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### The Image of a Building: Santa Maria in Trastevere

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# A Building's Images: Santa Maria in Trastevere

Dale Kinney

## Images

If only because it has an inside and an outside, a building cannot be grasped in a single view. To see it as a whole one must assemble images: the sensory impressions of a beholder moving through or around it (perceptual images), the objectified views of painters and photographers (pictorial images), the analytical graphics of architects (analytical images), and now, virtual simulacra derived from laser scans, photogrammetry, and other means of digital measurement and representation. These empirical images can be overlaid by abstract or symbolic ones: themes or metaphors imagined by the architect or patron (intended images); the image projected by contingent factors such as age, condition, and location (projected images); the collective image generated by the interaction of the building's appearance with the norms and expectations of its users and beholders; the individual (but also collectively conditioned) "phenomenological" images posited by Gaston Bachelard (psychological images), and many more.<sup>1</sup> In short, the topic of a building's images is one of almost unlimited complexity, not to be encompassed in a brief essay. By way of confining it I will restrict my treatment to a single example: Santa Maria in Trastevere, a twelfth-century church basilica on the right bank of the Tiber River in Rome. I will focus on its intended, projected, and collective images in two key eras of its existence. Pictorial images, including those surviving inside the basilica and the representations of it by artist-architects in the 19th century, are considered in relation to the ephemeral images that are my principal subject and their role in constituting communal identities.

Pictorial images—graphic and painted—are fixed and more amenable to historical analysis than collective and projected ones, which are contingent, unstable, and rarely recorded. We can, however, say something about the collective image of Santa Maria in Trastevere held by contemporary Anglophone art historians. It is essentially a verbal image, shaped by books, teaching, and professional conversations. In this image the building is "medieval" but "restored"; depending on the frame of reference, it is also "traditional," "historicist," or "retardataire"—in any case neither Romanesque nor Gothic, and thus somewhat difficult to place.<sup>2</sup> The collective images of contemporary tourists, pilgrims, and parishioners—not to mention their 12th-century counterparts—must be more experiential, but insofar as they are derived from physical realities, all of these images will share some commonalities.<sup>3</sup> Intricately worked gold mosaics, impressive granite columns, and an elaborate mosaic pavement have always been among the building's most conspicuous interior features (even if the pavement of today is a 19th-century replacement of the one seen in the 12th century), and nearly any collective image will reflect them (figs. 1 and 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Marvin Trachtenberg, "On Brunelleschi's Choice: Speculations on Medieval Rome and the Origins of Renaissance Architecture," in *Architectural Studies in Memory of Richard Krautheimer*, ed. Cecil L. Striker (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1996), 169; Dale Kinney, "Rome in the Twelfth Century: *Urbs fracta* and *renovatio*," *Gesta* 45, no. 2 (2006): 199–203.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the tourist image I have been informed by reviews of "Santa Maria in Trastevere," *TripAdvisor*, [http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g187791-d243029-Reviews-or140-Santa\\_Maria\\_in\\_Trastevere-Rome\\_Lazio.html#REVIEWS](http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187791-d243029-Reviews-or140-Santa_Maria_in_Trastevere-Rome_Lazio.html#REVIEWS) (accessed June 17, 2015).

Given the effort and cost of incorporating them, these features must also be part of the intended image—that is, the image that Pope Innocent II (r. 1130–1143), who sponsored the original construction of the basilica, wanted it to project.



Fig. 1. Rome, Santa Maria in Trastevere, interior looking west. Photo: author.



Fig. 2. Santa Maria in Trastevere, view of apse from transept. Photo: author.





Fig. 3. Rome, San Clemente, interior looking toward west (Luigi Rossini, *Scenografia degl'interni delle più belle chiese e basiliche antiche di Roma* [Rome: privately printed, 1843], pl. VI).

Projected and collective images can be animated by the performance of the building's intended functions, and in this respect the medieval and modern images of Santa Maria in Trastevere will diverge. The staging of the liturgy has changed more than once since the Middle Ages. The walled choir that occupied nearly half the nave, carving out a space for the canons from the space of the people (as seen still today at San Clemente, fig. 3) was dismantled in the 15th century, opening all of the nave to lay people, while the space in the transept reserved for the clergy became higher and more remote following a lowering of the nave floor in the 1860s.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> On the choir: Karin Bull-Simonsen Einaudi, "L'arredo liturgico medievale in Santa Maria in Trastevere," *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 59 (2000).



The introduction of electric lighting in the 20th century enabled a uniformly bright illumination of the nave and transept that might have seemed hallucinatory to earlier viewers accustomed to indirect lighting from the windows, the fitful radiance of candles, or the confined, concentrated glow of gas lamps.<sup>5</sup> The sounds of the liturgy have changed as well. Today the Mass is mostly spoken rather than chanted, and its delivery in Italian makes it more conversational than the Latin heard by worshippers until Vatican II. Canons no longer sing the Divine Office throughout the day; their living voices have been replaced by piped-in recordings of medieval chant. Liturgical dress is simpler than it was, and the dress of many contemporary visitors and even congregants is recreational. These and other such factors constitute the experiential component of collective images, which is condensed from available stimuli—visual, aural, olfactory, and tactile.<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 4. Santa Maria in Trastevere, north wall of nave, detail. Photo: author.

The features that make Santa Maria in Trastevere “medieval” are most visible in analytical images: the ground plan and elevations. Most accessible are the previously mentioned spoliated colonnades and the 12th- and 13th-century mosaics, as well as the exterior brick-faced walls and the bell tower.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise the eyes find only post-medieval alterations. The gilded pilasters above the nave colonnades, which rhythmically separate large arched windows from recesses containing paintings of early Christian saints, date from a renovation by Virginio Vespignani (1808–1882) in the 1860s–1870s (fig. 4).<sup>8</sup> The neo-Cosmatesque pavement was part of the same

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rico Franses, “When All That Is Gold Does Not Glitter: On the Strange History of Looking at Byzantine Art,” in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Bissera V. Pentcheva, “The Performative Icon,” *Art Bulletin* 88, no. 4 (2006); Eric Palazzo, “Art, Liturgy, and the Five Senses in the Early Middle Ages,” *Viator* 41, no. 1 (2010): 26–27.

<sup>7</sup> On the mosaics: Jérôme Croisier, in Serena Romano, *Riforma e tradizione 1050–1198, La Pittura medievale a Roma 312–1431; Corpus e Atlante* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2006), 4:305–11; Alessandro Tomei, *Pietro Cavallini* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana, 2000), 22–51.

<sup>8</sup> “Vespignani Conte Commend. Virginio,” in *Triplice omaggio alla Santità di Papa Pio IX nel suo Giubileo episcopale offerto dalle Romane Accademie* (Rome: Tipografia della Pace, 1877), part 2, § VI, 42–43; Claudio Rocca, “Roma: S. Maria in Trastevere. I restauri ottocenteschi,” *Ricerche di storia dell’arte* 35 (1988); Armanda and Laura Pastorino, “I restauri delle chiese ad impianto basilicale a Roma durante il pontificato di Pio IX,”

renovation. The magnificent ceiling was designed by Domenichino (1581–1641) for Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini (titular cardinal 1612–1620).<sup>9</sup>

The transept was remodeled by Cardinal Marco Sittico ab Altemps (titular cardinal 1580–1595) and opens onto the cardinal’s historically important family chapel to the left of the apse.<sup>10</sup> Vespignani renovated the transept and reworked the often-photographed façade, which is a composite of 13th/14th-, 18th-, and 19th-century features (figs. 5 and 6).



Fig. 5. Santa Maria in Trastevere, façade. Photo: author.



Fig. 6. Detail of façade. Photo: author.

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*Ricerche di storia dell'arte* 56 (1995): 68–70; Clementina Barucci, *Virginio Vespignani, architetto tra Stato Pontificio e Regno d'Italia* (Rome: Argos, 2006), 172–74.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Spear, *Domenichino* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 13, 87, 189–191, 328–329.

<sup>10</sup> Helmut Friedel, “Die Cappella Altemps in S. Maria in Trastevere,” *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 17 (1978).

The vaulted porch was made to the design of Carlo Fontana (ca. 1634/38–1714) in 1701–1702, while the three large windows above it were opened in the 19th century to match those in the nave.<sup>11</sup> The strip of mosaic on the angled *cavetto* over the windows was made in installments, the first in the 13th century and the last in the 14th.<sup>12</sup> Silverio Capparoni (1831–1907) painted palm trees and sheep between the windows and a scene of Pope Pius IX (r. 1846–1878) kneeling before the Lord of the Apocalypse in the tympanum, now almost illegible.

That this polychronic building registers today as medieval is a testament to the success of Vespignani's approach to restoration. The desired effect was a look simultaneously old and new: of the original era, but without the wear of time. To this end he filled the interstices between the original ornament and later interventions with historicizing features (such as the round-headed windows and the pilasters), and unified the various phases with color and the glow of gold. The result evokes a romantic idea of the Middle Ages; it has the effect of *medievalità*.<sup>13</sup> If in the collective image of art historians *medievalità* is a sign of inauthenticity, in the collective image of tourists it confirms what is said in the guidebooks, that Santa Maria in Trastevere is authentically old.<sup>14</sup>

However (in)accurate, every collective image has some relationship to the intended and the projected images, which are themselves reciprocally related. A projected image of neglect or decay can undermine an intended image of splendid grandeur, as has happened to Santa Maria in Trastevere repeatedly in the centuries since 1143. The intended image is the work of the author; the projected image is the work of circumstance, including materials, craftsmanship, weather, and time. Inevitably the two images diverge, and the renovator who seeks to bring them back into convergence (or to replace one intended image with another) counts as a new author. In that respect we must admit that the author to whose image all 21st-century collectives are reacting is Virginio Vespignani, not Pope Innocent II.

### The 19th-Century Image

The style of Vespignani's renovation was not personal; it was corporate, an institutional intervention in a long-running discussion about the value and form of the early Christian church basilica and how modern architects should respond to it. Although it predated the burning of San Paolo fuori le mura in 1823, the debate took on an acutely practical relevance after the fire that left the late fourth-century basilica ruined but not entirely destroyed (fig. 7).<sup>15</sup> Should the surviving parts be incorporated into a reconstruction, or should the site be leveled to start again? If the latter, should the new building reproduce the original or should it have a contemporary design?

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<sup>11</sup> Christopher M.S. Johns, *Papal Art and Cultural Politics. Rome in the Age of Clement XI* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 147–51.

<sup>12</sup> Karina Queijo, in Serena Romano, *Il Duecento e la cultura gotica 1198–1287 ca.*, *La Pittura medievale a Roma 312–1431*; *Corpus e Atlante* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2012), 5:72–76, 311.

<sup>13</sup> Maurizio Caperna, “Il restauro delle chiese romane durante il pontificato di Pio IX: Preesistenze e rinnovamento figurativo,” in “Architettura: processualità e trasformazione. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Roma, Castel Sant’Angelo, 24–27 novembre 1999,” ed. Maurizio Caperna and Gianfranco Spagnesi, special issue, *Quaderni dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Architettura*, n.s. 34–39 (1999–2002): 513.

<sup>14</sup> An often-cited guide is *Rick Steves’ Walk. Trastevere, Rome* (<https://rickstevesdigital.com/Products/0617aa5f-84ff-4520-a8ea-a409018af1c1> [accessed June 25, 2015]), but to their credit, many tourists are better informed.

<sup>15</sup> On the earlier debate, see Elisabetta Pallottino, “La nuova architettura paleocristiana nella ricostruzione della basilica di S. Paolo fuori le mura a Roma (1823–1847),” *Ricerche di storia dell’arte* 56 (1995).





Fig. 7. Rome, San Paolo fuori le mura in 1823 (Luigi Rossini, *Le antichità romane divise in cento tavole*, Rome: Scudellari, 1823, pl. 99). Photo: Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome.

Factions developed around the various solutions. After initially favoring a proposal for a neoclassical replacement, Pope Leo XII (r. 1823–1829) reversed course in 1825, when he issued a Chirograph endorsing the wishes “of scholars (*eruditi*) and of those who admirably advocate the preservation of ancient monuments in the state in which they arose through the work of their founders.”<sup>16</sup> The basilica would be rebuilt as it had been; “no innovation should be made in the architectural forms or proportions, and none in the ornament of the resurrected building except to exclude some small things that, in times after its original foundation, could have been introduced by the whim of later ages.”<sup>17</sup>

The rebuilding of San Paolo was entrusted to the architect Pasquale Belli, who—in apparent violation of the Chirograph—proposed an interior elevation that differed significantly from that of the incinerated prototype, with uniform granite colonnades (instead of the fluted *pavonazzetto* shafts thought to go back to Constantine) and above them, an order of Corinthian pilasters

<sup>16</sup> Terry Kirk, *Architecture of Modern Italy, 1: The Challenge of Tradition, 1750–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 172–73; quotation from the Chirograph after Paolo Marconi, “Roma 1806–1829: un momento critico per la formazione della metodologia del restauro architettonico,” *Ricerche di storia dell’arte* 8 (1978–1979): 65; see also Pallottino, “La nuova architettura,” 38. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted by Marconi, “Roma 1806–1829,” 65.

framing windows and blind arches containing painted figures.<sup>18</sup> Challenges to these innovations were effectively rebutted by the younger architect Luigi Poletti (1792–1869), who appealed to the 5th-century basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore as an example of what the emperor Constantine must have intended at San Paolo (fig. 8).<sup>19</sup> Poletti inherited the massive reconstruction project in 1833, and for better or worse, the result is generally considered his building. It is still a polarizing design. Architects and historians today find it deadly: “a mere replacement,” “mechanical,” “frozen,” “a mistaken assignment that could never be brought to life” (fig. 9).<sup>20</sup>



Fig. 8. Rome, Santa Maria Maggiore, interior looking west. Photo: author.



Fig. 9. Rome, San Paolo fuori le mura, interior looking east. Photo: author.

<sup>18</sup> Pallottino, “La nuova architettura,” 43 and fig. 16. For the original elevation, see Hugo Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom* (Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2004), 115–25.

<sup>19</sup> Pallottino, “La nuova architettura,” 45.

<sup>20</sup> Gianfranco Spagnesi, *L’Architettura a Roma al tempo di Pio IX*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Studium, 2000), 145–46; Richard Krautheimer, *Rome. Profile of a City, 312–1308*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 43; Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen*, 120–21. For contemporary criticism, see Barucci, *Virginio Vespignani*, 178.

In its own time the reconstructed San Paolo became a model for the restoration of other historic churches in Rome, not as they were originally but as they should have been, or would have been had the earliest Christian basilicas not been built in a time of decadence. This image of the early Christian—specifically Constantinian—basilica was classicizing but not neoclassical: Roman rather than Greek, and filtered through the classicisms of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries.<sup>21</sup> Ferdinando Fuga’s restoration of Santa Maria Maggiore (1743–1750) was an influential antecedent.<sup>22</sup> Vespignani, who became Poletti’s pupil at the age of seventeen and ultimately completed the reconstruction of San Paolo, conducted his own restorations along the lines established by his master. His approach, freer and more decorative than Poletti’s, was much to the taste of Pope Pius IX. Vespignani became this pope’s favored architect and the designer of his most significant renovations.<sup>23</sup>

Different images of the early Christian basilica emerged in other circles. A portfolio of plans, sections, and views by the architects Johann Gottfried Gutensohn (1792–1851) and Johann Michael Knapp (1791–1861), originally commissioned in 1818 by the eminent German publishing house J.G. Cotta, was reissued in 1843 with a text by the polymath Christian C.J. Bunsen.<sup>24</sup> Three years later Luigi Canina brought out a second edition of his *Research on the Most Appropriate Architecture of Christian Churches* also extensively illustrated.<sup>25</sup> Canina’s prominence assured a wide readership; according to Augusto Sistri, his audience extended as far as Brazil.<sup>26</sup> Canina shared the general dislike of the “capricious” architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries and urged a return to the project of 16th-century architects like Bramante, Sangallo, and Peruzzi to recover the “true principles” of the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome. He opposed eclecticism. While applauding attempts in France and Germany to build new churches in the manner of early Christian ones, he noted with disapproval that in London architects were constructing churches in the Gothic style and even on the model of the Erechtheum. He offered his “Research” as an antidote to the corrosive differences of opinion about the appropriate manner of building in his own time.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Barucci, *Virginio Vespignani*, 25–28.

<sup>22</sup> On the restoration, see Richard Krautheimer, Spencer Corbett, and Wolfgang Frankl, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, 3 (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1967), 9, 24–26.

<sup>23</sup> Armando Ravaglioli, “Gli impegni romani e le trasferte laziali dell’architetto Vespignani (1808–1882),” in *Pittori architetti scultori laziali nel tempo*, ed. Renato Lefevre (Rome: Fratelli Palombi Editori, 1989), 276–78; Caperna, “Il restauro,” 510–11; Barucci, *Virginio Vespignani*, 54, 143–89.

<sup>24</sup> Johann Gottfried Gutensohn and Johan Michael Knapp, *Denkmale der christlichen Religion oder Sammlung der ältesten christlichen Kirchen oder Basiliken Roms von 4. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert*, 5 vols. (Munich: J.G. Cotta, 1822–1827); Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen, *Die Basiliken des christlichen Roms nach ihrem Zusammenhänge mit Idee und Geschichte der Kirchenbaukunst*, 2 vols. (Munich: J.G. Cotta, 1843). On Cotta, see Leonard A. Wheatley, “The Publishing House of J.G. Cotta,” *The Bibliographer* 3 (1882–1883); on the two editions see Ewald Wegner, *Forschung zu Leben und Werk des Architekten Johann Gottfried Gutensohn (1792–1851)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), 64–74; Bernd Evers in Bernd Evers and Christof Thoenes, *Architectural Theory from the Renaissance to the Present*, trans. Gregory Fauria, Jeremy Gaines, and Michael Shuttleworth (Cologne: Taschen, 2003), 612–21.

<sup>25</sup> Luigi Canina, *Ricerche sull’Architettura più propria dei Tempj cristiani basate sulle primitive istituzioni ecclesiastiche e dimostrate tanto con i più insigni vetusti edifizj sacri quanto con alcunj esempj di applicazione del Cav. Luigi Canina*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Canina, 1846).

<sup>26</sup> Augusto Sistri, “Canina teorico dell’architettura, dalle antiche basiliche al Palazzo di Cristallo,” in *Luigi Canina (1795–1856). Architetto e teorico del classicismo*, ed. Augusto Sistri (Milan: Edizioni Guerini e Associati, 1995), 168.

<sup>27</sup> Canina, *Ricerche*, 6–10; Sistri, “Canina,” 167–71.



Canina advocated the early Christian basilica as the proper type for churches because it descended directly from the forum basilicas of Imperial Rome; San Paolo, for example, imitated Trajan's Basilica Ulpia.<sup>28</sup> Because these first Christian buildings were corrupted by the deficiencies of their age, which caused them to be made with "diverse materials taken haphazardly from buildings of different types," it was necessary to discern and emulate their character rather than their actual appearance.<sup>29</sup> Santa Maria in Trastevere exemplifies his approach. Canina considered it one of the early churches worthy of study, illustrating it with four plates.<sup>30</sup> He believed it was "one of the few buildings that can be believed with great certainty to have been dedicated to the Christian cult before the era of Constantine"—even if its present incarnation was a rebuilding by Pope Gregory III (r. 731–741)—on the grounds that the reconstruction would have preserved the basilican form of the original 3rd-century church. It was notable for having architraves "according to the constant practice of ancient architecture" rather than the arcades introduced in the time of decadence.<sup>31</sup>



Fig. 10. Santa Maria in Trastevere, interior looking west (Canina, *Ricerche*, pl. XXXIX). Photo: Avery Library.

Canina's collapse of the long medieval history of Santa Maria in Trastevere into a supposed rebuilding by Pope Gregory III, despite the evidence of the apse mosaic that the structure at hand was the work of Pope Innocent II four hundred years later, bespeaks his lack of interest in the *realia* of medieval construction and design.<sup>32</sup> His view of the basilica as it was before the

<sup>28</sup> For the background to this belief, see Susanna Pasquali, "Basiliche civili e cristiane nell'editoria romana d'architettura tra Sette e Ottocento," *Ricerche di storia dell'arte* 56 (1995).

<sup>29</sup> Canina, *Ricerche*, 49–50.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 82–84 and plates XXXVIII–XLI.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 83–84.

<sup>32</sup> The reference to Gregory III rests on the *Liber pontificalis*, ed. Louis Duchesne, 2 vols. (Paris: E. Thorin, 1886–1892), 1:419: "Hic etiam basilicam sancti Calisti pontificis et martyris pene a fundamentis dirutam novis fabricis cum tecto construxit ac totam depinxit" ["And this pope [re]built the almost totally ruined basilica of St. Callixtus, pope and martyr, with new structures and a roof and painted it all"]. On the interpretation of this passage, see G. N. Verrando, "Callistum (ad), basilica," in *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae. Suburbium*, ed. Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai, M. Grazia Granino Cecere, and Zaccaria Mari, vol. 2 (Rome: Quasar, 2004).

addition of “modern” decoration shows large windows filled with tracery and a Gothic ciborium, neither of which ever existed (fig. 10).<sup>33</sup> It is a copy of the view by Gutensohn republished by Cotta, romanticized by the pictorial manipulation of light and shadow (fig. 11).<sup>34</sup> For his part, Gutensohn based his ciborium on the extant one in Santa Maria in Cosmedin, which is signed by the marble worker Deodatus (ca. 1300) and is in turn a simplified version of the late 13th-century ciborium by Arnolfo di Cambio in San Paolo fuori le mura.<sup>35</sup> The Gutensohn-Canina image of Santa Maria in Trastevere is a composite, stereotypical view of the Roman medieval church interior as early-19th-century architects imagined it.

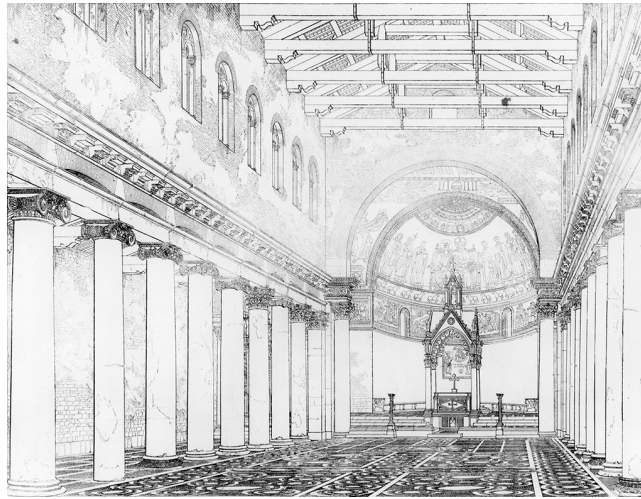


Fig. 11. Santa Maria in Trastevere, interior looking west (Johann Gottfried Gutensohn, in Bunsen, *Die Basiliken*, vol. 2, pl. XXXVIII). Photo: Courtauld Institute of Art.

Canina’s images of the basilica “in its most ancient state” are also composites, combining features of the extant church that he deemed authentic—like the “decadent” mix of capital types and the multiple profiles of the modillions in the entablature over the colonnade—with invented features that his research indicated were typically early Christian: open timber roofs (rather than ceilings or vaults), large round-headed windows filled with grilles in both nave and aisle walls, a trabeated porch on the facade (fig. 12).<sup>36</sup> The Gothic ciborium is a jarring anomaly, possibly a sign that Canina did not care about, or did not care to prescribe, the forms of liturgical microarchitecture.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Canina, *Ricerche*, pl. XXXIX.

<sup>34</sup> Bunsen, *Die Basiliken*, pl. XXXVIII. The image is dated 1826. On Canina’s reliance on Bunsen, see Sistri, “Canina,” 169.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Cornelius Claussen, *Magistri doctissimi romani. Die römischen Marmorkünstler des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1987), 210–12.

<sup>36</sup> Canina, *Ricerche*, 83, pl. XL.

<sup>37</sup> His section of San Crisogono (*ibid.*, pl. XLII) includes a domed ciborium like the 17th-century one there today, while his view of St. Peter’s—long since destroyed—shows an invented Gothic one (*ibid.*, pl. LXVIII).

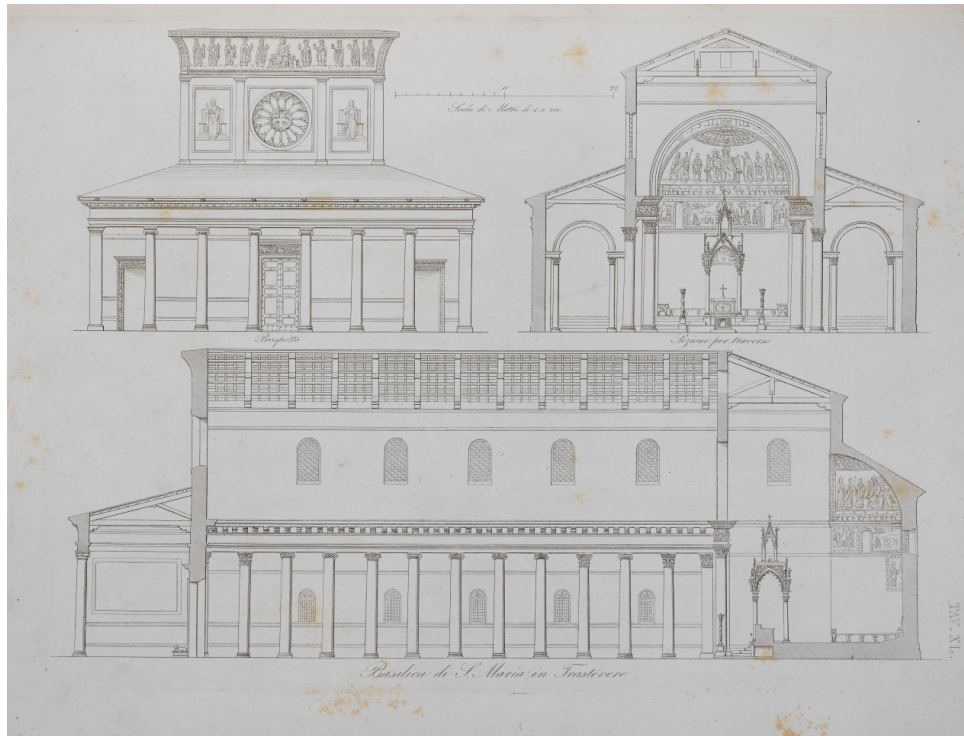


Fig. 12. Santa Maria in Trastevere, elevation of facade, transverse and longitudinal sections (Canina, *Ricerche*, pl. XL). Photo: Avery Library.

Canina’s images of Santa Maria in Trastevere were academic exercises, shared with readers and viewers of his book as illustrations of a corrupted ideal that could still be perfected in their own time. A different image of Santa Maria in Trastevere was available to many of the same readers in *Buildings of Modern Rome* by Paul-Marie Letarouilly (1795–1855).<sup>38</sup> Born in Coutances, Letarouilly entered the atelier of the neoclassical architect Charles Percier in 1816 and was sent to Rome to study five years later. Almost immediately he conceived his life’s work, an illustrated compendium of the best Roman architecture of the 15th through 17th centuries that would provide models for architects in his home country.<sup>39</sup> His prodigious output of drawings, made in the brief span of five discontinuous years in Rome (1821–1824, 1831–1832, 1844–1845), contains meticulous renditions of facades, interior spaces, and decorative features of hundreds of buildings. Laboriously completed and engraved in Paris, the images eventually filled three giant folio volumes; the last plates were approved just before the author’s death. Santa Maria in Trastevere appears in volume three, on a single plate with four images: a perspective view of the nave, a precisely measured ground plan, and details of the southwest and southeast corners (fig. 13).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Paul Letarouilly, *Édifices de Rome moderne; ou Recueil des palais, maisons, églises, couvents, et autres monuments publics et particuliers le plus remarquables de la ville de Rome* (Paris: Libraires-Imprimeries Réunies May et Motteroz, 1860).

<sup>39</sup> “Notice sur la vie et les travaux de P. M. Le Tarouilly,” in Letarouilly, *Édifices*, 1:XVII–XXI.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:pl. 327.





Fig. 13. Santa Maria in Trastevere, interior looking west and ground plans (Letarouilly, *Édifices*, vol. 3, pl. 327).  
Photo: Avery Library.

The perspective view is clearly related to Gutensohn's; the perspective is the same in both, though the vantage point of Letarouilly's view is three columns closer. Gutensohn's view is dated 1826, two years after Letarouilly's seminal visit to Rome but long before his plate 327 was published, so the dependence could have gone either way.<sup>41</sup> Unlike Gutensohn, in any case, Letarouilly depicted the building as it was, with the domed wooden altar ciborium made by Cardinal ab Altemps, Domenichino's coffered ceiling, and the square windows in the nave walls that were made when the walls were raised to accommodate the ceiling in 1617.<sup>42</sup>

If it seems odd that early Christian basilicas would be included in a compendium of what today we would call early modern buildings of Rome, Letarouilly admitted to having catholic

<sup>41</sup> Letarouilly is known to have used other artists' engravings: M. D. Morozzo della Rocca, *P. M. Letarouilly: "Les Édifices de Rome moderne." Storia e critica di un'opera propedeutica alla composizione* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1951), 14. For the date of Gutensohn's view, see note 34 above.

<sup>42</sup> For the windows: Ottavio Panciroli, *Tesori nascosti dell'alma città di Roma*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Zannetti, 1625), 589: "Cardinale Pietro Aldobrandino [...] sotto dello stesso soffitto dall'vna, e l'altra parte con debita proportione aperse finestre, che danno à tutta la chiesa maggior lume" ["Under the same ceiling, on one side and the other, Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini opened properly proportioned windows that give more light to the entire church."]

tastes. He was even faulted for lacking “passionate choice and strong hatreds.”<sup>43</sup> Like Canina he appreciated church basilicas for their ancient Roman ancestry, and he admired the “character and simple beauty” that carried over despite the onset of *décadence* and “the fatal influence exerted by the Middle Ages on all products of the spirit.”<sup>44</sup> He regretted the switch to vaulted churches that accompanied the rebuilding of St. Peter’s in the 16th century, attributing it to a lack of *spolia* with which to make the colonnades; “so the elegant colonnade was abandoned and replaced by bulky piers surmounted by arcades.”<sup>45</sup> Describing the basilicas he imagined were constructed with “papal magnificence” in the 15th century (though in reality 15th-century popes only restored the old ones), Letarouilly was “overcome with admiration at the sight of that rich, double colonnade composed of the rarest marbles, gazing at the ravishing paintings spread over every part, casting one’s eyes on the magnificent ceilings that conceal the timber roof, whose deep compartments both shine with the glitter of gold and sparkle with the liveliest colors.”<sup>46</sup> This was the mental image that surpassed any of the basilicas Letarouilly actually saw.



Fig. 14. Santa Maria in Trastevere, interior looking west (Sarti “Interno della insigne Basilica di S. Maria in Trastevere”). Photo: Bibliotheca Hertziana.

<sup>43</sup> “Notice sur la vie,” XXII, quoting Prosper Mérimée. Pasquali implies that the churches were not part of Letarouilly’s original plan (“Basiliche,” 24).

<sup>44</sup> Letarouilly, *Édifices*, 1:18.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:19–20.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:19.

The description that accompanies Letarouilly's images of Santa Maria in Trastevere is down-to-earth. "According to tradition" it was the first church where Christians were allowed to worship; it was rebuilt "from the foundations" by Pope Innocent II; and it was restored by Bernardo Rossellino (1409–1464) on the order of Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447–1455), a misconception that may have been inspired by Giannozzo Manetti's claim that Nicholas V restored all of Rome's stational churches.<sup>47</sup> Mention is made of the ornament: the wall mosaics; the four porphyry columns of the altar; the Ionic capitals with heads of Isis, Serapis, and Harpocrates; and the pavement "inlaid with porphyry, serpentine and marbles."<sup>48</sup> Although Letarouilly provided detailed illustrations of the pavement, his drawings seem to be keyed to the colonnades rather than to the geometric pattern of the floor.

A contemporary view by the architect Antonio Sarti (1797–1880) shows all the same features as Letarouilly's, yet gives a completely different effect (fig. 14). By taking a vantage point in the left rather than the right corner of the nave, Sarti revealed a structure that Gutensohn, Letarouilly, and Canina all suppressed: the baroque altar of the Crucifix against the wall just inside the entrance. The altar was established in the 1590s by Cardinal ab Altemps, who combined a medieval Crucifix taken from elsewhere in the church with images of the Virgin Mary and St. John painted on the wall to either side of it by the artist known as il Sordo (Antonio Viviani, 1560–1620).<sup>49</sup> The elaborate frame, replete with kneeling angels, cherubs, telamons, and a bust of God the Father, was made later by Antonio del Grande (1625–1671).<sup>50</sup> The pictures by il Sordo, "made with love and in good style" according to Filippo Titi, were destroyed when Vespignani replaced the wall on which they were painted to better support the bell tower.<sup>51</sup> Vespignani dismantled the shrine and moved the Crucifix and the Bernini-esque Madonna Addolorata to a chapel off the right aisle.<sup>52</sup>

Sarti's image might be called more realistic than Letarouilly's in that it is more accurate (showing, for example, the many disruptions of the pattern in the 12th-century pavement) and much more detailed. The details—holy water stoups, confessionals, gated private chapels lining the aisles—tend to reinforce the message of the Crucifix altar that this is a place of devotion. The atmosphere is enhanced by dramatic lighting, which, though realistically distributed (sunlight does stream in from the south), exaggerates the contrast of light and shadow. Darkness envelops the mysterious trio in the left foreground, a child and two women with elongated proportions and anachronistic dress who evoke the mannered style of an artist like Pietro Testa (1611–1650). The artifice of these figures points to the purpose of the image, which in turn explains its differences from the views of Gutensohn and Letarouilly. Unlike their expository illustrations, which operated in the service of texts, Sarti's view aspired to the status of an autonomous work of art. It is the second in a series of etched views of church interiors that Sarti made in the decade after

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 3:671; Manetti as quoted by Christine Smith and Joseph F. O'Connor, *Building the Kingdom: Giannozzo Manetti on the Material and Spiritual Edifice* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 389.

<sup>48</sup> Letarouilly, *Édifices*, 3:671–72. On the capitals, see Dale Kinney, "Spolia from the Baths of Caracalla in S. Maria in Trastevere," *Art Bulletin* 68 (1986).

<sup>49</sup> *Diverse cose cavate da diversi Autori dal Sig.<sup>r</sup> Canonico Ramoino per la Basilica di Sta Maria in Trastevere*, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 9832, fols. 199v–200r; Dale Kinney, "S. Maria in Trastevere from its Founding to 1215" (PhD diss., New York University, 1975), 246–47 n. 65.

<sup>50</sup> Rome, Archivio Capitolare di Santa Maria in Trastevere, Filippo Mallerini, *Memorie storiche della sacrosancta Basilica di S. Maria in Trastevere* (1871), fols. 63r–63v.

<sup>51</sup> Filippo Titi, *Studio di pittura, scoltura, et architettura, nelle chiese di Roma (1674–1763)*. Vol. 1: Testo, ed. Bruno Contardi and Serena Romano (Florence: Centro Di, 1987), 27.

<sup>52</sup> Carlo Cecchelli, *S. Maria in Trastevere* (Rome: Danesi, n.d. [1933]), 87.



coming to Rome from Budrio (near Bologna) in 1820.<sup>53</sup> Dedicated to the titular cardinal or cardinal priest of each church, perhaps in the hope of gaining patronage, the views showcase Sarti's skills with perspective drawing and pictorial effects. He was praised as the Piranesi of church interiors, who brought something of the approach of the great master to a heretofore untried subject.<sup>54</sup>

The images of Gutensohn, Letarouilly, Canina, and Sarti, made for different (if overlapping) purposes and for different (if overlapping) audiences, existed in a complex feedback loop with one another and with the perceptual and projected images of the building. We can deduce from them only a general sense of what the draftsmen actually saw: robust colonnades, square windows, a ruined pavement, peeling plaster, mosaics in need of restoration, altars and chapels, confessionals. The basilica had not been renovated since the beginning of the 17th century. When he visited it in 1863 Pope Pius IX expressed shock at "the squalor of the walls" and the terrible state of the pavement.<sup>55</sup> Neglect and decay were not what the architects were looking for, however, and they suppressed any such perceptual images in order to create clean, uncluttered alternatives (Gutensohn and Letarouilly), a picturesque transformation (Sarti), and reconstructions of a hypothetical primal state (Canina). Although these images surely were known to Vespignani, none of them seems to have influenced his vision for the real building, which was, if anything, close to Letarouilly's verbal image of the magnificent basilicas of the 15th century, shining with rare stones, gleaming with gold ceilings and "ravishing" paintings.<sup>56</sup> Vespignani's chief concerns were first, the integrity of the structure, and second, its decoration.<sup>57</sup>

The aesthetic goals of Pope Pius IX's church renovations have been ably described by Maurizio Caperna: "new splendor" through "decorative saturation of the space"; "chromatic reconception" of the interior in order to eliminate "Baroque monochromy"; and, in the case of the column basilicas, to relieve the "expressionlessness" of the long flat walls over the lines of columns (fig. 15).<sup>58</sup> The results were "magniloquent," that is, magnificent or garish, depending on the aesthetics of the observer. In 1879 the British archaeologist and restorer John Henry Parker, a proponent of the Gothic revival, decried the "extremely bad taste, vulgar and tawdry," that "continued in Rome a generation later than in the west of Europe.

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<sup>53</sup> They are collected in an album in the Biblioteca Sarti: BANC. r 34, "Sarti Interni di basiliche e monumenti antichi." See also Carlo Alberto Petrucci, ed., *Catalogo generale delle stampe tolte da rami incisi posseduti dalla Regia Calcografia di Roma* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1934), 208 no. 1730. The etching of Santa Maria in Trastevere is dated 1825; it is inscribed "A Sua Eminenza Reverendissima il Signor Cardinale Francesco Falzacappa / Titolare della suddetta Basilica / Antonio Sarti D.D.D."

<sup>54</sup> Enrico Loverly, "Le chiese di S. Pietro, e di S. Maria in Transtevere, disegni ed incisioni di Antonio Sarti da Budrio nel Bolognese," *Memorie romane di antichità e di belle arti* 2 (1825).

<sup>55</sup> Rome, Archivio Capitolare di Santa Maria in Trastevere, [Canon Gioacchino Cressedi], "Diario dei lavori di restauro e di decorazione della Basilica di S. Maria in Trastevere nel Pontificato di Pio IX," at 20 Agosto 1863.

<sup>56</sup> Vespignani was aware of Letarouilly's project, but he may not have seen the image of Santa Maria in Trastevere until it was published ca. 1860. Clementina Barucci, "Vespignani e Letarouilly," *Quaderni PAU* 15–16 (2005–2006).

<sup>57</sup> Simonetta Ciranna, "Virginio Vespignani architetto restauratore," in *La cultura del restauro. Teorie e fondatori*, ed. Stella Casiello (Venice: Marsilio, 1996).

<sup>58</sup> Caperna, "Il restauro," 507–12.



Fig. 15. Santa Maria in Trastevere, view from south aisle. Photo: author.

What is now the fashion for the cafés of Paris and the gin-shops of London, was the fashion for churches in Rome until near the end of the reign of Pius IX.”<sup>59</sup> Victorian aesthetes were not the pope’s intended audience, however. His renovations of more than 60 Roman churches were addressed to the world community of Catholics, and were meant to inspire renewed piety and loyalty to Rome and above all, to the papacy, which was fighting to preserve its temporal domain.<sup>60</sup> In some circles this was effective. In January 1870 a writer for the *Dublin Review*, describing Rome as “God’s city,” rejoiced that “All that the riches, and splendour, and beauty of the world can give—gold, and silver, and precious stones [...]—are given back by Rome to their Creator, and are lavished on His shrines; whilst [Rome] adds to them [...] the noblest of the creations with which she herself, inspired by Him, has in her turn inspired the intellect, and taste, and imagination of her children.”<sup>61</sup>

Pius IX lost his battle. In September 1870 Rome became the capital of a united Italy, following a brief assault on the Porta Pia by an army of the state created ten years earlier when

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<sup>59</sup> John Henry Parker, *Historical Photographs. A Catalogue of Three Thousand Three Hundred Photographs of Antiquities in Rome and Italy* (London: Edward Stanford, 1897), 50. For more nuanced responses to the work of Vespignani in particular, see Barucci, *Virginio Vespignani*, 67–70.

<sup>60</sup> Caperna, “Il restauro,” 505, 510.

<sup>61</sup> “Rome,” *The Dublin Review* (January 1870): 28–56, at 40; cf. Massimo de Leonardis, “Motivazioni religiose e sociali nella difesa del potere temporale dei papi (1850–1870),” *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* 69, no. 1 (1982): 192.

the kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont was joined to the southern realms conquered by Garibaldi.<sup>62</sup> The restoration of Santa Maria in Trastevere spanned the last hopeless years of papal resistance to this tide of history and coincided with one of its most momentous events, the loss of the pope's position as a temporal ruler. Declining any accommodation with the Italian regime, Pius IX declared himself a "prisoner in the Vatican" and never again entered the city, lest he be perceived as acknowledging its new government. Thus he may never have seen the results of one of his last and most lavish restorations, but he was able to monitor it from the Vatican. Work at Santa Maria in Trastevere had bogged down following the "unlucky day" when Rome fell to the forces of King Victor Emanuel II.<sup>63</sup> The delay was reported to the pope by a delegation from the Chapter of the basilica at the beginning of July 1871. In response, Pius IX ordered that work on the nave should be expedited so that it could be opened for worship on the Feast of the Assumption (15 August). Restoration subsequently continued in the transept until the entire basilica could be opened for liturgical services in April 1873.<sup>64</sup> The new wooden choir stalls in the apse were carved with Pius IX's coat of arms above the medieval marble cathedra, but only his 20th-century successors were free to sit there (fig. 16).<sup>65</sup>



Fig. 16. Santa Maria in Trastevere, cathedra and 19th-century choir benches. Photo: author.

Viewed in this context, Vespignani's Santa Maria in Trastevere might be seen as an image of futility, an emblem of a misguided attempt to preserve the medieval prerogatives of the papacy from the onslaught of modernization. Any such symbolic image is cryptic, however, perceptible only to the small community of specialists equipped with historical hindsight. Other visitors and users of the building approach it from different perspectives, unaware of Vespignani and Pius IX and in some cases even the Risorgimento. Their collective images are largely experiential, combining knowledge of the basilica's great age with perceptions of fine craftsmanship, splendor, and the practice of Christian devotion.

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<sup>62</sup> Martin Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 87.

<sup>63</sup> Archivio Capitolare di Santa Maria in Trastevere, "Diario," at 3 Luglio 1871.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, at 25 Aprile 1873.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, at 15 Dicembre 1873.

## The 12th-Century Image

In some ways the circumstances of Pope Innocent II were remarkably like those of Pope Pius IX. His reign too was marked by struggle for control of Rome, beginning with a schism at the time of his election and concluding with the threat of secular rule by a newly reconstituted senate. He also reigned in a period of prolific renovation of churches, which began under his predecessors Popes Paschal II (r. 1099–1118), Callixtus II (r. 1119–1124), and Honorius II (r. 1124–1130).<sup>66</sup> For the most part these renovations were not the work of the popes but of cardinals (San Clemente, San Crisogono) and high-ups in the papal administration (Santa Maria in Cosmedin). Santa Maria in Trastevere was an exception: the only church renovation in 12th-century Rome initiated by a sitting pope, the most lavish and arguably the greatest.

The pope's reign began inauspiciously on 14 February 1130 with a contested election. One faction of the college of cardinals elected him, the former Gregorio Papareschi, and the other elected Pier Pierleone, who took the name Anacletus II.<sup>67</sup> When a majority of the cardinals and the Roman people rallied around Anacletus, Innocent fled Rome and spent most of the next eight years in exile in Italy and France, while his allies—notably the eminent Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153)—lobbied on his behalf. Only the death of Anacletus in January 1138 resolved the situation, and in the end Innocent spent less than five years (1138–43) fully resident in Rome. Shortly after obtaining the city he convened a general council at the Lateran Cathedral, which “render[ed] void the ordinances enacted by Peter Leoni and other schismatics and heretics, and deem[ed] them null.”<sup>68</sup>

Schism was a potentially fatal condition for the Church. Throughout their simultaneous papacies Anacletus and Innocent made treaties, consecrated churches, ordained bishops, named cardinals, and performed other acts that in theory were irreversible, but in reality were contingent upon which pope would eventually prevail. At the end of the Lateran council Innocent II stripped all of the bishops associated with Anacletus II of their rings—even if they had later come over to his side.<sup>69</sup> In turn, all of the acts of those bishops might be questioned. Schism made a mockery of ecclesiastical authority and demonstrated that without a unified hierarchy the Church could not function as a judicial, legislative, and sacramental body.

The renovation of Santa Maria in Trastevere has been seen by some modern scholars as another of Innocent II's retributions, since Santa Maria had been the title church of his opponent for the decade preceding his election as pope (1120–1130).<sup>70</sup> This church—which Pierleone may well have begun to renovate himself—was razed almost to the ground to become the foundation

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<sup>66</sup> Krautheimer, *Rome*, 161–87; more recently, Dale Kinney, “Romanità a Roma: Le basiliche del XII secolo fra tradizioni e innovazioni,” in *La Cattedrale cosmatesca di Civita Castellana, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Civita Castellana 18–19 settembre 2010)*, ed. Luca Creti (Rome: “l’Erma” di Bretschneider, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Mary Stroll, *The Jewish Pope. Ideology and Politics in the Papal Schism of 1130* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 82–90; I. S. Robinson, *The Papacy 1073–1198. Continuity and Innovation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 69–78.

<sup>68</sup> Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:202–03, Canon 30 (Lateran II, April 2–17, 1139).

<sup>69</sup> Robinson, *The Papacy*, 138; Mary Stroll, *Symbols as Power. The Papacy Following the Investiture Contest* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 164.

<sup>70</sup> Kinney, *S. Maria in Trastevere*, 206–07; Ursula Nilgen, “Maria Regina—ein politischer Kultbildtypus?,” *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 19 (1981): 24; Stroll, *Symbols*, 164–79.



of Innocent's new and larger basilica.<sup>71</sup> The apse mosaic is the strongest evidence that the reconstruction was meant to redress the schism, as it is an image of union: Christ and his mother, dressed in gold and jewels, sharing a throne (fig. 17).



Fig. 17. Santa Maria in Trastevere, apse mosaic. Photo: Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

The Virgin's "golden dress" (fig. 2), singled out for notice in the inscription below the image (*aurea vestis*), and her other queenly attributes signify her allegorical identity as the Church, here united with Christ.<sup>72</sup> The allegory is affirmed by another inscription on her scroll, which repeats the words of the Bride in the Song of Songs: "Leva eius sub capite meo et dex(t)era illius amplexabit(ur) me" ["His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me"].<sup>73</sup> The embrace is portrayed by the seductive gesture of Christ's right arm, and the words on his book play on the co-enthronement: "Veni electa mea et ponam in te thronum meum" ["Come, my chosen one, and I will place in you my throne"].<sup>74</sup> The image depicts a wedding, and Joan Barclay Lloyd has shown that it is a visualization of the wedding song Psalm 44 (45):

<sup>71</sup> Stefano Coccia, with Anna Giulia Fabiani, Francesco Prezioso, and Francesco Scoppola, "Santa Maria in Trastevere: nuovi elementi sulla basilica paleocristiana e altomedievale," *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 59 (2000).

<sup>72</sup> Nilgen, "Maria Regina," 24–30; Joan E. Barclay Lloyd, "Das goldene Gewand der Muttergottes in der Bildersprache mittelalterlicher und frühchristlicher Mosaiken in Rom," *Römische Quartalschrift* 85 (1990): 66–71.

<sup>73</sup> Cant. 2:6, 8:3.

<sup>74</sup> Renato-Joanne Hesbert, ed., *Corpus antiphonalium officii*, 6 vols. (Rome: Herder, 1963–1979), 1:284; 4:448.

- (6) Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;  
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.  
[...]
- (8) All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia;  
from palaces adorned with ivory  
the music of the strings makes you glad.
- (9) Daughters of kings are among your honored women;  
at your right hand is the royal bride in gold of Ophir.  
[...]
- (13) All glorious is the princess within her chamber;  
her gown is interwoven with gold.
- (14) In embroidered garments she is led to the king;  
her virgin companions follow her—  
those brought to be with her.
- (15) Led in with joy and gladness,  
they enter the palace of the king.<sup>75</sup>

Seven men are arrayed on either side of the throne. They represent the different grades of the ecclesiastical hierarchy: presbyter (St. Calepodius d. 232), deacon (St. Lawrence d. 258), and pope (St. Peter [d. 64], St. Callixtus I [d. 223], St. Cornelius [d. 253], St. Julius I [d. 352], Innocent II). All earned their place at Christ's side by sacrifice—by dying as martyrs or, in the case of Gregorio Papareschi, by giving up his family's resources in order to build God's church.<sup>76</sup> Nearly all have an historical connection to Santa Maria in Trastevere.<sup>77</sup> In the allegorical context of the epithalamium, however, they stand in the place of the "virgin companions" who attend the Bride and Bridegroom. Clerical celibacy had been one of the principal goals of the papal Reform since the 11th century, and it was still an issue for Pope Innocent II. He decreed repeatedly that "those in the orders of subdeacons and above who have taken wives or concubines are to be deprived of their position", so that "the law of continence and purity pleasing to God might be propagated among ecclesiastical persons."<sup>78</sup> Bishops were joined in chaste marriage to their sees, just as Christ was chastely married to the Church. To a community imbued with this ideal, the apse mosaic would have reinforced a collective image of its own purity and virtue.

In a powerful analysis, Ursula Nilgen has shown that this ideal image is subtended by its opposite: the Church dethroned by schism, unworthy of the Bridegroom's embrace while it was served by the false pope Pierleone.<sup>79</sup> In this implicit image everything has a double meaning tied to recent events: the Church is the Roman Church once stained by schism and also the church of Santa Maria in Trastevere, polluted by association with the counterfeit pope; the building

<sup>75</sup> New International Version, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+45> (accessed August 10, 2016).

<sup>76</sup> According to the 14th-century inscription on his ossuary, Pope Innocent II rebuilt Santa Maria in Trastevere "sumptibus propriis" ["with his own funds"]: Vincenzo Forcella, *Iscrizioni delle chiese e d'altri edifici di Roma dal secolo XI fino ai giorni nostri*, 14 vols. (Rome: Tipografia delle scienze matematiche e fisiche, 1869–1884), 2:338, no. 1036. All of the saints depicted are martyrs except Julius I.

<sup>77</sup> The exceptions are Sts. Peter and Lawrence.

<sup>78</sup> Tanner, ed., *Decrees*, 1:198, Canons 6 and 7 (Lateran II; similar decrees were issued at Clermont [1130] and Reims [1131]).

<sup>79</sup> Nilgen, "Maria Regina," 29–30.

described in the dedicatory inscription as “about to collapse” (*ruitura foret*) is again the polluted Roman Church and the contaminated basilica, both to be restored to glory by Pope Innocent II; the throne is Christ’s throne and the material throne of his vicar the pope, which was wrested from an imposter by Innocent, its rightful occupant.<sup>80</sup> The real-world realm of reference suggests a commemorative function for the image and a triumphant tone. The same tone is generally attributed to the architecture as well, although for different reasons. The design of Santa Maria in Trastevere is not unique, and its perceived triumphalism is considered characteristic of churches erected following the conclusion of the Investiture Controversy in 1122.<sup>81</sup> The defining features of these buildings are the transept and the trabeated colonnades, which create orthogonal sight lines to the apse. In the words of Cornelius Claussen, the trabeation of San Crisogono (1123–1129) “turns the nave into a column-lined triumphal way that leads through the triumphal arch to the altar and the papal throne” (fig. 18).<sup>82</sup>



Fig. 18. Rome, San Crisogono, interior looking west. Photo: author.

<sup>80</sup> The inscription running below the feet of the figures reads: HEC IN HONORE TVO PREFULGIDA MATER HONORIS / REGIA DIVINI RVTLAT FVLGORE DECORIS / IN QVA CRISTE SEDES MANET VLTRA SECVLA SEDES / DIGNA TVIS DEXTRIS EST QVA(m) TEGIT AVREA VESTIS / CV(m) MOLES RVITVRA VETVS FORET HINC ORIVNDVS / INNOCENTIVS HANC RENOVAVIT PAPA SECVNDVS. For a translation see Dale Kinney, “Patronage of Art and Architecture,” in *Pope Innocent II (1130-43): The World vs. the City*, ed. John Doran and Damian J. Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2016): 365 n. 51.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Cornelius Claussen, “Renovatio Romae. Erneuerungsphasen römischer Architektur im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert,” in *Rom im hohen Mittelalter. Studien zu den Romvorstellungen und zur Rompolitik vom 10. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert*. Reinhard Elze zur Vollendung seines siebzigsten Lebensjahres gewidmet, ed. Bernhard Schimmelpfennig and Ludwig Schmutge (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1992): 99–118; Kinney, “Romanità a Roma,” 57–64.

<sup>82</sup> Claussen, “Renovatio Romae,” 99. The basilica seen today is the result of a remodeling by Cardinal Scipione Borghese (1620–1633); Michela Cigola, “La basilica di San Crisogono in Roma—Un rilievo critico,” *Bollettino del Centro di Studi per la Storia dell’Architettura* 35 (1989).

The orthogonal view of the column basilica has been normalized by photography and is often assumed to be the intended view of all basilicas, trabeated or not. The viewpoint is nearly always just inside the entrance, as in the beautiful medal issued in 1874 to commemorate the completion of Vespignani's renovation (fig. 19).<sup>83</sup>



Fig. 19. Santa Maria in Trastevere, interior looking west (medal by Ignazio Bianchi, 1874, Museo Biblioteca Archivio di Bassano di Grappa, collezione Vittorio Conte). Photo: Courtesy of the Museum.



Fig. 20. Santa Maria in Trastevere, interior looking east from the cathedra.  
Photo: Alessandro Vasari Fotografo, Rome.

<sup>83</sup> Valentina Casarotto, "Restituit et ornavit. Un itinerario architettonico attraverso le medaglie di Papa Pio IX conservate nel medagliere bassanese," *Bollettino del Museo Civico* (Bassano) n.s. 25 (2004): 283, 296 n. 18. My thanks to Prof. Casarotto for help in obtaining the photograph.



The repetition of this pictorial convention obscures the fact that, unlike painting, basilicas reveal orthogonals in more than one direction. The view from the cathedra, though largely blocked by Vespignani's top-heavy and too-tall ciborium, looks toward the windows at the east, whose light symbolizes Christ's rising (fig. 20). The view from in front of the altar—freed from the ciborium and slightly lower—takes in the entire congregation, the living and the dead in their wall tombs and chapels (fig. 21). In the 12th century this view would have included the canons' choir (*schola cantorum*) directly in front. These alternatives raise the question of what users of, and visitors to, Pope Innocent II's basilica actually saw.



Fig. 21. Santa Maria in Trastevere, interior looking east from in front of the altar.  
Photo: Alessandro Vasari Fotografo, Rome.

The perspective view toward the apse implies that the viewer entered through the central of the three doors in the facade. This has a certain historical veracity, as it is only since the time of Cardinal ab Altemps that the smaller lateral doors have opened into the aisles. Originally all three led into the nave.<sup>84</sup> With no doors and tiny (if any) windows, the aisles were marginal dark spaces in a generally murky building, whose nave windows were considerably smaller than

<sup>84</sup> Pompeo Ugonio, *Historia delle Stazioni di Roma che si celebrano la Quadragesima* (Rome: Bonfadino, 1588), 138r.

Vespignani's.<sup>85</sup> The only chapel was the tiny Crib Chapel (*praeseptium*) off the middle of the right aisle.<sup>86</sup> With little to see in the aisles, attention perforce was on the nave. There the eye met the *schola cantorum*, a physical as well as a visual impediment. It occupied nearly half the nave's length, as shown in Vespignani's plan of the foundation discovered in 1869, and it was bulky, with chest-high parapets and taller reading platforms on either side (fig. 22, foundation walls in light grey).<sup>87</sup> For those unauthorized to enter the choir—that is, all women and laymen—the promise of the orthogonal focal point was withheld; they could approach the apse only through the peripheral spaces beside the choir or remain farther away in the eastern part of the nave.

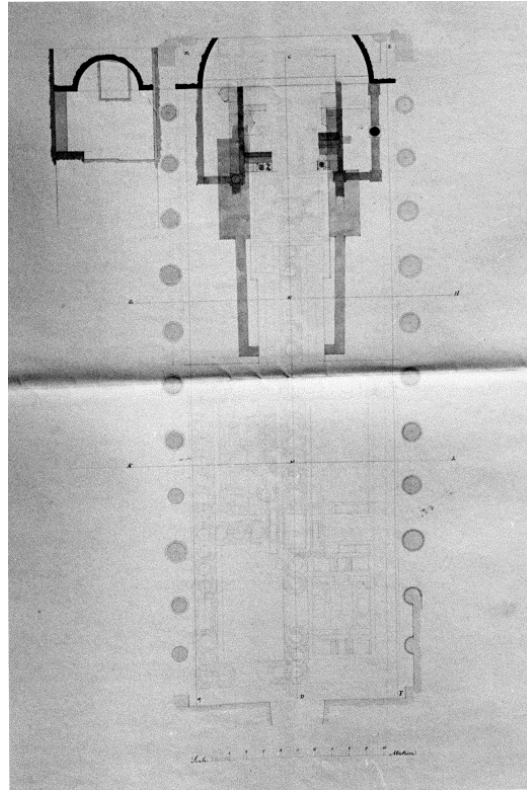


Fig. 22. Rome, Santa Maria in Trastevere, plan of excavations in the nave by Virginio Vespignani, ca. 1869 (Archivio del Vicariato di Roma, Archivio Capitolare di Santa Maria in Trastevere, No. 743).

From the periphery the views toward the apse are sharply angled and partial, but the *spolia* with which the nave is bedecked are right overhead (fig. 23). Exceptionally lavish and varied, the *spolia* must have commanded considerable attention. Even visitors with no appreciation for antique marble might have been struck by the eight Ionic capitals decorated with figures that enigmatically returned their gaze (fig. 24). Unevenly distributed among the columns, with five on the right side and three on the left, these 3rd-century capitals were decorated with heads of

<sup>85</sup> Kinney, *S. Maria in Trastevere*, 253–57.

<sup>86</sup> Dale Kinney, “The *Praeseptia* in Santa Maria in Trastevere and Santa Maria Maggiore,” in *Marmoribus vestita. Miscellanea in onore di Federico Guidobaldi*, ed. Olof Brandt and Philippe Pergola, 2 vols. (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2011), 2.

<sup>87</sup> On the discovery of the foundation: Archivio Capitolare di Santa Maria in Trastevere, “Diario,” at 18 Febbraio 1869. The parapets were 1.1 m. (43.3”) tall: Einaudi, “L’arredo liturgico,” 187.

Isis and Serapis on the abacus and busts of their son Harpocrates in the volutes, making his characteristic shushing gesture. Although Innocent II and his colleagues probably knew what these images represented, viewers with no education in Latin literature most likely did not.<sup>88</sup> Among these viewers the capitals may have provoked curiosity, speculation, and possibly too some unease. Who were these strange figures, and what were they trying to say?



Fig. 23. Santa Maria in Trastevere, columns in the north colonnade. Photo: author.



Fig. 24. Santa Maria in Trastevere, capital with head of Serapis in the north colonnade. Photo: author.

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<sup>88</sup> Kinney, "Spolia," 390–94.



Viewers excluded from the choir and transept also would have been taxed by the image in the apse. Unable to read the inscriptions, they could still easily recognize Mary and Christ and probably Pope Innocent II, since he is depicted as a donor holding a model of his gift (fig. 25).



Fig. 25. Santa Maria in Trastevere, apse mosaic, detail showing Pope Innocent II, St. Lawrence, and Pope Callixtus I. Photo: author.

St. Peter too was a well-known type. The other standing figures must be saints and could have been identified generically by their vestments, but rather than puzzle out their identities many viewers would have been content to focus on the Virgin and the unfamiliar iconography of her co-enthronement. Ernst Kitzinger proposed that Romans would have recognized the *synthronos* as an allusion to the annual ceremony of the feast of the Assumption, in which the miraculous icon of Christ in the Chapel of St. Lawrence at the Lateran was carried to Santa Maria Nova in the Forum. There it was met by an icon of the Virgin and the two were displayed together.<sup>89</sup> With or without this prompt, most viewers would have concluded that the image represented the Assumption, if only for lack of alternatives. Yet even though the Assumption had long been described in literature and the liturgy as an enthronement, the iconography was conspicuously new.<sup>90</sup> The loving encounter—intended as allegory but readable as a physical reality—may have been unsettling or confusing.

<sup>89</sup> Ernst Kitzinger, “A Virgin’s Face: Antiquarianism in Twelfth-Century Art,” *Art Bulletin* 62 (1980): 17–18. The identity of the Marian church was disputed by William Tronzo, “Apse Decoration, the Liturgy and the Perception of Art in Medieval Rome: S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore,” in *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. Functions, Forms and Regional Traditions. Ten Contributions to a Colloquium Held at the Villa Spelman, Florence*, ed. William Tronzo (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1989), 176–79. Wherever they met there is no evidence that the icons shared a throne: Gerhard Wolf, *Salus populi romani. Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1990), 55–56.

<sup>90</sup> Paschasius Radbertis (d. 865): “This is the day on which the unstained mother and virgin advanced to the height of the throne and, raised to the throne of the king, sat glorious with Christ.” Translated from *Epistola 9, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, De assumptione beatae Mariae Virginis*, 7, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*,



William Tronzo observed that the Virgin's left hand extends two fingers toward Christ while holding the scroll. He interpreted the gesture as an evocation of the icon type known as the Madonna Avvocata, the Virgin who intercedes with her son on behalf of sinful humans.<sup>91</sup> Even if it is only a simple sign of speech (three of the surrounding figures make the same gesture), the argument that the gesture implies intercession is persuasive. The sainted priests are also intercessors, especially the successors of Peter, who was given the power to bind and to loose (Matt. 16:19). Gestures are details easy to miss in the shimmering expanse of the mosaic. They indicate another level of meaning that was more accessible to viewers standing in the apse and transept than to those confined to the nave.

The best overall view of the mosaic is from a point just inside the entrance to the choir, roughly between the eighth and ninth columns of the nave.<sup>92</sup> From there one can see all of the images in the conch and on the arch surrounding it, but not the remaining wall of the transept where the mosaic breaks off. Although this viewpoint was in their space, it was not in the sightline of the canons, who sat perpendicular to it on benches along the longitudinal walls of the enclosure (fig. 3). The ideal view was the prerogative of those processing through the choir to the altar and apse: deacons, priests, the cardinal, and on the occasion of stational Masses, the pope. When the priests reached the apse and took their seats they were arrayed directly under the mosaic, and the direction of the sightline was reversed.

As demonstrated at the beginning of this paper, collective images may be largely experiential, constituted by a variety of sensory stimuli and tinged by emotion. The collective image of Santa Maria in Trastevere shared by its privileged clerical users must have been charged by the esoteric and auratic nature of the rituals they enacted there. Seated behind the altar they were in a world apart, where the sights and sounds of the liturgy—unintelligible or inaudible to many in the nave—were enveloping and meaningful (fig. 20). Stepping out in front of the altar they stood as if on a stage, before an audience dependent on their words and actions for their own spiritual well-being (fig. 21). In this respect Santa Maria in Trastevere was a grand and beautifully decorated theater, which may have made their performance feel more powerful than more modest settings in which they performed exactly the same rites. The collective image of the basilica's priestly users was determined by how its physical features interacted with their use of it, and reflected their cognitive and sensory perceptions of their own performance.

The collective images of non-privileged users must have been more diverse. Their expectations varied with the nature of their involvement; some were parishioners, some pilgrims, others what might be called tourists—people who came to see the mosaics and fancy *spolia*. Pilgrims were looking for holy sites and relics, and Santa Maria in Trastevere was famous as the site of a fountain of oil (*fons olei*) that miraculously burst from the ground around the time of the birth of Jesus, “signifying the grace of Christ [born] of the human race”, according to St. Jerome.<sup>93</sup> The remains of the fountain—a patch of wet earth, which when squeezed gave off

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*series latina*, 30:128. On the text see E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved. The Songs of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 152–55.

<sup>91</sup> Tronzo, “Apse Decoration,” 173.

<sup>92</sup> Dale Kinney, “The Apse Mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere,” in *Reading Medieval Images. The Art Historian and the Object*, ed. Elizabeth Sears and Thelma K. Thomas (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 19.

<sup>93</sup> “Translatio Chronicorum Eusebii Pamphili,” ed. Migne, *Patrologia [...] latina*, 27:431–32; L. J. Engels, “Fons Olei: Abélard, sermon 4 et hymne 34,” in *Festoen Opgedragen aan A. N. Zadoks-Josephus Jitta bij haar zeventigste verjaardag* (Groningen: H. D. Tjeenk Willink, 1976); Karin Bull-Simonsen Einaudi, “‘Fons Olei’ e Anastasio Bibliotecario,” *Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale d’Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte*, s. 3, no. 13 (1990): 213–17.

oil—were said to have been found by the builders when the old church was demolished.<sup>94</sup> The discovery happened at the point where the new nave was to meet the transept, just north of the central axis near the wall of the old apse (fig. 22). The builders of the new church paved over it, leaving two holes covered by grilles to mark the spot. Fifteenth-century pilgrims were misled into thinking there were two wells.<sup>95</sup> The site was inconspicuous and not well curated. Pilgrims who had seen the shrines and reliquaries of northern Europe, or even St. Peter's and the Lateran cathedral in Rome, might have been disappointed or at least surprised to find no spectacular framing of this wondrous place; or perhaps they inferred that the basilica itself was the frame, and thus specially holy.

Parishioners' images were conditioned by their attachments to the old basilica. Some may have been partisans of Pierleone who took the act of destroying his church as a punishment or insult; others were loyal to Innocent II, whose family—as noted in the mosaic inscription in the apse—was from Trastevere.<sup>96</sup> Despite their differences all of them would have lost something in the demolition: family tombs, devotional and votive paintings, shrines, favorite altars. All were swept away by the new construction, and except for its liturgical furniture and decoration, the basilica of Innocent II was empty. Some parishioners probably exulted in the greater size and splendor of the new space and even in its very emptiness, symbolizing renewal (*renovatio*), while others may have considered it a heartless and unnecessary aggrandizement.

In the political interpretation emphasized by modern art historians, both the adherents of Anacletus II who saw the new church as a punishment and the pro-Innocentians who saw it as a triumphant vindication were correct. A contemporary source offers some corroboration for this position, although it describes it in significantly different terms. It is an account of the construction of the basilica and its consecration on 15 November 1215, composed not long after the consecration and inserted into a 12th-century Lectionary now in the Vatican Library, which begins with a history of Pope Innocent's "persecution" by schismatics who prevented him from occupying the papal throne.<sup>97</sup> The episode is cast in biblical terms, with Innocent II as David and his persecuting opponent as Saul. When the schism ended Innocent, like David, was allowed to reign in peace over his city, possessing secular as well as spiritual dominion. "The city was ruled by him, offenses were punished," and like David, Innocent could say, "You made my enemies turn their backs in flight, and I destroyed my foes (Ps. 18[17]:40)."<sup>98</sup> The narrative goes on to describe the pope's desire to "repay the Lord for everything that He had repaid him." He resolved to build a church. Santa Maria in Trastevere was ruinous, "completely consumed by age", and the pope realized "that the Lord had reserved for him its renovation."<sup>99</sup> Here the plane

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<sup>94</sup> Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 10999, fol. 151r.

<sup>95</sup> *Ye Solace of Pilgrimes. A Description of Rome, ca. A.D. 1450*, ed. C. A. Mills (London and New York: H. Frowde, 1911), 111; *Mirabilia Romae. Rom, Stephan Planck, 20 November MCCCCLXXXIX: ein römisches Pilgerbuch des 15. Jahrhunderts in deutscher Sprache*, ed. Christian Hülsen (Berlin: Wiegendruckgesellschaft, 1925), n.p.

<sup>96</sup> See note 80: "hinc oriundus."

<sup>97</sup> Vat. Lat. 10999, fols. 150v-151v, published by Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, "Jesus, Maria und Augustus. Ein Text zur Weihe von S. Maria in Trastevere (1215) und zur Geschichte Trastevere in Antike und Mittelalter," in *Licet preter solitum. Ludwig Falkenstein zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Lotte Kéry, Dietrich Lohrmann, and Harald Müller (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 1998), 136. For additional discussion of this text see Kinney, "Patronage," 373-374.

<sup>98</sup> New International Version, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+18> (accessed August 10, 2016).

<sup>99</sup> Schimmelpfennig, "Jesus, Maria und Augustus," 136.

of earthly battle is transcended and the rebuilding of the basilica is construed as an act of thanksgiving, the pope's moral obligation to God.

The story continues: the pope totally destroyed the old building, and “as was appropriate to the glorious Virgin Mary, mother of God, and fitting for the honor of the papacy”, he erected a new one decorated with “glorious columns and glorious capitals” and a pavement “so wonderful and skillfully made with precious stones that [...] one could scarcely find another one like it.” Moved by love and the desire to further the construction, he spent more generously than could ever be imagined and in turn, observing the pope's “faith and devotion” the Lord bestowed his grace upon the work so that “the more one looks at it, the more beautiful it appears and the more one desires to see it.” One might even believe that the Son of God himself was the pope's collaborator and architect on the project, “in order to make the dwelling-place (*habitaculum*) of his most holy mother such that it would be loved by all not only on account of the Virgin herself, but because of the beauty of the house itself; so that those who enter it might deservedly say with the prophet: ‘O Lord I have loved the beauty of your house’” (Ps. 25[26]:8).<sup>100</sup> This history, repeated each year during the octave of the feast of the dedication of Santa Maria in Trastevere, takes us as close as we can come to the image intended by the basilica's founder.

The description of the pope's piety is a cliché, but it should not be discounted for that. It is entirely possible that Innocent II believed that his piety was exceptional, that it earned him the special favor of God, and that he should repay that favor by building a sumptuous church. The dedicatory inscription in the apse mosaic encourages the reader to see Mary's *habitaculum* as a “palace” (*regia*) where Christ has “a seat beyond time” with her at his right hand.<sup>101</sup> The allusion to Christ's celestial throne—in the heavenly Jerusalem, “prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev. 21:4)—is also a cliché.<sup>102</sup> All medieval churches were images of the heavenly Jerusalem, going back to the time of Constantine when Eusebius of Caesarea proclaimed the cathedral at Tyre “an intellectual image upon earth of those things which lie above the vault of heaven.”<sup>103</sup> Not all patrons attempted to realize the image in a mimetic way, however; here, and in the insistence that the palace belonged to the Virgin Mother as well as to the Son, Innocent II was perhaps influenced by what he had seen and heard in his travels through France.

The near-banality of the intended image and its correlation with material aspects of the building made it accessible to the broadest possible audience. The complexity of the apse mosaic (which has levels not even mentioned here) indicates that the intended image of exemplary piety and its reward was only the surface; there were esoteric levels aimed at more specialized viewers, including the canons and clergy and cognoscenti in the Curia. Decor—the beauty of the house of God that allowed it to be the “locum habitationis gloriae tuae” [“dwelling-place of [his] glory”]—was the point of departure for all of them.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Schimmelpfennig, “Jesus, Maria,” 136.

<sup>101</sup> See note 80: “regia [...] in qua Criste sedes manet ultra s(a)ecula sedes.”

<sup>102</sup> New International Version, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+21> (accessed August 10, 2016); cf. Anne Prache, *Chartres Cathedral. Image of the heavenly Jerusalem*, trans. Janice Abbott (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1993), 6–13.

<sup>103</sup> Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 10.4.70, quoted by Christine Smith, “Christian Rhetoric in Eusebius' Panegyric at Tyre,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989): 235.

<sup>104</sup> “Domine dilexi decorem domus tuae et locum habitationis gloriae tuae” (Psalm 25:8).

## Image and Identity

The intended image of Santa Maria in Trastevere was created by Pope Innocent II in the 12th century and recreated by Pius IX seven centuries later. In both cases, it was meant to rally the universal community of Catholics around the papacy, endangered from within in the 12th century and from without in the 19th. In both cases the image was grounded in the tradition of Roman church building going back to Constantine, which was deliberately evoked by the architectural design and its decoration. In both cases the intended image faded with time and circumstance, and was countered by projected images of obsolescence, neglect, or inauthenticity. In the 19th century, artists and photographers created their own images of Santa Maria in Trastevere by appropriating its forms and its space for their own purposes. These images represented their own skills and aspirations and were addressed to communities resembling modern art historians in their learned, connoisseurial, and emotionally detached relationship to the real building. It is good to remember that these dispassionate communities are not the audiences for whom the 12th-century basilica was created, nor those for whom it was recreated 150 years ago.\*

\*It is a pleasure to thank the staff of the Classics collection of Avery Library for their generous assistance with my study of Letarouilly, and the student organizers of the Robert Branner Forum for inviting me to give the earliest version of this essay to a learned and stimulating audience.

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