

PICTORIAL CYCLES OF NON-BIBLICAL SAINTS:  
the evidence of the 8th Century mural cycles in Rome

by

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## ABSTRACT

Due to the influence of the Greek-speaking immigrants who flocked into the city of Rome over the course of the 7th and 8th centuries, there was an explosion of interest in the cults of saints and their relics, one manifestation of which was the efflorescence in the depiction of saints' lives on the church walls. Five of these cycles survive - albeit in various stages of preservation - and portray the martyrdoms of Quiricus and Julitta, Erasmus, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Callixtus, and Paul and Anastasius. As the largest surviving body of early hagiographical cycles, the paintings serve as the standard of comparison for later works, but they have yet to be fully studied in the art historical literature. The aim of this dissertation is to help correct this oversight, and to examine the cycles, in the context of their cultural and architectural settings, in order to come to an understanding of how early hagiographical cycles functioned.

The dissertation begins with an examination of the evidence for pre-8th century cycles, Biblical and non-Biblical, extant and non-extant, produced in any medium in Byzantium or the West. The aim is to discover patterns, either in the make-up of the cycles, or the contexts for their use. The paintings in Rome are then carefully analysed, both in terms of their content and archaeological context, in combination with the surviving hagiographical, liturgical, and

historical texts.

The conclusion reached is that non-Biblical hagiographical cycles first gained popularity in the East, where they most commonly found decorating either the tombs of saints, or their reliquary shrines. Their appearance in Rome can be closely linked to the influence of the Greek-speaking immigrants, to the cults of saints and relics that they promulgated, and to the special veneration accorded the non-Biblical saint by members of the lay population. The cycles most commonly decorate chapels, or chapel-like spaces, that are located in diaconiae, the charitable institutions founded in Rome at the end of the 7th century, and whose administration was largely the responsibility of the lay community. Furthermore, as several of the cycles seem to decorate private chapels, perhaps provided to the wealthy laity in return for their donations to the church, they emerge as the early ancestors of the works found in the private chapels, decorated for rich benefactors, which proliferate in the late Middle Ages.

Examiners:

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## FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

- Acta SS. Acta Sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur (3rd ed., Paris and Rome, 1863 - in progress).
- CBCR R. Krautheimer, W. Frankl, S. Corbett, Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae, 5 vols. (Vatican City, 1937-1977)
- LP Le Liber Pontificalis, texte introduction, ed. L. Duchesne, 3 vols., (Paris, 1886-1957).
- PG Patrologia cursus completus, series graeca, ed. J.P. Migne, 167 vols. (Paris, 1857-1876).
- PL Patrologia cursus completus, series latina, ed. J.P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844-1863).

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As anyone who has lived and worked in Rome knows, the city can be both fascinating and frustrating. I was fortunate in that during my time there any frustrations were eased through the help of the British School at Rome. The School assisted in financing my research, Amanda Claridge made accommodation available, Maria Pia Malvezzi obtained endless permits for me, and Valerie Scott helped in tracking down some of the more obscure bibliographical references.

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## INTRODUCTION

Evidence for the depiction of narrative cycles of non-Biblical saints can be traced back to the early days following the official recognition of the Christian faith, but it is not until the 8th century that these cycles survive in any great number. In the past, research on early hagiographical cycles has focused primarily on Biblical saints, for example the cycles of Peter and Paul at Rome and Ravenna,<sup>1</sup> while interest in non-Biblical saints has been sporadic. The cycles of Saints Euphemia, Martin, Quiricus and Julitta, and the unknown saints in the confessio under the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo have been the subject of several journal articles,<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup>Summary of scholarship on frescoes of S. Paolo f.l.m., with bibliography, is given by L. Eleen, The Illustration of the Pauline Epistles, (Oxford, 1982), pp.4-6. For the frescoes in St. Peter's see S. Waetzoldt, Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien, (Vienna, Munich, 1964), pp.68-70, (hereafter Waetzoldt, Kopien); A. Weis, "Ein Petruszyklus des 7. Jahrhunderts im Querschiff der vatikanischen Basilica," Römische Quartalschrift, 58 (1963), pp.230-270; W. Tronzo, "Setting and Structure in Two Roman Wall Decorations of the Early Middle Ages," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 41 (1987), pp.477-492. For the cycle of Saint Peter at Ravenna see A. Weis, "Die römische Schöpfungzyklus des 5. Jahrhunderts in Triclinium Neons zu Ravenna," Tortulae in Römische Quartalschrift, 30 Supplementheft (Rome, 1966), pp.300-316; F.W. Deichmann, Ravenna Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes, 2/1 (Wiesbaden, 1974), pp.194-197.

<sup>2</sup>Most recently: O.J. Schrier, "A propos d'une donnée négligée sur la mort de Ste. Euphémie," Analecta Bollandiana, 102 (1984), pp.329-353; H. Kessler, "Pictorial Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul," Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, (Studies in the History of Art), 16 (National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1985), pp.75-91; J. Wilpert, "Le pitture della 'Confessio' sotto la basilica dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo," Scritti in onore di Bartolomeo Nogara, (Vatican City, 1937), pp.517-22; H. Belting, "Eine Privatkapelle im frühmittelalterlichen Rom,"

discussed summarily in monographs on the churches in which they are found,<sup>3</sup> but no overall study of the early cycles has yet been carried out.<sup>4</sup> Art historical research has tended to focus on the cycles which appear in abundance (and in a far better state of preservation) in the later Middle Ages,<sup>5</sup> but the 8th-century mural cycles in Rome (which form the focus of this dissertation) have been largely overlooked. Admittedly, several of the cycles survive in a pitiful state of conservation, but together they form the largest surviving body of early hagiographical cycles, and thus set the standard of comparison for later works.

In examining the 8th-century cycles in Rome, the purpose of this dissertation is to illustrate some of the ways in which early hagiographical cycles functioned in their

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Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 41 (1987), pp.55-69.

<sup>3</sup>For example: S. Ortolani, SS. Giovanni e Paolo, (Le Chiese di Roma Illustrate), (Rome, 1925); W. de Grüneisen, C. Hülsen, V. Federici, J. David, Sainte-Marie Antique, (Rome, 1911).

<sup>4</sup>Notwithstanding Nancy Ševčenko's brief survey of the Pre-Iconoclastic and Middle Byzantine cycles in her Ph.D. thesis, "Cycles of the life of St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art," (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1973), pp.13-72, (hereafter Ševčenko).

<sup>5</sup>For recent work on the earliest illustrated saints' lives to survive in libelli see the Ph.D. thesis by Cynthia Hahn, "Narrative and Liturgy in the Earliest Illustrated Lives of Saints," (Ph.D. thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1982); see also her commentary to the facsimile edition of this manuscript: "Passio Kiliani, Ps Theotimus, Passio Margarete, Orationes," Hanover Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek ms.189, 2, (Graz, 1988).

architectural and cultural settings. In doing so, the dissertation has been divided into two parts. Part One deals with the ancestors of the cycles in Rome, and brings together the scattered information on early hagiographical cycles - both Biblical and non-Biblical - produced in any medium, in Byzantium and the West. The aim is to discover the popularity of hagiographical cycles prior to the 8th century, and to establish patterns, either in the format of the cycles, or the contexts for their use.

Part Two builds on Part One, and examines the 8th-century mural cycles in Rome, which survive in a more complete and elaborate form. It begins with a detailed description of the paintings, as well as the decorative programmes, and the architectural settings in which they are found. The evidence for their dating is also discussed. The paintings are then examined within the cultural context of Rome. Particular attention is paid to the role the Greek-speaking immigrants played in fostering the cults of saints and their relics; the relationship between non-Biblical hagiographical cycles and the changing Roman liturgy; and to the role of the lay population. This is followed by an investigation into the practical aspects of hagiographical illustration, which examines the relationship between the cycles and surviving texts, and the sources of their iconography. Finally, the conclusion draws together all the information gathered on pictorial hagiographical cycles - Biblical and non-Biblical,

extant and non-extant - and summarises their evolution. In addition, by taking into account the different audiences for whom these images were intended, consideration is given to the different roles hagiographical narratives played in a church setting, and to the importance of the visual in Early Medieval society.

Since a fine line often distinguishes between what can, and what cannot, be termed a narrative cycle, a clarification of the term is necessary. For the purposes of this dissertation, a narrative cycle is defined as a series of two or more images, which represent different moments in time, but which have at their core a specific event or personage. Single images are not included, despite the story-telling elements they may contain. This excludes, for example, the type of image found in the apse of the Oratory of the Forty Martyrs in the church of S. Maria Antiqua, at Rome.<sup>6</sup> The 7th-century painting depicts the martyrdom of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. The centre of the composition focuses on the death of the martyrs, who were condemned to stand in the waters of an icy lake. But on the right, the artist has included the incident in which one member of the group lost his faith, and escaped to the comforts of a warm bath. This is balanced on the left by the guardian, who, impressed by the faith of the remaining thirty-nine soldiers, converted and joined them in

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<sup>6</sup>J. Wilpert, Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert, (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1916), 4/1, plate 199, (hereafter Wilpert, RMM).

their ordeal. Although the single image contains a sequence of events, the Forty Martyrs are only shown once, and the focus of the painting is on their suffering. Since all elements are closely linked to the central martyrdom scene, and were not intended to stand alone as separate episodes, the painting is not considered a true narrative cycle.

In each case, the paintings, and their archaeological context, were carefully examined, and the earlier research reviewed. In areas where the paintings are so faded that their original composition can be barely determined, the plates from Josef Wilpert's corpus, Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert, were used. These plates are hand-coloured black and white photographs, and since they were taken early in the 1900's (soon after many of the paintings were uncovered) they include details which are no longer visible, and serve as an invaluable tool in any study of Early Medieval Roman mural painting.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as written documentation from this period is scarce, a careful examination of the paintings is paramount. Indeed, the paintings serve as documents in their own right, and it is through their study that we can increase our understanding of the Middle Ages.

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<sup>7</sup>For an examination of the accuracy of Wilpert's plates see P.J. Nordhagen, "Working with Wilpert. The Illustrations in Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien and their Source Value," Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, Series Altera, 5 (1985), pp.247-257.

PART ONE: HAGIOGRAPHICAL CYCLES, 4TH - 7TH CENTURIES

CHAPTER ONE: BIBLICAL CYCLES

Just as writing is to readers, the image is to the uneducated; for they see in an image what they must follow, they read in it what they are ignorant of in books... It is not without reason that Antiquity has allowed paintings of the lives of saints in holy places.<sup>1</sup>

The well-known words of Pope Gregory I, who was writing to Bishop Serenus of Marseilles to admonish him for destroying images of saints, are important to us for two reasons. They are confirmation that, in addition to the more popular use of iconic images and of cycles of Christ and Old Testament figures, narrative cycles depicting the lives of saints could be found decorating the walls of churches in the late-6th century. Furthermore, Gregory's words tell us that these images were greatly valued as a means of instruction, as they exemplified for the viewer the way of life within the Christian fold. However, exactly how popular narrative hagiographical cycles were in the early period is difficult to gauge. The advent of Iconoclasm in the Christian East (a phenomenon of the 8th and 9th centuries A.D.) resulted in the loss of a substantial amount of material, and the surviving

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<sup>1</sup>"Nam quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotas praestat pictura cernentibus, quia in ipsa etiam ignorantes vident quid sequi debeant, in ipsa legent, qui litteras nesciunt... Et quia in locis venerabilibus sanctorum depingi historias non sine ratione vetustas admisit ..." "Epistola XIII," PL, 77, cols.1128-1129.

works of art in the West indicate that, prior to the 8th century, there was little interest in the visual portrayal of saints' lives. Nevertheless, valuable information on what has been lost can be gained from Early Medieval descriptions, and from drawings made in later centuries, notably the 17th.

The use of images as a means of communication, or as objects of worship complete with magical properties, dates back to the earliest known civilisations. It is not surprising then that Early Christians used pictures to record the wonder and power of their religion, and to recount important religious events. In a world that was largely illiterate, images had wider appeal than the written word, and by conveying messages in a form that was more tangible than the spoken word, they were more easily remembered and understood. In fact, pictorial narrative cycles were more than the mere translation of the written word into pictures. They were vehicles of communication that utilised whatever motifs best illustrated their theme: they blended oral and literary traditions, and incorporated features from the Classical, Jewish, and Christian worlds.

In the early period, narrative cycles portraying events from the lives of Christ and Old Testament figures found their expression in all areas of Christian art: they decorated the walls of churches and church furnishings, they illuminated manuscripts, and were carved into reliquary boxes, ivory diptychs, and marble sarcophagi. In contrast, although

isolated events from the lives of Saints Peter and Paul abound on funerary objects such as sarcophagi and reliquary boxes,<sup>2</sup> the evidence for true narrative cycles is limited.

### Literary Evidence

Central to any discussion on the narrative representation of Biblical saints are the two basilicas of Old St. Peter's,<sup>3</sup> and S. Paolo fuori le mura, at Rome.<sup>4</sup> The church of Old St. Peter's was begun by Constantine c.319/322, but it was not until the year 386 that work began to replace the small structure which had originally stood over the grave of Saint Paul. Unfortunately, neither Medieval church survives. Old St. Peter's was pulled down in the 17th century to make way for the church that stands on the site today, and the existing church of S. Paolo fuori le mura is a modern replacement, as the Medieval basilica was virtually demolished by fire in 1823. Our knowledge of how the two churches were decorated in the Middle Ages is based on a series of sketches and descriptions executed prior to their destruction, and while we

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<sup>2</sup>For the early representations of Saints Peter and Paul see J.M. Huskinson, Concordia Apostolorum: Christian Propaganda at Rome in the 4th century, BAR International Series 148 (Oxford, 1982).

<sup>3</sup>For the history of St. Peter's see R. Krautheimer et al., Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae, 5 (Vatican City, 1977), pp.165-279 (hereafter Krautheimer CBCR).

<sup>4</sup>For the history of S. Paolo fuori le mura see Krautheimer, CBCR, 5 (1977), pp.93-164.

have detailed information on the decoration of S. Paolo fuori le mura,<sup>5</sup> our knowledge of the adornment of St. Peter's is somewhat rudimentary.<sup>6</sup>

In c.1605, when Tasselli sketched the interior of St. Peter's, remnants of an Old Testament cycle occupied the right side of the nave and fragments of a New Testament cycle survived on the left. The only indication that the church was decorated with a cycle of its titular saint appears in Grimaldi's description, recorded some fifteen years later, in which he mentions that many scenes from the life of Saint Peter were portrayed, in mosaic, on the west wall of the north transept.<sup>7</sup> To what extent, however, do the 17th century sketches and descriptions reflect the Early Christian decoration of the church?

It is generally believed that St. Peter's was first adorned with figural scenes during the restorations undertaken

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<sup>5</sup>The most complete collection of sketches is found in Bib. Vat. Barb. lat. 4406, but twelve scenes from the Old Testament and Pauline cycles are also recorded in an ink drawing in Vat. lat. 9843. All sketches are reprinted in Waetzoldt, Kopien, plates 317-458.

<sup>6</sup>Copies of the watercolours sketched by Tasselli c.1602, and Grimaldi's later descriptions and sketches are recorded in Bib. Vat. Barb. lat. 2733. Both are reprinted in G. Grimaldi, Descrizione della Basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano (Bib. Vat. Barb. lat. 2733), ed. R. Niggi (Vatican City, 1972). See also Waetzoldt, Kopien, plates 484, 485, 485a.

<sup>7</sup>"...multis historiis B. Petris museivis", Bib. Vat. Barb. lat. 2733, fol.164v; repr. G. Grimaldi, op.cit., p.203.

by Pope Leo I (440-461),<sup>8</sup> and it is known that a further restorative programme was carried out by Pope Formosus in the late-9th century.<sup>9</sup> Undoubtedly other restorations took place, but they have not been recorded. The copies of the Old Testament cycle are felt to represent a more or less faithful reflection of the Early Christian programme, a late-7th century date has been proposed for the Peter cycle in the transept,<sup>10</sup> and, until recently, the execution of the New Testament cycle has been attributed to the restorations of Pope Formosus.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>It is assumed that figural scenes did not form part of the original decoration of the church, as Prudentius makes no mention of them in his brief description of St. Peter's, written following his visit to Rome in the early 5th century. See Prudentius, 2, text and Eng. trans. H.J. Thomson, (Harvard and London, 1961), p.323. The narrative scenes in the nave are, therefore, believed to have been executed during Pope Leo I's restorations. See Liber Pontificalis, ed. L. Duchesne, 1 (Paris, 1955), p.239, (hereafter LP). This collection of papal biographies, compiled by a group of anonymous writers from the 6th century onwards, is an important source of information on the founding and decoration of Early Medieval churches in Rome.

<sup>9</sup>That Pope Formosus restored the paintings in St. Peter's is first recorded in a 10th century document written by Benedict of Mt. Soractus: "Renovavit Formosus papa ecclesia principis apostolorum Petri picture tota." Il "chronicon" di Benedetto, monaco di S. Andrea del Sorratte, ed. G. Zucchetti, (Rome, 1920), p.156. In the 15th century this passage was copied by the compiler of the Liber Pontificalis, 2, p.227 and n.2. That Formosus restored the paintings is also recorded in an inscription on Tasselli's drawings, see Waetzoldt, Kopien, plates 484 and 485

<sup>10</sup>See A. Weis, "Ein Petruszyklus des 7. Jahrhunderts im Querschiff der Vatikanischen Basilika," Römische Quartalschrift, 58 (1963), pp.230-270.

<sup>11</sup>This attribution can be traced back to Grimaldi, op.cit., (note 6 supra), p.140 (fol. 106v.).

Initially, it appears that the church of St. Peter's is of little importance in any study of early hagiographical cycles, as there was only a Peter cycle in the transept, and no detailed description of it survives. However, Tronzo has suggested that the New Testament cycle in the nave may originally have been executed in the late-7th century, that it replaced a narrative cycle depicting Peter's life, and that the loss of the Peter cycle from the nave may have prompted the erection of a new Peter cycle in the transept.<sup>12</sup>

The hypothesis that the left nave wall of St. Peter's was originally decorated with a cycle of its titular saint finds support elsewhere. When the church of S. Paolo fuori le mura was constructed, it seems that the two funerary basilicas of the patron saints of Rome were intended to be seen as a matched pair. Both churches are similar in size and plan, both were restored by Pope Leo I (440-461);<sup>13</sup> and as far as can be ascertained, the paintings and mosaics that covered their walls depicted similar subjects and themes. For example, an image of the Adoration of the Twentyfour Elders could be found on the facade of St. Peter's, and on the

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<sup>12</sup>W. Tronzo, "The prestige of St. Peter's: observations on the function of monumental narrative cycles in Italy," Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, (Studies in the History of Art), 16 (National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1985), pp.93-112, esp. p.105.

<sup>13</sup>For the restoration of St. Peter's see LF, 1, p.239. That Pope Leo I restored S. Paolo fuori le mura is also suggested in a letter written by Pope Hadrian I (772-795) to Charlemagne, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae, 5 (Berlin, 1974), p.50.

triumphal arch of S. Paolo fuori le mura. Above the narrative cycles in the nave, portraits of prophets and saints occupied the spaces between the clerestory windows, and papal portraits were placed in the roundels above the columnar supports of the nave. Furthermore, since both churches depicted Old Testament cycles on their right nave walls, and the scenes in each were similar in terms of selection, arrangement, and iconography,<sup>14</sup> it seems possible that a similar situation existed on the opposite wall. Thus, since the church of S. Paolo fuori le mura portrayed a cycle of its titular saint on the left nave wall, the church of St. Peter's may also have done so, in which case the church of S. Paolo fuori le mura would have been a reflection of, rather than a deviation from, the earlier model at St. Peter's.

The church of Old St. Peter's had enormous influence on church decoration throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup> Besides possibly having served as the prototype for S. Paolo fuori le mura, it is also believed to have been the model for the

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<sup>14</sup>For a discussion of the narrative cycles at St. Peter's and S. Paolo fuori le mura see J. Garber, Wirkungen der frühchristlichen Gemäldezyklen der alten Peters-und-Pauls Basiliken in Rom, (Berlin and Vienna, 1918).

<sup>15</sup>For recent work on the influence of Old St. Peter's see H. Kessler, "'Caput et speculum omnium ecclesiarum': Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Latium," Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance, Villa Spelman Colloquia, 1 (Bologna, 1989), pp.119-146.

decoration of Bishop Neon's triclinium at Ravenna.<sup>16</sup> According to the Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis, written in the 9th century by the historian Agnellus, the triclinium was adorned in the 5th century with the story of the Creation on one side of the entrance wall, and the story of Peter the Apostle on the other.<sup>17</sup> Weis has shown that the Creation cycle was partly copied from St. Peter's,<sup>18</sup> but as only one episode can be identified in the Peter scenes (Peter's Vision of the Unclean Beasts at Joppa), there has been considerable discussion over whether the "story of Peter" consisted of a single image,<sup>19</sup> or whether in fact it was a narrative cycle.<sup>20</sup> Agnellus is the only witness to this lost

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<sup>16</sup>In this context, the word triclinium refers to a dining hall.

<sup>17</sup>"Et in alia fronte depicta istoria Petri apostoli," Agnellus, "De Sancto Neone XVIII," Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis, in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum Saec. VI-IX, (Hanover, 1828), pp.292-293. For an examination of the evidence provided by this text see F.W. Deichmann, Ravenna, Hauptstadt des spätantikes Abendlandes, 2/1 (Wiesbaden, 1974), pp.194-197.

<sup>18</sup>A. Weis, "Der römische Schöpfungszyklus des 5. Jahrhunderts im Triclinium Neons zu Ravenna," Tortulae, Römische Quartalschrift, 30 Supplementheft (1966), pp.300-316.

<sup>19</sup>For proponents of a single image see: F. Wickhoff, "Das Speisezimmer des Bischofs Neon von Ravenna," Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft, 17 (1894), pp.10-17; A. Testi Rasponi, Codex Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis, ed. L.A. Muratori, in Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, New Series, 2/3 (Bologna, 1924), pp.80-81.

<sup>20</sup>For the supporters of further Peter scenes see: E. Steinmann, Die Tituli und die kirchliche Wandmalerei im Abendlande, (Leipzig, 1892), pp.46-48; and W.N. Schumacher, "Dominus legem dat," Römische Quartalschrift, 54 (1959), pp.1-

decoration, and the presence or absence of further Peter scenes is difficult to determine from his text. In favour of a Peter cycle is the fact that it would be unusual for a viewer to describe a single episode as being "the story of Peter", and since the Creation cycle was copied from Old St. Peter's, it seems likely that its opposing imagery was also. That is, what the diners probably saw on the entrance wall was a Creation cycle on one side, juxtaposed with a Peter cycle on the other.

More detailed information on Early Christian hagiographical cycles is provided by the church of S. Paolo fuori le mura, whose decoration was extensively documented in a series of watercolours commissioned by Cardinal Francesco Barberini in 1634. The copies were discovered by Müntz at the end of the 19th century,<sup>21</sup> and ever since art historians have wrestled with the thorny problem of determining to what extent the copies reflect the work of an Early Christian artist. From the time of their execution in the 5th century, to their destruction in the 19th, the paintings of S. Paolo underwent a series of restorations. Work on the papal portraits located beneath the narrative cycles has been narrowed down to three

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39, esp. p.38.

<sup>21</sup>E. Müntz, "L'ancienne basilique de St. Paul hors-les-murs; ses fresques et ses mosaïques, d'après des documents inédits, avec des notes sur quelques autres peintures romaines du moyen-âge," Revue de l'art chrétien, 48 (1898), pp.1-19, 108-113.

phases (5th century, c.700, 13th century),<sup>22</sup> and while we can only be sure of two painting periods for the Old Testament cycle and the cycle of Saint Paul (5th and 13th centuries), the possibility of other restorative work cannot be ruled out.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, since the church's roof is known to have undergone a considerable number of repairs, it is unlikely that the paintings could have survived undamaged for as long as eight centuries.<sup>24</sup> According to Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), restorations to the Old Testament cycle were carried out by Cavallini in the 13th century,<sup>25</sup> and although there is secure evidence that the reworking of the Pauline cycle was undertaken during Cavallini's lifetime,<sup>26</sup> his involvement in the restorations to the cycle of Saint Paul is by no means

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<sup>22</sup>E. Kitzinger, Römische Malerei vom Beginn des 7. bis zur Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts, (Ph.D. thesis, Munich, 1934), pp.22-25; Waetzoldt, Kopien, pp.57 and 61-62.

<sup>23</sup>For example, Waetzoldt believes that Scenes 1-14 and 22-35 of the Old Testament cycle are faithful 8th-century copies of the Leonine works. Kopien, p.57.

<sup>24</sup>The Liber Pontificalis records repairs to the roof from the end of the 7th century through to the beginning of the 9th century. LP, 1, pp.375, 397, 420; 2, p.9.

<sup>25</sup>"In santo Pagolo era di musayco la faccia dinanzi dentro nella chiesa tutte le parieti delle nave di meco erano dipinte [by Cavallini] storie del testamento vecchio..." in J. von Schlosser, Lorenzo Ghibertis Denkwürdigkeiten, 1 (Berlin, 1912), p.39.

<sup>26</sup>This is established through the dating of the donor figures and their accompanying inscriptions. See J. White, "Cavallini and the lost frescoes in S. Paolo," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 19 (1956), pp.84-85; P. Hetherington, Pietro Cavallini, (London, 1979), pp.87-90;

certain.<sup>27</sup>

Attempts to identify "early" and "late" images have examined aspects of the copies' style and iconography, and have concluded with the opinion that the 13th-century restorers intended to recreate the Early Christian programme.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, large areas of some paintings were very damaged, making their original compositions indiscernible. In the course of the restorations this resulted in iconographical changes, changes in subject matter, and changes in style. Thus, although early traits can be discerned, the later restorations indicate that care must be taken when discussing the cycle of Saint Paul in the context of Early Christian art.

Despite these words of caution, a few points about the Pauline cycle can still be made, and can demonstrate, at least in general terms, the role that Biblical hagiographical cycles played in the decoration of Early Christian churches. The Pauline cycle appears to have worked typologically with the Old Testament cycle on the opposite wall. Both cycles flanked

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<sup>27</sup>Doubt over the attribution to Cavallini is expressed by Waetzoldt, Kopien, p.59; J. Gardner suggests that Cavallini may have been one of a team of painters: "S. Paolo fuori le mura, Nicholas III and Pietro Cavallini," Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, 34 (1971), pp.240-248, esp. p.246.

<sup>28</sup>See J. White, "Cavallini and the lost frescoes of S. Paolo," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 19 (1956), pp.84-95; Waetzoldt, Kopien, p.58; L. Eleen, "Frescoes from the life of St. Paul in S. Paolo fuori le mura in Rome. Early Christian or Medieval?" RACAR, 12, #2, (1985) pp.251-59.

an image of the Saviour in the apse, and showed the story of the ancestors of Christ on one nave wall, and the story of Paul - as one of his successors - on the other. In this setting, the paintings served as a reminder of Paul's role in the development of Christian history. The cycle was placed high up on the nave wall, and although it is unlikely that the individual scenes could be easily identified from the ground, the episodes appear to have been carefully selected. The narrative began at the triumphal arch with three scenes from the life of the protomartyr Stephen (Choice of the Seven Deacons, Stephen before the Chief Council, Stoning of Stephen), and while the inclusion of Stephen scenes may seem out of place in a Pauline narrative, the prominence given to him probably relates to the role that he played in Paul's conversion. The story then continued with the life of Paul, as told in the Acts of the Apostles. In the 5th century, Romans were fascinated with Paul's missionary activities, and this was reflected by the predominance of scenes portraying episodes of conversion, baptism, and preaching. In addition, one of Pope Leo the I's concerns was to promote the primacy of Peter over Paul,<sup>29</sup> and his interests were reflected in the final scene, which deviates from the Biblical text, by showing the apocryphal Meeting of Peter and Paul at Rome. The painting from S. Paolo is our earliest known witness to this

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<sup>29</sup>For the representation of the concordia apostolorum and the primacy of Peter see J.M. Huskinson, op.cit., (note 2 supra).

event, and its inclusion emphasised the fact that, although Peter and Paul were brothers in founding the church at Rome, Peter was in the city first, and had already begun to establish a Christian community prior to Paul's arrival.<sup>30</sup>

The idea of decorating the church of S. Paolo with a cycle of its titular saint, opposing one of the Old Testament, appears to have come from St. Peter's, but the exact iconographical model is not known. Weitzmann has noted that illustrated books of the Bible were used as models in monumental wall paintings and mosaics,<sup>31</sup> a theory borne out by the close relationship that exists between the Old Testament cycle in the church of St. Julien at Tours and the miniatures of the Ashburnham Pentateuch (Paris, B.N. nouv. acq. lat. 2334);<sup>32</sup> as well as the Genesis cycle in the church of S. Marco at Venice and the illustrations of the Cotton Genesis (London, B.L. Cotton, Otho B.VI).<sup>33</sup> However, as Kitzinger has

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<sup>30</sup>For a discussion of the iconography of this scene see H. Kessler, "The Meeting of Peter and Paul in Rome: an emblematic narrative of spiritual brotherhood," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 41 (1987), pp.265-275.

<sup>31</sup>K. Weitzmann, "The Illustration of the Septuagint," Studies in Classical and Byzantine manuscript illumination, ed. H. Kessler, (Chicago, 1971), pp.45-75, esp. p.48.

<sup>32</sup>See A. Grabar, "Fresques romanes copiées sur les miniatures du Pentateuque de Tours," Cahiers Archéologiques, 9 (1957), pp.329-341.

<sup>33</sup>The relationship was first noticed by J.J. Tikkanen, Die Genesismosaiken von S. Marco in Venedig und ihr Verhältnis zu den Miniaturen der Cottonbibel, (Helsinki, 1889); the subject has been treated more recently by K. Weitzmann, "The Genesis Mosaics of San Marco and the Cotton Genesis Miniatures," in O.

observed, since a large time gap exists between copy and model, these two examples are not typical of the usual relationship between book illumination and monumental art.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, the S. Paolo cycle cannot be linked to a specific illuminated text, because although it has been suggested that a Byzantine illustrated Book of Acts existed in the West as early as the 5th century,<sup>35</sup> no such text is extant. Furthermore, since the cycle at S. Paolo includes the Meeting of Peter and Paul at Rome, while the Acts do not, even if an early illustrated Acts did exist, it cannot have been the sole pictorial source. In addition, the earliest reference to the illustration of saints' lives in manuscripts appears in the writings of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Nikephoros (806-815),<sup>36</sup> and the earliest extant examples date approximately fifty years later.<sup>37</sup> As will be shown, hagiographical cycles survive in monumental art (usually in a

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Demus, The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice, 2 (Chicago, 1984), pp.105-142; and K. Weitzmann, H. Kessler, The Cotton Genesis, (Princeton, 1986).

<sup>34</sup>E. Kitzinger, "The Role of Miniature Painting in Mural Painting," The Place of Book Illumination in Byzantine Art, (Princeton, 1975), pp.99-142, esp. pp.99-109.

<sup>35</sup>H. Kessler, The Illustrated Bibles from Tours, (Princeton, 1977), p.124

<sup>36</sup>PG, 100, col.477.

<sup>37</sup>See H. Buchthal, "Some Representations from the Life of St. Paul in Byzantine and Carolingian art," Tortulae. Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinische Monumenten. Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte, 30, Supplementheft, 1966, pp.43-48, plates 9-13.

funerary context) long before they are ever illustrated in texts. It seems possible, therefore, that the funerary churches of Saints Peter and Paul at Rome contained the first expanded visual portrayals of the lives of their titular saints.

### Visual Evidence

The one surviving example of an Early Christian Biblical cycle (albeit in an abbreviated form), is found on an ivory diptych - popularly known as the Carrand diptych - in the Carrand Collection of the Museo Bargello, at Florence (fig.1). The right side of the diptych portrays three episodes from the life of the apostle Paul: Paul Preaching, Paul Bitten by a Viper, and Paul Healing the Sick on Malta. These scenes are juxtaposed on the left with the depiction of Adam lounging with the newly created animals in Paradise.<sup>38</sup> Due to the high cost of ivory, which was imported from India, the diptych was undoubtedly commissioned by a wealthy patron, but exactly who this patron may have been is not known. When and where the ivory was produced is also problematic. It is, however, most popularly believed to be of Italian origin, and to have been

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<sup>38</sup>The sides of the diptych were originally reversed to their present arrangement, with the Pauline scenes on the left and Adam on the right. See K. Shelton, "Roman Aristocrats, Christian Commissions: The Carrand Diptych," Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, 29 (1986), pp.166-180, esp. p.170.

produced in Rome around the year 400 A.D.<sup>39</sup> This places its production at a time when the power and influence of the largely pagan aristocracy were rising, and their conversion to Christianity was one of the primary concerns of the church.<sup>40</sup>

In interpreting the diptych's iconography, its imagery will be viewed in the light of these events, in combination with the exegetical writings of the Early Christian Fathers.

At the top right of the diptych, the image of Paul preaching is not linked to a specific episode in the Acts, but is intended as a general reference to Paul's mission. In creating this scene the artist has adapted the philosopher-muse compositions that abound in Classical art,<sup>41</sup> and it is possible that the model was deliberately chosen. In his De laudibus Pauli, John Chrysostom (c.347-407) compares Paul's mission with the works of pagan philosophers.<sup>42</sup> Thus, anyone

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<sup>39</sup>The date and provenance of the diptych is based on stylistic analysis. Volbach, in Elfenbeinarbeiten der spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters, (Mainz, 1976), #108, p.78, believes it was produced in the East, possibly Constantinople. On the other hand, Kessler compares the diptych's style to ivories produced in Italy c.400. See Age of Spirituality, ed. K. Weitzmann, New York Metropolitan Museum of Art (1979), #454, pp.505-507, (hereafter Spirituality).

<sup>40</sup>For a discussion of the conflict between the Christians and Rome's pagan aristocracy see H. Block, "The Pagan Revival in the West at the End of the Fourth Century," The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity, ed. A.D. Momigliano, (Oxford, 1963), pp.193-218.

<sup>41</sup>K.J. Shelton, "The Consular Muse of Flavius Constantinus," Art Bulletin, 65 (1983), pp.7-23, esp. fig.9.

<sup>42</sup>"Homily 1, De laudibus Pauli," PG, 50, cols.473-78.

familiar with John's writings could make the connection, that an image portraying Paul in the guise of a philosopher, promotes the idea that Christianity is the true philosophy.<sup>43</sup>

Immediately beneath this episode the diptych depicts Paul being bitten by a viper. In keeping with the concept of Christianity as the true faith, this scene can be associated with the writings of Ambrose (c.339-397) who, in his homily on the 6th day of Creation, uses the miracle of Paul being bitten by a viper as an example of faith.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, the image also draws attention to the church's concern with eradicating paganism. In his "Contra orationem Symmachi", the poet Prudentius (348-c.410) likens the Roman prefect Symmachus to the viper that attacked Paul, and sees the paganism in Rome as a disease.<sup>45</sup> Thus, a parallel is made between the viper's ineffective attack on Paul, and the threat of paganism against the church.

The final Pauline scene depicts the apostle healing the sick on Malta. The image provokes several levels of interpretation. On a specific level the inclusion of the cure

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<sup>43</sup>K.J. Shelton, op.cit., p.179.

<sup>44</sup>Ambrose, Hexaemeron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel, trans. J.J. Savage, Fathers of the Church, 47, (New York, 1961), p.251. For an interpretation of the diptych in terms of the importance of faith in achieving salvation see E. Konowitz, "The program of the Carrand diptych," Art Bulletin, 66 (1984), pp.484-88.

<sup>45</sup>"A reply to the address of Symmachus," Prudentius 1, text and Eng. trans., H.J. Thomson, (London, 1962), pp.344-401, esp. pp.344-351.

of the man with the withered hand brings to mind Christ's parallel miracle, and emphasises Paul's role as heir to Christ's ministry.<sup>46</sup> On a more general level, the inclusion of a healing miracle makes an indirect reference to Prudentius' observation that paganism is a disease. In this way the point is made that, just as Paul was able to heal the sick on Malta, so will the church be able to eradicate the disease of paganism. Consequently, the group of Pauline scenes send an evangelical message which promotes Paul as Christ's successor, and Christianity as the true faith.

On the adjacent panel, the image of Adam lounging with the animals in Paradise is a literal interpretation of the Genesis text. Nevertheless, the iconography, which has its roots in portrayals of Orpheus charming the animals, suggests that an allegorical meaning was also intended.<sup>47</sup> In his study of images of Orpheus found in an Early Christian context, Stern has noted that Orpheus is commonly associated with salvation imagery, and that he appears as a prefiguration of Christ, the Saviour.<sup>48</sup> By drawing on the image of Orpheus for the depiction of Adam in Paradise, the imagery on the diptych

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<sup>46</sup>As suggested by H. Kessler, "Scenes from the Acts of the Apostles in some Early Christian Ivories," Gesta, 18/1 (1979), pp.109-119, esp. p.114.

<sup>47</sup>For an analysis of the Early Christian iconography of Adam in Paradise see H. Macquire, "Adam and the Animals: Allegory and the Literal Sense in Early Christian Art," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 41 (1987), pp.363-373.

<sup>48</sup>H. Stern, "Orphée dans l'art paléochrétien," Cahiers Archéologiques, 23 (1974), pp.1-16.

serves as a reminder of the promise of salvation, the path to which was facilitated through the work of Christ.

Why, however, were the Pauline scenes juxtaposed with an image of Adam in Paradise? On one level, the two sides of the diptych can be seen as working typologically, and portray Adam and the commencement of sacred history on the left, with Paul as Christ's successor on the right. At a deeper level, however, connections between the two opposing scenes can be found in the allegorical treatments of Paradise in the Early Christian commentaries. Links between Paul and Paradise appear as early as the 3rd century in the commentaries of Origen, who used Paul's vision of the man caught up into Paradise (2 Corinthians, 12:2-4) to interpret Earthly Paradise as an allegory for heaven.<sup>49</sup> Although Origen's interpretation was often criticised, Paul's vision played a prominent role in further discussions of Earthly Paradise. In the 4th century Ambrose noted that Adam's dominion over animals demonstrated man's ability to form judgements, but that because of his disobedience, Adam was expelled from Paradise. However the just man, exemplified by Paul in the ivory, can ascend from his corporeal nature and arrive in spiritual Paradise.<sup>50</sup> A further connection lies in parallels between Adam's animals and Paul's serpent. According to Theodoret of Cyrus (c.393-

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<sup>49</sup>"Selecta in Genesim," PG, 12, cols.98-100.

<sup>50</sup>Ambrose, Paradise, in Hexameron, Paradise, Cain and Abel, Fathers of the Church, 42, trans. J.J. Savage (New York, 1961), Chapters 32, 52 and 53, pp.310-311 and 330-332.

c.466), an indefatigable fighter against paganism, the virtuous need not fear wild beasts, for just as the beasts submitted to Adam before he sinned, so the viper withdrew its teeth from Paul's hand when it found that he had no sin in him.<sup>51</sup>

Today, the imagery of the diptych invites complex levels of interpretation, but we cannot be certain if this was how the diptych was intended to be understood, given the lack of secure evidence regarding its patron, date, and provenance. It is, however, tempting to see function of the Carrand diptych as an announcement of one man's conversion to Christianity, and that it was designed to encourage others to follow his lead.

### Conclusion

The evidence is fragmentary, at times even suspect, but it appears that in the Early Christian period the only expanded cycles of Biblical saints may have been found in the funerary basilicas of Saints Peter and Paul, at Rome, where they were organised typologically with the Old Testament cycles on the opposite walls. These paintings were memorials to the founders of the church in Rome, and, in telling the stories of Peter and Paul, they sent an evangelical message

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<sup>51</sup>"Quaestiones in Genesim, 1.18," PG, 80, col.97.

that promoted Christianity, and the role of the apostles as the successors of Christ. On a superficial level, a similar message is reflected in the decoration of the Carrand diptych. But the primary intent of the diptych was not simple storytelling. Instead, the artist appears to have created an intricate web of messages - designed to intrigue and persuade - that champion the Christian faith, and demonstrate the importance of having trust in God if salvation and eternal life are to be realised.

Unfortunately, insufficient information has survived to determine what the standard ingredients of Early Christian Biblical hagiographical cycles may have been. Although the church of St. Peter's appears to have served as the basic model, only one scene can be identified from the Peter cycles, and the copies of the paintings from S. Paolo fuori le mura are unreliable examples of Early Christian art. The cycle at S. Paolo fuori le mura demonstrates, however, that even cycles of Biblical saints were not restricted to a single narrative source, while the cycle on the Carrand diptych underlines the debt Early Christian art owed the Classical world. In creating pictorial narratives, the primary concern of the Early Christian artists was to convey a message in a form that was comprehensible, believable, and instructive. In doing so, they used whatever narrative or iconographic sources best suited their needs.

## CHAPTER TWO: NON-BIBLICAL CYCLES

In the Early Medieval period, veneration as a saint did not require a formal act of canonisation, which only became part of Western canon law in the 12th century. Indeed, the earliest non-Biblical figures to be venerated as saints were the Early Christian martyrs and confessors, and from the 4th century onwards, cults of non-Biblical saints grew rapidly. Their growing popularity seems to reflect a need amongst Christians to venerate a holy figure who was more accessible than God, or even the Virgin and John the Baptist. But despite their rising popularity, the surviving works of art indicate that there was little concern to interpret the lives of non-Biblical saints in visual form. However, the dearth of visual material is misleading, as it reflects more a problem of survival than a lack of interest. As will be shown, the evidence gathered from the writings of the Early Medieval poets, bishops, and papal biographers demonstrates that the depiction of lives of non-Biblical saints first gained popularity in the East, and that these images were far more common than the sole surviving example demonstrates.

Literary Evidence

The earliest cycles of non-Biblical saints were found decorating the tombs of the Early Christian martyrs. In the

early-4th century, Pope Sylvester (314-335) donated a silver screen, decorated with images of Lawrence's passion, to the basilica of S. Lorenzo fuori le mura, where it was placed before Lawrence's body.<sup>1</sup> While it is not entirely clear that these images constituted a true narrative cycle, the reference is one of the earliest to associate scenes of martyrdom with the tomb of a saint.

Also in Rome, but almost a century later, Prudentius describes in gruesome detail a painting of the martyrdom of Hippolytus, which was located above the saint's tomb. The description appears in the Peristephanon Liber, written following the poet's visit to Rome in the early-5th century, and is incorporated into a narrative of Hippolytus' life. It reads as follows:

There is a picture of the outrage painted on a wall, showing in many colours the wicked deed in all its details; above the tomb is depicted a lively likeness, portraying in clear semblance Hippolytus' bleeding body as he was dragged along... One could see the parts torn asunder and lying scattered in disorder up and down at random. The artist had painted too his loving people walking after him in tears wherever the inconstant track showed his zig-zag course. Stunned with grief, they were searching with their eyes as they went, and gathering the mangled flesh in their bosoms. One clasps the snowy head, cherishing the venerable white hair on his loving breast, while another picks up the shoulders, the severed hands,

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<sup>1</sup>"Ante corpus beati Laurenti martyris argento clusas sigillis passionem ipsius cum lucernas binixes argenteas", LP, 1, p.181.

arms, elbows, knees, bare fragments of legs.<sup>2</sup>

Given the poetical nature of Prudentius' text, it cannot be expected to be as accurate as an archaeological description, and needs to be approached with caution.<sup>3</sup> For example, Prudentius confuses the martyr Hippolytus with the homonymous priest involved with the schism of Novatius,<sup>4</sup> and the story he tells derives from the legend of the classical Hippolytus, who was dragged to death by the horses of his chariot.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, despite his confusion over the identity of Hippolytus, Prudentius was undoubtedly relating

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<sup>2</sup>"Exemplar sceleris paries habet inlitus, in quo/multicolor fucus degerit omne nefas./picta super tumulus species liquidis veget umbris/effigians tracti membra cruenta viri.../cernere erat ruptis conpagibus ordine nullo/membra per incertos sparsa iacere situs. /addiderat casos gressu lacrimisque sequentes, devia quo fractum semita monstrat iter./maerore attoniti atque oculis rimantibus ibant,/implebantque sinus vixceribus laceris./ille caput niveum complectitur ac reverendam/canitiem molli confovet in gremio;/hic umeros truncasque manus et brachia et ulnas/et genua et crurum fragmina nuda legit." Prudentius, 2, text and Eng. trans., H.J. Thomson, (London, & Harvard, 1961), pp.98-345, esp. pp.312-315.

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of ekphrasis in Byzantine art see L. James and R. Webb, "'To understand ultimate things and enter secret places': ekphrasis and art in Byzantium," Art History, 14 (1991), pp.1-17.

<sup>4</sup>For the sources of Prudentius' poem see H. Delehaye, "Recherches sur le légendier romain," Analecta Bollandiana, 51 (1938), pp.34-98, esp. pp.58-66.

<sup>5</sup>This story would have been known to Prudentius through Seneca's play, "Phaedra, or Hippolytus," Seneca's Tragedies, 1, text and Eng. trans. F.J. Miller, (London, and Harvard, 1938), pp.320-423.

the legend as it was known in Rome in his time.<sup>6</sup> Further problems are encountered in trying to determine where Prudentius' description of the painting ends, and the narrative takes over, as in an attempt to bring an image to life, it was not uncommon for writers to embellish what they had seen with background events. In addition, when Prudentius first speaks of the painting he uses the word exemplar, indicating a single image, but then continues with a description that suggests two scenes. The first portrayed Hippolytus being dragged to death by horses, while the second depicted the faithful following behind him and gathering up his scattered remains. Like the images of Saint Lawrence's passion in the church of S. Lorenzo fuori le mura, it is unclear whether the image(s) above Hippolytus' tomb constituted a true hagiographical cycle, but both examples bear witness to the Early Christian interest in decorating the tombs of the martyrs with events from their lives.

Although some of the references to martyrdom cycles in the East are made in passing only, enough evidence survives to indicate that it was in the East that their depiction first rose to popularity. In the 7th century, the writer of the Vita of Anastasios noted that the stories of martyrs appeared

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<sup>6</sup>In 13th-century Rome, the story of the martyr Hippolytus was still confused with that of the classical Hippolytus; see Magister Gregorius, Narracio de Mirabilibus Urbis Romae, ed. R.B.C. Huygens, Textus Minores, 42 (Leiden, 1970), p.22; also Master Gregorius, The Marvels of Rome, trans. and commentary J. Osborne, (Toronto, 1987), p.68.

on the walls of churches in Hierapolis, Syria, and that these images so impressed one man that he converted to the Christian faith.<sup>7</sup> In the late-6th/early-7th century, the poet Vrt'anes K'ertogh stated in an anti-Iconoclastic treatise that the torments of martyrs, including those of Saint Gregory the "Enlightener" - who is credited with bringing Christianity to Armenia - were painted on the walls of churches.<sup>8</sup> A further reference, to what appears to have been a combination miracle/martyrdom cycle, is recorded in the 7th-century Miracula of Saint Artemios. The text mentions that in the time of Emperor Heraclius (610-41) "illustrations of the struggle of the healer-saint Artemios" were represented on the west exterior wall of the church of St. John the Baptist, at Constantinople.<sup>9</sup> The depiction of these images is probably related to the acquisition of Saint Artemios' relics which, in the 6th century, were placed in a lead coffin under the main altar of the church.<sup>10</sup> Although Artemios died a martyr's

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<sup>7</sup>"Vita Anastasios d. Perses", ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Analekta Hierosolymitikes Stachyologias, 4 (1897), p.130.

<sup>8</sup>Text edited by S. Der Nersessian, "Une apologie des images du septième siècle," Byzantion, 17 (1944-45), pp.58-87, esp. p.64.

<sup>9</sup>"Ιστορία τῆς αθλησεως τοῦ ἁγίου θαυματουργοῦ Ἀρτεμίου". Miracula, edited by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Varia graeca sacra, (Petersburg, 1909), pp.1-79. For a discussion of the art historical significance of this text see C. Mango, "On the History of the Templon and the Martyrion of St. Artemios at Constantinople," Zograf, 10 (1979), pp.40-43.

<sup>10</sup>Miracula, op.cit., #24, #33, #34.

death, he was known primarily for his healing powers, and his miracula are full of stories about pilgrims who came to the church in order to see or touch his relics, even sleep by them, as it was by this process that they hoped to be healed.<sup>11</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that the cycle included a selection of Artemios' healing miracles, and concluded with his death as a martyr.

More specific information on martyrdom cycles is provided by Gregory of Nyssa (335-395) who, in a eulogy delivered at the Saint Theodore's martyrdom at Euchaita (near Amaseia in the Pontus), describes a painting of Theodore's martyrdom:

The painter, too, has spread out the blooms of his art, having depicted on an image the martyr's brave deeds, his resistance, his torments, the ferocious faces of the tyrants, the insults, that fiery furnace, the martyr's most blessed death and the representation in human form of Christ who presides over the contest.<sup>12</sup>

Gregory's text is the oldest to relate the legend of Saint Theodore, and the simplicity of his story is not found

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<sup>11</sup>For a discussion of the miracula of Artemios see B. de Gaiffier, "Sub Iuliano Apostata' dans le martyrologie romain," Analecta Bollandiana, 74 (1956), pp.5-49, esp. p.15.

<sup>12</sup>"Ἡπέκρωσε δε και ξωγράφος τὰ ἄνθη, τῆς, τέχνης ἐν εἰχόνι διαγραφαμενος, τὰς ἀριστείας τοῦ μάρτυρος, τὰς ἐνστάσεις, τὰς ἀλγηδόνας, τὰς θῆριώδεις τῶν τυράννων, μορφας, τὰς ἐπηρείας, τὴν φλογοτρόφον ἐχείνην χάμινον, τὴν μαχαριωτάτην τελείωσιν τοῦ ἀθλητοῦ, τοῦ αγωνοθέτου Χριστοῦ τῆς ἀθρωπίνης μορφῆς τὸ εχτώπωμα". PG, 46, col.737; Eng. trans. C. Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire (315-1453) Sources and Documents, (Toronto, 1986), pp.36-37, (hereafter Mango, Sources).

in any later versions.<sup>13</sup> Theodore was a Roman soldier during the persecutions of Maximian who, following an initial interrogation regarding his Christianity, was allowed to return to the army in the hope that he would renounce his faith. Theodore's response was to set fire to the Temple of the Mother Goddess at Amaseia, an act that caused his re-arrest. During his trial, no amount of persuasion - physical or verbal - could convince Theodore to recant his faith. He was tortured by having his body suspended, and his flesh torn, but Theodore remained firm in his beliefs. He ultimately met his death by fire.

Exactly how much of this story was portrayed in the painting at Euchaita is unclear. The use of the plural for Theodore's "brave deeds ... his torments, the ferocious deeds of the tyrants, the insults" indicates that more than one torture scene may have been shown before Theodore's death in the fiery furnace. How many? - it is impossible to say. One element, however, which is repeated in later cycles,<sup>14</sup> and which is also described in a 4th-century image of Saint Barlaam's martyrdom,<sup>15</sup> is "the representation in human form of Christ who presides over the contest".

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<sup>13</sup>See Acta SS., November 9 (Paris and Rome, 1925), pp.11-89.

<sup>14</sup>For example, the paintings of the martyrdom of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in the church of S. Maria Antiqua, at Rome: fig. 18 and Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 199.

<sup>15</sup>Described in a homily by Basil of Caesarea (329-379). PG, 31, col.489; Eng. trans., Mango, Sources, p.37.

While the description of Gregory of Nyssa gives just a fragmented impression of the painting of Theodore's martyrdom, the description of a nearly contemporary work portraying the martyrdom of Euphemia is sufficiently complete to allow a reconstruction of the cycle. The text is from an oration delivered by Bishop Asterios of Amaseia, and dates some time before 410, the year of Asterios' death.<sup>16</sup>

Euphemia was martyred in the 4th century at Chalcedon, later the site of the 4th Ecumenical Council (A.D.451). Asterios describes a painting located near Euphemia's tomb,<sup>17</sup> in her shrine at Chalcedon. He speaks of a martyrdom cycle consisting of four scenes. The first showed Euphemia being brought to her interrogation. The judge was elevated on a throne, and surrounded by guards, soldiers, and secretaries. Euphemia was being led toward him with one soldier dragging her forward, and another urging her from behind. The second scene showed a torture which rarely appears in the stories of martyrs: that of Euphemia having her teeth pulled. Asterios describes one executioner holding Euphemia's head down, while the other cut out her teeth. The third scene portrayed Euphemia in prison with her arms upraised, praying to God. In the fourth, and final scene, Euphemia was depicted in the midst of a fire, and once more her arms were raised in prayer

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<sup>16</sup>PG, 40, cols.336-7; Eng. trans. Mango, Sources, pp.37-39.

<sup>17</sup>"Που περὶ τὴν Θήχην ἱερὸν". PG., 40, col.336.

as she rejoiced at her departure from the earthly world.

The description by Asterios is our earliest record of Euphemia, but its accuracy as an historical document has been seriously questioned,<sup>18</sup> as has the existence of the painting itself.<sup>19</sup> One objection is based on the belief that when Asterios says "after a short stroll in the marketplace in the company of friends, I proceeded to God's temple to pray in peace and quiet",<sup>20</sup> he implies that the church was in the centre of Chalcedon.<sup>21</sup> This appears to be in contradiction to other sources who state that the church was located one kilometre out of the city.<sup>22</sup> However, one kilometre would not have been a great distance for someone to walk - especially in the 4th century - and it is not difficult to imagine Asterios strolling such a distance from the marketplace to the church. Another discrepancy occurs when Asterios states that

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<sup>18</sup>For a discussion of ekphrasis in Asterios' eulogy see O.J. Schrier, "A propos d'une donnée négligée sur la morte de Ste. Euphémie," Analecta Bollandiana, 102 (1984), pp.329-53, esp.p.332; also A.M. Schneider, "Sankt Euphemia und das Konzil von Chalkedon," in A. Grillmeier, H. Bacht, Das Konzil von Chalkedon. Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1, (Würzburg, 1951), pp. 291-302.

<sup>19</sup>J. Stilting, Acta SS., September 16 (Paris and Rome, 1866), pp.252-286, esp. p.265.

<sup>20</sup>"...καὶ ὀλίγα τοῖς γνῶρίμοις συμδαδίσας ἐπ' ἀγορᾶς, ἐχειῖθεν εἰς τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τέμνος ἀφιχόμεν ἐομξ ὁμξνος ἐνσχολῆ. PG, 40, cols.333-36. Eng. trans. Mango. Sources, p.37.

<sup>21</sup>See Schrier and Schneider, op.cit.

<sup>22</sup>For example, Evagrius of Antioch, "Historiae Ecclesiasticae, Book 2, Ch.3," PG, 86/2, col.3492. Further references are summarised by Stilting, op.cit., p.255.

Euphemia's tomb was near the church,<sup>23</sup> implying that it was a separate building, whereas Evagrius of Antioch says that Euphemia's tomb was in a chapel at the northeast corner of the basilica.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, we must take into account the rhetorical nature of Asterios' speech, which was designed to sway and impress, and cannot be expected to be accurate in every detail. Further objections to Asterios' text question the existence of the painting on the grounds that the members of the Council of 451, who gathered in Euphemia's shrine, make no mention of the image.<sup>25</sup> But this is a weak point, as the Acts of the Council are not concerned with providing a detailed description of the church. Furthermore, this "oversight" may simply have meant that such paintings were regularly found with the tombs of martyrs, and there was nothing sufficiently unusual about the Euphemia cycle for it to have been considered "worthy" of mention. In addition, the fact that the cycle was a painting, and not the more expensive and more treasured medium of mosaic, could also account for the Council's failure to acknowledge its existence.

Perhaps the strongest evidence against the accuracy of Asterios' description is the fact that his account of

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<sup>23</sup>"Παησίο τοῦ ἱεροῦ". PG, 40, col.336.

<sup>24</sup>PG, 86/2, cols.2493-96; for Eng. trans. of passage see Mango, Sources, p.30. Although there is some ambiguity in Evagrius' text, it does suggest that both the chapel and the basilica were one building.

<sup>25</sup>Stilting, op.cit.

Euphemia's passion bears little relation to the surviving texts. The best known version is the 5th-century Greek Passion, thought to have been produced for the 451 Council.<sup>26</sup> As Delehayé has established, this text is not an historical document, but purely a work of the imagination. He categorises it as an "epic passion", one of a group of stories that is characterised by a dialogue between the martyr and the judge, a variety of tortures, and frequent miraculous interventions.<sup>27</sup> According to the 5th-century Passion, Euphemia was tortured for 19 days with a group of other Christians. She was then separated from her group, but her torture continued. Although there is a reference to her being condemned to fire (from which she was miraculously saved), there is no mention of her being tortured by having her teeth extracted, and her death occurs when she is thrown into an arena with wild beasts. Other early texts, one of which is contemporary with Asterios' description - although written as far afield as Rouen - state that Euphemia was beheaded.<sup>28</sup> As can be seen, there is little correlation between any of these texts and the description of Euphemia's martyrdom in the painting. Indeed, within only 150 years of her death,

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<sup>26</sup>For a review of the texts relating the passion of Saint Euphemia see F. Halkin, Ste. Euphémie de Chalcedoine, (Brussels, 1965).

<sup>27</sup>H. Delehayé, Les passions des martyrs et des gens littéraires, (Brussels, 1921), "Epic Passions", pp.238-315.

<sup>28</sup>Schrier, op.cit., (note 18 supra).

Euphemia is recorded as dying by being burnt, beheaded, or by being thrown to the wild beasts.

Nevertheless, those who criticise Asterios' description on the grounds that there is little affinity between the version of Euphemia's martyrdom portrayed in the paintings, and that found in written texts, fail to acknowledge the role that oral tradition played in narrative art. If we take ourselves back to the 4th century, when few people were literate and books were only available to an elite few, the oral tradition served as an important, and highly valued, means of communication.<sup>29</sup> Hagiographic legends were perpetuated not only in the written and artistic traditions, but also through stories that were passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation, or transmitted in a more formal capacity via the hymns and sermons that were chanted and read in church on the feast days of the saints. As only the important sermons of the most prominent Christian leaders have been recorded in texts, a wealth of oral tradition existed that has not survived. In all probability the paintings of Euphemia's martyrdom were based on contemporary verbal accounts, and, as we are only too aware, stories passed on by word of mouth are rarely repeated verbatim. Instead, each person makes his own omissions or additions, or confuses

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<sup>29</sup>Even as late as the 12th century in England, the spoken word was still considered to be legally valid and superior to any document. See M.T. Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record, (London, 1979), esp. p.56.

certain facts, so that it is not difficult to see how, in the passage of 100-150 years, a once simple story of martyrdom can become a fantastic tale of endless tortures and miraculous escapes.

How much value should be placed on Asterios' description? Did he in fact see the painting? As Schrier has suggested, perhaps Asterios only knew of the painting by word of mouth, or was simply describing a painting he had seen, but remembered poorly.<sup>30</sup> Despite the possible unreliability in details of Asterios' description, there is no valid reason to doubt the existence of the painting. More evidence is needed, however, to finally lay these problems to rest. Furthermore, if Asterios did not accurately describe what he saw, he at least described what he thought he had seen; and if he did fabricate part of his description, it was undoubtedly based on other examples he had known. On this basis it can be safely assumed that, in Byzantium in the 4th century, one formula for representing the passion of a saint consisted of scenes of trial, torture, prison, and death.

Unlike martyrdom cycles, narrative cycles depicting the miracles of saints were rare in the early period, and it is not by chance that the earliest known examples depicted Saints Spyridon and Martin, two of the earliest non-martyr figures to be venerated as saints. In the 7th-century Vita of Saint

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<sup>30</sup>Schrier, op.cit., (note 18 supra) p.295.

Spyridon, written by Bishop Theodore of Paphos,<sup>31</sup> the author recalls an event which took place on Spyridon's feast day, in his church at Trimethous, Cyprus. Theodore had just delivered a sermon relating how Spyridon had overturned an idol at Alexandria through the force of prayer alone. This story was initially met with disbelief by many of the congregation, for the legend of Saint Spyridon with which they were familiar made no mention of it.<sup>32</sup> Then one of the members realised that this was the image represented, with other events from Saint Spyridon's life, above the central portal of the church where the saint's body lay.<sup>33</sup> These paintings were so old that previously no one had been able to identify their subject. When confronted by the image, the disbelievers found they could no longer doubt the truth of Theodore's story.

As Saint Spyridon was not a martyr, it is clear that these paintings represented a series of his miracles, of which one showed him overturning the idol at Alexandria. There is no way of knowing what other miracles were included, but the interesting aspect of Theodore's account is that it demonstrates the power of the image over the written, or spoken, word in 7th-century Cyprus. The disbelievers became

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<sup>31</sup>P. Van den Ven, La légende de S. Spyridon, (Louvain, 1953), pp.81\*-82\*, pp.81-91 esp. pp.88-90; Eng. trans. Mango, Sources, pp.136-137.

<sup>32</sup>This was the legend of Saint Spyridon, as told in the poem of Triphyllios. This version no longer survives.

<sup>33</sup>P. Van den Ven, op.cit., pp.89-90.

believers when the story was shown to them in a painting.

A similar situation can be found in the 7th-century Miracula of Saint Demetrios, from Thessaloniki.<sup>34</sup> Here the author describes an incident in which the prefect Marianos was cured of his paralysis through the intervention of the saint. He continues by saying that those who do not believe him will find a depiction of the episode, in mosaic, on the exterior wall of the church. The belief was that an image could not lie. Although orators, or writers, might be suspect and tend to exaggeration, an image was tangible proof of a story's veracity. Through the use of images, thoughts and ideas could be conveyed to the people in a form which was appealing, easily understood, and had the added advantage of being more readily believed.

Probably the best known Early Christian miracle cycles are those that portrayed the life of Saint Martin in the West. Martin was born in Pannonia, but moved to Pavia in Italy while still a young boy. From a very early age Martin had wanted to pursue a religious life, but he initially followed the wishes of his family and began what was to be a short-lived military career. By age 22 Martin had sought his discharge from the army, and devoted the remainder of his life to God. His missionary activities took him from Italy to Dalmatia, and then finally to Gaul. He became bishop of Tours in 370/371, and remained there until his death approximately twenty-seven

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<sup>34</sup>PG, 116, col.1220.

years later. After his death Martin's cult spread throughout Europe, and to a large extent his popularity can be attributed to the writing of his biography, by his friend Sulpicius Severus, as it served to preserve and promote Martin's reputation as a preacher and miracle worker.<sup>35</sup>

Cycles depicting events from Martin's life decorated churches in Padua in Italy,<sup>36</sup> and Tours in Gaul. At Tours, a series of images portraying events from Martin's life could be found decorating the saint's funerary basilica located just outside the city, and also in the cathedral. When Perpetuus became bishop of Tours (460-490), he pulled down the basilica that stood over Martin's tomb, and built a new church in its place.<sup>37</sup> He also asked Paulinus of Perigueux, Sidonius Apollinaris, and other writers whose names are lost, to compose a group of tituli that were to accompany the images

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<sup>35</sup>For the Latin text of Sulpicius Severus see PL, 20, cols. 159-222; Eng. trans. The Works of Sulpitius Severus, A. Roberts, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 11 (Oxford, 1894).

<sup>36</sup>In his Vita S. Martini, written c.575, Venantius Fortunatus urges visitors to Padua to see the church "huius habet paries Martini gesta figuris". "Vita S. Martini 4", Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Opera Poetica, (Berlin, 1961), line 674, p.369.

<sup>37</sup>For a brief description of the church built by Perpetuus see Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks, 2, ed. O.M. Dalton, (Oxford, 1927), Book 2, (14), p.58 (hereafter Dalton); see also May Vieillard-Troiekourov, Les monuments religieux de Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours, (Paris, 1976), pp.311-24.

decorating the church.<sup>38</sup> These tituli indicate that a series of images portraying Martin's miracles adorned the area surrounding Martin's tomb in the apse.<sup>39</sup>

In 558 the cathedral at Tours was destroyed by fire, and lay in ruins until rebuilt by Bishop Gregory between the years 573-590.<sup>40</sup> Information on how the church was decorated can be found in a poem written by Venantius Fortunatus in which he describes the new cathedral, mentions major episodes from the life of Saint Martin, and records seven sets of tituli which he composed for the church's decoration.<sup>41</sup> The tituli describe seven scenes: Saint Martin curing the leper with a kiss; Saint Martin dividing his cloak; Saint Martin giving his tunic; Saint Martin resuscitating the dead; Saint Martin preventing a pine tree from falling by making a sign of the

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<sup>38</sup>Tituli repr. in E. Le Blant, Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1 (Paris, 1856), #170-#181 (hereafter Le Blant); see also Luce Petri, "Les tituli de la basilique saint Martin edifiée à Tours par l'évêque Perpetuus (3<sup>e</sup> quart du Ve siècle)," Mélanges d'histoire ancienne offerts à William Seston, (Paris, 1976), pp.419-31.

<sup>39</sup>See the verse composed by Paulinus: Le Blant, op.cit., #176. For a discussion of this, and other Martin cycles, see T. Sauvel, "Les miracles de St. Martin," Bulletin Monumental, 114 (1956), pp.153-179.

<sup>40</sup>For a brief description of the church see Dalton, 2, Book 10 (31), pp.476-477.

<sup>41</sup>Venantius Fortunatus, "Carmen 10, 6", Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Opera Poetica, (Berlin, 1961), pp.234-38, esp. pp.237-38; Eng. trans. H. Kessler, "Pictorial Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul," Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, (Studies in the History of Art), 16, (National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1985), pp.75-91.

cross; Saint Martin overthrowing idols; Saint Martin exposing a false martyr.

The tituli do not follow in chronological order, and whereas five consist of four lines of verse, two are singled out for special attention and consist of ten lines each. These are the tituli that describe the scenes of Saint Martin curing the leper with a kiss, and Saint Martin giving his tunic to the poor man. Clearly these were the two most important scenes. But in Sulpicius Severus' Vita S. Martini the episode of Martin healing the leper is given just a brief mention.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the incident of Martin giving his tunic to the beggar is first referred to in the Dialogues, which Sulpicius wrote approximately seven years later, in order to bolster his portrayal of Martin.<sup>43</sup> Why then, had the episodes of Martin curing a leper, and Martin giving his tunic to a beggar man gained such prominence by the mid-6th century?

On a general level the scene of Martin curing a leper places emphasis on Martin's healing powers, and these miracles played an important role in the spread of his cult and the importance of Tours as a pilgrimage site. Nevertheless, it does not explain why this particular miracle was chosen, as during his lifetime Martin was credited with various cures. To cite just a few examples, Sulpicius Severus speaks of

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<sup>42</sup>The Works of Sulpitius Severus, trans. A. Roberts, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 11 (Oxford, 1894), p.12.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp.37-38.

Martin curing one girl from paralysis,<sup>44</sup> another from fever,<sup>45</sup> and restoring speech to a third girl who had been dumb since birth.<sup>46</sup> The specific choice of the leprosy scene is perhaps tied to the ancient view that leprosy was both a spiritual and physical disease.<sup>47</sup> Lepers were regarded as unclean, or as sinners, and the most popular interpretation by Early Christian writers was that leprosy symbolised heresy. Pope Gregory (590-604) himself made this association when he wrote that the cleansing of the ten lepers in Luke 17:12-19 could be viewed as their cleansing of heresy.<sup>48</sup> In 6th-century Gaul this idea was taken one step further, and leprosy became a metaphor for paganism.

In the 6th century the legend of Constantine's baptism by Pope Sylvester, and his subsequent cure from leprosy, had already circulated widely.<sup>49</sup> When King Clovis was baptised by

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp.11-12.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p.13.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp.46-47.

<sup>47</sup>For a discussion of how lepers were viewed in Medieval society see S. Brody, The Disease of the Soul and Leprosy in Medieval Literature, (Ithaca and London, 1974), esp. pp.60-106 and pp.147-197.

<sup>48</sup>"Moralium Libri 5" PL, 75, col.694. Eng. trans. "Morals on the Book of Job", 1, Book 5:28, A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, 18, (Oxford, 1844), pp.262-63.

<sup>49</sup>That Constantine was cured of leprosy when he was baptised by Pope Sylvester is mentioned by the compiler of the Liber Pontificalis, the first edition of which is believed to have been written in 530. LP, 1, p.170. The earliest accounts date back to the end of the 5th century. See Duchesne, ibid., pp.cix-cxvii; H. Fuhrmann, "Konstantinische

Bishop Remigius of Reims, Gregory wrote: "like a new Constantine, he moved forward to the water, to blot out the former leprosy, to wash away in this new stream the foul stains borne from old days".<sup>50</sup>

It seems likely that a parallel is being made between Martin's healing of the leper, Constantine's baptism, and the official recognition of the Christian faith. The scene of Martin curing the leper has significance, therefore, beyond that of a healing miracle. In fact it need not be a reference to the physical disease, but to the symbolic cleansing of a mind and soul tarnished by pagan beliefs. In this context the inclusion of the scene in the church's decoration represents the triumph of Christianity over paganism in Gaul, made possible through the work of Martin.

While the scene of Martin curing a leper accents Martin's missionary activities in Gaul, the episode of Martin giving his tunic to a beggar, followed by his appearance before the congregation (his arms bedecked in jewels) emphasises the importance of the city of Tours, and more specifically the site of the cathedral itself. For it was in a small cell alongside the cathedral that the miracle took place -

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Schenkung und Silvesterlegende in neuer Sicht," Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters, 15 (1959), pp.523-540.

<sup>50</sup>"Procedit novus Constantinus ad lavacrum, deleturus leprae veteris morbum/sordentesque maculas gestas antiquitis recenti latice deleturus", PL, 71, col.226; Eng. trans., Dalton, Book 2, 12(14), p.58.

Venantius Fortunatus stresses this point<sup>51</sup> - and it was in this cathedral that Martin officiated as bishop. Furthermore, the episode of Martin appearing before the crowd with his jewel-encrusted arms must have had special importance to the people in Tours in the 6th century, as it does not belong to the original story as told by Sulpicius Severus,<sup>52</sup> but is a later interpolation by Fortunatus. The appeal of the miracle is undoubtedly related to the belief that certain gems and precious metals held healing and protective powers. In the 1st century A.D. these properties were already being discussed by Pliny,<sup>53</sup> and similar beliefs continued throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>54</sup> Certainly, protection against disease would have been uppermost in the minds of the people in 6th-century Gaul, a time when the area was beset with the plague.<sup>55</sup> The appearance of Martin before his people, his arms covered in jewels, would underscore his miraculous and protective powers - both essential aspects in the importance and popularity of

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<sup>51</sup>"Carmina 10, 6", op.cit., (note 41 supra), p.234.

<sup>52</sup>PL, 20, cols.201-03; Eng. trans., op.cit., (note 35 supra), pp.37-39.

<sup>53</sup>The Natural History, text and Eng. trans. H. Rackman and D.E. Eichholz (Harvard and London, 1968-71), Book 33: Ch.25; Book 37: Chs.37, 40, 52, 54.

<sup>54</sup>For example, in the 11th/12th centuries Marbod of Rennes spoke of the healing and protective powers of gems in his "Liber lapidum seu de gemmis", PL, 171, cols. 1739-80.

<sup>55</sup>Jean-Noel Biraben, Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranées, 1, (Paris, 1975), pp.25-48.

any pilgrimage site.

Thus the two primary scenes of the cycle emphasise Martin's role in the Christianisation of Gaul, the importance of Tours as the seat of his cult, and Martin's miraculous powers. The remaining scenes reinforce this message. But Fortunatus does not say where these images were placed. Were they on the side walls of the nave, in the apse, or perhaps even in Martin's cell adjacent to the church? The configuration of seven scenes - of which two are singled out for special attention - seems to negate the idea that they were located in the nave, or a side aisle. If such a narrative cycle filled one of the side walls of the church, one would suspect that more than seven scenes would be required. The importance given to the miracle of Martin clothing the beggar with his tunic suggests that the cycle may have been placed in the chapel where this miracle took place. But this location does not seem appropriate to the strong missionary message the cycle imparts. It seems more likely that the cycle was located in the apse of the cathedral,<sup>56</sup> perhaps as an adjunct to an image in the conch such as Christ and the Mission of the Apostles. Although this theme is more commonly found in 4th or 5th-century apse decorations,<sup>57</sup> it is

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<sup>56</sup>This is also proposed by Kessler, although he suggests a different format, op.cit., (note 41 supra) p.80.

<sup>57</sup>For example: S. Aquilino, Milan; S. Pudenziana, S. Agata dei Goti, S. Andrea in Catabarbara, and the Oratory on Monte della Giustizia, all in Rome. See C. Ihm, Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur

certainly appropriate to any decoration with an evangelical message. The cycle of Saint Martin may have been placed below this, with the scenes of Martin healing the leper, and Martin appearing before the congregation with his jewel encrusted arms, taking up a position similar to the images of Justinian, Theodora, and their attendants in the 6th-century mosaics in the Church of San Vitale, at Ravenna.

### Visual Evidence

On the Coelian Hill, at Rome, lies an Early Christian basilica dedicated to the two Roman saints John and Paul. The church was built by Senator Pammachius sometime close to the year 410,<sup>58</sup> on a site previously occupied by a group of apartment houses and shops. It is this area, preserved under the church, that is of primary interest here. Although it is not until the 8th century that non-Biblical hagiographical

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Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts, (Wiesbaden, 1960), plates 1/1, 3/1, 4/1, 5/1; and fig.1 p.16.

<sup>58</sup>That Pammachius was the donor of the upper church is indicated in a 5th century inscription once located in the entrance to the basilica "...QUIS TANTA CHRISTO VENERANDAS CONDIDIT AEDES/SI QUAERIS CULTOR PAMMACHIUS FIDEI". G.B. De Rossi, Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae, 2 (Rome, 1888) p.150 n.20. The dating of the construction of the basilica close to his death in 410 is inferred by the fact that no mention is made of it in his correspondence with Saints Jerome, Augustine and Paulinus of Nola, while less notable events were dealt with at great length. For a summary of Pammachius' correspondence see S. Ortolani, SS. Giovanni e Paolo, (Le Chiese di Roma Illustrate), 29 (Rome, 1925), pp.88-90.

cycles survive in any great number, the earliest extant example dates back to the second half of the 4th century, and is found on the walls of a small confessio, located in one of the houses under the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo.

In the maze of rooms and passages that make up the underground area of the church, the confessio can be found in the house that faces onto the Clivus Scauri, at the south-west corner of the basilica.<sup>59</sup> At the time the confessio was built, the house appears to have served as a titulus, or Christian community centre, and probably retained this function after the basilica was built above. As Krautheimer has suggested,<sup>60</sup> the house may have been the titulus Byzantis, known to us from the 499 Synod,<sup>61</sup> while the basilica above was originally known as the titulus Pammachius,<sup>62</sup> following the name of its founder.

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<sup>59</sup>That is, it is the house behind facade 8 in R. Krautheimer, CBCR, 1 (Vatican City, 1937), plate 36. For the most recent discussions of the archaeology of the area under the church see R. Krautheimer, ibid., pp.284-302; A.M. Colini, "Storia e topografia del Coelio," Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, ser.III, Memoria VII (1944), pp.164-95); A. Prandi, Il complesso monumentale della basilica celimontana dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo, (Vatican City, 1953), pp.75-185, fig.95.

<sup>60</sup>Krautheimer, CBCR, 1, p.301.

<sup>61</sup>"Acta Synodorum Habituarum Romae II," Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi, 12 (Berlin, 1961), p.413 nn.32, 33. Byzantis is not known to us from any other sources.

<sup>62</sup>As the bigger and more important of the two tituli, the titulus Pammachius had two priests sign the 499 Synod. Ibid., p.411 n.4;

The confessio occupied a pivotal position in the house, or titulus. Members of the congregation appear to have entered the building via the Clivus Scauri, and then passed through a series of rooms - one of which is still decorated with Christian frescoes<sup>63</sup> - before ascending the staircase leading up to the second floor (fig.i). As the confessio has been built onto the landing of the staircase at the mezzanine level, visitors would have had to pass by it in order to reach the upper floors of the house, and could not have failed to see its frescoed walls. The confessio itself consists of a deep shaft that extends from the ground floor up to the first floor, and in its original state probably rose to the second floor. At the mezzanine level, the two side walls of the confessio project out onto the landing, and the rear wall is pierced by a window which looks down onto the site where Saints John and Paul are believed to have been martyred and buried. These three walls (the rear and side walls) are covered with fresco decorations, of which two scenes represent events from the martyrdom of three unknown saints (figs.2 and 3).

The paintings of the confessio are divided into two horizontal registers. The first narrative scene is located in the upper register of the left side wall. On its right-hand side, the painting portrays five walking figures. Two

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<sup>63</sup>For a description of these paintings see Wilpert, RMM, 2/1 (1916), pp.633-34, and 4/1, plates 127/4 and 128; Colini, op.cit., pp.177-79.

beardless young men, dressed in long tunics and pallia, flank a bare-headed young woman, clothed in a long robe, a shawl draped around her shoulders. They are followed by two more young men - possibly guards - who wear conical hats. Only the outlines of a dog and a river can still be discerned on the fragmentary remains of the left-hand side of the painting. The second narrative image is located directly opposite, in the upper register on the right side wall. It shows the two men and their female companion kneeling on the ground, their hands tied behind their backs, and their eyes blindfolded. A male figure, dressed in a short tunic and a flying chlamys, stands behind them. Although the upper part of his body is no longer visible, this is probably the executioner preparing to behead his prisoners. Viewed together, the panels appear to represent three figures being accompanied to the place of their martyrdom on the left side wall, with their death by beheading on the right.

On the basis of their style, the execution of the paintings has been placed in the third quarter of the 4th century,<sup>64</sup> a date which seems too precise for one based on stylistic criteria alone. We know, however, that the paintings must have been produced before the year of Pammachius' death in 410 A.D., as when Pammachius had the church constructed above, the top of the confessio was cut

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<sup>64</sup>See, for example, the analysis by J. de Wit, Spätromische Bildnismalerei, (Berlin, 1938), p.58.

down to make room for the pavement.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, although the three martyrs cannot be positively identified, it will be shown that two of them are probably the Roman saints John and Paul, who, according to their Acts, suffered martyrdom under Emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363 A.D.).<sup>66</sup> Thus, it seems more prudent to suggest a slightly broader range of dates: sometime after the years of Julian's reign (361-363 A.D.), and before the building of Pammachius' basilica in 410 A.D.

The major problem that these paintings present concerns the identification of the figures, since they lack identifying inscriptions, and no documentary evidence referring to the paintings of the confessio has survived. In addressing this problem, many scholars have looked to the Acts of the martyrs, in order to discover whose legend most closely fits the decoration of the confessio. But, as will be demonstrated, hagiographical texts tend to confuse the issue rather than clarify it, and are of little value in determining who is represented on the confessio walls.<sup>67</sup>

The confessio marks a burial site in which three graves

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<sup>65</sup>Krautheimer, CBCR, 1 (Vatican City, 1937), p.285.

<sup>66</sup>For the oldest version of their Acts see H. Delehaye, Etude sur le légendier romain, (Brussels, 1936), pp.125-126.

<sup>67</sup>This has already been noted by Delehaye in a discussion following a paper presented by M. Trinchi Cecchelli, "Osservazioni sul complesso della 'domus' celimontana dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo," Atti del IX Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana, Roma 21-27 settembre 1975, 1 (1978), pp.551-62, see p.568.

were uncovered,<sup>68</sup> and since early martyrdom cycles are most commonly found in association with the tombs of martyrs, a more fruitful avenue of investigation is to try and establish the identity of the bodies buried in the space below. At first glance, however, it seems unlikely that this burial dates back to as early as the 4th century, as the ancient Law of the Twelve Tables (c.450 B.C.) strictly forbade burial within the city.<sup>69</sup> This practice does not seem to have been relaxed until the period of the Gothic wars in the 6th century, when burial within the walls became standard.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, there is evidence that urban burials occasionally took place prior to the 6th century. In the 5th century, Pope Simplicius (468-483) built the church of Saint Bibiana, over the site of her burial, within the city of Rome.<sup>71</sup> Although Delehayé has tried to explain this apparent contradiction to accepted practice by suggesting that in this

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<sup>68</sup>The date of the graves has not been firmly established. For the excavation reports see F. Grossi Grondi, "Scoperta della tomba dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo," Civiltà Cattolica, 65 (1914), III, pp.579-597; V.E. Gasdia, La casa pagano-cristiana del celio (titulus byzantis sive pammachi), (Rome, 1937), pp.77-85.

<sup>69</sup>Cicero, De Legibus, II, 23; Traité des lois, text and trans. G. de Plinval, (Paris, 1959), pp.73-74.

<sup>70</sup>See J. Osborne, "Death and Burial in 6th century Rome," Classical Views, 28, N.S.3, #2 (1984), pp.291-299.

<sup>71</sup>"Dedicavit...basilicam intra urbe Roma iuxta palatium Licinianum beatae martyris Bibianae, ubi corpus eius requiescit", LP, I, p.249.

context the word corpus refers to Bibiana's relics,<sup>72</sup> it seems more likely that there were some exceptions to the laws regarding burial. Indeed, the need to restate the burial laws in the Theodosian Code of 386<sup>73</sup> may well have been prompted by an increasing number of burials inside the city walls. Thus, although no firm date can be attached to the graves under SS. Giovanni e Paolo, in all likelihood they belong to the three personages whose martyrdom is represented on the walls of the confessio above.

A long tradition associates this site with the Roman martyrs John and Paul. The upper church has been dedicated to them since at least the time of Pope Symmachus (498-510),<sup>74</sup> and when Pope Leo I (440-461) preached a sermon in their honour he stated that "the victorious bodies of Saints John and Paul were buried in the heart of the city itself".<sup>75</sup> Later, in a 7th-century pilgrims' itinerary, the basilica was

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<sup>72</sup>H. Delehaye, Etude sur le légendier romain, (Brussels, 1936), p.135.

<sup>73</sup>The Theodosian Code, tr. Clyde Pharr (Princeton, 1953), 9.17.6.

<sup>74</sup>"Ad beatum Iohannem et Paulum fecit grados post absidem", LP, I, 262. At this time the church appears to have been known as both the titulus Pammachius, and the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo. The presbyter Gordianus who signed the 499 Synod for the titulus Pammachius (op.cit., note 62 supra) is probably the same man as the Gordianus, father of Pope Agapitus, who is recorded as being "clericus a sanctos Iohannem et Paulum", LP, I, p.287.

<sup>75</sup>"In ipsius visceribus civitatis sancti Iohannis et Pauli victricia membra reconderes...", PL, 55, col.48.

identified as their burial site.<sup>76</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that John and Paul are two of the martyrs represented in the paintings. But problems arise when we try to identify their female companion, as the surviving Acts indicate that John and Paul were beheaded alone.

According to the oldest and simplest version of their Acts, which dates to the beginning of the 6th century,<sup>77</sup> John and Paul were eunuchs of Costanza, the daughter of Emperor Constantine. They were brought before Emperor Julian the Apostate, but as they refused to abandon their faith, they were secretly beheaded and buried in their house in Rome. At a later period, the story of Crispus, Crispinianus, and Benedetta was added to their legend.<sup>78</sup> These three saints were discovered praying at John and Paul's burial site. They also were arrested and interrogated by Emperor Julian, and when they refused to sacrifice to the idols, were beheaded. Although their bodies were originally thrown to the dogs, they were later retrieved and buried in the house of John and Paul.

Using the information provided by the Acts, Padre Germano

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<sup>76</sup>"Primum in urbe Roma beatorum martirum corpora Iohannis et Pauli tantum quiescunt, in basilica magne et valde formosa". Notitia Ecclesiarum Urbis Romae, in R. Valentini, G. Zuchetti, Codice Topografico della Città di Roma, 2 (Rome, 1942), p.72. For a discussion of the reliability of this text see Sandro Carletti, "Santuari di martiri romani negli 'itinerari' del VII secolo," Studi Romani, 18 (1970), pp.51-67.

<sup>77</sup>H. Delehaye, Etude sur le légendier romain, (Brussels, 1936), pp.125-26.

<sup>78</sup>Acta SS., June 26 (Paris and Rome, 1867), pp.140-41.

di S. Stanislao concluded, as had De Rossi before him, that the painting on the left depicted the arrest of John and Paul, accompanied by their mistress Costanza, while the scene on the right portrayed the beheading of Crispus, Crispinianus, and Benedetta.<sup>79</sup> Given that the legend says that all five saints were buried in the church, this originally appears as a reasonable hypothesis. Unfortunately, it is not supported by the archaeological evidence, as only three graves were uncovered during the excavations.

Another theory, proposed by De Sanctis, identifies both groups of saints as Crispus, Crispinianus, and Benedetta.<sup>80</sup> The problem with this identification is that these saints appear to be wholly fictitious, and since they play only a secondary role in the legend of John and Paul, it is strange that their burial site would have been commemorated with a decorated confessio, while that of John and Paul was ignored.

By using a completely different hagiographical text, Pio Franchi dei Cavalieri has suggested that the two martyrdom scenes depict three eastern saints named Ciprian, Giustina, and Teoctistus.<sup>81</sup> They were beheaded on the banks of the

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<sup>79</sup>G.B. De Rossi, "Conferenze di archeologia cristiana," Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana, ser.IV (1888-89), pp.68-70. P. Germano di S. Stanislao, La casa celimontana dei SS. martiri Giovanni e Paolo, (Rome, 1894), pp.166 and 325.

<sup>80</sup>G. De Sanctis, I santi Giovanni e Paolo, (Rome, 1962). pp.97-100.

<sup>81</sup>P. Franchi dei Cavalieri, "Dove furono sepolti i SS. Cipriano, Giustina, Teoctisto?" Note Agiografiche Studi e Testi, 65 (Vatican City, 1935), pp.335-354.

River Gallo, at Nicomedia, during the reign of Diocletian. Their bodies had been initially left to the dogs, but were recovered six days later by some sailors who brought them to Rome. In Rome they were given to a woman named Rufina, of the Claudio family, who placed them in a shrine at the top of the Coelian Hill.<sup>82</sup> Admittedly this text, which was written down no later than the 5th century, accords closely with the paintings of the confessio. But whether the shrine dedicated to SS. Ciprian, Giustina, and Teoctistus was the spot identified by the confessio is not certain. No other evidence connects them with the site, despite the fact that the confessio denotes a spot so highly venerated that its location was marked by an altar in the newly built basilica above.<sup>83</sup>

The problems encountered in using these hagiographical texts are multiple. As historical documents they are notoriously unreliable, and, as the Acts of Saint Euphemia demonstrate, paintings that pre-date the written records often bear little relation to their literary counterparts. Furthermore, the individuals and events portrayed in the confessio under SS. Giovanni e Paolo may well have been based

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p.338.

<sup>83</sup>Today the location of the confessio is marked by a marble slab near the first right-hand side pier of the upper church. It replaces an earlier altar which survived until 1573. During his excavations Padre Germano da S. Stanislao discovered remnants of another altar, possibly of 5th/6th-century date. There is no reason, therefore, to disbelieve the existence of an altar on this spot from the time the confessio was built.

on contemporary verbal accounts which, given the variability in the early recountings, probably had little in common with the events that were finally recorded in the texts.

The evidence associating John and Paul with the site is more reliable than the hagiographic texts, but if we accept that they are two of the martyrs portrayed in the paintings, then we must also accept that by the time their legend was written down, all remembrance of the name and the role of their female companion had been forgotten. Without further evidence, there will always be an element of doubt as to who was buried under the church, and portrayed in the paintings. Nevertheless, this should not detract from the importance of the paintings, as they represent our first visible proof of a martyrdom cycle. Furthermore, since much of their decorative programme and architectural context has survived intact, the paintings can give us some insight as to how martyrdom cycles functioned in the Early Christian period.

The two scenes of the arrest and death of the three martyrs frame two acclaiming figures who flank the window on the back wall.<sup>84</sup> They are probably the apostles Peter and Paul, who welcome the martyrs into heaven, and are the forerunners of the tradition of acclaiming apostles, seen in such monuments as the 5th-century Mausoleum of Galla Placidia at Ravenna, and in the 9th-century San Zeno Chapel in S. Prassede, at Rome. The register below depicts a series of

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<sup>84</sup>Wilpert, *RMM*, 4/1, plate 131/2.

votive images. On the rear wall, directly beneath the window, a male orant, dressed in a long, ochre-coloured tunic stands between drawn curtains, and two figures - a male and a female - prostrate themselves at his feet.<sup>85</sup> Although the orant figure has been identified as Christ,<sup>86</sup> it is unlikely. I know of no other images that portray Christ as an orant, and as Christian decoration is normally hierarchial, it would be unusual to find Christ portrayed below a register of martyrs. Probably the orant is one of the martyrs, while the male and female figures who prostrate themselves at his feet could be the donor of the paintings and his wife. If this titulus is in fact the titulus Byzantis, then possibly Byzantis and his wife are shown here, although this cannot be proven. On the left side wall, a male figure - probably the donor - offers a chalice to another - possibly a martyr.<sup>87</sup> This is balanced on the right side wall, where the female seems to be presenting the wife of the donor to the orant in the centre.<sup>88</sup>

The small size of the confessio suggests that it was designed as a place for private devotion. The scenes of martyrdom found on its walls, accompanied by a series of votive images, indicate that the confessio served not only as

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>G. De Sanctis, I santi Giovanni e Paolo, (Rome, 1962), p.97.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., plate 131/1.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., plate 131/3.

a memorial to the martyrs' suffering, but also as a visual reminder of the martyrs' role as intercessors. It was possibly through the decoration of the confessio that the donor and his wife sought to promote their acceptance into heaven, the path to which would be facilitated through the intercession of the martyrs, aided by the apostles Peter and Paul. Furthermore, if the donors of the paintings were in fact Byzantios and his wife, the decoration of the confessio demonstrates that the interest of a lay patron, in the lives of non-Biblical saints, dates back to the early days of Christian art.

#### Conclusion

Despite the fragmentary, and seemingly disconnected evidence for early non-Biblical hagiographical cycles, some intertwining threads can still be established. The early cycles - both Biblical and non-Biblical - were most commonly found in monumental art, in association with the tombs of saints. Although there is insufficient information to establish the existence of a standard formula, the similarity between the painting of Euphemia's martyrdom at Chalcedon - which consisted of scenes of trial, torture, imprisonment, and death - and the 8th-century cycle of Saints Quiricus and Julitta in the church of S. Maria Antiqua, at Rome, has long

been noted.<sup>89</sup>

One of the striking features of the early cycles is that there is often little relationship between these images, and surviving written texts. Indeed, since the cycles of Saints Hippolytus, Theodore, Euphemia, and the unknown martyrs in the confessio under the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, pre-date all the known literary sources, it seems highly likely that the paintings were based on contemporary verbal accounts, and that these accounts played a major role in the formation of early pictorial narratives. Although any discussion of the importance of an oral tradition rests on shaky ground, as it can only be conjectured, not proven, that a wealth of oral tradition existed cannot be doubted, and should always be given due consideration in any examination of cycles that cannot be explained by surviving texts.

In the early days of the church, the eradication of paganism was a primary concern, and cycles such as the life of Saint Martin, sought to "sell" Christianity to the viewer, and were usually placed in a prominent location in the church, for example the apse, or the nave. Their imagery focused on the saints' powers over the forces of nature, over the forces of paganism, and over disease - an important consideration in the Middle Ages. They also illustrated to the viewer a way of life, epitomised in the lives of the saints, that was

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<sup>89</sup>A. Grabar, Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques de l'art chrétienne antique, 2 (Paris, 1946), p.312.

available to everyone. Like Biblical cycles, non-Biblical cycles were visual memorials to those who had dedicated or sacrificed their lives to God. Cycles of the Early Christian martyrs predominate, simply because they were the earliest figures to be venerated as saints. Through images of their trials and tortures, which underlined the martyrs' unwavering belief in God's power, these cycles promoted the Christian faith. They also served as reminders of the martyrs' intercessory powers, as it was by invoking the martyrs that Christians sought help with the problems of daily life, and through their intercession that they hoped to achieve salvation and eternal life after death.

PART TWO: NON-BIBLICAL HAGIOGRAPHICAL CYCLES:  
ROME, 8TH CENTURY<sup>1</sup>

CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION

In the 7th and 8th centuries, the migration of Greek-speaking monks and clergy into the city of Rome sparked an increased interest in the cults of eastern saints and their relics, and this was accompanied by an efflorescence in the depiction of saints' lives on the walls of churches. Prior to this period, the city's only surviving example of a hagiographical cycle was produced in the late-4th/early-5th century, namely the two martyrdom scenes located on the walls of the confessio under the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo (figs. 2 and 3). A period of 300 years ensued, in which there was no known interest in the depiction of saints' lives. This was to change, for the remains of an extremely fragmentary cycle survive, datable somewhere between the mid-7th and mid-8th century, and four other cycles, in various states of preservation, survive from the 8th century.

The factors that produced this explosion of interest in the portrayal of saints' lives will be discussed in the next chapter; the intent here is to lay the groundwork for the analysis by describing the surviving cycles, introducing the

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<sup>1</sup>The cycle of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, in the church of S. Maria Antiqua, have been included in this section. Although it is possible they were executed in the 7th century (a mid-7th - mid-8th century date is proposed), the paintings' architectural and cultural context share many characteristics with the 8th-century cycles.

monuments in which they are found, and discussing the evidence for their dating. The following cycles are examined: Saints Quiricus and Julitta, and the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste from the church of S. Maria Antiqua; Saint Erasmus from the church of S. Maria in Via Lata; Saints Paul and Anastasius from the church of S. Adriano; and Saint Callixtus from the catacomb of Calepodius.

#### CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA ANTIQUA

For many centuries the existence of the church of S. Maria Antiqua, located at the foot of the Palatine Hill in the Roman Forum, was known only through the literary sources, and the actual site of the church was shrouded in controversy.<sup>2</sup> In 1702, excavations in the Forum revealed the apse of a Medieval church,<sup>3</sup> but the site was not conclusively identified as S. Maria Antiqua until 1900, when excavations by Giacomo Boni uncovered the following inscription in the Theodotus Chapel: [T]HEODOTVS PRIMICERIO DEFENSORVM ET D[ISP]ENSATORE SANCTAE DEI GENETR[IC]IS SENPERQVE BIRGO MARIA QVI APPELLATVR

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<sup>2</sup>The earliest mention of the building is found in a 7th century pilgrims' itinerary of Rome's churches. See De locis sanctis martyrum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae, Istae vero ecclesiae intus Romae habentur, in R. Valentini, G. Zuchetti, Codice Topografico della Città di Roma, 2 (Rome, 1942), p.121. For a list of the literary references to the church of S. Maria Antiqua see W. de Grüneisen, C. Hülsen, G. Giorgis, V. Federici, J. David, Sainte Marie Antique, (Rome, 1911), pp.13-30, (hereafter SMA).

<sup>3</sup>SMA, p.34.

ANTIQUA (Theodotus, primicerius of the defensors and dispensator of [the church of] the holy mother of God, ever Virgin Mary, which is called Antiqua).<sup>4</sup> Boni's excavations revealed a church with a wealth of wall paintings which have been important to art historians ever since.<sup>5</sup> The church contains the largest surviving body of Early Medieval wall paintings in Rome, several of which can be firmly dated. In the presbytery, the Church Fathers hold texts which were cited at the Lateran Council of 649, thus a date soon after 649 is proposed.<sup>6</sup> The dates of other paintings are established by the fact that they include papal portraits, in which the popes are depicted with square nimbi, a motif that indicates that the head is a portrait, and consequently that the bearer was

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<sup>4</sup>One word of the inscription is missing from the beginning. It could be EGO, as suggested by Wilpert, "Appunti sulle pitture della chiesa di S. Maria Antiqua," Byzantinische Zeitschrift, 14 (1905), pp.578-83, esp. pp.579-80. Rushforth has suggested that it may be an adjective such as DEVOTISSIMVS: "The church of Santa Maria Antiqua," Papers of the British School at Rome, 1 (1902), pp.3-19, esp. p.43, (hereafter Rushforth). The use of the ablative for the nominative in PRIMICERIO and DISPENSATORE appears to be an error of case on the part of the artist. One error which is common is the use of B for V in BIRGO. See P. Testini, Archeologia Cristiana Nozioni Generali dalle Origini alla Fine del Secolo VI, (Rome, 1958), pp.339-40.

<sup>5</sup>Unfortunately Boni's excavations in S. Maria Antiqua were never published. The early findings in the church are, however, discussed by Rushforth, op.cit.; Grüneisen, SMA; and E. Tea, Santa Maria Antiqua, (Milan, 1937-45).

<sup>6</sup>For a discussion of these texts, and their relevance to the dating of the paintings see Rushforth, pp.68-72.

either alive at the time, or recently deceased.<sup>7</sup> These portraits include Pope John VII (705-707) and Pope Paul I (757-767) in the presbytery, Pope Hadrian I (772-795) in the atrium, and Pope Zacharias (741-752) in the Theodotus Chapel. The paintings of S. Maria Antiqua serve, therefore, as points of reference in any discussion of the development of Early Medieval art in Rome.

While much has been written about the church of S. Maria Antiqua,<sup>8</sup> relatively little attention has been paid to the cycle of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in the left aisle of the church, and the cycle of Saints Quiricus and Julitta on the side walls of the Theodotus Chapel. As the cycle of the Forty Martyrs survives only in an extremely fragmentary state, this is not surprising. But the cycle of Saints Quiricus and Julitta is worthy of more attention. It is the earliest "expanded" hagiographical cycle to survive, it can be securely

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<sup>7</sup>For the use of the square nimbus see J. Osborne, "The Portrait of Pope Leo IV in San Clemente, Rome: A Re-examination of the so-called 'square' nimbus in Medieval Art," Papers of the British School at Rome, 47 (1979), pp.58-65.

<sup>8</sup>The publications, up to 1968, are summarised by Nordhagen, "The frescoes of John VII," Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, 3 (1968), pp.3-12. To these publications may be added: P.J. Nordhagen, "S. Maria Antiqua: the frescoes of the 7th century," Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, 8 (1978), pp.89-142; B. Vileisis, "The Genesis Cycle of Santa Maria Antiqua," (Ph.D. thesis), Princeton University, 1979; H. Belting, "Eine Privatkappelle im frühmittelalterlichen Rom," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 41 (1987), pp.55-69; and J. Osborne, "The Atrium of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome: A History in Art," Papers of the British School at Rome, 55 (1987), pp.186-223.

dated,<sup>9</sup> and since both its architectural and decorative contexts have survived intact,<sup>10</sup> the paintings serve as the cornerstone of this study.

### Theodotus Chapel

The cycle of Saints Quiricus and Julitta lines the side walls of the Theodotus Chapel located immediately to the left of the sanctuary (fig.ii). The main entrance into the chapel is via the left aisle, while a second entrance in the west wall connects the chapel with the sanctuary.<sup>11</sup> The chapel itself is divided into two halves by a 1.10m. high marble screen, part of which still survives intact on the west wall. In the outer portion of the chapel, Rushforth reports that a

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<sup>9</sup>Although the dating of the paintings in the Theodotus Chapel has been vigorously disputed in the past, a dating within the pontificate of Zacharias (741-752) is now accepted. For a brief summary of the debate, including bibliography, see: P.J. Nordhagen, "The frescoes of John VII," op.cit., pp.3-12; G.B. Ladner, Die Papstbildnisse des Altertums und des Mittelalters, 3 (Vatican City, 1984), esp. pp.23-25.

<sup>10</sup>The preservation of the chapel and its paintings is due to the fact that the barrel vault and four walls remained intact following the partial collapse of the Palatine Hill in the earthquake of 847. For the documentation of the earthquake see LP, 2, p.108. Following the earthquake it appears that this area of the church was abandoned, as Boni's excavations revealed that the church had been stripped of all its valuables and liturgical objects.

<sup>11</sup>For a discussion of the architectural phases of the chapel see R. Krautheimer, CBCR, 2 (1959), pp.249-268.

grave was discovered.<sup>12</sup> The square opening into it was just in front of the side door leading into the sanctuary, and the grave is described as being of the same design as the Early Medieval graves found in the atrium, and was able to hold several bodies. Today the only evidence for this grave consists of cracks in the flooring in this area of the chapel.

Entrance into the inner portion of the chapel was via a central gateway whose marble threshold is still in situ. Above, and slightly to the rear of the marble screen, at a height of 2.10m., holes in both the east and west walls indicate that a beam once ran above the marble screen. As David has suggested,<sup>13</sup> this beam probably supported curtains which, when closed, would have separated the faithful visually as well as physically from the reliquary altar in the inner portion of the chapel.<sup>14</sup> Curtains would also have prevented the faithful from seeing the story of Saints Quiricus and Julitta in its entirety, as the beam was inserted into the east wall between Scenes 3 and 4. In fact, the screen separated the images of the arrest of Julitta and Quiricus

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<sup>12</sup>Rushforth, pp.104-106. Tea makes no mention of this grave in her discussion of the Theodotus Chapel, op.cit., (note 4 supra), pp.248-249.

<sup>13</sup>SMA, p.470.

<sup>14</sup>For a summary and bibliography of the recent work on altar screens see A. Epstein, "The Middle Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier: Templon or Iconostasis," Journal of the British Archaeological Association, 134 (1981), pp.1-28; also L. Nees, "The Iconographic Program of the Decorated Chancel Barrier in the Pre-Iconoclastic Period," Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, 46 (1983), pp.15-26.

from the more gruesome events of their tortures and final martyrdom.

From the marble screen there is a small step up into the inner chapel. Here the base of an altar still survives. Grooves around the edges indicate the position of side plates, varying from 5-8cm. in width. These grooves show that there was an opening, probably for a door or a window, in the side facing the south wall of the chapel. In the centre of the marble base there is a small rectangular recess. Its size and shape indicates that it either held a support post, or was designed for the storage of relics.<sup>15</sup> As the widths of the grooves indicate that the side walls were sufficiently thick to obviate the need for any central support, it appears that the recess was designed for relics. In this respect the altar is similar to the 6th-century reliquary altars in the churches of SS. Cosma e Damiano and SS. Apostoli in Rome, and in the chapel off the left aisle in the church of S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna.<sup>16</sup>

In the south corner of the west wall, and below Scene 7 of the Quiricus and Julitta cycle, a cupboard has been created out of a passageway which dated back to the Roman period, but which was blocked up at a later stage of the building's use.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>This was first suggested by Rushforth, p.39. His view is supported by J. Braun, Der Christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlen Entwicklung, 1 (Munich, 1924), pp.198-199.

<sup>16</sup>Braun, op.cit., pp.194-199, plates 102, 103.

<sup>17</sup>Krautheimer, CBCR, 2, p.253.

Grooves in the sides indicate that the cupboard once held two shelves. It is here that the vessels, and possibly the books used during the communion would have been stored.<sup>18</sup>

A hollow, conical, mortar structure stands in the south-east corner of the chapel. It was built after the walls were decorated with the existing paintings, as the painted drapery of the dado is visible in the interior. The function of this structure is not clear, but, as David has suggested, it may have been used as a basin for handwashing during the celebration of mass.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the Crucifixion, which was removed from the niche on the south wall for restoration and then replaced, the paintings of the Theodotus Chapel continue in a single register around the four walls of the chapel to a height of 3.0m. The paintings were executed on a single layer of plaster, which varies from 0.7-2.0cm. in thickness. The plaster itself lies directly on the Roman brickwork,<sup>20</sup> and appears to have been laid all at one time as there are no obvious signs of joins or overlaps. The only evidence for preparatory sketches consists of several black lines corresponding to the frames between Scenes 1 and 2 of the

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<sup>18</sup>This is also suggested by David, SMA, p.458.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>The brickwork in S. Maria Antiqua has been dated by brickstamps to the reign of Domitian (81-96 A.D.). See P. Romanelli, P.J. Nordhagen, S. Maria Antiqua, (Rome, 1964), p.19. Krautheimer is erroneous in stating that the brickstamps date to the Antonine period (CBCR, 2, p.249).

Quiricus and Julitta cycle. Some incised frame-lines are visible in Scene 2. The incisions do not, however, correspond to any part of the existing decoration. After the plaster was laid, it was painted with a yellow-ochre ground colour. Each scene was marked out by a black frame 4-5cm. wide. The composition was roughed in, and the details which followed were painted with a thick impasto. The final stage of the decoration consisted of the addition of white highlights, the inscriptions, and the painting of fine white lines around the black frames.

#### Crucifixion (fig.4)

A large image of the Crucifixion fills the niche on the south wall, and was strategically placed so that it could be seen over the altar screen when the curtains were closed. It is one of the best preserved paintings in the church. In 1954 it was removed from the wall, restored, and returned to its original location.<sup>21</sup> The iconography of the painting has its roots in eastern depictions of the Crucifixion, as it shows Christ dressed in a blue colobium, hanging from the cross with his eyes open.<sup>22</sup> Above his head lies the inscription: IC O

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<sup>21</sup>L. Borrelli Vlad, "Il restauro di una Crocifissione di S. Maria Antiqua," Bollettino dell'Istituto Centrale del Restauro, 19-20 (1955), pp.123-129.

<sup>22</sup>It compares, for example, with the Crucifixion image in the 6th-century Rabbula Gospels. The Rabbula Gospels facs. ms. Plut. 1, 56 Medicean-Laurentian Library, ed. C.

NAZ (Ω) PAIOC O BACIAEYC TΩN I OYΔAIΩN (Jesus of Nazarus King of the Jews). It has, unfortunately, faded to the point of illegibility.<sup>23</sup> The figures of Mary and Saint John the Evangelist stand on either side of Christ. Mary gazes up towards her son and raises her veiled arms to her face in an expression of grief. John the Evangelist looks out towards the viewer, and holds a jewelled codex. Longinus, who is dressed in a short green tunic, stands next to Mary, and pierces Christ's side with a lance. On the right side, a soldier, dressed in a short brown tunic, raises a vinegar-soaked sponge to Christ's mouth; a pail lies at his feet. All the figures, except the soldier, are identified by Latin inscriptions. The background is portrayed in shades of brown, ochre, red, and green, with the sky depicted in two shades of blue. Images of the sun and moon appear on either side of Christ's head.

#### Donor Painting (fig.5)

Much of our information about the decoration of the chapel comes from the donor painting, which was located under the Crucifixion on the south wall. Following the Second World War, it was detached from the wall for restoration, and is now

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Cecchelli, G. Furlani, M. Salmi, (Olten and Lausanne, 1959), fol.13r.

<sup>23</sup>It can, however, be read clearly in Wilpert's reproduction, RMM, 4/1, plate 180.

stored in the architect's office of the Soprintendenza del Foro Romano e del Palatino.<sup>24</sup> In the centre, the composition portrays the enthroned Virgin and Child, flanked by the standing figures of Peter and Paul, the patron saints of Rome. The plaster is missing from the upper section in the centre of the painting, consequently the head and shoulders of the Virgin and Child, and of Saint Peter have not survived, while Saint Paul's upper body survives in a fragmentary state only. The Virgin is portrayed in a jewelled robe, and is seated on a jewelled throne. It is likely that she was depicted as Maria Regina, in the same manner as the Virgin on the palimpsest wall flanking the main apse of S. Maria Antiqua,<sup>25</sup> or in the church of S. Clemente.<sup>26</sup>

The standing figures of Peter and Paul are, in turn, flanked by Saints Quiricus and Julitta, the titular saints of the chapel. The young Quiricus stands on the right, with his arms raised in prayer. He acts as an intercessor between the donor Theodotus on his left, and Peter on his right. As Grüneisen has noted, the image of Quiricus can be likened to an 8th-century text of his passion that states "Saint Quiricus stands praying, on behalf of all mankind, to the right-hand

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<sup>24</sup>For the report on the restoration of this painting see M. Cagianò de Azevedo, "Il restauro di una delle pitture di S. Maria Antiqua," Bollettino d'Arte, 34 (1949), pp.60-62.

<sup>25</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 133.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 4/2, plate 213/3

side of God [our] all-powerful Lord."<sup>27</sup> In the Theodotus Chapel, however, Quiricus is specifically shown praying on behalf of the donor Theodotus and his family.

Theodotus stands next to Quiricus, at the extreme right of the painting. His head is framed by a square halo, and he can be identified as the donor by the fact that he holds a model of the chapel. The inscription that identifies the church as S. Maria Antiqua surrounds his head: [T]HEODOTVS PRIMICERIO DEFENSORVM ET D[ISP]ENSATORE SANCTAE DEI GENETR[IC]IS SENPERQVE VIRGO MARIA QVI APPELLATVR ANTIQVA (Theodotus, primicerius of the defensors and dispensator of [the church of] the holy mother of God, ever Virgin Mary, which is called Antiqua). As well as confirming the identification of the church, this inscription tells us that in the middle of the 8th century S. Maria Antiqua functioned as a diaconia. That is, it was one of those charitable institutions that were set up to distribute food and money to the poor. This is indicated by the fact that Theodotus is identified in the inscription as dispensator, which was an administrative office in a diaconia, and a position normally held by a layman of high social standing.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>SMA, p.133; Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A436, fol.133r.

<sup>28</sup>For the duties of dispensator see J. Lestocquoy, "Administration de Rome et diaconies du VIIe au IXe siècle," Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana, 7 (1930), pp.261-298, esp. pp.276-284; O. Bertolini, "Per la storia delle diaconie romane nell'alto medioevo sino alla fine del secolo VIII," Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria, 70 (1947), pp.1-145, esp. pp.24-36; F. Niederer, "The Roman Diaconiae," (Ph.D.

On the left side of the painting, Julitta stands between Paul and Pope Zacharias. She holds a cross and a crown in her hands, the traditional symbols of a martyr-saint. Pope Zacharia wears a square halo, and holds a jewelled codex. As he is not the donor, the reason for his inclusion is not clear, but possibly his portrait was inserted to record the fact that the chapel's decoration was undertaken during his pontificate.

One unusual feature of the donor panel is that both the heads of Zacharias and Theodotus were executed on separate pieces of plaster, before being attached to the wall. The layer of plaster containing Theodotus' portrait no longer survives, only the rough underdrawing remains. In the fierce debate over the dating of the paintings in the chapel, the fact that the heads of Theodotus and Zacharias were painted on separate layers of plaster, was used to argue in favour of two decorative campaigns.<sup>29</sup> The controversy was, however, finally laid to rest when Cagiano de Azevedo published his report on the restoration of the donor panel in 1949.<sup>30</sup> He noted that after removing the head of Zacharias, he found another painted head, analogous to that of Theodotus, beneath. In other words, the underpainting of the head of Theodotus is simply a

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thesis, New York University, 1950), pp.168-171.

<sup>29</sup>The debate is summarised by Nordhagen "The frescoes of John VII," *op.cit.*, (note 7 supra), pp.3-12.

<sup>30</sup>M. Cagiano de Azevedo, "Il restauro di una della pitture di S. Maria Antiqua," *Bollettino d'Arte*, 34 (1949), pp.60-62.

preparatory sketch, and a similar sketch exists under the head of Zacharias. Thus, as Wilpert originally proposed, the paintings of the Theodotus Chapel were executed at the same time, with the portraits of Zacharias and Theodotus being painted on separate pieces of plaster before being nailed to the wall.<sup>31</sup> As a similar technique can be seen on a donor figure in the catacomb of St. Callixtus,<sup>32</sup> it appears that this was simply one of the portrait painting practices of the time.<sup>33</sup>

#### Theodotus and his Family (fig.6)

The image of Theodotus and his family is located on the west side wall, between the entrance into the sanctuary, and the final scene of the Quiricus and Julitta cycle. The loss of plaster from the upper area of the painting has meant the loss of the identifying inscriptions, but it is generally accepted as representing Theodotus and his family, in the company of a standing image of the Virgin and Child. In the lower left-hand corner of the painting, where the plaster has

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<sup>31</sup>J. Wilpert, "Appunti sulla pittura della chiesa di S. Maria Antiqua," Byzantinische Zeitschrift, 14 (1905), pp.578-83; idem, "Zum quadratischen Nimbus. Die Porträts des Papes Zacharias und des Primicerius Theodotus in S. Maria Antiqua," Römische Quartalschrift, 21 (1907), pp.93-104.

<sup>32</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 182/1.

<sup>33</sup>This suggestion was first made by Wilpert, ibid., 1, pp.108-109; 2/1, p.686.

fallen away, remains of an earlier border can be seen, indicating that after the work had been started the border was lowered. Evidence of modern restoration can be seen in the black line of the Virgin's robe that mistakenly extends through the son's hand. This error does not appear in any of the early photos.<sup>34</sup>

The centre of the composition is filled with a standing image of the Virgin holding the infant Christ in her arms (whose feet only are visible). Theodotus stands on the left, and presents two votive candles to the Virgin. His wife stands on the right, and holds a long chain from which a large jewel is suspended. Theodotus and his wife are accompanied by their two children, both of whom are portrayed with square nimbi. Although all the figures in the painting were executed at the same time, the inclusion of the children has the look of a last minute addition. They stand on a different ground plane to that of their parents, and they appear to have been squeezed into the composition. The son is positioned between his father and the Virgin, and, in what is a rare gesture for a lay person, he extends his hands towards the Virgin as if presenting his father to her.<sup>35</sup> On the right side, the young daughter stands between her mother and the Virgin. She stares out towards the viewer, and holds her left palm outwards, in

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<sup>34</sup>For example, Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 183.

<sup>35</sup>The act of presenting another person to the Virgin is normally reserved for saints.

the gesture of prayer.<sup>36</sup> In her right hand, between her thumb and forefinger, she holds a red flower - possibly a rose - with a chain attached. As roses are often used to symbolise Paradise, and the colour red serves as a reminder of the blood of the martyrs,<sup>37</sup> the portrayal of the young girl carrying a red rose seems to be sending a message that the road to Paradise was prepared for her through the sacrifice of the martyrs.

Theodotus before Quiricus and Julitta (fig.7)

The painting of Theodotus kneeling before Quiricus and Julitta is located on the north wall, immediately to the right of the main entrance as one enters the chapel. As is the case with several of the paintings in the chapel, the upper portion of painted plaster has fallen away. The painting shows Theodotus kneeling before Quiricus (who holds the cross and crown of martyrdom) and Julitta (who appears to have her arms

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<sup>36</sup>Her praying gesture is similar to that of Saints Quiricus and Julitta in prison in Scene 6 (fig.13) of the cycle. For the origins of this gesture, and other similar examples, see C. McClendon, "An Early Funerary Portrait from the Medieval Abbey at Farfa," Gesta, 22/1 (1983), pp.13-26, esp. pp.15-16.

<sup>37</sup>From the Early Christian period roses have often been associated with Paradise. For example, Ambrose relates how the roses in Paradise originally grew without thorns, and only took on thorns after the Fall of Man to remind man of his sins. The red rose has traditionally been a symbol of martyrdom. See G. Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art, (Oxford, 1954), pp.47-48.

raised in prayer). Theodotus presents the two saints with two votive candles, and requests their intercession on behalf of himself and his family. One feature which may seem unusual, however, is the fact that Theodotus stares out towards the viewer, not towards Quiricus and Julitta. His frontality is undoubtedly attributed to the fact that this is a portrait painting, as the inclusion of the square halo attests. Similar examples can be found in the donor painting on the back wall of the chapel (fig.5), and the mosaic of Pope John VII (705-707) from his oratory in Old St. Peter's, Rome.<sup>38</sup> In both works the donors present models of their chapels to the figure of the Virgin in the centre of the composition. Both donors wear square halos, and in both cases they stare out towards the viewer, not towards the recipient of their donation.

#### Four Saints (fig.8)

The image of Four Saints is located on the other side of the main entrance into the chapel, and abuts onto the east wall where the Quiricus and Julitta cycle begins. It depicts four standing martyr-saints (one man, and three women) of whom the saint at the far left, and the second saint from the right, hold a cross and a crown. Above the painting the

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<sup>38</sup>G. Matthiae, Pittura Romana del Medioevo Secoli IV-X, 1 (repr. Rome, 1987), fig.74.

remains of an inscription reads: [MARTY]RIS QORVM NOMINA DEVS SCET (martyrs whose names God knows). A similar inscription was engraved into a marble table in the church of S. Prassede, where it refers to the many bodies of martyrs transferred into the church by Pope Paschal I (817-824).<sup>39</sup> Traces of an inscription run vertically beside the female saint on the left, but the letters have never been deciphered. The only identifying inscription that could be read is the one accompanying the male saint (SCS ARMENTISE), who stands second from the right, but only the letters NTISE can be deciphered today.<sup>40</sup> Armentise is a mystery figure, as his name does not appear in any martyrology. One would expect, however, that the inclusion of these four saints would have had special significance either to Saints Quiricus and Julitta, or to the donor Theodotus. According to Quiricus' and Julitta's Apocryphal Acts, more than a thousand others suffered martyrdom with them.<sup>41</sup> Possibly this image is a commemoration of those unknown martyrs, but without further evidence, the exact meaning of the painting will remain a puzzle.

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<sup>39</sup>For a reproduction of the inscription see LP, 2, pp.63-64, n.12.

<sup>40</sup>For the full inscription see Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 185.

<sup>41</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #23, p.28, (Paris and Rome, 1863, edition always cited).

Cycle of Saints Quiricus and Julitta

Saints Quiricus and Julitta were a son and mother who suffered martyrdom at Tarsus during the persecutions of Diocletian, c.304/5. The most reliable version of their martyrdom appears in a 6th-century letter written by Bishop Theodore of Iconium.<sup>42</sup> According to this account, which was written expressly to correct the apocryphal stories that were already circulating, Quiricus and Julitta were originally from Iconium, and fled to the city of Tarsus in order to escape Diocletian's persecutions. Soon after their arrival in Tarsus, Quiricus and Julitta were discovered, and were brought before the governor Alexander. Alexander ordered Julitta to renounce her Christianity, but she repeatedly refused. In the hope of changing her mind, he ordered her torture. As Alexander sat and watched his guards persecuting Julitta, he held the young Quiricus on his knees. He tried to befriend the boy, but Quiricus kept reaching out for his mother, and tried to push Alexander away. Finally he scratched Alexander on the face, and announced that he, Quiricus, was also a Christian. This so enraged Alexander that he grabbed Quiricus by the foot, and threw him against the steps of the tribunal so violently that the boy was killed. After witnessing the death of her son, Julitta thanked the Lord for giving him the crown of martyrdom. She was then taken away by her

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp.19-20.

executioners and beheaded. As will be seen, the story of the martyrdom of Saints Quiricus and Julitta in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua is based on an expanded, and largely apocryphal version of this text.<sup>43</sup>

Scene 1 (fig.9)

The painting represents the episode in which Julitta is brought before Governor Alexander following her arrest in Tarsus.<sup>44</sup> The scene follows the Apocryphal Acts, as Julitta confronts Alexander alone, and according to Bishop Theodore's story, Julitta was brought before him holding Quiricus in her arms.<sup>45</sup> The painting has undergone considerable damage, as most of the work that remains consists only of the rough underpainting. Traces of paint showing the more detailed brushwork can be seen, and are most apparent on the head of the soldier behind Julitta, and on areas of Alexander's clothing.

The nimbed figure of Julitta, dressed in yellow, stands in the centre of the composition, and extends her hands to Alexander as if addressing him. Behind her, dressed in a

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp.24-28. In the description of each scene, I shall also refer to an older version of their passion found in an 8th/early-9th century manuscript in Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A 436, fols. 123r-134r. It is partially reprinted by Grüneisen, SMA, pp.124-132. Grüneisen also includes a list of 10th - 15th-century manuscripts containing the saints' Acts: SMA, p.122.

<sup>44</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #1, p.24; Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A 436, fol. 123r, repr. SMA, p.124.

<sup>45</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #5, p.20.

short blue tunic, stands a soldier holding a lance. On the left, Alexander, dressed in blue and white, sits on a cushioned throne underneath what appears to be the apse of a building. Two attendants, dressed in red and holding yellow shields, stand behind him. The scene is set before a wall, behind which stand a group of buildings that probably represent the city of Tarsus. Immediately to the left of the buildings, a nimbed figure, dressed in yellow, is visible against the blue background of the sky. This may represent Quiricus, who had been hidden in a house outside the city, and was fetched at Julitta's request to give his testimony to Alexander.<sup>46</sup> As Quiricus is dressed in blue in the next scene, it seems more probable that the figure represents Julitta before her arrest. Traces of an inscription can be seen against the blue background. The words are no longer legible, but Rushforth suggested that it read: [VB]I SCA [IVLITTA FVGIENS DVCITVR AD PRE]SID[E]M<sup>47</sup> (where the fleeing Saint Julitta is taken to the judge).

#### Scene 2 (fig.10)

The painting depicts the next episode of the Apocryphal Acts: Quiricus being brought to give his testimony to Alexander.<sup>48</sup> Like Scene 1, most of the surface layers of

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<sup>46</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #2, p.24; Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A 436, fol. 123v, repr. SMA, p.125.

<sup>47</sup>Rushforth, p.46.

<sup>48</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #2, p.24; Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A 436, fol. 123v, repr. SMA, p.125.

paint have flaked away leaving only the rough underpainting. A large area of plaster has fallen away from the lower right section, exposing the Roman brickwork beneath. The plaster is very thin in some areas; for example, in the area below the soldier on the left it measures 0.07cm. Directly below this, where the plaster has fallen from the wall, there is a remnant of plaster from what may have been an earlier period of decoration. It shows the incised lines of a frame and these frame lines do not correspond to any part of the existing decoration.

In the foreground of the painting Quiricus, who is dressed in blue, and identified by the inscription [S]CS [C]VIRICVS, is being led into a building by the soldier on the left. Another soldier, dressed in yellow and carrying a lance, follows behind. Only the upper half of his body remains. Two buildings, which balance the composition on the left and the right, are set before a wall that is painted red-brown. The background is filled with two strips of colour. The lower zone is yellow, and the upper zone is blue. Traces of an inscription in dark blue can be read against the blue background: [VBI SCS C]VIRIC[VS A] MILITI[BVS DVCITVR] (where Saint Quiricus is brought by the soldiers).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>The reconstruction of this inscription is from Rushforth, p.46.

Scene 3

This scene has been virtually destroyed. In the area where the beam was inserted into the wall, the Roman brickwork is damaged, and the damage extends across into Scene 4. Only a small area of plaster remains in the upper left corner, and on this most of the surface layers of paint have flaked away. The only painted remains consist of the head of a figure set against a background of three zones of colour: blue, red, blue. The letters SC are visible by the head. In the upper blue zone, the word VBI from an inscription can still be read. Rushforth read this inscription as: VBI SCS CVIRICVS C, and suggested that the episode portrayed was Quiricus' confession of his faith.<sup>50</sup>

Scene 4 (fig.11)

The painting depicts the episode in which the angry Alexander orders the beating of Quiricus with whips.<sup>51</sup> Above, the identifying inscription reads: VBI SCS CVIRICVS CATOMVLEBATVS EST (where Saint Quiricus is beaten down the back). The plaster has fallen from most of the left-hand side of the painting, and in patches on the lower two-thirds. In the foreground, Quiricus, who is identified by the inscription SCS CVIRI[CVS] on the tall parapet to the right, is being held

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<sup>50</sup>Rushforth, p.46. This episode immediately follows Quiricus' arrest in Tarsus, see: Acta SS., June 16, #3, p.24; Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A 436, fol.123v., repr. SMA, p.125.

<sup>51</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #4, p.24; Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A 436, fol.124r, repr. SMA, p.125.

by a man dressed in a short yellow tunic. Quiricus is only visible from the waist down, and most of the plaster has fallen from the area of his left leg. To the left of Quiricus, a balding man with a moustache raises his arm in the act of flogging. He wears a short red tunic, and a light coloured cloak falls over his left shoulder. On the left side of the painting, the figure of Alexander seated on a throne is almost destroyed. His head remains, as does his right hand, which is extended in the act of ordering the torture. The scene is set against a castellated building, and above this the sky is painted blue.

Scene 5 (fig.12)

The painting represents one of a series of miracles related in the Apocryphal Acts. Here, Alexander, who is tired of Quiricus' incantations, orders a physician to cut out the boy's tongue.<sup>52</sup> However, by virtue of his divine power, Quiricus is still able to talk. At the top of the scene, the white inscription can be clearly read against the blue background of the sky: VBI SCS CVIRICV[S] LINGVA ISCISSA LOQVIT AT PRESIDEM (where Saint Quiricus, his tongue cut out, talks to the judge).

The plaster has fallen away in patches from the lower half of the painting, and the central area on the right is completely missing. There is evidence of restoration in the

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<sup>52</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #16, p.27; Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A 436, fols.,129v-130r, repr. SMA, pp.127-128.

area of Julitta's head. Here the plaster is on a slightly raised layer. The new plaster layer cannot be seen in either Grüneisen's or Wilpert's reproductions of the painting,<sup>53</sup> indicating that the restoration is modern. Another alteration can be seen in the hand of the central figure who gestures towards Quiricus. The index finger of his right hand has been repainted at a slightly lower level. This change is visible in both Grüneisen's and Wilpert's reproductions, indicating that this alteration was possibly made by the original artist.

On the left side of the painting Alexander is portrayed seated on a throne. He wears a blue robe and a white chlamys, and gestures towards Quiricus. His identifying inscription (PRESE[S] ALEX[ANDER]) is written in the doorway of the building behind him. An attendant stands behind Alexander. A man with short, curly brown hair stands on Alexander's left. He is also dressed in a blue robe and a white chlamys, and although he has no identifying inscription, he is commonly identified as the doctor who cuts out Quiricus' tongue.<sup>54</sup> The figures of Quiricus and Julitta stand on the right-hand side of the painting. Julitta is identified by the inscription SCA IVLITTA. Only her head remains. Quiricus stands in front of her. He is dressed in a long, pale-coloured robe, and his

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<sup>53</sup>SMA, plate IC 42, IB; RMM, 4/1, plate 186.

<sup>54</sup>G. Fogolari, "La leggenda del martiro dei sancti Quirico e Giulitta in S. Maria Antiqua," Bullettino della Società Filologica Romana, 3 (1902), pp.15-30, esp. pp.22-24.

identifying inscription runs vertically above his head. A city wall fills the background of the painting, and the sky is coloured in two tones of blue.

Scene 6 (fig.13)

The painting represents one of the episodes which took place while Quiricus and Julitta were in prison.<sup>55</sup> Alexander directed his soldiers to build a fire under a large cooking pot, and ordered Quiricus and Julitta to get into it. At first Julitta was hesitant, but she was restored to faith by her son's prayers, and willingly entered the pot. Neither of them was hurt.

The painting has undergone considerable damage. The plaster is completely missing from the central area, and this damage extends over into Scene 5. With the exception of the upper right corner, the painting has faded extensively, and without the early descriptions it would be very difficult to identify the original composition. Damage has also occurred in recent years, and consists of the water tracks which run down through the figures of Quiricus and Julitta in prison.

In the upper right corner, the figures of Quiricus and Julitta are portrayed in the window of a building, with their hands raised in prayer. Remains of their identifying inscriptions are still visible beside them: SCS [CVIR]ICVS and SCA I[VL]ITT[A]. Remnants of another inscription survive

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<sup>55</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #17-20, p.27; Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A 436, fols.131r-131v, repr. SMA, pp.128-130.

below: SCS CVIRICVS CVM MATRE. Directly below the figures of Quiricus and Julitta are the faint outlines of a cauldron and red flames. In the left lower corner, the footstool of a throne is barely visible. Above, in the upper left corner, the roof of a building remains. Probably the enthroned figure of Alexander was depicted in the missing portion. The foreground of the scene is painted red, and the background is in two tones of blue.

Scene 7 (fig.14)

This image is much smaller than the rest of the paintings in the cycle, as it is located above the cupboard in the west wall. The scene represents another of Quiricus' and Julitta's many tortures.<sup>56</sup> Quiricus and Julitta are ordered to lie in a red hot frying pan, but are saved from death - or serious injury - by the intervention of Christ, who descends from heaven and plucks their bodies from the burning pan. At the top of the scene, the white identifying inscription can be read clearly against the red background: VBI SCS CVIRICVS CVM MATRE IN SARTAGINE MISSI SVNT (where Saint Quiricus and his mother were sent into the frying pan).

Overall, the painting has a faded appearance which is more pronounced on the left-hand side. Most of the plaster has fallen away in the area of the lower border. Where it

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<sup>56</sup>In the manuscript in Turin (Bib. Naz. memb. A 436) this episode appears on fols.129r-129v, where it precedes those shown in Scenes 5 and 6. The Acta SS. contains nothing that directly corresponds to this scene.

does remain in the lower left corner, the plaster is considerably thicker than in the rest of the painting. Bolt holes to the right of this scene indicate that a beam may have run across the top of the cupboard below, and that the plaster was laid over it to form a type of plaster cornice.

In the centre of the composition, Quiricus and Julitta, dressed only in loincloths, lie on a large rectangular frying pan. It is held on the right by a man dressed in a short blue tunic with long sleeves. On the left, a man wearing a short yellow tunic with short sleeves, tends to the fire. The figure of Christ, accompanied by an angel, descends from heaven in the upper left corner. According to Rushforth's description, there was formerly a second angel to Christ's left.<sup>57</sup> This angel is no longer visible, but can be seen in Wilpert's reproduction of the scene.<sup>58</sup> The sky is painted in two zones of blue.

#### Scene 8 (fig.15)

The cycle terminates with another of Quiricus' tortures, combined with his final martyrdom. Julitta's death is not shown, nor is there any evidence that it was ever intended to be included. The painting is in relatively good condition, although isolated patches of plaster have fallen away. On the left border, the frame has been adjusted to fit around bolt

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<sup>57</sup>Rushforth, p.48.

<sup>58</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/2, plate 187. The angel is not visible in Grüneisen's reproduction: SMA, plate IC 42, 2E.

holes of the beam that ran across the top of the cupboard. On the right border, the frame has been adjusted to fit around the beam of the altar screen.

On the left side of the composition, Quiricus, who is mistakenly portrayed as an adult, is being tortured by having nails driven into his head and shoulders.<sup>59</sup> Above, the identifying inscription is written in white against the blue sky: VBI SCS CVIRICVS ACVTIBVS CONVICTVS EST (where Saint Quiricus was killed with nails). Quiricus wears a long white robe, and stands impassively while the man on his right drives nails into his shoulders and head. On Quiricus' left, an assistant holds him by the right shoulder. Both torturers are dressed in short yellow tunics. In the upper left corner, an angel (identified by the inscription ANGELVS), descends from heaven to extract the nails from Quiricus' body.

The right side of the painting depicts Quiricus' final martyrdom as related in Bishop Theodore's letter.<sup>60</sup> According to this story, Quiricus was killed when he was thrown against the steps of the tribunal by Governor Alexander. An entirely different version is related in the Apocryphal Acts, which attest to Quiricus and his mother being beheaded together.<sup>61</sup> At the top of the scene, part of an identifying inscription

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<sup>59</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #12, p.26; Turir, Bib. Naz. memb. A 436, repr. SMA, pp.131-132. Grüneisen does not give the folio numbers for this episode.

<sup>60</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #7, p.20.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., #22-23, p.28.

survives: VBI SCS CVIRICVS IN. As Rushforth has suggested, the completed inscription possibly read: VBI SCS CVIRICVS IN TERRAM ILLISVS EST<sup>62</sup> (where Saint Quiricus was struck against the ground). On the far right of the scene, Alexander (identified by the inscription PRESIDE), is depicted on his throne in a half-sitting, half-standing position. He wears a long grey robe, and white chlamys. His right arm is extended in the act of ordering Quiricus' execution. Two soldiers, carrying shields, stand behind him. They are dressed in grey, and wear grey head-coverings. In the centre, the executioner, who wears a short yellow tunic and a white chlamys, holds Quiricus by the right leg, and is flinging him around. Where the paint has flaked away in the area of Quiricus' legs, the blue paint of the background can be seen underneath. It should also be noted that the scene does not correspond exactly with Bishop Theodore's account. In the chapel, Alexander is shown giving the order for Quiricus' death, whereas Theodore's letter tells us that Alexander killed Quiricus himself.<sup>63</sup>

Cycle of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (fig.16)

Remnants of what appears to have been a cycle of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste survive at the south end of the left

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<sup>62</sup>Rushforth, p.49.

<sup>63</sup>Acta SS., June 16, #7, p.20.

aisle of S. Maria Antiqua, in an area of the church which appears to have functioned as a side chapel (fig.ii). To the north, the space is separated from the remainder of the left aisle by a 1.38m. high transenna with a central opening; to the east the area is bounded by the exterior wall of the church; the entrance into the Theodotus Chapel lies to the south; and it appears that a transenna once separated this space from the bema on its west side. Part of a 1.30m. high transenna survives against the south-east pillar of the church, and in all probability it was analagous to the transenna on the opposite side of the bema, and extended all the way across to the sanctuary wall.<sup>64</sup>

As the paintings of the Forty Martyrs, including their measurements, have already been fully described by Nordhagen, only the major points will be repeated here.<sup>65</sup> The painted fragments are located directly above the dado, which is painted with a register of simulated drapery. The border enclosing the paintings of the Forty Martyrs extends horizontally from the transenna in the left aisle to the doorway leading onto the Palatine ramp, and extends vertically from the top of the painted velum to the same height as the register of standing saints which decorates the continuation of the left aisle wall. Part of the border dividing the

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<sup>64</sup>For an analysis of the architecture in this area of the church see Krautheimer, CBCR, 2 (1959), pp.258-260.

<sup>65</sup>p.J. Nordhagen, "S. Maria Antiqua: the frescoes of the 7th century," op.cit., (note 7 supra), pp.131-132.

paintings into two registers is still visible on the right, but no internal vertical divisions remain. The fact that the space was further divided vertically may be assumed by the large size of the space enclosed, and the disproportionately small size of the figures.

The paintings portray the story of forty soldiers from Sebaste in Armenia who, after refusing to repudiate their faith, were stripped naked and brought to a frozen lake.<sup>66</sup> A fire was kindled nearby, and warm baths prepared. When one of the soldiers succumbed to this temptation, a guard, impressed by the faith of the remaining thirty-nine soldiers, took his place. By morning, the guard and the thirty-nine soldiers were dead.

In the lower left-hand corner of the wall, part of the episode representing the condemned martyrs on the frozen lake still survives. The fragment depicts two beardless male figures standing side by side. They are dressed only in loincloths, and hold their right hands up against their chests. Remnants of a figure wearing a turretted crown survive in the upper left corner, and probably represent a personification of the city of Sebaste. The rest of the decoration consists of loose fragments, which either fell from the wall, or were found nearby during the excavations.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>For the cult and Acts of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste see Acta SS, March 10, (Paris and Rome, 1865), pp.12-29.

<sup>67</sup>Nordhagen, "S. Maria Antiqua: the frescoes of the 7th century," op.cit., (note 7 supra), plate 59.

These pieces were mounted on a piece of gesso, and kept in the storage rooms of the Soprintendenza del Foro Romano e del Palatino. Their whereabouts today appears to be unknown. The fragments include more male figures, similar to the two described above, and a bust of Christ. Although the head of Christ is larger than those of the martyrs, as Nordhagen noted, the colours and technique were the same as the rest of the panel, making it likely that an image of Christ appeared above the condemned.<sup>68</sup>

On the portion of the border which divides the painting into its upper and lower registers, the letters ICAI of an inscription are preserved. Fragments of another inscription, which survive on the left-hand side of the lower border, read: TH ΓΡΑΦΗ ΤΗΣ ΕΙΚΟΝΟΣ ΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΒΡ ... (the writing of the icon...)

Unfortunately insufficient fragments have survived to allow us to reconstruct this mural with any degree of accuracy, or to be certain that these fragments formed part of a narrative cycle, although this does appear to have been the case. Apart from the chapel at the entrance to S. Maria Antiqua, where another damaged narrative cycle survives - possibly a cycle of the Forty Martyrs, as it is located above a large image of the Forty Martyrs in Glory<sup>69</sup> - the earliest narrative scenes of the Forty Martyrs are found in a group of

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p.131.

<sup>69</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 200/2.

Byzantine marginal psalters. The earliest of these psalters is dated 1066,<sup>70</sup> making it hazardous to use these examples in trying to establish an iconography that existed 300-350 years earlier.

Since no documentary records exist, and as the paintings of the Forty Martyrs survive in a very damaged condition, their dating is problematic. Conclusions must be based on stylistic and palaeographic analyses, and by an examination of the plaster layers. Unfortunately, no one method is irrefutable, and proof of their lack of precision is demonstrated by the span of the dates proposed: a late 8th-century date was suggested by Wilpert<sup>71</sup> and Grüneisen,<sup>72</sup> an uncertain 8th-century date by Tea,<sup>73</sup> and a c.650 date by Nordhagen.<sup>74</sup>

Any consideration of the style of the paintings of the Forty Martyrs in the left aisle must take into account the fact that most of the superficial layers of paint have flaked off, and that these layers often included the finer details such as highlighting. Keeping this in mind, the style of the paintings appears as flat and linear, and the only noticeable

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<sup>70</sup>BL Add. 19352, fols.81r, and 81v.

<sup>71</sup>RMM, 2, p.709.

<sup>72</sup>SMA, p.116.

<sup>73</sup>Op.cit., (note 4 supra), p.280.

<sup>74</sup>P.J. Nordhagen, "The earliest decorations in Santa Maria Antiqua and their date," Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, 1 (1962), pp.53-72, esp. p.63.

use of modelling to define form is seen in the bust of Christ on the gesso panel (now missing). The figures are slender and broad-shouldered, with downcast eyes. Motifs that can be compared to other works include the way the eyebrows and nose are portrayed by a single line that runs horizontally across the eyebrow, then continues down the nose and across to indicate the nares: this is also seen in the paintings of the New Testament cycle in the presbytery, dated by Nordhagen to the pontificate of John VII (705-707).<sup>75</sup> Another idiosyncrasy of the artist can be seen in the way in which the junction of the neck and the clavicle is portrayed by a V-shaped line: the same V-shaped line is seen in the figures in the apse of the Chapel of the Forty Martyrs, at the entrance to the church.<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately, as the dating of these paintings can be only tentatively placed within the pontificate of Martin I (649-652),<sup>77</sup> this comparison is of little help in solving the dating problem. In fact, based on stylistic criteria alone, only a general date within the span of the mid-7th century to the beginning of the 8th century can be proposed.

An examination of the palaeography is no more fruitful. A comparison with the dated Greek inscriptions in the church

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<sup>75</sup>Nordhagen, "The frescoes of John VII," op.cit., (note 7 supra), pp.22-30, plate 27.

<sup>76</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 199.

<sup>77</sup>P.J. Nordhagen, "The earliest decorations in Santa Maria Antiqua and their date," op.cit., (note 73 supra), pp.53-72, esp.71.

indicates that the letter forms A, P, and W bear the closest resemblance to the inscriptions of Pope Martin I (649-652).<sup>78</sup> The A has the same horizontal top bar, the P has the same downward flourish, and in both groups of inscriptions the middle stroke of the W is of equal height to the two outward strokes. While these comparisons suggest a c.650 date, the appearance of an A with a horizontal top bar in the paintings of the Theodotus Chapel (741-752),<sup>79</sup> indicates that an 8th-century date cannot be ruled out.

A comparison of the plaster layers provides a terminus ante quem in the second half of the 8th century. As Nordhagen noted, the plaster on which the paintings of the Old Testament and the register of saints lie overlaps that of the Forty Martyrs at a height of 2.30-2.50m. above the transenna.<sup>80</sup> The Old Testament cycle and the row of saints below are popularly dated to the second half of the 8th century;<sup>81</sup> the paintings of the Forty Martyrs must, therefore, have been executed earlier. The panel of the Forty Martyrs itself rests on an earlier stratum of painted plaster, the details of which are

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., plate 4, nos.1,2,3,4.

<sup>79</sup>SMA, p.417, fig.329; p.418, fig.331.

<sup>80</sup>Nordhagen, "The earliest decorations in Santa Maria Antiqua," op.cit., (note 73 supra), p.63.

<sup>81</sup>By using stylistic criteria, the dating of these paintings is commonly attributed to the pontificate of Paul I (757-767). For a summary of the various opinions see B. Vileisis, op.cit., (note 7 supra), pp.141-144. Vileisis herself feels that the paintings post-date the work of Paul I, and proposes a date in the time of Pope Stephen II (768-772).

too damaged to be discerned. The paintings also share the same layer of plaster as the painted velum of the dado, of which the first datable examples in the Medieval period appear in the decorations of Pope John VII (705-707).

Due to the fragmentary nature of the paintings, and the lack of solid evidence, it is rash to be precise regarding their dating. It seems they were executed sometime between the mid-7th century and mid-8th century, most possibly within the early half of this time span, but more evidence is needed before this can be established with any certainty.

#### CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA IN VIA LATA

The church of S. Maria in Via Lata, as it stands today on the corner of the Via del Corso and Via Lata, reflects the 17th century work of Pietro da Cortona; all that remains of the Early Medieval church are six vaulted chambers beneath the existing Baroque structure. In 1904 Cavazzi began excavating the underground area,<sup>82</sup> and his discoveries revealed the remains of a Roman horreum which, possibly by the 7th century,

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<sup>82</sup>For reports on the excavations see L. Cavazzi, La diaconia di S. Maria in via Lata e il monastero di S. Ciriaco, (Rome, 1908); E. Sjoqvist, "Studi archeologici e topografici intorno alla Piazza del Collegio Romano," Opuscula Archaeologica, 4 (1946), pp.47-98; R. Krautheimer, CBCR, 3 (Vatican City, 1967), pp.72-81. A useful book which summarises the scholarship on the church is C. Bertelli, C. Galassi Paluzzi, S. Maria in Via Lata, (Le Chiese di Roma Illustrate), 114 (Rome, 1971).

had been converted into ecclesiastical use.<sup>83</sup> However, the earliest documented mention of S. Maria in Via Lata does not appear until the early-9th century, when the Liber Pontificalis records donations made to the diaconia by Pope Leo III (795-816).<sup>84</sup> By the 11th century (at the latest) the church had fallen into neglect, and when a new church was built above, two of the rooms of the old church served as its crypt. Today, the underground area is dark and damp. As most of the wall paintings have been removed,<sup>85</sup> there is scant reminder of how the church, decorated with murals, appeared in the Early Medieval period.

#### Cycle of Saint Erasmus

The story of Saint Erasmus follows the typical "epic passion" format outlined by Delehaye, and consists of lengthy interrogations, interspersed with gruesome tortures, which are

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<sup>83</sup>The earliest indication of the building's ecclesiastical use is provided by the images of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, which are painted in what is judged to be a 7th-century style: see C. Bertelli, "The Seven Sleepers, a Medieval Utopia," Paragone, 291 (1974), pp.23-35. Krautheimer notes that the conversion of the horrea into an oratory may be as early as the 5th - 6th century, as suggested by the type of masonry used to construct the new openings, CBCR, 3, p.81.

<sup>84</sup>LP, 2. pp.12, 19.

<sup>85</sup>In 1960, most of the paintings were detached from the wall for restoration. Some are stored in the Istituto Centrale del Restauro, at Rome, while others appear to have been lost.

characterised by miraculous escapes.<sup>86</sup> Erasmus was a 4th-century bishop from Antioch, who retired to the mountains of Syria. During his stay in the mountains he converted many to the Christian faith, and quickly became known for his ability to perform miracles. However, after seven years, following the advice of a voice who called to him from heaven, Erasmus returned to Antioch. Soon after his arrival, he was arrested by Diocletian, who demanded that Erasmus renounce his Christianity. Erasmus refused, and the tortures - from which Erasmus always survived unharmed - began. In one episode, he was thrown into prison, and tied down with lead weights. In answer to Erasmus' prayers, an angel descended from heaven, freed him from his bonds, and miraculously transported him to Italy, where he was able to recommence his evangelical and miracle-performing activities. It was not long, however, before news of his work reached Maximian, and Erasmus was re-arrested. He was interrogated again, and submitted to many tortures that were were similar to those he had undergone under Diocletian. Since Erasmus still refused to recant his faith, he was returned to prison, and once again tied down with lead weights. This time an angel called to Erasmus, and asked him to come to Formia. Erasmus was miraculously freed from his bonds, and taken by the angel to Campania, where he

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<sup>86</sup>H. Delehayé, Les passions des martyrs et des gens littéraires, (Brussels, 1921), pp.238-315. For the cult and Acts of Saint Erasmus see Acta SS., June 2, pp.206-214, esp. pp.208-211, (Paris and Rome, 1867 edition always cited).

died peacefully from his wounds seven days later. After his death, his soul was carried to heaven by angels.

The paintings portraying the legend of Saint Erasmus decorated the north and east walls of Room IV, at the southwest corner of the underground complex (fig.iii).<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, the exact plan of the diaconia has yet to be established, as excavations of the southern and western boundaries remain incomplete, and precise archaeological analysis is hampered by modern reinforcements and restorations.<sup>88</sup> It appears, however, that Room IV may have served as a separate chapel. Access to Room I was maintained via a large archway, whose construction probably coincided with the commencement of the building's use as a church (c.7th century). Communication with Room V was not possible until the second half of the 8th century, at which time a passageway was cut in the dividing wall. As the paintings of Saints John and Paul,<sup>89</sup> which lined this access passage, were laid directly on the Roman brickwork, and as there is no sign of any earlier decoration, the paintings appear to have been

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<sup>87</sup>The paintings were detached from the wall to aid their preservation, and are now stored in the Istituto Centrale di Restauro.

<sup>88</sup>For an archaeological examination of Room IV see Sjöqvist, op.cit., pp.59-66; Krautheimer, CBCR, 3, pp.78-79.

<sup>89</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/2, plate 218/2&3. These paintings are now stored in the Istituto Centrale del Restauro, at Rome.

executed soon after the construction of the passageway.<sup>90</sup> On the south wall of Room IV, a small door led through to the unexcavated southern extension of the building. On the west wall a larger door, 3m. wide, opened into the western extension. This area has also not been excavated.

The walls on which the Erasmus cycle was located were decorated at four separate periods.<sup>91</sup> The first stratum consisted of the paintings of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, dated by Bertelli to the 7th century.<sup>92</sup> The two paintings of the Erasmus cycle sat on the second stratum. The third stratum consisted of a series of saints, that may be contemporary with the images of Saints John and Paul in the passageway, as the red frame of this layer is also found surmounting the figures of John and Paul.<sup>93</sup> The fourth and

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<sup>90</sup>A 9th/10th-century date for these paintings was first suggested by A. Muñoz, "Affreschi medioevali in S. Maria in Via Lata," L'Arte, 8 (1905), pp.59-60; a late 8th-century date is proposed by M. Righetti Tosti-Croce, "Gli affreschi di S. Maria in Via Lata," Fragmenta Picta, Affreschi e mosaici staccati del Medioevo romano, (Rome, 1989), pp.179-182, esp. p.182. The paintings bear a striking resemblance to the register of saints on the left aisle wall of S. Maria Antiqua, dated by Nordhagen to the time of Pope Paul I (757-767), and it seems reasonable to assign the images of Saints John and Paul to a similar period.

<sup>91</sup>Cavazzi, op.cit., (note 81 supra), pp.220-224; the stages of the decoration, and the findings of the restorers, are summarised by Bertelli, "S. Maria in Via Lata," (note 80 supra), pp.20-23, 33-37.

<sup>92</sup>C. Bertelli, "The Seven Sleepers, a Medieval Utopia," Paragone, 291 (1974), pp.23-25.

<sup>93</sup>This was noted by Kitzinger, Römische Malerei vom Beginn des 7. bis zur Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts, (Munich, 1934), pp.55-56.

final stratum was located over the series of saints and portrayed, on the east wall, an enthroned Christ flanked by two saints, accompanied by a small donor figure in the lower left corner. An inscription above read: EGO SILBESTER MON[ACHUS].<sup>94</sup> On the north wall Cavazzi reported remains of another inscription which read: BENEDICTA MULIER.<sup>95</sup>

The paintings of the Erasmus cycle are enclosed by a solid black frame, lined on the interior with a narrow white line. The story is set against a background of bands of red, and a green/brown colour to represent the earth, with the sky depicted in two bands of blue. Although portrayed in two scenes only, the paintings represent five episodes from the life of Erasmus. The story begins with Scene 1 on the north wall, and continues with Scene 2 on the east wall.

In the first scene (fig.17) Erasmus, dressed in the blue and white robes of a bishop, stands before an enthroned emperor, and has his right arm raised in the gesture of speech. Although his hands are no longer visible today, they can be seen in Wilpert's plates.<sup>96</sup> Only part of the figure of the emperor has survived, but enough has remained to see that he is dressed in a jewelled robe, and is seated on a jewelled throne. This appears to be a representation of Erasmus'

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<sup>94</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 191/2. The whereabouts of this painting is unknown.

<sup>95</sup>Cavazzi, op.cit., (note 81 supra), p.220.

<sup>96</sup>Wilpert, RMM. 4/1, plate 190.

interrogation before Emperor Diocletian, as the episode is followed by Erasmus being flogged, and according to the surviving legends, Erasmus was not flogged by Maximian.<sup>97</sup>

To the right of this episode, but still on the north wall, Diocletian - still seated on a high-backed jewelled throne - raises his right arms in the act of ordering Erasmus' torture. Two guards stand behind his throne, but they are only identifiable by the presence of their shields. Erasmus, dressed in a loincloth only, lies stretched out as if suspended in mid-air. The grill-like structure that supports him is barely visible. The inscription SCS ERASMUS, which ran vertically to the left of his head, can no longer be seen.<sup>98</sup> Erasmus' torturers, dressed in short tunics, stand on his right. The torturer on the left (with the flying chlamys), has his right arm raised as if marking the beat. The torturer on the right has both arms raised, as if flogging Erasmus, but no clubs are visible.

Moving to the east wall, the story continues in the lower left corner of Scene 2 (fig.18) where Erasmus is portrayed being dressed in a burning tunic of armour. This is one of the tortures Erasmus suffered under Maximian, but through the force of his prayer Erasmus was not hurt.<sup>99</sup> The orant figure of Erasmus, still dressed in a loincloth, stands between two

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<sup>97</sup>Acta SS., June 2, #2&3, p.208.

<sup>98</sup>It is visible in Wilpert's plate, RMM, 4/1, plate 190.

<sup>99</sup>Acta SS., June 2, #11, p.210.

torturers. On the right, one torturer holds the red-hot tunic with tongs. Today the tunic has almost disappeared from the painting, and the tongs are no longer visible. On the left, another torturer, dressed in a short white tunic, appears - if the position of his hands are a guide - to be also holding the tunic with tongs, although these tongs could not be seen when Wilpert's photos were taken.<sup>100</sup>

The narrative continues in the upper left-hand corner of the scene, and shows Erasmus, swaddled in a long brown robe, lying on a stretcher. This appears to be Erasmus' miraculous transportation to Campania.<sup>101</sup> The story then moves to the right side of the painting. Most of the plaster from the lower right-hand side is missing. Only the nimbed head of a figure remains. It must be Erasmus, as there is no mention of any other saint in his legend. In the upper right-hand corner, the hand of God, with rays descending towards the head of Erasmus, provides a clue to the episode portrayed. It appears to be the ascension of Erasmus who, after seven days of rest in Formia, heard a voice calling him from heaven. As Erasmus looked up he saw a choir of angels and prophets beckoning to him. He died as he lowered his head in prayer.<sup>102</sup> Above, Wilpert's plates show an angel carrying

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<sup>100</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 191/1.

<sup>101</sup>Acta SS, June 2, #13, p.211.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

Erasmus' soul to heaven,<sup>103</sup> but today only a few remnants of white paint survive. As Wilpert has suggested, the box-like structure in the centre of the painting is probably the house in which Erasmus' heavenly vision took place.<sup>104</sup>

An approximate date for the paintings of the Erasmus cycle can be established by the fact that they were laid over the 7th-century paintings of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, and under the register of saints, executed in approximately the second half of the 8th century.<sup>105</sup> Attempts at a more precise date are hampered by the lack of documentation for the church prior to the papacy of Leo III (795-816). Furthermore, the use of stylistic criteria, which is always subjective, is hindered in the 8th century by the scarcity of firmly datable material. Despite these problems, there is general agreement that the paintings of the Erasmus cycle are close in date to the scenes of martyrdom in the Theodotus Chapel. Belting<sup>106</sup> and Kitzinger<sup>107</sup> also link them with the New Testament scenes in San Saba, and feel the Erasmus paintings may pre-date the Quiricus and Julitta cycle. On the other hand, Matthiae

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<sup>103</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 191/1.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 2/2, p.1000.

<sup>105</sup>They appear to be contemporary with the images of John and Paul in the passageway, as Kitzinger noted that both groups of images are surmounted by the same red frame. E. Kitzinger, op.cit., (note 92 supra), pp.55-56.

<sup>106</sup>H. Belting, Studien zur beneventanischen Malerei, (Wiesbaden, 1968), p.209.

<sup>107</sup>E. Kitzinger, op.cit., (note 92 supra), pp.32-33.

believes they were executed in the second half of the 8th century - probably soon after the decoration of the Theodotus Chapel.<sup>108</sup>

As the paintings of the Theodotus Chapel (741-752) serve as one of the fixed points of reference in 8th-century wall painting, it is useful to compare the two works. In making such a comparison, it is immediately apparent that both groups of artists were using similar models. There is a similarity not only in the way the emperors are portrayed (seated on their high-backed thrones, and flanked by two guards at the rear), but also in the setting of the scenes, which show backgrounds depicted in two shades of blue for the sky, with a scalloped band of reddish-brown for the landscape (compare figs.15 and 18). A further resemblance is revealed in the way the anatomy of the abdomen is portrayed on the figure of Erasmus in Scene 2 (fig.18), and Quiricus and Julitta in Scene 7 (fig.14). Both artists use a single line of two semi-circles to indicate the breasts, a double-ended Y denotes the abdominal wall, and a large semi-circular line indicates a slightly protruding lower abdomen. This manner of depicting the naked torso is a feature of Byzantine art, but surviving examples are most commonly found in the 9th century - for example, in the illustrations of the post-Iconoclastic manuscript commonly known as the *Sacra Parallela* (Paris, BN,

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<sup>108</sup>G. Matthiae, Pittura Romana del Medioevo Secoli IV-X, 1 (repr. Rome, 1987), p.152.

gr. 923).<sup>109</sup> While this particular way of portraying the abdominal anatomy may be a useful example of the Byzantine influence in Roman wall painting, it is of little help in solving the dating problem.

Despite this similarity in depicting the naked torso, essential differences between the two martyrdom cycles are revealed in the portrayal of the figures. The images in the Theodotus Chapel show more subtle colour gradations in the modelling of the drapery, whereas the broad white highlights of the Erasmus cycle contrast strongly with the harsh black brushstrokes that delineate form. This is especially noticeable in the torturer on the left in Scene 1 (fig.17), and again in Scene 2 (fig.18), and it is a technique that is more closely linked with the New Testament scenes in San Saba.<sup>110</sup> Further differences between the paintings of the Theodotus Chapel and the Erasmus cycle appear in the facial types, as the Erasmus figures have larger eyes, and compare more closely to the works of Pope Gregory III (731-741), such as the bust of Saint Crisogonus under the church of S. Crisogono.<sup>111</sup>

Although no single striking comparison exists, the paintings of the Erasmus cycle appear to have more in common

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<sup>109</sup>The closest parallel is found in the figure of Job on fol.256v. K. Weitzmann, The Miniatures of the Sacra Parallela Parisinus Graecus 923, (Princeton, 1979), plate 213.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., figs.126 and 127.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., fig.119.

with works in the first half of the 8th century, than with the trend to more static, linear images that develops in the second half of the 8th century. They seem to occupy a place between the San Saba paintings (themselves not securely dated), and the images in the Theodotus Chapel. However, without further evidence, it would be unwise to give a more precise date than one which is close in time to the Quiricus and Julitta scenes.

#### CHURCH OF SANT'ADRIANO

The church of S. Adriano stands in the Roman Forum, just a short walk down the Via Sacra from the church of S. Maria Antiqua. A few faded wall paintings and remnants of inscriptions are the sole reminders that the building once served as a church, as it was originally the Roman Senate House, and was restored to this state during recent excavations and restorations.<sup>112</sup> The building's ecclesiastical history began in the 7th century when, according to the Liber Pontificalis, Pope Honorius I (625-638) converted the Senate House into a church, and dedicated it to Sant'Adriano.<sup>113</sup> By the end of the 7th century the church was sufficiently important to serve as the starting point for the

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<sup>112</sup>For the excavation report see A. Bartoli, Curia Senatus. Lo scavo e il restauro, (Rome, 1963).

<sup>113</sup>LP, 1, p.324.

procession of the Feast of the Purification, instituted by Pope Sergius (687-701).<sup>114</sup> However, its life as a stational church is uncertain, as at the end of the 8th century the Liber Pontificalis records that Pope Hadrian I (772-795) newly restored the church of S. Adriano, and instituted a diaconia there.<sup>115</sup>

Whether Pope Honorius made any structural changes to the Senate House when he converted it into a church is unclear, and none are mentioned by the Liber Pontificalis. It seems that the first substantial change to the building can be attributed to Pope Hadrian I. The compiler of the Liber Pontificalis notes that Hadrian restored both the churches of S. Adriano and SS. Cosma e Damiano,<sup>116</sup> and that he renovated S. Adriano in a similar way to the church of S. Maria in Cosmedin, which had been rebuilt from the ground, enlarged, and given three apses.<sup>117</sup> There is, however, no evidence that S. Adriano was a triple-apsed church (fig.iv). The excavations revealed a central apse in the back (north-east)

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<sup>114</sup>LP, 1, p.376, n.4; M. Andrieu, Les Ordines Romani du haut Moyen Age, 3 (Louvain, 1974), pp.231-236.

<sup>115</sup>LP, 1, p.509.

<sup>116</sup>"Idem egregius praesul praelatas basilicas, scilicet beati Adriani martyris seu sanctorum Cosme et Damiani, quas noviter restauravit diaconias constituit..." ibid., p.509.

<sup>117</sup>"... a fundamentis aedificans, praedictamque basilicam ultro citroque spatiosae largans, tresque absidas in ea construens praecipuus antistes, veram Cosmidin amplissima noviter reparavit... et basilicam sancti Adriani a noviter simili modo renovavit aedes." ibid., pp.507-508.

wall, and another small apse in the external chapel to the right. It appears, therefore, that the words of Hadrian's biographer should be given only a loose interpretation, for clearly S. Adriano was not rebuilt following the same ground plan as S. Maria in Cosmedin.

#### Cycle of Saints Paul and Anastasius

Even at the time of the excavations, little survived of the external chapel to the right of the apse. The partial foundations of the left side wall, and the back wall - with its semi-circular apse containing a square reliquary altar - were revealed, as well as remnants of the painted decoration which once covered all four walls of the chapel. While a minute fragment of this painting has survived to the left of the apse,<sup>118</sup> the major segment consists of three registers of paintings: a narrative cycle at the top, a row of standing saints in the middle, and a strip of painted velum in the lowermost register (fig.19).

Only one episode remains of the narrative cycle. It portrays a standing nimbed male figure on the left, who at the time of the excavations could be identified at the right by an

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<sup>118</sup>A. Mancini, "La chiesa medioevale di S. Adriano del Foro Romano," Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Rendiconti, 40 (1967-1968), pp.191-245, fig.7.

inscription, SCS PA..VS. This inscription no longer survives.<sup>119</sup> Saint Paul is approached by three figures, the central figure is female and walks between two tonsured males. When the painting was excavated the inscription SCS ANASTAS[I]VS could be seen written beside the head of the male figure at the extreme right.<sup>120</sup> As the surviving figure is without a nimbus, Saint Anastasius was probably represented on the missing portion of the painting at the right. The scene is set in front of an abbreviated architecture and the background is represented by a single band of blue for the sky, accompanied by a reddish-brown band for the earth.

The identification of exactly which Saint Paul, or which Saint Anastasius, is represented in the paintings is problematic, as it is based solely on faded inscriptions which can now only be read in photographs. Despite the presence of a reliquary altar, there is no record that the relics of Paul or Anastasius were ever in S. Adriano. Mancini has suggested that the paintings depict the 4th-century saints Paulillus and Anastasius who were martyred with a group of companions at either Nicomedia or Nicaea.<sup>121</sup> If, indeed, this is the correct identification of these saints, the fragmentary

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<sup>119</sup>It can be seen in photos taken at the time of the excavations, ibid., figs.8 and 9.

<sup>120</sup>Once again, this can be seen in photos taken at the time of the excavation, ibid., fig.8.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., p.210. For the little that is known about these saints see Bibliotheca Sanctorum, 3 (Rome, 1963), col.1308.

paintings in S. Adriano are the sole record of their legend. Their Acts do not survive, and our information on them relies solely on an entry in the Martyrologium Hieronymianum which records their feast day on December 19.<sup>122</sup>

The paintings resemble, in both arrangement and style, the decoration of the left aisle in S. Maria Antiqua.<sup>123</sup> Both groups of paintings consist of the three registers: a narrative cycle, a row of standing saints, and a band of painted velum. Stylistically, both works are characterised by a linear quality, and follow the 8th-century movement away from the illusionistic works of the 7th century.<sup>124</sup> Even taking into account the damaged state of the paintings, this linearity is also seen in the row of standing saints who accompany the portrait of Pope Hadrian I in the atrium of S. Maria Antiqua.<sup>125</sup> It is known that Pope Hadrian I made repairs to the church of S. Adriano, and probably took a personal interest in the church because of its titular association with his own name. He was probably responsible for the building of the external chapel, and it seems reasonable to credit him also with the chapel's decoration.

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<sup>122</sup>G.B. De Rossi, L. Duchesne, "Martyrologium Hieronymianum," Acta SS., November 2/1, (Brussels, 1894), p.155.

<sup>123</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 192-193:1.

<sup>124</sup>Seen, for example, in the painting of the Maccabees in S. Maria Antiqua. Matthiae, op.cit., (note 103 supra), plate 6.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., plate 13.

Certainly, there is nothing in the style of the paintings to contradict such a dating.

Since the paintings appear to date to the time of Pope Hadrian, one tantalising possibility is that the decoration of the small chapel is linked to Pope Hadrian's interest in the Persian martyr Anastasios. The head of Anastasios was brought to Rome by a group of eastern monks who established themselves in a monastery at the Tre Fontane.<sup>126</sup> This relic, along with an icon of Anastasios, soon became famous for their miraculous properties, and by the 8th century were so highly valued, that one night when the building where they were stored was ravaged by fire, Pope Hadrian ran there himself to inspect the damage.<sup>127</sup> Unfortunately the major drawback to identifying the figure in the cycle as Anastasios the Persian is the fact that there is no mention of a Saint Paul in his legend.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, the only known connection between this Anastasios and a figure named Paul is the fact that his monastery was built on the site where the apostle Paul is traditionally held to have been martyred. However, one possible explanation for the inclusion of Saint Paul in the paintings is that, at the end

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<sup>126</sup>See J. M. Sansterre, Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne, 1 (Brussels, 1980), pp.14-17. The presence of the head in Rome is recorded in the 7th century pilgrims' itinerary, De Locis Sanctis Martyrum, in R. Valentini, G. Zuchetti, Codice Topografico della Città di Rome, 2 (Rome, 1942), p.109.

<sup>127</sup>LP, 1, pp.512-513.

<sup>128</sup>Acta SS., January 22, (Paris and Rome, 1863), pp.35-54.

of the 8th century, the identity of Anastasios the Persian was confused with the homonymous saint from Nicodemia. The connections between the church of S. Adriano, Pope Hadrian, and the Persian martyr Anastasios are difficult to ignore, but without further information, the exact identification of these saints will remain enigmatic.

#### CATACOMB OF CALEPODIUS

The catacomb of Calepodius is located on the Via Aurelia Antica, in the western suburbs of Rome. For many centuries it was known that Saint Callixtus, the 3rd-century martyr and bishop of Rome (217-222), was buried in the catacomb, but the actual site of his tomb had not been identified.<sup>129</sup> In the mid-1960's, Aldo Nestori began excavations of the site,<sup>130</sup> during the course of which he discovered the tomb of Saint Callixtus in a small underground chamber in the oldest area of

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<sup>129</sup>That Pope Callixtus was buried in the catacomb of Calepodius is recorded in the Liber Pontificalis, 1, pp.92-93. In the 7th century his tomb was still the object of pilgrimage. See the Notitia Ecclesiarum Urbis Romae, a 7th century pilgrims' itinerary, in R. Valentini, G. Zucchetti, Codice Topografico della Città di Roma, 2 (Rome, 1942), pp.93-94.

<sup>130</sup>For the excavation reports see A. Nestori, "L'area cimiteriale sopra la tomba di S. Callisto sulla via Aurelia," Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana, 44 (1968), pp.161-172; idem, "La catacomba di Calepodio al III miglio dell'aurelia vetus e i sepolcri dei papi Callisto I e Giulio I," Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana, 47 (1971), pp.169-278, (hereafter Calepodio 1); idem, "La tomba di S. Callisto sull'Aurelia antica," Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Arqueologia Cristiana, (Vatican City, 1972), pp.367-372.

the catacomb. Any doubts that this was the site of Callixtus' burial were laid to rest by the fact that the chamber was decorated with wall paintings, that depicted events from Callixtus' life.

### Cycle of Saint Callixtus

In contrast to the previous hagiographical cycles, which represent episodes from the lives of eastern saints, Callixtus was Roman by birth. By the 4th century he was venerated as a martyr,<sup>131</sup> although contemporary accounts record no official persecutions of Christians during his pontificate, and the Liber Pontificalis makes no mention of an unnatural death.<sup>132</sup> However, as Callixtus' appointment as pope met with strong opposition, if there is any truth to the tales of Callixtus' violent death, it was most likely due to a local uprising.<sup>133</sup> The first apocryphal accounts of his martyrdom appeared in the 5th/6th century, and while these legends may contain a kernel

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<sup>131</sup>He is included in the Depositio martyrum, of the Chronograph of 354. See R. Valentini, G. Zucchetti, Codice Topografico della città di Roma, 2 (Rome, 1942), p.27.

<sup>132</sup>LP, 1, pp.141-142.

<sup>133</sup>One of Callixtus' greatest rivals was Hippolytus, and much of what we know about Callixtus today is found in Book 9 of Hippolytus' work, the "Philosophema", published by Migne, under the authorship of Origen, in PG, 16/3, cols.3369-3412.

of truth, they cannot be considered as historical documents.<sup>134</sup> In brief, the story began circulating that Callixtus and his clergy were attacked, in their church in Trastevere, by a mob who felt that their Christian activities were incurring the wrath of the gods. When ten soldiers entered the church, they were immediately blinded, causing one of the members - a consul named Palmatius - to flee in terror. A short while later, an omen brought Palmatius back to the church, where he was converted by Callixtus, and baptised. The successful conversion of Palmatius was followed by many others, causing the priest Calepodius to cry with joy. These cries were heard by Emperor Alexander (222-235), who sent his soldiers to intervene. Calepodius was murdered, and Callixtus was imprisoned. He was tortured by starvation and beatings, and further incurred the anger of Alexander by baptising the soldier Privatus. For Alexander this was the final straw. He had Privatus beaten to death, and Callixtus was pushed out a window, then shoved down a well with a stone tied around his neck. After seventeen days Callixtus' body was recovered, and buried in the catacomb of Calepodius.

Today, direct access into Callixtus' burial chamber, and to the remnants of paintings that portray scenes from his life, is possible via a staircase that begins at ground level, and opens into the north wall of the underground room. The

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<sup>134</sup>Acta SS., October 14, pp:401-448, esp.439-441, (Paris and Rome, 1868, edition always cited); Bibliotheca Sanctorum, 3 (Rome, 1963), cols.680-691, esp. col.687.

space itself is small, long, and narrow. The roof is vaulted, and a skylight is located above Callixtus' tomb on the south wall. From the number of painted fragments of plaster that were found on the floor during the excavations, and the pieces of red intonaco that survive on the vault and the walls, it appears that the room was once completely covered with mural paintings, which started at a level of 70cm. above the floor.

As already mentioned, the paintings of Callixtus' martyrdom in the catacomb of Calepodius survive in an extremely fragmentary state, and are somewhat like a giant jig-saw puzzle which has most of the pieces missing. There is, however, enough information to establish that the imagery was drawn from the apocryphal accounts of his life.

One small piece shows a hand, with the index and middle fingers extended, painted against a red background.<sup>135</sup> This could be part of the figure of the emperor, shown raising his arm to order Callixtus' torture. A second fragment portrays a standing nimbed figure - probably Callixtus - dressed in a long ochre-coloured robe, and wearing a bishop's pallium.<sup>136</sup> Further small fragments show the head of a tonsured figure;<sup>137</sup> the head of a soldier;<sup>138</sup> part of an inscription which reads:

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<sup>135</sup>Calepodio 1, fig.23

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., fig.28.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., fig.26.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., fig.27.

DOM[V]S CAL/LISTI;<sup>139</sup> a fragment depicting a piece of pallium decorated with a cross;<sup>140</sup> and a graffito with the name ELISEVS.<sup>141</sup>

Several of the larger fragments pertain to Callixtus' martyrdom by being thrown into a well. One portrays Callixtus, dressed in a long ochre-coloured tunic, with a stone tied around his neck (fig.20). One torturer, dressed in a close-fitting white jacket, with long slim trousers of the same colour, pushes on Callixtus' head with his two hands. Another torturer, dressed in a short tunic, and wearing black stockings, supports Callixtus' body. Above the body of the saint are remnants of an inscription [CALLIX]TVS, and below on the right are the letters P/VTE[VS]. The background is red. A smaller fragment shows a well, full of water, set against a grey background (fig.21). The fingers of two hands are all that remain of what must have been Callixtus falling into the well. Another fragment, painted on a grey background, shows three lines of a white inscription, written on a dark grey background: IN PVTEV[M]/[IACT]ANT SCM/[CA]L[LI]STVM (fig.22).

The final fragment depicts the deposition of Callixtus (fig.23). The scene is portrayed against an architectural backdrop. The body of Callixtus, dressed in an ochre robe and white pallium, lies horizontally - as if suspended in mid-air.

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<sup>139</sup>This piece is described by Nestori, *ibid.*, p.209.

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, fig.5,e.

He is attended by three figures on the left; the middle figure appears to have his right arm raised in the act of blessing.

In his publication of the excavations, Nestori felt that the fragments of the Callixtus cycle represented two separate painting programmes. He saw a disparity in the style of the image of Callixtus' martyrdom (fig.20), and that of his deposition (fig.23),<sup>142</sup> and noted that the martyrdom scene appeared to have been depicted twice (figs.20 and 21), each time with a different coloured background.<sup>143</sup> He assigned a 7th - 8th century date to the paintings, and felt that the fragments with red backgrounds belonged to the earlier painting programme, while those pieces with grey backgrounds were later.<sup>144</sup>

However, the likelihood of two painting campaigns is not supported by the archaeological evidence. Any disparity in style may be simply the result of different artists at work, and the fact that the paintings have two different coloured backgrounds is insufficient proof of two decorative campaigns. None of the fragments which have fallen from the wall display two layers of intonaco, and while an earlier plaster layer is visible beneath the image of the standing saint still in situ,<sup>145</sup> there is no indication that it was decorated with

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<sup>142</sup>Nestori, Calepodio 1, pp.203-204.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p.210.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., p.211.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., fig.9.

figures or scenes. The most convincing piece of evidence for two artistic programmes is that Callixtus' martyrdom appears to have been represented twice (figs.20, 21, and 22), although it is possible that these two scenes portray different moments in Callixtus' martyrdom. The Quiricus and Julitta cycle depicts the saints' arrest in two separate images: the arrest of Julitta followed by the arrest of Quiricus. More pertinent here, however, is Prudentius' description of the portrayal of Hippolytus' martyrdom, in which the artist depicted Hippolytus' death in two scenes.<sup>146</sup> It seems possible, therefore, that the painter of the Callixtus cycle did the same, and wished to place an emphasis on Callixtus' death as a martyr by dividing it into two separate episodes.

Once again, it is difficult to establish a secure date for the paintings. The documentary records provide a terminus ante quem of 827-844, as the Liber Pontificalis tells us that in Pope Gregory IV's time the body of Callixtus was buried in the church of S. Maria in Trastevere.<sup>147</sup> There is, however, no record of the date of its translation from the catacomb of Calepodius. A further passage in the Liber Pontificalis states that Pope Gregory III (731-741) "built the basilica of the holy pope and martyr Callixtus, demolished almost to its

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<sup>146</sup>"Peristephanon Liber," in Prudentius, 2, text and Eng. trans., H.J. Thomson, (London, and Harvard, 1961), pp.98-345, esp.312-315. For a discussion of this painting see Chapter Two.

<sup>147</sup>LP, 2, p.80.

foundations, with new structures, with a roof and he painted the whole thing".<sup>148</sup> Can this be, as Kinney has suggested, a reference to the underground chamber that housed Callixtus' tomb on the Via Aurelia?<sup>149</sup>

As Kinney admits, it requires a liberal reading of the Liber Pontificalis to see Callixtus' burial chamber as a "basilica". In addition, a dating within the pontificate of Gregory III is hampered by the fact that style of the paintings bears little resemblance to Pope Gregory III's work under the church of S. Crisogono, at Rome.<sup>150</sup> However, even taking into account the fact that the fragments of the Callixtus cycle are very damaged, and much of the surface modelling has been lost, the paintings find their best stylistic comparisons with 8th-century works. Certain characteristics recall the work of John VII (705-707): the free sense of movement, and the swirling tunic of the torturer who supports Callixtus' body in fig.20, resemble the figure of David from the west transenna in S. Maria Antiqua.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>"Basilicam sancti Calisti pontificis et martyris pene a fundamentis dirutam novis fabricis cum tecto construxit ad totam depinxit". LP, 1, p.419.

<sup>149</sup>For a discussion of the identification of the basilica referred to in Pope Gregory III's vita see D. Kinney, "S. Maria in Trastevere from its founding to 1215," (New York University, Ph.D. thesis, 1975), pp.73-79.

<sup>150</sup>G. Matthiae, Pittura Romana del Medioevo Secoli IV-X, 1 (repr. Rome 1987), figs.119, 120 and 121, plate 11; in the same volume: M. Andaloro, Aggiornamento Scientifico e Bibliografia, figs.18 and 19.

<sup>151</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 178.

Moreover, the slashes of dark lines that delineate the facial features of the soldier,<sup>152</sup> and to some extent the standing figure of Callixtus,<sup>153</sup> are also seen in the paintings of John VII, for example, the seraph on the apse wall of S. Maria Antiqua.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, this technique of portraying facial features also appears on the mid-8th century painting of Quiricus in prison in the Theodotus Chapel (fig.15), and creates the possibility of a date anywhere in the first half of the 8th century. In fact, the dark contours that define form in the Callixtus paintings find their best comparison in the paintings of the Erasmus cycle in S. Maria in Via Lata (figs.17 and 18), for which a rough mid-8th century date is proposed.

From the point of view of style, it would seem that the Callixtus cycle was most probably executed in the first half of the 8th century. Although the word basilica does not normally refer to the type of small underground chamber in which the Callixtus cycle is found, the same area is referred to as an ecclesia in the 7th-century Notitia Ecclesiarum Urbis Romae.<sup>155</sup> If we can accept that this space can be termed an ecclesia, we should be able to accept that it can also be

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<sup>152</sup>Nestori, Calepodio 1, fig.27.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., fig.28.

<sup>154</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 156/3.

<sup>155</sup>See R. Valentini, G. Zuchetti, Codice Topografico della Città di Roma, 2 (Rome, 1942), pp.93-94.

called a basilica. Certainly, a date in the middle of the 8th century fits well with the reference in the Liber Pontificalis that Pope Gregory III "built the basilica of the holy pope and martyr Callixtus... and he painted the whole thing".<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup>"Basilicam sancti Calisti pontificis et martyris... construxit ad totam depinxit". LP, 1, p.419.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CULTURAL CONTEXT

From the mid-6th century to the mid-8th century, Rome was technically part of the Byzantine Empire under the control of the imperial exarch at Ravenna.<sup>1</sup> Over the years Rome became increasingly alienated from her Byzantine overlords, an estrangement that was undoubtedly aggravated by the city's physical separation from the heart of the Byzantine Empire. In the 7th and 8th centuries the feelings of alienation were brought to a head by two major doctrinal disputes: the Monothelite and the Iconoclastic controversies. When Monothelitism was formulated in 624, it sparked a fierce debate over the number of wills operating in Christ.<sup>2</sup> The doctrine was originally supported in the West by Pope Honorius (625-638), but was condemned by Pope Martin I at the Lateran Council of 649.<sup>3</sup> The response to Pope Martin's opposition bears witness to the fact that, despite the growing estrangement between Rome and Constantinople, the power of the Byzantine capital could still be felt in the West. Since

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<sup>1</sup>For a survey of the relationship between Rome and the Byzantine Empire see P. Llewellyn, Rome in the Dark Ages, (London, 1971), pp.141-172.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of Monothelitism see V. Grumel, "Recherches sur l'histoire du monothélisme," Echos d'Orient, 27 (1928), pp.6-16, 257-77; 28 (1929), pp.19-34 and 272-282; 29 (1930), pp.16-28; P. Verghese, "The Monothelite Controversy. A Historical Survey," The Greek Theological Review, 13 (1968), pp.196-208.

<sup>3</sup>E. Caspar, "Die Lateransynode von 649," Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte, 51 (1932), pp.75-137.

Martin had been confirmed pope in 649 without imperial sanction, this event alone was sufficient to prompt intervention from Constantinople. When his resistance to Monothelitism became known, Emperor Constans II (641-668) dispatched Olympius, the exarch at Ravenna, to secure papal co-operation. The attempt was in vain. Olympius' successor, Theodore Calliopas, was then sent with orders to bring an end to papal opposition. In 653 Calliopas arrested Pope Martin in the Lateran, and brought him to Constantinople for trial in December 654. At the trial Martin was found guilty of treason, and exiled to Crimea where he died in 655.<sup>4</sup>

By the end of the 7th century, the authority that the Constantinopolitan emperors held in Rome had lessened considerably. In 692 Emperor Justinian II convened the Quinisext Council, which laid down, in 102 canons, rulings for ecclesiastical administration and ritual. The articles were sent to Pope Sergius I (687-701) for ratification, but since Sergius found several of the canons unacceptable, he refused to sign and also forbade publication of the articles. Justinian's reaction was similar to that of his grandfather, Constans II. He sent his spatharius Zacharias to Rome in order to arrest Sergius, but in doing so he underestimated the extent of the local support that the papacy enjoyed. Troops from Rome and Ravenna rallied behind the pope, and Zacharias had to appeal to Sergius' generosity in order to escape with

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<sup>4</sup>LP, 1, pp.336-338.

his life.<sup>5</sup>

The religious and political discord created by the controversies over Monothelitism, and the Quinisext Council, was aggravated further in the 8th century when Iconoclasm was proclaimed by Emperor Leo III c.726/730. This continued as imperial policy until 842, notwithstanding one brief hiatus between the years 787-815.<sup>6</sup> During this time the worship of religious imagery was prohibited, a major campaign was instigated in which all figural religious imagery was either destroyed or covered over, and disputes over what kind of religious art was acceptable dominated theological discussions. Once again, however, the Roman papacy was hostile to imperial policy and condemned Iconoclasm.<sup>7</sup> The result was that in the city of Rome religious figural imagery not only survived, but also continued to be practised.

In the mid-8th century, the problems of religious dissension, combined with Rome's insecure political situation, culminated in the final political break between the East and the West. In 752 the Lombards had captured Ravenna and were threatening to overcome all of imperial Italy. Faced with the

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<sup>5</sup>LP, 1, pp.372-374.

<sup>6</sup>For a discussion of the political and theological aspects of Iconoclasm, and the effect of Iconoclasm on the arts, see the papers in Iconoclasm, ed. A. Bryer, J. Herrin, (Birmingham, 1975).

<sup>7</sup>Immediately following his accession, Pope Gregory III (731-741) held a synod that condemned the persecution of images. LP, 1, pp.416-417.

imminent Lombard threat, and with the need for more powerful and trustworthy military support than Constantinople was able to offer, the papacy looked to the West for protection. By 753, when Pope Stephen II met with Pepin in his palace at Ponthion, near Paris, and created an alliance with the Franks,<sup>8</sup> there was no longer even the pretense of imperial control over Rome.

Despite Constantinople's waning authority, the city's religious and cultural life was becoming increasingly dominated by Greeks, many of whom were themselves fugitives from eastern doctrinal disputes, while others were refugees from the Arab invasions. The strength of the Greek presence in Rome can be measured by the growing number of Greek monasteries (in the 5th and 6th centuries there were none, by the 7th century there were six, and in the 8th century this number was increased to approximately ten);<sup>9</sup> at the second session of the Lateran Council of 649 there were 37 Greek monks present,<sup>10</sup> and from 678 through to 752 eleven of the thirteen popes were of Syrian, Sicilian, or Greek origin.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the city the new building and decorative programmes

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<sup>8</sup>LP, 1, pp.444-449.

<sup>9</sup>G. Ferrari, Early Roman Monasteries, Studi di antichità cristiana, 23 (Vatican City, 1957), pp.411-418.

<sup>10</sup>J. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio, 10 (Florence and Venice, 1758-), cols.909-910.

<sup>11</sup>The two exceptions are Benedict II (684-685) and Gregory II (715-731), both of whom were born in Rome.

displayed a distinctly Byzantine quality,<sup>12</sup> eastern liturgical customs were introduced into the Roman Church,<sup>13</sup> and, most important of all to this study, the influx of the Greeks into Rome precipitated an explosion of interest in the cult of saints and their relics.

The intent of this chapter is to examine non-Biblical hagiographical cycles within the context of 8th-century Rome. The influence of the newly arrived easterners and the cults of eastern saints and relics that they promulgated will be explored. The relationship between pictorial martyrdom cycles and the changing Roman liturgy will also be investigated, along with the special appeal these images had among members of the lay population.

#### Role of the Greeks

The influx of Greek immigrants into Rome caused a flourishing interest in cults of eastern saints and their relics, some of whom had been known in Rome since an early date, while others were newly introduced into the city.<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>12</sup>For a brief survey of Rome's art and architecture in this period see R. Krautheimer, Rome. Profile of a City, 312-1308, (Princeton, 1980), pp.89-108.

<sup>13</sup>For example, Pope Sergius I (687-701) introduced the Marian feasts of the Annunciation, Nativity, and Dormition. LP, 1, p.376.

<sup>14</sup>For the role of the Greek monks in the introduction and promulgation of the cults of eastern saints in Rome see J.M. Sansterre, Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques

new-found interest in eastern saints is reflected in the decoration of Roman churches, particularly S. Maria Antiqua. Greek saints predominate in the selection of portraits that decorate the left aisle of the church,<sup>15</sup> and the chapel to the right of the sanctuary is adorned almost exclusively with eastern medical saints.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, these images are portrait-icons, not narrative cycles, and on the surface it appears that only a small percentage of the eastern saints venerated in Rome were commemorated by having their torments and sufferings portrayed on the walls of churches. The problem of survival should, however, be taken into account. For example, Muñoz records that part of a painted narrative cycle (which he believed represented the martyrdom of a saint) was discovered beneath the 12th-century campanile on the left (west) side wall of the church of S. Giorgio in Velabro.<sup>17</sup> As the painting followed the same three-tiered format (narrative cycle/row of standing saints/painted velum) as the 8th-century

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byzantine et carolingienne, 1 (Brussels, 1980), pp.147-162 (hereafter Sansterre). For a survey of the cults of eastern saints in Byzantine Rome see E. Donckel, Ausserömische Heilige in Rom, von den Anfängen unter Liberius bis Leo IV, (Luxembourg, 1938).

<sup>15</sup>These paintings were originally described by Rushforth, pp.29-36.

<sup>16</sup>For the most recent treatment of the paintings inside this chapel see P.J. Nordhagen, "The Frescoes of John VII (705-707)," Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, 3 (Rome, 1968), pp.55-66.

<sup>17</sup>A. Muñoz, Il restauro della basilica di S. Giorgio al Velabro in Roma, (Rome, 1926), pp.37-38.

decorations in the left aisle of S. Maria Antiqua,<sup>18</sup> and the cycle of Paul and Anastasius from the church of S. Adriano (fig.22), it is possible the work was executed in the 8th century, although admittedly the evidence is tenuous. Nevertheless, an 8th-century date would link the narrative cycle to the translation of the head of Saint George, which had been "rediscovered" in the Lateran and translated by Pope Zacharias to S. Giorgio in Velabro.<sup>19</sup> Possibly this cycle portrayed events from the life of Saint George, but there is no longer any trace of these paintings in the church, and no photographs of the cycle appear to have been taken at the time of Muñoz's discovery. While it is an impossible task to hypothesise about the number of works that may have been lost to us, it is worthwhile to keep in mind that all the early non-Biblical mural cycles are painted cycles. Whereas mosaics are a durable medium, wall paintings are relatively fragile, and more susceptible to the damage caused by people and nature. Furthermore, as religious beliefs, patrons, or artistic tastes changed, so did the paintings in churches - especially in large centres such as Rome.

It is difficult to deny the influential role the easterners played in the promulgation of cycles of non-Biblical saints in Rome. First, the portrayal of these cycles initially gained popularity in the East. Second, four of the

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<sup>18</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 192-193.

<sup>19</sup>LP, 1, p.434.

surviving cycles depict eastern saints, and are located in diaconiae, the charitable institutions which originated in the East, and were introduced in Rome towards the end of the 7th century, while the city was still under Byzantine control.<sup>20</sup> The Greek influence in the establishment of diaconiae is further demonstrated by the prominence of eastern saints in their dedications: of the 19 diaconiae in existence at the end of the 8th century,<sup>21</sup> five were dedicated to the Virgin (S. Maria Antiqua, S. Maria in Via Lata, S. Maria in Cosmedin, S. Maria in Aquiro, and S. Maria in Domnica); and six to specifically eastern saints (S. Giorgio in Velabro, S. Adriano, SS. Sergio e Baccho, S. Teodoro, SS. Cosma e Damiano, and S. Alessio). Although the general influence of the Greeks

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<sup>20</sup>For the literature on diaconiae see: L. Duchesne, "Les titres presbytéraux et les diaconies," Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire, 7 (1887), pp.217-243; J. Lestocquoy, "Administration de Rome et diaconies du VIIe au IXe siècle," Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana, 7 (1930), pp.261-298 (hereafter Lestocquoy); H.L. Marrou, "L'Origine orientale des diaconies romaines," Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'école française de Rome, 57 (1940), pp.95-142; O. Bertolini, "Per la storia delle diaconie romane nell'alto medioevo sino alle fine del secolo VIII," Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria, 70 (1947), pp.1-145; F. Niederer, "The Roman Diaconiae," (Ph.D. diss. New York University, 1950).

<sup>21</sup>Since many of the churches are not referred to as diaconiae until the pontificate of Leo III (795-816), it is difficult to know whether they were founded in the 8th or 9th century. As Duchesne states, however, the number of urban diaconiae under Hadrian I and Leo III was probably the same (LP, 2, p.43 n.79). Moreover, although the number of diaconiae in existence at the end of the 8th century is normally cited as 18, SS. Silvestro e Martino is included as it is referred to as a diaconia in the biography of Leo III (LP, 2, p.12). Thus, the number of Roman diaconiae is cited as 19.

is clear, it is more difficult to be precise regarding the extent of their role in the execution of each cycle. That is, were the cycles executed expressly for Greek patrons, or did the Greek influence stimulate Roman patrons to portray cycles of eastern saints?

The cult of Saint Erasmus was centred on his burial site at Formia, in Campania, and was introduced into Rome by a group of Greek monks who dedicated a monastery in his name on the Coelian Hill.<sup>22</sup> Exactly when the monastery was founded is not known, but it was in existence in the mid-7th century at least.<sup>23</sup> By the 8th century Erasmus' popularity in Rome seems to have been at its height. This is indicated by the mention of his monastery on the Coelian Hill as one of the landmarks in Rome in the 8th-century Einsiedeln pilgrims' itinerary;<sup>24</sup> the inclusion of his portrait in the row of Greek and Latin bishop-saints in the left aisle of the church of S. Maria Antiqua;<sup>25</sup> the presence of his relics in the church of S.

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<sup>22</sup>That the monastery was founded by Greeks was proposed by De Rossi, and is based on a Greek epigraph, now lost, which listed donations to the monastery. For a copy of the inscription see F. Camobreco, "Il monastero di S. Erasmo sul Celio," Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria, 28 (1905), pp.265-300, esp. pp.274-275.

<sup>23</sup>The Liber Pontificalis records that Pope Adeodatus (672-676) grew up there. LP, 1, p.346.

<sup>24</sup>"Einsiedeln Itinerary," in R. Valentini and G. Zuchetti, Codice Topografico della Città di Roma, 2 (Rome, 1942), pp.155-207, esp. p.198.

<sup>25</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plates 192-193.

Angelo in Pescheria;<sup>26</sup> and the paintings of his martyrdom in the church of S. Maria in Via Lata (figs.19 and 20). The portrait of Erasmus in S. Maria Antiqua is accompanied by a Greek inscription, but the inscriptions accompanying his martyrdom in S. Maria in Via Lata are in Latin. It appears, therefore, that the cult of Erasmus, which was introduced into Rome by the Greeks, had gained such prominence by the mid-8th century that it was venerated by both the Greek and Latin speaking members of the community.

Unlike the cult of Erasmus, no written record survives to indicate that the cult of the Forty Martyrs was introduced into Rome by Greeks, although this certainly seems to have been the case. Notwithstanding the dubious evidence that their relics were deposited in the basilica of S. Maria del Priorato on the Aventine in the 6th century,<sup>27</sup> they do appear to have been in the city in the mid-7th century. In the chapel at the entrance to S. Maria Antiqua, the paintings of the Forty Martyrs in the apse surround a large, square-shaped

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<sup>26</sup>This is recorded in an inscription from the church, see Lestocquoy, fig.2 and p.281. Although the inscription appears to fit either the 755 or 770, a 755 date has been convincingly argued by Bertolini, "Per la storia delle diaconie romane nell'alto medioevo sino alle fine del secolo VIII," Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria, 70 (1947), pp.1-145, esp. pp.26-28.

<sup>27</sup>This is based on Tomasetti's suspect assignation of a 6th-century date to their reliquary urn and its inscription. See F. Tomasetti, "Notizie intorno ad alcune chiese di Roma," Bulletino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma, 33 (1905), pp.329-343, esp. p.331. His 6th-century date is accepted by Donckel, op.cit., (note 14 supra) p.108.

hole, indicating that an altar probably stood in this space.<sup>28</sup> It is likely that this altar held relics of the Forty Martyrs, which were probably acquired by the church in the mid-7th century, the suggested date for the paintings. Indeed, the Forty Martyrs appear to have been accorded special veneration in S. Maria Antiqua, as attested by their paintings in the left aisle of the church (fig.4), and in the chapel at the entrance. In both cases the paintings are accompanied by Greek inscriptions, and their popularity seems to be linked to the stationing of imperial troops in the city, and to the veneration accorded the Forty Martyrs by the upper ranks of the Byzantine army. It is also tempting to see the interest in them on the Palatine as being linked to the suggestion that S. Maria Antiqua served as the guard room to the Imperial Palace, prior to its conversion into a church.<sup>29</sup>

While the cults of the Forty Martyrs and Erasmus were among those introduced into Rome by the Greek community over the course of the 7th and 8th centuries, the cult of Quiricus and Julitta appears to have been established in the city at an early date. Their relics were taken West in the late-4th

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<sup>28</sup>Wilpert, *RMM*, 4/1, plate 199.

<sup>29</sup>This is tentatively suggested by G. Lugli, "Aedes Caesarum in Palatino e Templum Novum Divi Augusti," Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica del Governatorato di Roma, 69 (1941), pp.29-58, esp. p.36.

century,<sup>30</sup> and by the late-5th century their legend was circulating in Rome, as their apocryphal acts were condemned by Pope Gelasius in the Council of 495, who doubted their authenticity.<sup>31</sup> Archaeological evidence also indicates that the church of SS. Quiricus and Julitta, which stands today just east of the Roman Forum, was founded in the 6th century,<sup>32</sup> and although its original dedication is not certain,<sup>33</sup> the church was already being referred to as S. Ciriacus in the 8th century.<sup>34</sup> This is a name by which Quiricus is also known. For example, in the identifying inscriptions which accompany images of Quiricus and Julitta in two separate churches in Cappadocia, one identifies Quiricus as KHPIAKOC,<sup>35</sup> while the other identifies him as KYPHKOC.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>In the late 4th century, Bishop Amator brought their relics from Antioch to Auxerre. Acta SS., June 16 (Paris and Rome, 1863), p.17, #17.

<sup>31</sup>PL, 59, col.164.

<sup>32</sup>See: S. Corbett, "The Church of SS. Quirico e Giulitta in Rome," Papers of the British School at Rome, 28 (1960), pp.33-50; M. Bosi, SS. Quirico e Giulitta, (Le Chiese di Roma Illustrate), 60 (Rome, 1960); Krautheimer, CBCR, 4 (1970), pp.37-70.

<sup>33</sup>Bosi, op.cit., believes that the church was originally dedicated to SS. Stephen and Lawrence. This is based on the fact that in 1588 Ugonio described a mosaic, of antique date, which portrayed SS. Stephen and Lawrence in the apse of the church.

<sup>34</sup>"Einsiedeln Itinerary," in R. Valentini, G. Zuchetti, Codice Topografico della Città di Roma, 2 (Rome, 1942), pp.155-207, esp. p.177.

<sup>35</sup>This is found in Ali Reis sokak, at Ortahisar. See N. Thierry, "Matériaux Nouveaux en Cappadoce 1982," Byzantion, 54 (1984), pp.315-357, esp. p.336.

Nevertheless, there are numerous saints named Quiricus, just as there are several variations to the spelling of his name.<sup>37</sup>

All that can be said, therefore, is that it is probable that the 8th-century Roman interest in the cult of Quiricus can be found, not only in the paintings of his martyrdom in the Theodotus Chapel, but also in the church dedicated to him opposite the Roman Forum. It is difficult to establish whether this revival of interest in the cult of Quiricus and Julitta was instigated by the Greek community in Rome, or whether the Greek presence excited Roman interest in Greek saints. Although the paintings in S. Maria Antiqua were executed for a patron with a Greek name, the dispensator Theodotus, whether he was of Greek or Roman origin is uncertain. As Tom Brown has noted, Greek names were used throughout the Empire, irrespective of race.<sup>38</sup>

Connections between the Greeks and the narrative cycle of Saints Paul and Anastasius from the church of S. Adriano are difficult to establish, given the uncertainty over the exact identity of the saints represented in the paintings. In the 8th century, the relics of a saint named Anastasius were

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<sup>36</sup>This is found in the church of Taghar. See G. de Jerphanion, Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce, 2 (Paris, 1925), p.192.

<sup>37</sup>For example, the Bibliotheca Sanctorum, 3 (Rome, 1963), cols.1292-1308, lists 27 saints named Ciriaco.

<sup>38</sup>Tom Brown, Gentlemen and Officers, (British School at Rome, 1984), p.67.

placed in the church of S. Angelo in Pescheria,<sup>39</sup> but whether these are the relics of the saint who was martyred with his companions at Nicomedia, and whose story appears to be depicted in S. Adriano, is impossible to know.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, if the cycle in S. Adriano does represent the martyrs from Nicomedia, these paintings appear to be the sole surviving record of their legend, and nothing is known of when their cult was introduced into Rome. What can be said, however, is that the appearance of these paintings, like those that decorate the tomb of Pope Callixtus, was influenced by the Greek practice of adorning the tombs of saints, or their reliquary chambers, with a visual record of the saint's life.

#### Cult of Relics

Interest in depicting pictorial cycles of non-Biblical saints is intricately linked to the roles of the easterners in promoting the cult of relics in Rome, and in changing the papacy's stance regarding the inviolability of saints' tombs

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<sup>39</sup>This is recorded in an 8th century inscription from the church. See Lestocquoy, fig.2 and p.281.

<sup>40</sup>The identification of Anastasius as one of the martyrs from Nicomedia is suggested by A. Mancini, "La chiesa medioevale di S. Adriano del Foro Romano, " Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Rendiconti, 40 (1967-1968), pp.191-245, esp. p.210.

and their relics.<sup>41</sup> Previously the papacy had held to a law stated in the Theodosian Code, issued in Constantinople in 386, which stated that "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."<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, however, the law proved to be ineffective against the enormous appeal of relics, which gave members of the faithful a tangible representative of an unseen, supernatural world. To be able to touch a relic was like touching the saint himself, and the joy experienced by those who had the great fortune to touch relics is described by Gregory of Nyssa, who states, "shedding tears of reverence and passion, [the faithful] address to the martyr their prayer of intercession as though he were hale and present."<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the powers accorded the saint during his lifetime were continued through the agency of his relics after his death, and the lives of the saints abound with tales of posthumous miracles. To cite just one example, the 7th-century Vita of Saint Demetrios records the story of an aristocrat from Thessaloniki who had fallen ill with an internal haemorrhage which no doctor was able to

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<sup>41</sup>See J. McCulloh, "From Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change in Papal Relic Policy from the 6th to the 8th century," Pietas. Festschrift für Bernhard Kötting, ed. E. Dassmann and K. Suso Frank, (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 8, 1980), pp.313-324.

<sup>42</sup>The Theodosian Code, tr. Clyde Pharr, (Princeton, 1952), 9, 17, 7.

<sup>43</sup>PG, 46, col.740.

treat. His cure was ultimately procured when he was taken to the church of St. Demetrios, where the saint's body lay, and on entering the church his health was restored.<sup>44</sup> In the Medieval world, full of magic and superstition, the relics of saints were regarded as powerful talismans, and their value cannot be overstated.

Despite the fact that the law regarding burial practice was issued in Constantinople, it was adhered to more strictly in the West than in the East. In the late-6th century Constantia, the wife of Emperor Maurice, wrote to Pope Gregory I to request the head of Saint Paul which she wished to place in a church she was constructing in the apostle's honour. Her request was refused, as Gregory explained that the custom of trading corporeal relics was not practised in Rome, and he defended his position by relating a story about the power of relics to kill those who moved them. Gregory then added that a contact relic, or brandeum, could be sent if Constantia so wished.<sup>45</sup> In the minds of the easterners, however, there seem to have been doubts about the efficacy of contact relics, as

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<sup>44</sup>P. Lemerle, Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius, 1 (Paris, 1979), pp.68-71.

<sup>45</sup>"Gregorii I Papae, Registrum Epistolarum IV, 30," Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae, 1 (Berlin, 1981), pp.263-266. The reliability of Gregory's statements regarding the Roman practice in the trade of relics is discussed by J. McCulloh, "The cult of relics in the letters and 'Dialogues' of Gregory the Great: a lexicographical study," Traditio, 32 (1976), pp.145-184.

they appear to have been viewed as poor substitutes.<sup>46</sup>

In requesting the head of Saint Paul, Constantia incorrectly assumed that the cult-related dismembering or translation of saints' bodies, which had been practised in the East since the 4th century, was also carried out in Rome.<sup>47</sup> In fact, there is no evidence of it in Rome until the mid-7th century, at which time some of the newly-arrived easterners are recorded as having brought with them relics of their local saints. For example, when monks from south-eastern Asia Minor established themselves at Aquae Salviae in the 7th century, they brought with them the head of the Persian martyr Anastasius;<sup>48</sup> and the Dalmatian Pope John IV (640-642) had the bodies of Saints Venantius, Anastasius, Maurus, and others, brought from Salona and sites on the Dalmatian coast, and placed them in the San Venanzio Chapel in the Lateran Baptistery.<sup>49</sup> Several cult-related translations are also recorded by popes of Greek-speaking origin. The Palestinian Pope Theodore (642-649) had the bodies of Saints Primus and Felicianus moved from their burial site on the Via Nomentana

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<sup>46</sup>See McCulloh, op.cit.

<sup>47</sup>For a discussion of the translation of relics in the East and West see H. Delehaye, Les origines du culte des martyrs, (Brussels, 1933), pp.50-99.

<sup>48</sup>For the date of the translation of Anastasius' relics see Sansterre, pp.15-16.

<sup>49</sup>LP, 1, p.330.

to the church of S. Stefano Rotondo on the Coelian Hill;<sup>50</sup> and the Sicilian Pope Leo II (682-683) transferred a group of bodies, including those of Saints Simplicius, Faustinianus, and Beatrix, from their resting place on the Via Portuense and placed them in the church dedicated to the apostle Paul, which he had built near S. Bibiana.<sup>51</sup>

The importance of relics to the Greek community in Rome was a strong factor in relaxing the papacy's stance regarding trade in corporeal relics, but it was not until the pontificate of Paul I (757-767) that the translations of saints' bodies began to take place on a large scale. Due to his concern about the neglected state of the suburban cemeteries, and the plundering and destruction they had undergone during the Lombard siege of Rome in 756, Pope Paul began a campaign to remove the bodies of saints from the catacombs and place them in churches within the walls of Rome. Many of these relics were placed in S. Silvestro in Capite, a monastery which was founded by Pope Paul in his house and which, interestingly enough, was staffed by Greek monks.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p.332.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p.360.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp.464-465. Although the Liber Pontificalis states simply that the translations took place because the catacombs were in a neglected state, in a synod on July 4, 761, Pope Paul decreed that the bodies were moved because the Lombards plundered and destroyed many of the catacombs during their siege of Rome in 756. See V. Federici, "Regesto del monastero di S. Silvestro de Capite," Archivio della Reale Società Romana di Storia Patria, 22 (1899), pp.213-300, esp. p.257.

Thus, faced with the ruined state of the catacombs, and the fact that a more secure resting place for the bodies of the saints was needed, the Roman church succumbed to pressure and relaxed its stance regarding the inviolability of saints' tombs. Finally, as an added boost to the flourishing relic trade, the Second Council of Nicaea passed a decree in 787 which stated that any church consecrated without relics should make this defect good.<sup>53</sup>

The efflorescence of saints' lives on the walls of Roman churches is closely linked to this explosion of interest in the cult of relics, in that the Roman practice follows the eastern trend of decorating the tomb of a saint, or his reliquary shrine, with a pictorial record of the saint's life. For example, the cycle of Saint Callixtus decorates his tomb, and both the cycles of Saints Quiricus and Julitta and Saints Paul and Anastasius adorn chapels that contain reliquary altars. Although several records attest that relics of saints named Anastasius were in Rome at this time,<sup>54</sup> there is no documentation to confirm that the relics of Quiricus and

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<sup>53</sup>"The Seven Ecumenical Councils," A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, 14, ed. H. Percival (New York, 1900), p.560.

<sup>54</sup>For example, an 8th century inscription that records that the relics of Anastasius were in S. Angelo in Pescheria (Lestocquoy, fig.2 and p.281); a 7th century pilgrims' itinerary mentions the relics of Anastasius the Persian at Aquae Salviae ("De locis sanctorum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae," in R. Valentini, G. Zuchetti, Codice Topografico della Città di Roma, 2 (Rome, 1942), p.109); and Pope John IV transferred the relics of Anastasius, from their burial site in Salona, to the San Venanzio Chapel (LP, 1, p.330).

Julitta were in the city as early as the 8th century. They had, however, been kept in the church of St. John the Baptist at Ravenna since the early-5th century,<sup>55</sup> and there is the tantalising possibility that some were presented to Pope Zacharias, as a thank-offering, after his successful intervention during the Lombard siege of Ravenna in 743. Furthermore, even though no tomb or reliquary shrine was found in association with the cycles of Saint Erasmus and the Forty Martyrs, it must be remembered that altars were not necessarily permanent fixtures. Since the churches of S. Maria in Via Lata and S. Maria Antiqua were both partially abandoned in the Medieval period, any portable altars would have been removed, especially if made of valuable materials. The possibility that the cycles of Erasmus and the Forty Martyrs decorated reliquary shrines is, at least, supported by the fact that the relics of Erasmus were in Rome in the 8th century,<sup>56</sup> and there is every indication that the relics of the Forty Martyrs were also.<sup>57</sup>

Unfortunately, since the 7th and 8th centuries in Rome are truly a "Dark Age" in terms of surviving written records, it is not possible to provide solid proof that each painted cycle decorates the saint's tomb or his reliquary shrine.

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<sup>55</sup>Acta SS., June 16, (Paris and Rome, 1863), p.19.

<sup>56</sup>They are recorded in the inscription in S. Angelo in Pescheria, see Lestocquoy, fig.2 and p.281.

<sup>57</sup>See supra pp.137-138.

Nevertheless, given the evidence that is available, this does appear to have been the case.

### Art and Liturgy

The practice of reading the acts of the martyrs during the church service took place from the late-4th/early-5th century onwards in Africa, Gaul, and Milan, but was slow to be accepted in Rome.<sup>58</sup> Although the saints were honoured daily in the Roman Church, this tribute consisted of a simple reading from a martyrology, in which only the martyrs' names, along with the place and date of their martyrdom, were found.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the acts of the 494 Council in Rome stipulate reservations in accepting the deeds of the martyrs and state that, according to ancient custom, the passions of

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<sup>58</sup>As early as 393 the Acts of the Council of Hippo stipulate: "Liceat etiam legi passiones martyrum cum anniversarii dies eorum celebrantur." Acts of the Council are printed among the works of Pope Leo I: PL, 56, cols.418-433; passage cited: col.429. For the reading of martyr literature during the celebration of the liturgy see B. de Gaiffier, "La lecture des actes des martyrs dans la prière liturgique en Occident," Analecta Bollandiana, 72 (1954), pp.134-166.

<sup>59</sup>In reply to Patriarch Eulogius of Alexandria, Pope Gregory the Great says that the saints are honoured daily during Mass, and that thanks to the martyrology the diverse origins of each saint is known. "Epistola VIII, 28," Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae, 2 (Berlin, 1974), p.29. For the use and reading of the early martyrologies see B. de Gaiffier, "De l'usage et de la lecture du martyrologe," Analecta Bollandiana, 79 (1961), pp.40-53; see also H. Quentin, Les martyrologes historiques, (Paris, 1908).

the martyrs were not read in the Roman church.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, at the end of the 8th century, Pope Hadrian allowed the passions of the martyrs to be read on their feast days, which were celebrated in the saints' titular churches - both inside and outside the walls - whether or not the church held the body of the saint.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, Pope Hadrian introduced the reading of martyr literature into St. Peter's.<sup>62</sup> Thus the custom, which was already current elsewhere in the Empire, was finally accepted in Rome.<sup>63</sup>

The acceptance of the reading of martyr literature into the Roman liturgy, and the blossoming interest in the depiction of the lives of the martyrs on the walls of Roman

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<sup>60</sup>PL, 59, cols.160-161.

<sup>61</sup>In Pope Hadrian I's letter to Charlemagne he writes "Magis enim passiones sanctorum martyrum sacri canones censuentes ut liceat etiam eas legi cum anniversarii dies eorum celebrantur." Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae, 5 (Berlin, 1974), p.49. For the location of the celebration of martyrs' feast days see A. Chavasse, "Les grands cadres de la célébration à Rome 'in urbe' et 'extra muros' jusqu'au VIIIe siècle," Revue Bénédictine, 96 (1986), pp.7-26.

<sup>62</sup>Ordo XII, written in Gaul in the late 8th/early 9th century by a monk who was aware of Roman practices, states that "passiones sanctorum vel gesta ipsorum usque Adriani tempora tantummodo ibi legebantur, ubi ecclesia ipsius sancti vel titulus erat. Ipse vero tempore suro renovere iussit et in ecclesia sancti Petri legendas esse instituit." M. Andrieu, Les ordines romani du haut moyen-âge, 2 (Louvain, 1948), pp.465-466. This is confirmed in the second recension of Ordo XIV, ibid., pp.23-41, esp. p.41.

<sup>63</sup>B. de Gaiffier, "La lecture des passions des martyrs à Rome avant le IXe siècle," Analecta Bollandiana, 87 (1969), pp.63-78.

churches, are both consequences of the rising popularity in the cult of saints. Indeed, the development of the accounts of the martyrs follows a similar pattern in literature, art, and liturgy. In the early years of the church, martyr literature began as simple stories about believers who suffered for their faith. By the 7th and 8th centuries, these stories had evolved into complex tales of miraculous deeds and superhuman feats, filled with more fiction than fact. Similarly, the single martyrdom scenes and abbreviated cycles, that are exemplified in the 4th-century images of Saint Barlaam or Saint Hippolytus,<sup>64</sup> gave way to a more expansive visual account of the martyr's life, as illustrated by the paintings of the Quiricus and Julitta cycle in S. Maria Antiqua. At the end of the 8th century, the celebration of the martyrs' feast days, which had previously consisted of reading from the somewhat dry martyrs' lists, was livened by the addition of narrative content. Thus, in response to the popular interest in the cult of saints, the stories of the martyrs - once noted for their simplicity - were expanded and embellished in literature, art, and liturgy.

When Pope Hadrian allowed the reading of martyr literature into the Roman Church, it is believed that he was putting his official seal on a practice that had been carried out for a long time in some of Rome's lesser churches (eg. tituli). Given the developments that were taking place in art

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<sup>64</sup>See Chapter Two.

and liturgy, it is interesting to consider how Callixtus' feast day was celebrated at his tomb on the Via Aurelia. As excerpts from Callixtus' passion were read, the faithful were confronted by paintings that depicted the major events. As a visual reinforcement of the church readings, these images brought the story to life, and for those who might doubt the fabulous nature of Callixtus' legend, they made the words believable. Throughout the Middle Ages, images were often used as proof of a story's veracity, as they were considered more trustworthy than the written word. For example, the 7th-century writings of Saint Anastasius of Sinai encourage the use of "material proofs" (ie. visual aids), explaining that writings could easily be corrupted.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, whether the practice of reading the passions of the martyrs at their tombs, and titular churches, also extended to include their reliquary shrines is not known. In other words, does the special relationship between art and liturgy, which is found in the paintings adorning Callixtus' tomb, also extend to include the cycles of saints Quiricus and Julitta, Erasmus, Paul and Anastasius, and the Forty Martyrs?

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<sup>65</sup>"Hodegos," PG, 89, cols.35-310, esp. col.40. For a discussion of this text see A. Kartsonis, Anastasis. The Making of an Image, (Princeton, 1986), pp.40-67. See also the discussion of images of Saint Demetrios and Saint Spyridon in Chapter Two.

Role of the lay population

In Christian Medieval society, saints served a valuable role as intercessors between members of the faithful and their remote and unseen God. Saints were appealed to in times of crisis, and served a myriad of public and private functions that ranged from the protection of cities against invading armies, to the cure of the sick, and the exorcism of the possessed. Due to their close relationship with Christ, the Virgin and John the Baptist were considered the two principal intercessor figures, whereas it seems that non-Biblical saints - who occupy the lowest rung in the hierarchy of holy figures - had special appeal among members of the lay population. From the aristocracy, down to the poorer classes - all in search of their personal intercessors in the world beyond - the attraction of non-Biblical saints lay in their accessibility. Indeed, the efflorescence of cycles depicting their lives on the walls of Roman churches appears to have been closely connected to the needs of the lay community. For example, four of the five surviving cycles are located in diaconiae, the charitable institutions that were largely founded and administered by the lay population. In addition, one of the cycles is known to have been produced for a lay patron, and it is possible the others were also: they are painted images (the least expensive artistic medium), and located in secondary areas of the less important churches in

the city.

Due to the prevalence of non-Biblical hagiographical cycles in diaconiae, a brief survey of the institutions is in order, and, in particular, the role the laity played in their administration. Unfortunately, our knowledge of how diaconiae functioned is limited. It is reliant on a few surviving inscriptions, plus the lists of donations made by the papacy which are recorded in the Liber Pontificalis, and occasional references in the Liber Diurnus (a body of papal regulations compiled from 7th and 8th-century sources). Last, but not least, is the evidence supplied by the surviving diaconiae and their decoration.

The earliest diaconiae were founded in a Rome towards the end of the 7th century in order to serve the needs of the poor.<sup>66</sup> They relied on donations made by both the papacy and the lay aristocracy, but initially it appears that their day to day administration was primarily the responsibility of the lay community. At the head of diaconiae there was a dispensator and a pater.<sup>67</sup> While the office of dispensator could be held by a lay person, the slightly more exalted office of pater was restricted to members of the clergy. A mid-8th century inscription, that still survives in the narthex of S. Maria in Cosmedin, lists donations of land that

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<sup>66</sup>The earliest mention of diaconiae in Rome is found in the biography of Pope Benedict III (684-685): LP, 1, p.363.

<sup>67</sup>For the roles of pater and dispensator see Bertolini, op.cit., (note 20 supra), pp.28-38.

were made by the dispensator, a certain Duke Eustathius, military commander in Rome. In return for his charity, Eustathius hoped to receive remission from his sins.<sup>68</sup> As Eustathius is recorded elsewhere as having been sent to Ravenna as an emissary by Pope Stephen II,<sup>69</sup> he obviously occupied a position of high social standing in Rome, and was well able to tend to the financial needs of a diaconia. In a second inscription, which surrounds the portrait of Theodotus in S. Maria Antiqua, Theodotus is identified as dispensator of the diaconia.<sup>70</sup> As his portrait shows him without a tonsure, and as another portrait in the church depicts him with his wife and two children, he is clearly a lay person. The name Theodotus is known to us in two other 8th-century sources. An inscription from S. Angelo in Pescheria, which seems to be dated to the year 755,<sup>71</sup> states that Theodotus, who had earlier held the office of duke, but who was now primicerius sanctae sedis apostolicae and pater of the diaconia, founded

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<sup>68</sup>For the inscription in S. Maria in Cosmedin see Lestocquoy, pp.277-279. For the dating of the inscription see N. Gray, "The Paleography of Latin Inscriptions in the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth centuries in Italy," Papers of the British School at Rome, 16 (1948), pp.38-162, esp. p.55.

<sup>69</sup>"Codex Carolinus," Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae, 3 (Berlin, 1892), pp.496-657, esp. p.569 n.49.

<sup>70</sup>For the full inscription see Chapter Three.

<sup>71</sup>Lestocquoy, p.281. The inscription can be interpreted as referring to the years 755 and 770, but, as Bertolini has argued, the earlier date is more likely. See O. Bertolini, "Per la storia delle diaconiae romane nell'alto medioevo sino alla fine del secolo VIII," Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria, 70 (1947), pp.1-145, esp. pp.25-28.

S. Angelo in Pescheria in order to atone for his sins.<sup>72</sup> As the inscription states that he was once a duke, he is generally identified with the Theodotus who is mentioned in the Liber Pontificalis as the uncle and tutor of Pope Hadrian I, and who once held the positions of consul and duke.<sup>73</sup> Is this the same Theodotus as the one represented in S. Maria Antiqua? The first was a lay person, while the second, as the holder of the positions of primicerius sanctae sedis apostolicae and pater, was clearly a member of the clergy. Although it is impossible to be certain on the basis of the available evidence, it seems that Theodotus, after holding the position of dispensator in S. Maria Antiqua, entered the clergy and rose to one of the highest positions in the papal administration, that of primicerius sanctae sedis apostolicae. He also became the benefactor of S. Angelo in Pescheria. Such munificence served his personal needs as well as those of the poor. His act of charity gave him more status in the community, while at the same time it also satisfied his own feelings of piety. Furthermore, by making such donations Theodotus hoped to atone for his sins, a process that would greatly facilitate his passage to heaven.

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<sup>72</sup>For the office of primicerius sanctae sedis apostolicae, which is the same as that of primicerius notariorum, see J. Osborne, "The portrait of Pope Leo IV in San Clemente, Rome: a re-examination of the so-called 'square nimbus' in Medieval art," Papers of the British School at Rome, 47 (1979), pp.58-65, esp. pp.60-61.

<sup>73</sup>LP, 1, p.148.

Since the two dispensators whose names are known to us both held the title of duke, and as eight of the diaconiae are dedicated to soldier saints (S. Giorgio, S. Adriano, S. Eustachio, SS. Sergio e Baccho, S. Teodoro, and SS. Nereo ed Achilleo), the military seem to have been closely involved in their organisation and administration. By the end of the 8th century, this role was largely taken over by the church, as the interests of the papacy, which initially consisted of making donations only, were expanded to include the foundation of new diaconiae and the restoration of existing ones.<sup>74</sup>

In their concern with providing for the needs of the poor, diaconiae served both a secular and religious function. Even though it may have been only certain chapels inside the churches that were designated for use as diaconiae,<sup>75</sup> the fact that all the Roman diaconiae were instituted in religious buildings indicates how closely the spiritual and temporal needs of the community were intertwined. Although the provision of such mundane needs as food was paramount, the fact that the religious well-being of the poor was not

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<sup>74</sup>Pope Hadrian I rebuilt the churches of S. Adriano and SS. Cosma e Damiano and founded diaconiae there (LP, 1, p.509); he also made restorations to the diaconia of SS. Sergius and Bacchus (LP, 1, p.512, p.522 n.123). In addition, the diaconia at SS. Nereo ed Achilleo was probably founded by Pope Leo III, as he rebuilt the existing titulus (for the construction of the Carolingian church see Krautheimer, CBCR, 3, pp.135-152, esp. pp.148-151), and the building is first referred to as a diaconia in his biography, which lists some of the donations he made to it (LP, 2, p.9, p.21).

<sup>75</sup>F. Niederer, op.cit., (note 20 supra), p.179.

overlooked is confirmed by the inscription in S. Maria in Cosmedin. The inscription records a number of donations that were made to the diaconia, with the stipulation that the pater pay a priest to celebrate Mass daily.<sup>76</sup>

By supplying food for the poor, diaconiae took over the role of the imperial annone which, although still functioning in the time of Pope Gregory the Great, had virtually ceased by the later 7th century.<sup>77</sup> In order to facilitate the distribution of food, most of the diaconiae were concentrated in the centre of Rome, around the main food supply areas, and some were even built over buildings that belonged to the imperial grain supply. S. Maria in Via Lata occupies the site of a Roman horreum; S. Maria Antiqua and S. Teodoro are located on either side of the Horrea Aggripiana; S. Maria in Cosmedin is built over the ancient statio annonae; S. Giorgio in Velabro is located in an area dependent on the grain supply; and S. Angelo in Pescheria and S. Vito in Macello are located in the fish and meat markets respectively.

Several factors also indicate that the range of services offered by the diaconiae to the poor included the healing of the sick. Four are dedicated to saints associated with healing: the diaconia of SS. Cosma e Damiano is dedicated to two well-known eastern medical saints, the titular saint of S.

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<sup>76</sup>For the inscription in S. Maria in Cosmedin see Lestocquoy, p.279.

<sup>77</sup>For the connection between the imperial annone and diaconiae, see Lestocquoy.

Lucia in Orfeo and S. Lucia in Settizonio was popularly invoked against diseases of the eyes, and the patron saint of S. Vito in Macello was credited with curing a number of illnesses, especially epilepsy. In addition, several of the diaconiae are located on sites that have been long associated with healing. SS. Cosmas and Damian was built over a well which was credited with curing the sick; S. Maria Antiqua is next to the temple of Castor and Pollux, a frequent pagan resort for healing; and S. Teodoro has traditionally been a centre to which sick children were brought, a custom which still persists today.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, if we follow the premise that decoration follows function, it is possible that the right side chapel in S. Maria Antiqua, whose decoration celebrates a group of eastern medical saints,<sup>79</sup> served some kind of role as a healing site.

In summary, diaconiae were charitable institutions that were set up in Rome, towards the end of the 7th century, in order to provide for both the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor. Initially the laity took responsibility for their foundation and administration but, by the end of the 8th century, this role had been absorbed by the church.

What is the connection, however, between the diaconiae and the flourishing interest in cycles of non-Biblical saints?

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<sup>78</sup>Niederer, op.cit., (note 20 supra), p.174.

<sup>79</sup>P. Nordhagen, "The frescoes of John VII (705-707) in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome," Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, 3 (1968), pp.55-66.

In each case the cycles in diaconiae decorate secondary areas of the church, as they are located in side chapels, or areas that have been partitioned-off to create chapel-like spaces. Furthermore, three of the cycles (Forty Martyrs, Erasmus, and Quiricus and Julitta) are located at eye-level, indicating that a close relationship between image and viewer was intended. Exactly who these viewers were cannot be determined with any certainty. Insufficient information survives to ascertain who had access to the side aisles, or side chapels of churches in 8th-century Rome, especially those found in diaconiae. Nevertheless, it seems likely that these cycles are located in areas of the church to which access was limited. As suggested by the votive inscription that accompanies the paintings of the Forty Martyrs in S. Maria Antiqua,<sup>80</sup> the cycles appear to be private votive images. It seems likely that, in return for their generosity to diaconiae, the wealthy lay donors were provided with chapels for their private use, which they decorated with the images of saints who served as their personal intercessors. As Nordhagen has noted in his study of S. Maria Antiqua, papal patronage was restricted primarily to the main areas of the church, while the secondary areas appear to have been left for private donors.<sup>81</sup> The images that decorate the small chapels,

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<sup>80</sup>For the inscription see Chapter Three.

<sup>81</sup>P. Nordhagen, "S. Maria Antiqua: the frescoes of the seventh century," Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, 8 (1978), pp.89-142, esp. pp.136-138.

or chapel-like spaces that surround the nave (fig.ii), are located at eye level, and some are even believed to have been decorated with ex voto gifts, or precious gems.<sup>82</sup> It is in front of these images that the donors worshipped, as they sought the intercession of the saints depicted before them.

Indeed, the name of one of the donors is known to us, that of Theodotus, dispensator of S. Maria Antiqua. In the mid-8th century, Theodotus decorated the side chapel to the left of the apse in S. Maria Antiqua with the martyrdom cycle of Quiricus and Julitta. The decorative programme was completed with a large image of Christ's Crucifixion, a series of votive images that portray Saints Quiricus and Julitta in the role of intercessors, and a portrait of Theodotus and his family (figs.6-17). The presence of a grave below the family portrait - one that was large enough to hold several bodies - confirms that this was the private funerary chapel of Theodotus and his family. As dispensator of S. Maria Antiqua, Theodotus was able to obtain a very prestigious location, close to the apse, for his family's burial site. The decision to decorate the walls with the martyrdom of Quiricus and Julitta was linked to the presence of their relics in the chapel's altar, and the funerary function of the chapel. It is also tempting to link the fact that we are looking at the story of a child martyr, with the possibility that it was the

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p.117. See also P.J. Nordhagen, "Icons designed for the display of sumptuous votive gifts," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 41 (1987), pp.453-460.

death of one of the children in the family that prompted the chapel's decoration.

As the cycle of Paul and Anastasius was located high up on the wall of the chapel it decorates, it is unlikely that these paintings served any private, devotional function. It has been proposed that it was in this chapel that the pope dressed at the beginning of the stational procession, which took place at S. Adriano on the feasts of the Virgin, at the end of the 8th century.<sup>83</sup> However, there is no obvious relationship between a cycle depicting the life of SS. Paul and Anastasius, and a liturgy celebrating feasts of the Virgin. As previously noted, the cycle is undoubtedly related to the reliquary altar that still survives nestled against the chapel's apse. Presumably, the altar held the relics of Anastasius, perhaps those of the Persian martyr Anastasius, which were famous for their healing powers.<sup>84</sup> Certainly, it is tempting to see a link between Pope Hadrian I's interest in the church of S. Adriano,<sup>85</sup> the relics of Anastasius the Persian,<sup>86</sup> and the narrative cycle on the wall of the chapel.

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<sup>83</sup>A. Mancini, "La chiesa medioevale di S. Adriano nel Foro Romano," Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Rendiconti, 40 (1967-1968), pp.191-245, esp. p.206.

<sup>84</sup>For the relics of Anastasius at Rome, and their miracle-working properties, see Sansterre, op.cit., (note 14 supra), pp.15-16 and p.149.

<sup>85</sup>He restored the church, and founded the diaconia there. LP, 1, p.509.

<sup>86</sup>LP, 1, pp.512-513.

Indeed, he may even be the patron of the paintings. The presence of the reliquary altar, and the belief in the healing powers of Anastasius' relics, suggest that the chapel in S. Adriano served a role in healing the sick, similar to that of the chapel decorated with medical saints to the right of the apse in S. Maria Antiqua. The stories of saints are filled with tales of people who were restored to health through the agency of relics. For example, the 6th/7th-century Miracula of Saint Artemios, who specialised in treating diseases of the male genital organs, recount how people flocked to the church of St. John the Baptist at Constantinople, in order to lie near the relics of Saint Artemios that were located under the main altar. By this process they hoped to be healed.<sup>87</sup> Although it cannot be proven, the cycle of Paul and Anastasius appears to be linked to the relics of Anastasius that were stored in the chapel's altar, and the role of diaconiae in healing the sick. The chapel could have provided a space where people could come and venerate the relics, sleep by them if need be, in order that their health might be restored through the miracle working powers of the relics.

Indeed, although three of the cycles of non-Biblical saints appear to have been private votive images, located in chapels provided for the wealthy lay donors, it seems that the

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<sup>87</sup>For an analysis of the information provided by the Miracula, see C. Mango, "On the History of the Templon and the Martyrion of Saint Artemios at Constantinople, Zograf, 10 (1979), pp.40-43.

cycle in S. Adriano enjoyed a much wider audience, and was possibly produced under the patronage of Pope Hadrian. This change from lay to papal patronage may reflect a change in the running of diaconiae which, by the end of the 8th century, were administered by the papacy. However, whether executed for a limited or wide audience, the general meaning of martyrdom cycles remained the same. The paintings of their sufferings offered hope, and reminded the beholder of the importance in maintaining trust in God, and of his ability to be there in one's hour of need.<sup>88</sup>

Although the appearance of non-Biblical hagiographical cycles is by no means exclusive to diaconiae, or the lay patron, it is in these institutions that the 8th-century cycles in Rome are most commonly found. The popularity of the cycles amongst the members of the lay community may be best explained as a response to the rising interest in the cults of saints, and to the need of the laity to have personal intercessors with whom they could easily identify.

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<sup>88</sup>For example, the cycle of the martyrs Paul and Anastasius in S. Adriano.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PRINCIPLES OF ILLUSTRATION

The concern of this chapter is to determine the principles that governed the illustration of non-Biblical hagiographical cycles. Aspects of the narratives to be examined include the relationship between the cycles and surviving texts, and the sources of their iconography. The focus of the chapter is on the Quiricus and Julitta cycle in S. Maria Antiqua, and the Erasmus cycle in S. Maria in Via Lata, as, of the five cycles under examination, they are the only two to survive more or less intact. Nevertheless, despite the limited material, some basic rules regarding hagiographical illustration in 8th-century Rome can still be established.

Relationship to Texts

The legends of saints were handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, or were transmitted in a more official capacity in a variety of texts which, due to their scarcity, were usually shared by being read aloud. Today these texts are our primary source of information for the various hagiographical legends that were circulating in the Middle Ages. As the Quiricus and Julitta cycle and - to a lesser extent - the cycle of Erasmus both follow the standard format of trial, imprisonment, torture, and death that is

found in martyr literature, it seems natural to expect that there was a close relationship between these images and a specific written text, and that this text may have been illustrated. As Weitzmann states in his article on the illustration of the Septuagint "because the Church realised the didactic value of Bible illustration and wanted to make it available to broader masses of the faithful, illustrated Bible manuscripts were used as models for wall paintings and mosaics adorning churches."<sup>1</sup>

Any attempt, however, to prove a relationship between the Roman cycles and illustrated texts is hampered by the problem of survival. No illustrated manuscripts depicting cycles of non-Biblical saints survive prior to the late-9th century,<sup>2</sup> but that they existed earlier is indicated in the writings of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Nikephoros (806-815), who deplores the destruction of manuscripts illustrating the acts

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<sup>1</sup>K. Weitzmann, "The Illustration of the Septuagint," Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination, ed. H. Kessler, (Chicago, 1971), pp.45-75, esp. p.48.

<sup>2</sup>For a survey of illustrated manuscript cycles from the Middle Byzantine period see Ševčenko, pp.24-32; the earliest manuscript cycles to survive in the West date from the 10th century, see C. Hahn, "Narrative and Liturgy in the Earliest Lives of Saints," (Ph.D. diss., The John Hopkins University, 1982); and F. Wormald, "Some Illustrated Manuscripts of the Lives of the Saints," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 35 (1952-1953), pp.248-266.

of the martyrs.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, as several details in the Roman cycles have been cited as indicating an illuminated manuscript source, these points require explanation.

Weitzmann has suggested that the existence of a densely packed sequence of phases into one frame - as seen in the Erasmus cycle (fig.18) - indicates that the artist was probably using a more profusely illustrated source.<sup>4</sup> It seems more likely, however, that it simply indicates the derivative nature of the cycles. That is, the cycles represent an abridged version of their source, which need not necessarily have been illustrated. Furthermore, the fusion of scenes in the Erasmus cycle simply appears to have been created in order to fit as many as possible episodes into the limited amount of space. Problems of space also explain why the final scene of the Quiricus and Julitta cycle (fig.15) combines an image of Quiricus' torture on the left, with that of his death on the right. Since the left-hand border of the scene was limited by the location of a cupboard in the corner of the chapel, and the right-hand border was defined by the placement of the altar screen, the space left for the painting was only 1.88m. wide. This was not quite large enough for two framed scenes,<sup>5</sup> but larger than normal for one. The artist simply solved this

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<sup>3</sup>PG, 100, col.477.

<sup>4</sup>Weitzmann, op.cit., esp. pp.56, 58, and 71.

<sup>5</sup>On the opposite wall the scenes, including the black frame, vary from 0.94m.-1.16m. Between each scene there is a space of approximately 9cm.

problem by combining two separate episodes.

Nevertheless, the apparent fusion of two episodes in Scene One of the Quiricus and Julitta cycle (fig.9) is less easy to explain. The image centres on Julitta giving her testimony to Governor Alexander and includes, in the top right-hand corner, a nimbed figure dressed in yellow waiting outside the city walls. The initial impression is that this figure represents Quiricus, who was fetched at Julitta's request to give his testimony to Alexander. However, as Quiricus is dressed in blue elsewhere in the cycle, while Julitta is normally dressed in yellow, the identification of the figure as Julitta seems more likely. But why it was felt important to show Julitta twice is not clear. Probably the nimbed figure represents Julitta outside the city before her arrest, although the circumstances leading up to her arrest are barely mentioned in the literary sources, and there is generally little interest in depicting the moments before a martyr's arrest in the visual tradition. Although this fusion of scenes is unusual, there is no real reason to assume that it resulted from the artist's use of a more profusely illustrated manuscript source.

Further attempts to link the Quiricus and Julitta cycle with illuminated texts have noted that all the inscriptions start with VBI,<sup>6</sup> as found in the directions to the artist in

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<sup>6</sup>This has been suggested by M. Avery in her article "The Alexandrian Question," Art Bulletin, 7 (1925), pp.131-149, esp. p.139.

the miniatures of the Quedlinburg Itala.<sup>7</sup> However, VBI is found frequently in inscriptions accompanying wall paintings in 8th-century Rome,<sup>8</sup> and reflects a common practice in writing abbreviated inscriptions, whether they be in manuscripts or mural paintings.

On the basis of the available evidence, it seems unlikely that the cycles in Rome were based on illustrated texts. Furthermore, although the artists probably used a particular text as a general reference, an examination of the relationship between the paintings and surviving manuscripts indicates that the primary intent was not to create a pictorial version of a specific written text. As Nancy Ševčenko notes in her study of the cycles of St. Nicholas in Byzantine art, "though several cycles can be matched with the very popular Vita compilata or the Vita per Metaphraten, they inevitably include one or more episodes which are missing in these texts and which derive from other textual sources."<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the two most important factors that determined the selection of scenes within a cycle appear to have been the cycle's function, and the size of its architectural setting.

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<sup>7</sup>Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, cod. theol. lat. fol.485.

<sup>8</sup>It is found, for example, in the Libertinus cycle in S. Clemente; accompanying an episode from the life of Saint Sylvester in S. Martino ai Monti; in the Old Testament cycle in S. Maria Antiqua; and the Greek equivalent  $\epsilon\nu\theta\alpha$  occurs in the New Testament scenes in S. Saba.

<sup>9</sup>Ševčenko, p.437.

The Quiricus and Julitta cycle serves as an excellent example of the close relationship that can exist between function and decoration. The cycle adorns the side walls of a burial chapel - that of the family of Theodotus - in the church of S. Maria Antiqua.<sup>10</sup> Although martyrdom cycles are commonly found in a funerary context, stories of child martyrs are rare. The decision to decorate the chapel with the story of the three-year old Quiricus, and his mother, appears to be linked not only to the acquisition of their relics, but also to the portraits of the two children included in the family scene above the grave (fig.6). As it is unusual to find portraits of small children in a church setting, their appearance here suggests that the decoration of the chapel was instigated following the death of one, or both of these two children. Certainly, if the inscription in S. Angelo in Pescheria refers to the same Theodotus as the donor of the paintings in S. Maria Antiqua, it appears that Theodotus himself was alive at the time the chapel was being decorated.<sup>11</sup>

While practicalities, such as physical layout of the space, may have determined the choice of some scenes (for example, the horizontal format of the torture of Quiricus and Julitta in the red-hot frying pan [fig.14] is well suited to

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<sup>10</sup>For a full description of this chapel, and the evidence for it being a funerary chapel, see Chapter Three.

<sup>11</sup>For the inscription see Lestocquoy, fig.2 and p.281.

the small space above the cupboard in the chapel), the presumed function of the chapel as the burial site of two small children appears to have played a very important role. This is demonstrated by the fact that the paintings focus on Quiricus - the child martyr - rather than his mother. Julitta appears in only three of the eight scenes (figs.9, 13, 14), and in the final dramatic scene (fig.15) she is conspicuous by her absence.

The left-hand side of the final scene portrays Quiricus being tortured by having nails driven into his head and shoulders, and the right-hand side shows Quiricus being killed by being thrown against the steps of the tribunal. The torture portrayed on the left is described twice in the surviving texts. Quiricus and Julitta first underwent this torture prior to their imprisonment, when Governor Alexander ordered his guards to bring in fourteen nails, and directed them to drive seven into Quiricus, and the same number into Julitta.<sup>12</sup> At a later date, while in prison, Quiricus - this time alone - was again subjected to the torture.<sup>13</sup> By choosing to portray the later episode, the artist eliminated Julitta from the image. This appears to have been deliberate, as is also suggested by the choice of scene on the right-hand side of the painting. The texts describe Quiricus meeting his death in two ways. According to the apocryphal legend (from

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<sup>12</sup>Acta SS., June 16 (Paris and Rome, 1863), #6, p.24.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., #12, p.26.

which the remaining scenes in the cycle are taken) Quiricus and his mother were beheaded together.<sup>14</sup> But the final scene deviates from this text by depicting Quiricus' death as told in his authentic Acts.<sup>15</sup> According to this version, Julitta watched in horror as her son was flung to the ground and killed on the steps of the tribunal. After having witnessed the death of her son, Julitta was taken away by the soldiers and beheaded. However, Julitta's death is not shown anywhere in the chapel, nor is there any evidence that it was ever intended to be included. The most obvious place for it would be in the adjacent scene - where the family portrait is located - but this section of the wall shows no signs of any previous decoration. Thus, the omission of Julitta's death appears to have been intentional, and may have been part of a plan to make Quiricus the central figure of the narrative. Moreover, the secondary role that Julitta plays in the cycle suggests that it may have been the relics of Quiricus only that were stored in the altar, although this cannot be proven. Nevertheless, although Julitta has been relegated to a minor role, her inclusion in the cycle was essential. As the legends of numerous saints named Quiricus were circulating in the Medieval period,<sup>16</sup> there was always the possibility of

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp.24-30 esp. p.28.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp.21-23, esp. p.23.

<sup>16</sup>For example 27 saints named Ciriaco are listed in the Bibliotheca Sanctorum, 3 (Rome, 1963), cols.1292-1308.

confusion over their identity. By the inclusion of Julitta alongside her son, the correct identification of Quiricus would be ensured.

While the function of the Theodotus Chapel as the burial place of two small children played a major role in how the Quiricus and Julitta cycle was portrayed, little can be said about the context in which the Erasmus cycle is found. The chapel-like space appears to have been used for private devotion, and possibly the relics of Erasmus were stored here. However, two striking features of the Erasmus cycle include the way in which the artist has conflated the scenes in order to fit as many as possible into the small space available, and the fact that although Erasmus was well known for his healing miracles,<sup>17</sup> the cycle concentrates solely on his life as a martyr. The prevalence of martyrdom cycles in funerary contexts suggests that this may be because the cycle decorates a burial site, but there is no evidence of any burials in this area of the church. Perhaps the attention given to Erasmus' martyrdom is simply a response to local trends, and the fact that it was the passions of saints, rather than their evangelical or thaumaturgical works, that most interested Romans in the 8th century. This interest is reflected not only in the popularity of martyrdom cycles on the walls of churches, but also in the fact that at the same time the

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<sup>17</sup>To cite just one example, he is credited with raising the son of a certain Anastasius from the dead. Acta SS., June 2 (Paris and Rome, 1867), pp.208-211, esp. p.209.

readings from the passions of saints were introduced into the Roman liturgy.<sup>18</sup>

Scenes were chosen according to the needs of the cycle, not out of a desire to illustrate a particular text. Although all the episodes in the Erasmus cycle derive from a single textual source, by portraying only those episodes which focus on Erasmus' life as a martyr, the cycle creates an image of Erasmus that is somewhat different to that found in the hagiographic texts.<sup>19</sup> In addition, whereas the cycle of Quiricus and Julitta matches an 8th-century edition of their apocryphal Acts closely (Turin, Bib. Naz. memb. A436), a different chronology has been followed, and the cycle terminates with the death of Quiricus as told in the so-called 'authentic' version of their legend. As no known manuscript combines both the 'apocryphal' and 'authentic' stories, the use of a second textual source seems to be linked to a desire to make Quiricus the central figure of the narrative.

It appears that written texts were normally used as guides only, but any conclusions regarding the relationship between texts and early pictorial cycles of non-Biblical saints must remain tentative, due to the fragmentary state of the images and the scarcity of surviving texts. The

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<sup>18</sup>For the relationship between paintings of martyrs and the reading of their passions in the Roman Church see Chapter Four.

<sup>19</sup>For the Acts of Erasmus see Acta SS., June 2 (Paris and Rome, 1867), pp.208-211.

problematic nature of the evidence is well demonstrated by the image of SS. Paul and Anastasius, in the church of S. Adriano, which appears to have formed part of a narrative cycle illustrating their lives. Does this image represent the two saints who, along with their companions Ciriacus, Secundus, and Sindimus, are recorded as being martyred at Nicomedia, but whose legend does not survive?<sup>20</sup> Or does this image depict an unknown episode from the life of Anastasius, the Persian martyr, who was widely venerated in Rome in the 8th century, and who appears to have been accorded special veneration by Pope Hadrian I, the possible patron of the paintings?<sup>21</sup> The lack of sufficient visual and textual evidence means that the exact identity of the saints, and the scene in which they are portrayed, will remain a mystery.

#### Sources of Iconography

In order to determine the artists' working methods - that is, to what extent were they working according to established formulae, and to what extent were they creative? - the iconography of the paintings will be compared with other surviving images, as well as the literary descriptions of

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<sup>20</sup>Bibliotheca Sanctorum, 3 (Rome, 1963), col.1308.

<sup>21</sup>Militating against the identification of the saint as the Persian martyr Anastasius is the fact that his extant Acts make no mention of a saint named Paul. Acta SS., January 22 (Paris and Rome, 1863), pp.35-53.

works of art no longer extant. As will be demonstrated, the cycles themselves appear to be ad hoc creations, as no one cycle can be tied to a single iconographic source. Some isolated scenes have convincing comparisons with works of art produced in the city of Rome, or the Italian peninsula, but many have their greatest similarities with Byzantine works of art - which have no obvious connection to Rome - and thus raise the question as to how iconographic formulae were developed and diffused.

In general, the cycles consist of three main groups of scenes: the trials of the martyrs, their tortures, followed by episodes connected with their death or burial. The three surviving trial scenes consist of Julitta before Governor Alexander (fig.9), Quiricus being brought to his trial (fig.10), and Erasmus before the emperor (fig.17). Throughout Medieval art, trial scenes - whether part of Biblical or non-Biblical cycles - follow a standard formula. The number of participants may vary, but most images include an enthroned judge, flanked by two guards carrying shields, with the accused standing pleading his case before the judge, or being brought to his trial in the company of soldiers.

As the artist of the Erasmus cycle was working in a restricted space, the scene of Erasmus' trial (fig.17) has been reduced to only the essential elements: Erasmus stands before an enthroned judge (Emperor Diocletian), who in turn is

flanked by a pair of guards.<sup>22</sup> Similar abbreviated trial scenes are found in the 9th-century paintings in the church of S. Prassede, at Rome, where the lives of many of the saints whose relics were transferred into the church by Pope Paschal I (817-824) are commemorated on the transept walls.<sup>23</sup> The same basic elements are repeated in the painting of Julitta's trial (fig.9), with the addition of an apsed structure over Alexander's throne, and a soldier who stands behind Julitta. These are both frequent components of trial scenes. In the painting of Moses changing a river into blood from the church of S. Paolo fuori le mura, at Rome, a similar apsed building is shown behind the enthroned pharaoh,<sup>24</sup> and in the scene of Cyprian before Decius, in an 11th-century copy of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, the artist has included both the apsed building and an additional soldier.<sup>25</sup>

In the painting of Quiricus' trial (fig.10), the focus is not on the trial itself, but on Quiricus being brought before the judge. As such, it is similar to the 4th-century painting

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<sup>22</sup>Due to the damage to the painting, the lower portion of a shield, seen between Erasmus and the emperor, is the only indication that guards were included in the image.

<sup>23</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plates 202 and 204.

<sup>24</sup>Waetzoldt, Kopien, plate 360. Although these paintings were restored by Cavallini in the third quarter of the 13th century, Cavallini is believed to have been faithful to the original Early Christian iconography.

<sup>25</sup>Paris, BN, cod. Coislin 239, fol.53r; repr. G. Galavaris, The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus, (Princeton, 1969), fig.216 (hereafter Galavaris).

of Euphemia's trial at Chalcedon, described by Bishop Asterios.<sup>26</sup> In each painting the accused is being led to trial by one soldier, while another urges from behind. However, the image of Quiricus' trial is missing one basic ingredient: an enthroned judge. One possible reason for the omission may be that the first two scenes of the Quiricus and Julitta cycle were intended to be read together. The soldiers who accompany Quiricus move in the direction of Governor Alexander in Scene One (fig.9), and thus the need to repeat the figure of Alexander in Scene Two (fig.10) was eliminated.

Images of torture make up the largest group of scenes in martyrdom cycles, and given the variety of ingenious and blood-curdling torments the martyrs underwent, it was here that the artist had the greatest opportunity to be creative. Nevertheless, the surviving evidence indicates that some eight different types of torture were depicted in what we know of the pictorial cycles produced between the 4th and 8th centuries. Of these eight, only the torture by flogging appears more than once: the flogging of Erasmus in S. Maria in Via Lata (fig.17), and the flogging of Quiricus in S. Maria Antiqua (fig.11).

The image of Erasmus' flogging compares closely with the Early Christian images of Paul's flagellation from S. Paolo

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<sup>26</sup>PG, 40, cols.336-337; Eng. trans. Mango, Sources, pp.37-39.

fuori le mura, at Rome,<sup>27</sup> and Lawrence's martyrdom on a bronze medallion,<sup>28</sup> as well as the 9th-century painting of Lawrence's martyrdom in the crypt church at S. Vincenzo al Volturno.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, neither Early Christian example survives in the original. Our information on how S. Paolo fuori le mura was decorated relies on a group of descriptions and watercolour sketches made two centuries before fire virtually destroyed the church in 1823, and our knowledge of the imagery on the bronze medallion comes from a lead seal imprint, also believed to have been made in the 17th century. Keeping in mind the possible unreliability of the Early Christian evidence, the figure of Erasmus - in position and dress - is almost an exact copy of the figure of Paul from the church of S. Paolo fuori le mura, and compares closely with the martyrdom of Lawrence as seen on both the lead seal and the 9th-century painting at S. Vincenzo al Volturno. The texts are not specific regarding the position of Erasmus' flogging, and as later images of flagellation depict the victims being beaten in a variety of ways - standing, kneeling, or prone - it seems unlikely that artists working independently would have produced scenes as

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<sup>27</sup>Vat. Barb. lat. 4406, fol.103; repr. Waetzoldt, Kopien, plate 382.

<sup>28</sup>G.B. De Rossi, "Le due medaglie di divozione dei primi sei o setti secoli della chiesa," Bolletino di Archeologia Cristiana, 7 (1869), pp.33-45, plate III/8. The lead seal was recorded as being in the Vatican Museum, but its location today is not known.

<sup>29</sup>A. Pantoni, San Vincenzo al Volturno e la cripta dell'abate Epifanio 824-842, (Salerno, 1970), p.38.

similar as the Erasmus and Pauline paintings.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, since saints were viewed as the followers of Christ, and every attempt was usually made to equate their sufferings with those of the Saviour, it seems unusual that Erasmus' flogging was not fashioned after the flagellation of Christ, which shows Christ being beaten upright while tied to a pillar.<sup>31</sup> Certainly, the similarity among the three figures of Erasmus, Lawrence, and Paul, in works of art whose dates spread from the 5th - 9th centuries, suggests that the artists were working from a common model. Indeed, this common model may have been the painting of Paul's flogging in the church of S. Paolo itself.<sup>32</sup>

The torture of Quiricus and Julitta in the cooking pot (fig.13) portrays a popular method of torture, of which the painting in the Theodotus Chapel is the earliest surviving

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<sup>30</sup>See, for example, the painting of Erasmus being flogged upright from the Baptistry at Bressanone (G. Kaftal, Iconography of the Saints in the Painting of North East Italy [Florence, 1978], fig.351) and the 11th-century painting of Urban being flogged while kneeling on the ground from S. Urbano alla Caffarella (Waetzoldt, Kopien, plate 582).

<sup>31</sup>In Prudentius' poem "Tituli historiarum (Dittochaen)", he describes the flagellation of Christ as follows "vinctus in his Dominus stetit aedibus, atque columnae/adnexus tergam dedit ut servile flagellis." Commentators on the poem believe that the quatrains were intended to accompany pictures in a church. Whether or not this is true, the poem confirms that Christ was believed to have been flogged upright as early as c.400. See Prudentius, 2, text and Eng. trans. H.J. Thomson (Harvard, 1961), pp.346-371 esp. p.364.

<sup>32</sup>For a discussion on the iconography of this image see L. Eleen, "The frescoes from the Life of St. Paul in S. Paolo fuori le mura Rome: Early Christian or Medieval?" RACAR, 12, #2 (1985), pp.251-259.

example. Similar illustrations can be found in later Byzantine manuscripts, for example, the portrayal of Cyprian being boiled in a cauldron, from the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, produced in Constantinople between the years 879-883.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, despite the similarities between the paintings in S. Maria Antiqua, and later Byzantine manuscripts, there need not necessarily be a connection. The portrayal of figures being boiled in a pot is one which does not lend itself to a variety of interpretations, and it is possible that artists working in different locations could independently respond to the legend in a way that would produce similar images.

One feature that has been added to the Quiricus and Julitta scene is the indication that the torture took place while the saints were in prison. This is portrayed by showing the busts of the two saints in the window of a building, their arms raised in the attitude of prayer. This simple, but effective, method of depicting imprisonment can be traced back to the Euphemia cycle in Chalcedon, which showed Euphemia in prison "stretching out her arms to heaven as she calls on God to help her in her distress."<sup>34</sup> A similar manner of portraying imprisonment can be found in the early 9th-century

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<sup>33</sup>Paris, BN, gr. 510, fol.332v; repr. H. Omont, Miniatures des plus anciens manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale du VIe au XIe siècle, (Paris, 1929), plate 47 (hereafter Omont).

<sup>34</sup>Mango, Sources, p.39.

martyrdom cycles that decorate the transept of S. Prassede, Rome.<sup>35</sup> In S. Prassede, however, the figure of the imprisoned martyr lacks the frontality of Quiricus and Julitta portraits. As the painting in S. Prassede is obviously not a copy of its counterpart in S. Maria Antiqua, both images may have followed a generic iconographic guide which, for example, simply instructed artists to portray imprisonment by showing the accused in the window of a building, with arms raised in the attitude of prayer.

The third major group of scenes in martyrdom cycles are those relating to the death of the martyr. Quiricus was killed when he was thrown against the steps of the tribunal (fig.15); the Forty Martyrs froze to death on an icy lake (fig.16); Callixtus was killed by being thrown down a well with a stone tied round his neck (figs. 20 and 21), and as Erasmus died peacefully from his wounds, the artist chose to allude to his death by portraying his vision, and the ascension of his soul to heaven (fig.18). In doing so, the artist of the Erasmus cycle seems to have adapted two well-known examples of iconography. Even taking into account its damaged state, the painting of Erasmus' vision appears to follow the iconography used for ode figures in Byzantine manuscripts.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the ascension of Erasmus' soul,

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<sup>35</sup>Wilpert, *RMM*, 4/1, plate 204.

<sup>36</sup>As in the Prayer of Hannah in the Paris Psalter (Paris, B.N. gr.139, fol.428), believed to have been produced in Constantinople in the mid-10th century.

in the arms of the archangel Michael, is similar to an earlier example found on a 6th-century ivory pyxis, believed to have been carved in Alexandria, and which may have been used to transport the relics of Saint Menas from his nearby sanctuary, to the city of Rome.<sup>37</sup> The front of the pyxis, which depicts the martyrdom of Menas, includes the image of an angel, who hovers behind Menas with his veiled arms outstretched, waiting to carry Menas' soul to heaven. The ascension of the martyr's soul is described in many hagiographical legends, and marks the logical termination to the martyr's life on earth. Although the portrayal of the ascension of Erasmus' soul is similar to the scene on the Menas pyxis, it is obviously not a direct copy. Their similarities suggest, however, the existence of a common and widely diffused tradition.

The prototype for the death of Quiricus, which shows the young boy being tossed against the steps of the tribunal, is well known. It follows a type of iconography used for the Massacre of the Innocents, as seen on the Early Christian ivory diptych in the Milan Cathedral Treasury.<sup>38</sup> In both images the judge (or king) is shown seated on a throne, flanked by guards carrying shields, and has his right hand raised in the act of ordering the torture. Before him, a

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<sup>37</sup>The pyxis was purchased in Rome in the 18th century and is now part of the British Museum's collection. A. Nesbitt, "On a Box of Carved Ivory of the Sixth Century," Archaeologia, 44 (1880), pp.321-330.

<sup>38</sup>W. Volbach, Early Christian Art, (London, 1961), plate 100.

soldier grasps a young child by the leg, as he swings him overhead. Indeed, like the comparisons between the floggings of Paul and Erasmus, the similarities are sufficiently close to suggest a common model.

The martyrdom of the Forty Martyrs in the left aisle of S. Maria Antiqua (fig.16) follows the traditional iconography for their death, the earliest surviving example of which is found in the apse of the chapel at the entrance into the church.<sup>39</sup> The paintings in the left aisle are not, however, an exact copy of the slightly earlier composition in the entrance chapel. Both paintings include the figure of Christ presiding above the condemned,<sup>40</sup> an element that is frequently found in martyrdom scenes, and can be traced back to the Early Christian images of the martyrdoms of Theodore at Euchaita,<sup>41</sup> and Barlaam at Antioch.<sup>42</sup> In both paintings the scantily clothed martyrs are gathered together in rows, but in the left aisle the martyrs have their right arms folded across their chests, whereas the painting in the entrance chapel shows the martyrs with their arms raised in the attitude of prayer. Like trial scenes, the consistency with which the iconography of the death of the Forty Martyrs is portrayed continues

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<sup>39</sup>Wilpert, RMM, 4/1, plate 199.

<sup>40</sup>For the evidence regarding the inclusion of a bust of Christ above the paintings in the left aisle see Chapter Three.

<sup>41</sup>PG, 46, col.737; Eng. trans. Mango, Sources, pp.36-37.

<sup>42</sup>PG, 31, col.489; Eng. trans. Mango, Sources, pp.36-37.

throughout the Middle Ages, and suggests that the artists were working according to an established formula.

The portrayal of burial following the death follows the natural sequence of events, but burial scenes do not appear in early narrative cycles. The literary sources refer to images illustrating the burial of Christ in the 7th century,<sup>43</sup> although surviving examples can be dated only as early as the 9th century.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, if the 8th-century date attributed the cycle of Saint Callixtus is correct, then the portrayal of his entombment (fig.23) is our earliest surviving example of a burial scene. It shows the body of Callixtus being lowered into his tomb, and compares closely with later burial scenes, for example, the funeral of Basil in the 9th-century Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus (Paris, B.N. gr.510),<sup>45</sup> suggesting that both images were based on a lost prototype, such as the burial of Christ.

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<sup>43</sup>The Burial of Christ forms part of the Christological cycle recommended for the decoration of churches in Vita S. Pancratii, ep. Tavromenii, written in South Italy in the early 8th century; Eng. trans. Mango, Sources, pp.138, 265, 137 n.75. The text has been edited by C.J. Stallman, in her D. Phil. thesis, "The Life of S. Pancratius of Taormina," (D. Phil., Oxford, 1986). An illustration of the Burial of Christ is also alluded to in Chapter Thirteen of the 7th-century Hodegos of Anastasius of Sinai: PG, 89, cols.203-244, esp. cols.239-244. For a discussion of this text and the theology behind the development of the image see A. Kartsonis, Anastasis. The Making of an Image, (Princeton, 1986), pp.40-69.

<sup>44</sup>Folio 30v in the 9th century Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus (Paris, B.N. gr. 510) portrays Christ's Crucifixion, Deposition, Entombment, Chairete; repr. Omont, plate 21.

<sup>45</sup>As seen on fol.104r; repr. Omont, plate 31.

As the pictorial representation of saints' lives was still in its embryonic stages in the 8th century, it would be extremely unlikely to find prototypes for each of the scenes. For example, the episodes of Callixtus' death by being pushed into a well (figs.20 and 21), Quiricus and Julitta in the frying pan (fig.14), Quiricus tortured with nails (fig.15), Quiricus having his tongue cut out (fig.12), and Erasmus clothed in a red hot tunic (fig.18) have no iconographic comparisons worthy of note. Furthermore, the episode of Quiricus having his tongue cut out, like the scene of Paul and Anastasius from the church of S. Adriano, (fig.19) could have been modelled after any number of images, as it is depicted in such a general fashion that an inscription is required to ensure its correct identification.

When comparative material can be found, it appears in a variety of examples that are widely disseminated in terms of both time and place. The greatest number of comparisons appear in the monumental art of Rome and Byzantium, and similarities can also be found in the illustrations of Middle Byzantine manuscripts. The literary evidence indicates that the portrayal of the lives of non-Biblical saints has its roots in Byzantine monumental art,<sup>46</sup> and the efflorescence of these cycles in Rome may well be a reflection of

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<sup>46</sup>For example, it has been suggested by Belting, and others, that the earliest cycle of Quiricus and Julitta was executed in the East, perhaps in the martyrs' shrine at Tarsus. See R. Naumann, H. Belting, Die Euphemia-Kirche am Hippodrom zu Istanbul und ihre Fresken, (Berlin, 1965), p.146.

Constantinopolitan trends. By what means, however, did ideas from the East spread to the Western part of the Empire?

Over the course of the 7th and 8th centuries, there was a large-scale migration of Greek-speaking people into the city of Rome, and the new immigrants had a profound influence on the city's art and architecture. By the mid-8th century, Iconoclasm was raging in Constantinople. In the wake of the political and religious turmoil, it appears that many artistic commissions were lost, forcing artists to seek work elsewhere. Although there is no written documentation to prove that artists from Constantinople were working in Rome, the strong Byzantine influence seen in the art produced in the city during the 7th and 8th centuries certainly suggests it. There is also ample evidence that artists followed patrons to find work. To cite just one example, when the Byzantine princess Anna, sister of Emperor Basil II (976-1025), moved to Kiev to marry Prince Vladimir, she brought with her from Constantinople a group of architects and workmen to build and decorate her palace chapel.<sup>47</sup>

The primary method of circulating artistic ideas was via the objects that accompanied travellers, and artists, on their voyages. For example, it is possible that the supplies carried by artists who came to Rome included sketch books, similar to the notebooks of the 13th-century French architect

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<sup>47</sup>A. Poppe, "The building of the church of St. Sophia in Kiev," Journal of Medieval History, 7 (1981), pp.15-66.

Villard de Honnecourt, which include rough drawings of monuments he had seen during his travels.<sup>48</sup> They may also have brought with them generic iconographic guides, either in the form of pictorial guides, as in a 16th-century Armenian notebook,<sup>49</sup> or written instructions on how specific images should be portrayed, as in the 18th-century Mt. Athos guide.<sup>50</sup> This must, however, remain supposition, as although there is evidence that suggests generic model books existed as early as the 1st century, it is unlikely that they were used at this early date, and none of the surviving examples can be dated earlier than the 10th century.<sup>51</sup>

In the life of Pancratius, written in the early 8th century, the saint's biographer relates that in the time of Peter the apostle, the story of Christ's life was "depicted on panels and parchment" and these were given to bishops who "depicted them beautifully and decorously" in their

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<sup>48</sup>For example, his notebook includes a sketch of Laon Cathedral. See T. Bowie, The Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt, (Bloomingdale, 1959).

<sup>49</sup>See S. Der Nersessian, "Copies de peintures byzantines dans un carnet arménien de 'modeles'," Cahiers Archéologiques, 18 (1968), pp.111-120.

<sup>50</sup>See P. Hetherington, The "Painter's Manual" of Dionysius of Fourna: An English Translation with Commentary of Cod. Gr. 708 in the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library, Leningrad, (London, 1974).

<sup>51</sup>R.W. Scheller, A Survey of Medieval Model Books, (Harlaam, 1963).

churches.<sup>52</sup> The biographer also tells us that when Pancratius was sent by Saint Peter to evangelise the West, he was provided with the equipment necessary for the setting up of churches. This equipment included "two volumes of the divine picture-stories containing the decoration of the church, i.e., the pictorial story of the Old and New Testaments."<sup>53</sup> It seems that the "panels" depicting Christ's life that the biographer refers to were most probably icons, while those on "parchment" may well have been a type of iconographic guide, perhaps similar to the Armenian notebook mentioned above. However, this vita does not appear to have been written until the early-8th century, and its reliability concerning events that took place some seven centuries earlier is questionable. Since the New Testament as we know it today was not formalised until the 4th century, it is unlikely that a pictorial version existed as early as the 1st century. Nevertheless, the words of the biographer could well reflect contemporary practices. In other words, it seems likely that, in the early-8th century, iconographic ideas were spread via portable icons, and pictorial iconographic guides.

Whenever the earliest iconographic guides were produced,

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<sup>52</sup>vita S. Pancratii, ep. Tavromenii, Eng. trans. of passage in Mango, Sources, pp.137-138.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. These appear to have been books that included sketches of how to portray selected Biblical events, as in a 16th century Armenian notebook. See S. Der Nersessian, "Copies de peintures byzantines dans un carnet arménien de 'modeles'." Cahiers Archéologiques, 18 (1968), pp.111-120

it seems they were designed for Biblical stories only. While many hagiographical scenes (the trial scenes, the flogging of Erasmus and Quiricus, Quiricus and Julitta in prison, the vision of Erasmus, and the deaths of Quiricus and Callixtus), appear to have their ultimate source in Biblical imagery, another explanation needs to be sought for those scenes which were not adapted from any known Biblical iconography. The Death of the Forty Martyrs serves as one such example. The story of their death on an icy lake is unique, and was probably first portrayed in one of the many sanctuaries dedicated to the Forty Martyrs in Constantinople or Caesarea.<sup>54</sup> The iconography of the scene also undergoes little change throughout the Middle Ages, and is commonly found on narrative icons. If, as is widely believed, the iconography has its origins in the East, it was probably transferred West through a medium such as a painted icon. The literary sources are filled with references to icons having travelled. In the 7th century, when Benedict Biscop returned to Northumbria from his trip to Rome, the merchandise he brought back with him included "sacred pictures" (i.e. icons) which he used to decorate the church of St. Peter.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>O. Demus suggests that a narrative cycle was originally portrayed in their church at Caesarea; "Two Paleologan Mosaic Icons in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 14 (1960), pp.89-119, esp. p.100; Ševčenko thinks a Constantinopolitan source is more likely, p.58.

<sup>55</sup>C. Davis-Weyer, Early Medieval Art 300-1150, (Toronto, 1986), p.74.

Furthermore, by the 7th and 8th centuries, icons had permeated all aspects of everyday life: they not only decorated churches, but were also carried like palladia into battle by armies, hung in private homes, and even used as guarantors of contracts. As the Forty Martyrs were highly venerated amongst the upper ranks of the Byzantine army, it seems likely that when officers were transferred to Rome from Constantinople, they would have brought with them icons of the Forty Martyrs for their private, devotional use.

Other portable objects include items such as manuscripts and reliquaries. However, there is no evidence to suggest that any of the cycles in Rome were based on a specific text - illustrated or otherwise. Although isolated scenes may have been drawn from manuscripts, the likelihood of a single illustrated manuscript source is remote. Nevertheless, the importation of many relics of eastern saints into Rome is well documented, and as the decoration of a reliquary often reflects the type of relics it contains,<sup>56</sup> the possibility that ideas were spread via objects such as reliquaries appears to be promising. However, there is insufficient information to link the spread of ideas from the East to the West to a single medium. The sources of the iconography are mixed. Certain episodes appear to be adaptations of Old and New

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<sup>56</sup>For example, the many reliquaries containing a piece of the true cross which are adorned with Christ's Crucifixion, and the ivory pyxis portraying Menas' martyrdom, which is believed to have contained his relics.

Testament scenes, some compare with isolated images of martyrdom, while others appear to be ad hoc creations of the artist. Some of the more commonly portrayed scenes may have been circulated via generic iconographic guides, but other portable objects, such as reliquaries and icons, must also have played an important role.

## CONCLUSION

This study covers non-Biblical hagiographical cycles produced in Byzantium, and the West, from the early days of organised Christianity through to the end of the 8th century. The focus is on the 8th-century mural paintings in Rome, as they form the largest surviving body of early cycles. Unfortunately, the ravages of time, and the fragility of the technique used by Early Medieval mural painters, have meant that very few cycles have survived intact. But, despite the fragmentary state of the visual material, it has been possible to come to an understanding of how the cycles functioned within the church setting, and within the cultural context of Rome. Some basic principles that guided their illustration have also emerged. This has been accomplished through a careful analysis of the cycles' content and archaeological context, in combination with an examination of the surviving hagiographical, liturgical, and historical texts (including the literary descriptions of cycles that no longer survive).

According to the evidence provided by the literary sources, interest in the depiction of cycles of non-Biblical saints first gained popularity in Byzantium, where, by decorating the tombs of saints, or objects associated with their burial, they served as visual memorials to the deceased. One of the general characteristics of these early cycles was their condensed format (they consisted of only two - or

sometimes four - scenes), a trait that reflected the simplicity of the early hagiographical accounts, which began as modest stories about people who had suffered for their faith. A further characteristic is the fact that these early cycles often bear little relationship to surviving texts, a feature which seems to indicate that the cycles were based on legends that circulated via an oral tradition. When these legends were later formalised in texts, it appears that the process of time and repetition meant that some facts were confused, while others were omitted, or exaggerated. This resulted in literary accounts that display only a passing resemblance to their earlier visual records.<sup>1</sup>

In examining the ancestors of the 8th-century cycles in Rome, cycles of both Biblical and non-Biblical saints were included, with the aim of discovering if common threads existed between the two. There is no evidence that non-Biblical cycles used Biblical cycles as their guides, and similarities between different categories of cycles depends more upon their setting and audience, rather than the type of saint they portray. That is, when located in a public setting - high up in a church apse, or nave - hagiographical cycles send a propagandistic message that espouses Christianity as the true faith. The life of Saint Paul, located in the nave of his funerary church at Rome, sent an evangelical message

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<sup>1</sup>For example, the cycle of Saint Euphemia at Chalcedon, and of the three unidentified martyrs in the confessio under SS. Giovanni e Paolo, at Rome.

that promoted the apostle as the successor to Christ, while the cycle of Saint Martin, in the cathedral at Tours, emphasised Martin's role in the Christianisation in Gaul, the importance of Tours as the seat of his cult, and the extent of Martin's supernatural powers.

In response to the need of Christians in the Middle Ages to believe in the miraculous, and the existence of an external force beyond the known world, what were originally simple stories about people who had suffered for their faith, gradually emerged into fantastic legends, filled with more fiction than fact. This embellishment of the legends follows a parallel development in art, literature, and liturgy. In this context, images played a significant role, as the Medieval viewer - Christian and non-Christian alike - placed more importance on images than we do today. Pictures were not merely works of art, as the importance of an image was not measured by its beauty, but by what the image represented. Furthermore, images were regarded as representing the truth - as opposed to written or spoken words, which could be easily altered. Since many may have been sceptical about the veracity of some of the more fantastic hagiographical legends, by presenting the narratives in visual form, the people could be more easily persuaded. In other words, by seeing an image, disbelievers could become believers. Images also served as memory-aids, as when members of the faithful heard the legends of saints being recounted during the church service, if

certain highlights were portrayed on the church walls, the images would not only bring the stories to life, but embed them more deeply in the viewer's mind.

In 8th-century Rome, the efflorescence of hagiographical cycles on the walls of Roman churches, can be closely linked to the growing interest in the cults of saints and their relics. As the demand for saintly relics increased, so did the popularity of pictorial hagiographical cycles, whose use spread to include not only the tombs of saints, but also their reliquary shrines. This increased curiosity about the lives of saints - especially eastern saints - was closely connected to the influence of the Greek-speaking immigrants in the city, but the special popularity that non-Biblical saints enjoyed seems to have been linked to the needs of the lay population. The appeal of saints lay in the power of their intercession, and although the efficacy of their intercession was related to their closeness to God, it appears that the laity may have doubted the availability of figures such as the Virgin and John the Baptist, as they tended to seek their personal intercessors among the more lowly members of the celestial hierarchy: the non-Biblical saint.

Unlike cycles of the Old and New Testaments, which tended to be located high up on the nave, or side aisle walls, these cycles of non-Biblical saints are most commonly found in secondary areas of the church, in private chapels, or chapel-

like spaces.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the cycles tend to be located at eye-level,<sup>3</sup> indicating that an intimate relationship between image and viewer was intended. That is, like iconic images, these narrative cycles appear to have been objects of devotion. Members of the faithful came and prayed before them, and sought the intercession of the holy figures portrayed on the walls. When placed in these private settings, the cycles were executed by Christian patrons, for an exclusively Christian audience. There was no need to win over disbelievers, but there was concern to underline God's accessibility. Although the faithful did not doubt the presence of God, they needed to be reassured of his ability to be there in times of crisis. By a series of images portraying the tortures of martyrs, throughout which the martyrs survive unharmed due to the intervention of God, God's availability could be confirmed.

As the cycles in Rome are amongst the earliest hagiographical cycles to survive, it is not surprising that no single source for their iconography could be found. Nevertheless, the cycles bear certain characteristics that can be traced back to 4th-century monumental art in Byzantium, and

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<sup>2</sup>The exceptions are the cycle of SS. Paul and Anastasios in S. Adriano, which is located in a chapel that may have served a role in healing the sick; and the cycle of Saint Callixtus in the Catacomb of Calepodius, which decorates Callixtus' tomb, a popular pilgrimage site.

<sup>3</sup>The one exception is the cycle of SS. Paul and Anastasius.

thus raise the question as to how aspects of iconography were developed and diffused. In the absence of solid proof, it is proposed that ideas probably spread via portable objects carried by travellers - via items such as icons, reliquaries, or ivories. The possibility that generic model books were used was also explored, but the evidence was inconclusive. It seems clear, however, that although isolated scenes may have been drawn from an illustrated manuscript source, there is no indication that the monumental cycles used manuscript cycles as their guide.

In conclusion, the aim of this dissertation was to study the mural cycles of non-Biblical saints, in 8th-century Rome, in the context of their architectural and cultural settings. From the beginning, it was suspected that the popularity of non-Biblical hagiographical cycles formed part of the phenomenal interest in the cults of saints and their relics, promulgated by the Greek-speaking immigrants, who flocked into the city over the course of the 7th and 8th centuries. One aspect, however, that had been overlooked was the appeal that these paintings seem to have had amongst members of the lay population. Several of the cycles decorate private chapels, possibly provided to the wealthy laity, in return for their donations to the church. As such, they emerge as the early ancestors of the works found in the private chapels, decorated for rich benefactors, which proliferate in the late Middle Ages.

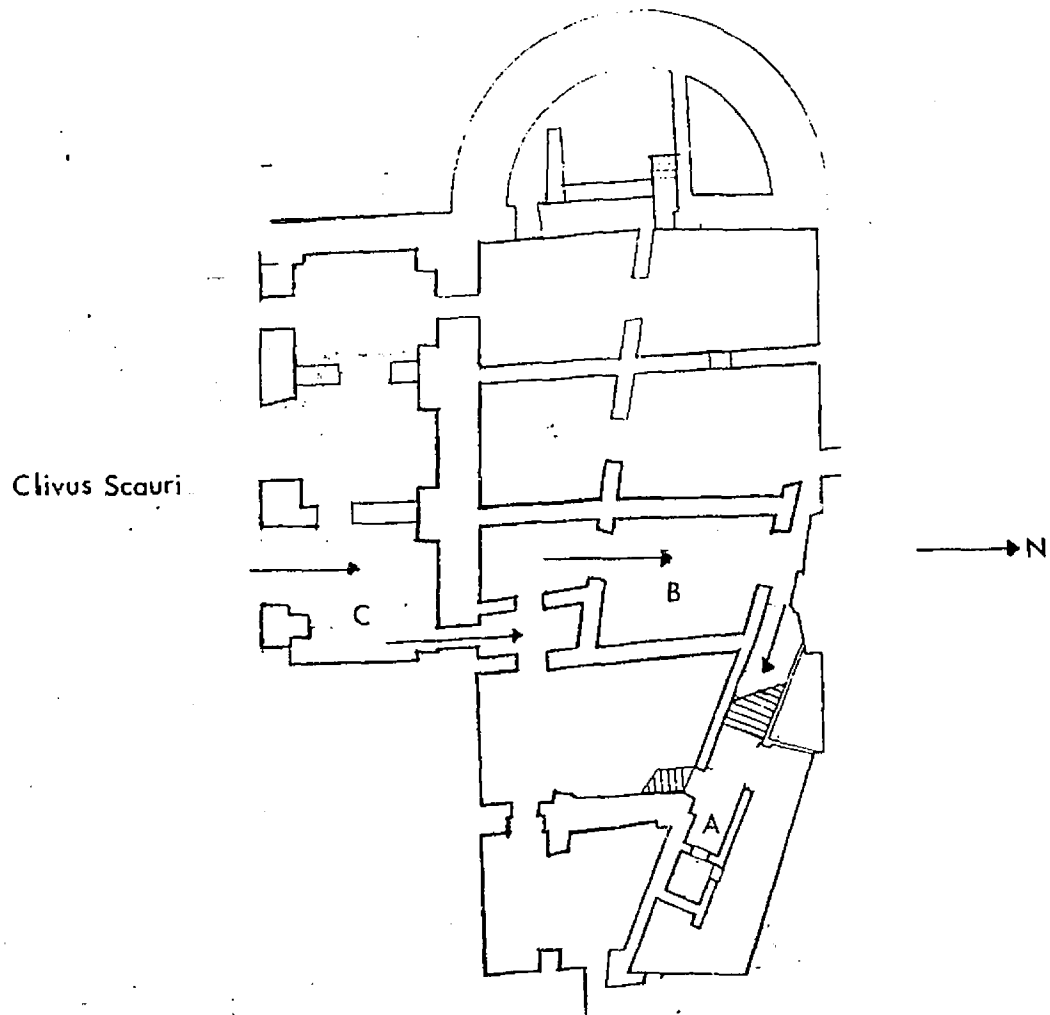


Fig.i: Area under the Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome  
(after Krautheimer)

- A: Confessio
- B: Room decorated with Christian frescoes
- C: Shop

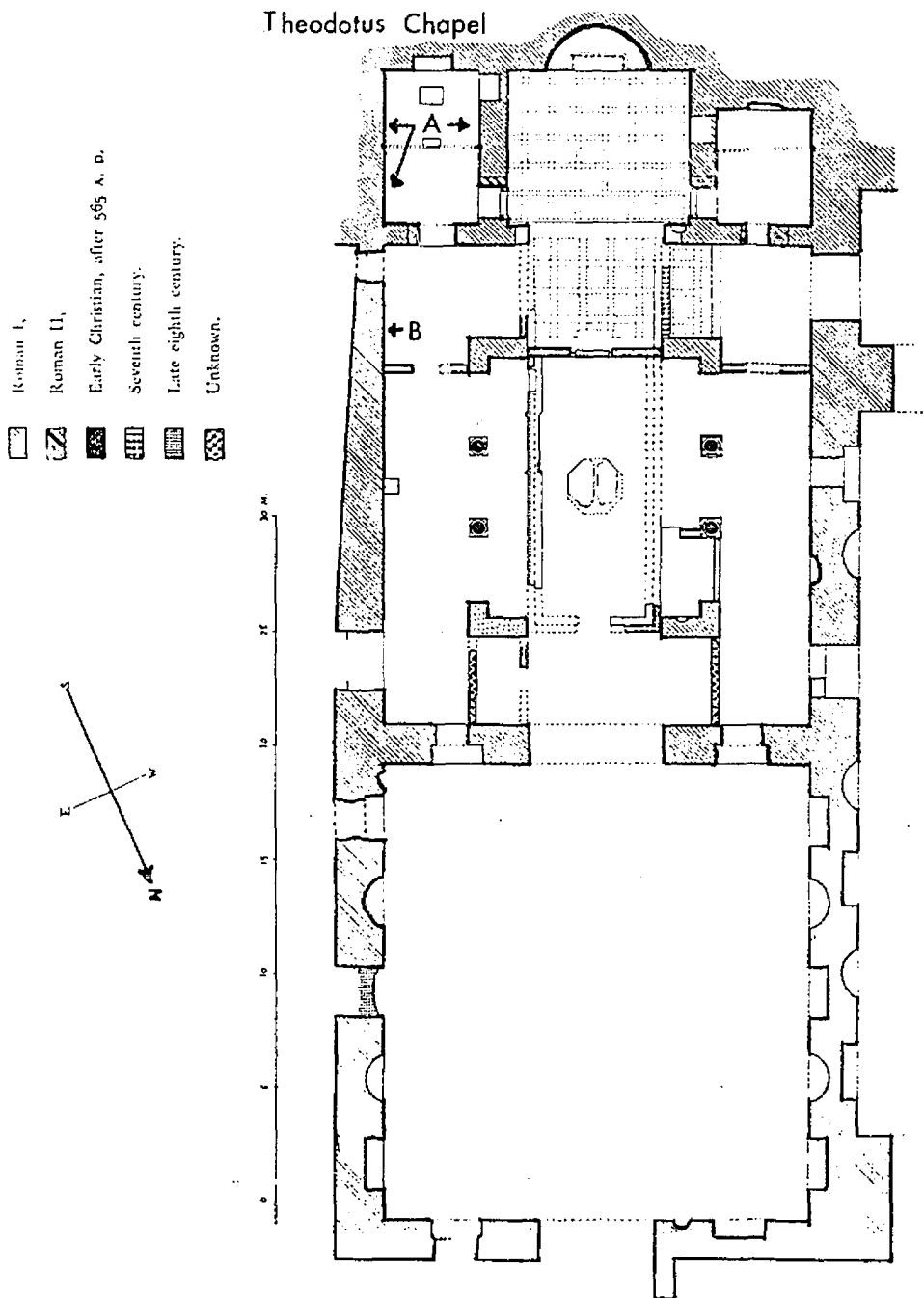


Fig.ii: Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome (after Krautheimer)  
 A: Cycle of SS. Quiricus and Julitta  
 B: Cycle of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste

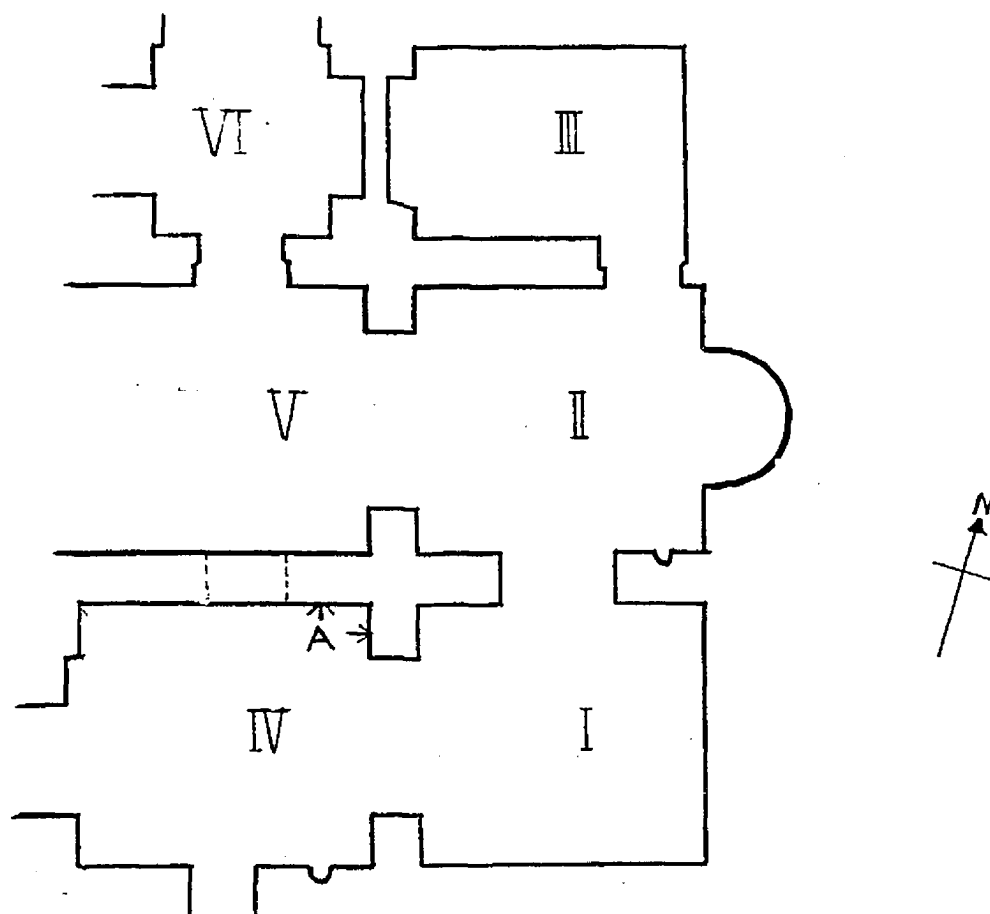


Fig.iii: Church of S. Maria in Via Lata, Rome (after Krautheimer)

A: Cycle of St. Erasmus

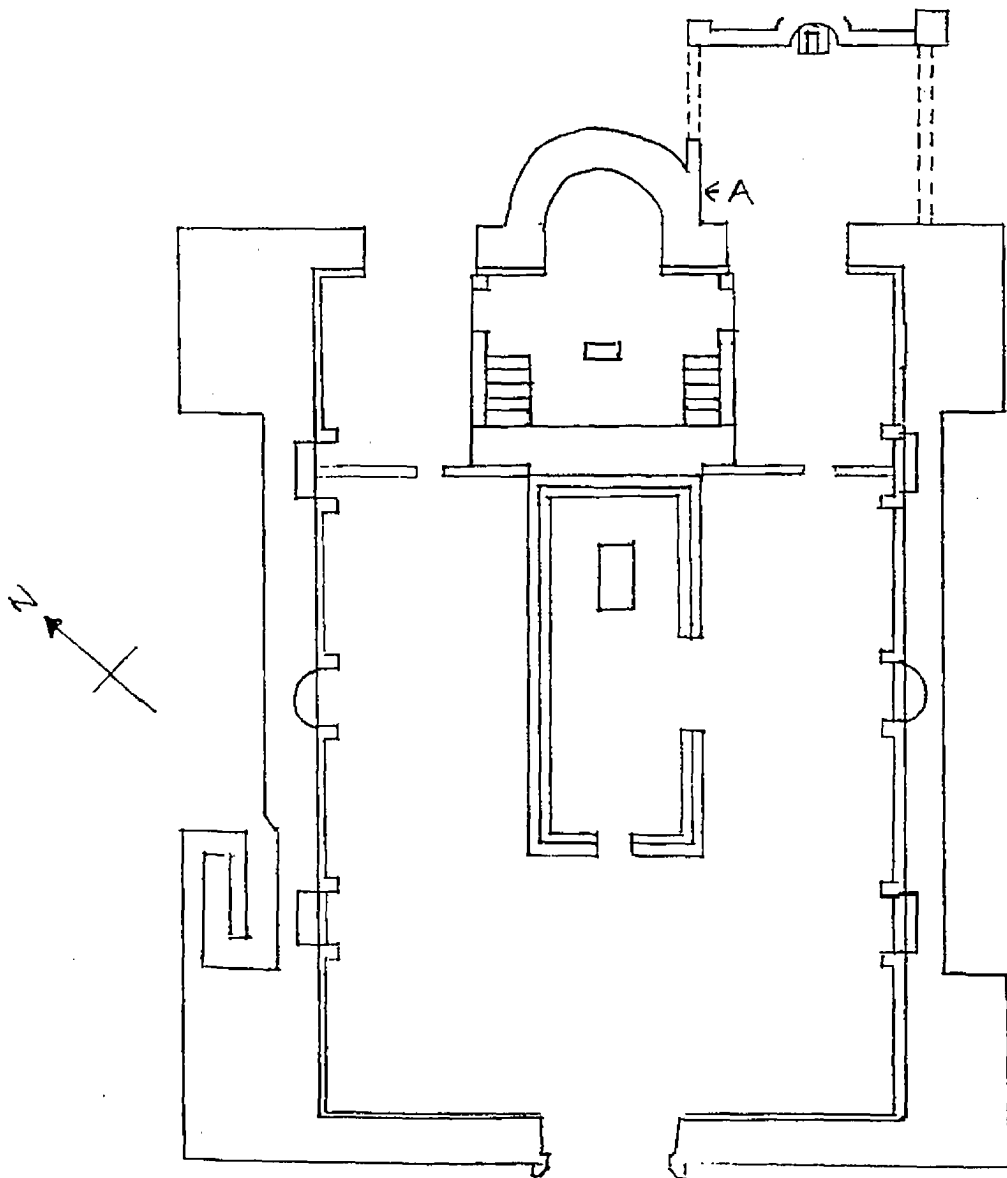


Fig.iv: Church of S. Adriano, Rome. (after Mancini)  
A: Cycle of SS. Paul and Anastasius

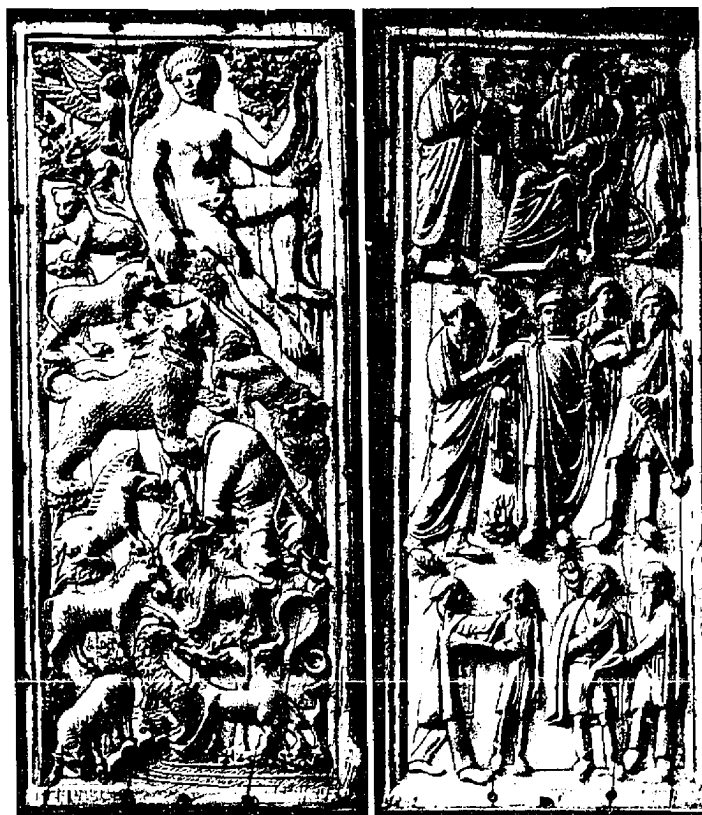


Fig.1: Adam in Paradise (left), Scenes from the life of Saint Paul (right): Carrand Diptych, Museo Bargello, Florence (photo: W. Volbach, Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters, (Mainz, 1976), plate 58.



Fig.2: Arrest of three martyrs: Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome



Fig.3: Beheading of three martyrs: Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome



Fig.4: Crucifixion: Theodotus Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome



Fig.5: Donor Painting: Theodotus Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome



Fig.6: Theodotus and family: Theodotus Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome



Fig.7: Theodotus before Quiricus and Julitta: Theodotus Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome



Fig.8: Four Saints: Theodotus Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome



Fig.9: Scene 1: Cycle of SS. Quiricus and Julitta: Theodotus Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome



Fig.10: Scene 2: Cycle of SS. Quiricus and Julitta: Theodotus  
Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome





Fig.12: Scene 5: Cycle of SS. Quiricus and Julitta: Theodotus Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome



Fig.13: Scene 6: Cycle of SS. Quiricus and Julitta:  
Theodotus Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome

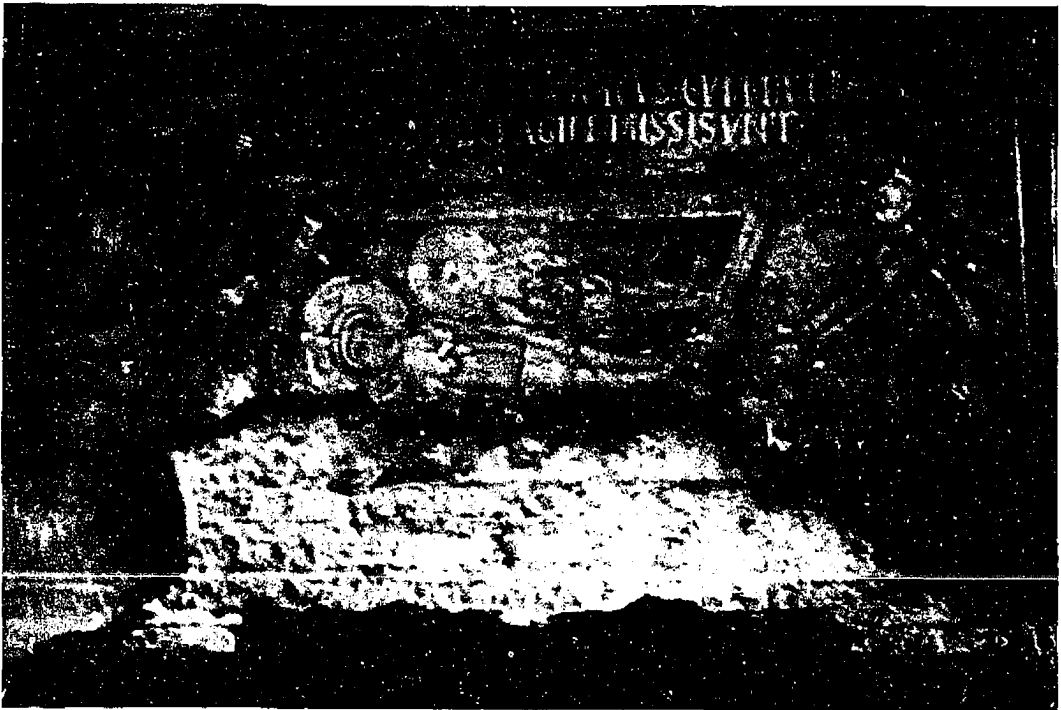


Fig.14: Scene 7: Cycle of SS. Quiricus and Julitta: Theodotus  
Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome

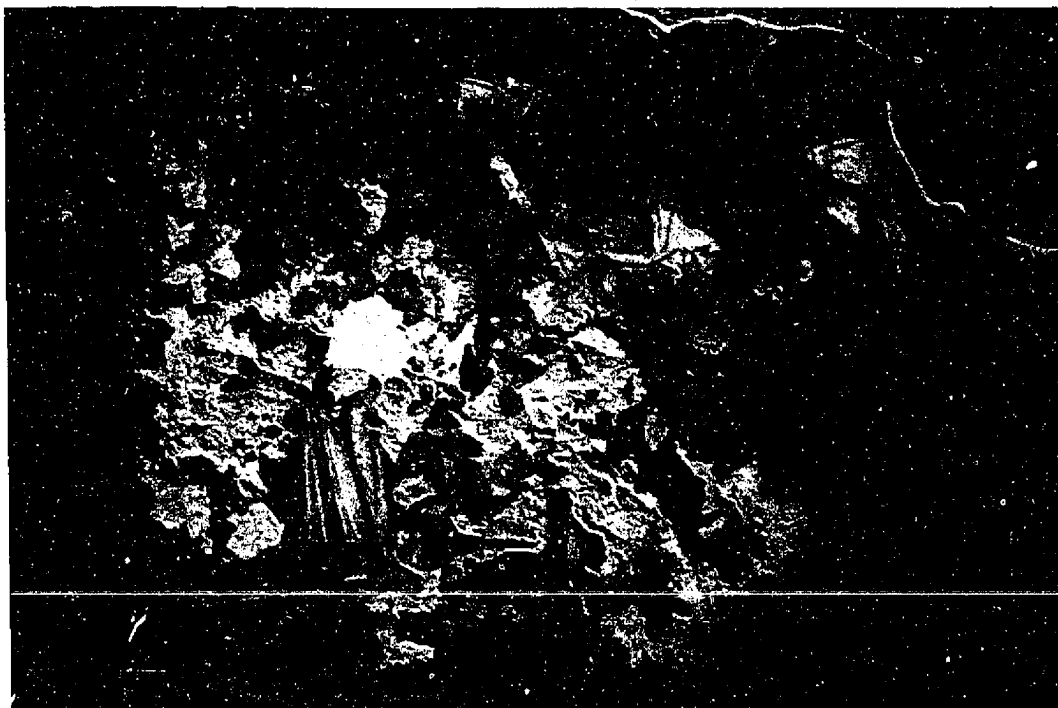


Fig.15: Scene 8: Cycle of SS. Quiricus and Julitta: Theodotus Chapel, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome

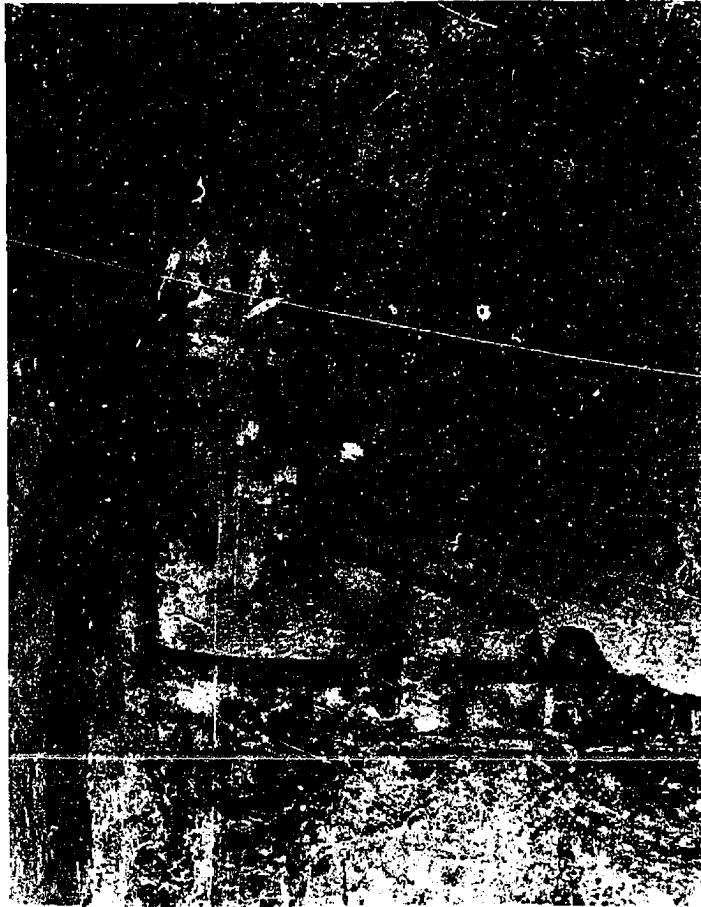


Fig.16: Martyrdom of Forty Martyrs of Sebaste: left aisle, Church of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome (photo: Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma)



Fig.17: Scene 1: Cycle of St. Erasmus: Church of S. Maria in Via Lata (photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome)



Fig.18: Scene 2: Cycle of St. Erasmus: Church of S. Maria in Via Lata (photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome)



Fig.19: Cycle of Paul and Anastasius: Church of S. Adriano, Rome (photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome)



Fig.20: Detail, martyrdom of St. Callixtus: Catacomb of Calepodius, Rome (photo: Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, Rome)



Fig.21: Detail, martyrdom of St. Callixtus: Catacomb of Calepodius, Rome (photo: Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, Rome)



Fig.22: Inscription: Catacomb of Calepodius, Rome (photo: Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, Rome)



Fig.23: Deposition of St. Callixtus: Catacomb of Calepodius, Rome (photo: Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, Rome)

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