similar concerns must surely have operated in other locations where chapels--cubicula--were

aeternae requiem locos praebent." Paulinus of Nola, Epistula 32, in R.C.Goldschmidt, Churches, 40-41.

3 Ibid, "Omne cubiculum binis per liminum frontes uersibus praenotatur, quos inserere his litteris nolui."

4 G.Chierici, "Recenti lavori ...alle basiliche paoliniane di Cimitile," RAC, 16, 1939, 51-73, esp. 60, fig 5.

5 Paulinus, Carmen 27, Goldschmidt, Churches, 52-69, esp. 63-65.

6 Prudentius, The Poems of Prudentius, II, tr. H.J.Thomson, Loeb Classical Library, London, 1953, 304-323, Peristephanon, XII, "Ad Valeriam Episcopum de Passione Hippolyti Beatissimae Martyris", v.171f, and, esp. 227f., "plena laborantes aegre domus accipit undas,/ artaque confertis aestuat in foribus,/ maternum pandens gremium, quo condat alumnos/ ac foveat felos adcumulata sinus."

7 Jerome, Epistola 108, "Ad Eustochium Virginem", PL, 22, cols. 878-906, esp.889; also Peter Brown, The Cult of the Saints, ch.6, "Potentia", esp. 106f.

built as places apart in the colonnades of the great congregational churches and cemetery basilicas of late antiquity: the provision of privacy in life and death for the clerical hierarchy and the well-to-do near the sacred places which, while replete with holiness, were devoid of privacy and noisy with the uncouth habits of the lower strata of society.

Cubicula are not peculiar to the writings of Paulinus, they also abound in the text of the Liber Pontificalis. Sergius (687-701), for example, repaired *cubicula* around St. Peter's: according to Duchesne these were in a portico attached to the outer side walls of the church, which was furnished with cells for pilgrims.⁸ Sergius likewise repaired *cubicula* around S. Paolo.⁹ Paulinus' explanation of the uses of such structures at Nola hints that at the Roman basilicas, too, some of the chapels may have been used for burial. But Paulinus also tells us that he provided upper storey accommodation over the cloisters for the use of pilgrims to the shrine of Felix.¹⁰ This suggests that such accommodation would have been provided at any great pilgrimage church, in Rome or the provinces, and that the enclosure of colonnades and cloisters may often have had the primary function of giving shelter and rest to pilgrims.

II. ORATORIA.

Oratories in the domestic setting have been discussed in the opening chapters of this study. Oratories were also built at basilicas and baptisteries, and are recorded in the patronage records of the popes and other ecclesiastics. The Liber Pontificalis, for example, abounds in references to oratoria created by the popes in ecclesiastical

8 LP, I, 375, and note 33. "Hic tegnum et cubicula quae circumquaque eiusdem basilicae sunt, quae per longa tempora stillicidiis et ruderibus fuerant disrupta, studiosus innovavit ac reparavit".

9 Ibid, 375, "Hic tegnum et cubicula universa in circuitu basilicae beati Pauli apostoli quae longa per tempora vetustate confecta fuerant, studiosus innovavit ac reparavit".

10 Paulinus, Carmen 27, 395-406, Goldschmidt, Churches, 54-55.

settings, though none is dated earlier than the pontificate of Hilarus (461-468), except an *oratorium* in the catacombs that was the tomb and *memoria* of a martyr.¹¹ We will discover that there were doctrinal reasons why the earliest of these chapels were not situated in the interiors of church buildings, but were either added on to the outside as annexes or inserted into subsidiary buildings nearby.

Early papal commissions of oratoria in Rome took place at the Lateran baptistery in the mid-fifth century and at S.Maria Maggiore in the early sixth;¹² and also, in the seventh century, in the portico outside the Porta Ostiense leading to S.Paolo fuori le mura,¹³ and, again, at the Lateran Baptistery.¹⁴ The majority of oratories mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis*, though, were built at St.Peter's, though not, it seems, inside the basilica itself. The early sixth century Pope Symmachus (498-514), for example, inserted at least four, and probably six, chapels into the niches of the Vatican Rotunda, the imperial mausoleum adjacent to the basilica's left transept.¹⁵ This building, which dated to the third century and was burial place of an emperor of the pre-Christian period, had not previously been consecrated as a church: from our limited knowledge of the interior of the converted

11 Oratory of Felicity, *LP*, I, 227, Boniface I (418-422), "Hic fecit oratorium in cymiterio sanctae Felicitatis, iuxta corpus eius, et ornavit sepulchrum sanctae martyris Felicitatis...".

12 *LP*, I, 262, Symmachus (498-514), "Item ad sanctam Mariam oratorium sanctorum Cosmae et Damiani a fundamento construxit".

13 The Oratory of St.Euplus, *LP*, I, Theodore (642-649), "Fecit et oratorium beato Euplo martyris, foris porta beati Pauli apostoli, quam etiam ornavit". This chapel, repaired by Hadrian I (772-795), was at the start of the portico near the Pyramid of Cestius, *LP*, I, 334, note 12. It afterwards bore the name S.Salvatore, and survived until 1849.

14 The two chapels of St.John, and the S.Croce chapel, all of Hilarus (461-468), as well as the S.Venanzio chapel of John IV (640-642), finished by Theodore (642-649). These chapels are discussed in Chapters 8 and 9.

15 Dedications were to Thomas, Protus & Hyacinthus, Apollinaris, Cassianus, Sossius, and possibly to Lawrence and Vitus. The dedicatory inscriptions of several of these chapels have been recorded: *LP*, I, 265-266, notes 17-19.

building we cannot determine whether the insertion of these altars dedicated to various martyrs made the building into a martyrrium designed in honour of the papacy's relics of the saints, though it seems likely. Plainly, the conversion did not make it into a congregational church or basilica.

Symmachus' other building project at St.Peter's is of special interest as it appears to document oratoria in the interior of the basilica at the start of the sixth century, which would be the earliest indisputable record of such chapels. We learn from the Liber Pontificalis that Symmachus built three chapels at St.Peter's at the baptistery of Pope Damasus (366-384).¹⁶ All these chapels are referred to in the Liber Pontificalis as oratoria: they bore the same dedications--to the two saints John and the Holy Cross--as Pope Hilarus' chapels at the Lateran baptistery. Symmachus' chapels have usually been located inside the right transept of St Peter's, because the Alfarano Plan shows them there, loosely arranged around a font.¹⁷ If these chapels really were inside the church, rather than annexed, it would suggest that chapels were built inside basilicas a full hundred years before the next recorded example.¹⁸ The problem is that the Alfarano plan was drafted about forty years after the demolition of Old St.Peter's, and cannot be relied on without corroboration. Février has

16 LP, I, 261-262, Symmachus, (498-514), "Item ad fontem in basilica beati Petri apostoli...oratorium sanctae Crucis...fecit autem oratoria II, sancti Iohannis.Evangelistae et sancti I.Baptistae...quas cubicula omnes a fundamento perfecta construxit".

17 For early baptisteries in Rome, and baptism at other locations than the Lateran, see M.Andrieu, Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age, II, Louvain, 1965-1974, 408-413. For the Alfarano Plan, Tiberius Alpharanus, De Basilicae Vaticanae, ed. D.Michele Cerrati, Studi e testi, 26, Rome, 1914, pl.II, and xxvii,f. The chapels are numbered 35, 32 and 30 respectively on Alfarano's plan, showing as altars attached to the west and north walls of the north transept.

18 The liturgist, M.Andrieu, accepts the Alfarano plan, postulating that the chapels were at first temporary structures, thrown up hastily in response to a sudden need, and only later acquiring permanent status. M.Andrieu, Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age, III, "Les Textes, Ordines XIV-XXXIV", Louvain, 1974, esp. Ordo XIV, (Baptism).

recently suggested an alternative solution. He proposes that in fact the original chapels were annexed structures.¹⁹ He bases his opinion on the twelfth century description of Petrus Mallius, who called Symmachus' chapels *ecclesiae*, a designation he always used for annexed chapels, while he called internal chapels *oratoria*.²⁰ If Février's theory is correct, these chapels would fit the normal pattern of the times, when regulations, now lost, appear to have favoured external chapels, by discouraging or even forbidding the subdivision of church interiors, as will become clear in this chapter. Furthermore, if the chapels were separate structures, Damasus' baptistery was probably a free-standing building as well, and located outside the right transept of the church. A contemporary poem appears to confirm this layout, as Prudentius describes a spring to the north of the church which fed the font.²¹ Water channels discovered under the basilica in this location may well be the remains of the plumbing of this baptistery. Février also suggests that the remains of the baptistery and its three chapels could all have been buried without trace under the massive foundations of St. Peter's.²² If Février's assumptions are correct, the St. Peter's baptistery with its newly attached chapels was a much closer copy of the Lateran baptistery complex than is usually understood, with similar or identical building types in addition to identical dedications. Although the chapels were all described as *oratoria*, on the precedent of the Lateran chapels one may surmise that they also served as *memoriae* and sheltered relics of the saints, in addition to being used for private prayer. This is borne out by our knowledge that Symmachus' S.Croce, like its Lateran prototype, possessed a relic of ten pounds' weight of

19 P. Albert Février, "Baptistères et reliques", *RAC*, 62, 1986, 131, f.

20 P. Mallius, (writing 1159-1181), *Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae*, ed. Valentini/Zucchetti, *Codice topografico*, III, FSI, 90, Rome, 1946, 375-442, esp. 422, "De oratorio sanctae Crucis", and "De ecclesia sancti Iohannis ad fontes".

21 Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, XII, "On the Passion of... Hippolytus", v.171f., Loeb, 1961.

22 Février, *Baptistères*, 133.

the wood of the Cross.²³ It seems probable that these three chapels were built to honour the cults of the saints John and of the Holy Cross, as well as to underline the authenticity of Symmachus' claim to the Papacy. Very likely, they also served both for private prayer, and for private celebration of the Mass, in the manner of their namesakes at the Lateran Baptistery, which were discussed in Chapter 8.

Février's work makes it difficult to accept information documenting chapels inside church buildings as early as the reign of Symmachus without serious reservations. At a later date, though, there is firmer evidence for the existence of chapels in the interiors of churches. These chapels form the subject of this section.

Why the appearance of separately dedicated chapels within the interiors of churches was such a relatively late development is a question worth considering, especially in view of the popularity of such chapels in the later Middle Ages. The impetus for their appearance appears to be linked to changing perceptions of the nature of the altar. In the early days of the church, the altar was felt to be indivisible, as were the celebrant and the Mass itself,²⁴ and it seems that this indivisibility extended to the church also, setting for the altar and temple of the mysteries. The earliest surviving description of a Christian church, Eusebius' passage on the church of Tyre written soon after its dedication in 317, describes the early layout with a single altar.²⁵ "He hath placed in the midst the holy of holies even the

23 Mallius, Descriptio, 422 "De Oratorio sanctae Crucis", 35, "Ab alia parte est ecclesia sanctae Crucis, quam construi fecit beatae recordationis Symachus papa, cuius absidam columnas porfireticus et optimo mosibo decoravit, et .X. libras ligni sanctae Crucis in ea recondidit". See also Chapter 8.

24 St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, (ca.35-ca.107), Ad Philadelphenses, IV, I, Opera Patr. Apost., ed. F.X.Funk, I, 226, tr. J.Quasten, Patrology, I, Utrecht, 1950, 66, "Take care, then, to partake of one Eucharist; for one is the Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with His Blood, and one altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants".

25 Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History, X, 37-45, tr. J.E.L.Oulton, Loeb Classical Library, London and Cambridge, Mass., 1926, 426-427. The tenth book of Eusebius' History was probably written in 323, ODCC, 481.

altar, and again surrounded this part also, that the multitude might not tread thereon, with a fence of wooden lattice work..." It is apparent that the re-creation of the Last Supper by the celebrant, in memory of Christ's sacrifice, carries with it the idea of a single table, and a single oblation offered by an individual priest. This explains the difficulty of accepting or even contemplating the multiplication of any of the essential elements. Joseph Braun has noted that in those days secondary altars did not exist inside basilicas, *memoriae* or chapels in either the East or the West. If new altars were needed, new churches were built or chapels were added onto the outside of existing buildings. These chapels differed from internal chapels in their possession of doors, and usually also of vestibules, which allowed them to be thought of as separate structures, completely isolated from the church.²⁶ In fact, it is not until almost three centuries after Eusebius that the earliest unequivocal mention of multiple altars within a church occurs, and it refers to Gaul, not Italy.²⁷ It occurs in pope Gregory's letter to Palladius, bishop of Santenis in Gaul, written in July, 596, concerning the need for relics for the thirteen altars of a church under construction there.²⁸ It seems, in the dearth of evidence to the contrary, that between the early fourth and the late sixth centuries the single altar had been the rule.²⁹ The edict "one church, one altar", however, evidently led to problems. These have been seen by Dyggve to have been caused by the success of the cemetery churches in attracting

26 J. Braun, Der christliche Altar in seiner historischen Entwicklung, Munich, 1924, 368.

27 Some earlier references are ambiguous, as the plural form *altaria* of *altare* could also have a singular meaning. For example, Paulinus, PL, 61, Epistola XXXI, col. 329, "et aureis dives altaribus".

28 Gregory I, Epistola XLIX, "Ad Palladium Episcopum", PL, 77, lib. I, VI, col. 834, "atque illic tredecim altaria collocasse." Date of letter in Thomas Hodgkin's autograph copy of PL 77 in the library of the British School at Rome.

29 Cabrol/Leclercq, DACL, I/2, col. 3186, "Autel", texts which might be read to refer to multiple altars can all be explained by the possible use of *altaria* to mean altar.

pilgrims, because there each grave-top could serve as an altar. This gave opportunities, which were denied to city churches, to celebrate the Eucharist at any hour of the day, and in the presence of the remains of the martyrs.³⁰ The change to multiple altars has also been attributed to the greatly increased congregations, though the extent of such increases has not been precisely determined. According to this argument, the expansion of the Christian community led to an increase in the numbers of clergy relative to the number of altars, one only to a church, that were available for celebration of the Mass. Thus, some priests may have been deprived of altars at which to celebrate, while for congregations the problem was felt especially keenly at Easter, when some Christians even found it impossible to receive the sacraments as required of them on this day.³¹ A hint of the difficulties, again referring to Gaul, is contained in the Tenth Canon of the Council of Auxerre, of 578. This laid down that any one altar could only be used for Mass once in a day.³² Such legislation implies that altars were of necessity being used more than once, and perhaps that this was occurring because individual priests could not find a "resting altar" on which to celebrate. Since the idea of celebration of the sacraments upon a "resting altar" was doctrinally important, the solution seems to have been to allow the proliferation of altars, so as to ensure a fresh altar for each celebrant. Thus the multiple altar church came to be accepted, though scholars have failed to find exact documentation of this vital change, despite being able to pinpoint it to the last quarter of the sixth century.

We have seen that the evidence that appears to document chapels

30 Ejnar Dyggve, "L'origine del cimitero entro la cinta della città", Atti dello VIII Congresso di Studi bizantini, Palermo, 1951, repr. Studi bizantini e neoellenici, 8, Rome, 1953, 137-141.

31 Athanasius, Apologia ad Constantium, 14, PG, 25, col.412; tr. H.Newman, N&PNE, 4, 243-245.

32 J.D.Mansi, Concilium omnium amplissima collectio, IX, 1960 edition, Graz, col. 913, Concilium Autisiodorense, Canon X, "Non licet super uno altario in una die duas missas dicere: nec altario ubi episcopus missas dixerit, ut presbyter in una die missas dicat."

inside church buildings as early as the reign of Symmachus cannot be accepted without reservation. Nevertheless, the evidence is firmer that from the seventh century onwards chapels could be and were built inside the interiors of churches, though we know remarkably little about the architectural features and decoration of these internal chapels in the earliest period. This section will locate the earliest chapels, and define the features which they have in common. It will become clear from the sources that these "chapels" were not completely walled off spaces, "rooms within rooms", but altars, placed near or right against the walls of the church, rather than standing in the centre of the space, as had been the custom. They were set apart by a low and partial enclosure at most, and furnished with railings and canopies, lamp-holders and other plate, and above all, mosaics, paintings and other rich items such as curtains of precious fabric, and decorative panels made of gold and silver.³³

The earliest chapel of this sort that survives, though it was only recently recognised as such, is the oratory of saints Primus and Felicianus at S.Stefano Rotondo, Rome. It dates to the reign of Theodore I (642-649).³⁴ The unusual design of the huge, circular church, where a central, cruciform core was wrapped by two columnated ambulatories, through which the higher cross-shaped element rose, in theory allowed space for a chapel in the end of each cross-arm. Only the north-east chapel site survives, though in the seventh century one of the other cross-arms probably contained an altar dedicated to the Baptist.³⁵ Krautheimer and his associates have suggested that originally there may have been neither a main altar and *confessio* in the church nor even a relic of St.Stephen. They point out that originally there had been a radial symmetry, with multiple entries in the perimeter

33 See Jean Croquison, "L'iconographie chrétienne à Rome d'après le Liber Pontificalis", Byzantion, 34, 1964, 535-606, for an analysis of papal gifts to churches and chapels in the Early Middle Ages.

34 LP, I, 332.

35 Krautheimer et al., CBCR, IV, 237.

wall, though very soon most of the entrances were blocked up, except for those in the north-east, which became the entry way. Cecilia Davis-Weyer has recently surmised that there was in fact a main axis to the church, running from south-west to north-east, and that the presbytery and altar were in the south-west arm.³⁶ This would make the present chapel of saints Primus and Felicianus in the north-east an entry-way chapel, like others attached to the narthex of Early Christian churches, such as the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna.

Pope Theodore chose this location to re-inter the saints' remains which he brought in from their catacomb gravesite at Mile 14 of the Via Nomentana, the first recorded translation of martyrs' remains into the city of Rome from its suburban catacombs. He carried out this exhumation and reburial at least in part to provide a burial *ad sanctos* for his father, Bishop Theodore, an exile from Jerusalem after the Arab conquest.³⁷ The eastern origin of the pope and his father may explain the innovative nature of this break with the Roman past, which previously had forbidden the transfer of saints' bodies.

The interest to us of Pope Theodore's chapel, which, incidentally, is not named as an *oratorium* in the Liber Pontificalis, but only as a *confessio*, implying an altar, rather than a full chapel, lies in its decoration and furnishings. These are known from the gifts listed in the Liber Pontificalis, the surviving mosaic and the results of archaeological exploration. This varied information makes it potentially one of the best known of early medieval chapels within a church, in addition to being the earliest known internal liturgical

36 Cecilia Davis-Weyer, "S.Stefano Rotondo in Rome and the Oratory of Theodore I", in Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. Functions, Forms and Regional Traditions, ed. W.Tronzo, Bologna, 1989, 61-80.

37 Two inscriptions, now lost, were recorded by G.B.De Rossi, Inscr.Chris.Urbis Romae, II, Rome, 1888, 152, no.30. EXQUIRENS PIETAS TECTUM DECORARE SACRATUM/ PASTORIS SUMMI THEODORI CORDEM EREXIT/ QUI STUDIO MAGNO SANCTORUM CORPORA CULTU' HOC DEDICAVIT, NON PATRIS NEGLECTA RELIQUIT. "Piety inspired the heart of pope Theodore, who wished to decorate this sanctuary. He applied all his zeal to honouring the bodies of the saints by this fine decoration, nor did he forget the remains of his father," tr. Oakeshott, Mosaics, 153.

chapel to survive.

Both the small apse, less than four metres wide, and its mosaic decoration date to the time of Theodore. In the mosaic, Primus and Felicianus, named + SCS PRIMUS + SCS FELICIANUS, stand on either side of a large, jewelled cross which bears a roundel with a bust of Christ (fig.42). This cross is of an Eastern type, similar to that in the courtyard of the Anastasis in Jerusalem which is known from pilgrim flasks at Monza and Bobbio. It seems an appropriate choice, both for the burial place of a Palestinian bishop, and for the church itself, which is widely believed to be a copy of the Holy Sepulchre. The inscription below reads ASPICIS AURATUM CAELESTI CULMINI TECTUM/ ASTRIFERUMQUE MICANS PRAECLARO NUMINE VULTUM, "Reader, thou lookest on a roof golden with heavenly apex and a face gleaming like a star and shining with a wondrously divine air".³⁸

The altar stood in front of the chord of the apse.³⁹ The relics were found *in situ* in its *confessio* in 1736, identified by a silver tablet.⁴⁰ The altar appears to have been the only one in the church,⁴¹ and was ornamented with Theodore's silver frontal.⁴² The sacred area and indeed, the chapel itself, were bounded by a small wall, which was wider at 6.40 m. than it was deep: its side walls measured 4.4 m. It was rectangular except for the curve in the rear wall, formed by the apse. The enclosure walls were built on top of the paving, which was of large marble slabs, and the central front opening was 1.20 metres wide and still retained a sill of green serpentine. Carlo Ceschi identified the wall as the base of a low enclosure, such as could have supported *plutei* and a *pergula* rail. This last would have held the papal gifts,

38 Oakeshott, Mosaics, 153.

39 Archaeological data from Carlo Ceschi, "Santo Stefano Rotondo", Atti della pont.acc.rom.di arch., ser.III, Memoriae, 15, 1982, 7 to volume end, especially 94-95.

40 Krautheimer *et al*, CBCR, IV, 237.

41 Idem, 237.

42 LP, I, 332.

three golden lamp holders and a pair of silver arches.

Cecilia Davis-Weyer's opinion that this structure was a chapel and not the main presbytery is based on the discovery of remnants of a *schola cantorum* and, possibly, of a bishops' chair at the other end of the "processional way". The chapel's unique position, directly facing the altar, is made possible by the circular plan of Santo Stefano: it suggests to her a function not only as martyrium and mausoleum, but also, possibly, as the sacristy from which the liturgical procession would emerge on its way to the altar.⁴³

Two other oratoria which were built by the popes in the late seventh and early eighth centuries inside Roman basilicas, are described in the Liber Pontificalis with enough detail to give us some further idea of the furnishings of such a papal chapel. At the Lateran basilica, the otherwise unknown oratory of St. Peter was rebuilt by Gregory II (715-731). He decorated it with precious metals, perhaps meaning gold mosaics, and had its altar faced with silver plaques weighing 180 pounds and depicting the twelve apostles. A short while before, Sergius I (687-701), had built a chapel in the south transept of St. Peter's to shelter the remains of Leo I, whose tomb had previously been situated in the communal papal cemetery in the atrium, the *paradisum*, which was now crowded with papal graves. Although this chapel was not referred to in the Liber pontificalis entry for Sergius' reign as an *oratorium*, but rather as a *tumba* (tomb), it had achieved the status of *oratorium* fifty years later, when it was again mentioned in the life of Paul I (757-767).⁴⁴ Its recorded inscription dated the translation to June 28, 688,⁴⁵ and describes its decoration as of precious marble, with pictures of the prophets and saints who were

43 Davis-Weyer, S. Stephano rotondo, 79.

44 LP, I, 465, "et infra ecclesiam beati Petri apostoli foris muros civitatis Romanae, noviter oraculum ...construxit, iuxta oratorium beati Leonis papae..." Duchesne, LP, I, 379, note 35, establishes this connection.

45 De Rossi, Inscr. christ. II, 201-202.

buried at St.Peter's.⁴⁶

Another important example of an interior chapel dates from the very end of our period. It was built in 732, by Pope Gregory III (731-741), who chose Old St.Peter's as the site of an *oratorium* in honour of Christ, his mother and all saints. It was situated next to the triumphal arch and would also serve for Gregory's burial.⁴⁷ Although it has not survived, this chapel is unusually well described in the Liber Pontificalis, where we read that it had a *pergula* for suspension of a cross, lamps, vases and crowns, gifts of the pope. The altar enclosed a *confessio* with silver covered doors: its sides bore three silver crosses each weighing 36 pounds. Above the altar was a picture of the Mother of God with her Child, wearing a golden collar or diadem hung with gems. Mallius also records this icon, and mentions that there was a cavity in the wall above it for an important relic, the arm of St.Stephen, which was placed there in the twelfth century by Alexander III.⁴⁸

Our knowledge of one other early medieval chapel from Old St.Peter's is gained not only from documentation, but from the descriptions and drawings made of it at the time of its demolition along with its church, and from the major fragments of its mosaic decoration that survive. The chapel was built between 705-707, during the short reign of John VII,⁴⁹ and has been the subject of extensive research, particularly by P.J.Nordhagen,⁵⁰ and, recently, by William Tronzo.⁵¹

46 LP, II, 379, note 35 "HINC VATUM PROCERUMQUE COHORS QUOS CERNIS ADESSE/ MEMBRA SUB EGREGIA SUNT ADOPERTA DOMO".

47 LP, I, 417.

48 Mallius, Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae, 7, p.388.

49 LP, I, 385, Iohannes VII, "Hic fecit oratorium sanctae Dei genetricis intro ecclesiam beati Petri apostoli, cuius parietes musibo depinxit, illicque auri et argenti quantitatem multam expendit et venerabilium Patrum dextra levaeque vultus erexit".

50 P.J.Nordhagen, "The Mosaics of John VII, 705-707", Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, II, 1965, 143-165

The former concentrated on a study of the mosaics through the drawings of the lost composition and the surviving fragments in Rome, Florence, and Orte.⁵² Since chapels at St. Peter's underwent many changes in the thousand years between their foundation and their demolition, Tronzo's analysis of the chapel of John VII is all the more welcome. Tronzo bases his research on the structure itself as revealed in the drawings of Grimaldi,⁵³ which show that this *oratorium* was in fact another vestigial chapel, like those we have discussed, consisting only of an altar and its furnishings. Its features included the altar, with the tomb of John VII in front of it beneath an oval slab; a ciborium supported by two columns; pilasters on the wall which probably held lamps; and the important mosaic panel above the altar in which episodes from the life of the Virgin and of Christ surrounded a large central image of Mary at prayer, in the fashion of an icon of the *vita* type.⁵⁴ By recognising that the mosaic panel on an adjacent wall which illustrated scenes from the lives of Peter and Paul was a later addition, and not part of the original programme, Tronzo was able to see the chapel for what it was, an altar on the inner entrance wall of the church, rather than a four-square space railed off in the corner of the basilica. Thus he overcame the enigmatic quality that had previously deterred scholars from attempting a reconstruction. Tronzo's interpretation makes it plain that it fits into the normal pattern for the earliest chapels in the interior of churches, which we shall designate the "altar-chapel". It was also clear that a primary function of the structure was the burial of the pope who built it, thus

51 William Tronzo, "Setting and Structure in Two Roman Wall Decorations of the Early Middle Ages", *DOP*, 41, 477-492.

52 A further fragment, Joseph from the Nativity, has recently been identified in Moscow. Illustrated in G. Matthiae, *Pittura Romana del Medioevo, Secoli IV - X*, Rome, 1987, part 2, "Aggiornamento scientifico e bibliografia di Maria Andaloro", colour plate 2.

53 Giacomo Grimaldi, *Descrizione della basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vatican City*, Cod. Barberini Latino 2733. Facsimile, ed. Reto Niggli, Vatican City, 1972.

54 Tronzo, *Roman Wall Decorations*, 491-492.

conforming to a pattern which was to become more and more common at St. Peter's in the early Middle Ages. The decoration and inscriptions, together with the humble figure of John VII in the square halo of a portrait from life, kneeling at the feet of Maria Regina, make it clear that the pope gave the chapel and mosaics to the Virgin in her role as intercessor, in expectation of her help on the day of judgment.

Thus, it was only around the time of Gregory the Great that the integrity of the internal space of the church began to be breached, and individuals of the highest ecclesiastical rank could claim a private, dedicated space right inside the basilica. These chapel spaces could be used for private prayer, private liturgical celebrations, or even for burial within the actual confines of the church.⁵⁵ In cemetery churches outside the walls of cities, burial within the church building, itself a cemetery, had been possible from an early date, and every grave-top had come to be thought of and used as an altar. However, in the Early Christian period, even in the cemetery churches graves do not seem to have been enclosed in individual, internal rooms inside the basilica itself. And even in the late seventh and early eighth centuries, the funerary chapels that were built inside churches remained vestigial, furnished and decorated as altars, and lacking the full walls and vaults that would become the ninth-century norm. The next stage, the full room internal chapel, is exemplified by the mid-eighth century Theodotus chapel at S. Maria Antiqua in the Roman Forum, a redecoration of a pre-existent room; and the vaulted funerary chapel of saints Processus and Martinianus, in the left transept of Old St. Peter's, which was built and decorated with a mosaic vault by pope Paschal I (817-824), for his own use as a burial chapel.⁵⁶ It is a short step from such structures as

55 This latter use was not usually possible in city churches while the Roman laws forbidding burial within the city were in force, that is, before about the seventh century. An early example is the late sixth century burial of bishop Marcianus in S. Eufemia, Grado. See Chapter 4.

56 LP, II, Paschal I; 53 and 58.

these to the typical chapels inside the churches of the later Middle Ages.

III. SACRISTIES

A third important category of chapel existed within the physical boundaries of some Early Christian and Byzantine churches: the sacristy. Sacristies have sometimes been known as *pastophories*, but this term is better reserved for the side chambers of middle-Byzantine churches, where they had precisely determined functions in the preparations for the liturgy.⁵⁷

Sacristies have been defined as utilitarian chapels which meet the auxiliary needs of the Mass and the congregation.⁵⁸ They are often paired, and situated on either side of the altar, though before the sixth century a single structure might meet all the practical needs and be situated at the other end of the church, beside the narthex.⁵⁹ It might even be an entirely separate structure, rather than an annexe. Although some exceptional cases of paired and even multiple sacristies can be documented to the fourth and fifth centuries, these were all imperial gifts, perhaps with special significance. The change to paired sacristies in non-imperial churches can be traced to the mid-sixth century and the reign of Justinian, when the three part sanctuary became the norm in the East, and in churches built under Eastern influence in the West. The paired chambers to the left and the right of the altar would later be called *prothesis* and *diaconicon*. In our period, however, these names had not yet come into use.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, even if the

57 See Janet Charlotte Smith, "Form and Function of the Side-Chambers of Fifth- and Sixth-Century Churches in Ravenna", JSAH, 49, 1990, 181-204, esp. 181-182, with bibliography.

58 R.Krautheimer, ECBA, 69; 361-362.

59 Djordje Stricevic, "The Diakonikon and the Prothesis in Early Christian Churches", Starinar, 9, 1959, 59-66, in Serbian with a summary in English, p.66.

60 Smith, Ibid, 181.

functions of these chambers in terms of the liturgy had not yet become formalised, many of the needs they served were not peculiar to the Middle-Byzantine period, and the chapels must therefore have served the same functions as *protheses* and *diaconicons*. Among these, the most important was the preparation of the sacraments. The clergy also needed a place in which to robe themselves, light the incense and prepare the vessels and clean them after use. Places also had to be provided to store the churches' treasures: books, plate, vestments and money. In addition, the gifts of the congregation had to be received and stored, gifts that included the bread and wine destined for the Eucharist.

It is striking that despite needs that must have varied little from place to place, some Early Christian churches possessed sacristies, while others lacked them. Even when we take into account the possibility that local variants in the liturgy may have imposed needs for differing architectural ground-plans, we must still ask how the sacristy functions were carried out in churches which had no special sacristy chapels, the situation, we shall discover, of most early churches in the West. Some light is thrown on this problem by Paulinus of Nola, who at the turn of the fifth century not only built a church in the cemetery at Nola, the Basilica Apostolorum, but explained the use of specific parts of its sanctuary as "sacristies" in a letter, and recorded the epigrams which he placed above these areas to explain their functions.⁶¹ Paulinus' new church had a trichoran apse: in his own words,⁶² "an undulating apse unfolds itself with two recesses, one to the right and one to the left".⁶³ The excavations of the Basilica Apostolorum made it clear that an "undulating apse with recesses", *conchulae*, was an apse with a wide, three-windowed, central bay and a secondary apse on either side, each of which was lit by a single window

61 Paulinus, Letter 32 to Sulpicius Severus: Goldschmidt, Churches, 41.

62 Paulinus, ed. Goldschmidt, Ibid, 38, "reliquiis apostolorum et martyrum intra absidem trichoram sub altaria sacratis...". On p.124, Goldschmidt discusses the meaning of the phrase *absis trichora*.

63 S.Paulinus Nolanus, Epistola 32, PL 61, col.338.

(fig.41, B).⁶⁴ Paulinus remarked that one recess offered a place where the priest prepared the host--the "offers of jubilation", and the other was for the prayers of the priest and his congregation.⁶⁵ He expounds these meanings in verse: the right sacristy (*secretarium*) of his church bore the verses "this is the place where the awesome provisions are put, and where the life-giving ceremonial procession of the sacred sacraments is sent forth". On the left was inscribed "If anybody has the holy wish of meditating on the law, here sitting down he can turn to the holy books".⁶⁶ Thus, it was the side apses of Paulinus' church that were used as sacristies, the right apse being used for storage and preparation of the elements of the eucharist, and the left for storage of the altar books, which were available there for study by the congregation. Perhaps the furnishings on this side consisted of cupboards like the one seen in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia lunette mosaic, with shelves for the gospel-books, and doors that could be closed and presumably locked on the sacred contents. Across the chancel, there must have been more cupboards for the vessels, and a table for the preparations.

Paulinus solves the question of where the sacristy functions were carried out for one of the several types of church without separate, purpose-built sacristies: the *trichora*. One can only speculate that in churches which lacked both sacristies and trichoran chancels, these functions were accommodated in the subsidiary apses, if the sanctuary were triple, in the areas to either side of the main apse, or at the east ends of the side aisles. It is hardly surprising that no early furnishings have survived, though an idea of them can be gained from the illustrations of book cupboards in mosaic and manuscript art.⁶⁷

64 G.Chierici, "Recenti lavori ..alle basiliche paoliniane di Cimitile", *RAC*, 16, 1939, 51-73, esp.60, fig.5.

65 Paulinus, ed. Goldschmidt, *Ibid*, 40, "Una earum (conchula) immolanti hostias iubilationis antistiti patet, alia post sacerdotem capaci sinu receptat orentes".

66 Paulinus, ed. Goldschmidt, *Ibid*, 44, "si quem sancta tenet meditanda in lege voluntas, / hic poterit residens sacris intendere libris".

Normally in the West, the spaces dedicated to these functions were equal in size, and symmetrically arranged on either side of the sanctuary, as Paulinus describes them. In the East, however, the utility functions came to occupy separate rooms. Such profound local architectural variants in different parts of the Early Christian world are thought to reflect regional differences in the liturgy and in the needs of congregations. In Syria, for example, archaeological evidence makes it clear that there were two types of sacristy with different functions, with the inevitable outcome of a local variant, the asymmetrical sanctuary. On one side, the utility chapel would communicate openly with the altar area and the north aisle of the church by means of archways, to facilitate the processions and the transfer of the consecrated bread and wine to the altar. On the other side, by contrast, the sacristy was closed off from view by a smaller doorway, and presumably possessed narrower and less accessible windows. Here we have physical evidence that in Syria one of the main functions of the sacristy had become that of treasury, which needed the greatest possible security. This may well be a reflection of Syria's position on the frontiers of empire. The treasure of the average Syrian church included not only the communion plate and other portable objects such as censers, candelabra and lamps,⁶⁸ but the relics of the martyrs, which occupied stone coffers within the building.⁶⁹ These were bulky, and the need for this type of storage seems to have led to an exaggerated asymmetry of the east end of many Syrian churches, in which the treasury came to project forward from the sanctuary.⁷⁰

67 See Chapter 7. A manuscript version of the book cupboard is seen in the Ezra page of Codex Amiatinus, Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, cod. Amiatinus 1, fol. 5A, Wearmouth-Jarrow, early eighth century. This illustration was probably a copy of a sixth century Italian original.

68 Much evidence for the large collections of silver vessels of even quite modest churches has come to light in the numerous hoards found in Syria and Turkey, and inscribed with the names of particular churches.

69 J.Lassus, Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie, Paris, 1947, 162f.

70 See G.Descoedres, Die Pastophorien in syro-byzantinischen Osten, Doctoral thesis, Wiesbaden, 1983, 13-25, for a discussion of other functions which were sometimes carried out in pastophories in the East,

The region for which the congruence between architecture and liturgy is best understood is Byzantium, where the architecture has been studied in this context by Thomas Mathews,⁷¹ and the early liturgy has been investigated in depth by Robert Taft. Taft has analysed the text of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, collating the ritual and ceremony with the architecture of the church buildings and their annexes.⁷² Taft and Mathews have concluded that the earliest churches in Byzantium did not have clearly demarcated sacristies, and that all their functions were in fact filled by a separate building, the skeuophylakion.⁷³ Brick studies of the skeuophylakion at H. Sophia, Constantinople, show that it antedates Justinian's church, and belongs with the earlier church built on the site by Theodosius the Great, which was consecrated in 415. It survived the church's destruction by fire in the Nika riots of 532, and consists of a dodecahedral building with interior niches. Literary evidence for its function is found in the works of Palladius (ca. 363-ca. 431), who called it a "separate little building in which the many sacred vessels were kept".⁷⁴ Other Constantinopolitan churches such as H. Eirene and the much smaller H. Theodoros Sphorakios also had separate and circular skeuophylakions.⁷⁵ Taft's and Mathews' studies have concluded that the ceremony of the Mass in H. Sophia both started and

such as baptism, burial and housing of martyr relics.

71 Thomas F. Mathews, The Early Churches of Constantinople. Architecture and Liturgy. University Park, Pennsylvania, 1971.

72 Robert F. Taft, "The Great Entrance", Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 200, Rome, 1975. N. K. Moran questions Taft's conclusions, as he feels the longer Mass of St. Basil was in more general use than that of St. John Chrysostom, and hence would have formed a more valid basis for analysis. Neil K. Moran, "The Skeuophylakion of the Hagia Sophia", CahArch, 34, 1987, 29-32, esp. 29.

73 Taft, Ibid, 181.

74 Palladius, Dialogus de Vita S. Ioannis Chrysostomi, PG, 47, 5-82, esp. 36. This was written ca. 408. See Questen, Patrology, III, 179. Also Taft, Great Entrance, 185.

75 Mathews, Churches, 161. For the skeuophylakion at S. Sophia, 16-17, figs. 2 and 3, and pl. 16.

ended at the skeuophylakion.⁷⁶ Before the ceremony, the clergy vested and said the prothesis prayer in the skeuophylakion. The gifts were offered there by the congregation and stored there also; there too the eucharistic vessels were withdrawn from storage and charged with the bread and wine. The deacons were normally in charge of the preparations. They went in procession to the altar, where they were met by the priests: in smaller churches where there were no deacons the priests made all the preparations. After the Mass, the exit procession followed the same route in reverse, and a prayer was offered on reaching the skeuophylakion, where disrobing took place, and the sacred vessels were returned to storage.

My intention in discussing the origins of the sacristy in the East is to pinpoint the influence this type of structure had in its evolution in Italy and the Upper Adriatic. The skeuophylakion as it developed in Constantinople seems to have been one component of metropolitan church architecture, which, even if it was not exported in exactly its metropolitan form, had a profound influence on the layout of the sanctuary of some early Italian churches. This is especially true of the churches which were most closely related to the imperial, and therefore Eastern, tradition of church building.

These churches, of course, are best known from Ravenna, but there are others in outlying areas, including Rome, which were also built under Eastern influence. The influence is very obvious in the triple east ends of these churches, which usually have characteristic apses, polygonal outside and round inside. Taft has related this feature to north Syria, for pre-iconoclastic Constantinopolitan churches had no sacristies at all, but single apses flanked by multiple entrances.⁷⁷ In Italy, the Constantinopolitan influence, even where not seen in the

76 This idea, however, has been challenged by N.K.Moran, Skeuophylakion, who proposes that a curtained off corner of the north-east conch of the church would have been a more convenient gathering place for the procession. In either case, the skeuophylakion would have served as a secure accessory building for storage of the treasures of the church, and to serve its liturgical needs.

77 Taft, Great Entrance, 181; Mathews, Churches, 109.

triple apse, is apparent in the circular chambers beside the apses of several special churches. Some of these survive, while others are known from literary or archaeological evidence. The sites of these chambers, in each case paired and adjacent to the sanctuary, are the imperial foundations of S.Lorenzo in Milan and S.Vitale in Ravenna. They also occur at S.Maria Formosa, Pula, which was not only an extraterritorial Ravenna possession, but was built by Archbishop Maximian, who was closely associated with the building of S.Vitale. All three pairs of chapels were centrally planned, with internal niches, and those of Ravenna and Pula are known to have been decorated with wall mosaics.

The chambers at S.Lorenzo, Milan, presumably contemporary with the church and thus dating from the late fourth century, are known only from excavation. Octagonal in form, each small chapel had eight rectangular niches, alternating deep and shallow, with one niche penetrated by the door. These rooms flanked the martyrium behind the high altar. The octagons in their turn were flanked by rectangular, apsed chapels which still survive. Chierici and his co-authors have suggested that the right-hand octagon served as "diaconicon".⁷⁸

The set of eight chambers beside the presbytery at S.Vitale have also sometimes been identified as sacristies: Janet Smith has suggested functions for each according to its architectural features. The Sancta Sanctorum to the south of the altar, with its extra door to the outside, has served as a funerary chapel for San Vitale's founding bishops since Agnellus' time, and probably from the outset. The twin chapel of Gervasius and Protasius on the left of the sanctuary has no door to the exterior, and may well have been used as a sacristy and treasury. Suggestive evidence for this function is provided by an event recorded in the late sixteenth century Historia di Ravenna of Tomasso Tomai.⁷⁹ He describes a find of treasure that had occurred about fifty years previously. Gold coins were found in one container, and later, under a

78 A.Calderini, G.Chierici and C.Cecchelli, La Basilica di San Lorenzo Maggiore, Milan, 1952, pl.XXXIII. Also, Gino Traversi, Architettura paleocristiana milanese, Milan, 1964, 70.

79 Tomasso Tomai, Historia di Ravenna, Ravenna, 1580, 23-26.

very heavy cover, a marble sarcophagus full of closed reliquary boxes of various materials, both plain and ornamental. The boxes, of silver and of alabaster, were variously sized, from six inches, ("due palmi"), to a cubit, ("un braccio", 18-22 inches). These relic containers were accompanied by many loose precious stones and cameos.⁸⁰ This discovery was made in the "little church near the afore mentioned church (of S.Vitale) dedicated to saints Gervasius and Protasius, martyrs and sons of St. Vitalis." Because the text continues with a description of the decoration of the chapel "all worked in mosaic, with most beautiful figures who mysteriously look at one another beckoning with their hands", this has been assumed to refer to the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, with its pairs of gesturing saints on the upper walls. However, the mausoleum has never been dedicated to the sons of Vitalis, whereas the left hand domed chamber of S.Vitale has always borne this dedication. Perhaps there is another solution: that the find was in some way connected with the domed sacristy of Protasius and Gervasius at S.Vitale, perhaps originally occupying the sarcophagus-sized niche in its outer wall.⁸¹ This treasure, consisting in large part of relics in precious containers, was an appropriate one to come from the treasury of a great imperial church. The supposition of Corrado Ricci that the treasure must have formed part of an imperial burial seems less likely, since a sarcophagus entirely full of reliquaries would be a strange accompaniment for a secular tomb.⁸² Unmounted jewels, also, do not fit the pattern that we know from the burial in Rome of the empress Maria, whose grave goods, while they included hundreds of gems, had them set as

80 Some were sent to Venice, where they were used to repair and augment the Pala d'Oro. This dates the find to the period 1527-1530, when Ravenna was under the rule of Venice. Other jewels were used to ornament three mitres, which were lost in the early 19th century.

81 For the dimensions of the niches in the domed chambers of S.Vitale in terms of sarcophagus size see J.C.Smith, Side Chambers, 186-187.

82 Ricci, Mausoleo, 30, "il ricordo del tesoro rinvenuto richiama la nostra mente all'uso antico di seppellire le persone cospicue con le loro cose più preziose e rafforza la tradizione, per non dire il fatto, esser quel monumento un sepolcro imperiale".

rings and other jewellery.⁸³ The Ravenna treasure is unfortunately dispersed, and its find-location cannot be precisely determined. Since the goods it contained were so appropriate to the treasury of a great church, I offer this find as extremely tentative evidence that the chapel of Gervasius and Protasius at S.Vitale, about which nothing is known of function or decoration, was a sacristy and treasure store of the church and that it was once decorated with mosaics, which have since been lost.⁸⁴

Janet Smith has recently suggested that the three storey chambers between the domed chapels and the sanctuary fulfilled various other storage related functions.⁸⁵ On the middle level, the low, windowless chambers were hidden from both inside and outside: she identifies these as secret treasuries. Both top chapels are furnished with slots for shelving. They occupy the driest and best ventilated positions in the church, and were quite possibly used as libraries. On the ground level the chapels are provided with deep rectangular niches: that on the north side is grooved for shelving. These chambers, especially the north one next to the presumed sacristy, may have held the more immediate necessities of the Mass.

The architecture of the large domed chapels can be related both to the skeuophylakion in Constantinople, and to the needs of the treasury function: their rectangular niches, sized to hold a sarcophagus, also relate them to such structures as San Sisto, the funerary chapel of the Milanese bishops at S.Lorenzo. As at Constantinople, each of the S.Vitale chambers was circular, with niches: two larger on the outer side of the church; two smaller on the apse side. Each was lit only by a small window in the east end. Each was raised by several steps above the level of the surrounding land which then, as now, had a high water-

83 The reports of the discovery of Maria's tomb and its contents in the Honorian Mausoleum, Rome in 1544 have been collected by M.J.Johnson, Imperial Mausolea, 322-334, Appendix C, 3-12.

84 I have not found any reference to mosaic fragments being found in restorations of this chapel.

85 J.C.Smith, Side Chambers, 189-190.

table. This may have been designed to raise the sacristy contents out of the worst of the damp at ground level. There does not seem to be a conflict with the dedications of these two chapels as martyria, especially as we know that the actual bodies of the four Milanese saints of the dedications lay in Milan.

The sacristies at S.Maria Formosa, Pula, are known both from a sixteenth century description and from the remains of the substantial common wall, complete with niches, that survives as part of the adjacent, outer chapel which is the only part of the great basilica to survive.⁸⁶ Pietro Kandler, quoting an anonymous early sixteenth century Pula writer, described the sacristies as having "most beautiful monumental doors" and "a window that gave little light"; the perfect formula for a treasury, and one can presume that they were designed as strong-rooms, capable of being securely locked.⁸⁷ Inside, the floor was clad in mosaic in a compartmentalised design, of which fragments were still visible in 1845.⁸⁸ The vault was described by the anonymous writer as also clad in mosaic, and the walls below as having niches that contained statues.⁸⁹ Perhaps these were reliquaries. It seems likely that both these vaulted, niched and securely closed chapels beside the altar served for storage of the altar wares, sacred books and church

86 These funerary chapels, (originally two), opened only to the exterior, and are unlikely to have served the functions of sacristies. See Chapter 4.

87 Anonimo di Pola, Dialoghi sulle antichità di Pola del 1600, Ms. in Bibl. Marciana, Venice. Reprinted in P.Kandler, (ed.), Cenni al forestiero che visita Pola, Trieste, 1845, 59-158, esp. 78, "l'entrate delle quali hanno dei bellissimi portoni", and "finestra che dà scarsa luce".

88 Kandler, L'Istra, 32, 1847, repr. in Notizie Storiche di Pola, IX Congresso Generale, Città di Pola, Parenzo, (Poreč), 1876, 171-177, esp. 174.

89 Anonimo di Pola, Dialoghi, ed. P.Kandler, Cenni, 78, "lavorate et sotto nel pavimento et sopra nella concavità di volti a mosaico, di opera segnalatamente ricca e vistosa... dimostrano a'concavi ovati che in finissimo marmo vi si veggono, essere già state ornate di bellissime statue...".

treasures, which probably included relics.

In these churches, each with its own connection with Constantinople, it seems that the very unusual circular sacristies or treasuries are direct quotations from the capital city, where early churches kept their treasures in a separate, circular skeuophylakion. Krautheimer has argued very convincingly that such "copies" of architecture in the Middle Ages did not slavishly imitate every feature of the original, but selected key qualities for emulation. These acted as markers of the buildings' common purpose, overriding other striking differences which were less important to the medieval mind.⁹⁰ In the case under consideration, the circular form and the niches appear to have been the fundamental points of resemblance: the position, close to the altar, rather than separated, and the duplication, may have been local features, influenced by the symmetrical architecture of the earlier churches of Milan and Ravenna.

Such circular sacristies, though, are exceedingly rare and occur only at the most richly endowed churches, and only at S.Lorenzo can they be assigned a pre-sixth century date. However, multiple rectangular side-chambers beside the sanctuary distinguished Galla Placidia's two Ravenna churches, S.Croce and S.Giovanni Evangelista, from their contemporaries. Again the clustered side chambers seem to be a hallmark of imperial patronage. These sets have also been assigned practical functions by Janet Smith: hidden chambers for treasuries, a small relic shrine that may be a copy of Golgotha at S.Croce, a library heated by a sub-floor hypocaust.⁹¹ In the absence of any other early evidence for the building of separate sacristies in the West, we are probably justified in assuming that the typical, non-imperial Early Christian basilica had found no cause to build formal sacristies, finding that the arrangements described by Paulinus at Nola were quite adequate.

90 R.Krautheimer, "Introduction to an "Iconography of Medieval architecture"", JWCI, 5, 1942, 1-33, repr. in Krautheimer, Studies in Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art, London, 1969, 115-150, esp. 125-126.

91 J.C.Smith, Side Chambers, esp. 193-200; and "The side-chambers of San Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna: Church Libraries of the Fifth Century", Gesta, 29, 1990, 86-97.

In the sixth century the situation seems to have changed, presumably in response to the renewed Byzantine presence in Italy. At this time, the east end of non-imperial churches in Ravenna and the Upper Adriatic area were frequently provided with chapels flanking the sanctuary. Even in Rome trichoran and triple-apsed eastern ends were built under Eastern influence. Pope Vigilius' SS.Quirico and Giulitta (538-545), for example, had a polygonal apse, flanked by apsed side-chapels facing north and south, the assemblage creating a trefoil.⁹² The SS.Apostoli, first dedicated by pope Julius I (337-352), possibly also had a sixth century trefoil chancel, with an apse at each end of the transept, and a sacristy on either side between the transept and the choir, though these latter, which can be seen in a fresco in the Vatican Library, may be fifteenth century additions built on Early Christian foundations. These foundations, though, prove that there were side chambers in the Early Christian period. Krautheimer accounts for this Eastern influence by dating the church to the Byzantine occupation of Rome under Narses.⁹³ S.Giovanni a Porta Latina, also, had a tripartite choir: its central apse was polygonal outside and semicircular within, in Eastern fashion.⁹⁴ The chancel probably dated to the reign of Gelasius I (492-496), and was built with side rooms that have narrow doorways into the aisles. These were all rare features for Rome, but known from Ravenna, while the polygonal apse also points to the East and Constantinople. The Eastern influence is confirmed at S.Giovanni a Porta Latina by use of the Byzantine, rather than the Roman, foot as unit of measurement.⁹⁵

The sixth century churches of Ravenna and the North-East, which were plainly built under Byzantine influence, were quite often endowed with chapels beside the sanctuary. Some of these must have served as

92 Krautheimer, CBCR, IV, 49, 538-545.

93 Krautheimer, Ibid, I, 78-81. The fresco is reproduced as fig.56; these sacristies apparently remained in use until 1702.

94 Krautheimer, Ibid, I, 315, and 313, fig. 165.

95 Krautheimer, Ibid, 318.

sacristies, though many were used as funerary chapels. Grado is especially rich in such structures. The cathedral, S.Euphemia, has been examined in Chapter 4. Nearby, at the mid-sixth century S.Maria delle Grazie, the third church to occupy the site,⁹⁶ the chapels have narrow and low doorways: in order to use the space behind the straight east wall, they open into a narrow, vaulted passageway behind the apse. This space was formerly divided by a wall into two small inner rooms in the thickness of the masonry behind the curve of the apse. The whole area is provided with fine, sixth-century mosaic floors: the inner area may have served for storage of treasures, as the small low doorways and inner recesses of the rooms would suggest: these treasures may, as in Syria, have included relics such as those donated by Bishop Elia.⁹⁷

The sacristy floors are attributed to the bishopric of Elia (571-586), who also built those of S.Eufemia and of the Basilica of the Piazza Vittoria at Grado. Parts of the mosaic floors were given by individual officials and soldiers, and are dated to the second half of the sixth century.

The Basilica of the Piazza Vittoria, its dedication unknown, but dating to the first half of the fifth century, like S.Maria delle Grazie had a rectangular plan with the apse inscribed within the flat east wall, and a pair of trapezoidal chambers fitted into the space around and behind it. This style, possibly of Syrian inspiration, was adhered to when the basilica was expanded in the late sixth century. The renovation probably occurred in Elia's time, when a new apse, again flanked by sacristies, was built behind the primitive one, and the nave was wrapped by lateral aisles. This time, though, the flat expanse of wall behind the main apse was broken by a small, extra apse in the right chamber, which took on the function of relic-chapel, associated with the

96 Mosaic floors on the site at a lower level reveal the presence of fourth and fifth century churches on this site.

97 Verzone, L'Architettura Religiosa, 45, fig.18. A different layout for the space is given in Brusin and Zovatto, Monumenti paleocristiani di Aquileia e di Grado, 435, fig.22, and plan fig.15. For relics given by bishop Elia, see note 98, below.

transfer of relics to the churches of Grado in the time of Elia.⁹⁸

At Ravenna also, fifth century churches usually had a single apse, while in the Byzantine period of the sixth century triple apses became more common, or the central apse was flanked by sacristies.

Archaeological evidence places the Basilica Petriana (429-449), situated in the city of Classis and destroyed in an eighth century earthquake, in the simple category, with a single, externally hexagonal apse,⁹⁹ and the suburban church of S. Severo, Caesarea (570-577), was also of this simple, early design.¹⁰⁰ The three-aisled Basilica Probi, however, had a triform east end: this may possibly be an early feature comparable with to that of the Basilica Apostolorum at Nola.¹⁰¹

In conclusion, the scanty evidence concerning sacristies points to the co-existence in Italy and Istria of two different traditions. Typically, in the Early Christian period in the West, the sacristy functions were not carried out in separate rooms built for the purpose within the church. Paulinus' account confirms that specific interior chapels designated for these practical functions were not a normal part of the early basilica, any more than the church interior was subdivided at this period for other purposes. Nevertheless, there was clearly a different tradition in the East, which affected church design in those parts of Italy which were closest to Eastern influence, or were provided by the individual patronage of Eastern clerics or of the imperial family. This tradition was manifested in a variety of plans for the sanctuary area, that allowed different functions purpose built spaces,

98 Andrea Dandalus, Chronicon Venetum, Muratori, RIS, 12, 1728, col. 102, XIV-XVI. Relics went to Elia's S.Euphemia, S.Maria, S.Giovanni Evangelista and S.Vitalis. Perhaps the Piazza Vittoria church was one of the two latter.

99 G.Bovini, Memorie cristiane scomparse dell'antica città di Classe, Ravenna, 1965, 69.

100 Bovini, Ibid, 92.

101 Bovini, Ibid, 35, who thinks the trichoran apse may date from the mid-sixth century.

suitably furnished, separated off in the form of subsidiary chapels. The conclusion is inescapable that all variants of the sanctuary with side-chamber sacristies in Italy are of eastern origin. The great majority that have survived, or that are described in literary or archaeological sources, are in the Upper Adriatic region, including Ravenna, and date from the sixth century. They mark the Byzantine period in the Exarchate, and the Eastern patronage that resulted from it.

CONCLUSION

This study has covered a wide geographical area: the whole of north and central Italy, as well as the coast of Istria in present day Yugoslavia. It has explored a period of over four centuries that spans Late Antiquity and the start of the "Dark Ages". Yet even though it covers so large an area, and such a long time-span, and has brought together information about numerous chapels, few of them have survived with any of their decorations in place, and of these, fewer still are in a complete enough condition to allow the whole iconographic programme to be deciphered. This is hardly surprising after an interval of anywhere from twelve to sixteen hundred years.

In addition to the handful of more or less intact specimens, though, some chapels retain fragmentary decorations, and many more, entirely shorn of decoration, betray symbolic meaning in their architectural form. More chapels still have been discovered in the archaeological record. Descriptions in medieval and later documents, while often mystifying or at best incomplete, allow some chapels which have lost their decor to take their place in the overall picture. Drawings made in the Renaissance period are also informative. The picture which emerges tells of an artistic and architectural vocabulary which is rich in symbolic content, and which can express the various ideas and articles of faith which we know from written sources to have been important theological concerns in the early Church.

Thus, it has become clear that decorations illustrate texts appropriate to the purpose of the chapels' use, and that these texts may be drawn from the Old Testament and the Prophets, the New Testament, apocryphal writings and, especially, the Apocalypse. The writings of the Church Fathers were also influential, and provide insights into the texts chosen, illuminating the concerns of the era. Precedents exist to suggest that the liturgy may also have been illustrated, and its prayers depicted in visible form in the space where they were spoken. This was the case in Rome at the fourth century mausoleum of Constantine's daughter, Constantina, and, nearly half a millenium later, at S.Prassede in the San Zeno chapel. In both of these, the intercessory prayers of

the funerary Mass were illustrated in mosaic.¹ Unfortunately, none of the surviving chapel decorations from the intervening period includes this theme, though it probably remained popular in funerary structures. The lives and deaths of the saints, however, provided inspiration, especially in the *memoriae* which were erected over their graves, such as S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan. And even when no exact text can be located for a given decoration, it is likely that such a text existed, perhaps in the sermons or other oral sources of the day, but has not survived.

The material that has been gathered also covers a wide variety of structures, from the annexed self-contained building with or without a vestibule to the internal secondary altar with its furnishings, partly or completely railed off; from the sacristy chapel with its multifarious practical purposes to the room within a house. Above all, the survey is essentially incomplete, since the ravages of time have taken so heavy a toll on chapels and their decorations. This is particularly true of those in the houses of the wealthy laity, which have disappeared almost without a trace, although their existence is recorded in literary sources. This lost material obviously would have counterbalanced conclusions which in default must be based almost entirely on evidence from funerary structures. This is the inevitable consequence of the fact that almost all the surviving decorated chapels belong to the funerary and martyr tradition. The cult of the dead was not only responsible for their existence in the first place, but was also the reason for the care and maintenance they received in succeeding centuries. The most notable exceptions are the Archbishops' chapel in Ravenna, palace chapel of the Ravenna episcopate, and the chapels of the two saints John at the Lateran baptistery. At Ravenna, it seems reasonable to ask whether its storage areas contained relics of the saints which would have given some flavour of the martyr cult to this

1 For Mausoleum of Constantina, see Henri Stern, "Les mosaïques de l'église de S.Constance à Rome, DOP, 12, 1958, 157-208, and for San Zeno Chapel, Gillian Mackie, "The Zeno Chapel: a Prayer for Salvation", PBSR, 57, 1989, 172-199. See also Damien Sicard, Liturgie de la Mort, 361f.

chapel too, while at the Lateran, the chapels, built as shrines, also held relics in their *confessios*. This would at least partly explain the convergence of their decorative programmes with those of the more overtly funerary majority that form the main subject of this study.

The vocabulary of chapel-decoration was found to be that of Early Christian art in general: the three persons of the Trinity, expressed literally or metaphorically; their attendant angels; and their abode, the heavens, seen as a multilayered dome sprinkled with stars, and sheltering an appropriate flora and fauna which express layers of allegorical meaning.

Both the Father and the Holy Spirit appear only in symbolic form: the Father for dogmatic reasons,² and the Holy Spirit because of the inherent difficulty in representing the non-material. Thus, at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro the Father is represented by the hand that emerges from the clouds of heaven to crown Victor in his glory, while at the St.Matrona chapel the Holy Spirit is shown as a dove, following the standard formula in Early Christian art. The Son, with his two natures, human and divine, appears in human form in a medallion portrait at St. Matrona, as a shepherd in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, and as a victorious emperor at the Archbishops' chapel. These images do not illustrate events from the Gospels and in fact Christological narrative scenes are entirely absent in the surviving chapels. Rather, they approach the task of illustrating Christ as Man through his own words as recorded in the Gospels, or those attributed to him in the apocalyptic vision of John, which was already considered canonical in the West in the Early Christian period. Christ taught about himself in metaphors, and it is these that are expressed visually in chapel programmes. For example, at the St.Matrona chapel, Christ's image is flanked by the alpha and omega, illustrating his words "I am the Alpha and the Omega,

2 John, 1:18, "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known"; and 6:46, in Christ's own words, "Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from the Father".

the beginning and the end", (Rev. 21:6), while the shepherd scene at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia is dependent on "I am the good shepherd," and also refers in its position over the entry-way to "I am the door: if any enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture". (John, 10:11, and 10:9.) The preferred dress for Christ in these images is the purple imperial *chlamys*. In the vestibule of the Archbishops' chapel at Ravenna, the choice of imperial military dress and victory iconography makes the interest in showing Christ as ruler even more explicit. Evidently the model transferred to the heavenly realm was that of God's representative on earth, the emperor. Evidently, also, the respect given to images of the emperors in the temporal realm could be transferred to those of Christ, the heavenly ruler.³

Just as frequently, though, the image of Christ is expressed in symbolic forms, which may co-exist with his human image in the same composition, and lend it the richness of extra layers of meaning. These symbolic images, like those already discussed, may be drawn from Gospel and Apocalyptic metaphors. Two important examples are the Lamb, (Rev. 5:6-9), shown in the vaults of the two chapels of the saints John at the Lateran Baptistery, and the Vine, (John, 15:1-8), widespread in the vaults of chapels from the Veneto to Campania. However, a second category of symbolic image, the cryptic, does not depend on Christ's own words. The cryptic images are those which Kitzinger describes as "material props",⁴ and originate in the period when the Mosaic law against graven images held sway, and when, perhaps, Christians attempted also to put distance between themselves and the practices of Graeco-Roman paganism. Most obvious of these "props" is the simple cross, as at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, where it blazes among the stars of the main vault and symbolises Christ in his second coming. Equally popular are the varied monogrammes using the letters of Christ's name. The most widely accepted of these was the Chrismon or Chi-Rho symbol,

3 Ernst Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm", *DOP*, 8, 1954, 83-150, esp. 90f.

4 Kitzinger, *Ibid.*, 89.

which appears in the lateral vaults at both the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia and the Archbishops' chapel in Ravenna. The cross may also be combined with the monogramme, most notably at S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro. There, analysis of the complex crosses portrayed beside St.Victor in the vault reveals cryptic equivalents of the name of Christ, similar to those inscribed in early days in the Roman catacombs.

The heavenly city, Jerusalem, and its twin city, Bethlehem, also form part of the decoration of at least one chapel, that of S.Venanzio at the Lateran Baptistery. Interestingly, this is one of the latest and by far the largest of the chapels in our series, its size raising the question of whether this building was intended more as a church than a chapel. The meaning of the decoration was symbolic. It stood for the Church, and also for the dispensations to the Jews and the Gentiles. This symbolic content may possibly identify S.Venanzio as a church, in the absence of any other "chapels" decorated with this motif, though the group sampled is far too small to be certain.⁵

The apostles, also, appear in the vocabulary of Christian art in both literal and allegorical forms, and are so illustrated in the decorations of chapels. Named portraits of the twelve in medallions adorn the soffits of the arches at the Archbishops' chapel, while at St.Matrona an allegorical rendering, now lost, showed them as twelve doves beside the cross of Christ. Lost also are the bust- or full-length figures of the twelve from the vault of the S.Prodocimo chapel at Padua's S.Giustina, which may once have echoed those of the baptisteries of nearby Ravenna.

The revelation of God in the Christian faith is represented by the Gospels, which are symbolised by the evangelists. These, in turn, are portrayed in human or symbolic form, or in combinations of the two, and the chapels illustrate the evolution of such imagery during the period of establishment of Christian iconography. At the chapel of S.Giovanni Battista at the Lateran baptistery, Rome, the evangelists were depicted in human form, standing with their symbolic animals above their heads.

5 Perhaps significantly, the Liber Pontificalis text refers to it as an ecclesia. "eodem tempore fecit ecclesiam beatis martyribus...". See Chapter 9, note 10, for complete text.

Symbols with neither evangelists nor books survive at St. Matrona and at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, while slightly later, the symbolic animals are seen holding their books at the Archbishops' chapel, Ravenna, and at S. Maria Mater Domini, Vicenza. In all these cases the imagery represents the faith as a divinely inspired revelation. However, in one location, the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the Gospels are shown separately from the evangelist symbols, and appear as named volumes in a cupboard. This unique iconography spells out the role of the books as books, rather than as revelations, in an abbreviated narrative account of the passion of St. Vincent of Saragossa. This panel, incidentally, antedates other surviving narrative illustrations of the lives and passions of the saints by at least two centuries.

The Virgin Mary does not occur among the holy figures illustrated in the earliest Christian art; she is also absent from the decorative programmes of the earliest chapels. After the Council of Ephesus of 431 which named her Mother of God, her likeness may well have been placed beside those of the martyrs and confessors in the memorial chapels sanctified by their graves or relics. If so, it has not survived, even at S. Maria Mater Domini, Vicenza, which has probably been dedicated to Mary since the sixth century. Her first surviving chapel-image is in the seventh-century apse of S. Venziano, Rome.

As far as the saints and, especially, martyrs, are concerned, it is hardly surprising to discover their images in their places of burial and commemoration. Interestingly, they are not confined to the lowest zone of the decoration, as in the hierarchical decorative schemes of the East after iconoclasm. In the West they occur both in the lower zone, along with the ecclesiastics who had promoted their cults on earth, and also in the vault, the "heavenly" area, where they had attained glory through martyrdom. This is especially well shown at San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro. Here, the important early bishops associated with the site, Maternus and Ambrose, are pictured full-length on the side walls, each between his protectors, the martyrs whose cults he had served. Overhead, in the "golden sky" in the centre of the dome, Victor is portrayed in glory in the heavenly abode of the Father and the Son, who are represented by their symbols.

It seems, then, that the most important and ubiquitous images of chapel decorations are the holy beings who inhabit the highest heaven, seen as the zone above the sky. These are displayed in chapels as statements of the faith. The images of holy beings are joined by those of saints and martyrs, and sometimes even by the portraits and inscriptions of the donors. The gallery of holy persons can be represented in various ways. Simplest, perhaps, are the lifelike images, confined like icons within the outlines of framing medallions, a format that probably depends on the imperial portrait. Full-length figures and allegorical images are also found. In addition, the early Christians delighted in plays on words and numbers, and in mystical and cryptic ideas. This allowed them the poetry of the symbolic image, which itself led to many layers of meaning and understanding, and lifted the possibilities beyond the literal into the transcendental.

The peopling of the walls of the chapels with images of saints and martyrs was counterpoised by references in inscriptions, painting or mosaics to the individuals responsible for the planning of the decorations. Frequently, we have seen that an actual donor-portrait was displayed among the holy images, according to literary sources such as the Ravenna Liber Pontificalis of Agnellus. The funerary portrait had a twofold purpose. First, and most obviously, the individual and his gift of a building and a decoration were recorded for posterity. But there were important additional reasons for picturing the deceased among the saints. These reasons, although only formally drawn up after the end of Iconoclasm, and in the East, were rooted in the thinking of the Early Christian period, itself a product of the Classical, and pagan, past. From these ancient sources Christianity inherited the idea that religious images contained divine power. This idea was given authority by the Church Fathers, who were strongly influenced by Neoplatonism as early as the second century.⁶ According to the theory of images which developed as a result of this interest, they had a mystical correspondence with their prototypes. The holy individuals were thus

6 Kitzinger, Ibid., 117-120.

present in person in the interior space of the chapel by means of their mystical identity with their images.⁷ The result was that the donor felt himself to be in the actual presence of the saints as he waited for the day of judgment. This allowed him the hope of their assistance and their intercession with Christ on that day. The portraits of donors that once signed these chapels are among the earliest recorded, and join other important examples in the major churches of Ravenna, Rome and Poreč. It is unfortunate that the chapel donor-portraits are without exception lost, for they would not only have revealed the physical likenesses of the donors to us across the centuries, but illuminated the evolutionary sequence of such portraits from Late Antique coffin pictures to the well characterised portraits that recorded the gifts of Early Medieval and Carolingian popes to the churches of Rome.

In summary, study has revealed that the basic decorative elements of these early chapels were those of early Christian art in general, and could in most cases be represented either naturalistically or in symbolic form. However, a further development took place within the chapel space itself. Here, the vaulted architecture of the chapel was utilised as a three-dimensional decorative field, and images were combined to form coherent iconographic programmes covering the whole interior, including the vault. Although Early Christian baptisteries also made their centrally-planned internal space the site of overall decoration, few retain any part of their decorative programmes, with the exception of S.Giovanni in Fonte, Naples, and the Orthodox and Arian baptisteries at Ravenna. There are many similarities, probably because there is congruence of thought between baptismal and funerary programmes, which both serve the rites of passage from one state of being to another. Thus, at Naples, the vault opens illusionistically onto Christ's symbol in the starry vault, while at Ravenna, processions of the twelve apostles surround the central motifs, as they may once have done at S.Prodocimo, Padua. The Naples baptistery also has a series of narrative scenes illustrating Christ's miracles, which have no

7 Otto Demus, Byzantine Mosaic Decoration, London, 1948, 5f.

parallels in surviving chapel decorations. However, too few baptistery programmes survive to determine whether these similarities, and differences, are significant. It is clear, though, that these two sorts of centrally planned building between them have all the elements that later would be combined to decorate the typical, centrally planned Middle-Byzantine church. Since the earliest Christian art was not firmly divided into Eastern and Western traditions, similar decorated chapels and baptisteries must have occurred in the East, but have failed to survive. Many of the conventions of this earliest Christian art in the vaulted buildings of East and West alike were derived from the Orient, in addition to its obvious roots in Graeco-Roman art.⁸ Both frontality of images of holy persons, and their depiction in front of the unbroken picture plane, rather than in a perspective recession, can be attributed to this oriental influence, which came to dominate the decorative schemes of Byzantium, and was also influential in the West in the later part of the period under discussion.

Most importantly, the iconographic elements were arranged, within the confined space of the chapel interior, in such a way that they represented a microcosm of the universe as it was understood in Late Antiquity.⁹ Thus, the walls were clad in precious marble, stone which both came from the earth and represented it. The ground level of the chapel at its simplest was a cube, its four corners representing the world of mortal existence. Conversely, the arching vault represents the firmament, the analogy made more vivid by the colour and decoration that was chosen and that often survives. The blue of the vault mimics the colour of the sky itself, and is often sprinkled with stars, as at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, or glimpsed through a fruiting arbour, as

8 The history of the Middle Byzantine decorative system is discussed by Demus, Ibid., Chapter II.

9 A mid-sixth century text, a hymn probably written for the reconsecration of H.Sofia, Edessa (Urfa), is the earliest source in writing which describes the church building as a microcosm of the universe. See Kathleen E.McVey, "The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol", DOP, 37, 1983, 91-121, esp. translation of hymn, p.95, and commentary, 96-106. Also, Krautheimer, ECBA, 230.

at the St. Matrona chapel. The blue of reality, however, may be replaced by the shimmer of gold, as at the Lateran chapels and S. Vittore. This is not merely the replacement of one precious and expensive colour by another, even more luxurious hue, but represents a means of recreating the radiance of light. The incident light is scattered from the uneven gold glass surfaces of the mosaic, lending the imitation a mystical quality which hides the subterfuge in shimmering other-worldly radiance. A feature common to most of these vault firmaments is the central opening, an oculus bordered with sculptural detail at St. Matrona, wreathed at S. Vittore, framed by a support structure at the Lateran, but always revealing a vision of a realm beyond, a realm where Christ dwells with his Father and where the saints and the righteous join him in glory. Christ's presence in this realm is expressed by the monogrammes and symbols of his name, which again tell of the mystical and magical preoccupations of Late Antiquity, so often expressed in the cryptic language of numerology and similar systems. Even in the single example of a mortal saint ascended to glory that survives in an Early Christian chapel vault, saint Victor at S. Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan, he is depicted between two monogrammatic crosses, elegantly replete with symbolic content which probably only the erudite could understand.

The ancestry of this idea of the domed sky recreated inside the vault of a building has been found in remote antiquity, among the Romans and before them the Etruscans. Its re-interpretation in Christian terms is not surprising, but what is especially interesting is that here in Early Christian vaulted buildings it is possible to trace the beginnings of the ideas that would become important in the decoration of post-iconoclastic Byzantine churches. These were the concepts of the mystical equivalence of the inner space of the church to the boundless universe, and of the peopling of such a space with a hierarchically arranged series of holy beings. This system of decoration would become codified as the standard decorative scheme of Byzantine churches from the ninth century until the present day.

One of the most important questions that has been considered in this study is whether chapels display iconographic programmes that

relate specifically to their functions. It proved necessary to define these possible functions, and to distinguish them from those of churches. Through the early part of the period under consideration, the permitted uses of chapels were increasingly restricted in terms of the liturgical acts which were allowed to take place there. This involved separation of their possible functions from those of churches. Churches were primarily intended for the celebration of the Eucharist: although in the earliest period of all, the fourth century, it appears that Mass could also be celebrated in domestic oratories, these soon became restricted to use for private prayer, with the probable exception of those built by high level ecclesiastics. The restrictions appear to have been imposed in the struggle against heresy. By contrast, chapels were built in the cemeteries outside cities from the very earliest days of organised Christianity. These *memoriae* were built to commemorate the heroes of the church: their graves, their places of martyrdom, their relics. The survival of martyr shrines over other sorts of chapels is explained by the high priority they must have had for maintenance and repair in a Christian society. In a natural sequence fuelled by the increasing importance of the cult of the martyrs in Late Antiquity, the *memoriae* of the saints were seen as the most powerful sites for Christian burial, and the two functions, burial and commemoration of heroes, became intertwined. Soon, those who built themselves funeral chapels took care to provide relics in order to sanctify the space as well as to invoke the power of the martyrs for their own salvation. They also installed pictures to invoke the reality of the saints and holy beings. The relics were probably non-corporeal in the earliest times, but when the translation of human remains started to be acceptable, around the seventh century, *martyria* were built. These were shrines where the bones and other relics of the martyrs were gathered together in special surroundings for veneration. Some early chapels may have fulfilled one only of these three functions, others served each function in turn, starting with that of commemoration, and evolving through a period as funerary chapel to a full blown *martyrium*, serving to shelter the remains of saints gathered in from the whole region.

Who were the Christians who were buried beside the saints in their

shrines, or in private or collective graves sanctified by their remains? At first, it seems that ordinary Christians could claim the privilege of burial *ad sanctos* in the shrines. By the end of the fourth century, though, such burials were reserved for rich laymen and, especially, for the clerics who controlled the rights over the martyrs' bodies and their graves. At Milan, for example, most of the *memoriae* of the martyrs in the cemeteries outside the walls were chosen by the early bishops for their own burial. This reflects the marked preoccupation with personal salvation associated with the rise of the cult of martyrs after the Peace of the Church. A private space for rest in death, and relics and pictures of a saintly companion to ease one's way on judgment day were among the ambitions of every upper churchman. It was only later, in the fifth and sixth centuries, that bishops and archbishops created common burial chapels for themselves. At Milan, for example, an episcopal burial place was built in the sixth century as an annexe to S.Lorenzo. And finally, with the loosening of attitudes towards the moving of relics, by the seventh century martyria were raised which focused the devotions of a whole region, and became centres of pilgrimage.

One may well ask if there is any explanation of the overriding theme of the Early Christian decorated chapel, which is the recreation in microcosmic form of the whole glory of the universe. In the absence of texts, one is obliged to look at the buildings themselves for the answer. It seems clear that the vault or dome was seen to arch over the chapel's interior just as the sky seemed to be a dome arching over the earth. Once the idea of the magical equivalence of images and their prototypes is accepted, the next step was the provision of a suitable setting for the holy images, and what setting would have more veracity than a recreation of their natural abode? The space of the chapel itself would then acquire a mystical identity with the universe it imitates. The setting, however, is not only planned in the comparatively trivial expectation of providing a suitable "stage set" for the images and their originals, but to create a sacred setting for the donors' own aspirations. These aims are to channel Christ's power through anamnesis in the form of pictorial remembrance, thus recreating

his mystical presence on earth, and that of his saints, and ensuring that the deceased enjoyed proximity to the holy while awaiting the day of resurrection.



Fig.i Italy and Istria.

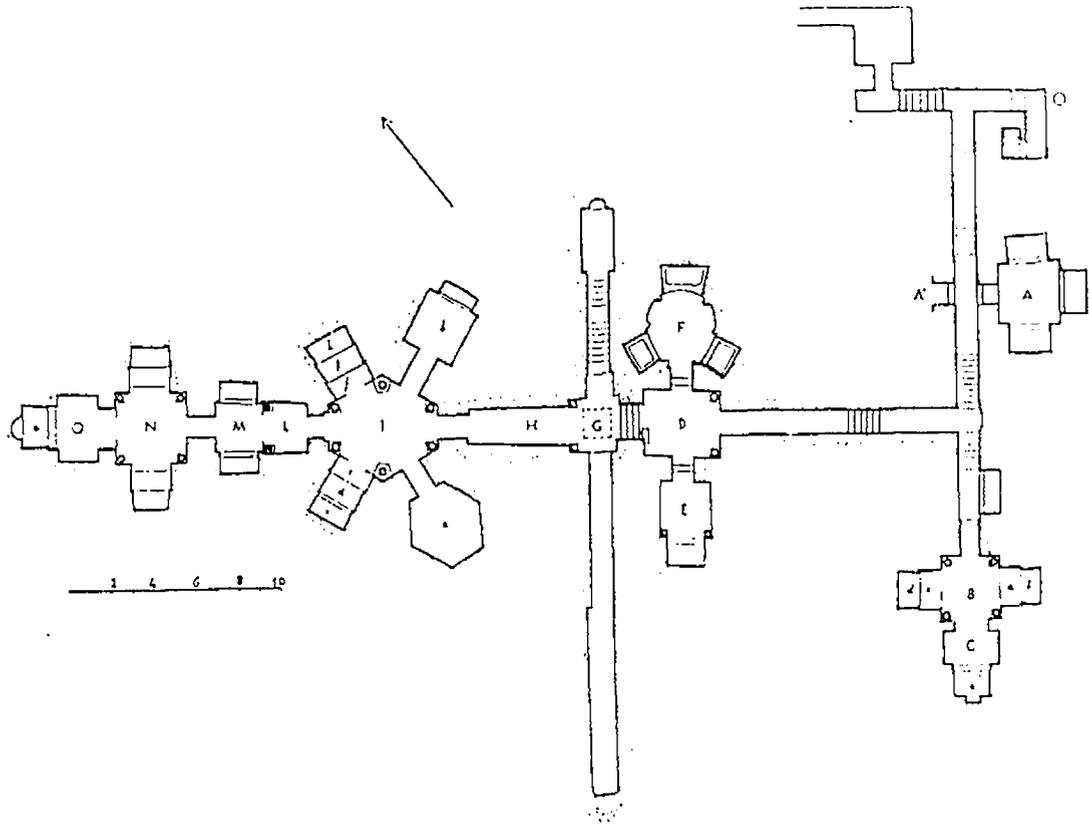


fig.iii The Via Latina Catacomb, Rome,
after Ferrua and Tronzo.

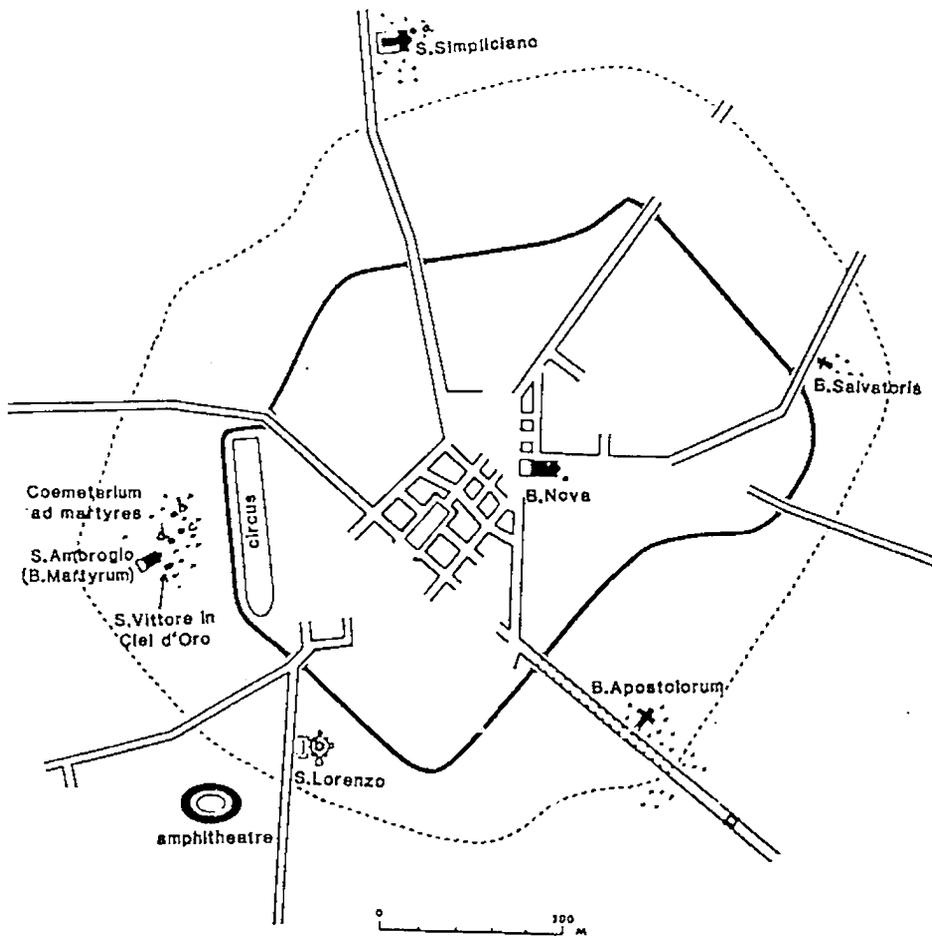


fig iv. Milan, ca. 400 AD, redrawn after Krautheimer.

- a. chapel at S.Simpliciano
- b. chapel of Nabor & Felix
- c. S.Vitale
- d. S.Valeria

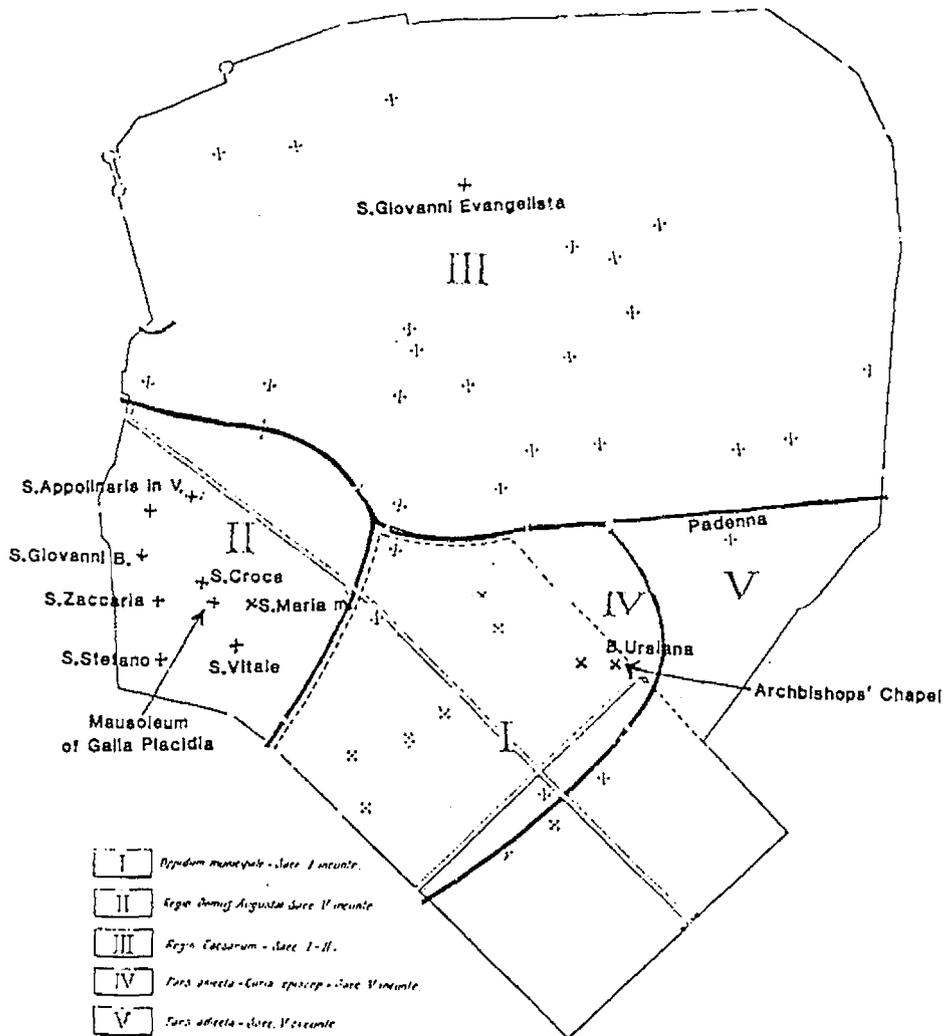


fig v Ravenna, ca.500 AD,
after Testi-Rasponi.



fig 1. Archbishops' chapel, Ravenna,
vault, facing north.

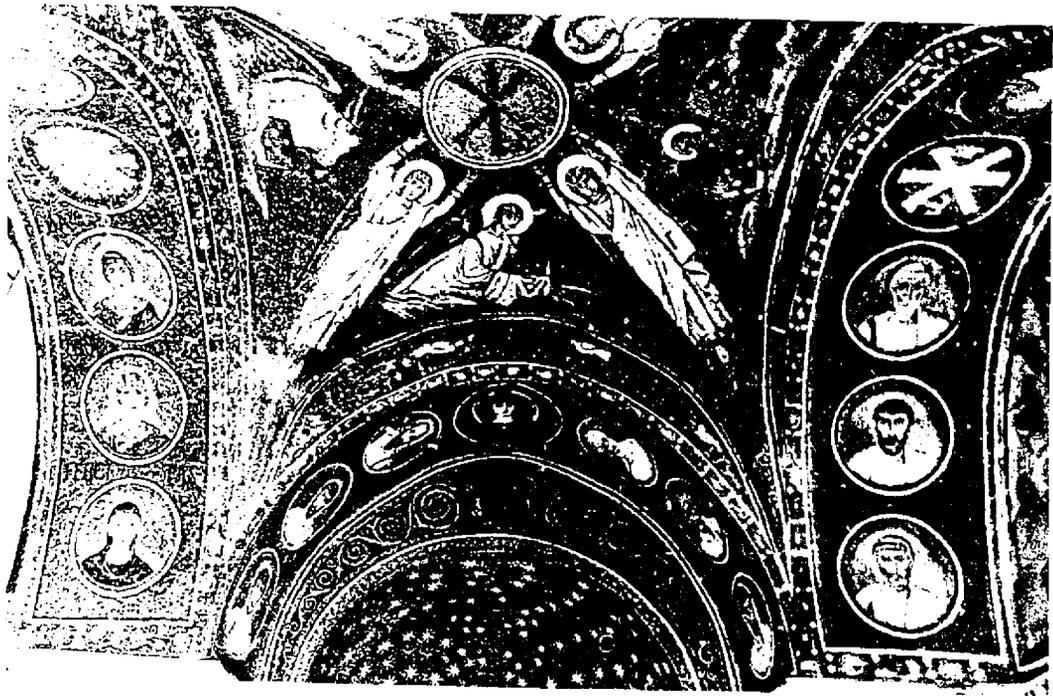


fig.2. Archbishops' chapel, Ravenna,
Altar end, facing east.

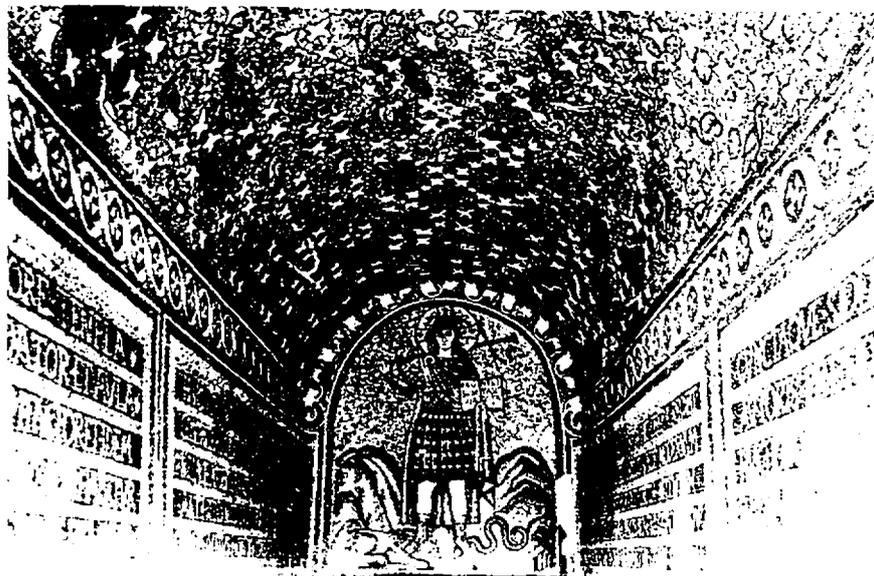


fig.3. Archbishops' Chapel, Ravenna.
Vestibule, north lunette: Christ.

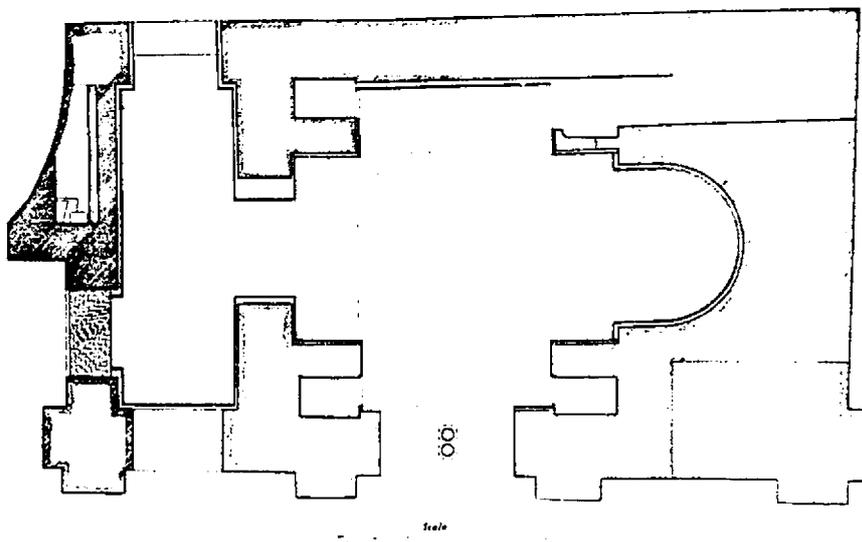
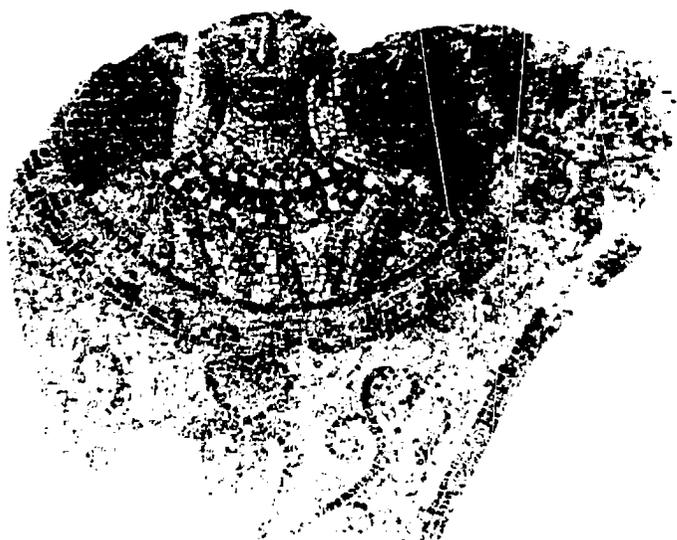
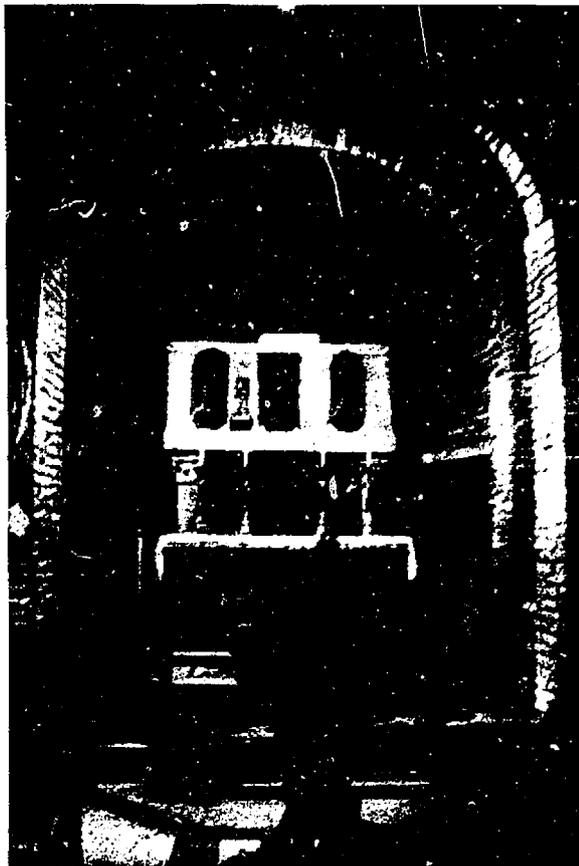


fig.4. Archbishops' chapel: plan.

- a Narthex
- b Cupboards
- c Apse

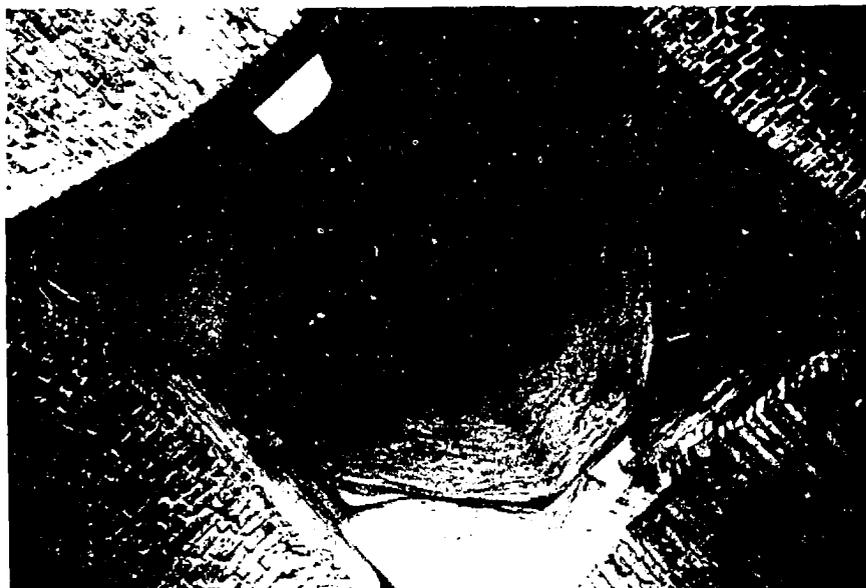


S. Maria Mater Domini, Vicenza.
fig.5. (above) Squinch: Symbol of St Mark.
fig.6 (below), Medallion: Saint.

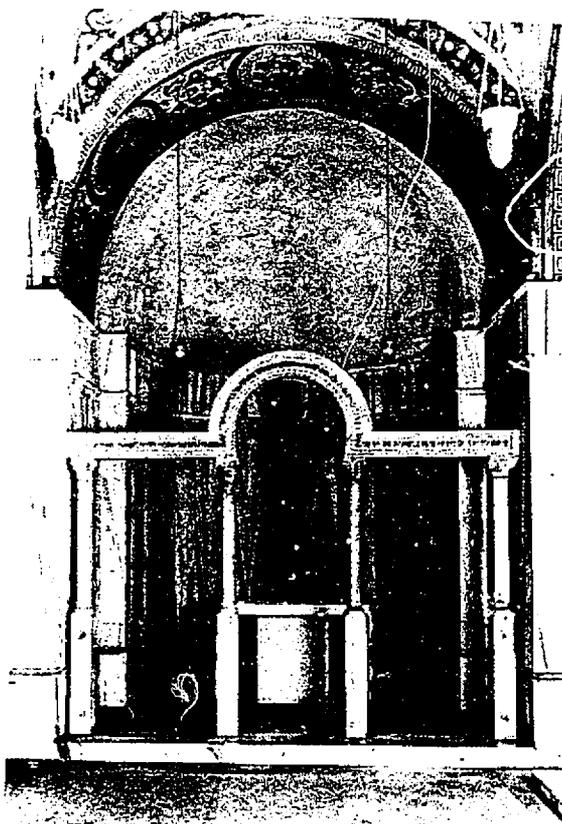


SS. Tosca e Teuteria, Verona.

fig.7 (above) exterior
fig.8 (below) interior



S.Maria Mater Domini, Vicenza.
 fig.9 (above) left: chapel,
 right: SS.Felice e Fortunato.
 fig.10 (below) vault, (mosaics: right squinch).



S.Prodocimo, Padua
fig.11 interior.

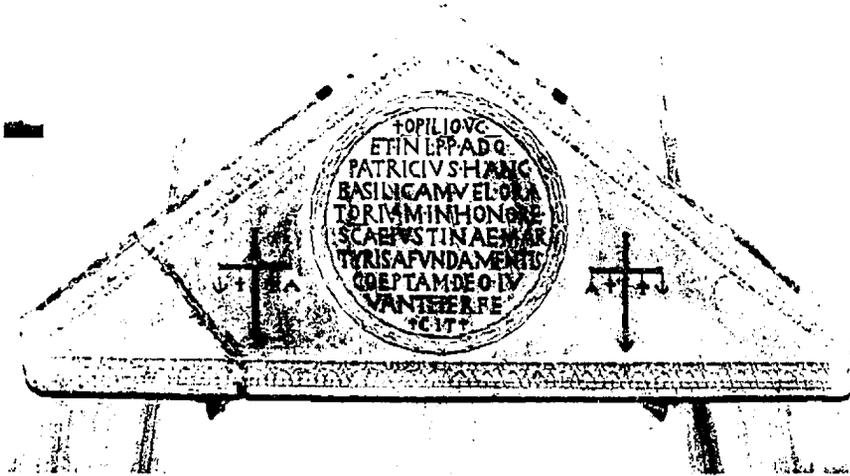


fig.12 Opilio inscription.

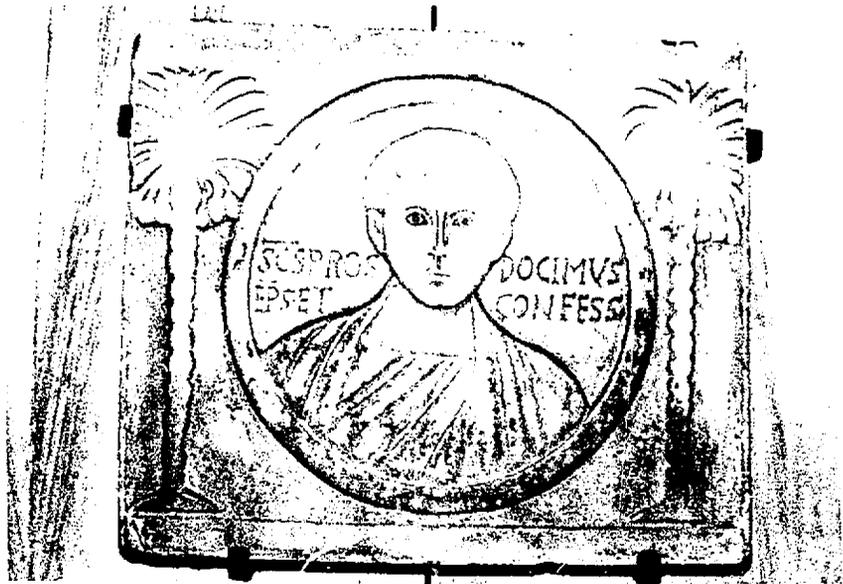
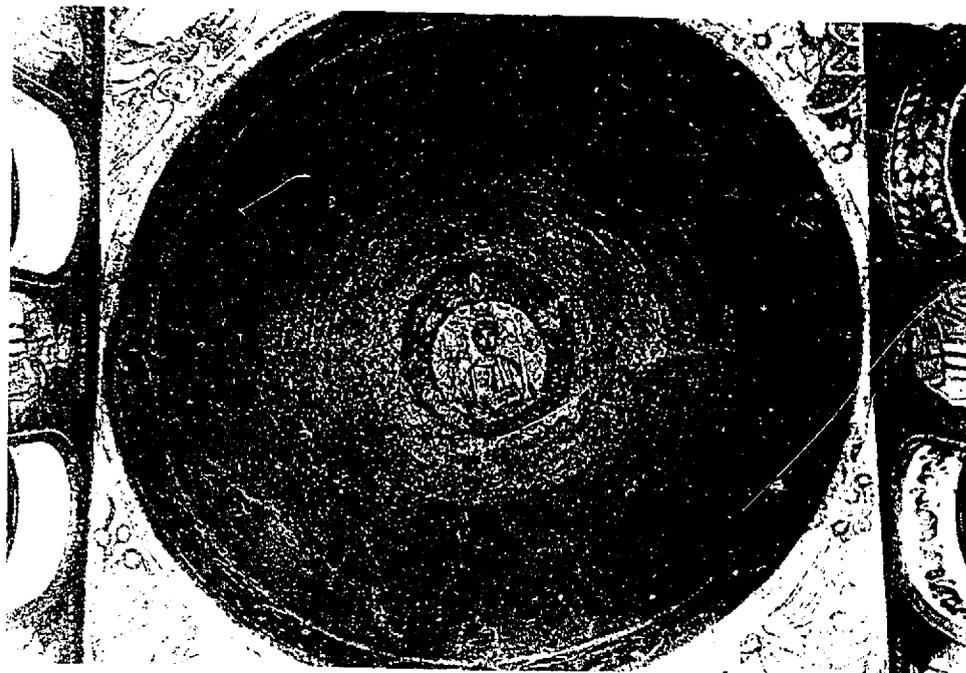


fig.13 Bishop Prosdocimus
S.Prosdocimo, Padua.



fig.14 S.Maria Formosa, Pula,
Chapel exterior.



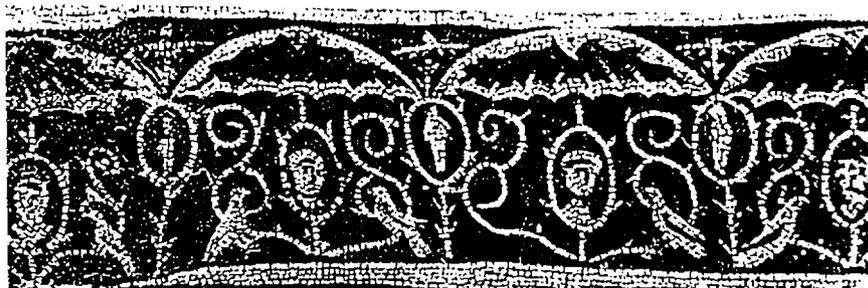
S.Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan

fig.15 vault.



Catacomb of S.Gennaro, Naples

fig.16 tomb of Bishop Quodvultdeus, mosaic.



S. Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan

fig.17 (above) detail: frieze
fig.18 (below) vault, with medallion and frieze



S.Matrona chapel at S.Prisco

fig.19 west lunette: Christ

fig.20 north lunette: throne with symbols of
Saints Luke and John



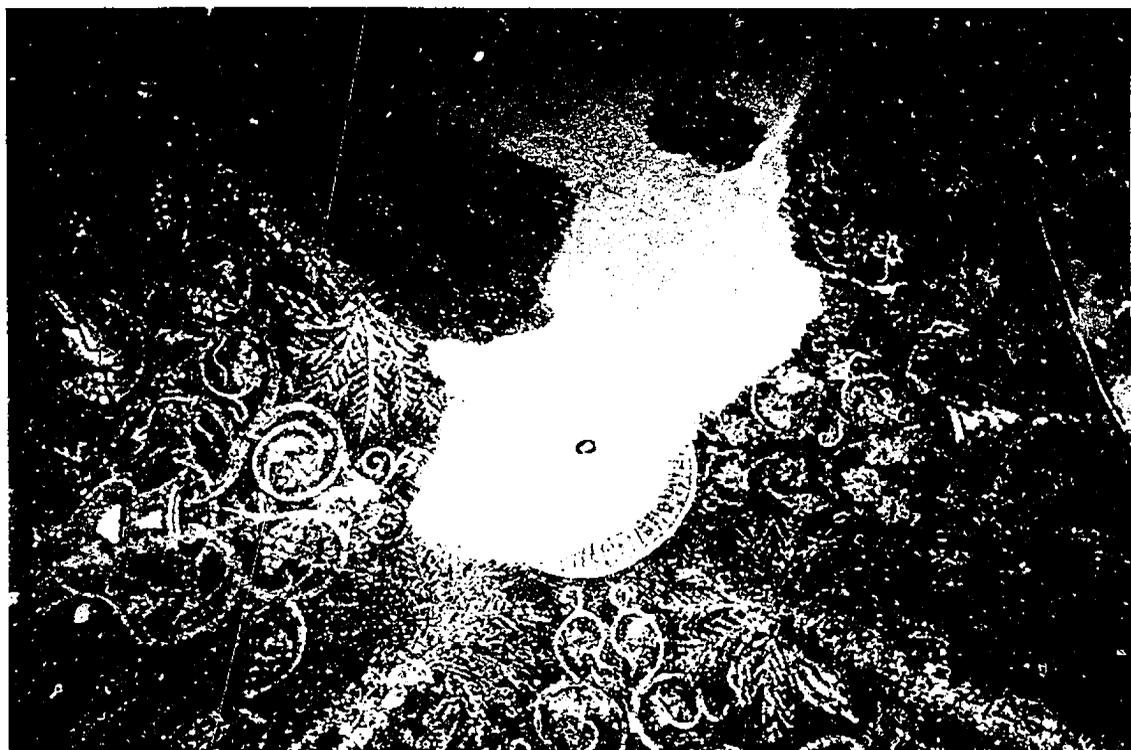
S.Matrona at S.Prisco

fig.21 symbol of St. Matthew



S. Matrona at S. Prisco

fig. 22, Altar lunette, Monachus engraving.



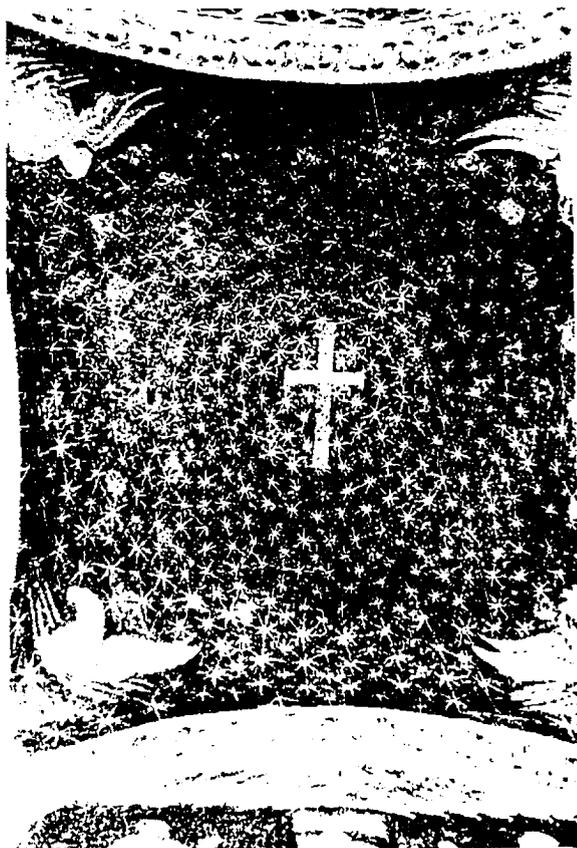
S.Matrona at S.Prisco

fig.23 vault mosaic



Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna

fig 24 (above) exterior
fig 25 (below) interior, facing east.



Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna

fig.26 vault.



Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna

fig.27 side lunette: deer.



Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna

fig.28 entry lunette: Good Shepherd.

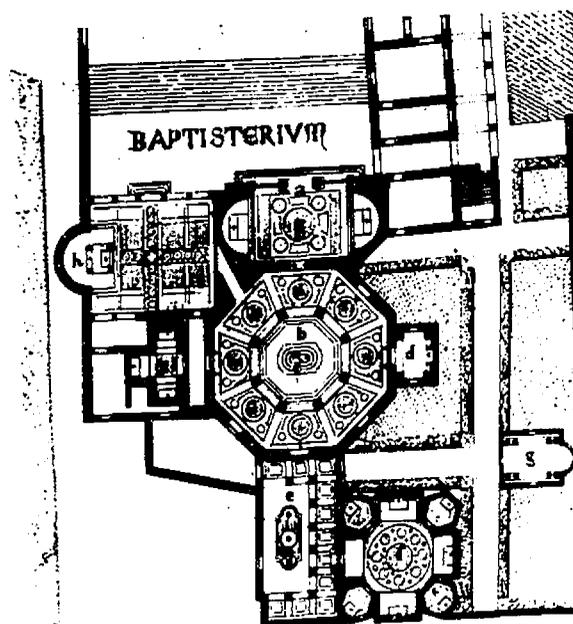


fig.29. Lateran Baptistery with chapels: plan

- a Portico (SS. Ruffina e Secunda)
- b Baptistery
- c Chapel of S.Giovanni Evangelista
- d Chapel of S.Giovanni Battista
- e S.Croce, forecourt
- f S.Croce
- h S.Venanzio

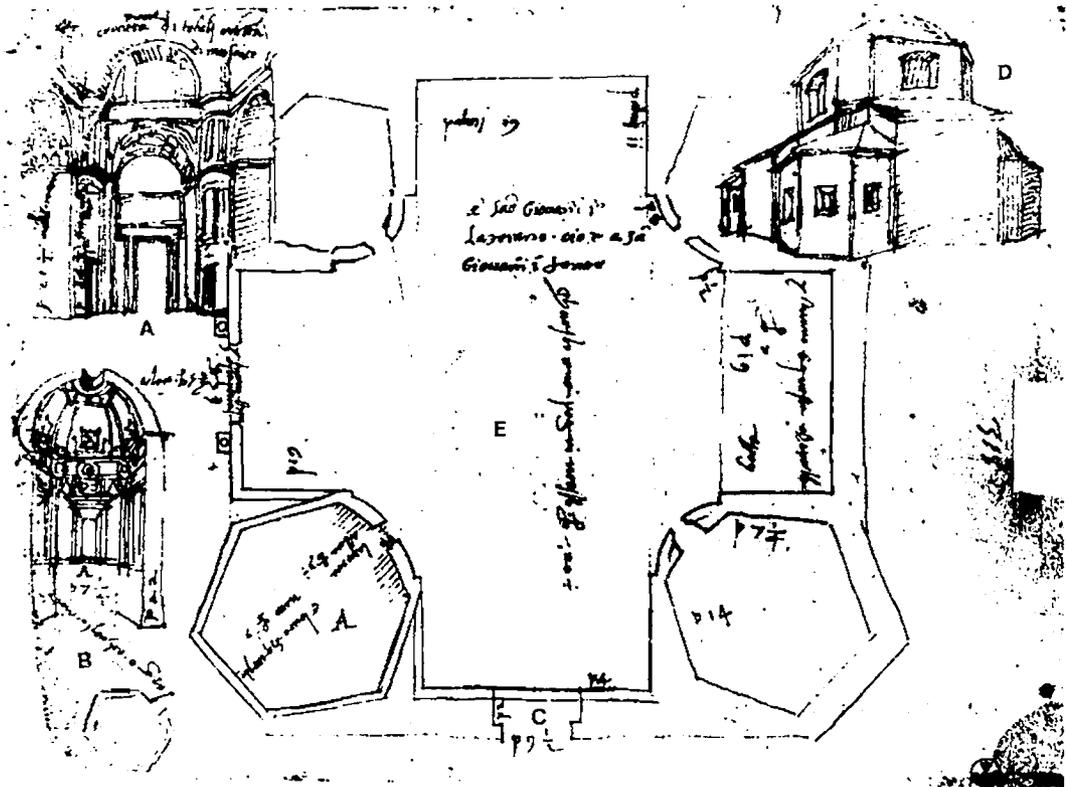
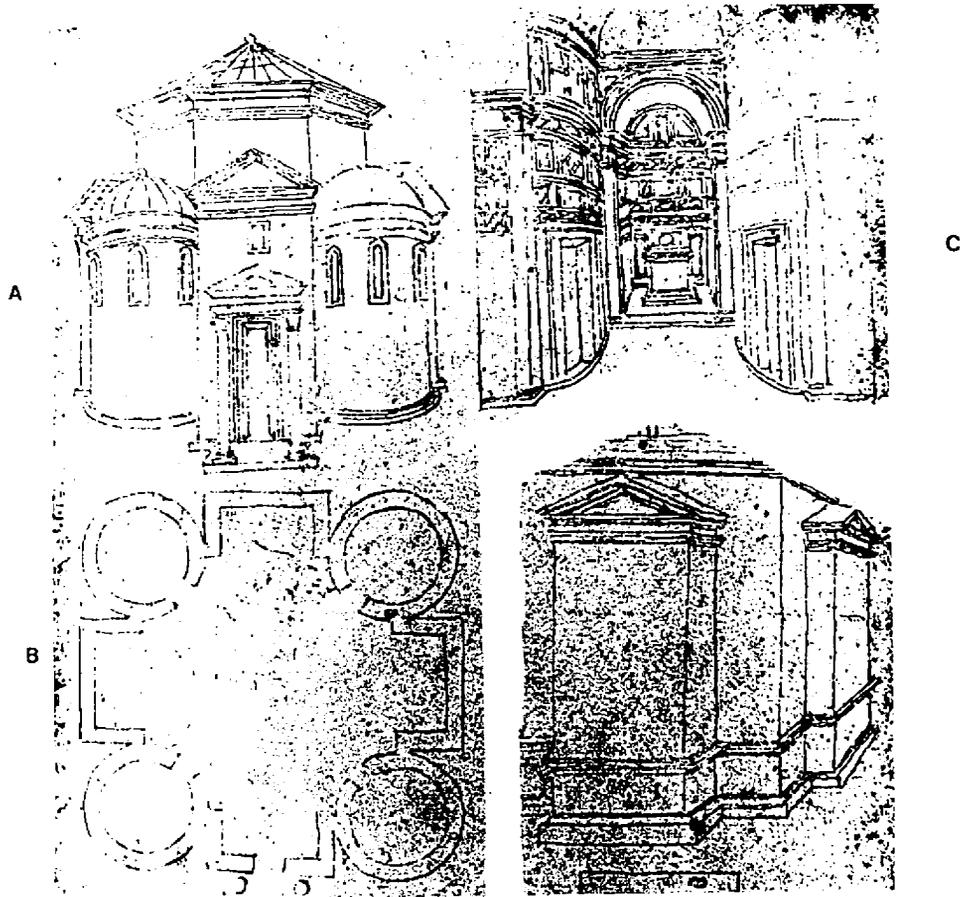


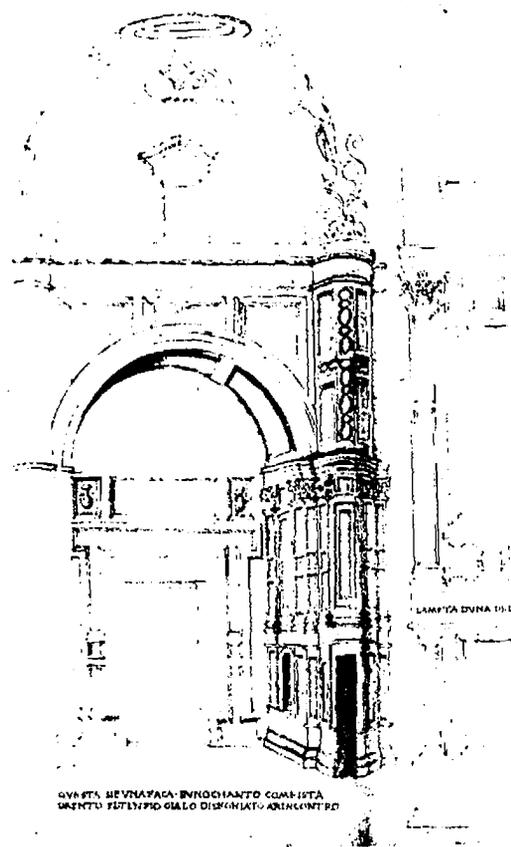
fig 30, S.Croce in Laterano
Peruzzi drawings

- A. Interior, chapel "A" on ground-plan E.
- B. Interior, entry arm at C on ground-plan.
- C. entry.
- D. Exterior.
- E. ground-plan.



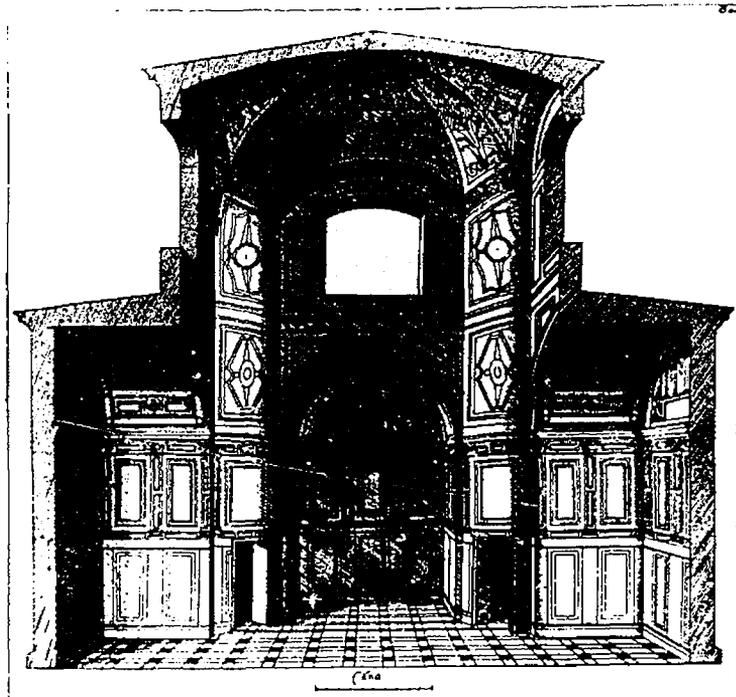
S. Croce in Laterano
fig 31, Anonymous drawings.

- A. Exterior
- B. Ground-plan
- C. Interior



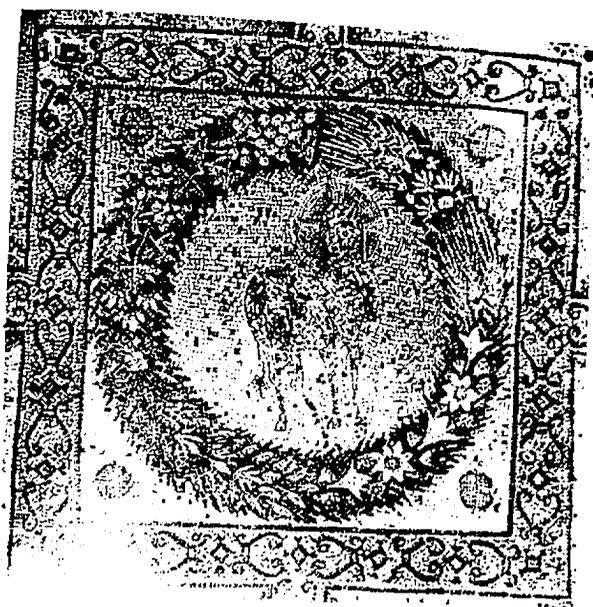
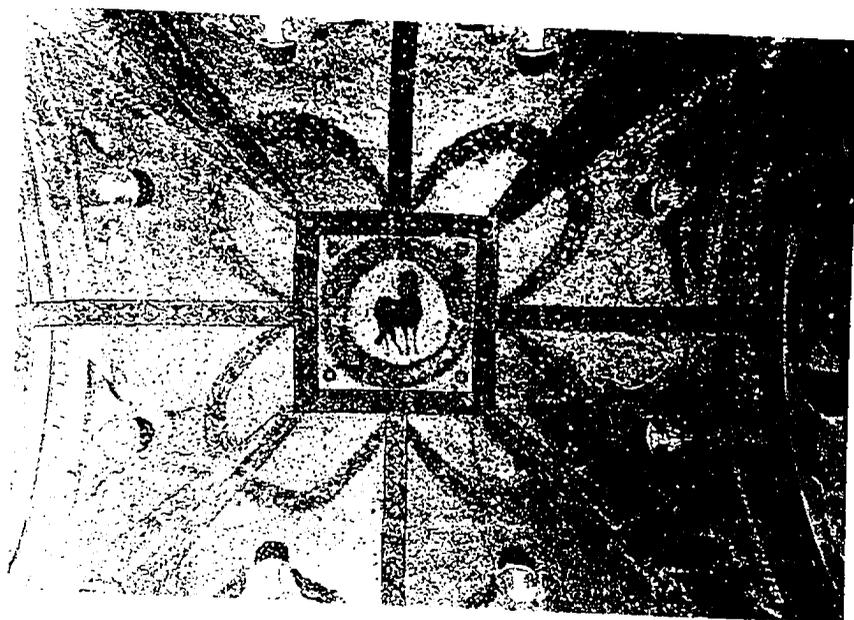
S. Croce

fig.32 interior, Sangallo drawing.



S. Croce

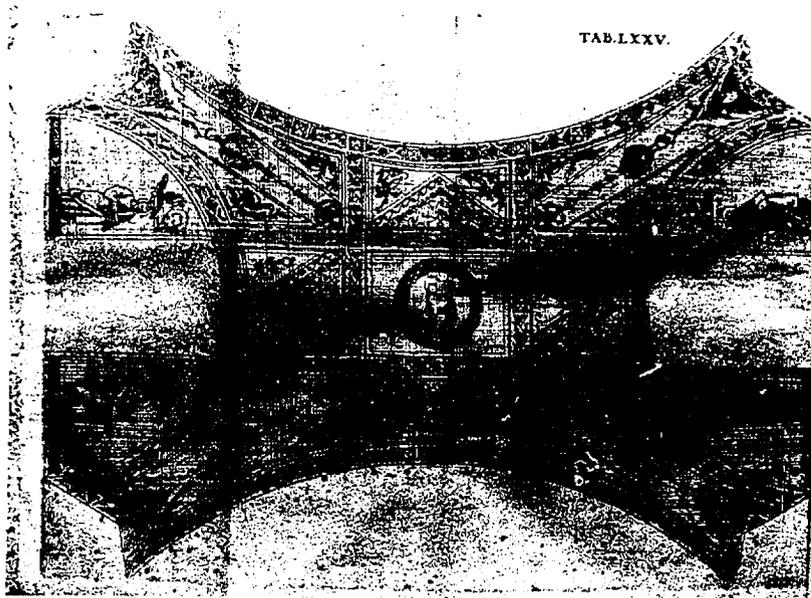
fig.33. interior: Lafréri engraving.



S.Giovanni Evangelista, Rome.

fig.34 (above) vault, mosaic

fig.35 (below) central detail, Lamb.



S.Giovanni Battista, Rome

fig.36. vault mosaic, Ciampini engraving.



Tarquinia, Tomb of the Cacciatore.

fig. 37 interior.



fig.38. S.Secunda e Ruffina



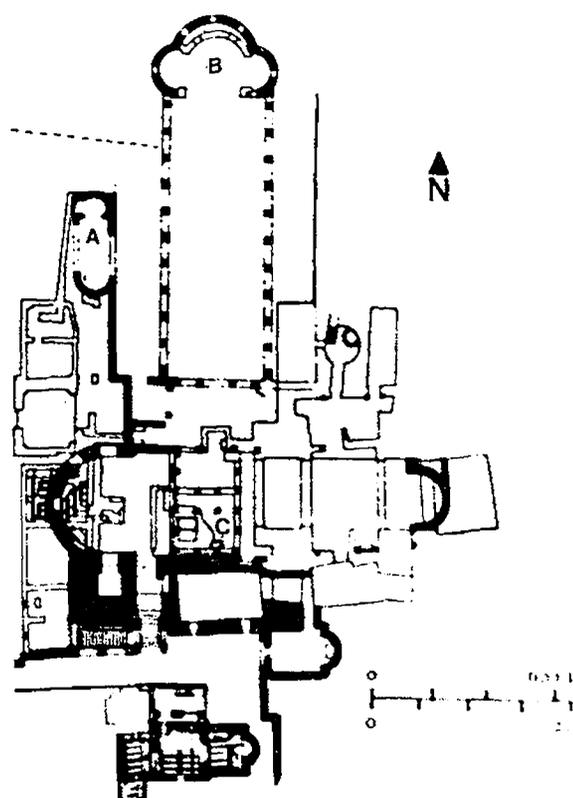
S. Venanzio chapel, Rome

fig 39 apse end, mosaics.



S.Venanzio, Rome

fig 40 apse mosaic: detail, Christ.



Nola- Cimitile

fig 41. Paulinus' churches: excavation plan.

- A. Chapel
- B. Apse: Basilica of the Apostles
- C. Shrine of St. Felix.



S.Stefano Rotondo, Rome,

fig 42 apse mosaic.

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