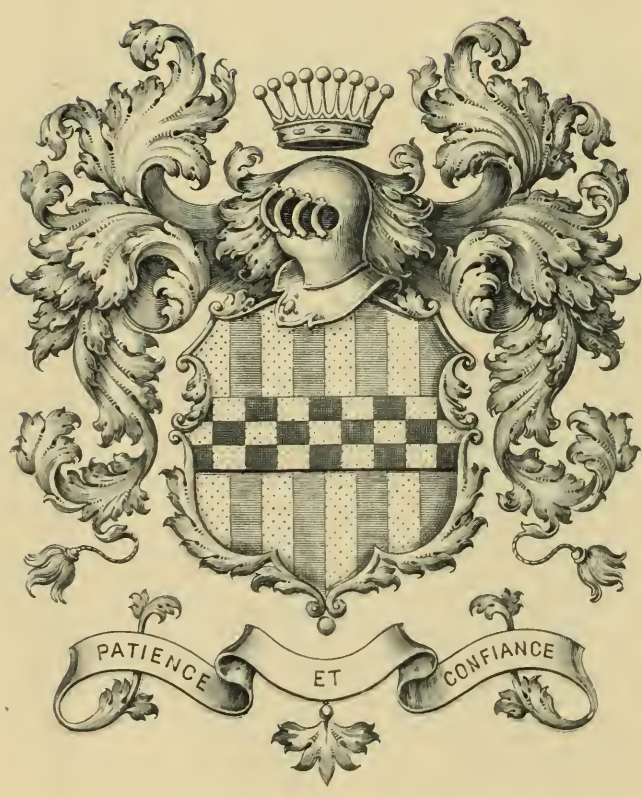




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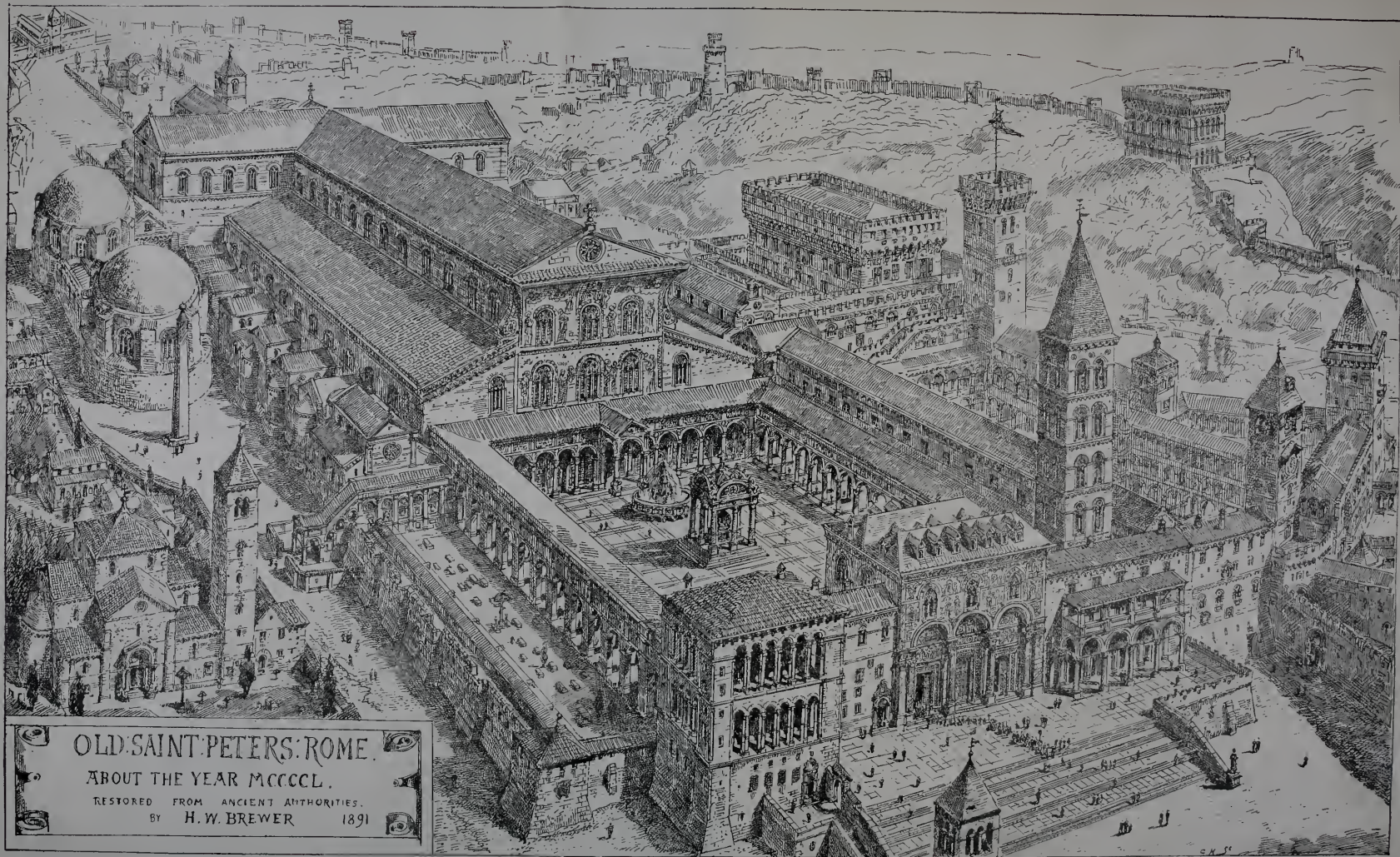
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OLD SAINT PETERS: ROME.  
ABOUT THE YEAR MCCCCL.  
RESTORED FROM ANCIENT AUTHORITIES.  
BY H. W. BREWER 1891

# ST. PETER IN ROME

AND

## *His Tomb on the Vatican Hill*

BY

ARTHUR STAPYLTON BARNES, M.A.

[UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD  
PRIEST OF THE DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER  
AUTHOR OF "THE POPES AND THE ORDINAL," ETC.

WITH THIRTY FULL-PAGE PLATES AND SEVERAL TEXT-  
ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON

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HERBERTUS CARD. VAUGHAN,  
*Archiep. Westmon.*

15th November, 1899.

TO  
HIS HOLINESS  
POPE LEO XIII.

THIS BOOK  
IS  
BY HIS GRACIOUS PERMISSION

**Humbly Dedicated.**

## PREFATORY NOTE.

THERE is little needed by way of Preface to the present volume. The author is aware that it might have been much better had his leisure been greater. There must be much valuable information lying forgotten in the Manuscripts of the various Libraries of Europe, and this is a field he has not been able to touch. The book has been the product of the leisure hours of a life already sufficiently full, as the life of any Catholic priest in England is almost bound to be. For this cause he would ask for a merciful treatment in the criticisms he cannot hope to escape, since he has felt obliged on so many points to run counter to the opinions which at present are generally held.

He desires to take this opportunity of thanking all those who have assisted him in the preparation of the work, and especially the Bishop of Clifton and the Very Rev. Provost Northcote, for the use of some of the blocks from their *Roma Sotterranea* ; S. Lugari, for the use of his drawing ; Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall & Co., for permission to copy certain plans ; and the Editor of *The Builder*, for his courteous permission to use the beautiful drawing by Mr. Brewer, which originally appeared in the pages of that periodical. In one or two other cases, in which he has not known to whom to apply for permission, he has assumed that such permission would be granted, and trusts that he has not thereby infringed any copyrights which may exist.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ST. PETER AT ROME.

NOT so very many years ago, a book published in England with such a title as that of *St. Peter in Rome* would have been regarded as being almost necessarily of a controversial character, and written with the express purpose of upholding a particular set of religious views. It was the general rule in all books of Protestant theology to deny that St. Peter had ever set foot at all in the Eternal City, and any Protestant writer who dared to maintain the contrary would thereby have rendered himself a suspected person. Those days, however, have now passed away, never to return; and, so far at any rate as scholars are concerned, the question may be regarded as so completely settled that it is not likely that any prominent writer will ever again venture to deny the fact, supported as it is by so overwhelming a consensus of ancient authorities.

The Protestant position, indeed, was never a very strong one, for it was based solely on the silence, real or supposed, of the writers of the New Testament. All other evidence, whether literary or monumental, was ignored; "the Bible and the Bible only" was to be considered decisive of the question; and therefore, since the Bible does not in express words record either the coming of St. Peter to Rome, or his martyrdom in that city, it was urged that the narratives of these events could not be considered historical. Later writers added

that certain passages in the Epistle to the Romans and the other Epistles of St. Paul made it practically certain that St. Peter could not have been in Rome at the time at which these Epistles were written, and on the strength of these passages they roundly asserted that it could be proved from the New Testament that St. Peter was never at Rome at all.

Now it is evident, of course, that this argument was not a very solid one, and perhaps it is not too much to say, that, but for the supposed necessities of the controversial position, it would never have been brought forward at all. The mere silence of the New Testament in such a matter proves nothing, for we can learn hardly anything from its pages about the doings of any one of the apostles, except only St. Paul, after about A.D. 50, so that it is not possible to found any secure argument upon so absolutely negative a basis. Nor, again, are the passages from St. Paul's Epistles strong enough to bear the weight that is placed upon them. The most that they can be taken to prove is that St. Peter had not as yet visited Rome at the time at which they were written; and this, however fatal it may be to any theory of a twenty-five years' Episcopate and continuous residence of the apostle at Rome, is quite consistent with a visit made by him at some date after the Epistles had been written, with a martyrdom undergone in the city, and even with his occupation, during the closing years of his life, of the episcopal throne. Moreover, it is quite obvious that a historical question of this kind ought to be decided by a careful review of all the evidence which is available, whether literary, monumental, or archæological, and that no case whatever can be made out for restricting the argument to the evidence contained in the pages of the New Testament.

Catholic writers, however, from the first declined to admit that the New Testament was really silent on the matter, and appealed to the absolutely unanimous witness of all ancient writers that the "Babylon" from which St.

Peter dated his first Epistle was really Rome, thus described under a title which no Jew or Christian of the first century would have failed to understand. They had on their side, moreover, a tradition which for 1400 years no one had ventured to dispute, and the fact that no city or country except Rome could be produced which had ever laid claim to be the scene of the labours or of the death of the chief of the Apostles; so that, if the Roman claim was disallowed, it remained that no trace whatever had survived of his life or work after the date of the First Council of Jerusalem, which took place about A.D. 50. Such a position was manifestly too strong to be set aside by evidence that was merely negative, and accordingly, even in the heat of the controversies of the sixteenth century, the more learned and cool-headed among the reformers were very slow to commit themselves to any definite opinion on the matter. Their moderation, however, was not imitated by their followers, and a large number of books were written on the subject, the most noteworthy of which was by a German Protestant named Frederick Spanheim. The next century saw a reaction, especially in England, among the Laudian divines, who had no love for the principle that "the Bible and the Bible only" was to be taken as the sole authority in historical questions. Bishop Pearson, Cave, Grotius and Ussher may be mentioned among many who wrote to the effect that the testimony of the ancient writers on the subject could not be ignored or set aside, and Whiston, the translator of Josephus, was so impressed with the discreditable character of the methods of controversy which had been employed, that he bursts out in irrepressible indignation: "The thing is so clear in Christian antiquity, that it is a shame for any Protestant to confess that a Protestant ever denied it".

It is not the object of this book to go at any length into the details of this wearisome controversy. It will be

sufficient if we recapitulate in this preliminary chapter the heads of the evidence which, to our thinking, places the residence and martyrdom of St. Peter at Rome among the facts of history which are so well substantiated that no room for serious doubt can possibly remain. This evidence falls into three main divisions—the evidence, namely, from Scripture, from ancient writers and from archæological monuments. On each of these heads we shall have something to say, and then we shall add a little upon a fourth line of argument to which attention does not as yet seem to have been directed.

First, then, with regard to Holy Scripture. It must not be forgotten that there are only two books of the New Testament in which we could reasonably expect to find the record of St. Peter's death, or any allusion to it. These two are the Gospel according to St. John, and the Apocalypse of the same apostle. All the other books were probably written before the martyrdom occurred. This consideration reduces the argument from the silence of the New Testament to its true value, especially when we notice that, as we shall presently proceed to show, there is a tolerably clear allusion to the martyrdom to be found in each of these two books in which alone it is possible. We have three points to be proved. First, that St. Peter was at Rome. Secondly, that he was martyred by crucifixion. Thirdly, that his crucifixion took place at Rome. For all these three statements there is abundant evidence forthcoming outside of the Sacred Scriptures. We shall now show that there is also a certain amount of testimony bearing on each of the three points to be found in the Bible itself, which testimony, although it may be scarcely sufficient by itself to establish any of these positions, is by no means without value when it is considered as confirming what is already known from other sources. That St. Peter was at Rome in the course of his ministry is proved by the fact that

he dates his first Epistle from that city under the name of Babylon. That Babylon in this place must be taken to denote the imperial city, and cannot be referred either to the ancient Babylon in Chaldea or to the fortress of that name in Egypt, is a matter on which all scholars are now agreed, and which may be taken as settled beyond controversy. Ancient writers are absolutely unanimous upon this point, without even a single exception. Catholic writers in all ages have maintained the same, and of late years all other scholars, whether Protestant or Rationalistic, have given in their adherence to this view ; so that, as we have already said, it is now unlikely that any prominent writer will ever again be found to maintain the opposite opinion. A point, the traditional and Catholic interpretation of which is upheld by such Anglicans as Lightfoot, Ellicott, Farrar, Westcott and Gore, and by the *Speaker's Commentary* ; and also by Wieseler, Harnack, Hilgenfeld, Renan, Thiersch and Ewald, with many others among the non-Catholic writers of the continent, may fairly claim to be considered as thoroughly established, and to be outside the field of controversy. We will make but one quotation, which shall be from the *Speaker's Commentary*, in which the discussion on the point is summed up as follows : “ The foregoing arguments seem to leave us no alternative but to accept the old, unvarying testimony of the fathers, who must have known the sense in which the statement was understood throughout Asia Minor, that St. Peter here designates Rome by the title of ‘ Babylon ’ ”.

That St. Peter was put to death by crucifixion is asserted almost in so many words in the Gospel of St. John. The apostle is obviously speaking of a fact known to all when he tells how our Lord's prophecy about St. Peter's death, that his hands should be stretched out upon the cross, had been literally fulfilled. “ This He said, signifying the death by which he should glorify

God" (St. John xxi. 19). To "stretch out the hands" is used in this sense of crucifixion by heathen writers; *brachia patibulo explicuerunt*, for instance, is the phrase employed by Seneca; and no doubt, even at the time, and before the event, the words of our Lord had been commonly understood to mean that St. Peter should pass to his reward by a death upon the cross.

It is almost unreasonable to demand a proof from the Scriptures that not only did St. Peter live at Rome, and die by crucifixion, but that this crucifixion took place at Rome, seeing that there is only one book in which we could hope to find anything on this point, and that this book, the Apocalypse, is not of a historical character. Nevertheless there is an allusion in that book which M. Renan interprets, not altogether unreasonably, of that event. In the judgment pronounced upon heathen Rome under the name of Babylon, (and here, it should be noted, Protestant writers can see no difficulty at all, but quite the reverse, in interpreting Babylon as the equivalent of Rome), the following passage occurs: "Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath judged your judgment upon her" (Apoc. xviii. 20). If the apostles for whose murder Rome was judged be not St. Peter and St. Paul, it seems difficult to assign any intelligible meaning to the passage.

This completes the evidence from Holy Scripture, which, scanty as it is, is nevertheless more explicit than we had a right *a priori* to expect, so far at least as the martyrdom of the apostle is concerned. We pass next to tradition, and here the evidence is full and uniform. Here again the position is well summed up by the *Speaker's Commentary*: "The testimony of early Christian writers is uniform and unvarying. From whatever quarter their voices reach us, they affirm that Babylon is here (in 1 St. Peter) a recognised appellation of Rome, the city which occupied the place of that

ancient city as the central world power, the head-quarters of anti-Christian influences. In fact no other view of the passage was ever entertained before the time of Calvin . . . Papias, Clement Alexandrinus, Jerome, Œcumenius, Eusebius, all state this as a well-known fact needing no defence. Œcumenius gives the true account of the matter: 'He calls Rome Babylon, on account of the pre-eminence which of old belonged to Babylon'."

The strong point in the evidence of the fathers is their unanimity. It is quite clear that no other place was known to them as claiming to have been the scene of St. Peter's death, and the repository of his relics. It is not surprising that there should not be many scholars willing to attack so strong a position, and the marvel is rather that there should have been any "so hardily sceptical" as Bishop Ellicott of Gloucester has phrased it, "as to reject altogether evidence as strong, early and wide as that on which we believe that Hannibal invaded Italy".

A third line of evidence which is open to us is that which is drawn from archæology. This argument will be found drawn out in the pages which follow. It has been almost entirely neglected hitherto by English writers, but is admirably summed up by Professor Lanciani, by common consent the leading authority now living on Roman antiquities, in his excellent book on *Pagan and Christian Rome*. "I write," he says, "about the monuments of Rome from a strictly archæological point of view, avoiding questions which pertain, or are supposed to pertain, to religious controversy. For the archæologist the presence and execution of SS. Peter and Paul in Rome are facts established beyond a shadow of doubt by purely monumental evidence. . . . There is no event of the imperial age, and of imperial Rome, which is attested by so many noble structures, all of which point to the same conclusion—the presence and execution of the apostles in the capital of the empire. When Con-

stantine raised the monumental basilicas over their tombs on the Via Cornelia and the Via Ostiensis; when Eudoxia built the church ad Vincula; when Damasus put a memorial tablet in the Platonica ad Catacumbas; when the houses of Pudens and Prisca and Aquila were turned into oratories; when the name of Nymphæ Sancti Petri was given to the springs in the Catacombs of the Via Nomentana; when the 29th day of June was accepted as the anniversary of St. Peter's execution; when Christians and pagans alike named their children Peter and Paul; when sculptors, painters, medallists, goldsmiths, workers in glass and enamel, and engravers of precious stones, all began to reproduce in Rome the likenesses of the apostles at the beginning of the second century, and continued to do so till the fall of the empire; must we consider them all as labouring under a delusion, or as conspiring in the commission of a gigantic fraud? Why were such proceedings accepted without protest from whatever city, from whatever community, if there were any other which claimed to own the genuine tombs of SS. Peter and Paul? These arguments gain more value from the fact that the evidence on the opposite side is purely negative. It is one thing to write of these controversies at a distance from the scene of the events, in the seclusion of one's own library; but quite another to study them on the spot, and to follow the events where they took place. If my readers had the opportunity of witnessing the discoveries made lately in the Cemeterium Ostrianum and the Platonica ad Catacumbas; or of examining Grimaldi's manuscripts and drawings relating to the old Basilica of Constantine; or Carrara's account of the discoveries made in 1776 in the house of Aquila and Prisca, they would surely banish from their minds the last shade of doubt."<sup>1</sup>

There is a line of evidence alluded to in the above

<sup>1</sup> Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 125.

extract of which scarcely any notice has as yet been taken by English writers, the value of which nevertheless is very great in confirming the conclusions to which we have already been led. This evidence is derived from the traditional portraits of St. Peter and St. Paul which have undoubtedly been preserved at Rome. "There is no doubt," writes Professor Lanciani in another place, "that the likenesses of St. Peter and St. Paul have been carefully preserved in Rome ever since their lifetime, and that they were familiar to every one, even to school-children. These portraits have come down to us by scores. They are painted in the cubiculi of the Catacombs, engraved in gold leaf in the so-called *vetri cemeteriali*, cast in bronze, hammered in silver or copper, and designed in mosaic. The type never varies. St. Peter's face is full and strong with short curly hair and beard, while St. Paul appears more wiry and thin, slightly bald, with a long pointed beard. The antiquity and the genuineness of both types cannot be doubted."<sup>1</sup>

Now the significance of this fact will be made clear when we remember that it is only of these two apostles that anything of the kind can be said. So far as Christian art is concerned, for we leave out of consideration such instances as the Handkerchief of St. Veronica, no authentic type can be shown to have existed in the earliest centuries, which was universally accepted as preserving the likeness either of our Lord Himself or of His blessed Mother. Nor have we any portrait which we can consider to be that of St. John or of any other of the apostles. There are authentic portraits in existence of St. Peter and St. Paul, and of no other member of the Christian Church who lived in the apostolic age. Moreover, even in the case of these two apostles, the portraits are confined to Rome alone, and are not found to exist elsewhere. Is not the

<sup>1</sup> Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 212.

conclusion clear, that we have portraits of these two, and of no one else, because they alone were the apostles of Rome, the only place where the art of portrait-taking was in full vigour? It is not too much to say that the existence of these portraits is by itself enough to prove, even if all documentary evidence and all tradition had perished, that these two apostles had visited Rome, and were both of them in some way closely connected with the imperial city.



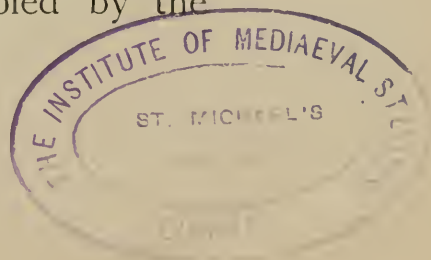
MEDAL OF SECOND CENTURY, WITH PORTRAITS OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL.  
Found in the Catacomb of St. Domitilla.

Nor is this a mere deduction. We have ancient authority to prove that these likenesses were regarded as authentic even in the fourth century. Eusebius has recorded in his history that there had come down to his time the actual original portraits of these two apostles, made by Gentiles who had been converted to the faith by their preaching.<sup>1</sup> What has happened to these original

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, vii., 18. St. Augustine (*De consensu Evang.*, i., 10) and St. Ambrose (*Epist.* 53) also speak of authentic portraits existing in their time.

portraits since then it is now impossible to say. None which can with any probability be considered actually contemporary have survived. There are however several which are of the second century, and were therefore probably copied from the originals, and so may be taken as preserving the true likeness for us. The most important of these is the medallion of which we give an illustration, of the actual size of the original. It was found by Bol-detti in the catacomb which he thought to be that of St. Callixtus, but which we now know to be that of St. Domitilla. He published a very rough drawing of it in his book, and this drawing, a thoroughly misleading one, has been copied again and again by later writers. Even Professor Lanciani has been content to follow their example, instead of going to the original, and in consequence he has given us in his book on *Pagan and Christian Rome* a very bad copy of the head of St. Paul, and has called it by the name of St. Peter. The matter is of importance, because the argument as to the date of the medallion, and consequently the authenticity of the likenesses, depends entirely upon the style of its art and workmanship, and no one could suppose that the rough work shown in Professor Lanciani's picture could possibly be of the second century. As a matter of fact, as a glance at our illustration will show, the workmanship is admirable, and the medallion is in a state of excellent preservation. It would have been impossible for such a work to have been produced in the fourth century, or even in the third, when the decadence of art had already gone so far. The second century is the latest period to which it can be assigned, and it probably belongs to the earlier half of it.

It will be noticed at once that in this medallion it is St. Paul and not St. Peter who occupies the place of honour, according to our modern views, on the right-hand side. But in the early centuries no rule of this kind holds, and the left-hand side is frequently occupied by the

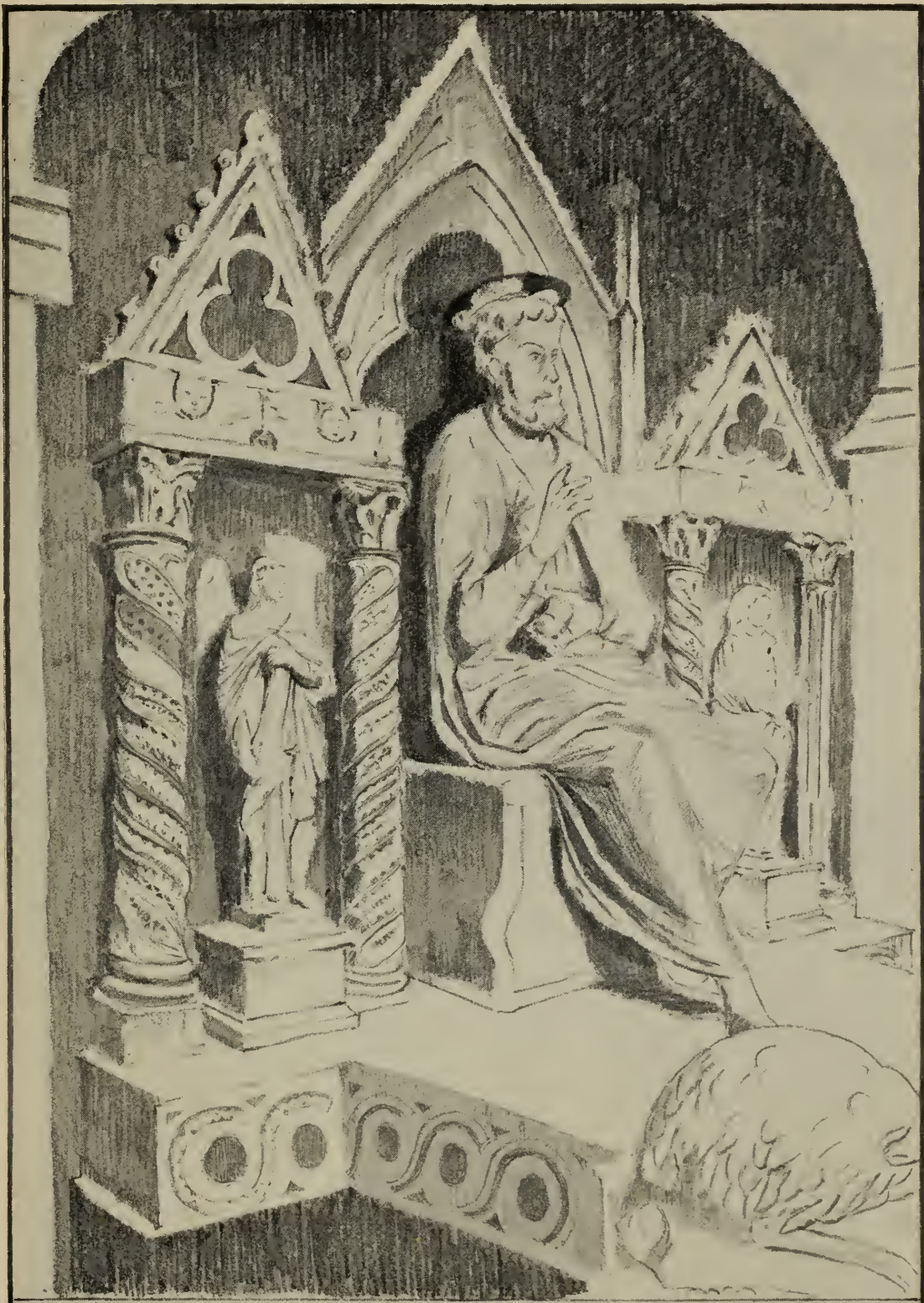


person of greater dignity. Thus in one of the sepulchral glasses of this period our Lord Himself is placed on the left of St. Paul, and in another the blessed Virgin occupies a similar position with regard to St. Agnes. Indeed, the uniform use of the right hand side as the place of dignity cannot be said to date back farther than the middle of the tenth century, and no question on the matter seems to have been raised until the time of St. Peter Damian. The seal of the Papal Bulls to this day represents St. Peter on the left hand.

Several descriptions of the appearance of the two great apostles are to be found in early writers,<sup>1</sup> and it is interesting to read these with this portrait before one, since it is certainly much earlier than any of them. Here is for instance an account compiled entirely from these literary sources, which nevertheless is in striking accordance with the ideas we gather from the pictured representation: "St. Paul is set before us as having the strongly marked and prominent features of a Jew, yet not without some of the finer lines indicative of Greek thought. His stature was diminutive, which may have provoked the contemptuous expressions of his enemies. His beard was long and thin. His head was bald. The characteristics of his face were, a transparent complexion which visibly betrayed the quick changes of his feelings, a bright grey eye under thickly overhanging united eyebrows, a cheerful and winning expression of countenance which invited the approach and inspired the confidence of strangers. . . . St. Peter is represented to us as a man of larger and stronger form, as his character was harsher and more abrupt. The quick impulses of his soul revealed themselves in the flashes of a dark eye. The complexion of his face was pale and sallow, and his short hair which is described as entirely grey at the time of his death curled thickly round his temples and his chin."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Malalas, *Chronog.*, x., p. 257, ed. Bonn; Nicephorus, *Hist. Eccl.*; *Acta Pauli et Theclæ*, ed. Grabe, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Conybeare and Howson.



Stone Statue of St. Peter  
from the old Basilica - now in  
the Vatican

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This concludes the evidence at our disposal in favour of the fact of St. Peter's having visited Rome. All the consequences which flow from that visit lie outside the scope of this book. We are not here concerned with the exact sense in which he may be said to have been Bishop of Rome, or with the extent of the power which he handed down to his successors. It is enough for us that we are able to prove that he did come to the Eternal City, that he was there martyred and laid in the grave. This is now generally conceded by all scholars as being demonstrated by an amount of evidence which is available for hardly any similar fact in all history; and though there will no doubt remain a certain number of "hardy sceptics," to use once more the apt phrase of the Bishop of Gloucester, who will continue to deny it, their scepticism will proceed not from the depths of their knowledge or the accuracy of their scholarship, but from a not uncommon inability to alter their opinion when facts are found not to be in complete accordance with what their prejudices have led them to believe. Their case is hopeless, for no evidence that could be brought would have the smallest effect upon their preconceived ideas. But for reasonable men the question is decided and the controversy closed, and we are therefore free, after this preliminary explanation, to put it away from us altogether, and to confine our efforts to piecing together the various traditions which are known to us and comparing them with the evidence we can obtain from the monuments relating to the apostle, in the hope that we may thus be able to recover some forgotten details of his life at Rome and the history of his tomb. How far we have succeeded in this endeavour it will be for the reader to decide when he has finished the perusal of this book. Our object so far has been simply to clear the ground, and to lay the foundations for the edifice which we shall now endeavour to erect.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FIRST COMING TO ROME.

FOR the first beginnings of Christianity in Rome—which, by the way, must be carefully distinguished from the foundation of the Roman Church, this latter expression denoting a fully formed Christian community organised on a permanent basis—we must go back to the events which took place at Jerusalem on that Feast of Pentecost which immediately succeeded the ascension of our Lord; when, as is expressly recorded by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, “Strangers of Rome” were present amongst the crowds who were witnesses of the miracle of the tongues, and who listened to St. Peter’s first sermon. These men, on their return to their homes, would of course have reported the wonders they had seen and heard, and so there would no doubt have sprung up among the Jewish colony at Rome a band of men who believed that the Messiah had already come, and who were more or less perfectly instructed in the doctrines of the Christian faith. Their knowledge of the new religion would have constantly grown in definiteness and accuracy as fuller and exact information was brought from Jerusalem by new immigrants, or by members of their own body on their return from pilgrimages to the Holy City on the occasion of the Jewish feasts. This earliest Christianity, however, would not be organised, or in any real sense a Christian Church; and it would no doubt be confined to the Jews and the proselytes who had adopted

the Jewish life, for even in Jerusalem itself there was, for the first twelve years after the ascension, no idea of including others within the borders of the Church. Any account therefore of the beginnings of Roman Christianity must necessarily be based upon an examination into the numbers and conditions of life of that large Jewish colony in the imperial city, from among whose members the first Christians were exclusively recruited.

This Jewish colony at Rome, towards the middle of the first century of the Christian era, was very numerous. More than two hundred years before this date, relations between the two peoples had been begun, and we find allusions in the books of the Maccabees, B.C. 160, to very definite treaties of alliance which had been entered into. (1 Macc. viii. 11, 17-32; xii. 1-3; xiv. 16-19, 24). Twenty years later, in B.C. 138, there was already a Jewish colony resident at Rome, for, in one of the fragments published by Cardinal Mai from the MSS. in the Vatican Library, we find that the republican Government, less tolerant than Romans of later years, banished them all from the city on account of their too ardent efforts to make proselytes.<sup>1</sup> We may believe, however, that the colony was soon formed again, and that no permanent injury was done to it by the decree of expulsion. In B.C. 62, after the taking of Jerusalem by the Roman troops under Pompey, a great number of Jews were brought to Rome to figure in the triumph of that general, and these, as we learn from Appian,<sup>2</sup> were not afterwards put to death, but were granted permission to return to their own country. We may suppose, however, that a good many did not avail themselves of this permission, but remained in Rome to swell the already numerous ranks of their countrymen. Be this as it may, only four years after-

<sup>1</sup> Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vat. cods.*, III., iii., pp. 7, 98.

<sup>2</sup> Appian, *De bello Mithr.*, 118.

wards, in B.C. 58, the Jewish colony had become so large, and its members so turbulent, that Cicero, pleading for Flaccus, who had incurred their enmity by forbidding the sending of the sacred tribute to Jerusalem, lowered his voice from time to time as he spoke, in order that what he said might not be overheard by the Jewish crowd who thronged the Forum. "You know," he said, "how numerous they are, and how united, and how much influence they exert, sometimes turbulently enough, in the public assemblies. To offend the Jews is a matter of the gravest import."<sup>1</sup> The fears of the great orator show us very plainly how important the Jewish colony had already become, and this is made still more clear by the treatment they met with at the hands of Julius Cæsar, who considered their support of such importance that he purchased it by constant favours and concessions, a long list of which is recorded for us by Josephus.<sup>2</sup> These concessions are the more remarkable because they coincide with the period of the severest repression of all similar private associations, whose privileges were thought in any way to constitute a danger of the formation of anything approaching to an *imperium in imperio*. Nor were the Jews ungrateful for the benefits he had conferred upon them. During his life, Cæsar had no firmer adherents than they, and after his murder they surrounded the funeral pyre on which the body had been laid in the Campus Martius, and were constant, not only by day but also throughout the night, in their cries of lamentation.<sup>3</sup> Augustus, however, did not venture to revoke any of the special privileges which had been granted to them, and went so far in his consideration for their prejudices as to order that the distributions of *largesse* made on his behalf to the populace should, when necessary, be deferred, so as not to coincide with the Sabbath Day.<sup>4</sup> It was under

<sup>1</sup> *Pro Flacco*. xxviii.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, xiv., 10.

<sup>3</sup> Suetonius, *Cæsar*, 84.

<sup>4</sup> Philo, *Legatio ad Caium*, 523.

Augustus, indeed, that the rights of the Jews in Rome reached their highest point, and after his death we find not infrequent instances of attempts to diminish them, caused by the jealousy which these exceptional privileges had called forth, and also by the unpopularity of the Jews, of which the successful proselytism which was being carried on was no doubt one of the principal causes. This proselytism, indeed, existed to a very considerable extent, and was exercised even in the highest ranks of Roman society, where men and women, weary of the state religion which no longer commanded their faith, turned with relief to the higher monotheism and purer morality that was offered them by the Jewish religion; and where, also, amid the prevailing restlessness of the times, any novelty, especially from the east, was pretty sure of receiving a warm reception. Moreover the Jewish religion, full of rules and intricate observances as it was to those who were born within its pale, or to those who desired to embrace it in its fulness, admitted also of a much laxer and more general adherence on the part of those who came to it from without. There were two classes of proselytes. The one, called *proselytes of justice*, became to all intents and for all purposes actual Jews, observing the entire law, and separating themselves from their families and friends, and from all Roman and heathen connections. So drastic a change of life was, however, a rare thing, especially amongst the men, to whom the painful rite of circumcision acted as an additional deterrent, but, side by side with these converts of stricter life, there was also a far larger class of *proselytes of the gate*, οἱ σεβομένοι, or "men fearing God," as they are called in the New Testament, from whom a far less irksome and repellent change of life was demanded. These were required only to renounce idolatry; to keep the natural law, at any rate in its graver and more general precepts; and to abstain from

eating blood and things strangled. Such a rule of life as this laid no intolerable burden on the consciences of those who undertook it, and accordingly the class of proselytes of the gate would seem to have speedily become a very extensive one. There was no need to break with friends, to give up Roman nationality or its privileges, or to separate from the ordinary functions of Roman society. We meet with men of this class again and again in the pages of the New Testament, and it would seem to have been from among them that Christianity obtained many of her first and most important converts. The Centurion whose son was healed by our Lord at Capernaum was probably one of them, for it is recorded that the principal Jews came to Jesus to plead on his behalf, saying that he was worthy to receive a benefit, "for he loveth our nation and he hath built us a synagogue".<sup>1</sup> Again, Cornelius, the first of the Gentile converts, was another, for we read of him that "he was a religious man and one who feared God with all his house, giving much alms to the people and always praying to God".<sup>2</sup> Seneca himself, if we may judge from a passage in one of his letters, seems to have been on the point of enrolling himself among their number at the time when he was studying at Alexandria.<sup>3</sup> Poppæa, the mistress of Nero, is expressly recorded by Josephus to have been "a fearer of God,"<sup>4</sup> and Tacitus records that she was buried in the Jewish fashion, and not burnt upon the pyre.<sup>5</sup> Fuscus Aristius, the friend of Horace, was another of these proselytes, and the poet, in the passage in which he alludes to the event of his conversion, tells us that such conversions were no rare occurrence, but that his friend was one of a very considerable band, *unus multorum*.<sup>6</sup> That this was so, we may gather also from the frequency of the allusions to the Jews and the Jewish

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, vii., 5.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, x., 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ep.*, 108.

<sup>4</sup> *Ant. Jud.*, xx., 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ann.*, xvi., 6.

<sup>6</sup> *I Sat.*, ix., 74.

religion which we meet with in the pagan writers of the time. These allusions are, almost without exception, contemptuous in their tone, but at the same time are singularly frequent, so that there is scarcely a poet of the Augustan age who does not in some way or other find occasion to mention the institution of the Sabbath or that of circumcision; a clear proof to us of the universal influence which these Jewish customs must have had on the Roman society of the day.<sup>1</sup> Augustus himself, on one occasion, praises his grandson Caius, afterwards the Emperor Caligula, because, passing near Jerusalem, he had the rare self-control not to yield to the fascinations of that religion by offering sacrifice in the Temple.<sup>2</sup> There is no sign in these words of any leaning on the part of the emperor towards the Jewish faith, and so we may conclude that it was from political motives only that, as Philo records, he had instituted in his own behalf a daily sacrifice at Jerusalem of a bull and two lambs.<sup>3</sup> The fact however again tends to show how great was the influence exercised by the Jews at this period in Rome; and how no class, not even those who surrounded the imperial throne, were so highly placed as to be beyond the reach of that influence, and of the fascination of a religion so ancient and so dignified. We can hardly wonder that Rome took alarm, and thought itself in danger from the spread of these principles, or that the anti-Jewish feeling, which from time to time gained the upper hand, resulted again and again in the total expulsion of the Jews from the confines of the city. Such an expulsion, the first on record, took place as early as B.C. 138; there was another under Tiberius in A.D. 19; and another, of which we shall have more to say, in A.D. 49. These expulsions, however, even if they were rigorously carried out, which

<sup>1</sup> See, *e.g.*, Horace, 1 *Sat.*, ix.; Persius, v., 179-85; Tibullus, 1, 3; Ovid, *Ars amandi*, 1, 67, 415; *Remed. Amor.*, 219; Martial, vii., 82, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Suetonius, *Oct. Aug.*, 93.

<sup>3</sup> *Leg. ad Caium.*

must always have been very difficult, were quite without any permanent effect. Judaism was too strong, and too deeply rooted in Rome, to be so easily eradicated. There is no evidence to show us that the large class of Gentile "proselytes of the gate," of whom we have been speaking, was in any way affected by these decrees of banishment, and even among the Jews themselves nothing further was effected than their removal from the city itself to the neighbouring towns, until a favourable opportunity occurred to creep back within the walls. Juvenal<sup>1</sup> tells us of one such colony which in consequence of banishment from Rome had established itself in the town of Ariccia on the Alban Hills, and this is probably only one of many similar instances. Oppression and persecution, indeed, as in later ages, seemed only to cause them to thrive the more; and Dion Cassius sums up a good deal of their history when he says that, "the more they were oppressed, the more vigorously they kept up the struggle, until at last they obtained the liberty of living in accordance with their own laws".<sup>2</sup>

As we examine more closely into the condition of this large and important Jewish colony, we can hardly help being struck by the remarkable manner in which, through all the centuries that have passed, the national characteristics of this wonderful people have been preserved. We might almost be reading, under feigned names and slightly changed conditions of life, an account of the Jewish community as we know it in London or in any great European city to-day. There is first a small number of wealthy men, the leading financiers of the city, the forerunners of the Rothschilds and Hirschs of a later age, having little of Judaism about them except the names; a class whose chief representatives at this time were the Herods, and especially Tiberius Agrippa, who lived on terms of intimacy with the emperor; and who, as they were among

<sup>1</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.*, iv., 117 (Scholiast).

<sup>2</sup> Dion Cassius, xxxvii., 17.

the richest, so also were they among the most influential of the citizens of Rome. But these, as always, were but the few, and for the most part, then as now, the Jewish community was composed of the very poor. "They are a people born for slavery,"<sup>1</sup> says Cicero; "abominable among all the nations,"<sup>2</sup> says Seneca, who himself however was not always wholly unsympathetic. And the Satirists, while they find in the Jewish practice of circumcision, in their institution of the Sabbath, and in their hatred for pork, an endless opportunity for witticisms, in general describe the Jews in terms of utter contempt, and in language which suggests most strongly the gypsies of to-day; as beggars and rag-pickers; bartering tapers for broken glass; dirty and odorous; with swarms of ragged children; with no possessions but a basket, and no bed to lie on but a heap of straw.<sup>3</sup> Then, too, as now, it was the tendency of this strange people, keeping itself distinct from all others among whom it might be found, to gather itself together into certain quarters, and to occupy these to the exclusion of all other inhabitants. If the Jewries and the Ghettos of the middle ages were in part the result of a deliberate policy of the municipal authorities, they were also in part caused by the natural tendency of the Jewish people, shown in all ages, to create for themselves a separate and exclusive quarter to dwell in. There were no laws on the subject in ancient Rome, they were free to live where they would, but the Ghettos of that time were nevertheless almost as definitely marked off as were those others of a later age, so familiar to the travellers of a few years back, which were shut in with walls, and closed with gates that were locked at the fall

<sup>1</sup> *De Prov. Cons.*, v.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, vii., 36.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Juvenal, iii., 13, 296; vi., 542-47. Martial, i., 42. Even such men as Plutarch (*Quæst. Conviv.*, iv., 5, 2), and Tacitus (*Hist.*, v., 4) gravely tell us that they worshipped the pig and the ass.

of night. The first and earliest of these Ghettos was in Trastevere, the poorest, while at the same time one of the busiest, of the quarters of the city; close to the wharves at which the boats from Ostia unloaded their merchandise. Then, as their numbers increased, a single quarter became too small to hold them, and they overflowed into the city across the Tiber. A large number were to be found outside the Porta Capena, the Via Porta San Sebastiano as we call it to-day, where, along the Appian Way, there came into the city the commerce from Naples and Brindisi, and from all the ports of Southern Italy. Another large group were settled in the Suburra, the noisy industrial quarter whose name is yet preserved in the title of S. Agata in Suburra, the church belonging to the Irish College, situated on the low ground between the Esquiline and the Capitol, not far from the Temple of Mars Ultor: a district covered at that period by *insulæ*, or vast houses five and six storeys high, let out in small tenements to an artisan population. From all these quarters they went forth day by day, to carry on trades that others shrank from—hawkers of small ware; dealers in old clothes and bits of glass and metal; pickers of rags and so forth;—disdaining nothing, if in any way they could snatch a scanty profit, and gain enough to keep actual want at bay. For the most part it was, as a living and eminent French author has described it, “a world in rags,”<sup>1</sup> and yet a world animated by the most intense vitality, and the keenest religious feelings; eager to the last man for the spread of their religion, and at the same time full of benevolent charity towards the poor and suffering of their own race. This last characteristic, indeed, was so marked that it attracted the notice even of a heathen historian,<sup>2</sup> and to this day in the Jewish ceme-

<sup>1</sup> Allard, *Histoire des Persécutions*, i., 10.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.*, v., 5, “Among themselves they are ever ready to show compassion”.

teries of Rome we may see ancient inscriptions to the more prominent members of the community, telling how this one "loved the people," or "helped the poor," or, again, was "a fellow-workman with the workers". They were moral, too, to a degree that was startling to the enervated Roman, and to this morality they owed no small portion of their influence. Elsewhere in the city marriage had become rare, for men shrank from the responsibilities it entailed, and sought to enjoy the pleasures of love without accepting the consequent burdens, so that at last laws had to be passed conferring special privileges on the rarely patriotic individual who had brought up three sons to the service of the state; but among the Jews this was not so. The number of their children excites the remark of more than one of the writers of the day, and especially of Tacitus,<sup>1</sup> who says that it was a special object among them to increase in number. In this way it had come to pass that, by the year 30 or 40 of the Christian era, they had become exceedingly numerous; and Renan is probably within the mark when he estimates their total in Rome, under the reign of Nero, as not having been less than 20,000 or 30,000 souls.<sup>2</sup>

Into the midst of this teeming and active population there had come already, as we have said, the first news of the Gospel message. It is not likely however that this Christianity, carried as it must have been by men who themselves were but very imperfectly informed concerning the truths of the new religion, would have been very definite, or in any way organised. For its organisation into a regular Church there was needed the visit of an apostle, or of some person duly authorised by some one possessed of apostolic powers, and it is not probable that any visit of the sort was made for the first twelve

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.*, v., 5, "They have a passion for propagating their race".

<sup>2</sup> Renan, *L'Antechrist*, p. 7, n. 2.

years after the ascension of our Lord. Christian tradition is very definite in stating that, for twelve years, no one of the apostles left Jerusalem, but that, for all that period, they remained in unity, preaching the Gospel, as our Lord had given them commandment, to the Jews alone. During all those years the Catholic Church, while no doubt cherishing the words of her Founder, who had bidden her go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, had not as yet given those words any prominence in practical work, but seemed to be almost unaware of her own Catholicity; content to be regarded, and to regard herself, as having a mission only to the Jewish people, which did not extend even to the "prose-lytes of the gate," who were believers in the one true God and to some extent observers of the Jewish law. A wider scope was given to her operations by the vision granted to St. Peter at Joppa, and the baptism of Cornelius and his followers in which that vision resulted. But even after that event, it would seem that for some years there was not any attempt made to preach to the Gentiles as such, but only to those who had already affiliated themselves to the Jewish religion by becoming proselytes.<sup>1</sup> The whole principle however was involved in the baptism of Cornelius, who himself, it is interesting to note, was, if not a Roman, at least an Italian, belonging to the "Italian cohort"; a body of troops, that is, which had been enlisted in Italy for foreign service in Syria, and the members of which would naturally return to Italy so soon as the period of military service for which they had engaged had been completed. The great step had been taken, and the Church had become, if not in fact at least in theory, Catholic and universal. It followed in God's providence, that the next step should

<sup>1</sup> This was Dr. Hort's opinion, and, if accepted, it certainly removes a good many difficulties in the interpretation of the history of the apostolic age.

be made clear, and that the apostles should be guided to leave Jerusalem, where they had for so long made their home, and should go forth in all directions over the world to preach the good tidings of the Gospel of Christ. And this further step, as so often in God's dealings with men, was brought about by an event which not only was not intended to produce any such result, but which was designed utterly to destroy the Church of Christ even in Jerusalem itself. This event was the persecution that was commenced by Herod Agrippa, and which is recorded for us in the twelfth chapter of the Acts. "And at this time Herod the king stretched forth his hands, to afflict some of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And seeing that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Now this was in the days of the unleavened bread." Then follows the story of the miraculous delivery of the apostle from prison, and of his decision forthwith to place himself in safety, beyond the confines of the jurisdiction of Herod; thus beginning the first of the apostolic journeys outside the boundaries of Palestine itself. "He departed," we read, "and went into another place."<sup>1</sup>

There is, indeed, no mention of Rome, or of any other place, as being that to which he now betook himself, but it is not without a considerable degree of probability that it has been conjectured that it was at Rome that his journey ended; for on this hypothesis alone, which in itself contains nothing that is improbable, can we reconcile with known facts the various traditions of the early Church. The date of the imprisonment under Agrippa, and the consequent departure from Jerusalem, can be fixed accurately, for Herod came to the throne in A.D. 41, and reigned only three years. He was dead before the Passover of A.D. 44,<sup>2</sup> and he had not arrived at Jerusalem until

<sup>1</sup> Acts, xii., 1-17.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Antiq.*, xix., 8, 2.

after the Passover of A.D. 41. It was, therefore, certainly, either in 42, or else in 43, that St. James was martyred, and the probabilities are very greatly in favour of the earlier date, for that would fit in precisely with the twelve years which are assigned by Apollonius,<sup>1</sup> and also by St. Clement of Alexandria,<sup>2</sup> as the limit of the apostle's labours in Jerusalem; and also with the date assigned by St. Jerome,<sup>3</sup> as having been that at which St. Peter first came to Rome "in the second year of Claudius," twenty-five years before his martyrdom in that city in A.D. 67. Rome, then, we may assume to have been the final end of his journey, but there is no reason to suppose that this was already determined upon when he left Jerusalem. The words of St. Luke seem to point quite in the opposite direction. Rome was not an unknown village of no importance that it should be spoken of so slightly, simply as "another place". The urgent matter for the moment was to get beyond the reach of Herod, and to avoid the risk of being captured, and that no doubt was what was in the mind of St. Luke, who tells us nothing at all of the end or extent of the apostle's journey, but only the fact that then, for the first time, he left Jerusalem for a prolonged period.

St. Peter's immediate destination would seem to have been Antioch. The traditions at Rome, which are preserved for us by St. Jerome<sup>4</sup> and St. Leo,<sup>5</sup> and those at Antioch itself and the East generally, which we find in Origen, Eusebius and St. John Chrysostom,<sup>6</sup> are entirely in accordance as to the fact that, at some time before he came to Rome, St. Peter had founded the Church at Antioch. St. Jerome's statement is the most explicit and

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by St. Jerome, *De Viris Ill.*, xl. He wrote about A.D. 210.

<sup>2</sup> *Stromata*, vi., 5.

<sup>3</sup> *De Viris Ill.*, i.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Serm.*, lxxxii., 5.

<sup>6</sup> Origen, *In Lucam*, Hom. vi.; Eusebius, *Chron.*, l. ii.; Chrys., *Hom. in Inscript.*, Act. ii., 6.

definite of all that have come down to us on this subject, and runs as follows: "Simon Peter . . . the prince of the apostles, after an episcopate at the Church of Antioch, and preaching to those of the Jews who had believed among the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, came to Rome in the second year of Claudius". Now there are great difficulties in assuming any earlier date than A.D. 42 for the foundation of the Church at Antioch, because of the tradition, which seems to fit in so well with the facts recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, that it was not till that year that any of the apostles left Jerusalem, and on this account the date of A.D. 37, which certain historians have suggested, or even A.D. 40, which is adopted by Tillemont, must be rejected. We assume, therefore, that St. Peter went, in A.D. 42, straight to Antioch from Jerusalem, and that he stopped there no longer a time than was necessary to organise the Christian community in that city, and to set over them as their head and as first bishop St. Evodius.<sup>1</sup>

He then would seem to have passed on at once to those regions in the north of Asia Minor which alone, together with Rome itself, claim to have been the scene of his ministrations, and to the Christian inhabitants of which, at a later date, he addressed his two Pastoral Epistles. The order of the names of the provinces enumerated in the First Epistle, beginning as it does with the East and going on towards the West, which has been so often brought forward as an argument to show that St. Peter when he penned it was more probably at the Eastern Babylon than at Rome, would seem to be explained even more naturally on the hypothesis that he recalled them in the order in which he passed through them in the course of this journey, and it may be also in

<sup>1</sup> It is quite impossible to find room at this period of St. Peter's life for the seven years' stay in Antioch mentioned by St. Gregory (Epist. l. vii., 40). Farther on we shall suggest a possible explanation.

another similar journey in later years, on his way from Antioch to Rome. We picture him, therefore, as passing northwards from Antioch, across the peninsula of Asia Minor, to Pontus, the region on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Two churches in that district, Amasea and Sinope, claimed that they had been founded by the apostle.<sup>1</sup>

The mention of Pontus suggests at once to the mind that we may have here the key to the first beginnings of the acquaintance of the apostle with some whose after history was to be closely interwoven with his own, and with that of St. Paul. Aquila, we read in the Acts of the Apostles, was "a Jew born in Pontus,"<sup>2</sup> who had afterwards migrated to Rome. It hardly seems far fetched, if we suppose that he was one of those "Jews from Pontus," who had been present at Jerusalem on the occasion of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and that he was thus among the first converts to the Christian faith. If this were so, he may well have kept up his acquaintance with St. Peter, on the occasion of other and later visits to the Holy City made for the purpose of attending other Jewish feasts; and it may have been for the very purpose of going to his house, and from thence preaching the Gospel to other Jews of the dispersion in Pontus and the surrounding districts, that St. Peter now turned his steps northwards. Further, it may be that it was Aquila's determination to go to Rome that first decided St. Peter also to take that important step, and that the two journeyed on thither in company; passing down through the districts of Galatia, and taking ship at some port of Western Asia for Italy and Rome. Such a hypothesis involves not the slightest improbability, and it fits in well with the little we know of St. Peter's movements at this period, and also with the tradition we find at Rome, that,

<sup>1</sup> Tillemont, *Mémoires*, St. Pierre, i., p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, xviii., 2.

during one portion of his stay in that city, he made his residence on the Aventine, in the house of Aquila and his wife Priscilla. There is another reason which may have induced the apostle to avoid the inland districts of Asia Minor, which were afterwards the scene of the labours of St. Paul, and to confine himself to the shores of the sea. This would be that he was anxious to be in a position to earn sufficient money for his support by working at his trade as a fisherman; for it is recorded by an ancient authority,<sup>1</sup> that he too, like St. Paul,<sup>2</sup> was always careful not to be a burden to others, but laboured at his trade, that so he might preach the Gospel freely, and without any suspicion of sordid motives.

In any case, his stay in Pontus cannot have been a long one at this period, if we are to accept the statement of St. Jerome that he arrived in Rome in the second year of Claudius, that is, at the close of that same year, A.D. 42, in the spring of which he had left Jerusalem. Setting sail, as we have said, from some port in the West of Asia Minor, he would have landed, possibly, at Ostia, but more probably at Brindisi or at Naples. We have no tradition to guide us, beyond the fact that the Church of Naples has always claimed to be of apostolic foundation, St. Aspren, the first Bishop of Naples, having been, it is said, consecrated by St. Peter himself.<sup>3</sup> In any case, when St. Paul arrived at Puteoli, some years afterwards, he found there Christians, and apparently an organised Church, which may well have owed its origin to St. Peter's labours. Although, of course, it is anything but decisive of the question, this gives a slight balance of

<sup>1</sup> *Const. Apost.*, ii., 63.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, xviii., 3; 1 Cor., iv., 12; 2 Cor., xi., 9; 1 Thess. ii., 9; 2 Thess. iii., 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Mart. Rom.*, 3rd August: "At Naples the Feast of St. Aspren, Bishop, who was cured by St. Peter and afterwards was baptised and made bishop of that city".

probability to the theory that it was at Naples that St. Peter landed, and that he made his way past Capua, and along the Via Appia, until he entered Rome itself by the Porta Capena or, as we now call it, the Gate of San Sebastiano.

His first resting-place would, almost as certainly, have been somewhere among his fellow-countrymen, in some one of the various quarters of which we have already spoken, but of this we have no trace left to us, and the place which tradition assigns as having been his first dwelling-place for any length of time, is the house of Aquila and Priscilla on the Aventine, the spot now occupied by the church of S. Prisca. How soon after his arrival in the capital he took up his abode in this spot must depend upon whether Aquila had, as we have suggested, but lately arrived himself in Rome in the apostle's company, or whether he was already a settled resident; and again, in the latter case, upon whether he was already a believer, or was converted at this period by St. Peter's preaching. And for all these questions we have no sufficient evidence to guide us with any certainty. Assuming, however, as the most probable, the hypothesis we have already stated, namely, that Aquila was already a Christian and that St. Peter had now come in his company to Rome from Pontus, it would seem likely that St. Peter would have gone to live with him and with his wife Priscilla, so soon as they had found a dwelling to their taste. There exists, however, a certain amount of evidence to show that, although Aquila was a Jew of foreign birth, his wife Prisca or Priscilla was a Roman, and in station superior to himself, which would account for her name occurring first on so many occasions when the two are mentioned together. In that case the house on the Aventine may perhaps have been her property. She would seem to have been a freed woman, connected with that noble family of Cornelius Pudens which plays so

important a part in the history of Christianity in its earliest stages at Rome. This is inferred from a number of details which seem to point in this direction. We know, from the apocryphal but still very ancient letters of Pastor and Timotheus, that one Priscilla, a relation, and possibly the mother, of Cornelius Pudens, was the founder of the cemetery which still bears her name, and which undoubtedly goes back to apostolic times. This is confirmed by the fact that in the cemetery of S. Priscilla there was buried Pudens himself, Pudenziana, Prassede, and others connected with that family. But in the same cemetery there are also found tombs bearing the names of Aquila and Aquilinus.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, there is proof, in the shape of a bronze tablet found at S. Prisca in 1776, that, in the early part of the third century the property belonged to one Cornelius Pudens, whose name had been later changed, through adoption, to Marius Pudens Cornelianus. This last find seems absolutely to prove some connection between the two families.

The tradition of St. Peter having dwelt on this spot is one of respectable antiquity. There may still be seen, in the crypt of the modern church, an inscription, dating from the twelfth century, which sets forth the opinion received at that date. It was placed there by Pope Calixtus III. :—

PRAECIPUE OB PRISCAE QUOD CERNIS NOBILE TEMPLUM  
 QUOD PRISCUM MERITO PAR SIBI NOMEN HABET  
 NAM PETRUS ID DOCUIT POPULUS DUM SAEPE DOCERET  
 DUM FACERET MAGNO SACRAQUE SAEPE DEO.

Moreover, in the fifteenth century, there might be read over the architrave of the door an epigram to the

<sup>1</sup> See De Rossi, *Bollettino*, 1867. May and June, p. 45. In the Ostian Cemetery there was a stone, "*Aquilie Priscæ in pace*".

same effect, written in letters which a contemporary writer<sup>1</sup> assures us were of ancient form, and which De Rossi assigns to the ninth or tenth century:—

HAEC DOMUS EST AQUILAE SEU PRISCAE VIRGINIS ALMAE  
 QUOD LUPE<sup>2</sup> PAULE TUO ORE VEHIIS DOMINO  
 HIC PETRE DIVINI TRIBUERAS FERCUA VERBI  
 SAEPIUS HOCCE LOCO SACRIFICANS DOMINO.

To this evidence from the inscriptions we may add that in the twelfth century the church became an abbey, and was entitled the Abbey of SS. Prisca and Aquila;<sup>3</sup> that in the *Acts of Sta. Prisca Virgin and Martyr*, which are not later than the eleventh century, the church on the Aventine is spoken of under the same title;<sup>4</sup> and, lastly, that in the life of Leo III. in the *Liber Pontificalis*<sup>5</sup> the ancient *titulus* or parish church of S. Prisca is called the *titulus beatorum Aquilæ et Priscæ*. This takes us back to the eighth century, and shows that at that time the church was regarded as occupying the site of the earlier *ecclesia domestica* of which we read in St. Paul's Epistles as having existed in the house of Aquila and Prisca. The name of *titulus Priscæ*, without the mention of Aquila, goes back to much earlier times.<sup>6</sup> The present church is mainly modern, but even as late as the opening years of the last century there were still traces visible of an earlier church close by. We learn this from Bianchini,<sup>7</sup> who says that a certain early Christian glass, of which he is writing, was

<sup>1</sup> Pietro Sabino, in De Rossi, *Inscr. Christ.*, ii., 443.

<sup>2</sup> For this strange use of *lupus*, wolf, as applied to St. Paul, De Rossi cites Arator, *De Act.*, App. ii., v., 485.

<sup>3</sup> Giorgi, *De liturgia Rom. pont.*, ii., 554.

<sup>4</sup> *Acta Sanctorum*, Jan., ii., 184.

<sup>5</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ed. Duchesne, ii., 6.

<sup>6</sup> See Carini, *Sul titolo presbiterale di S. Prisca*, who collects all instances.

<sup>7</sup> Bianchini, *Anast. bibl.*, ii., p. 172.

found *inter antiquæ ecclesiæ rudera prope S. Priscam*, "among the *débris* of the ancient church, close by S. Prisca". Excavations on this spot were made in 1776, and resulted in a most important discovery of an ancient oratory, adorned with pictures of the fourth century, which were a good deal destroyed by time, but had apparently represented the apostles. The discovery was, however, made at an unfortunate period, and, in spite of its great importance, no record whatever has survived, save and except a single short letter written at the time by one Carrara to the Treasurer of the Pope (Pius VI.), and containing the scanty details we have already given. This letter exists in Codex 9697 of the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. Copies of the frescoes are said to have been taken at the time, but, if so, they also have perished. It is, however, an extraordinary thing that no attempt whatever has been made in our own days to rediscover this most interesting building, the actual walls, in all probability, within which St. Peter and St. Paul preached to the infant Church of Rome. A good deal of interest was aroused in 1867 when De Rossi first published the discovery of this letter of Carrara's in the *Bollettino* for that year. Nothing, however, was done immediately, and the unfortunate events of 1870 put a stop to any projects which may have been formed.

If, however, S. Prisca marks the first dwelling-place of St. Peter in Rome, it seems clear that he did not remain there for any long time. For Roman tradition assigns, as the place in which he set up his chair, the recognised symbol of his episcopal and apostolic authority, not S. Prisca, but a spot in a more distant part of Rome, the Cœmeterium Ostrianum<sup>1</sup> on the Via Nomentana, a

<sup>1</sup> For all that is known of the Ostrian Cemetery see De Rossi, *Bollettino di arch. crist.*, 1867 and 1873, and a paper by the same, entitled "*Del luogo appellato ad Capream*," published in the *Boll. della comm. arch. munic. di Roma.*, 1883. See also, his *Roma sotterranea*,

little beyond the present church of S. Agnese fuori, outside the Porta Pia. It is not unnatural to surmise that the house on the Aventine was found too close to the quarters inhabited by the Jews, and too much exposed in consequence to the hostility stirred up by the preaching among them of the new religion; and that, in consequence, it was found advisable that St. Peter should have his head-quarters at some more distant and retired spot. That great opposition was aroused we know, not only from the parallel experiences of St. Paul in other cities, as written in the Acts, but also from the fact, which St. Justin<sup>1</sup> has recorded, that picked men were sent out from Jerusalem into the various cities of the empire, with the express object of rousing the Jews everywhere against the preachers of the new doctrines, and of spreading calumnious reports against those who professed them. In the operations of such a propaganda we cannot suppose that Rome and the chief of the apostles were left out of sight, and it is natural that we should connect these men, not only with the removal of the apostle at this time to a more secluded part of the city, but also with the serious disturbances which, as we shall see, broke out in Rome a few years later.

The reasons which may have caused St. Peter to decide on this spot on the Via Nomentana for the prosecution of his apostolate are of course unknown to us, but the tradition is too strong to allow us to doubt of the fact, and we can guess at some of the reasons which may have weighed with him. It was a region where public tranquillity was guaranteed by the close proximity of the camp of the Prætorian guards, which had only recently been constructed close by.<sup>2</sup> There was water, too, avail-

i., p. 189, *seq.*; and Armellini, *Scoperta della cripta di S. Emerentiana e di una memoria di S. Pietro*, 1877. Cf. also *Boll. arch. crist.*, 1876.

<sup>1</sup> St. Justin Martyr, *Dial. cum Tryphone*, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 37.

able for the baptism of converts, for the place was marshy, and hence was known by the names of *ad Nymphas* and of *palus Caprea*; and, most important of all, there was already a Christian population in the neighbourhood, or, at the least, a Christian family, the head of which, who bore the name of Ostorius, possessed either a villa, or else one of the places of burial surrounded by more or less extensive grounds which were common among the richer classes at this time. Thus, within private grounds, protected by the rights of private property, he could teach and baptise undisturbed. We may note also a certain fitness, which, however, is not likely to have occurred to the minds of Christians of the first century, in the fact that it was precisely at this spot that, as Livy<sup>1</sup> records, Romulus so mysteriously disappeared after reviewing his army. The place is connected, therefore, alike with the last records of the work of the founder of secular Rome, and with the first labours of that second and greater founder, who began in Rome that spiritual dominion, wider even than the Roman empire itself, which has procured for that city its title of eternal.

Here his abode was evidently of longer duration than had been the case at the house of Aquila, for it is, as we have said, with this place especially that Roman tradition has linked the memories of the earlier years of the apostle's ministry in Rome. Here, in later ages, came the pilgrims of the sixth, seventh and following centuries, that they might visit and might venerate the "chair where Peter first sat";<sup>2</sup> here it was that they were told that Peter had baptised; and here especially was celebrated that Feast of the Chair of Peter on the 22nd of February, which in later years, by a misunderstanding, has come to be known as the Feast of the "Chair of St. Peter

<sup>1</sup> *Hist.*, I, 16, *ad Capræ paludem*; cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, ii., 289; Plutarch, *Rom.*, 27.

<sup>2</sup> De Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, p. 176.

at Antioch".<sup>1</sup> The tourist at Rome to-day, going out on that day along the old Nomentan Way, past the Church of S. Agnese, may go down into the underground ceme-



Chapel in the Ostrian Cemetery, with stone chair and column opposite for lamp.

tery which probably had its beginnings within the apostle's lifetime, and may see, deep down in the earth, not indeed

<sup>1</sup> See the dissertation on the two feasts of the Chair of St. Peter in Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotterranea*, i., 494.

the chair on which Peter sat, but the chair which was cut out of the solid tufa in the second century, and which was afterwards held in honour as the symbol and memorial of the fact that here there had been set up for the first time in Rome the apostolic throne, and therefore, since the essence of a cathedral depends not on the existence of a vast and noble building, but simply on the possession of the bishop's seat, that here had been located the first and earliest cathedral of Christian Rome. Opposite to it he will still see the column which once supported the great bowl of oil which formed the lamp that burned constantly before it, as before others of the places that were deemed holiest in Rome; and still at Monza he may see the phial, containing a little of the oil from that lamp, which, in the seventh century, while Gregory the Great occupied the pontifical throne, was carried back by John the Abbot to Queen Theodolinda, and there stored up as one of the most precious of the relics that the Church of Monza could boast.<sup>1</sup>

Of the converts of these earliest years, and the success that the preaching of the apostle may have obtained, we have but faint indications. St. Peter was not, as was St. Paul, a graduate of one of the great universities of the empire, skilled in all the learning and philosophy of the age, and therefore able at once to command a hearing among the Jewish and heathen scholars with whom he might meet. To the heathen scholars it would seem most probable that St. Peter did not at this time address himself; circumcision was still, so far as the Church had yet decided, and, except in such cases as that of Cornelius where the Divine Will was plainly manifested, the usual, if not the invariable, preliminary of entering the Church; and so it was to the Jews alone, and to the proselytes of the stricter kind, that St. Peter first delivered his message.

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, i., 176.

And to these his speech, rough, and with the unmistakable accent of a Galilean fisherman, would not serve as the best of introductions. Not many, therefore, among the richer or more learned of the Jews would seem to have been converted; but the earnestness of the speaker, and his obvious and intense belief in the truth of the message he had to deliver, coupled perhaps with some manifestations of miraculous proofs, drew the poor around him; and thus, as it had been with the Master, so also was it with the apostle, "the common people heard him gladly". Hence it resulted that, for the most part, the earliest adherents of Christianity, in Rome as elsewhere, were drawn from the poorer and more ignorant classes, and so it came about that from these earliest converts there sprang up the idea, which held its own in Rome, as we may see from the writings of the Christian apologists of the second century, long after it had ceased to be really true, that Christians were recruited altogether from among the poor and the ignorant, and that it was not worth the while of any of the learned philosophers of the day to examine into their tenets, far less to occupy themselves with providing an answer by which they might be met. Still, while no doubt it is true that the bulk of the converts were drawn from the poorer classes, there were some even at this early period whose names have come down to us, and who belonged to the highest ranks of Roman society. The first of these was the celebrated Pomponia Græcina, the wife of one of the principal men in Rome, Aulus Plautius, who was the general of the imperial forces during the successful campaign in Britain in A.D. 43-47. On the return of the victorious commander in the latter year to his home, he found his wife, as Tacitus<sup>1</sup> records, given over to grief, never appearing except in a garb of mourning, and refusing to avail herself of the

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, xiii., 12.

consolations that Roman society could offer. The ostensible cause for all this sadness was a ceaseless sorrow for the untimely death of her friend Julia, the daughter of Drusus, who had fallen a victim to the jealousy of Messalina in A.D. 43. But, as the years went on and brought no change in her habits of life, it was felt that some deeper cause than this must be looked for to account for such strange and lasting effects, and men began to whisper abroad that the true reason was nothing less than that she had abandoned the religion of the state, and taken up with some foreign and unlawful superstition, one of the characteristics of which was that its votaries were forbidden to indulge in the ordinary pleasures or dissipations of life and society. So things went on for fourteen years, until, at last, she was brought, after the manner of the old patrician families, before a court composed of her husband and near relations, and was tried upon the charge of having joined an unlawful religion, but was declared innocent. She lived for some years after this event, enjoying, in spite of her retirement, the respect of all for her character and virtues. Such is the story as Tacitus has recorded it, and it is not wonderful that Christian historians of all times should, on the strength of it, have claimed Pomponia as a Christian convert. The characteristics recorded do not suggest any other religion known at that time in Rome which could possibly have been designated as a "foreign superstition". It was not Judaism, for Judaism was permitted, and had she become a proselyte even of the strictest kind she would not on that account have been molested, any more than was Veturia Paula, "the mother of the synagogue," who, having joined the Jewish community at the age of seventy-five, took, as may still be read upon one of the sepulchral stones of a Jewish cemetery in Rome,<sup>1</sup> the name of Sara, to com-

<sup>1</sup> Orelli, *Inscr. Lat.* 2522.

memorate her change of faith. Nor again does it sound like one of the various Eastern religions at that time so popular in Rome ; the mysteries, for instance, of Isis or of Ida ; for these voluptuous rites enjoyed no good name for the culture of the virtues. It does, on the other hand, fit in exactly with the ideas entertained by the heathen world of the first century about the Christians, compelled as these were by the exigencies of their religion to hold aloof from so much of the social and political pleasure-making of their time. The acquittal too is easily explained by the fact that Christianity was at this period still popularly confused with Judaism, which was a lawful religion. This surmise, however, for in itself it is little more, that it was actually the fact of her having embraced the Christian religion which led to this behaviour on the part of Pomponia, has been proved to be almost certainly true by the discovery, in the catacomb known as the Cemetery of S. Callisto, of a tombstone, dating probably from the end of the second century and bearing the name of Pomponius Græcinus.<sup>1</sup> The Christianity of the grandson, or rather, perhaps, the great-nephew, which is thus rendered certain, makes it exceedingly probable that it was from his famous ancestress that he derived his religion, and that we may safely put her down as one of St. Peter's earliest converts ; for it is noteworthy that it was in A.D. 43, the year following that in which the apostle is recorded to have come to Rome, that her changed manner of life began to attract the attention of her friends and neighbours.

There is one other convert of this period about whom we must say something, before we bring this chapter to an end ; although it is not till later years that he comes fully into prominence, and this is Cornelius Pudens. About the fact of his conversion there is indeed no dis-

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, ii., pp. 263, 282.

pute, the mention of his name in the First Epistle to Timothy is sufficient to prove it, no less than the existence of the venerable church of S. Pudenziana, which has succeeded to the *titulus Pudentis*, which in its turn, tradition tells us, grew out of the *ecclesia domestica*, or private oratory, which Pudens, like Aquila and Priscilla, had established within his own house. There is however a discussion, with which we need not just now concern ourselves, both as to the position he filled in Roman society—whether, that is, he was or was not of senatorial rank—and also as to the causes which led to his first acquaintance with the apostle and his subsequent conversion. With regard to this last point there would seem to be little ground for the surmise, built upon nothing more than identity of name, that he was a kinsman of the centurion Cornelius whose conversion is recorded in the Acts; for the name Cornelius was at this period probably one of the commonest of all names in Rome, because of the numbers who had received citizenship at the hands of Cornelius Sylla, the great dictator. Nor does it seem likely that Cornelius the centurion ever returned to Rome at all; for, although we have some evidence that the *cohors Italica*, to which he belonged, was recalled from Palestine about this time, there are no traditions about Cornelius to be met with in Rome, and Troas claims to have been the scene of his death, and the place of his burial. The inscription of the church which was dedicated to him at Assos is extant still, and may be read in more than one printed collection of such records of the past.<sup>1</sup>

There is however another and a more plausible, while at the same time a much more interesting way, in which we may suppose the conversion of Pudens to have come about. He was married, according to Christian tradition,

<sup>1</sup> *Corp. inscr. Graec.*, 8804; Le Bas et Waddington, *Inscript. d'Asie Mineure*, 1730; Lequien, *Oriens Christianus*, i., p. 784.

to a lady of the name of Claudia, and this is supported by the mention of the two names in the salutations at the end of St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy, "There salute thee . . . Pudens and Linus and Claudia". Now there is extant among the epigrams of Martial, one<sup>1</sup> which records the marriage of a distinguished Roman of the name of Pudens to a foreign lady (*peregrina*) named Claudia. From another epigram<sup>2</sup> we learn that she was a Briton. This Pudens and Claudia may well have been the same as those whose salutations are sent by St. Paul. There are certain other facts which make this more probable. Tacitus<sup>3</sup> records that one Cogidunus, a British king in the time of Claudius, was rewarded with certain lands in recognition of his fidelity to Rome. Now there was dug up at Chichester, in 1723, a marble,<sup>4</sup> which bore an inscription telling how the king, Tiberius Claudius Cogidunus, had permitted a temple to be erected in honour of Neptune and Minerva, on land that had been presented by Pudens, the son of Pudentinus. This inscription shows us that this British king had adopted as his own the name of his patron Claudius the emperor. In such a case his daughter would have been called Claudia according to Roman usage, and the occurrence in this inscription of the name of Pudens in addition to that of the father of Claudia suggests at once that we have here the Pudens and Claudia of Martial's epigram, and perhaps also of St. Paul's Epistles.

Nor is it difficult to suggest a way in which they may have been brought originally into contact with Christianity. The conqueror of Cogidunus was that Aulus Plautius whose wife Pomponia Græcina, as we have already shown, was one of the earliest converts to the Christian religion in Rome. We have only to suppose

<sup>1</sup> IV., 13.

<sup>2</sup> XI., 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Agric.*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> See an essay *Claudia and Pudens*, by J. W. Williams, M.A., London, 1848; from which most of the facts in the text are taken.

therefore that the daughter of Cogidunus, as was usual in such cases, was sent to Rome by Aulus Plautius as a hostage for the good behaviour of her father, and that she was placed under the charge and protection of his wife Pomponia. Having thus become a Christian, she married at a later date the Pudens who is associated with her father in the Chichester inscription, and succeeded in converting him too to the faith. The story in this form may at least be said to involve no kind of improbability, although it may seem to some to be over ingenious in its deductions. Still it is an interesting thought that the hostess of the apostles in Rome, whose house was the very centre of the Christian religion in the latter half of the first century, at least may have been, and indeed probably was, a native of these isles.

## CHAPTER III.

### ABSENCE OF ST. PETER FROM ROME.

THE greatest of all the monuments connected with the earliest years of St. Peter's ministry in Rome is not to be found either at S. Prisca or at S. Pudenziana, nor even at the Ostrian Cemetery, but in the pages of the Gospel of St. Mark ; a work which was, as the united voice of all the earliest Christian writers assures us, written at Rome for the purpose of providing a permanent record of the matter which had formed the basis of the preaching in that city of the chief of the apostles. That this was so is one of the best attested of all the facts in the history of the apostolic age. The evidence for it goes back to sub-apostolic times, for we have the testimony of John the priest, the friend and disciple at Ephesus of St. John the apostle, which has survived by the chance of being doubly quoted. Papias recorded his words, quoting them in a work that is now lost, but Eusebius<sup>1</sup> in his turn quotes from Papias, and includes in his quotation the words that Papias had taken from John the priest. Nor does this John stand alone as our authority, for his evidence is again and again corroborated by writers of the second and third centuries, by Irenæus<sup>2</sup> and by Justin,<sup>3</sup> as well as by Origen<sup>4</sup> and St. Clement of Alexandria.<sup>5</sup> The testimony of John the priest is however at once the earliest and the

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, iii., 39, 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Hær.* iii., 1, 1,

<sup>3</sup> *Dial.*, cvi.

<sup>4</sup> In Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi., 25.

<sup>5</sup> In Euseb., *H. E.*, vi., 14 ; *cf. Adumbratio ad I. Ep. Petri.*

fullest, and it has a considerable importance. "Mark" he says, "was interpreter to St. Peter,<sup>1</sup> and he put together with great exactness, but without any precise order, all that he could remember of the words and actions of the Christ. He had not himself listened to the Lord, nor had he accompanied Him, but later on he became, as I have said, the companion of Peter, and Peter always arranged his teaching to suit the needs of his hearers, and did not aim at compiling a methodical collection of the sayings of the Lord. Mark is not to be blamed for only having written down a small number of details just as they came to his memory, for his one object was only not to omit anything he had heard, and not to allow any untruth to creep into his story." From this, and from the other sources already mentioned, we can construct a fairly vivid picture of the way in which the Gospel came to be written. When St. Peter left Jerusalem, St. Mark, according to tradition, had been sent by him to Alexandria; but his stay in Egypt at this period had not been long, and he had soon returned to his master, who by that time had settled himself in Rome. Here he was able to make himself of invaluable service, for St. Peter's provincial accent was not easily understood in Rome; where, moreover, Greek and not Aramaic would seem to have been the usual language in use among the Jewish colony. St. Mark was able therefore to stand by St. Peter's side and to act as his interpreter, putting into the familiar Greek the teaching that St. Peter gave in his native tongue. St. Clement of Alexandria, who is also quoted by Eusebius, gives us some further details of the causes which led to the written Gospel being prepared. St. Clement himself wrote before the close of the second century, so that he is a very valuable witness, but he states that on this point he is but putting down what he had

<sup>1</sup> ἑρμηνευτῆς Πέτρου.

heard "from the elders of the generation before him," the tradition in fact of the Church of Alexandria, which we may suppose to have been derived directly from St. Mark himself, since it was Alexandria that was the scene of the later labours of that evangelist. "This is the way," says St. Clement, "that St. Mark went about the writing of his Gospel. Peter had been preaching the word of God publicly in Rome, and, inspired by the Holy Ghost, had announced the Good Tidings. Many of those who heard him begged Mark, who for a long time had been his companion, and remembered distinctly all that he had said, to write down the discourses of the apostles. Accordingly Mark composed his Gospel, and gave it to all who asked for it; and when Peter was informed of what was done he neither forbade him nor encouraged him."<sup>1</sup>

Such are the earliest traditions of the way in which St. Mark's Gospel came to be written, and, if we turn to the Gospel itself for confirmation of what we have learnt from tradition, we shall find our conviction as to the truth of the statement greatly strengthened. St. Augustine indeed has left on record his opinion that "Mark appears to be the abbreviator of Matthew,"<sup>2</sup> but it is hard to endorse the verdict of the great doctor. On the face of it St. Mark's Gospel was written not for the Jewish but for the Latin world, for it appeals but rarely to the Jewish Scriptures, and translates the few Hebrew words that occur, and the references to Hebrew customs, into a form in which they would be more intelligible to the Gentile world.<sup>3</sup> Those for whom it was written had never seen Jerusalem, for he finds it necessary to explain that the Jordan is a river,<sup>4</sup> and that the Mount of Olives rises over

<sup>1</sup> In Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, vi., 14.

<sup>2</sup> Aug., *De Consens. Evang.*, i., 4, "pedissequus et breviator".

<sup>3</sup> Ch. ii., 18; iii., 17; v., 41; vii., 1-4, 11, 34; x., 46; xi., 13; xii., 18; xiv., 12, 36; xv., 6, 34.

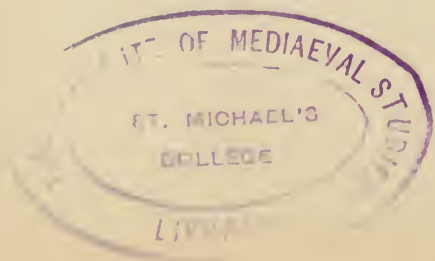
<sup>4</sup> i., 5.

against the Temple.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, although St. Mark was not himself one of the apostles, and according to one tradition was not converted till after the Resurrection, so that he had never seen the Lord, this Gospel nevertheless is full of vivid details which could only have been supplied by an eye-witness. He records for us, again and again, not only the actual words, but the very looks and expression of the Lord on different occasions. He alone, for instance, has preserved the distress which was visible on our Lord's countenance and in His manner when He found Himself unable to help, on account of the unbelief of those who needed His assistance.<sup>2</sup> The other evangelists record the blessing of the children, but St. Mark alone that "He took them into His arms, and laid His hands upon them, and blessed them".<sup>3</sup> He remembers that, in the storm on the Sea of Galilee, the Lord was "in the hinder part of the ship sleeping upon a pillow";<sup>4</sup> or, again, with how significant a gesture it was that He looked around as He asked the question: "Who is My mother and My brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of God, he is My brother and My sister and My mother."<sup>5</sup> These are details which might have been supplied to the writer of the Gospel by any of the apostles, but there are others which seem to narrow down his source of information at least to one of the chosen three, St. Peter, St. James or St. John. He knows what was said when these three together with St. Andrew came and spoke to Jesus privately.<sup>6</sup> He can tell us what took place on the occasions when the three alone "were with him on the Holy Mount"<sup>7</sup> of the Transfiguration, or at the raising of Jairus's daughter, or in the Garden of the Agony. And in each of these cases again there are details added which bespeak the eye-witness. It is in St. Mark alone that we read of

<sup>1</sup> xiii., 3.<sup>2</sup> Ch. iii., 5 ; vi., 6 ; vii., 34 ; viii., 12.<sup>3</sup> ix., 36 ; x., 16.<sup>4</sup> iv., 38.<sup>5</sup> iii., 33-36.<sup>6</sup> xiii., 3.<sup>7</sup> 2 Pet., i., 18.

the raiment that "became shining and was exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can make white";<sup>1</sup> or that the age of the child who was raised was twelve years, or that after the miracle she not only rose up but "walked immediately";<sup>2</sup> or again, that in the garden the Lord seemed almost in a state of distraction; "began to be sore amazed"<sup>3</sup> as it is translated by the "Authorised Version," which is here better than the Catholic "began to fear". If, then, the informant from whom St. Mark derived these details was one of the three chief apostles, as it seems must certainly have been the case, we can hardly doubt that it must have been St. Peter; for St. James had perished by a martyr's death long before this Gospel was written, and the details are not the least in the style of St. John, as we can gather from a comparison with the fourth Gospel.

Nor are indications wanting to connect the Gospel, as tradition asserts, with the preaching of Peter. It is St. Mark, for instance, who records the details of St. Peter's conversion, noting the details that the boat which belonged to Simon and Andrew was close by that which belonged to Zebedee, that Simon and Andrew were actually fishing on that eventful morning, while James and John were mending their nets, and that Zebedee was not left alone, but had still his hired servants to help him. He can tell us, too, how St. Peter was feeling at the time of the Transfiguration, that "he knew not what he said, for they were struck with fear".<sup>4</sup> He knows too, what no other evangelist has told us, how in the Garden of Gethsemane there was a special appeal and warning addressed to St. Peter personally and by name. "Simon, sleepest thou? couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit

<sup>1</sup> ix., 2.<sup>2</sup> iv., 42.<sup>3</sup> xiv., 33, ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι.<sup>4</sup> ix., 5.

indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”<sup>1</sup> And, most striking of all, he knows exactly how St. Peter was brought to a sense of the sin of his denial, and tells with an expression that almost defies translation, just how it was that, filled with shame and repentance, he flung his mantle over his head and burst into bitter and long continued weeping.<sup>2</sup>

From all this it will be seen that we have every reason for accepting as substantially true the tradition which tells us that St. Mark composed his Gospel at Rome, for the purpose of putting on permanent record the preaching of the apostle St. Peter in that city. On examining the evidence a little more closely, we can make what is at least a shrewd guess as to the date at which the Gospel was written, and the causes which led to its composition. While St. Peter was still preaching there would have been no need for a written record of his words. It would be after his death, or at least after for some reason the living voice had been silenced, that his disciples would have felt the need of some account in writing, by means of which the words of the apostle might still live on for them and for their children. It was not, however, after the death of St. Peter that the Gospel was composed, for we are told by St. Clement that afterwards it was brought to St. Peter's notice, and that “he neither approved nor blamed what had been done”. It would seem, therefore, that it was written on account of some absence of the apostle from Rome, which threatened to be prolonged or perhaps even permanent: and we ask ourselves whether there is any record of such an absence on the part of St. Peter as would account for the need being felt and the Gospel being written. Now we find meeting us everywhere in early Christian writings notices which do seem to point clearly to, and to be only explicable on the

<sup>1</sup> xiv., 38.

<sup>2</sup> xiv., 72.

assumption of, such an absence. Although it is true that exactly twenty-five years do intervene between the probable date of St. Peter's first arrival in Rome in the second year of Claudius A.D. 42, and that of his martyrdom under Nero in A.D. 67, it is quite impossible to accept the theory that he spent all those twenty-five years continuously in Rome itself. Such a hypothesis is negatived at once by the Sacred Scriptures. St. Peter was not in Rome at the end of A.D. 49 (we give in each case dates that are widely accepted<sup>1</sup>), because in that year we find him "come to Antioch," and St. Paul "withstands him to the face".<sup>2</sup> Nor was he at Rome in A.D. 50, for then we find him at Jerusalem, attending at, and presiding over, the first Council of the Church. He was not at Rome, again, in A.D. 58, for it could hardly be that St. Paul, writing to the Roman Church, should make no mention of his fellow apostle had he known him to be at that time in residence. Nor, again, does he seem to have been there when St. Paul wrote from Rome the Second Epistle to Timothy, for his name is not found among those whose salutations St. Paul is sending. It would seem, therefore, that the sacred record very clearly indicates a prolonged absence of the apostle from Rome an absence which began as early as A.D. 49, and which continued probably till A.D. 62. Such an absence as that would surely account for the composition of a Gospel to record his teaching for the Church at Rome. It is not, however, only from the Bible that we deduce this long absence of St. Peter from the city. We find it hinted at everywhere in the traditions of Rome itself. The *Liber Pontificalis*,<sup>3</sup> following in this St. Epiphanius<sup>4</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> The chronology of the apostolic period is obscure, and it is difficult to give the exact year of many events, although the sequence of events and their relations to one another are more clear.

<sup>2</sup> Gal., ii., 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ed., Duchesne, i., pp. 118, 121-22.

<sup>4</sup> *Adv. Her.*, xxxviii., 6 (*Patr. gr.*, xli., p. 371).

Rufinus,<sup>1</sup> speaks of Linus and Cletus, the two first Bishops of Rome, as having been consecrated within the lifetime of St. Peter to assist in the government of the Church during his absences from the city, and therefore as having performed their pontifical actions, not of their own ordinary authority, but *ex precepto beati Petri*. The pilgrims at the Ostrian Cemetery in the sixth and seventh centuries were, as we have said, taken to see the place *ubi Petrus prius sedit*, his home and seat during his earlier stay. And finally, while St. Jerome<sup>2</sup> and Eusebius<sup>3</sup> assign a date near the beginning of the reign of Claudius for the coming of the apostle to Rome, there are not wanting other and important passages in early writers which speak of his coming to Rome only a few years before his martyrdom, in the later years of Nero. Thus Origen says that, after preaching in Pontus and other places to the Jews of the dispersion, St. Peter “finally (ἐπὶ τέλει) came to Rome, and was crucified with his head downward”.<sup>4</sup> And Lactantius, in a passage often quoted by Protestant controversialists, is even more explicit, for he says that “when Nero was already reigning, Peter came to Rome . . . and converted many to justice”.<sup>5</sup> The seeming divergence between these fathers vanishes at once, on the explanation that there were, not one only, but two occasions on which St. Peter came to Rome, and with it vanish also all the difficulties which have been raised from the silence of the Acts of the Apostles or of the various Epistles of St. Paul on the subject of St. Peter’s presence in the Eternal City.

Now it is remarkable that we do find, both in secular historians and in Holy Scripture, a very valid reason why St. Peter should have left Rome in A.D. 49, for in

<sup>1</sup> *Præf. ad Recogn. Clem.* (*Patr. gr.*, i., 1207).

<sup>2</sup> *De Viris Ill.*, i.

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, ii., 14.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, iii., 1.

<sup>5</sup> *De Mort. Pers.*, i., 2.

that year<sup>1</sup> by an edict of the emperor all the Jews were banished from Rome. The fact is recorded by St. Luke in the Acts,<sup>2</sup> when he is explaining how Aquila and Priscilla came to be at Corinth and not at Rome, but we should not have known the reason of this edict on the part of Claudius were it not for the chance expression of a heathen writer,<sup>3</sup> who tells us that it was done on account of continual riots which had taken place amongst the Jews, "in which one Chrestus was the ringleader". We can readily understand how the mistake was made. The old dissensions and violent opposition, to which we have alluded already as supplying a probable motive for the removal of the apostle from the house of Aquila and Priscilla to a quieter and more retired home on the Via Nomentana, would seem to have continued and even to have increased in intensity, until at last it broke out into actual rioting. "A rising was a terrible matter among the turbulent dwellers in the suburbs, traditional enemies of Roman civilisation, who were able in an instant, like gathering clouds, to swell out into innumerable battalions of prowlers, rag-pickers and mendicants. The Roman police, no doubt, did not trouble itself to make a very careful inquiry on this occasion. It saw that public order was imperilled by the Jewish action, that the cause of the agitation was the name of Christ, pronounced by one party with accents of adoration, by the others with menace and hatred. Maybe the authorities did not inquire whether this *Christus* or *Chrestus*,<sup>4</sup> was or was not an actual living

<sup>1</sup> Wieseler, *Chronologie des apostolischen Zeitalters*, p. 127, gives January A.D. 52 as the date of this edict. There are, however, solid reasons for preferring the date given in the text, A.D. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, xviii., 2.

<sup>3</sup> Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25, "Judæos, impulsore Chresto, assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit".

<sup>4</sup> The spelling *Chrestus* for *Christus* is very common in early Roman records. See for instance *Tertullian, Apol.*, 3, and *Lactantius, Div. Inst.*,

person, but, accustomed as they were to rapid and brutal action, especially towards the poor and insignificant, towards a nation 'born for slavery,' as Cicero says of the Jews, ordered the immediate expulsion of every Israelite from the city of Rome."<sup>1</sup> In such a general banishment, we cannot suppose for a moment that so prominent a person as St. Peter, the acknowledged leader of one of the two parties, could possibly have been allowed to remain in Rome; and we are justified therefore in accepting this event as supplying us both with the date of his departure and the reason which led to his going.

It is, then, in this banishment of the Jews, and the consequent absence of St. Peter from Rome, that we find the probable reason for the composition of St. Mark's Gospel, which would seem therefore to have been written in A.D. 49. This, again, is in perfect agreement with what we can gather from tradition on the subject, for Eusebius<sup>2</sup> tells us that it was composed in the reign of Claudius, and Eutychius,<sup>3</sup> Patriarch of Alexandria, giving apparently the local tradition, says that it was in the ninth year of Claudius, that is in this very year A.D. 49, that St. Mark came to Egypt at St. Peter's command. Lastly Eusebius,<sup>4</sup> in another place, adds the one detail that we want, namely, that when he arrived at Alexandria he brought with him the written Gospel which he had but lately composed. One passage of St. Irenæus,<sup>5</sup> as commonly translated, seems to contradict this, and to assign the writing of the Gospel to a period after St. Peter's death, but, as Father Patrizi<sup>6</sup> has pointed out, the word translated death (*ἔξοδον*) simply means departure: and it

iv., 17. It occurs even in the Catacombs, *Bull. arch. crist.*, 1873, p. 21. So also the old French form *Chrestien*.

<sup>1</sup> Allard, *Hist. des Persécutions*, i., 20.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, ii., 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Patr. Grecque*, cxi., p. 903.

<sup>4</sup> *H. E.*, ii., 16.

<sup>5</sup> In *Eus.*, *H. E.*, v., 8.

<sup>6</sup> Patrizi, *De Evang.*, i.

needs nothing more than a rearrangement of the punctuation, which in ancient writers is of course always wholly uncertain, to bring this passage into conformity with the rest.

Aquila and Priscilla, as we know from the Acts, went, on leaving Rome, to Corinth. St. Peter may have gone with them, but, if so, he did not stay there long, but apparently went on to Antioch; for it is to this period that it would seem that we ought to assign his meeting with St. Paul in that city, and the "withstanding to the face" on the part of the latter apostle which is recorded in the Epistle to the Galatians. A year or so later we find him at Jerusalem at the great council of the apostles, but, with that single exception, we have no light whatever from the Scriptures concerning his whereabouts or the nature of his labours. From tradition we learn that he returned more than once to revisit the Churches he had founded in Pontus and Bithynia,<sup>1</sup> while St. Gregory, in one of his letters,<sup>2</sup> says that he resided seven years at Antioch. As has already been said, it is quite impossible to find room for a seven years' episcopate at Antioch prior to his first coming to Rome; unless we are to give up the much more strongly supported position that for twelve years after the Ascension all the apostles remained at Jerusalem. It would seem probable, therefore, that it is to this period of St. Peter's life that this seven years' residence at Antioch is to be assigned.

If we are right in supposing that the apostle left Rome in A.D. 49, and did not return till A.D. 62 or thereabouts, there is plenty of room for such a residence; and it will allow of missionary journeys, as recorded by Epiphanius, at the beginning and end of the period. It is worth while to remark also that most of the ancient writers, while they state clearly that St. Peter founded the Church at Antioch,

<sup>1</sup> St. Epiphanius, xxvii., 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.*, vii., 40.

do not speak of him as having himself been, in an absolute sense, bishop of that city. There is a marked difference, for instance, in the way in which Eusebius speaks of St. Linus as "the first to become bishop of the Roman Church after St. Peter,"<sup>1</sup> or of St. Clement as "third after Peter and Paul," and of St. Evodius as simply the first Bishop of Antioch.<sup>2</sup> St. Peter, it would seem, was specially connected with Antioch both as the founder of its Church, and also by a more or less prolonged residence; but he does not seem to have been, in the eyes of antiquity, Bishop of Antioch in quite the same sense as that in which he was Bishop of Rome. The idea that he was so has gained universal credence from the fact that the 22nd of February has for many centuries been observed as "the Chair of St. Peter at Antioch," just as the 18th of January is the Feast of "the Chair of St. Peter at Rome". But it has been shown conclusively by De Rossi,<sup>3</sup> that this was not the original designation of the festival, nor the object for which it was instituted. If reference be made to the martyrologies, or calendars of the Church, prior to the seventh century, it will be seen that in early times the feast kept on January 18th had reference to the setting up of the apostolic chair at the spot where now is the Ostrian Cemetery. In the martyrology of St. Jerome, for instance, we find it as "the Dedication of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle, where first he sat at Rome". The second feast, on February 22nd, is found in ancient calendars simply as "the Chair of St. Peter," and on it the appointment of St. Peter to the primacy of the Church was commemorated, and the chair now at the Vatican was venerated. The words "at Antioch" were for the first time added in the seventh century by a clerk of the Church of Auxerre, who was puzzled in finding two Feasts of St. Peter's Chair, and

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, iii., 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii., 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Bull. arch. cr.*, 1867.

concluded that the one on which he did not find Rome mentioned must certainly refer to St. Peter's episcopate at Antioch. Possibly he was misled by the fact that the day was also kept as the Feast of St. Gallus, a martyr of Antioch, so the record as it came to him may have run in this way, *VIII. Kal. Mart. cathedra S. Petri Antiochiæ S. Galli mart.*, in which case a change in punctuation would be all that was necessary to cause the error.

Leaving St. Peter, and turning to his flock at Rome, we find that for this period we are still without any very definite light on the course of events. It would seem clear that Linus was in charge of the Church, and this accounts for the various traditions which represent him to us as having acted as the deputy of St. Peter as Bishop of Rome during the lifetime of the apostle. He was, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*,<sup>1</sup> not a Jew but an Italian from Tuscany, so he would not have been included in the sentence of banishment. It must have been but a shrunken flock that he ruled over, for by far the larger portion of the Church at this period would have been, we should have supposed, of Jewish descent. Very likely, however, although the more prominent members of the Church would not dare to return so soon, the decree of banishment did not for long affect the poorer classes, who would not have gone far outside the city, but would watch their chance of coming back unnoticed, to resume their former avocations within the walls. It seems unlikely that St. Linus followed St. Peter in having his head-quarters outside the walls at the Via Nomentana. The reason which had led to this somewhat inconvenient arrangement, namely, the turbulence and the violent opposition of the Jews, had ceased to be operative now that the Jews were banished, and it would seem probable therefore that Linus lived—where indeed he may quite possibly have

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Duchesne, i., pp. 53, 121.

been living before this event took place, and where certainly the succeeding Bishops of Rome lived for the next two centuries at least—in the house of Pudens in the Vicus Patricius; that is, on the site occupied by the present church of S. Pudenziana, which thus became what we may fairly call the second Cathedral Church of the city of Rome. There is an indication of this in the salutations at the end of the Second Epistle to Timothy. “Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren salute thee.”<sup>1</sup> The occurrence of the name of Linus between those of Pudens and Claudia, who there is every reason to suppose were husband and wife, has been a difficulty to commentators. If, however, we are right in supposing that Linus was actually living in Pudens’ house, and that this was now the head-quarters of the Christian community at Rome, the arrangement of the names is quite natural.

A good deal of light on the Roman Church at this time is thrown by the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, and it will be found quite in accordance with the conclusions we have arrived at. By the time that Epistle was written, probably in A.D. 58, permission had been granted to the Jews to return, and Aquila and Priscilla are back again at Rome, and have reopened the oratory in their house.<sup>2</sup> This permission, we know from later writers, was granted in A.D. 56. St. Peter has not yet returned, for there is no mention of him in the Epistle, which could hardly have been the case had he been actually in residence as diocesan bishop. The seed sown by him has however borne fruit in his absence, for the Church of the Romans is a most flourishing community, and “their faith is spoken of throughout the world”. A great number of its members are known to St. Paul, and are saluted by him at the close. Many of these,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim., iv., 21.

<sup>2</sup> Rom., i., 8.

perhaps, like Aquila and Priscilla, who are among the number, were Jews who had left Rome in consequence of the edict of Claudius, and, having gone to Greece or to Asia, had there come into contact with the Apostle of the Gentiles, and now had returned again to their own homes in Rome. Still the Church is largely, perhaps predominantly, Gentile, for whole passages of the Epistle are addressed to such exclusively.<sup>1</sup> At the same time there was a large Jewish element, for it is on Jews alone that it could have been necessary to inculcate the duties of loyalty to the existing powers, and payment of tribute and custom ;<sup>2</sup> for in A.D. 58 they were still in the first years of Nero's reign, the "golden quinquennium" during which his government was directed by Seneca and Burrhus, and in which therefore there was little temptation to disloyalty, except as regarded the members of a subject race.

One of the greatest of modern critics, the late Bishop Lightfoot of Durham, has put on record<sup>3</sup> his opinion that this Epistle is "absolutely decisive" against any theory of St. Peter having been at Rome up to the time at which it was written, for St. Paul, he says, claims Rome as virgin soil so far as apostolic ministrations are concerned. Fortunately he gives the passages on which he bases this conclusion, and, as we turn to them, we can only feel amazed that they should have seemed to him to be capable of this interpretation, for, on the face of it, they seem to assert the precise opposite of what he says. So far from claiming Rome as being in any sense "virgin soil," St. Paul tells us that, although for years it had been one of his great desires to see Rome, yet he had abstained from going there, precisely because it was *not* virgin soil.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Ch. i., 15-32 ; xi., 13-36 ; *cf.*, Weizäcker, ii., 86, Engl. transl. "Our conclusion is, that, whenever the apostle in addressing the Roman Church is referring to its actual membership, he addresses them as Gentiles by birth".

<sup>2</sup> Ch. xiii., 1-7.

<sup>3</sup> *St. Clement of Rome*, i., p.

“I have preached the Gospel,” he says “not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation, . . . for which cause also I was hindered very much from coming to you, and have been kept away till now.”<sup>1</sup> However, he continues, such is his desire of seeing Rome, that he had determined in this case to break what had hitherto been an almost invariable rule, and, since he had now covered the whole unoccupied ground in the regions in which he then was, he proposed, after visiting Jerusalem, to come to Rome on his way to undertake the breaking up of fresh ground in Spain and the West.<sup>2</sup> Bishop Lightfoot, it would seem, though he does not say so, connected the “hindrance” of which St. Paul speaks, not with his desire to avoid preaching where others had been before him, but with the need of completing his apostolic labours in Greece and Asia before going to Rome. Such a construction of his words is, however, not the most natural, and it is not that which is put forward by the principal commentators of the bishop’s communion; and before we give up the testimony of the early tradition as to St. Peter’s visit, we may fairly ask that some reason should be given why the simpler, and according to the order of the words the more natural, interpretation should be thus cavalierly put out of court.

St. Paul’s purpose of coming to Rome was fulfilled in A.D. 61, though not quite in the way he had anticipated, and we gather some of the details of his journey from the account given by St. Luke in the Acts. St. Paul lands, as perhaps did St. Peter before him, at Puteoli, and finds there a Christian Church in existence; already, it may be, presided over by St. Patrobas, the same Patrobas whom St. Paul salutes in the Epistle to the Romans, and who, being sent by St. Peter to be Bishop of Puteoli, was martyred, according to the Roman martyrology, together

<sup>1</sup> Rom., i., 10-13.

<sup>2</sup> xv., 19-25.

with Philologus. His feast is kept on the 4th of November. St. Paul then passes along the Appian Way, and at the Three Taverns, still some twenty miles away from the city, is met by a deputation from the Roman Church, who had heard of his approach and had come out to welcome him. Some few further details may be gleaned from one of the series of apocryphal Acts lately published by Tischendorf and by Lipsius, the *Acta Petri & Pauli*, for though it is of course impossible to accept these narratives in their entirety as being in any way historical, we must still remember that documents which are no longer accessible were used in their composition, and that they are generally very accurate in topographical details. From these *Acta* we learn that St. Paul, after leaving Puteoli, was escorted by the faithful, and went to Baiæ and thence by Gaeta to the Three Taverns. There is also mentioned a station on the Via Appia, the name of which is not known to us from any other source, Βικουσεράπη, or Vico Serapide, as it would be in modern form. The preservation of this name, derived as it is from a heathen temple, points to a very ancient source as the origin of these details of the narrative, and this, as De Rossi has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> gives a not inconsiderable value to the statement which goes with them, that all along the line St. Paul found many Christians who had been evangelised by St. Peter. From the Three Taverns our apocryphal writer takes him, as no doubt would have been the case, to Ariccia, on the Alban Hills, and thence along the Via Appia, under the still standing arch of Drusus,<sup>2</sup> into Rome itself. At Rome, as we read

<sup>1</sup> *Bull. arch. crist.*, 1883.

<sup>2</sup> Every modern tourist goes out to see the arch of Drusus on the Appian Way, on account of this connection with St. Paul. It is a singular thing that no notice whatever is taken of another arch, under which the apostles Peter and Paul must have passed again and again during their stay in Rome. This arch exists in the very centre of the

in many of the manuscript copies of the Acts of the Apostles, the prisoners were handed over to the custody of the Prefect of the Prætorian camp.<sup>1</sup> The passage was not probably part of the original text, for it is not found in any of the more ancient manuscripts, but it has every appearance of embodying a true and ancient tradition, and is not without considerable interest. The fact that the word signifying prefect is in the singular is important, for it was only just at this period that the celebrated Burrhus was, as we know from Tacitus, alone in the possession of this office, whereas both before and after him it was always held by two persons. It was to Burrhus then that St. Paul was given in charge, and this fact, since Burrhus was the intimate friend of Seneca, and his colleague in the government of Rome during the minority of Nero, renders more probable the interesting traditions which tell us of the interviews that St. Paul had with Seneca, and the influence he may possibly have exerted over that philosopher. Two whole years passed away before the actual trial took place before the emperor, and throughout that time St. Paul was kept in custody.<sup>2</sup> He was not, however, actually in prison, nor

English quarter, in the Via S. Andrea delle Fratte, almost opposite the door of the Collegio Nazzeno, and within a stone's throw of the crowded Via Tritone. The guide-books pay no attention to it, Baedeker does not even mention its existence, nor has any paper dealing with its history been published by any archæological society. Yet it bears an inscription telling us that it was erected by Claudius, and its purpose was to convey the Aqua Virgo across one of the principal streets of ancient Rome. It consists, like other arches of the period, of a large arch in the centre for carriages and horses, and a smaller arch on each side for foot passengers, and though it is half buried its purpose is still perfectly obvious.

<sup>1</sup> Acts, xxviii., 16, A.V. It is not in the Revised Version or in the Vulgate. The word is *στρατοπεδάρχη*. Compare the plural in Trajan's letter to Pliny (Plin., *Ep.*, x., 65), *τοῖς τῶν στρατοπέδων ἡγεμόσιν*. Compare also Tacitus, *Ann.*, xii., 42; xiv., 51.

<sup>2</sup> For the different kinds of *custodia* in use in imperial times see

yet on the other hand was he merely given over to the charge of personal friends who were held responsible for his due appearance on the day of trial. He was allowed to live in a house of his own,<sup>1</sup> and to receive his friends there as he wished. Only he was assigned to the care of the soldiers of the Prætorian Guard, one of whom was always with him day and night, chained to him by the arm, so that he could never be alone. It is a curious thing that no trace of the locality of this house, in which St. Paul lived so long, should remain in Roman tradition. We can hardly doubt, however, but that it must have been in the close neighbourhood of the Prætorian Camp, and therefore not far from that Ostrian Cemetery which is so closely associated with St. Peter, and this too we gather from the expression in the Epistle to the Philippians (i., 13): "My bonds have become manifest in Christ throughout the whole Prætorian Guard" for so the passage should be translated. The convenience of the soldiers in relieving guard would certainly have to be considered in the selection of the house of a prisoner. There is indeed one spot in Rome which claims to be the site of the house in question, and that is the church of S. Maria in Via Lata, situated in the Corso. We are bound however, though unwillingly, to confess that the claim does not seem to be well founded. St. Paul could hardly have lived at this period in the Campus Martius. On the other hand the tradition is not valueless, and it has been unduly discredited by recent writers.<sup>2</sup> There still remain, under the existing church, on the level of the ancient Via Lata, traces of a Roman edifice of about the third century, and

Geib, *Geschichte des römischen Criminal-processes*, p. 561, seq. Cf. also Ulpian in *Digest*, xlvi., viii., 1, 12, Joseph., *Ant. Jud.*, xviii., 6, and Seneca, *Ep.*, i., 5.

<sup>1</sup> Acts, xxviii., 30.

<sup>2</sup> See Armellini, *Chiese di Roma*, p. 474, second ed.; and Marucchi, *Le Memorie dei S. Apostoli*, p. 119.

these in turn indicate that there was once on this spot another building of a much earlier date, which last, therefore, may possibly have been inhabited at some period by St. Paul. The place was made into an oratory by the eighth century at latest, and some traces of the old frescoes of that date may still be made out. There is also a fragment of a fresco of the eleventh century which evidently represented the Crucifixion, for the name Joannes and the words *Ecce Mater tua* can still be read.

The relations of St. Paul with the Jews of Rome, as narrated by St. Luke in the Acts, have been used by rationalist writers to throw discredit on the historical character of that book. Their ignorance, real or pretended, of the existence of any Christian Church among them is said to be inconsistent with the opening words of the Epistle to the Romans. On the other hand it may fairly be pointed out that the troubles which turbulent opposition to Christianity had brought upon them some years before may well have taught them caution, and that, as Bishop Lightfoot has said,<sup>1</sup> it was the most natural as well as the most politic course for them to affect to know nothing beyond the fact that this "sect" was everywhere spoken against.

The two years that St. Paul spent in confinement at Rome were not spent in idleness. He received all who came to him, and his teaching would seem to have met with no small measure of success. Even some of the soldiers who guarded him would seem to have been thereby brought to conversion, as we may gather from his own words to the Philippians; and among these were not improbably St. Nereus and St. Achilleus,<sup>2</sup> who seem both of them to have been Prætorians. It seems likely, indeed, that St. Paul was able to reach a higher grade in Roman society than had been open to St. Peter, and if,

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. to Philippians*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> See De Rossi, *Bull arch. crist.*, 1874, pp. 20, 26.

as has been said, the earliest converts in Rome were probably mostly of the lower classes, there are not wanting indications that, at this later period, the faith was embraced by no small number of adherents who came from the highest and most cultivated classes in Rome. The recent discoveries of modern archæological researches have made this abundantly clear. Inscriptions are not rare in the Catacombs to persons of senatorial rank (*clarissimi*), and one at least of the Christian martyrs had held the high office of consul. The cases of Pomponia Græcina and of Cornelius Pudens have already been spoken of, and are well known, but it is not so generally realised that Christianity found its way within the apostolic period into the imperial family itself, and that at one time it seemed almost certain that, before the first century had closed, a Christian emperor would be seated on the imperial throne. The prefecture of Rome in the year A.D. 64 was held by one Titus Flavius Sabinus, the elder brother of the future Emperor Vespasian.<sup>1</sup> In virtue of his office he had, no doubt, to assist at, probably even to arrange for, the terrible massacre of the Christians which Nero ordered in that year. Such a task must have been most distasteful to him, for he was, as Tacitus tells us, "a man of gentle nature, who abhorred bloodshed".<sup>2</sup> Possibly the scenes which he then saw caused him to take an interest in men who could suffer thus, and may even have led him to embrace the persecuted creed. Anyhow, from that time forward his nature seemed to have changed, and his contemporaries could not understand it. He seemed to them in his latter years to have lost all his energy.<sup>3</sup> Prefect of Rome again under Vitellius in A.D. 69, when his brother Vespasian was proclaimed by the legions of the Eastern army, he failed to

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.*, iii., 60-75.

<sup>2</sup> Mitem virum abhorrere a sanguine et cædibus.

<sup>3</sup> In fine vitæ segnem.

rise to the occasion, and to secure the city for his brother by putting himself at the head of the Guards, and leading the rebellion against his master. Only as a last resort, when his life was in danger, did he take refuge in the Capitol. The Capitol was attacked by the mob, and in the struggle which ensued was burnt to the ground. Sabinus was seized "unarmed and not attempting flight,"<sup>1</sup> was dragged before Vitellius and forthwith murdered by the rabble, his mutilated and headless corpse being afterwards exposed on the Gemonian stairs. Truly a strange end, as Tacitus says, for one who had fought for his country on five and thirty fields, and had covered himself with glory both as a soldier and in civil life.<sup>2</sup> Cowardice was felt to be out of the question in such a man, and most men contented themselves with the conclusion that it was due to his excessive anxiety not to shed the blood of his countrymen.<sup>3</sup> His innocence and justice, the historian adds, were beyond all question, nor can he find any fault to charge against him except a certain boastfulness of tongue. Such a man we are naturally inclined to claim as a Christian, for this want of energy is precisely the charge which is constantly preferred against the Christians of the next century, and manifestly arose from the serious difficulty, if not the actual impossibility, of reconciling civil duties with the claims of their religion, by which they were confronted so soon as they attempted to take any prominent part in political life. We have, however, no absolute proof of the fact in this case, although all reasonable doubt seems to be taken away when we find that, in the next generation, his son Titus Flavius Clemens died a Christian martyr, and that his daughter Plautilla was also among the faithful. This Clemens it was whose son and heir almost became the first Christian emperor. He had married his cousin Flavia Domitilla,

<sup>1</sup> Inermem neque fugam cœptantem.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.*, iii., 75.

<sup>3</sup> Civium sanguinis parcum.

the granddaughter of Vespasian and niece of Domitian, and his wife, like himself, was a Christian. The sons of this pair were publicly designated by Domitian, after the death of his infant son, as the heirs whom he intended should succeed to his throne. The hopes of the Christians in Rome must have run high, but unfortunately the temper of the tyrant soon changed. Clemens was put to death, accused, we learn from Dion Cassius, of "atheism". Domitilla was exiled to Ponzia, and the two little boys not improbably shared their father's fate, for they disappear from history, and we know nothing of what



Tombs of the Flavians, first century.

became of them. There remains, however, to this day a splendid memorial and proof that this elder branch of the Flavii really were converted to Christianity, in the family sepulchral chamber at the entrance to the Catacombs of St. Domitilla, containing some of the earliest Christian tombs of Rome, on one of which may still be read the Greek epitaphs of one Flavius Sabinus and of his half-sister Titiana.<sup>1</sup>

It has been necessary to dwell at some length upon this point, that among the earliest converts to Christianity

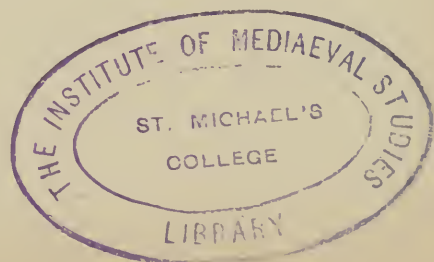
<sup>1</sup> *Bull. arch. crist.*, 1865.

were not a few of the patricians of Rome, because, until the matter was made clear by recent archæological researches, it was always assumed that the infant Church in that city was exclusively recruited from among the poor and obscure. Some writers, as for instance Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall*<sup>1</sup> have even gone so far as to make this supposed obscurity a foundation for an argument against the truth of the Neronian persecution. And yet no one can understand the conditions of Christian life in the apostolic age, who does not grasp the fact that among those who accepted the Gospel at this time were not a few of the rich nobles of Rome. Two causes principally brought about the spread of Christian teaching in the first century. The one was that, throughout this period, with the exception only of some four years under Nero, and a similar short space of time under Domitian, the Roman authorities insisted on regarding Christians as being merely a sect of Judaism, and therefore protected by the privileges which had been granted to Israel. The attitude of Gallio at Corinth was typical of that of all Roman magistrates of the first century. They refused to discuss what seemed to them to be mere "questions of words and names, and of Jewish law,"<sup>2</sup> and so Christianity grew up, in spite of all that the Jews could do to prevent it, under the shadow of the synagogue, and protected by the toleration which had been extended to the Jewish religion. Hence it was that St. Paul at Rome was able to preach and to teach with greater freedom than he had found anywhere in Greece or in Asia, "with all confidence, no man forbidding him".<sup>3</sup> This was one cause

<sup>1</sup> Chapter xvi. See, for an interesting account of another family, the *Acilii Glabriones*, the "noblest among the noble in ancient Rome," who also embraced Christianity within the first century, Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, pp. 4-7. Here again their religion has been proved by the recent discovery of their tombs.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, xviii., 15.

<sup>3</sup> Acts, xxviii., 31.



under God's providence of the security and freedom from persecution which marks as a whole the first seventy years of the preaching of the Gospel, but the conversion of a few men of great position was hardly less important. Within the gates of their houses, which were almost little towns in vastness, "houses built like cities" as Sallust<sup>1</sup> calls them, there was the opportunity for Christian worship to be carried on undisturbed; and the throng of worshippers passing through the gates would be quite unnoticed, in an age when the house of every noble was entered daily by hundreds of clients on their way to salute their patron. And, besides the town houses, these noble families possessed burying places, situated for the most part in large enclosed gardens outside the walls, which the customs of the time and the great respect which Roman law paid to the sepulchres of the dead rendered even more available for meetings of the Christians. We shall see these burying places play a great part in the Christian life of the second and third centuries, and they have already some importance, even in the apostolic age. The villa and cemetery of Ostorius, the scene of St. Peter's earlier labours, is an instance of this latter kind, while the house of Pudens, already the head-quarters of St. Linus, and soon to become the cathedral of St. Peter himself, may stand as a typical example of the former class, the palace of the Christian noble.

<sup>1</sup> Sallust, *Catilina*, 12, domos in urbium modum exædificatas, cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, vi., 641.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RETURN TO ROME, AND THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL.

THE explicit mention by St. Luke of "two whole years," as being the period of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome, implies that at the end of that time he was released. Those two years must have been for the apostle a time of weary expectations, of hopes deferred, and prospects sometimes brightening, only to grow dark once more.<sup>1</sup> All through the time he kept up by letter a constant communication with the Churches he had founded in the East, and three at least of his Epistles, those, namely, to the Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians, as well as the short Epistle to Philemon, were written in these years. It is only natural that the impression we gather from them should be that of a less brilliant success in the preaching of the Gospel than we should suppose from the words of the Acts to have been actually the case. St. Luke was writing immediately after St. Paul's acquittal, when the prospects of the Church seemed very bright, and when, too, the actual results of the two years' work had had time to mature. St. Paul, on the contrary, was writing under the pressure of uncertainty as to his future, unable to say exactly how far his message was meeting with acceptance,

<sup>1</sup> Contrast, *e.g.*, the tone of Philem, 22, "But withal prepare me a lodging. For I hope that through your prayers, I shall be given unto you," with Phil. ii., 17. In the one he is expecting release, in the other, which was written later, he feels sure that he is to be put to death. Other passages could easily be quoted.

and under the depressing conditions which the constant presence of his heathen guardian rendered necessary. We can hardly wonder, therefore, that these Epistles, and especially that to the Philippians, are written, as regards the outlook for the immediate future, in rather a gloomy tone. But, at last, whatever may have been the cause of the long delay, the two years came to an end, and he stood at the judgment seat of Nero, to whom three years before he had appealed at Cæsarea. We gather from various early writers that this, his first trial at Rome, ended in acquittal and liberation. This has indeed been denied by a number of German critics of the rationalistic school, impelled thereto, perhaps, by the thought that, if only it could be shown that St. Paul was never released from his captivity, it would follow of necessity that the Pastoral Epistles are not authentic. The available testimony on the point all tends in one direction, and, unless the judgment is strongly biassed towards the opposite conclusion, is sufficiently clear, it might have been thought, to exclude all controversy on the matter. No doubt whatever was entertained on the subject by the early Church, in which the tradition was uniform that, "after defending himself successfully at Rome, St. Paul went forth again to preach the Gospel, and afterwards came to Rome a second time, and was martyred under Nero".<sup>1</sup> The date of this departure is of course uncertain, but it was probably immediately at the close of the two years which St. Luke assigns as the period of St. Paul's stay in Rome, that is to say in the spring of A.D. 63. In any case it must have been before the outbreak of the persecution in A.D. 64, since one so well known to the authorities as St. Paul must have been could scarcely have escaped in that general massacre of the Christians. On the other hand, this same persecution, which is our evidence that St. Paul must have left Rome

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, ii., 22.

before the date of its commencement, affords us a proof that St. Peter must have returned thither by this time, for the First Epistle of the latter apostle bears obvious marks of having been composed while the persecution was raging at Rome, and in consequence of the prospect that it would spread to the provinces. We may, therefore, suppose that the two apostles met for a short time in Rome in A.D. 63, before St. Paul started on his last missionary journey. St. Clement of Rome, who of course writes as a contemporary, tells us that St. Paul went "to the extremity of the West,"<sup>1</sup> and the Muratorian fragment,<sup>2</sup> the date of which is about the middle of the second century, says expressly that he went "from Rome to Spain," a statement which is also made by St. Chrysostom<sup>3</sup> and other fathers.<sup>4</sup> From the pastoral epistles we gather that he did not long remain in Spain, where no certain traces of his visit have survived, but that he went on to revisit the scenes of his earlier labours in Asia and in Crete; but it was to Spain that he went first, and therefore in all probability it was from Ostia that he sailed. Now there is at Rome, on the Ostian Way, a small chapel situated about half a mile outside the Porta S. Paolo. The present chapel is modern, having replaced in 1568 an earlier one which stood in the middle of the road. It commemorates a separation of the two apostles on their way to martyrdom, and there is an inscription, drawn from the apocryphal letter of St. Dionysius the Areopagite to Timothy,<sup>5</sup> which gives the words spoken on the occasion. "Here there separated St. Peter and St. Paul on their way to martyrdom, and Paul said to Peter, Light be with you, O foundation

<sup>1</sup> Clem. of Rom., *Ad Cor.*, i., v.

<sup>2</sup> Routh, *Reliquiæ Sacræ*, iv., 1.

<sup>3</sup> *In 2 Tim.*, iv., 20.

<sup>4</sup> Athan., *Ep. ad Dem.*; Cyril., Hier., *Catech.*, xvii.; St. Jerome, *In Amos*, v., 17; Theodoret, *In Ep. ad Tim.*, cap. ult.

<sup>5</sup> See Torrigio, *Li Sacri Trofei*, p. 68.

of the Church, and shepherd of all the lambs of Christ : and Peter said to Paul, Go in peace, preacher of good tidings, and guide of the just to salvation." There are very obvious difficulties in the way of accepting the story as it stands, for it is not in the least likely that St. Peter, on his way to martyrdom at the Vatican, would have been taken so far in precisely the opposite direction. On the other hand the tradition must have had some origin, and it does not seem very far fetched to suppose that the chapel really commemorates the solemn farewell and parting benediction given by St. Peter to St. Paul on his departure from Rome. The words of the inscription are much more agreeable to such an occasion than to a separation of the two apostles on the way to martyrdom, and nothing could be more probable, considering the place in which the chapel stands, on the direct road to the spot where St. Paul was beheaded, than that later ages should suppose the event was connected with his execution. At any rate this explanation of the existence of the tradition seems simpler and more probable than the idea put forward by Signor Lugari, that it was at this spot that the relics of the two apostles were separated when they were brought back from S. Sebastiano to their respective tombs.

We have already seen that it is probable that Linus, after St. Peter's departure from Rome in A.D. 49, had his head-quarters at the house of Pudens, and to that house, accordingly, it would seem that St. Peter now went. To his residence there the witness of tradition is strong and early, and there are three notable monuments still remaining in Rome which seem to lend no little support to substantiate the claim. These are the Church of S. Pudenziana ; the " wooden altar of St. Peter " at St. John Lateran ; and the apostolic chair, now preserved and venerated at St. Peter's. That the Church of S. Pudenziana stands upon the site, and preserves the memory, of

the old oratory in the house of Pudens would seem to be established beyond question. "Ancient tradition," says De Rossi; "the narratives which go under the names of Pastor and of Timothy; the letters of Pius I. to Justus of Vienne; the *Liber Pontificalis*; all alike testify that the existing Church of S. Pudenziana was once the home of that Pudens who was baptised by the apostle, and who is mentioned in the Epistles of St. Paul; that in this house there took place frequent meetings of the primitive Christians, and that Pudenziana, Praxedes and Timothy, the children of Pudens, caused a baptismal font to be dedicated here, and got the adjacent baths of Novatus raised to the dignity of a *titulus Romanus* by Pius I."<sup>1</sup> Monuments still in the church prove that it existed in the fourth century, and that it was used for Christian worship at a much earlier date than that is proved by the documentary evidence cited by De Rossi, and also, even more clearly, by another witness whom he does not mention, the well-known Christian Apologist, Justin Martyr. When St. Justin was on his trial at Rome, he was interrogated by the judge as to where he lived, and where he held meetings with his disciples. He answered, "I have lived till now at the house of one Martin at the Timotine Bath. This is the second time that I have come to Rome, but I know no other place than the one of which I have spoken."<sup>2</sup> Now the Timotine Baths are, almost beyond question, the same as those of Novatus, Novatus being probably the elder son of Pudens, and Timothy the younger, and the property being known by the name of its possessor at the moment. Since St. Justin knew of no other meeting-place of Christians at Rome but this, it follows that it must have been here that he was in the habit of attending divine worship, and this is especially

<sup>1</sup> *Bull. di arch. cr.*

<sup>2</sup> *Acta S. Justinii Mart.*, printed in Ruinart, *Acta Sincera Martyrum*.

interesting because, in his apology,<sup>1</sup> there is a description, very well known to all students of liturgiology, of the eucharistic service at Rome at this time; in which the language used leaves no doubt but that it is the bishop himself who is described as presiding. It follows, therefore, that it was at S. Pudenziana that the Bishop of Rome lived and officiated in St. Justin's time, that is, in the middle of the second century, and this is entirely in accordance with the local traditions on the subject. Recent excavations below the church have resulted in uncovering much of the ancient baths, and in the discovery of a fresco of very early date, representing the Madonna and Child. The special connection of St. Peter with the church was commemorated in former times by a mosaic of the fourth century, which survived until the sixteenth, and then was unfortunately destroyed. It represented St. Peter seated upon a throne and teaching the Christian flock, two of whom, represented as sheep, are standing at his side.<sup>2</sup> In the chapel in which the mosaic was, and which is traditionally the oldest part of the church, there is preserved, placed within the altar and visible through a glass front, a single plank from that wooden altar of St. Peter which is now at the Lateran. It was left to S. Pudenziana, when the rest of the altar was removed in the fourth century, in memory of the fact that it had been there so long. The truth of this tradition was tested by Cardinal Wiseman when he was titular cardinal of the church, for he caused a careful comparison to be made between the wood preserved at S. Pudenziana and that at the Lateran, with the result that they were found to be identical.

There is, as will be seen from what we have said, a very strong tradition in favour of this altar having really been what it claims to be, the altar on which St. Peter

<sup>1</sup> *Apologia*, i.

<sup>2</sup> De Rossi, *Bull. di arch. cr.*

himself offered the Holy Sacrifice. It was, at any rate, so universally regarded as such at the beginning of the fourth century that it was made the altar of the new cathedral, as it had been that of the old through the ages of persecution; and this in direct contravention of the rule promulgated by St. Sylvester at this very time, that henceforth all altars throughout the Church were to be of stone. But we have not by any means exhausted the evidence in favour of its authenticity by thus showing that it was regarded as authentic in 312, at the date of the peace of the Church. Although St. Sylvester is commonly credited with having originated the law that altars should henceforth be of stone, in reality he was only re-enacting what had been the rule for all permanent churches, wherever it was possible, from the earliest times. The proof of this is to be found, first, in the obvious fact that, whenever mass was said on the tombs of the martyrs, as we know it was said throughout the centuries of persecution, the altar must have been of stone and not of wood; and, secondly, in a point that has been largely overlooked, the choice of the word *titulus* to express a consecrated church. A great deal has been written on the origin of this use of the word, but it is probable that it is really derived from its occurrence in the old Latin version, in the account of the setting up by Jacob of the altar at Bethel after his wonderful dream; an account which to this day is read in the service for the consecration of an altar in a church. "And Jacob said: How terrible is this place; this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven. And Jacob arising in the morning took the stone which he had laid under his head, and set it up for a title (*erexit in titulum*) pouring oil upon the top of it."<sup>1</sup> A "title," therefore, in early Christian usage, came to be nothing else but a stone altar duly

<sup>1</sup> Gen., xxviii., 18.

consecrated, and, in a wider sense, the church that contained that altar and drew its own sanctity from it. We are now, it appears, in a position to understand what is recorded of St. Evaristus, the fourth successor of St. Peter, namely, that "he divided the titles in the city of Rome to the priests".<sup>1</sup> The "titles" were the consecrated stone altars, the permanent churches of Rome. Evaristus assigned a priest to each of them. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to put it the other way. It is recorded of Cletus that "he ordained twenty-five priests in the city of Rome, according to the command of blessed Peter".<sup>2</sup> There were already therefore twenty-five priests in Rome. Evaristus assigned a church to each of them, building and consecrating some no doubt for the purpose. This would be possible enough at the close of "the long period of profound peace"<sup>3</sup> which the Church seems to have enjoyed after the death of Nero, and until the outbreak of the persecution of Domitian at the very end of the century; nor have we any reason to suppose that these churches were destroyed, or that they ceased to be in use, until the Valerian persecution in 258, when the churches and cemeteries of the Christians were all confiscated. This change of policy on the part of the Government seems also to have resulted in the destruction, or at least the confiscation, of the twenty-five *titles*, or churches of the city; for we find the next Pope, Dionysius (259-268), is recorded to have "given churches to the priests,"<sup>4</sup> which apparently denotes the reconstitution of the system which existed before the persecution, so soon as its violence had passed, and such reconstitution had become possible. The churches seem to have been once more confiscated or destroyed in the terrible persecution of Diocletian, at the end of the third century and

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 126.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 122.

<sup>3</sup> De Rossi, *Bull. di arch. cr.*, 1865, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 157.

beginning of the fourth, and to have been again refounded, on the advent of more peaceful times, by Marcellus in 308; for of him we read again, "He constituted twenty-five titles in Rome, . . . and ordained twenty-five priests for the city".<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note in connection with the argument detailed in the next chapter that, just as the first confiscation of the churches seems to have coincided exactly with the taking of the apostles to the Catacombs in 258, so also this second restoration of the old system coincides exactly with the date we have been led to adopt on quite other grounds for the bringing of them back to their own tombs.

All this is a digression, and yet a necessary one, for our object has been to show that the existence of the *tituli* of Rome, and therefore of the consecrated stone altars from which they took their name, goes back to the very first century of our era, and practically to the time of St. Peter himself. If, even at that early time, the practice was to offer the Holy Sacrifice, not on wooden altars, but on permanent altars of stone, and this alike in the Catacombs and in the churches and oratories above ground, it follows that a wooden altar must, even then, have been regarded as a mere temporary substitute for what was really fitting and suitable. Nevertheless, we know that all through that time there was one altar of wood in constant use; that it was carefully preserved in the principal church of all, on the ground that it had once been used by St. Peter; and that, in spite of the strong feeling in favour of stone altars which shows itself so early in the history of the Church, this wooden altar has kept its place and has been used without interruption, as the altar of the Cathedral of Rome, even down to the present day. It seems impossible to reject the conclusion that this altar must be what it claims to be, and that on it St. Peter did actually

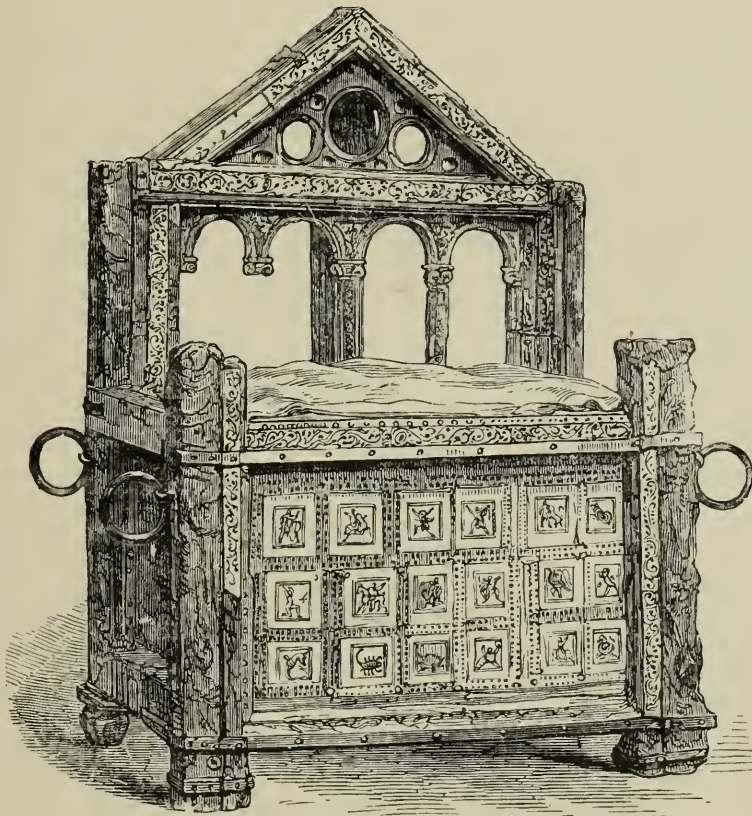
<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 164.

celebrate the Holy Mysteries, while he was residing in that house of Pudens in which this altar was afterwards preserved, and from which a portion of it has never to this day been removed.

It is worth our notice also, that, when Pius I. in the second century made this church a "title," and placed an altar in it, putting his own brother Pastor in charge, it would seem that it was not the older and existing oratory which is meant. That was itself older than all the "titles" and, as being the seat of the bishop, superior to them. It could not be itself a "title," because that would have meant the dethronement of St. Peter's wooden altar, and the erection and consecration of a stone one in its place. What St. Pius did was to erect a baptistery adjoining the *ecclesia Pudentis*, probably on the site now occupied by the Capella Gaetana, and to erect an altar in this baptistery, which gave it the rank of a "title". The provision of a baptistery in days when there was only one such in every city, of course proves what we have already said, that this was the residence of the bishop, and the cathedral, so to speak, of Rome. The "title" was not known by the name of Pudens at all, but by the name of the priest who was put in charge, "the title of Pastor". In later years, when the wooden altar had been removed to the Lateran, and a stone one was erected in its place, S. Pudenziana itself became a "title," and the "title of Pastor" becomes merged in the name, now given to the whole church, of "the title of Pudens". Later still the church was known, evidently in allusion to its traditional history, as the *domus Pudentiana* or the *ecclesia Pudentiana*, by which latter title it is designated in the mosaics of the fourth century in the apse. Thence the change to the present designation of the Church of S. Pudenziana is easy and obvious enough.

Of St. Peter's Chair so much has been written of late years which is easily accessible in English, that there is

no need for any long discussion in this place of the various questions connected with it. Its history, as far back as the time of the peace of the Church, can be traced without much difficulty. It was placed in its present position by Alexander VII in the middle of the seventeenth century, and enclosed in the great bronze monument which Bernini designed for it. Prior to that date it was always kept in the baptistery of the Basilica, with the exception



Chair of St. Peter. Now preserved in the Vatican Basilica.

only of a period of time between the destruction of the baptistery of Damasus and Symmachus in the twelfth or thirteenth century, and the destruction of the upper part of St. Peter's in 1507. During this interval of perhaps two hundred and fifty or three hundred years, it seems to have been kept at an altar close to the tomb of St. Leo, to the left of the high altar.<sup>1</sup> The baptistery of the cathedral is always the place in which in the earlier centuries we

<sup>1</sup> See De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., p. 226.

expect to find that the bishop's chair was preserved, because it was when seated in that chair that the bishop was accustomed to confirm the neophytes who had just received the sacrament of holy baptism.

There is a well-known passage in Ennodius, a writer of the sixth century, in which the use of this chair for that purpose is very vividly set forth. He introduces Rome as rejoicing in her conversion to the faith, and as saying: "Now the dripping thresholds pass on the white robed (neophytes) to the gestatorial Chair of the Apostle's Confession, and amidst many tears of joy the gifts conferred by the Grace of God are doubled,"<sup>1</sup> in the reception of the sacrament of confirmation. In the earlier part of the sixth century, when Ennodius wrote, there can, therefore, be no doubt that the Chair of St. Peter was, as we know it was in later years, in the baptistery that Damasus had built. It was placed there, we cannot doubt, by St. Damasus himself, for what else can be the meaning of one of the lines of the inscription which was placed there by that Pontiff to commemorate the erection of the building:—

"UNA PETRI SEDES UNUM VERUMQUE LAVACRUM"<sup>2</sup>

("One is Peter's Chair, one and true is the font of baptism").

This brings the history of the relic back to the fourth century, and for its existence at St. Peter's at that time there is plenty of confirmatory evidence.<sup>3</sup> The next question is, where was it kept in the earlier centuries and during the times of persecution? There is not any actual statement to which we can appeal in any ancient writer, but we can say, with strong probability at least on our side, that it must have been at S. Pudenziana. For not only was that the residence of the Pope, but it was also

<sup>1</sup> Ennodius, *Apologet.*, ap. Sirmondi, app. t. i., p. 1647.

<sup>2</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., 147.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, Optatus, *ad Parmenion*, ii., 45.

the baptistery of Rome, and therefore the natural place for such a chair, if one existed, to be preserved and be in use. And we do find a persistent tradition which connects this chair with the house of Pudens. It was said to be the senatorial chair of Pudens himself, given by him to the apostle when he was dwelling under his roof. This is not likely to be true; at least such was the judgment of the antiquarians who had the opportunity of examining it in 1867, when it was last exposed for the veneration of the faithful; but although the theory of its having ever been the curule chair of a Roman senator has been given up, the probability of its being really, as it claims to be, a relic of apostolic times has by no means been lessened by this examination, but rather increased. "The chair is about 4 feet 9 inches high, and 2 feet 10 inches wide. The depth from the front to the back is about 2 feet 2 inches, while the seat is about 2 feet 1½ inches from the ground. The seat itself is gone. The chair has four solid legs composed of yellow oak, united by horizontal bars of the same material. In these legs are fixed iron rings, which make the whole a *sella gestatoria*, such as that in which the Sovereign Pontiff is now carried on state occasions, and such as those which the Roman senators began to use about the time of Claudius. The four oak legs were evidently once square, but they are much eaten away by age, and have also had pieces cut from them as relics. These time-worn portions have been strengthened and rendered more ornamental by pieces of dark acacia wood, which form the whole interior part of the chair, and which seem hardly to have suffered at all from the same causes which have so altered the appearance of the oak legs. The panels of the front and sides, and the row of arches with the tympanum above them, which forms the back, are also composed of this wood. But the most remarkable circumstance about these two different kinds of material is that all the ivory ornaments

which cover the front and back of the chair are attached to the acacia portions alone, and never to the parts composed of oak. Thus the oak framework with its rings seem to be of quite a distinct antiquity from that of the acacia portions with their ivory decorations."<sup>1</sup> These ivory decorations again are of two distinct dates and adorned with mythological representations. Some of them exactly fit the acacia which they cover, and seem to have been made for that purpose. These are judged by experts to be of the ninth century, and among the decorations there is a portrait of an emperor, who is thought to be Charles the Bald, or at any rate one of the successors of Charlemagne. The other ivories, which seem to have been transferred from some other work of art, are much older. They represent the labours of Hercules.

From this description it is clear that the oaken part of the chair, which is quite plain and undecorated, must be the original. Probably at some time in the early middle ages, the other parts were added to strengthen it and to adorn it. It is thought that it is possible that these other parts once formed part of a royal throne, of Byzantine origin, which may have been sent as a present to the Pope from some Eastern emperor. The oaken part alone can claim to be the original chair of St. Peter, which, whether or not it was, as tradition asserts, the gift of Pudens to his guest, at least probably dates back to the time when St. Peter was living in Pudens' house on his second visit to Rome. And here we bring our long digression to an end, and resume the thread of the story of St. Peter's life and doings at Rome.

In all the accounts and allusions to the events of this period of St. Peter's life which are to be found in the writings of the ancients, one figure stands out in special

<sup>1</sup> Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotterranea*, i., 484.

relief. It is that of Simon Magus, the first heresiarch and great opponent of the Gospel in the apostolic age. He is said to have come to Rome a little before St. Peter, and to have made himself a great position there by false miracles and the exercise of magical arts, until his final fall was brought about by the prayers of the apostle. The whole story has been so overlaid with legend that it is almost impossible to sift out the true from the false, and we shall not attempt to do so now. At the same time, however, the main facts as given above are supported by such a volume of ancient testimony that it seems impossible to suppose that they do not rest upon a historical foundation.

Up to this time there had been, so far as the Roman authorities were concerned, no sort of persecution of the Christian religion. On the contrary, they had, as has been said, invariably insisted on considering the Christians as constituting merely a sect of Judaism, and as being therefore entitled to the full enjoyment of all the privileges which had been granted to the Jews. Persecution there had been, but never in Rome, and never with the connivance of the Roman officials. It had been from the Jews themselves that it had always come. The martyrdom of St. Stephen and the mission of St. Paul to Damascus, with authority from the High Priest to arrest any Christians he could find, were acts of the Sanhedrim, which still retained considerable power in such matters. The martyrdom of St. James the Great, and the imprisonment of St. Peter, took place under the authority of Herod Agrippa, immediately after he had received the kingdom from Claudius; while the death of St. James the Just took place after the Jews had revolted. So again the various persecutions, floggings and imprisonments, to which St. Paul was subjected, came, as he is careful to tell us, invariably from the Jews. "Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one; thrice was I

beaten with rods, once I was stoned.”<sup>1</sup> The attitude of the Roman magistrates, on the other hand, had invariably been one of toleration, and of a half-contemptuous protection, as if it were beneath the dignity of a Roman to inquire into the details of the superstitious beliefs and customs of a subject race. The Christians in their eyes were Jews, and therefore belonged to a *religio licita* which was secure from molestation; nor was it any part of their duty to take cognisance of internal squabbles among these Jews about their own religious observances. This was the ground upon which Gallio refused to condemn St. Paul at Corinth,<sup>2</sup> and on which Festus and Agrippa agreed that, but for the appeal to Cæsar, he might have been set at liberty.<sup>3</sup> It was the ground too, we cannot doubt, on which St. Paul was acquitted in his first trial at Rome; and on which the domestic court was able to decide that Pomponia Græcina, although she had become a Christian, was innocent of having joined herself to any foreign superstition. Up to A.D. 64, in fact, it is the invariable rule, to which at most an occasional exception, admittedly contrary to law and happening only in provincial districts, can be produced, that the Roman power acts as the protector of the new-born Christian religion, against the attacks of the Jews who desired to destroy it. But in that year we find a new state of affairs in being. Christians for the first time are separated from Jews in the eyes of the law, the protection they have hitherto enjoyed is suddenly withdrawn, and the first, and one of the sharpest, of the persecutions of the Church is in full being.

On the 19th July, 64, a great fire broke out in Rome in the shops, full of inflammable wares, which surrounded the Great Circus. The wind was blowing strongly, and the flames were carried along the valley towards the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor., xi., 24.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, xviii., 15.

<sup>3</sup> Acts, xxvi., 32.

Forum and the Capitol. The fire soon gained such a hold that no preventive measures were of any avail to stop it. The streets were narrow and winding, with houses that overhung,<sup>1</sup> and so afforded the most suitable material possible for a great conflagration. Moreover, from the first there were rumours that this fire was not due solely to accident. It seemed to spring up simultaneously in different places, and men were found everywhere forbidding the flames to be extinguished, and openly hurling brands to increase the conflagration, while they shouted that they were doing this under command from those in authority. After five days the destruction was arrested by the demolition of a large block of buildings at the foot of the Esquiline. Already rumours had spread that it was by Nero's orders that the fire had been lighted; and stories were told how he had dressed himself up in actor's clothes, and lyre in hand had chanted the story of the fire of Troy as he watched the blazing city. Popular indignation began to grow against the emperor, in spite of measures that were taken in his name to provide food and temporary lodgings on the Campus Martius for those who had been rendered homeless by the conflagration; and this indignation was tremendously increased when the flames, which had been believed to be extinguished, burst out again with fresh force on the Pincian Hill in the gardens of Tigellinus, Nero's most intimate friend. Of the fourteen regions of Rome, four alone remained uninjured; three were utterly levelled to the ground; while the remaining seven were filled with wrecks and blackened walls of houses that had been destroyed. For the first time Nero found himself face to face with popular fury. For a moment he was terrified, then with diabolical ingenuity he made his plans. The mob was convinced that the fire was the work of an

<sup>1</sup> See the curious view of a Roman street of the time in the fresco in the "house of Livia" on the Palatine.

incendiary, and was crying out for vengeance. He would turn their fury from himself against others who were defenceless; and while he thus saved himself from the consequences of his own act, he would be enabled at the same time to gratify the private hatreds of Poppæa, his Jewish wife, and other Jewish actors and dependants by whom he was surrounded. It was the Christians, he caused it to be asserted, who had set fire to Rome. They at least had no friends, for they shared with the Jews, with whom they were confounded, the hatred in which these were held by the Roman populace; while by the Jews themselves they were detested and despised as being members of an heretical sect, the very object of which was to destroy the Jewish religion, and to cause to cease the observance of the Mosaic law:

The description of the event given by Tacitus leaves nothing to be desired in brevity or force. "In order that he might free himself from the report," he tells us, "Nero caused to be accused, and inflicted the most exquisite tortures upon, a class of men who were hated for their abominable crimes, and who were called by the people Christians. The Christ, from whom they took their name, was put to death during the reign of Tiberius by the procurator, Pontius Pilate; and a most mischievous superstition, which had thus for the moment been checked, broke out anew, not only in Judea, but also in Rome, where everything that is shameful and hideous comes from every part of the world and finds a ready welcome. An arrest was first made of all who avowed the crime, and then, upon the information thus obtained, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of firing the city, as of a general hatred against mankind".<sup>1</sup> There is no reason to suppose that the Christians first arrested deliberately betrayed their brethren, even under torture; it

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, xv., 44.

is more probable, as M. Renan<sup>1</sup> has suggested, that papers were seized, and that in this way a clue was obtained, by means of which other arrests might be made. Soon the prisons of Rome were filled to their utmost capacity with the immense multitude of the faithful who had thus been seized. Imprisonment, however, was by no means all that these unfortunates had in store for them. Nero determined at once to gratify his own lust for blood, and to make a bid for the recovery of the favour of the people, by organising games on a scale hitherto unheard of, in which the Christians should appear and be put to death in such various methods of fantastic cruelty as might most certainly take off the minds of the spectators from any further speculations as to the complicity of the emperor in the bringing about of the late conflagration. For these games it was necessary to find a fitting scene. The Colosseum, of course, was not yet built, and the Circus Maximus, which would have been the spot naturally selected, had utterly perished in the fire; and this was probably also the case with the Flaminian Circus, situated where now is the Piazza Navona. There remained the great circus that Caligula had erected on the Vatican and surrounded by parks and gardens, which was the private property of the emperor. In this place, accordingly, the games were organised, and Nero threw open his gardens for the occasion to the whole of Rome. Tacitus describes the scene in only a few words, but they are enough to tell us at least the outlines of the entertainment that was provided.<sup>2</sup> It began doubtless with a long procession of the condemned, who filed round the circus. This was only to whet the appetite of the spectators for what was coming. There succeeded the *Venatio*, ordinarily the concluding scene, but in this case put at the

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *L'Antechrist*, p. 162, *cf.* also Weiszäcker, *Jahrbuch für Deutsch Theol.*, 1876, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> *Annals*, xv., 44.

beginning on account of the even more exciting episodes that were to follow. Numbers of unhappy Christians, men and women, dressed in the skins of wild animals, were turned out into the arena, and savage dogs were let loose to hunt down and devour this defenceless quarry. When the spectators were tired of this frightful scene, crosses were brought in, and other poor wretches were fastened to them, to fall a helpless prey to wild beasts which were then let loose. These, however, were but ordinary scenes at the amphitheatres of the day, but the peculiar bent of Nero's mind towards everything connected with the stage, seems to have suggested a novel diversion.<sup>1</sup> He would have a series of tableaux, in which the tortures and deaths recorded in mythology and in history should be really enacted with living victims. The fashion thus initiated seems at a later date to have been common, and we read how, to please the mob, Ixion was really fastened on the wheel,<sup>2</sup> Icarus made to fly, and killed in his fall,<sup>3</sup> Hercules really burnt,<sup>4</sup> the arm of Mucius Scævola really consumed,<sup>5</sup> Orpheus<sup>6</sup> and Dædalus<sup>7</sup> really torn in pieces. A chance expression in the letter of St. Clement to the Corinthians, alluding to the horrors of this persecution, seems to imply that some such scenes as these were included in the spectacles of the day, and that Christian maidens were among the unhappy actors. He cites among those who on this fearful day, feeble as they were in body, yet obtained eternal reward, some whom he speaks of as "Danaiids and Dirces";<sup>8</sup> and the most likely interpretation of his words would seem to be that which supposes that among these tableaux was one in which fifty virgins were made to enact the part of the daughters

<sup>1</sup> See Allard, *Hist. des Persécutions*, i., p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *De Pud.*, 22.

<sup>3</sup> Suetonius, *Nero*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Tertullian, *Apol.*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Martial, *Epigr.*, viii., 30.

<sup>6</sup> Martial, *De Spect.*, xxi.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>8</sup> Clemens, *Ad Cor.*, 6.

of Danaus, outraged maybe by men who represented the sons of Ægyptus, and finally put to death by one who enacted the part of Lynceus. Another similar scene may perhaps have been suggested by the celebrated group which is now in the museum at Naples, and which had been brought to Rome by Asinius Pollio in the time of Augustus. This group represents the sons of Antiope fixing Dirce to the horns of a bull, in vengeance of her attempts to slay their mother. Such a death, which was certainly afterwards inflicted upon St. Blandina, St. Perpetua, St. Felicitas and others, may very probably have been assigned to a number of Christian virgins on this day.

The day drew to an end, and night approached. As the shades fell a new and horrible illumination was provided. All about the gardens crosses and stakes had been set up, and on these there had been fixed or impaled,<sup>1</sup> in accordance with custom in the case of incendiaries, numbers of Christians, clad in garments soaked with tar and turpentine and other inflammable materials. All the day long they had been forced to look on at the tortures of their fellow-believers, or at least to listen to their cries, and to the brutal applause of the mob; now that night has come they in their turn must minister to the amusement of Rome; their garments are set on fire, and up and down these avenues of living torches there passed chariots and racers; while Nero himself did not disdain, sometimes to contend for a prize, sometimes in the dress of a driver to mingle with the crowds of onlookers. Everywhere, doubtless, he was applauded, a Roman crowd dared not do otherwise even if it desired, and yet, as Tacitus tells us, there were many there who could not repress a feeling of compassion for so many sufferers, who, as they felt, were being sacrificed, not so much for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Juvenal, i., 155-57; viii., 233. Seneca, *De ira*, iii., 3, and *Ep.*, 14, 5. Martial, *Epigr.*, iv., lxxxvii., 7; x., xxv., 5.

the public good, as to glut the cruelty of the emperor. The way in which these men met death made its impression. They did not blaspheme or complain, not a groan was to be heard; on the contrary, they went to their terrible death with cheerful faces and a smile on their lips. The memory of it was still with Seneca when, a year or two later, he wrote to Lucilius to bid him bear up bravely under sickness and pain. "What are your sufferings," he asks, "compared with the flame and the rack? And yet in the midst of sufferings like that, I have seen men not only not groan, that is little; not only not complain, that is little; not only not reply, that too is little; but I have seen them smile, and smile with a good heart."<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to avoid connecting such words with the Christian martyrs. No common malefactor could meet death like that; it needs the faith of a Christian, who knows that through suffering lies his path to glory and to God.

The horrible scene drew to a close at last; the living torches burning slowly, flickered and went out, leaving but a heap of ashes and half-burnt flesh behind them; the crowds of sight-seers wended their way back to the city; and silence fell again on the gardens of Nero. Then there crept out through the darkness, within the circus and along the paths of the gardens, a fresh crowd, men and women, maidens and even little children, taking every one of them as they went their lives in their hands; for detection meant a cruel death on the morrow; eager to save what they could of the relics of the martyrs; bones that had been gnawed by dogs and wild beasts, ashes and half-burnt flesh, and other sad remnants, all of them precious indeed in the sight of their brethren who are left, relics that must not be lost, but will henceforth serve as bright ornaments of the meeting-places of Christians, and

<sup>1</sup> Seneca, *Ep.*, 78.

fitting contents for the altar tombs on which the Holy Sacrifice is to be offered.<sup>1</sup> Close by the circus, on the other side of the Via Aurelia, in the midst of many pagan tombs, some Christians had already a tiny plot of ground available for purposes of burial. There, on the morrow, in a great chest of stone, were deposited all the remains that could be collected, for it was out of the question to keep them separate one from another. It was the beginning of the Vatican Cemetery, hereafter to become so famous, and on the spot thus consecrated by the martyrs' tomb St. Peter is said in the following years himself to have preached and baptised and perhaps to have offered the one great Sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> More than 1600 years afterwards, when the excavations were being made for the new baldachino over the altar tomb of St. Peter himself, the sad relics of this first great persecution were once more brought to light.<sup>3</sup> But they were not disturbed, and still rest in the place where they were originally laid, where now there rises above them the glorious dome of the first church of Christendom.

The persecution which thus began in Rome was not confined to the city. The burning of Rome was indeed, as Tacitus implies, only the pretext; the real cause of the persecution was the Christian religion itself. The law having once taken cognisance of the fact that Christianity was a distinct religion from Judaism, it followed that Christians could no longer claim the immunities and protection that the Jews enjoyed, and the persecution accordingly soon spread into every part of the empire. This has been denied, amongst others by Gibbon, Merivale and Renan, but the proofs of its wide extension are very strong, and include passages in the works of most

<sup>1</sup> For the zeal of the early Christians in recovering the relics of the Martyrs, see, *e.g.*, the *Acts of St. Polycarp*. St. Chrysostom calls it a "hunting".

<sup>2</sup> Torrigio, *Li Sacri trofei*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Infra*, p. 331.

of the early Christian historians. The most decisive of these proofs, however, is to be found in the First Epistle written by St. Peter to the Christians he had so often visited in Pontus and other parts of Asia. It is impossible to doubt that this Epistle was written when the memory of the horrors at Rome were still fresh in his mind, and when he had reason to fear that similar scenes might be repeated among those to whom he was writing. There is now but one opinion among scholars, that the Babylon from which it is dated must be taken to mean Rome, which, it is easy to understand, it may have been undesirable to name directly at such a time in a document that might fall into any one's hands. It was obviously written in a time of persecution, and for the purpose of encouraging those on whom that persecution, though it had not yet come, was soon about to fall. He warns them that it is near, and the very word that he uses, *πύρωσις*, trial by fire, seems to recall the flames of the Vatican. He reminds them that these sufferings are, for a Christian, not a thing to be dreaded, but rather to be welcomed. "Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you, but rejoice if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, so that when His glory shall be revealed you also may be glad with exceeding great joy . . . for the time is come that judgment must commence at the house of God."<sup>1</sup> The whole Epistle, almost unintelligible on any other hypothesis, grows at once into life and vigour when it is taken in conjunction with these circumstances, which provide so natural a reason for its having been sent.

St. Peter himself, though he survived the great day of A.D. 64, according to all tradition perished in the later days of this same persecution. The date assigned for his martyrdom, as also for that of St. Paul, is 29th June, and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet., iv., 12-17.

the prevailing opinion is that the two apostles suffered, not only on the same day of the month, but in the same year. Some early writers, however, among whom may be noted Prudentius and St. Augustine, say that St. Paul suffered exactly a year later than his fellow apostle.<sup>1</sup> So strange a coincidence is in itself very unlikely, and the explanation of the existence of this tradition is given us by a council at Rome in the time of Gelasius, which asserted that the two apostles suffered at Rome at the same time, *uno tempore uno eodemque die*,<sup>2</sup> "and not otherwise as the heretics were wont to say". It would seem that some heretics of the third century, who desired to make out that St. Paul survived St. Peter, and yet found themselves confronted by the traditional celebration of the feast of both apostles on the same day, hit upon this device to gain their point, and that this falsified testimony misled some of the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. The year in which the two apostles suffered is pretty clearly fixed to have been A.D. 67, for to this date a number of testimonies converge. St. Jerome, for instance, tells us that Seneca died two years before the apostles,<sup>3</sup> and from Tacitus<sup>4</sup> we know that the death of the philosopher took place in A.D. 65, when Silius Nerva and Atticus Vestinus were consuls. St. Clement of Rome<sup>5</sup> records that they were martyred "under the rulers," that is in the period of Nero's absence from the city, and while the government was vested in the prefects, and in A.D. 67 Nero is known to have been absent on his celebrated journey to Greece. This passage misled Tillemont,<sup>6</sup> who thought that it implied the presence of Nero at their death, whereas in reality it says precisely the contrary, and he therefore gave up the date of 67, to

<sup>1</sup> Prud., *De Mart.*; Aug., *Serm.*, 296-97.; Arator, ii., p. 700.

<sup>2</sup> Labbe, *Concilia*.

<sup>3</sup> *De Viris illust.*, cap. i.

<sup>4</sup> *Ann.*, xv., 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Ad Cor.*, 5, 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Mémoires*, i., p. 530.

which he had otherwise been led, and substituted that of 66. It is obvious, of course, again, that the year 67 fits in much better with the tradition of "the twenty-five years of Peter," since he cannot have come to Rome earlier than A.D. 42, and this consideration affords a noteworthy support to that date.

The apocryphal Acts of St. Peter and St. Paul are full of details as to their condemnation and death, but most of these are only imaginations of the romancers of the fifth and sixth century. One or two traditions stand out, however, as beautiful in themselves, and as having, not impossibly, a historical foundation. Of these perhaps the best known, and certainly not the least beautiful, is a story which attaches itself to the little oratory of the *Quo Vaa's* on the Via Appia, and which was known to St. Ambrose<sup>1</sup> in the fourth century. It tells how, when the persecution was raging, and special search for St. Peter was known to be being made, the faithful came to him and begged him to save himself by flight. "O truest of fathers, remember the words you said so often, that you were willing to lay down your life for our safety; may we not ask you for the sake of our salvation to be willing to bear yet for a little longer the burden of life.' So he bade them farewell, and blessed the brethren, and started off alone to seek safety without the walls. And when he had scarcely passed the city gates he saw Christ coming to him, and he fell down and worshipped Him, and said to Him, 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' and Christ said to him, 'I come to Rome to be crucified once more'. And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, wilt Thou be crucified afresh?' and the Lord said to him, 'Yea, I shall be crucified afresh'. And Peter said, 'I will turn back and follow Thee'. And when He had so spoken the Lord ascended into heaven. And Peter followed Him with longing eyes, and sweet tears,

<sup>1</sup> St. Ambrose, *Serm.*, 68.

and then, when he had come to himself, he understood that it was spoken of his own passion, and that the Lord was to suffer afresh in his person, for so He does suffer in all the chosen, by the compassion of His mercy and the power of His glory. And Peter turned back and went into the city with joy, glorifying God and telling the brethren how Christ had met him and had declared to him how that He was in him about to be crucified again.”<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting how much more beautiful the story is in this form—the invariable form of all the early writers—than in that in which it is commonly told in modern times. There is no trace of cowardice in St. Peter’s flight. He goes, although longing for martyrdom, in the spirit shown later by St. Martin of Tours: “Lord, if I am still needed by this Thy people, I do not refuse to labour; Thy will be done”.<sup>2</sup> Nor is it as a reproach that our Lord comes back to earth, to take the place of one who has left his post of danger, but rather as a special honour to one who is His *alter ego* and representative on earth; to tell him that the time had come at last for the fulfilment of a promise made so long ago, and that, as he had followed his Master in his life and work, so also it was to be his privilege to follow Him in his death, and to join Him in His glory. It was not in the place of St. Peter, but in his person, that the Lord, who now was beyond the reach of suffering, was yet about to suffer and to die afresh. Is it fanciful to see in the words of St. Peter in his Second Epistle, which must have been written precisely at this time, a reference to some such vision as this, foretelling his speedy death? “For I know that the laying aside of this my tabernacle is at hand, according as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me.”<sup>3</sup>

Another Roman tradition points out the Mamertine Prison as the place in which the two apostles were con-

<sup>1</sup> *Martyrium Beati Petri*, ed. Lipsius, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Antiphon in Brev. Rom.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Pet., i., 14.

fined, and there is at least no impossibility that it may have been so; for it was of course in existence long before, and was used as a prison at this time.<sup>1</sup> The *Acts of SS. Processus and Martinianus*, in which we find the first mention of this tradition, are not earlier than the fifth century, and are of no great authority, but they seem at least to show that the place was held to be the prison of the apostles at the time of their compilation. The Einsiedeln pilgrim, in the eighth century, visited it among the most important sanctuaries, and this would seem to imply the existence of an oratory on the spot dating back to a period long anterior to his visit. The staircase which leads down to the lower prison is modern. In St. Peter's time there was no access to it, and no means by which light and air could reach it, except by a round hole in the centre of the vaulting, through which the prisoners were lowered. The well, which still exists, is said to have been formed miraculously in order to allow St. Peter to baptise his jailers and some of the other prisoners. A modern French writer supposes that the frequent representations in the Catacombs which show St. Peter, like Moses, bringing water out of the rock, have a reference to this miracle, while at the same time they express the belief of the ages of persecution that St. Peter stood in the same position, as ruler and law-giver, to the Church of the new Covenant, as Moses had occupied with regard to that of the old.

Passing on to the places in which the martyrdoms actually took place, we find that, although no claim to be the scene of the death of St. Paul has ever been made on behalf of any other place than the *Aquæ Salvæ*, the matter stands differently in the case of St. Peter. Every tourist knows the beautiful Church of S. Pietro in Montorio, with the little circular *tempietto* of Bramante at its side, which stands on the Janiculum, just at the spot

<sup>1</sup> Urlichs, *Cod. Urb. Rom. topog.*, p. 72. See also Armellini, *Chiese di Roma*, p. 539.

from which the most extensive view of the modern city is obtainable. If this were indeed the place of the martyrdom, we should all of us feel that it was admirably appropriate and suggestive. There can, however, be but little doubt that it was not here, but in the Circus of Nero, already hallowed by the martyrdoms of A.D. 64, that the crucifixion of the great apostle took place. The ancient authorities are here in complete agreement. The *Liber Pontificalis*<sup>1</sup> tells us that St. Peter's grave was to be found *via Aurelia in templum Appollonis, juxta locum ubi crucifixus est, juxta palatium neronianum in Vaticanum in territorium triumphale*, and so by implication asserts that the place of crucifixion was on the Vatican, and close to the tomb. The *Martyrium Beati Petri Apostoli* is even more exact, and tells us that it was *ad locum qui vocatur Naumachiæ, juxta obeliscum Neronis in montem*<sup>2</sup> that the cross was placed, and with this agree the Greek *Acts of Peter and Paul*, which define the spot as "under the terebinth near the Naumachia in the place that is called the Vatican".<sup>1</sup> Another form of the *Acts of Peter*, again, tells us that the place was *apud palatium neronianum juxta obeliscum inter duas metas*. This mention of the obelisk and the two *metæ* fixes the place beyond a doubt as the Circus of Nero, the *metæ* being the two goals at the ends of the *spina*, round which the chariots turned, while the obelisk retained its original position until 1586 when it was removed by Sixtus V. to the place it now occupies in the centre of the great piazza. There is, however, a memorial of its ancient position still remaining, in the shape of a flat stone with an inscription, let into the pavement close by the door of the present sacristy.

The selection of S. Pietro in Montorio as the probable scene of the martyrdom seems to have been the result of the

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Acta Petri*, ed Lipsius, p. 13.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

faulty antiquarianism of the fourteenth century. As time went on, the true tradition had become obscured, overshadowed by the proximity of the tomb of the apostle. A Chapel of the Crucifixion, which had been apparently erected originally on the spot where St. Peter suffered, and in commemoration of his death, had come to be looked upon as dedicated to our Lord, and no clear knowledge remained in Rome as to the locality in which the martyrdom had actually taken place.<sup>1</sup> Under these circumstances men began to try to deduce for themselves from the old records in what part of Rome it had been, but unfortunately with very indifferent success. They found out that St. Peter had suffered "*in Monte Aureo*"; "near the Naumachia"; and "between the two *metæ*"; and each of these indications misled them. The *Mons Aureus*, originally a name given to the Vatican Hill on account of its proximity to the Via Aurelia, had, in the course of time, first become extended to include the whole of the Janiculum, and, later, restricted to its southern part, the part which still keeps the name of Montorio, an evident corruption of the ancient Mons Aureus. The Naumachia of Augustus, much larger and more famous than that of Nero, had been situated at the foot of this hill, so this confirmed them in their wrong impression. Lastly the term *metæ*, instead of being applied to the goals or turning posts of a circus, was, in the middle ages, used of those tombs of a pyramidal shape, two of which were still surviving; the one—that of Caius Cestius—near the Porta S. Paolo, and the other close to the Church of S. Maria Transpontina; and which were known respectively at that period as the *metæ* of Romulus and of Remus. It was noted that, if a line joining these two were bisected, the centre would fall about the place where now stands the Church of S. Pietro in Montorio, and this it was that finally decided the selection of the spot. The

<sup>1</sup> Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 127.

two *metæ*, as pyramidal tombs, may be seen in the representation of the martyrdom upon the bronze doors which were in the old Basilica, and now serve as the central entrance to the modern church.<sup>1</sup> The mistake is so far unfortunate that it has obscured and confused the genuine tradition, but on the other hand it must not be forgotten that we owe to it two very beautiful monuments, the Church of St. Peter upon the Janiculum, which has such a wonderful view of Rome from the terrace in front of it, and the little circular temple which Bramante built over the spot where the cross was supposed to have been fixed. Certainly, if we could have had the choice of the spot which seemed most fit for the enactment of such a tragedy, none could be discovered more apt to call forth pious meditations than this, where St. Peter's Church dominates the city of Rome, which then put him to a cruel death, but now owes to him, and to him alone, her proud boast that she is the Eternal City, and the mistress of the world.

St. Paul was led out, as became a Roman citizen, some distance beyond the walls, to the third mile-stone on a small road branching from the Ostian Way, and there, far from the crowds of Rome and in comparative privacy, with only a few spectators, suffered the honourable punishment of decapitation. Such was the law, which forbade the indignities of crucifixion and similar barbarous punishments to be inflicted on a Roman citizen; *Honestiores capite puniantur*.<sup>2</sup> The Bollandists, whose zeal in avoiding error has not unfrequently led them into denying truth, have thrown a needless doubt upon the authenticity of the claim of the *Aquæ Salviæ*, or "the Three Fountains" as the place is now called, to be the scene of this martyrdom, but have been amply answered by De

<sup>1</sup> This part of the door, however, only dates from the sixteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Paul, *Sent.*, v., xxix., 1.

Rossi,<sup>1</sup> who points out that the road in question is both ancient and Roman, and that Nibby<sup>2</sup> is entirely wrong in what he says on the subject. The tradition is quite uniform, and no other place has ever been suggested as having been the true site. We can trace it back as far as the time of St. Gregory the Great, for an inscription recording the gift by him of land at the Aquæ Salviæ to the Ostian Basilica was formerly to be seen on the walls of St. Paul's, and is given at full length by Severano.<sup>3</sup> St. Gregory speaks expressly of this land as having been the place in which St. Paul, "receiving the palm of martyrdom, was beheaded that so he might live". It is an interesting fact, too, that in some recent excavations on the spot a number of petrified pine cones were found, for the ancient Greek *Acta* say that St. Paul suffered under a pine tree.<sup>4</sup> A number of coins of the time of Nero were found at the same time.<sup>5</sup>

St. Peter, however, had no rights of citizenship to protect him, and he was condemned to the death of crucifixion, and that in the most public spot possible—the Circus of Nero—already the scene of the terrible massacre of two years before. In such a place his punishment would be rendered more bitter by the presence of a mocking crowd of spectators. To St. Peter's mind, however, this was but an added honour, for so his privilege would be the greater, in that his sufferings would then more closely resemble those of his Lord and Master. It had been foretold to him, years before, that he should so die, and he had treasured it always in his mind as the most splendid mark of his Master's favour, given to him as the crowning privilege immediately after his investiture as the universal shepherd of the Christian flock. "When thou shalt be

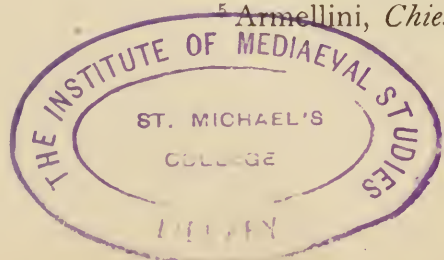
<sup>1</sup> *Bullettino di arch. cr.*, 1869., p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Nibby, *Analisi della carta*, iii., p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> *Sette Chiese*, p. 290.

<sup>4</sup> *Bull. di arch. cr.*, 1869.

<sup>5</sup> Armellini, *Chiese di Roma*, p. 940.



old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall guide thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldest not. This He said, signifying by what death he should glorify God.”<sup>1</sup>

But, closely as the death of the Vatican resembled that which had taken place on Calvary, there was still, it is recorded, a significant difference—a difference which was made at the request of the apostle himself. He was crucified, not in the ordinary method, but with his head downwards, as a great act of humility, because he did not count himself worthy to suffer altogether in the same way as his Lord. It is from Origen<sup>2</sup> that we learn of this; the strictly Roman authorities, such as Tertullian, do not mention it, but speak only of his having “suffered a passion like unto that of the Saviour”.<sup>3</sup> Later fathers all adopt the words of Origen, and thus it has passed into the universally accepted tradition of the Church. There are, however, certain difficulties in the way of an unhesitating acceptance of it, which it seems only fair to state. It is not that there is any impossibility, or even improbability, of such a punishment having been inflicted. Seneca tells us that it was not unusual at Rome at this very time. “I have seen,” he says, “crosses of many kinds . . . and some hung with their heads downwards.”<sup>4</sup> Among the saints the boy St. Calliopius<sup>5</sup> was thus put to death at his mother’s request, and it has always been common enough in Eastern countries, of which the story of the Japanese martyrs is a noteworthy instance. But in all these cases the method employed would seem to be the same. The cross was erected in the ordinary way, and the person to be executed was hauled up to it by means of a rope round the ankles and passing over the arms of the cross. Nor

<sup>1</sup> St. John, xxi., 18.

<sup>2</sup> In Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, iii., 1.

<sup>3</sup> Tertullian, *De præscr.*, 36; *cf. Scorp.*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Seneca, *Cons. ad Marcum*, 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Martyrologium Rom.*, 7th April. See also Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*.

does it seem as if any other way would be possible, if the effect of gravity be taken into consideration, for the whole weight of the body must hang from the feet, and no assistance can be given either by nails through the hands, or by provision of a support of any kind, such as is believed to have been generally employed by the Romans in the more ordinary forms of crucifixion. But in St. Peter's case this method cannot be considered to have been used, because of our Lord's promise to him, which St. John evidently considered to have been literally fulfilled, that he should "stretch out his hands". The description given in the apocryphal *Acta*, and which Christian art has also universally adopted, is that the cross itself was turned the other way, so that the head piece was sunk in the ground. There could have been no difficulty of course in preparing a special cross of this form, if the intention had been from the first to carry out the punishment in this way, and the difficulties caused by gravitation could also no doubt have been overcome by a careful binding with ropes, but the story is not told in this way. The cross, we are led to suppose, was of the ordinary shape, and the turning of it over was an after-thought, carried out at the request of the apostle. "Then Peter when he came to the cross said: 'Since my Lord Jesus Christ, who when He came down from heaven to earth was raised aloft on a cross, has deigned to call me also from earth to heaven, my cross should have my head towards the earth, and turn my feet to heaven. I am not worthy to be on the cross as was my Lord; turn my cross over' (*girate crucem meam*). So they turned his cross, and fixed his feet upwards and his hands below."<sup>1</sup> It is hard to believe that the top piece of an ordinary cross, constructed to bear no heavier weight than the title of accusation, could have been of sufficient size or strength to have rendered this

<sup>1</sup> *Passio SS. App. Petri et Pauli*, ed. Lipsius, p. 171.

possible; nor does it seem probable that the Roman soldiers who were charged with carrying out the sentence would have put themselves to any additional trouble in order to please one who was in their eyes only a condemned malefactor, and an enemy of the human race. And it is only necessary to look at any of the representations of the scene that have been made by artists, to realise how very great the difficulty caused by gravitation would certainly be. Nails through the feet could not hold the whole weight of the body in such a position, and the use of cords, with no cross-piece to which to fasten them, would not be easy.

Taking all these facts into consideration, we can hardly help recurring to the thought that the earliest authorities, and those who, as living in Rome, would have known most of the facts, do not mention this detail at all, and seem to have known nothing of it, though it is hard to gather much from the very scanty allusions which are all that they have left us on the subject. Such writers are St. Clement of Rome, Tertullian, St. Irenæus, and, greatest and most explicit of all, St. John in the Fourth Gospel. The earliest mention of it is by Origen,<sup>1</sup> at Alexandria, in the third century; a most respectable and early authority indeed, but hardly by itself conclusive, even when backed by the whole array of later fathers, who may have derived their knowledge only from the widely spread writings of Origen himself. One is always unwilling to disturb an accepted and pious belief, even when, as in this case, it has nothing whatever to do with the faith of the Church, but it cannot be denied that there are reasons why, as historians, we should hesitate before giving complete credence to the story. Some foundation, however, there must be for the general belief, for legends do not generally grow up out of nothing, and it is likely enough that St.

<sup>1</sup> In Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, iii., 1.

Peter did actually ask, in his great humility, that this additional humiliation and degradation might be inflicted upon him, and that in this petition we have the true origin of the whole story. Nor, surely, is it all loss, if we feel ourselves constrained to accept this version of the martyrdom as the more probable; for then, while we retain the thought of his touching humility, we can also dwell upon the favour shown him by his Master, who would not allow His apostle and vicar to come short of the fulness of the honour which He had twice promised him; but ordained that to him, and to him alone of all His apostles, there should be given the privilege, not only of being His representative in life, as Ruler of the Church and Shepherd of His sheep, but also of "following Him"<sup>1</sup> even to the end, and dying by a passion in every respect closely assimilated to His own, "stretching out his hands all the day" upon the cross, "to a people that did not believe, and that spoke against him".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John, xiii., 36; *cf.* xxi., 19, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Is., lxxv., 2; *cf.* Rom., x., 21, and St. John, xxi., 18.

## CHAPTER V.

### WANDERINGS OF ST PETER'S BODY.

BEFORE we can go on with the ordinary course of our narrative, and proceed to tell the story of the burial of the saint, we must first clear the way by discussing one of the most intricate of all the problems which are presented to us in the early history of Christianity—a problem which has, accordingly, for many centuries, provided a fertile field for the theories and surmises of historians and antiquarians. The records which have come down to us dealing with the subject of the history of the relics are somewhat scanty, and, as they stand, often even contradictory; but they clearly point to one translation at least of the relics prior to the peace of the Church, and it may be to two. The reasons which may have led to these translations, and the dates at which they took place, have been greatly debated, and several theories have been put forward; none of which, however, have completely satisfied all the evidence which is available. To make the matter as clear as possible, it will be best for us to begin by quoting all the documentary and other evidence which bears on this matter, and then to examine the various explanations which have so far seen the light. Then, perhaps, we shall be in a position to suggest some new solution, which may satisfy the requirements of the case more fully than any which has yet been given, and which we may therefore regard as probably providing us with a nearer approximation to the absolute truth than has hitherto been available.

The documents which make mention of the subject are various, the oldest of them going back, in their present form, to the fourth or fifth century. We will take them in order:—

I. The apocryphal *Acts of St. Peter and St. Paul*, which have come down to us in several forms, and in Greek, Latin and Syriac. These are romances of the fifth century or thereabouts, but, inasmuch as material previously existing was utilised in their preparation, they are frequently of considerable value, especially as to facts and topographical details. No reliance, however, can be placed in them, so far as concerns the words of the speeches reported, or most of the marvellous events which are related, for these have, for the most part, no more authentic origin than the pious imagination of the compiler, who desired in this way to edify his readers. The edition of these *Acta* which deals most fully with the question before us, is that which is entitled *The Passion of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul*. It runs as follows, after recounting the story of the crucifixion of St. Peter:—

“63. Forthwith there appeared holy men, whom no one ever had seen before, or could see again. These men said that they had come for him from Jerusalem, and they, together with Marcellus, an illustrious man who had believed, and leaving Simon had followed Peter, took down his body secretly and put it under the terebinth tree near the Naumachia, in the place which is called the Vatican.

“64. And these men who said that they had come from Jerusalem said to all the people: ‘Rejoice and be glad, for you shall have great friends and patrons with the Lord Jesus Christ. But know that this evil King Nero, after the death of the apostles, cannot keep his kingdom.’

“65. And it came to pass after this that he incurred the hatred of the army and of the Roman people, so that

they ordered that he should be publicly scourged to death. But when this news reached him he was seized with a mighty dread, and fled, so that he was never seen again. However, there were some who said that, while he was wandering in flight among the woods, he perished from cold and hunger, and was eaten by wolves.

“ 66. But while the bodies of the apostles were being carried off by the Greeks to be taken to the East, there was a great earthquake, and the Roman people ran out, and seized them in the place which is called Catacomba, at the third milestone on the Via Appia, and the bodies were kept there for one year and seven months, until the places were built (*fabricarentur*) in which their bodies were placed. Then they were brought back, with much singing of hymns (*cum gloria hymnorum*) and were placed, that of St. Peter in the Vatican at the Naumachia, and that of St. Paul on the Ostian Way at the second milestone, where answers are granted to prayer for ever and ever. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

II. *The Kalendars of the Early Church.* These are authentic documents, and give the feasts annually celebrated in the Church at the time of their compilation. The most noteworthy of these, which has been known for many years, is the so-called *Feriale Philocalianum*, the date of which is about A.D. 354. In this Kalendar we find noted, under the 29th of June, as follows:—

“ III *Kal.* Julias

*Petri in Catacumbas et Pauli Ostense Tusco et Basso cons.*”<sup>2</sup>

The consular date is clear and denotes the year A.D. 258, but otherwise the meaning is difficult. The title of the document is *Depositio Martyrum*, and it ought to mean that the relics of St. Peter were on the 29th of June A.D. 258 placed in the Catacombs, while on the same day those

<sup>1</sup> *Acta Petri*, ed. Lipsius, p. 173, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Mommsen, *Über den Chronografen*, vol. 9, 354, p. 632.

of St. Paul were deposited on the Via Ostiensis. This however can scarcely have been the case, and the entry would help us but little, had it not been explained to some extent by the discovery by De Rossi, in a codex existing at Berne, of another passage, in the *Martyrology of St. Jerome*, which seems to amplify and explain it.

This reads as follows:—

“ III Kal. Julias

*Romæ via Aurelia SS. Apostolorum Petri et Pauli  
—Petri in Vaticano, Pauli vero in Via Ostensi,  
utrumque in Catacumbis, passi sub Nerone, Basso  
et Tusco consulibus*”.<sup>1</sup>

Here it is clear that “Suffered under Nero” must be taken as a parenthesis, as otherwise the meaning would be absurd, making the martyrdom take place under Nero in A.D. 258. The sense of the passage will then be that on the 29th June there were three feasts kept at Rome: a Feast of St. Peter at the Vatican, one of St. Paul on Via Ostiensis, and a third, of both, at the Catacombs. The consular date must be connected with the Feast at the Catacombs, and can only denote a translation of the relics to that spot which took place in that year. Thus explained, the passage is in perfect agreement with one of the hymns attributed to St. Ambrose, written for the Feast of the Holy Apostles:—

Tantæ per urbis ambitum  
Stipata tendunt agmina,  
Trinis celebratur viis  
Festum sanctorum Martyrum.<sup>2</sup>

III. We have next, in the *Liber Pontificalis*,<sup>3</sup> under Pope Cornelius, who reigned in A.D. 251-52, the following account of the return of the relics from the Catacombs:—

“ This man, while he was Pope (*temporibus suis*), at

<sup>1</sup> *Martirolog. ex cod. Bernense descr.*, Brussels, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> St. Ambrose, *Opera. Hymn. in fest. SS. App.*

<sup>3</sup> Edited by the Abbé Duchesne, pp. 64-65.

the request of a certain matron Lucina, took up (*levavit*) the bodies of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul by night from the Catacombs. The body of St. Paul was taken first by blessed Lucina, and placed in its<sup>1</sup> own plot of ground (*in prædio suo*) on the Ostian Way, near the place where he was beheaded. Then blessed Cornelius the Bishop took the body of blessed Peter, and placed it near the place where he was crucified, among (*inter*) the bodies of the holy Bishops, in the Temple of Apollo on the Vatican at the Palace of Nero."

The difficulty here clearly lies in the date, for if the bodies of the apostles were only taken to the Catacombs in A.D. 258 it is not easy to see how they could have been brought back by Lucina and Cornelius before A.D. 252.

IV. Next, we have the poem written by Pope St. Damasus, and put up in the Catacombs at the spot where the apostles had traditionally lain. The date of this poem is about A.D. 375, and its historical value, as being the work of so careful and scholarly a man as St. Damasus, is very great :—

HIC HABITARE PRIUS SANCTOS COGNOSCERE DEBES  
 NOMINA QUISQUE PETRI PARITER PAULIQUE REQUIRIS  
 DISCIPULOS ORIENS MISIT QUOD SPONTE FATEMUR  
 SANGUINIS OB MERITUM CHRISTUM QUI PER ASTRA SECUTI  
 AETHERIOS PETIERE SINUS REGNAQUE PIORUM  
 ROMA SUOS POTIUS MERUIT DEFENDERE CIVES  
 HAEC DAMASUS VESTRAS REFERAT NOVA SIDERA LAUDES.<sup>2</sup>

"Here you must know that saints once dwelt. If you ask their name they were Peter and Paul. The East sent the disciples, as we willingly acknowledge. The saints themselves had by the merit of their bloodshedding followed Christ to the stars, and sought the home of heaven, and the kingdom of the blest. Rome, however, deserved more to defend her own citizens.

<sup>1</sup> *Or* her.

<sup>2</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., p. 32.

These things may Damasus record for your praise, O new stars."

V. Next, we have a letter written by St. Gregory the Great to the Empress Constantina at Constantinople about the year A.D. 600. A chapel had been built in the Imperial Palace and dedicated to St. Paul, and the empress desired to enrich it with some notable relic of the apostle. She therefore wrote to St. Gregory and begged the gift of nothing less than the head. St. Gregory refused the request, as being impossible and contrary to the customs of the apostolic see; and in justification of his refusal reminds the empress of what had happened when, on a previous occasion, there had been an attempt to remove the relics of the apostle from Rome to the East. He says:—

"It is well known that at the actual time of the martyrdom (*eo tempore quo passi sunt*), Christians from the East came to seek their bodies, as being their fellow-countrymen, and having carried them as far as the second milestone from the city, laid them in the place called *ad Catacumbas*. Then, when the whole company of them assembled and endeavoured to take the bodies from thence, a storm of thunder and lightning so greatly terrified them and dispersed them, that after that they durst not make any more attempts. The Romans, however, then went out, and took up their bodies, having been counted worthy to do so by the goodness of the Lord, and laid them in the places where they are now buried."<sup>1</sup>

VI. The pilgrims who went to Rome in the seventh and succeeding centuries tell us that among the holy places which they visited was the Church of S. Sebastiano on the Appian Way, and that there they were shown the sepulchres of the apostles Peter and Paul. They also record that the tradition then was that the

<sup>1</sup> *Opp. S. Greg.*, ii., ep. 30.

bodies had remained there for forty years. We transcribe two of the most ancient and important of these testimonies :—

(1) “ Afterwards you arrive by the Via Appia at S. Sebastian, Martyr, whose body lies in a very low spot ; and there are the sepulchres of the Apostles Peter and Paul, in which they rested forty years ”.<sup>1</sup>

(2) “ Near the Via Appia is the Church of St. Sebastian, Martyr, where he himself sleeps : where are also the burial places of the Apostles, in which they rested forty years.”<sup>2</sup>

VII. Lastly, we have the archæological evidence afforded by the place itself. Of this we shall speak more in detail later on. Here it may suffice to say that most exhaustive and elaborate examinations have been made recently, and have given the following very important results. There exists on the spot a large tomb, which is certainly of the first century. Close to this, but on a higher level, is another chamber, enclosing a double tomb in the centre, and with twelve archisolia, or tombs under arches, round the walls. The decoration of these tombs cannot, in the opinion of the best judges, be of a later period than the opening years of the third century. Lastly there are other decorations, which are of the period of the building of the adjoining Basilica by St. Damasus in the fifth century.

This completes the evidence at our disposal, and it must be confessed that it is not easy to put it together into a consistent story. It will be observed, on the one hand, that no ancient authority speaks of there having been more than one translation of the bodies ; while, on the other hand, it is difficult, without doing undue violence to some of these authorities, to explain them all as having reference to a single translation, either soon after the mar-

<sup>1</sup> *Notitia Ecclesiarum Urbis Romæ.*

<sup>2</sup> *De locis sanctis Martyrum quæ sunt foris Civitatis Romæ.*

tyrdom or in the third century. Hence it has happened that writers on the subject have come to very different conclusions, according as they have judged such and such pieces of evidence to be the more trustworthy, and therefore to be followed to the exclusion of others which it might be difficult to reconcile with them.

The writers on this subject might, until a few years ago, have been divided into three parties. The first party, following the lead of Cardinal Baronius in the *Annales Ecclesiastici*, and grounding their opinion on the apocryphal *Acts*, backed by the poem of St. Damasus and the letter of St. Gregory, held that there had been but one translation of the bodies, and that this had taken place very soon after the martyrdom. The second party, of whom the most noteworthy member was F. Papebroche, S.J., who wrote on the subject in the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum*, held that the story given in the *Liber Pontificalis* provides us with the true date of the return of the bodies from the Catacombs, and, therefore, that this took place either in A.D. 251 or 252, the two years of the Pontificate of Cornelius. They argued, however, that, inasmuch as the body of St. Peter was certainly on the Vatican until A.D. 200, since all his twelve immediate successors were buried there round him, the translation to the Catacombs could not have taken place at any earlier date than in that year. They assigned, therefore, as the motive of this translation, the possibility that the original tombs on the Vatican had been destroyed by Heliogabalus, who, early in the third century, as we read in Lampridius,<sup>1</sup> desiring to have races with elephants, and finding the course in the circus too narrow for the purpose, destroyed some tombs in the Vatican to make a new track. Lastly, a third party, led by F. Marchi, S.J., the learned custodian of the Catacombs, maintained that the evidence

<sup>1</sup> Lampridius, *In Heliogab*, c. 23.

for a double translation was too great to be passed over. This party, accordingly, combined the views of the other two, saying that the bodies were first taken to the Catacombs soon after the martyrdom, on account of an attempt on the part of some Greeks to carry them off, and again early in the third century, because of the action of Heliogabalus.

A new turn was given to the controversy by the discovery, already mentioned, of a new reading of the *Martyrology*, and the Abbé Duchesne was the first to revive the theory of a single translation; but with this difference from his predecessors, that, whereas they had maintained that the translation of the bodies must have taken place either near the time of the martyrdom, *eo tempore quo passi sunt*, as St. Gregory says, or else soon after the year A.D. 200, M. Duchesne<sup>1</sup> now maintained on the authority of the *Martyrology* that it took place when Tuscus and Bassus were consuls; that is in the year A.D. 258, and therefore, presumably, in consequence of the Valerian persecution which broke out in that year. To sustain this new theory he had to throw over all the evidence from the *Acta* and from St. Gregory, which had seemed to some of his predecessors so conclusive. He was followed by Professor Marucchi<sup>2</sup> and Mgr. De Waal,<sup>3</sup> but opposed by Professor Armellini. Against this new theory the excavations made on the spot in 1892, and the critical examination of the decorations of the tombs, seem quite decisive. Every authority is agreed that they apparently belong to the very beginning of the third century, (if not to the end of the second), and that, therefore, they cannot possibly have been placed there at a later date than A.D. 258, as the hypothesis of MM. Duchesne and Marucchi would require.

<sup>1</sup> Duchesne, *Liber Pont.*, i. cvi.

<sup>2</sup> Marucchi, *Le Memorie dei SS. Apostoli*, Rome, 1894, p. 39 *seq.*

<sup>3</sup> De Waal,

Professor Armellini,<sup>1</sup> although he opposed most strongly the opinions of M. Duchesne and Professor Marucchi, and held that two separate translations were absolutely demanded by the evidence, did not try to fix the dates of these events with any accuracy: but this has been done by Signor Lugari,<sup>2</sup> first in his work on the Catacombs, and again, quite recently, in a paper contributed to the *Bessarione* for January 1898. His conclusions are mainly the old ones of F. Marchi, that the bodies of both apostles were taken to the Catacombs soon after the martyrdom, in consequence of an attempt on the part of some Easterns from Jerusalem to carry them off; that the body of St. Peter, with the addition this time of those of his twelve immediate successors, was again taken there about the year A.D. 200, on account of the destruction of the Vatican tombs by Heliogabalus; and that the body of St. Paul was also taken there in A.D. 258, in consequence of the Valerian persecution. He thinks that all these bodies then remained there until the peace of the Church under Constantine. This theory is at least more in accordance with the facts than that of Professor Marucchi, but it obviously has its own difficulties, for it does not really account for the form of the entry in either the *Feriale Philocalianum* or the *Martyrology*, nor is it easy to suppose that the tradition at the place itself would have been that the bodies had been there only forty years, if, as a matter of fact, that of St. Peter had been there for more than a hundred. Again, the whole evidence of later excavations in the Vatican is against the destruction of St. Peter's tomb, which he assigns as the cause which led to the translation, and also against the removal of any of the twelve bishops who were buried round him.

Having thus sketched the various explanations and

<sup>1</sup> Armellini, *Antichi Cimiteri Cristiani*, Rome, 1893, p. 745 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Lugari, *Le Catacombe, ossia il sepolcro Apostolico dell' Appia*, Rome, 1888.

theories at present in the field, and the difficulties which prevent us from accepting any one of them as satisfactory, we now go on to make a fresh examination of the evidence at our disposal, in the hope that we may thus be able to do something towards clearing up the problem.

We start then by accepting the position of M. Duchesne,<sup>1</sup> that the statement of the *Martyrology* is decisive as to a translation of the relics to the Catacombs having taken place in the year A.D. 258. It is an official document of the Church, not merely a romance built on a historical foundation, and it records the fact of a translation the memory of which had been preserved by a yearly celebration held at the place to which the relics had been translated. Moreover, the method in which the date is recorded, by giving, namely, the consuls who held office in that year, is one that seems singularly free from all possibility of an error creeping in.

But, if the bodies of the apostles were taken to the Catacombs in A.D. 258, what are we to make of the passage in the *Liber Pontificalis*<sup>2</sup> which asserts that they were brought back by Lucina and Pope Cornelius? Pope Cornelius was martyred in A.D. 252, so that this would necessitate his having brought the apostles back from the Catacombs at least six years before they ever went there. Nor is it possible to get out of the difficulty by saying that there were two translations, and that the apostles, having lain in the Catacombs ever since their martyrdom, were now brought respectively to the Vatican and the Ostian Way for a short period of a few years, after which they returned to the Catacombs. For it is certain that St. Peter's body was not at the Catacombs, but at the Vatican, when his first successor Linus was buried *in Vaticano juxta corpus beati Petri*, when Anacletus built a memorial over the tomb, and when Caius the Priest,

<sup>1</sup> *Liber Pont.*, i., cvi.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Duchesne, i., p. 150.

in the year A.D. 200 or thereabouts, boasted against the heretics that he could show them the *trophæum* of the apostle on the Aurelian Way. Besides, the wording of the statement itself shows us that it was after the second translation, if there were two, and not after the first, that Cornelius and Lucina brought the body back. For it tells us that they laid him *inter corpora sanctorum episcoporum*, in the midst of the bodies of the holy bishops on the Vatican, and these bishops, we know, had been buried on the Vatican, simply because of the presence of the body of St. Peter in that place.

There remains then no possible hypothesis open to us but to suppose that somehow the entry has got misplaced. It reads like sober history, it does apparently record for us accurately the story of the bringing back of the bodies at some date after A.D. 258, but it ought not to be found under Pope Cornelius, but belongs to the reign of some other Pope, and has got misplaced. This is admitted both by the Abbé Duchesne, who is the learned editor of the *Liber Pontificalis*, and also by Professor Marucchi.<sup>1</sup> The only question is, to what Pope does this record really belong? for, if we can decide this question, we shall have also decided approximately the length of time after A.D. 258 during which the bodies remained at S. Sebastiano. Professor Marucchi, rejecting all idea of an earlier translation, takes the date given in the *Acta*, and thinks that the bodies remained a year and seven months, and that then, the persecution having a little abated, they were brought back to their own tombs. His theory is that "the *Acta* and St. Gregory have preserved for us a general memory of the fact, though partly confused, but have not fixed the date, and that we get the date from the *Feriale* and the *Martyrology*". To get over the difficulty that both the *Acta* and St. Gregory do seem to fix the date as being

<sup>1</sup> *Le Memorie dei SS. Apostoli*, p. 56.

close after the martyrdom, he notes, first, that the passage in the *Acta* is not necessarily connected with the account of the death of the apostles, being separated from it by the story of the death of Nero;<sup>1</sup> and then suggests as a possible translation of the words of St. Gregory, "*eo tempore quo passi sunt*," "on the anniversary of their martyrdom". Both of these explanations seem to be more than a little forced and unnatural. He next has to face the positive statements of the Itineraries that the bodies remained at the Catacombs for a period of forty years, but this he gets over without much ceremony by simply remarking that in any case the testimony of a pilgrim of the seventh century is of little value in a matter of this kind.

There exists, however, definite evidence of another kind, to which, so far as I know, attention has not hitherto been called in the discussion of this question, which seems to show that this hypothesis is wrong, and that the bodies must have remained for a period of at least twenty or thirty years. This evidence is to be found in the *Acts* of the various martyrs who suffered in the persecutions of the latter half of the third century. For instance, it is recorded in the Acts of St. Sebastian,<sup>2</sup> that the martyr appeared after his death to Lucina, and begged that his body might be laid near the relics (*vestigia*)<sup>3</sup> of the holy apostles. He was accordingly laid in the Catacomb which still bears his name, close to the place in which the apostles were hidden. Now it will scarcely be contended that the saint desired, or was thought to have desired, that he should lie near where the apostles had been, in preference to where either of them actually was, and so we have here a proof

<sup>1</sup> This was also suggested by M. Duchesne.

<sup>2</sup> *Acta S. Sebastiani*; see Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, Jan., ii., p. 622.

<sup>3</sup> For another instance of this unusual use of the word *vestigia* for relics, see *Lib. Pont.*, i.

that in A.D. 284, the year in which St. Sebastian was martyred, the bodies of the apostles had not yet been taken back to their respective tombs, but were still together in the Platonica, where they had been laid in A.D. 258.

Having thus shown, as against Professor Marucchi, that it is impossible to hold that the apostles remained at the Catacombs after A.D. 258 for so short a period as only one year and seven months, we turn next to the Abbé Duchesne and Signor Lugari, both of whom maintain that the bodies were not taken from the Catacombs until after the peace of the Church and the building of the Basilicas. Against this however we have, first, the fact that the local tradition, which would naturally tend to exaggerate rather than to minimise the duration of the stay of the apostles, was that they had remained there for forty years, while this theory would extend that stay to a period of more than seventy. And, further, in the actual construction of each of the Basilicas themselves, we have the clearest possible proof that the bodies were already in their respective tombs when these churches were being built, and that they were not brought back afterwards and placed in the finished edifices. For in the case of St. Peter's we have the very notable fact that the axis of the tomb does not seem to have been quite coincident with the axis of the church itself.<sup>1</sup> At St. Paul's the case is even more striking. For there the size of the original church itself was determined by the position of the tomb in relation to the road, and only quite a small church could in consequence be built. In both cases it is obvious that the bodies must have been within the tombs, and that, consequently, motives of reverence kept the architects from moving the tombs, and bringing them to a position which would have

<sup>1</sup> Considerations which will be given later seem, however, to show that this divergence must be much less than has commonly been supposed.

been more convenient with regard to the lines which local circumstances in each case dictated for the Basilica itself.

Since, then, it is clear that the bodies were at the Catacombs for more than twenty and yet for less than seventy years, let us examine whether the seventh century tradition at S. Sebastiano may not after all have preserved the correct memorial of the fact, and whether forty years or thereabouts may not be the actual time that intervened between the translations to the Catacombs and back again to the original tombs. Forty years from A.D. 258 would bring us to the very height of the Diocletian persecution, the last and by far the fiercest of all the persecutions suffered by the early Christian Church, and that would scarcely seem a likely moment to have been chosen for bringing the apostles back, but the Church in the West had peace again by A.D. 305, when, after an unusually long interregnum, consequent on the fierceness of the persecution, Marcellus ascended the papal throne, and soon after that date it might have been possible for Christians again to pay open visits to the cemeteries.

Let us therefore turn, in the *Liber Pontificalis*, to the reign of Pope Marcellus, A.D. 306-8, and let us see whether it is not possible that the passage we have found misplaced under Cornelius may in reality belong to the records of this Pontiff. On doing so, the eye is at once arrested by the occurrence of the name of Lucina. There was, then, living in the time of Marcellus a person bearing the name of Lucina, who could have taken the part assigned to her in our record in this work of bringing back the apostles. This fact, of course, immensely strengthens the case for believing that it really is to this reign of Marcellus that the misplaced record belongs. Moreover, this Lucina was apparently a most likely person to have so acted. She was a person of a certain rank and position, a widow of eighteen years' standing, who in former days had been the wife of one Marcus, with whom she had lived for

fifteen years. Further, she was evidently devoted to the Pope, for we read that she made over her property to the Church, giving over her house to be a *titulus* or parish church, and that this church was dedicated after his death to the memory of St. Marcellus, and is still known by his name as S. Marcello in Corso. And lastly, when Marcellus was martyred, this Lucina obtained his body and buried it "*in prædio suo*" "on her own land," that is, in what are now known as the crypts of Lucina in the Cemetery of S. Priscilla.

This last statement seems to give us a further proof, for there is just such another statement occurring immediately after the passage about the bringing back of the apostles. There too we read that Lucina, after the martyrdom of the Pope Cornelius, obtained his body "*in prædio suo*," that is, in this case, in the Catacombs of S. Callisto.

One of two things would seem to have happened. Either there were two Lucinas, one of whom buried Cornelius and the other Marcellus, each *in prædio suo*, and in that case we need look no further for the source of the error; or else there has been a confusion in the names of the Popes, Marcellus being by no means an impossible name to mistake for Cornelius in a worn and perhaps badly written record. In this latter case the whole passage must be taken as belonging to Marcellus, and there will remain no evidence at all that any Lucina was concerned in the burial of Cornelius.

Of these two hypotheses the second seems to be by far the most likely. For, in the first place, there seems no other evidence available to prove the existence of any matron of the name in the time of Cornelius. The Lucina who buried St. Sebastian in A.D. 294 is probably the same person as the matron who buried Marcellus in A.D. 308, and the only other authentic place in which the name occurs is in connection with apostolic times and the burial

of St. Paul. And, besides, there are considerable difficulties in the way of accepting the statement that Cornelius was buried in the property of any Lucina, for he was laid, according to all the evidence of the spot, in the burying place of his own family, the *Gens Cornelia*.<sup>1</sup> Unless, therefore, there are other reasons for connecting the name of Lucina with the Cemetery of S. Callisto—and we know of none—we seem obliged to believe that an error arose in the first place from a misreading of the name of Marcellus as Cornelius, and that this error has resulted, first, in the invention of a Lucina who buried Cornelius, and, secondly, in the giving, on the strength of this statement, the name of “the crypts of Lucina” to certain portions of the Cemetery of S. Callisto.

But next, if the Lucina of the third century is thus shown to have had no real existence, what shall we say about the Lucina of the first century, the disciple of St. Peter and St. Paul—identified by De Rossi with the celebrated Pomponia Græcina?<sup>2</sup> Her existence depends primarily on the authority of the *Roman Martyrology*, where we find her mentioned, under the date of the 30th June, as having lived in apostolic times, and as being accustomed to visit the martyrs in prison, and as making a crypt on her own land for the purpose of burying their remains. The only other ancient authority in which her name occurs is the *Acts of SS. Processus and Martinianus*, but these are too late to be of any real value. There seems to be no mention of her burying St. Paul before Baronius, who states it as a fact, but without quoting any authority. He no doubt took it from the entry under Cornelius in the *Liber Pontificalis*, considering that the whole of this story really referred to the original burial of the apostles. When these facts are considered, it will be seen that the evidence for the existence of any person

<sup>1</sup> Armellini, *Ant. Cim. Cr.*, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> De Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, ii., p. 262.

of the name in apostolic times is of a somewhat slight description.

But we are not even yet at the end of the confusion to which this unfortunate mistake has given rise. If another glance be given to the genuine record of the bringing back of the apostles, it will be seen that it is stated that Lucina indeed brought back St. Paul, but Marcellus himself brought back St. Peter a few days later. And, just as this passage, through a confusion between this return from the Catacombs and the original sepulture of the apostles, has led to the story of a Lucina burying St. Paul, so also is it with Marcellus and St. Peter. Marcellus is a most important person in all the apocryphal *Acts*. He is provided with a father, one Marcus of senatorial rank (whose origin again we may perhaps trace to that Marcus who was husband to the genuine Lucina), with brothers, and with a history. He had been a follower, we are told, of Simon Magus, but had been converted by the preaching of St. Peter, and became the most devoted of his disciples. He it is in whose house St. Peter stays; who begs St. Peter to fly from Rome; who takes down St. Peter from the cross, and lays him in the tomb; who watches by night at the grave, until St. Peter appears to him and bids him let the dead bury their dead; and who, lastly, commits the whole story to writing and attests it for us with the words "I, Marcellus, the disciple of my Lord Peter, have written down the things which I myself have seen".<sup>1</sup> He is, in fact, the chief hero of the story, after the apostles themselves, and it is to his credit that the compiler puts down the speeches and the actions which serve to make the few facts he has at his disposal into a connected whole.

From all these data we can make out pretty clearly what must have happened. There was a contemporary

<sup>1</sup> Lipsius, *Acta Petri*, etc., pp. 4, 5, 20, 21, 54 *seq.*, 99 *seq.*, 172, 173, 216.

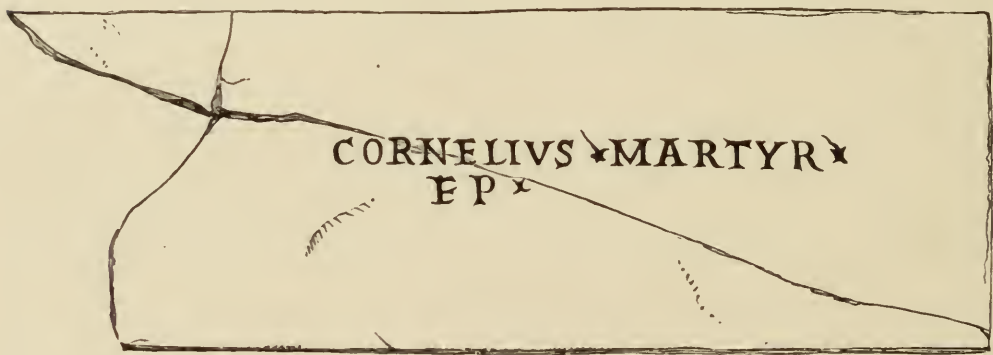
and authentic record made, concerning the bringing back of the bodies of the apostles from the Catacombs by Lucina and Marcellus. This record was on a detached sheet, and did not include any statement as to the date. Indeed, as Marcellus reigned but two years, such a date was scarcely needed. After a century or two a copy of this detached sheet got into the hands of the compiler of the *Liber Pontificalis*. By this time the name of the Pope was not very clear, and he misread it for Cornelius, and accordingly placed it under the reign of that Pope. A little later, the compiler of the apocryphal *Acts*, or perhaps rather of some other document on which the apocryphal *Acts* as they have come down to us are founded, got hold of this same record. This man was able to decipher the name Marcellus. Perhaps his copy was better preserved than the other one. That name ought to have sufficiently explained the meaning of the document, but it did not. Perhaps this second compiler was not a Roman, and had never heard of the translations to the Catacombs. In any case, he took it to refer to the original burial, and wrote his story accordingly, inventing a Marcellus to bury St. Peter, and providing him with the necessary connections and with a fitting story. Other writers since have naturally been misled, and, not seeing any reason to distrust their information, have followed, one after another, in the track of these two original blunderers.

This transference of the misplaced passage from the reign of Cornelius to that of Marcellus may possibly still further help towards the explanation of certain difficulties, of which ecclesiastical historians have long been aware, in the records of these two pontiffs. For, on the one hand, we are told of Cornelius that he was banished to Centumcellæ and died there a natural death (*cum gloria obdormitionem accepit*).<sup>1</sup> Now it has always seemed impossible to reconcile this statement with the known facts

<sup>1</sup> *Liberian Catalogue* quoted *Lib. Pont.*, i.

of his pontificate, and especially with the fact that he certainly died a martyr, and was buried at Rome, as his tombstone still records for all of us to see:—

This inscription seems absolutely to decide the question beyond all possibility of controversy, for it is certainly pre-Constantinian, and therefore practically contemporary. Moreover, we know that the title of martyr in those times, since it carried with it the right to the veneration of the faithful, was only given after a process (*vindicatio*), analogous to the canonisation of later years. For instance the epitaph of Pope St. Fabian has the word “Martyr” added at a later time and by another hand, since, although his glorious death was known to all, the title could not be



Tombstone of St. Cornelius. In the Catacomb of S. Callisto.

given until it was formally granted by his successor, and an interregnum intervened, So also St. Optatus (*De schism. Don.*, i., 6.), records the rebuke of a certain matron for honouring the relics of one who, although undoubtedly a martyr, had not yet been canonised (*etsi martyris necdum vindicati*).

On the other hand, the most authentic information we have of St. Marcellus is derived from the poetic epitaph which St. Damasus composed and put up in his honour in the Church of St. Sylvester in the Cemetery of St. Priscilla. This epitaph has been preserved for us, having been copied by those pilgrims of the seventh century, of whom we have already spoken, and runs as follows:—

VERIDICUS RECTOR LAPROS QUIA CRIMINA FLERE  
 PRAEDIXIT MISERIS FUIT OMNIBUS HOSTIS AMARUS  
 HINC FUROR HINC ODIUM SEQUITUR DISCORDIA LITES  
 SEDITIO CAEDES SOLVUNTUR FOEDERA PACIS  
 CRIMEN OB ALTERIUS CRISTUM QUI IN PACE NEGAVIT  
 FINIBUS EXPULSUS PATRIAE EST FERITATE TYRANNI  
 HAEC BREVITER DAMASUS VOLUIT COMPERTA REFERRE  
 MARCELLI UT POPULUS MERITUM COGNOSCERE POSSET.<sup>1</sup>

From this epitaph we learn that St. Marcellus was certainly exiled, in consequence of the action of some apostate who was enraged at the Pope's severity in dealing with those who had lapsed from the faith during the great persecution, and yet there is no record of this exile, either in the *Liber Pontificalis* or in the *Passio Marcelli*<sup>2</sup> or in any other document that has come down to us, but there is, instead, a story of his being forced to tend the horses in the public stables and of his dying in consequence of the ill treatment he received. This story is not apparently part of the record in its oldest form. Altogether, it looks very much as if the whole story of the exile to Centumcellæ, and the subsequent death in exile away from Rome, a death which although not strictly speaking a martyrdom, was still a death for the faith and might well be spoken of as "glorious," belongs, like the other story of the bringing back of the apostles, to the life of Marcellus and not to that of Cornelius. In that case the meaning of the words *collegit b. Lucina corpus suum*<sup>3</sup> would be well explained by supposing that she went to Centumcellæ and recovered his body, and brought it back to give it worthy burial in her own land at Rome.

We can see too now, in the light of these facts, why it was that Marcellinus, the immediate predecessor of

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Bollandists, under xvi. Jan., Nulla alibi quod sciamus mentio exilii S. Marcelli.

<sup>3</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., p. 151.

Marcellus, was not buried in the papal crypt at S. Callisto, as almost all the previous Popes had been, ever since the practice of burying them round St. Peter on the Vatican had been given up with St. Zephyrinus. Marcellinus was martyred in the very height of the Diocletian persecution, the fiercest of all the persecutions of the Church, and it was doubtless not safe to venture to take him to so well-known a burying-place as that of S. Callisto. Then Lucina came forward, being already well known for her action in burying St. Sebastian and other martyrs some years before, and offered her land, at what is now the Cemetery of St. Priscilla, for this purpose. To the same spot, in his turn, she took the body of Marcellus, when she had brought it home; and then she made over the whole of her property to the Church, giving her house to become the Church of S. Marcello, and this cemetery to take the place of that of S. Callisto as the burying-place of future Popes. Thither, therefore, were taken almost all the succeeding pontiffs throughout the fourth century. Besides Marcellinus and Marcellus, Sylvester and Liberius, Siricius, Celestine and Vigilius were all of them buried in this spot. It remained indeed the principal burying-place of the Popes until the practice of burying on the Vatican was again resumed with St. Leo the Great.

All this however takes us away from our point, and we must get back to the main thread of our story. Now that we have cleared up the details of the bringing back of the apostles from the Catacombs in A.D. 306, and have shown that the traditions of the seventh century were approximately right in assigning the period of forty years as the duration of their stay in that place, we turn back to our records to see whether we cannot now do something towards a similar explanation of their earlier translation. For it is evident enough now that there must have been two separate translations, inasmuch as there remains a

good deal of evidence which cannot be applied to the story, as we now have it reconstituted, of the removals of the bodies in the third century.

Certainly we have done something already towards clearing it up, for with the disappearance of the false Lucina and Marcellus from our records we have taken away all evidence that the apostles were ever buried at all on the Vatican and the Ostian Way respectively immediately after their martyrdom ; and the statement of the *Acta* that they lay at S. Sebastiano for a year and seven months, while their tombs were being made ready, becomes not impossible. With one exception indeed the story is now clear and credible enough and runs as follows :—

There was an attempt on the part of the Easterns to carry off the bodies to Jerusalem. When they had got as far as the third milestone on the Appian Way, there was a great storm and earthquake. They interpreted this as the token of God's anger at the attempted removal of the apostles from the city of their death, and so they desisted from their attempts and laid the bodies in a tomb not far off. Thence they were brought back with much rejoicing a year and seven months later, and laid in the tombs which by this time had been prepared near to the places of their respective martyrdoms.

So far the story does not seem to have the slightest improbability, and it perfectly satisfies all the evidence before us, with, as we have said, one single exception. This exception is the mention, made both by the *Acta*, and, which is more important, by St. Gregory the Great, that messengers were sent from Jerusalem to get the bodies. This in the *Acta* takes a somewhat marvellous form. "Forthwith there appeared holy men, whom no one had ever seen before, or could see again." Who were these men, and how had they heard of St. Peter's death? If the bodies were already buried, as they must have been if sufficient time had elapsed to allow the news

to reach Jerusalem and these men to come from Jerusalem to Rome, what commanding influence were they able to use to bring about the exhumation of the bodies and their removal to Jerusalem ; in defiance, as we cannot doubt, of the strong objections made by the Roman Christians to this loss of their martyrs and apostles ? Certainly we have here circumstances which stand much in need of a little explanation before we can accept them as sober history. And this explanation, as I venture to think, we shall find precisely in the third authority who alludes to this earlier translation—in the poem, namely, which St. Damasus afterwards put up at S. Sebastiano. *Discipulos Oriens misit*, wrote St. Damasus, meaning thereby to acknowledge that the contention of the Jews that the apostles were their fellow-countrymen was not unfounded. That this was his meaning, and nothing else, is sufficiently proved by the ending of the line, *quod sponte fatemur*, which with any other rendering at once becomes unmeaning. Besides, the phrase is one that St. Damasus liked, and which he used elsewhere, as for instance in that most celebrated of all his inscriptions which he placed in the papal crypt at S. Callisto ; in which the words occur :—

HIC CONFESSORES SANCTI QUOS GRAECIA MISIT.<sup>1</sup>

“The holy confessors who came from Greece.” Or, again, in another, speaking probably of St. Hippolytus, he writes :—

JAMDUDUM QUOD FAMA REPERT TE GRAECIA MISIT  
SANGUINE MUTASTI PATRIAM.<sup>2</sup>

“They say you came long since from Greece, but by dying you have changed your country.” Here the thought is exactly the same as in the instance before us, and we see accordingly what the poet’s meaning really was :—

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

DISCIPULOS ORIENS MISIT QUOD SPONTE FATEMUR  
ROMA SUOS POTIUS MERUIT DEFENDERE CIVES.

“We admit willingly that the apostles were Easterns by birth, but Rome had the better right to retain those who had become her citizens by death.”<sup>1</sup>

If St. Damasus had written, as we have translated, *Apostolos misit Oriens*, there would never have been any doubt what his meaning was, but unhappily he was writing hexameters, and for hexameters *Apostolos* is an impossible word. Therefore he wrote *discipulos*, and from that unfortunate word have sprung up a whole series of misconceptions. The writer of the *Acta* saw it first, or was told of it, and he took it to mean “the East sent messengers”. Then, after his fashion, he expanded and improved it, and the consequence is that we have those marvellous statements about the holy men “whom no one saw before, or could ever see again”. Then St. Gregory, who must have been familiar with it, for in his time the inscription was of course still in its place on the walls of the Platonica, saw it, and in his turn misunderstood it. His was a more sober mind, and so we have no marvellous details from him; but only the simple statement which has misled so many, that “Christians came from the East to seek the bodies of the apostles as being their fellow-countrymen”. Even at the present day the misconception continues, for there are not wanting scholars, as for instance Signor Lugari, who take the statements of the *Acta* and of St. Gregory as being independent authorities, and wish to translate the words of St. Damasus in the light of the facts which, as they think, these authorities record.

Our next instance is one the value of whose testimony

<sup>1</sup>For this thought, that the apostles became Romans by virtue of their martyrdom at Rome, cf. Tertullian, *Scorp.*, 15: “Paulus civitatis Romanæ consequitur nativitatem, cum ille martyrii renascitur generositate”.

is exceedingly hard to estimate. In the *atrium* or court in front of old St. Peter's there was a number of frescoes on one of the walls, whose subject was the series of events we have been narrating. There they were seen by Bosio, and, fortunately for us, he took the trouble of copying them just before they were destroyed in 1606. His drawings were published in the edition of his *Roma Sotterranea* which was brought out after his death by Severano. From that work they have been reproduced for these pages. One of the frescoes was also copied independently by Grimaldi, whose sketch is attached to a MS. in the Ambrosian Library at Milan; and this affords a certain proof that we may depend upon the accuracy of Bosio's reproductions so far as the main features of the pictures are concerned.

Now the value of these frescoes, as evidence for our inquiry, depends entirely on the date at which they were originally painted; because they will obviously represent the tradition current at that time. Bosio thought them to be very ancient indeed, and tells us that the general opinion of the experts of his time was that they were more than a thousand years old; that is, that they dated back at least to the time of St. Gregory the Great. There is no record of any work of the kind being done by any of the early pontiffs, except that Hadrian I. (779-795) is said to have adorned the atrium with paintings (*picturis*) and marbles. The difficulty of fixing the date from the style is increased by the fact that we have not the originals before us, but only copies, and that we cannot be sure how far these copies may not be tinged with the spirit of the sixteenth century. Moreover, there seems good reason to suppose that, in any case, the originals had already been largely retouched, and possibly repainted, in the early part of the fifteenth century, for Martin V. had affixed his arms to them, which would seem to show that he had carried out some work of the kind. Certainly

PROIECTIO CORPORVM SS. APOSTOLOB. IN CATACVMBAS EX PORTICV VETERIS VATICANÆ BASILICÆ  
fo: 258:



BURIAL OF THE APOSTLES IN THE CATACOMBS.  
(A fresco formerly in the Atrium of Old St. Peter's.)

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the ecclesiastical dresses of the third picture, and the monastic ones in the second, have a very mediæval appearance, while the bishop in both of these two pictures is as certainly of an earlier date. One other indication of date may perhaps be discovered in the use of the nimbus. The nimbus was adopted by the Church from pagan art, in which it had been occasionally employed to denote majesty. It seems to have passed from Egypt, where its use is very familiar to any student of the monuments, to Greece and to Rome, in which countries, however, it never obtained any extended use. At Rome there remain one or two instances, notably the figure of Trajan on the Arch of Constantine. A late instance of its use also by Christians to denote royalty and not sanctity is the curious fact that in one of the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore the figure of Herod has the nimbus. In Christian art, as a rule, the occurrence of the nimbus may be taken as a proof that the date of the work is not earlier than the time of Constantine, and even after his time, in the earlier centuries, its use is irregular, and often confined to the greatest personage in the composition. Thus at S. Costanze, where the mosaics are of the fourth century, we find that the figure of our Lord has the nimbus, while the apostles are without it. So, again, at the Catacomb of St. Domitilla, where our Lord is represented seated in the midst of the apostles, St. Peter is the only one of the twelve who has the nimbus. Now, in the pictures before us, it will be noted that in all three the two apostles St. Peter and St. Paul have the nimbus, and that this is also the case with the presiding bishop in one picture, but not in another. That is to say St. Cornelius (or St. Marcellus), as a martyr, has the nimbus, but St. Sylvester, who was not martyred, is without it. This would seem to show that the date of the paintings must really have been an early one, and therefore that their testimony is of some value as an independent witness.

The subjects of the second and third of the series are evident enough, and need not delay us. The one represents the bringing back of the two bodies from the Catacomb by St. Cornelius (or rather St. Marcellus) at the request of Lucina. The other shows the final disposal of the body of St. Peter by St. Sylvester, for Constantine is clearly intended by the figure in civil dress at the feet of the saint. These two need not delay us now. The interesting question for us is the determination of the subject of the first of the series. Bosio takes it to represent the story told by St. Gregory in his letter to the empress; the attempted rape of the relics by the Greeks, and the defeat of their design by the Roman Christians. To this hypothesis the strange dress of the men round the bodies may perhaps lend some support. On the other hand, the mounted soldiers with drawn swords can hardly be Roman Christians of the first century; nor is there any suggestion of a bloody struggle in St. Gregory's narrative, for he says that it was an earthquake that caused the attempt to be abandoned. Again, what can be the meaning of the angels with wreaths who are seen coming down from heaven. They cannot be bringing the crowns of martyrdom to St. Peter and St. Paul, because they are four in number. To us it seems more likely that the picture is meant to represent such an event as that which, as we have worked out in the present chapter, must have occurred in the year 258. The strange dresses of those who are engaged in hiding the apostles would imply that the translation was not carried out with any ecclesiastical ceremony, but secretly and by night; while the soldiers with their weapons, and the angels with their wreaths suggest in different ways the reason which made it necessary to act in this way, namely, the persecution which was raging at the time. It may be therefore that the picture is to some extent a confirmation of our views.

ELEVATIO CORPORVM SS. APOSTOLORVM E CATACVMBIS  
EX PORTICV VETERIS VAICANÆ BASILICÆ

Jo 259



EXHUMATION OF THE APOSTLES.  
(A fresco formerly in the Atrium of Old St. Peter's.)

[To face page 132.]

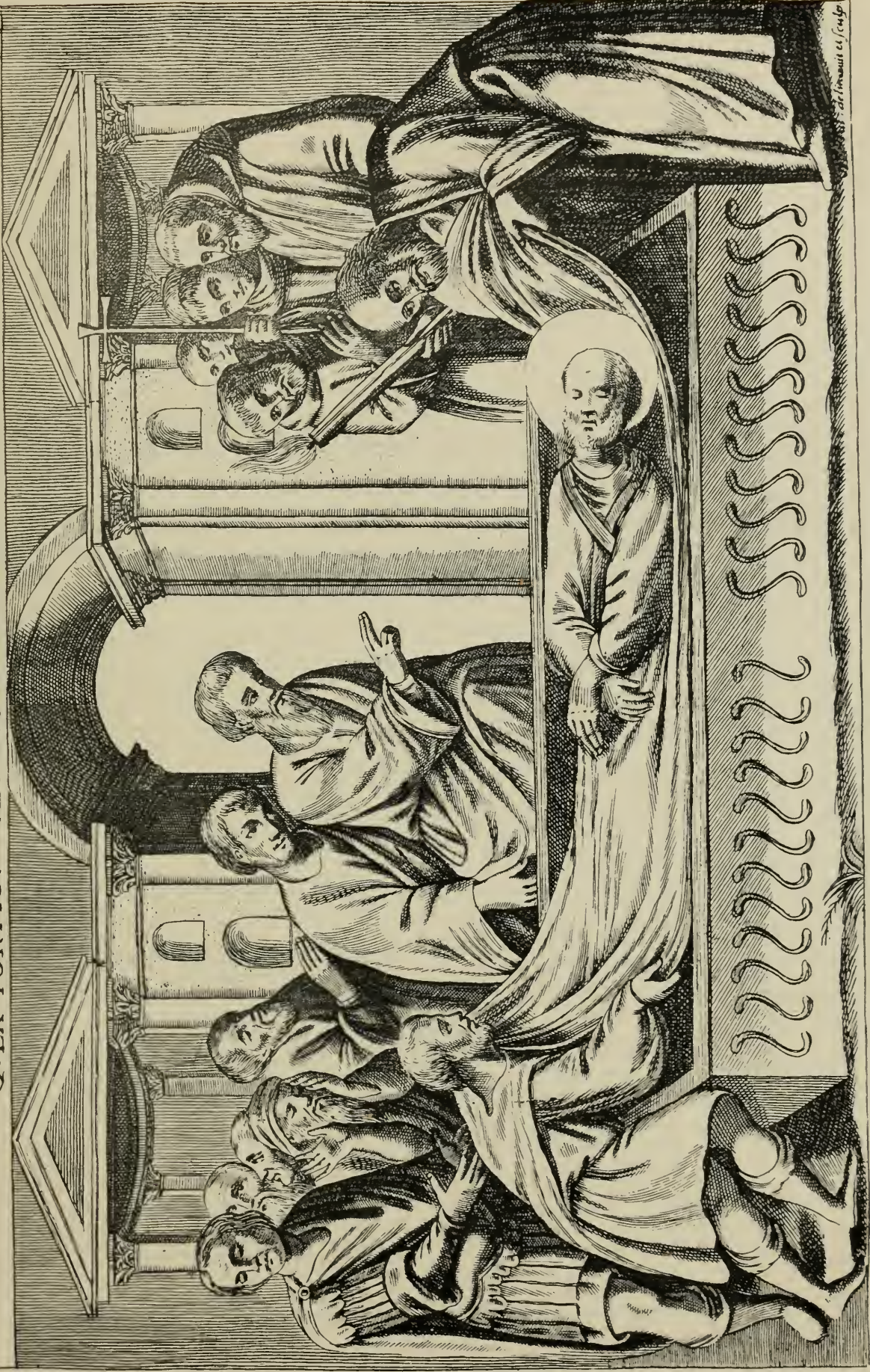


One more source of evidence remains to us, and demands to be taken into consideration. It is the archæological evidence afforded by the place itself in which tradition asserts that the apostles were laid. This evidence will be given at length in a later chapter. Here it must suffice to say that, while on the one hand the existence of two separate tombs, the one undoubtedly of the first century and the other of the third, does go far to substantiate the theory that there were two separate translations; on the other, the fact that the second tomb is not, as we should have expected, of the middle of the third century, but cannot have been constructed later than its opening years, demands a certain corresponding modification of that theory. It seems, that is, to be clearly proved by this fact that the tomb was not first prepared for the reception of the apostles in 258, when the removal of the bodies was finally decided upon. Some other motive than the Valerian persecution must have been the cause of the construction of the Platonica. Such a motive, though of course we cannot be certain of the fact, would seem to be supplied by the fear that the tomb of St. Peter would have been destroyed by Heliogabalus when he wished to make his new course for elephants to race on. For it would appear that the original idea, when the Platonica was built, was to remove thither not St. Peter only but the bodies also of all the twelve bishops who since his time had succeeded to the throne, and had in turn been buried round him on the Vatican. Further, it would seem to have been the intention at this time that future bishops should also be buried round St. Peter in the Platonica. All this will be made clear when we come to treat more carefully of this archæological evidence. But for some reason or other it would seem that this crypt after it was constructed was never used. Possibly Heliogabalus changed his plans, or the direction which his racecourse was to take, and so the danger passed by. St. Peter's

tomb remained intact, and the next series of Popes were buried, not in the graves prepared for them at the Platonía, but in the papal crypt at S. Callisto. Then in A.D. 258 came the Valerian persecution and the outlawing of the cemeteries, and in consequence of this the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul, not as had been originally intended that of St. Peter only, were both translated and hidden away *in Catacumba* "in the hollow cave," under the Platonía, near the place already consecrated by their previous sojourn, until the peace came in A.D. 306. Then, directly it was possible, they were taken back by Lucina and Marcellus, and laid in the tombs which they still occupy, over which at a later date were built the great Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul.

HVMATIO CORPORIS PRINCIPIS APOSTOLOBꝫ QVANDO S. SILVESTER RECŌDIDIT CORPVS EIVS  
EX PORTICV VETERIS VATICANÆ BASILICÆ

fo 77



BURIAL OF ST. PETER ON THE VATICAN.  
(A fresco formerly in the Atrium of Old St. Peter's.)

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FIRST TOMBS ON THE VIA APPIA AND ON THE VATICAN.

IF the conclusions of the last chapter be accepted, it follows that we must look for the earliest tomb in which St. Peter was laid, not on the Vatican, but at S. Sebastiano. For this purpose excavations were undertaken in 1892-93 by Monsignor De Waal, which resulted in some very important discoveries, of which little has hitherto been made known in English. Outside the Platonica itself, and separated from it by the wall which forms its one straight side, is a chamber which until recently was looked upon as forming a vestibule to it. On removing the earth from this chamber, there was uncovered a wall, with a doorway and two pilasters of red marble, of work which belonged to the first century. At first it was believed that this had formed the original entrance to the Platonica, but it was soon seen that the contrary was the case, and that this had been a separate chamber, with its doorway opening out on to the open space above which the Platonica is now built. Further investigations showed that this chamber had itself been a sepulchre, and in the centre of it, carefully sunk in virgin soil, was a large marble sarcophagus, of sufficient size easily to contain two bodies. The sarcophagus was empty, so far as regards human remains, but was filled up with earth and *débris*, and with large pieces of broken slabs of marble, which last had evidently been used to cover it, for a small fragment was still fixed in its place in one corner. A small portion of

the original mosaic pavement was also still to be seen on the floor near the sarcophagus, composed of little pieces of white and green marble, which for the most part were arranged in a geometrical pattern, though the figure of a bird could be distinguished in one place. A small statue, representing the draped figure of a man, was also found. On carrying on similar investigations at the entrance, it was found that there had been a staircase of four steps leading up to it, and that the approach was from an area paved with polygonal slabs of basaltic lava. Scraps of plaster bearing traces of fresco, which had once decorated the interior, were also found, and the whole tomb was clearly of the first century. The importance of this discovery is evidently very great. We have already, from the careful study of the documentary evidence, come to the conclusion that the bodies of the two apostles were laid, immediately after their martyrdom, in a tomb at S. Sebastiano. Now there has been found, precisely on the spot where tradition would lead us to look for it, a tomb of the first century, arranged for two persons, which once was occupied, but is no longer occupied now, and which was manifestly held in great veneration by the Christians of the beginning of the third century, when the Platonica was built. It seems impossible to doubt that we have thus recovered the actual tomb in which the two apostles were first laid, and we have enough remaining to enable us to reconstruct the building, and to picture to ourselves how it must have looked in its original state. The paved area in front makes it seem probable, at first sight, that it was situated on some small side road or lane leading out of the Via Appia, at the side of which it rose, with no space intervening. If so, it was a single story building, entirely above ground, approached from the road by four steps, and entered by a doorway with marble pillars. If, however, we consider the low level at which it stands, entirely underground at present, in a position where the

ground level cannot have altered very much, it seems more likely that the paved area was not a portion of a street or path, but simply a kind of yard, and that the tomb was at least partly subterranean. The sarcophagus was in the centre, sunk in a floor of mosaic, and covered with slabs of marble that had been taken from some other building. The walls, on the inside, were plastered and covered with fresco. Very probably the tomb was the property of some Christian of the time, prepared as the last resting place for himself and his wife, and he now offered it, as St. Joseph of Arimathæa offered his on a similar occasion, to serve the immediate needs of the two martyred heads of the Christian community. There would have been no difficulty in getting possession of the bodies after the execution. At a later date, indeed, this favour was constantly denied, and every effort was made to prevent the Christians from getting possession of the relics of the martyrs. But at this period there would have been no such difficulty, for the Roman law provided that in every case the bodies of those who had been put to death were to be given over to their friends, on demand being made;<sup>1</sup> and it was no doubt in virtue of this provision that St. Joseph and Nicodemus made their successful application for the body of our Lord. The pagan custom at this time was to burn the dead, but the Jewish custom, which passed into the Church, and seems to have been invariable among Christians, was to bury. We have, in the various writings of the fathers, a great number of passages from which we can gather the funeral customs of these earliest centuries, and our knowledge is made more exact by the discovery of many of the actual bodies of the period, which have come down to modern times in a state of good preservation. The first thing done was the careful washing of the

<sup>1</sup> *Dig.*, xlvi., 24, 2, Corpora animadversorum quibuslibet petentibus ad sepulturam danda sunt.

corpse, to which we have allusions in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> It was then covered with a linen shroud and embalmed; not, however, in the Egyptian fashion, which involved the making of incisions and the removal of certain portions of the interior organs; but simply surrounded with myrrh and spices, which would have a preservative effect. Lastly it was swathed in a long bandage of linen, which passed round and round the whole body, until no part of it, not even the head, was visible, the arms being either crossed in front or extended by the sides.<sup>2</sup> Bodies embalmed in this way, which probably were those of the first successors of St. Peter, were found still perfect in 1626, though they fell to dust on being exposed to the air.<sup>3</sup>

The persecution of the Church did not last after the death of Nero in June 68. It does not seem, indeed, that his edicts against the Christians were ever formally revoked. Tertullian seems to say that they alone were excepted in the general annulling of the tyrant's acts by the Senate.<sup>4</sup> But, be that as it may, it is certain that for thirty years after the death of Nero, whatever their legal position may have been, the Christians were quite unmolested. Throughout the reigns of Galba and of Otho, of Vespasian and of Titus, and even almost to the end of that of Domitian, the history of Christianity in Rome is unbroken, so far as we know, by any act of persecution; and the Church grew and strengthened in the enjoyment of a profound peace, to which she was afterwards to be a stranger for many a year. It was therefore possible, when a year or so had passed, for a more permanent and suitable arrangement for the sepulture of the two apostles.

<sup>1</sup> Acts, ix., 37; *cf.* Tertull., *Apol.*, c. 42.

<sup>2</sup> See, for allusions to these ceremonies of Christian burial, *inter alia*, Tertullian, *Apol.*, c. 42, and *De anima*, 29; St. Jerome, *Epist.*, 49, ad Innocentium; Prudentius, *Hymn.*, x.

<sup>3</sup> *Infra*, p. 323.

<sup>4</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Nat.*, i., 7.

to be made, than had been feasible while the persecution was actually raging ; and, therefore, as soon as the death of Nero had occurred, it would seem that steps were at once taken to prepare separate tombs for each of them, on the nearest available spot to the places of their respective martyrdoms. The preparation of these tombs, which seem in each case to have been vaulted chambers, almost entirely subterranean, and with no upper chamber above ground, occupied the time until the beginning of A.D. 69, when a year and seven months had passed from the time of the martyrdom ; and then, as we read in the account of these events which is known by the name of the *Passio SS. Apostolorum Petri et Pauli*,<sup>1</sup> the bodies were brought to their respective resting-places, from the tomb at S. Sebastiano, with considerable ceremony and rejoicing, “*cum gloria hymnorum*”. This detail, at first sight, looks apocryphal, as if the compiler had made the doings of the first century conform to what he was himself accustomed to in the fifth or sixth, but a second thought leads one to think that we have here a genuine tradition. For, just at this period, while the Church was at peace, such a ceremony would have been quite possible ; and that it is not only possible, but also probable, we gather from the account we have of the burial of St. Cyprian,<sup>2</sup> when, although the persecution was raging fiercely, and access to the cemeteries was forbidden, the body of the saint was taken in procession, with singing of hymns and lighted torches, to the sepulchre where it was to lie. Possibly we can determine not only the year and the month in which the translation took place, but even the actual day, for February 22nd, which is now kept as the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, is not noted by that name in some of the oldest calendars, but as the Feast of the Deposition

<sup>1</sup> Quoted on p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Ruinart, *Acta S. Cypr.*, p. 219, “*cum cereis et scolacibus cum voto et triumpho magno*”.

of St. Peter and St. Paul. It may be, therefore, that the day already kept at Rome as the anniversary of the translation of the relics of St. Peter was selected in after times as the Feast of the Chair.

Since recent excavations have enabled us to reconstruct the first resting-place of St. Peter's body at the Catacombs, we naturally ask whether we have any clue as to the appearance of this, its second and more permanent home. It lies now deep under the high altar of St. Peter's Church, and no eye has seen it for many centuries, so that, since no contemporary description has come down to us, we should be quite without any means of conjecturing its form, were it not for some measurements quoted quite casually in the *Liber Pontificalis*,<sup>1</sup> in the account of the ornamentation by Constantine of St. Peter's tomb. The chronicler tells how Constantine adorned the *loculus*, or sarcophagus as we should call it, with bronze from Cyprus, and laid a gold cross on the top; and then goes on to say, somewhat enigmatically, "It is all fixed and solid, five feet at the head, and five at the feet, five on the right hand, and five on the left, five above and five below". It is a strange thing that no one, through all the hundreds of years that have passed, should ever have hit upon what seems a very simple and intelligible explanation of these words. One after another, almost every writer on the subject has said that St. Peter's body lies in a receptacle of bronze, measuring five feet in every direction. But, in the first place, what the chronicler says is not that Constantine made a new receptacle of bronze, but that he covered the old one, and certainly a cube of five feet is a most unusual size and shape for an ancient sarcophagus to assume. And, secondly, if he had intended simply to express a cube, there would have been no need to give five measurements; three would have been enough,

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pontificalis*, i., p. 176.

and would have been much clearer: five feet in height, and in breadth, and in length. What he did really mean to record must have been that the sarcophagus occupied the exact centre of a chamber, and that there was a space, measuring roughly five feet in every direction, between it and the walls. Its top was also five feet below the roof, and it stood raised on a pedestal, five feet in height. The meaning of the words *quod est immobile*, which we have translated "it is all fixed and solid," do not concern us now, and will be better left for consideration later on. The important thing for us is that these measurements give us the approximate size of the vault in which St. Peter lies, five feet in every direction from the outside of the sarcophagus. Taking this latter to have been about seven feet, by four, by four, which would be a very probable size, we get the size of the chamber, on its inside, as seventeen feet by fourteen, and fourteen feet high, all of which measurements would seem to be very possible for an erection of the kind. Moreover, as we shall see later, these measurements, which otherwise would possess no further interest than as providing material for an ingenious guess, enable us to trace out the course of the actual walls which are still in existence below St. Peter's altar.

The usual plan, in Roman tombs of this kind, was to place them with their longer sides at right angles to the road on which they were built, and then to put the entrance at that one of the ends which was nearest to the road. The object of this was, of course, that as little of the frontage as possible might be taken up, so that room might be left for other tombs by the side. In this instance, however, the opposite was the case. The walls which we can trace, explained as they are by the measurements already given, make it clear that the *longer* side of St. Peter's tomb was parallel to the roadway, and to the walls of Nero's Circus on the other side of the road. The head was towards the Vatican Hill and away from

the city. In other words the head of St. Peter is to the west and his feet to the east. This is evident from the direction in which the church was afterwards built, for it seems to have been an invariable rule in the early fourth century, that the church should follow the line of the body of the saint over whom it was built, the body itself being never disturbed, even when, as in the case of St. Paul, St. Agnes and St. Laurence, the church could only be constructed with great difficulty, and perhaps be of very small dimensions, on account of the conditions which were thus imposed. The original church which was built by Constantine over the tomb of St. Paul affords an excellent example of this kind. St. Paul was buried close to the Ostian Way, with his feet apparently towards the road. In consequence, there was not room to build anything more than an oratory over the tomb in this direction, although, if the rule could have been departed from, a large church might have been built in any one of the other three directions. At the end of the fourth century, fifty years later, the original small church was taken down, and a new one was built in the reverse direction, and of much greater size. Since, then, the rule was kept to, in spite of the great inconvenience involved, in the case of the sister church of St. Paul, we may assume that it was not departed from at St. Peter's where no such difficulty existed, and therefore we may feel certain that the head of the apostle lies towards the apse of the church. We have also definite evidence that this is the case in the expression by an eighth century pilgrim, when the actual tomb was still accessible, to the effect that "going by the crypts you come to the head of St. Peter".<sup>1</sup>

The original entrance to the vault was, we can hardly doubt, on the side of the road, for greater convenience of access. This is a point of very considerable import-

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., p. 226.

ance, in case of any excavations being made in the future with the object of reaching the body. There is no trace whatever of an entrance having ever existed at the eastern end, where is now the confession, and any excavations made there would only come to the solid wall of the vault. The entrance was, presumably, from the south, for it was on that side that the road was, and of this entrance, as we shall show presently, there are still traces existing, which have not hitherto been noticed; probably because, strangely enough, the fact that the original entrance must have been on this side has been utterly overlooked, and no one has ever thought of looking for traces of a doorway anywhere but on the eastern side.

In view of the fact that a second story was added later on, it would seem certain, too, that this original tomb or vault was almost entirely subterranean, and it would have been approached, probably, by a steep straight staircase of stone, as is the case in other similar tombs. Arrangements for carrying off the rain-water, which would have otherwise accumulated at the bottom, were discovered in the excavations of 1635.

Such then was the original tomb, or vault, as it was made ready for the body of St. Peter to be laid in the sarcophagus in its centre, at the beginning of A.D. 69. It afforded very little space for pilgrims, and was not very easy of access. This was probably felt in the course of the next few years, when, on account of the absence of persecution and the rapid growth in the number of the Christians in Rome, we should expect that the tomb must have been visited by large and increasing numbers of the faithful, especially on such days as the anniversary of the martyrdom. Pope Anacletus therefore, as is recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*,<sup>1</sup> determined to build a *memoria* or upper chamber above the tomb, to serve as a small church

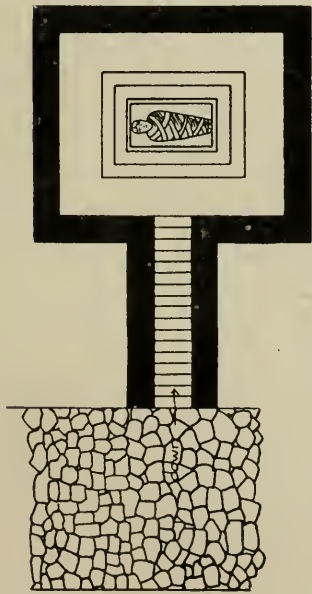
<sup>1</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, i., p. 125, "memoriam beati Petri construit et composuit".

in which the Holy Sacrifice could be offered. Here again we have no record beyond the bare statement that he "arranged and constructed the Memoria of St. Peter"; but, inasmuch as the walls that he built seem still to be standing, and the *memoria* to be in part accessible, in the existing basilica, we can make out pretty clearly what sort of a building it was that he erected. He would seem simply to have raised the walls of the existing vault to a higher level, thus providing a chamber on the floor above, that is, on the ground level, of the same shape and size as the vault itself, measuring inside about seventeen feet by fourteen. The height of the chamber cannot be determined with accuracy, because we know nothing of the nature of the roof, which was removed, apparently, by Constantine, when the high altar of the basilica was placed above it. We can, however, calculate that it measured not less than fourteen or fifteen feet in height inside. This measurement is obtained thus. The top of the niche now existing under the altar is taken as corresponding with the ceiling of this upper chamber. From that point to the "floor of the niche," as it was in ancient times, is, roughly, seven feet. Now St. Gregory the Great, in one of his letters,<sup>1</sup> speaks of some work, which was apparently being done on this floor, as being distant fifteen feet from St. Peter. Since, then, we have reason to believe that the sarcophagus of St. Peter was in St. Gregory's time raised five feet above the floor of the vault, and allowing four feet for the height of the sarcophagus, we get a total height of nine feet above the floor of the vault; to which we must add, first, the fifteen feet spoken of by St. Gregory, and then the seven feet to the top of the niche. Thus we get a total height of thirty-one feet from the floor of the vault to the ceiling of the upper room, and, since we have already arrived at the

<sup>1</sup> Greg. Magn., *Epist.*, iv., 2, 20, ad Constantinam., ed. Ewald, p. 264.

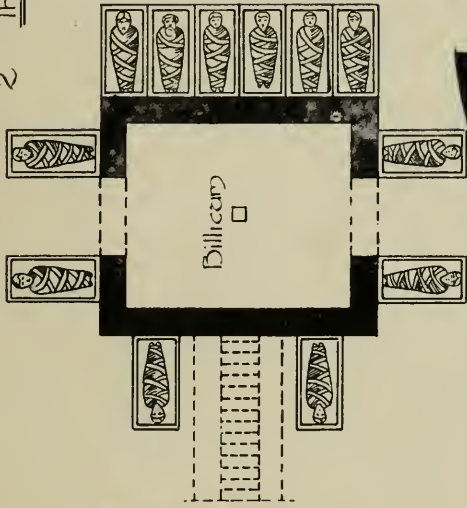
The original Vault

A.D. 60

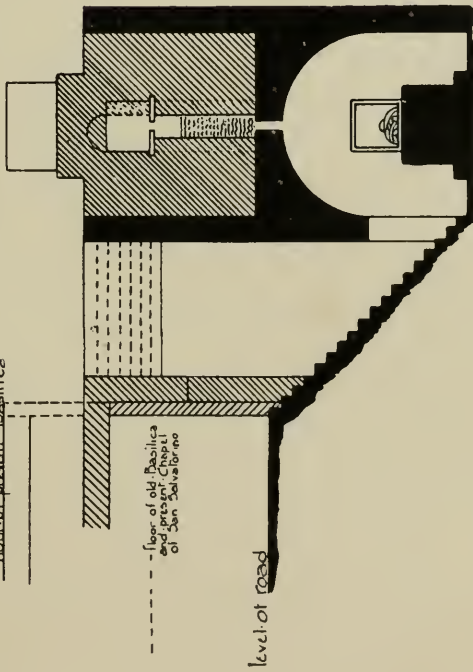


2 The Memoria of Anaclethus

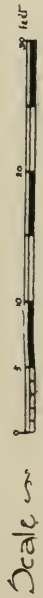
Showing the probable arrangement of the tombs of the earliest Popes buried round St Peter



Floor of present Basilica

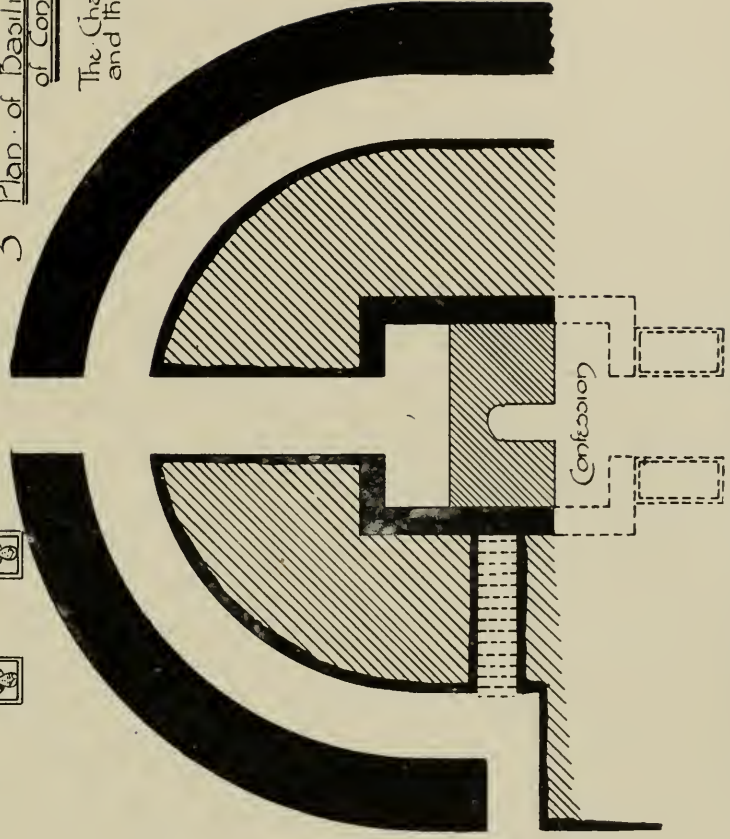


4. Section



3 Plan of Basilica of Constantine.

The Chapel under the Tribune and the Confession.



SKETCH SHOWING PROBABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOMB OF ST. PETER.



conclusion that the vault was fourteen feet in height, we have—after deducting two feet for the thickness of the vaulting—fifteen feet left for the height of the upper chamber, which is about the height we should have expected it to be. The entrance to this upper room manifestly could not be over the door leading to the vault, on account of the steps leading down. It would appear that it had two entrances, one at the east and one at the west, in the centre of each of the two shorter sides, and this again seems a not unlikely arrangement. There was certainly an entrance from the west in after years, though of course this may have been made later, and the arrangement of the coffins found in digging out the confession seems to denote the existence of another entrance from the east. When the outer walls of this building were uncovered in the excavations of 1626 there was still some stucco ornament upon it,<sup>1</sup> on examining which those who were present were able to see that the greater part of the building had always been underground. They do not seem to have realised at all what the building was, and thought from its appearance that it was some small heathen temple.

The question of the exact date at which this upper portion of the tomb was built is one which is not easy to answer; because it would involve going into all the difficulties which surround the early succession to the papacy; and we must be content to say that it was somewhere between the year A.D. 70 and A.D. 90. After the later date persecution broke out again, and it is not likely that any further additions were made to the structure, which remained, therefore, substantially unchanged, until the peace of the Church in A.D. 312. This, therefore, was the "*tropæum*" to which Caius the priest alludes when, about the year 210, he appealed against the heretics of the day, to the visible monuments of the apostles in the

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, p. 334.

possession of the Catholic Church : “ I can show you the trophies of the apostles, for whether you go to the Vatican or on the Ostian Way you will meet with the trophies of them who founded the Church.”

Here in the ages of persecution came the early Popes to offer the Holy Sacrifice over the apostle's body, as Tertullian tells us. Here too throughout these ages came the faithful in pilgrimage from all parts of the world. Again and again in the histories of the martyrs it is recorded that they had come from far off countries to Rome, in order that they might pray at the tombs of the apostles. Thus St. Marcius came with his wife Martha, and his two sons Abbacus and Audifacius, for this purpose, all the way from Persia, in the year 269 ;<sup>1</sup> St. Paternus from Alexandria, in 253 ;<sup>2</sup> St. Maurus from Africa in 284.<sup>3</sup> Again, it is told of SS. Simplicius, Constantine and Victorian, that, on their arrival at Rome, they went immediately to the tomb of St. Peter, whither they were followed by soldiers, and being captured were there and then put to death.<sup>4</sup> Again, we read of St. Zoe, in the *Acts of St. Sebastian*, that she was surprised while praying at the tomb of St. Peter, and immediately martyred.<sup>5</sup> These records sufficiently prove how widely spread in these times was the practice of making pilgrimages, and of praying at the tombs of the apostles ; for if some pilgrims were not deterred, even by the danger of death, from going to the shrine, we can understand how many must have gone there in the intervals when the persecution was raging less fiercely. Pilgrimage to the holy places of Jerusalem was, during these centuries, almost impossible, since a heathen temple had been built on the site of the Holy Sepulchre ; and it was therefore to Rome, and especially to the tomb of St. Peter, that the devotion of Christendom chiefly turned.

<sup>1</sup> *Martyrologium Romanum*, 19th Jan.

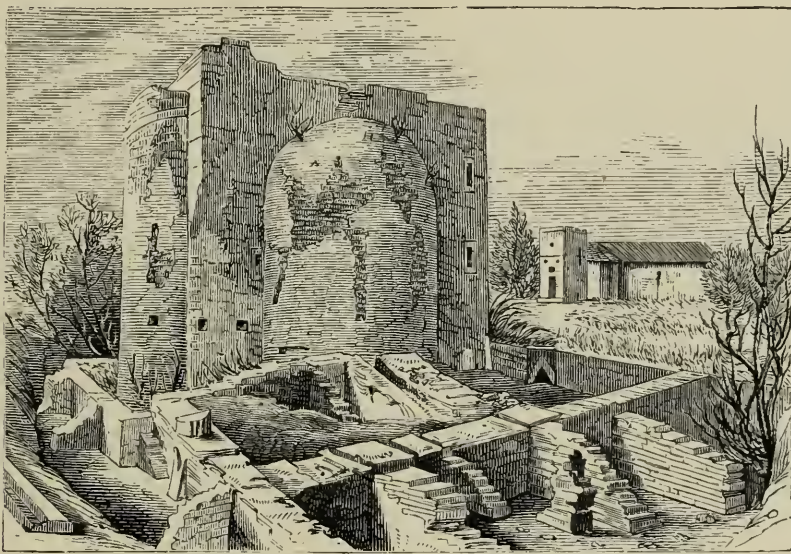
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 21st Aug.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 22nd Nov.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 26th Aug.

<sup>5</sup> *Acta Sanctorum, in die.*

Besides building the upper chamber, or *memoria*, of the tomb itself, St. Anacletus went on to prepare places in which he himself and a number of his successors might be buried round St. Peter. St. Linus, the immediate successor of St. Peter, had, it would seem, already been laid a little to the east of the tomb, and quite close to the road. There, as will be seen later, his grave was probably found in the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The graves now prepared by St. Anacletus seem to have been placed close up to the tomb itself and surrounding it, so that when



Cella of St. Soteris. Showing fourth century graves round the original *memoria*.

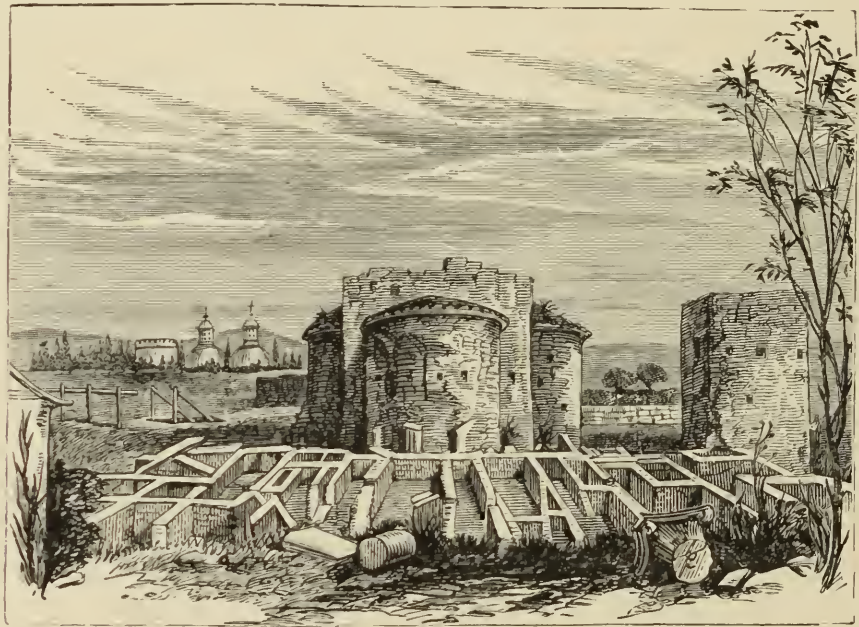
they were laid open, in the excavations in 1626, they seemed to those who saw them to be surrounding St. Peter, like "bishops assisting at a synod or council".<sup>2</sup> Some of these graves may be seen marked on the plan of the Crypts made by Drei at the time, and reproduced on p. 304. All the Popes who died in Rome up to the beginning of the third century, when the papal crypt at S. Callisto was made, were buried in this way round St. Peter.

At the beginning of the third century, and a little

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, p. 337.

earlier than the date at which St. Calixtus came into possession of the large cemetery which now bears his name, great changes were made close to the tomb on the Via Appia where the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul were originally laid. The excavations of 1893, already spoken of, enable us to trace these changes almost exactly.<sup>1</sup> There was already in existence, it will be remembered, a sepulchral chamber opening on to a paved area four steps below its own level. Against one side of this chamber,



Cella of St. Sixtus. Showing fourth century graves round the original *memoria*.

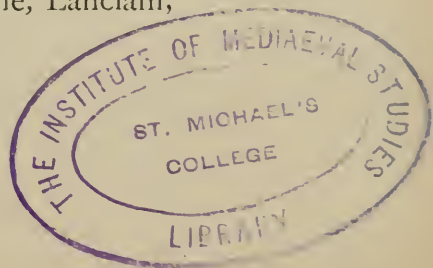
and over the paved area, there was constructed a semi-circular building, at a considerably higher level. This new chamber, which is known to us as the Platonica, and still remains almost unchanged in its original condition, was connected with the original tomb by means of three arches, the one in the centre being higher than the other two. Moreover, the entrance which was now made from outside passed directly into this new chamber, so that this

<sup>1</sup> See, for the results of these excavations, Armellini, *Cimiteri Cristiani*, p. 752; and an article by Lugari, in the *Bessarione*, Nos. 17-18.

now constituted a kind of large vestibule to the original tomb. Around the circular portion of this vestibule were constructed twelve archisolia, or arched tombs, each prepared to hold two bodies. All this work is placed, by those who are most competent to judge, at the end of the second century or the very beginning of the third.<sup>1</sup> The date of work of this kind, executed in Rome, can be ascertained with very great exactness, thanks to the great variety of specimens with which it can be compared. In this case, however, we have two other pieces of evidence which are in accordance with the conclusions formed from the general style of the work, and thus the date is fixed with a special certainty. These two pieces of evidence are, first, some tiles bearing stamps, which seem to belong to the last years of the second century, and, secondly, a *graffito*, or rough inscription, scratched in the plaster while it was still wet, and recording the names of the men who had executed the work—*Musicus cum suis laborantibus Ursus Fortunio Maximus Eus*. A facsimile of this interesting *graffito* has been published by Signor Lugari in the *Bessarione*, 1898 (No. 17). The classical form of the names and the shape of the letters, point again to a date not later than the early part of the third century.

Now, what was the cause which led to the construction of this chamber? We know that it was used in A.D. 258 for the reception of the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul, when the outlawry of the existing cemeteries had made their removal to some place of safety an imperative necessity; but that outlawry was not the original cause of its construction, for it is impossible to accept so late a date as A.D. 258 as being that at which it was built. Signor Lugari connects it, not unnaturally, with the passage from Lampridius already quoted in the last chapter, which tells of Heliogabalus destroying tombs on the Vatican to make

<sup>1</sup> This is the opinion of De Rossi, Armellini, Duchesne, Lanciani, Lugari, etc. See especially De Rossi, *Roma Sott.*, i., 193.



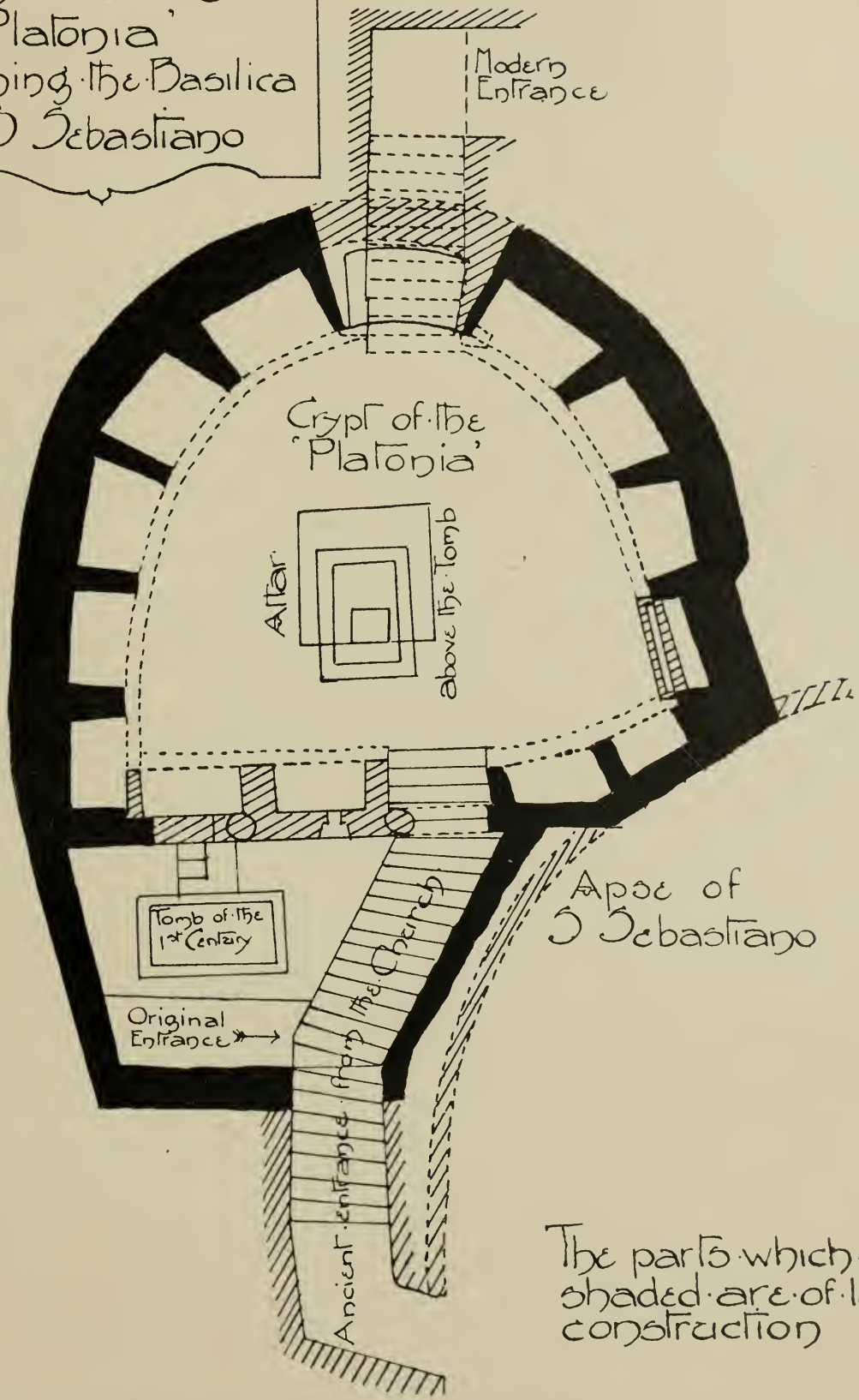
his new racecourse ; and he thinks that St. Peter's body was now again removed to the tomb in which it had been originally placed, and that the Popes who had since been buried round him at the Vatican were also removed, and laid in the new *archisolia*, provision being made, by the fact of these being doubled, for the next twelve Popes to be laid there also. He thinks too that St. Paul's body was brought to the same place only in A.D. 258, and in consequence of the Valerian persecution.

To this theory, although it sufficiently accounts for the facts, there seem to be several objections. In the first place, there is no evidence at all that St. Peter's tomb on the Vatican was ever in danger. The passage in Lampridius only tells us that some tombs on the Vatican were destroyed, and does not say in what part of the Vatican they were. Secondly, we have evidence that other tombs near St. Peter's were not destroyed, for many pagan tombs of an earlier date than Heliogabalus were found in the course of the excavations for the new basilica. Thirdly, it is a pure assumption, and directly opposed to the little evidence we have, to say that the Popes who were buried round St. Peter have ever been removed at all. There is no mention of any translation ; the *Liber Pontificalis*<sup>1</sup> speaks of St. Peter having been brought back to the place where the bodies of the bishops were ; and the actual bodies of these bishops seem to have been discovered in the excavations of the seventeenth century. Lastly, this theory involves an additional removal of St. Peter's body from the old tomb on the Via Appia to the new tomb close by, in the centre of the Platonica, and for this removal there is no evidence whatever.

A much simpler theory is possible, which also meets all the requirements of the case, and is not open to these objections. By the beginning of the third century, we

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., p. 150.

Plan of the  
'Platonia'  
adjoining the Basilica  
of S Sebastiano



The parts which are shaded are of later construction ~

Scale :- 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 feet

[To face page 150.]



may suppose, the sarcophagi prepared by St. Anacletus for his successors were all filled. We know, from the fact that pagan tombs have been found close to St. Peter himself, that the plot of ground available for Christian burial on the Vatican was exceedingly small, and the nature of the soil forbade any excavation, as in the Catacombs, on a lower level. It may well have been, therefore, that there was no more space available for any more graves, without disturbing those already in existence; a disturbance which, as almost all who were buried there seem to have died a martyr's death, we can well believe St. Zephyrinus, who was Pope at the time, would have been very slow to allow. It became necessary, therefore, to prepare another place elsewhere in which future Popes might be buried; and, since no more could be laid round St. Peter himself, what more suitable place could be suggested than that which had been hallowed by the presence of his body for a short time, though it had not been able to retain him? Hence the Platonica was prepared at S. Sebastiano, to be the papal crypt of the future, and was built in communication with the sepulchre in which St. Peter had once been laid. Preparation was there made for four and twenty future Popes, but none of these were ever laid there; for just at this juncture the Roman Church came officially into possession of the burying ground on the Via Appia which we now know as the Catacomb of S. Callisto, and a new papal crypt was constructed there. In this crypt Zephyrinus himself was laid in A.D. 220, and most of his successors after him until the times of the persecution of Diocletian at the end of the century, when this cemetery passed into the hands of the persecuting authority, so that a third series of papal sepulchres had to be begun at the Catacombs of St. Priscilla. It is worth noticing, by the way, that it does not seem ever to have occurred to anybody to bury the Popes round the tomb of St. Paul on the Ostian Way. This

shows us that the reason why first the Vatican was selected as their burying-place, and then, apparently, the Platonica was constructed with the same object, was not because St. Peter was an apostle, but because he was a Pope. The point is interesting as having a certain bearing on some current controversies in connection with the early Roman succession.

Up to quite the middle of the third century the cemeteries of the Christians had been unmolested, and they had been able to take advantage of the toleration which the Roman law extended to all places where the dead were buried, and thus to secure the free exercise of religious acts and services which were prohibited elsewhere. In fact, they probably registered themselves as burial guilds, *collegia*<sup>1</sup> as they were called, and so were able to enjoy very considerable immunities and privileges under the law. But in the year 258, under Valerian, these privileges and immunities were for the first time taken away. The exact words of the edict have not come down to us, but Eusebius<sup>2</sup> has recorded the fact that Christians were now forbidden to use the cemeteries as places of meeting, a measure which had been demanded by popular clamour at Carthage nearly half a century earlier.<sup>3</sup> Now, therefore, it was impossible for the faithful, without putting themselves into the gravest danger, to visit the tombs of the martyrs, and especially such well-known ones as those of St. Peter and of St. Paul. Possibly for this reason only, but more probably because it was feared that persecutors who had gone so far might go farther and desecrate the relics of the saints, it seems to have been decided to remove these bodies to a place of greater safety; and, accordingly, in this same year A.D. 258, in

<sup>1</sup> Armellini, *Antichi Cimiteri Cristiani*, p. 66 *seq.* See also Brownlow and Northcote, *Roma Sotterranea*, i., 64, 104.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, vii., 11.

<sup>3</sup> Tertullian, *Apolog.*, 37; and *Adv. Scap.* "areæ non sint".

the consulship of Tuscus and Bassus, the translation was accomplished. There would be obvious difficulties in carrying this out after the edict outlawing the cemeteries had been promulgated, and it would therefore seem more probable that the Christian authorities got to know beforehand, as might easily be the case, that something of the kind was likely to happen, so that the relics of the saints were removed to a place of safety while it was still possible to do it.

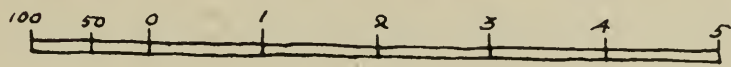
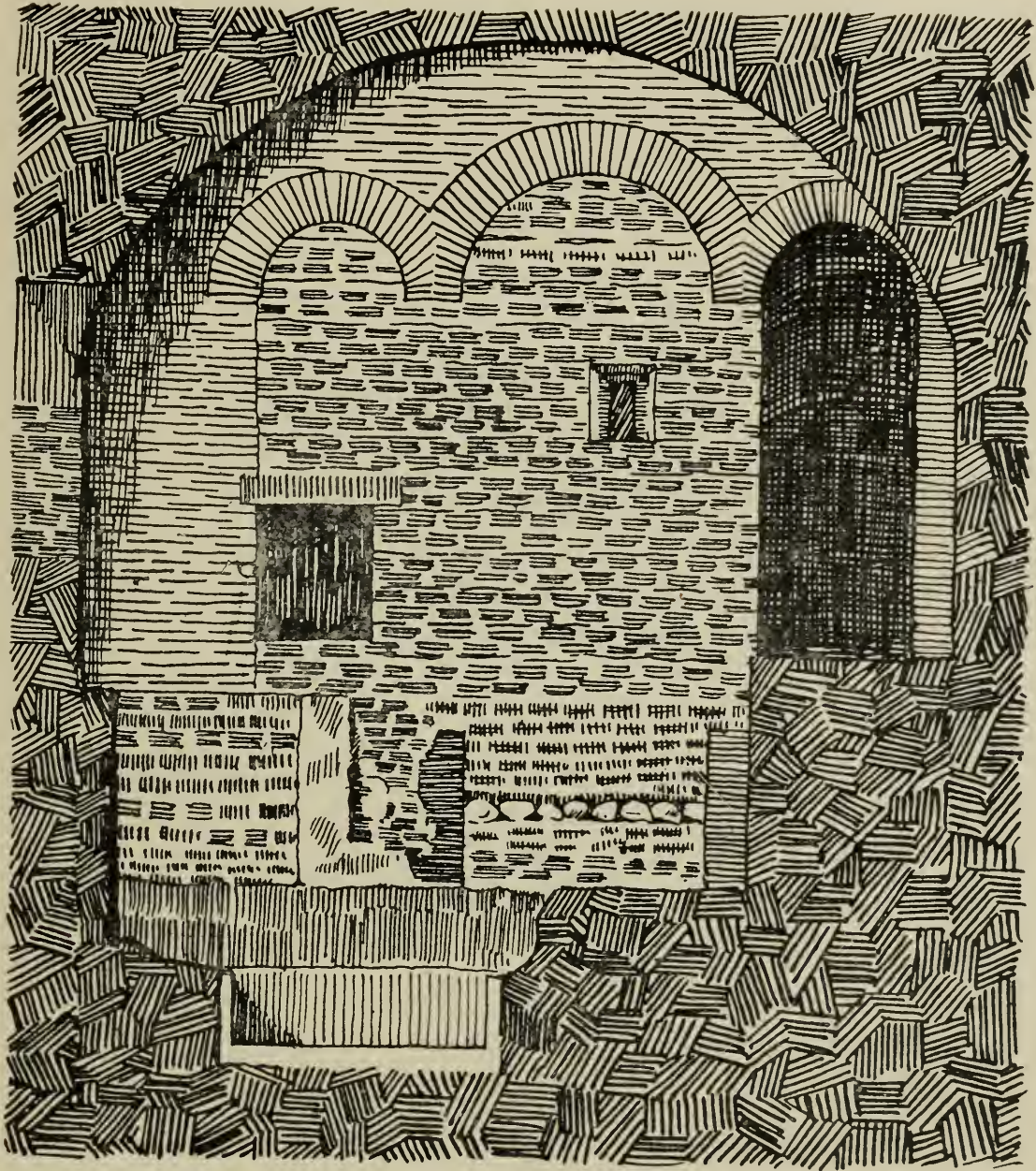
At S. Sebastiano, however, they were not laid again, as we should perhaps have expected they would be, in the tomb they had occupied before. It may be that this was thought too public, or too well known, in any case it was not utilised, but a new sepulchre was excavated for the purpose in the centre of the adjoining Platonica. This sepulchre, to which indeed, rather than to the chamber round it, the name of Platonica in strictness belongs, is still in existence, and is under the altar which now occupies the centre of the crypt. It is not generally accessible, but was examined carefully by Father Marchi, S.J., in the middle of the present century, and again by Monsignor De Waal and others in 1892-93. It is a square chamber,<sup>1</sup> measuring about eight feet each way, and covered with barrel vaulting, the highest part of which is eight feet three inches from the floor. The vaulting is of later date than the tomb. The floor is composed of two slabs of marble, separated the one from the other by a third slab laid vertically, thus forming a large double tomb, in which the sarcophagi of the apostles could be placed side by side. This tomb was certainly excavated after the crypt was built, as Signor Lugari shows by a very ingenious argument.<sup>2</sup> It was necessary, in order to sink the sepulchre to a sufficient depth, to remove some

<sup>1</sup> For the best description of it see Marucchi, *Memorie dei SS. Apostoli*, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Bessarione*, No. 17, p. 324.

of the polygonal stones of lava, of which we have already spoken, which formed the paved area in front of the original tomb, and underneath the later crypt of the Platonica. These stones were used, and may still be seen, in the wall of separation which now fills up the arches by which the two chambers had been originally put in communication. Now this wall is, necessarily, of a later date than the arches which it closes, while at the same time the method of its construction forbids us to suppose that it is as late as the fourth century. We conclude therefore that the sepulchre was excavated and the wall of separation was built at one and the same time, somewhere about the middle of the third century; that is, no doubt, in this year A.D. 258, when we know from other sources that the translation of the bodies took place. In the next century the Basilica of S. Sebastiano was built by St. Damasus<sup>1</sup> and both the Platonica and the old crypt adjoining were decorated with paintings. If a reference be made to the next plate, which is founded on a drawing by Signor Lugari, the whole of these rather complicated proceedings can be clearly traced. There can be seen the original sunk sepulchre of the first century, and the three arches which put the original chamber into communication with that of the Platonica. The original doorway is immediately under the central arch, which corresponds to it almost exactly. The masonry which fills up the doorway is less regular than the masonry to the left of it; and no doubt, if we could see it, also than that to the right; and contains the large pieces of stone which were removed when the second tomb was sunk. All three of the arches seem to have been walled up at this time, and the older tomb and chamber was covered up with earth to a depth of some feet, and seems to have remained so hidden until its

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 212; Lugari, *Le Catacombe*, p. 59.



### Scala Metrica

WALL SEPARATING THE TWO CHAMBERS AT THE PLATONIA.  
(Founded on a drawing by Sr. Lugari.)

[To face page 154.]



rediscovery in 1892. The aperture on the left seems to have been left open till the last moment, to enable the earth and stones to be removed, while the new tomb was being excavated within, and also, no doubt, to allow the bodies being brought in. It was then closed, leaving no communication with the crypt in which the apostles were, except by means of a little window in the centre to which, no doubt, some of the faithful, who were in the secret, came to pray. The arch on the right was reopened after the persecution was over, and formed the ordinary means of access to the Platonica, until a new entrance was made from the other side by Cardinal Borghese in the seventeenth century. The secret of the place in which the relics were hidden was no doubt most jealously guarded. The civil authorities were probably unaware that they had been moved at all, for they seem to have kept a careful watch for Christians at the tombs of the Vatican and the Ostian Way. The faithful of Rome no doubt knew that they had been removed and put in safety, for we have not any records of native Christians being caught at the tombs, but it is not likely that many were trusted with the knowledge of the place in which they now lay; for any concourse of pilgrims to the spot would have put the heathen authorities on the scent, and defeated the object for which the translation had been carried out. The foreign pilgrims, however, naturally knew nothing of what had happened, and, supposing the apostles to be still in their own tombs, went and prayed at these spots, regardless of the danger they were running, and, being captured there, were forthwith martyred.

Here, then, hidden under the floor of a crypt that was itself walled up and inaccessible, unvisited and unhonoured save by a faithful few, the bodies of the two great apostles lay all through the terrible years which closed the third century and began the fourth. Not till the year 306 did brighter times begin to show themselves. In that year,

the persecution was put a stop to by Maxentius so far as Rome and the West was concerned, although it went on longer in the East; and at once the idea seems to have been mooted that the bodies of the apostles might now be brought back to their own tombs. This, perhaps, affords an additional proof that the faithful generally did not know of the hiding-place at S. Sebastiano, and that it was, in consequence, impossible for them to venerate the relics as they would have wished.

The idea of bringing them back appears to have originated with St. Lucina, a wealthy Christian matron, whose zeal for the recovery and burial of the bodies of the martyrs, and careful reverence for their relics, meets us again and again in the histories of the period. She came to the Pope Marcellus, and persuaded him to undertake the task. The way in which it was executed is again very much in accordance with all that we otherwise know of the circumstances of the time. There is no question now of the grand processions or the *gloria hymnorum* which had accompanied the earlier translations. The persecution was over, indeed, and was not likely to break out again, but the cemeteries were still confiscated, and had not been restored to the Church.<sup>1</sup> Hence the utmost secrecy was necessary, and it was at night that everything was done. The body of St. Paul was taken back first, Lucina herself undertaking this task, and accomplishing it successfully. Then the same thing was done with that of St. Peter. This time the Pope himself took the responsibility, and, assisted by some of the clergy of Rome, carried the body back in the midst of the night, and laid it once more in its own tomb in the Vatican, in the midst of all the bishops who had followed St. Peter, first on his throne and then in his martyrdom. There it was visited, we may be sure, so soon as the

<sup>1</sup> They were not restored until the conversion of Constantine and the edict of Milan.

glad news spread in the city, by many thousands of his followers, to whom the veneration of the apostle's relics had hitherto been but a tale that their fathers had told them; and by not a few whose memories could stretch back over the terrible years of the last great persecutions of the Church, to the time when those relics had been in their own tomb, before the commencement of the forty years and more during which they had been hidden and banished from their home.

So ends the tale of the strange wanderings of those holy relics during the first three centuries. It is a singular and fortunate chance, which has enabled us, all these years afterwards, to see so much of the places in which they were successively laid, and thus to reconstruct so much of their history. Henceforth our story will be no longer of the wanderings to which they were subjected, for they were never moved again, but rather of the wonderful growth of the humble *memoria* in which we leave them now, until it becomes the glorious church whose spreading dome rises so magnificently above the spot to-day.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE BUILDING OF THE BASILICA.

DURING the ages of persecution, even in the times at which persecution was keenest, the Christians of Rome had been able to meet together for public worship in two kinds of places, to each of which allusion has already been made. These were—the palaces of Christian nobles, and the cemeteries in which their dead were buried. In the one they were protected by the rights of private property, and by the customs of the time, which rendered it easy for large numbers of clients to frequent the house of their patron without attracting remark ; and in the other, by the laws of the state with reference to places of burial, and by the well-known respect of the Romans for the remains and resting-places of the dead. From the conditions which necessitated worship being carried on in these two kinds of places alone there have flowed very important results, which are impressed clearly enough on Christian worship as it has come down to us to-day. For instance, it resulted from the necessity the first Christians were in of registering themselves as burial guilds, and worshipping in the cemeteries, that there grew up the custom of offering Mass on the tombs of the martyrs. This again has left its traces still in the dedication of our churches in honour of the saints, and in the rule which prescribes the excavation of a tiny “sepulchre” in the slab of every Catholic altar, and the entombment therein, practically with the ancient burial rites, of some

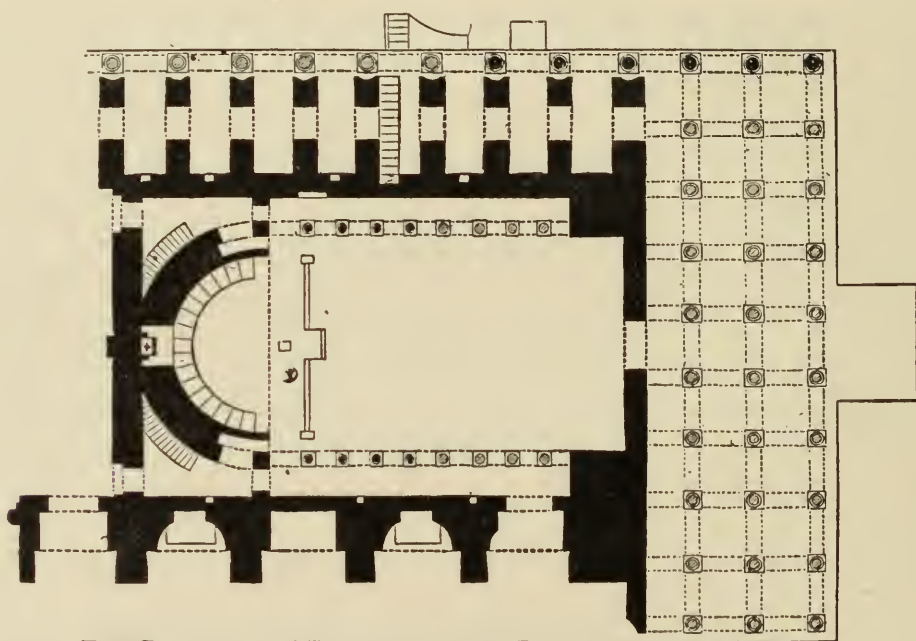
relics at least, in default of the entire body, of one of the martyrs.

Similarly, from the necessity of using the private palaces of nobles for places of Christian worship, we get the shape and general arrangement of our churches, and the name of "basilica" which was given to them. There is no ground, apparently, for the widely spread belief that Constantine handed over some of the basilicas or public law courts of Rome for Christian use, and that these became the first churches. The law courts were needed after Constantine's conversion, just as much as before it, for the purposes for which they had been constructed; and not a single instance can be brought forward, either in Rome itself or anywhere else outside the city, of such a building having been handed over at this period and used for Christian worship, although this may possibly have happened sometimes at a later period when the decay of Rome had rendered the buildings unnecessary for their secular purpose.<sup>1</sup> Again, there is no ground whatever for the assertion that these public basilicas were copied in shape and general arrangements, and so served as the models upon which the first Christian churches were constructed, and from which they drew their name of basilica; a name which from its meaning of "King's house" or palace was obviously enough appropriate to them. Both of these theories alike rest upon no more solid basis than the identity of name and of general shape which undoubtedly exists in each of these two classes of buildings, but neither has sufficiently taken account of the historical facts which can be ascertained.

The truth seems to lie in the forgotten fact, that, besides the public basilicas of ancient Rome, there were also private ones in existence, known by the same name and built according to the same general plan, which

<sup>1</sup>See for a detailed argument on this point, Zestermann, *Die antiken und die Christlichen Basiliken*, Leipzig, 1847.

formed an almost invariable part of every nobleman's palace. The basilica is enumerated by Vitruvius,<sup>1</sup> together with the library and baths, as an integral part of the arrangements of such a palace, though he does not give rules for its construction, but contents himself with referring to the rules he has already laid down for the building of public basilicas; since the same rules, he says, will do for both alike. When, therefore, the Christians met in these palaces for purpose of worship, as they did throughout the centuries of persecution, it was precisely in this basilica



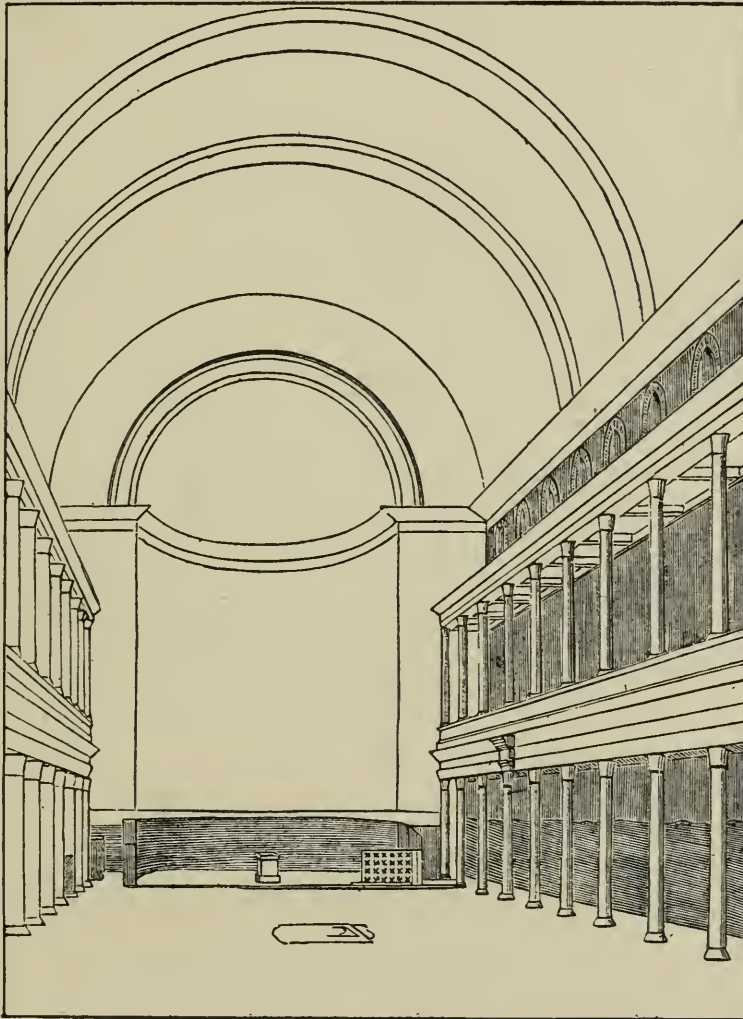
Plan of Basilica Julia, on the Palatine at Rome.

of the palace, the great hall as we should call it, that the meeting was held and the Mass was offered. In this way the name had come into use as equivalent to church before the persecutions were over, and when therefore there could as yet be no possibility of using the public basilicas for such a purpose. For instance, in a letter to the bishop in the year 303,<sup>2</sup> the term is thus applied to denote the meeting-place of the Christians, *Galatius unus ex lege*

<sup>1</sup> *The Architecture of Vitruvius*, translated by J. Gwilt, F.S.A., London, 1826, pp. 126, 180.

<sup>2</sup> *Gesta purg. Felicis*, ed. Routh (*Reliquiæ Sacræ*, lib. iv.).

*vestra publice epistolas saluatorias de basilica protulerit.* This basilica could only have been the private basilica of a palace. Of these private basilicas the best remaining example is that which belongs to the palace of Domitian on the Palatine Hill at Rome, the ground plan of which still remains perfectly distinct, and might almost pass for



Conjectural restoration, by Mr. G. G. Scott, of the Basilica Julia.

that of a Christian church without any change being required. It has, what the public basilicas by no means always possessed, the semicircular tribune at the end, which is so invariable a part of the Christian churches known by this name. Historically too we know that many of the great basilicas now existing did actually form

part once of a great palace. This was the case for instance with the Lateran Basilica. Constantine probably did not build the Lateran. It was an existing palace belonging to the emperors, and he made it over as it was to the Pope. The basilica or great hall of the palace became the Cathedral of Rome, and only needed the requisite fittings to enable it to serve its new purpose. In the same way the Sessorian Basilica, S. Croce in Gierusalemme as we call it now, was the great hall of the Sessorian Palace, which was the property of St. Helena. It is not said that St. Helena built the Sessorian Basilica, but she made over the palace, and the basilica of the palace was adapted to its new use. So again at Treves the remains of some of the rooms of the palace of which the existing cathedral was once the basilica can still be traced.<sup>1</sup> Other instances could no doubt be brought forward without difficulty, but these are enough to prove the point, that the true origin of the basilica is to be looked for not in the public law courts of Rome, but rather in the private halls of the palaces of Christian nobles, in which worship had been carried on from the first years of our religion.

This is not the place for a long discussion on the origin either of Christian churches or of Christian worship, and we will do no more, before passing on to the story of the basilica that Constantine built over the body of St. Peter, than just allude to a third influence which is very marked in the arrangements for worship of all the Christian basilicas of Rome. This is the influence of the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle. No one whose attention has been drawn to it can fail to be struck with the coincidence between the surroundings of the altar in a basilica at Rome, and the vision of the heavenly worship

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Coat of Treves*, by Fr. Clarke, S.J., p. 20. There are two noteworthy passages bearing on this point in the *Clementine Recognitions*, iv., 6, and x., 21.

seen and recorded by St. John.<sup>1</sup> In each case there is the throne, occupied in the heavenly temple by the Triune God, and in the earthly one by him who is His representative, and wields His power within the limits of his jurisdiction in the Church. On each side of the throne, occupying the semicircular seats round about the throne, are the four and twenty ancients or presbyters. In the midst of the throne and of the four and twenty elders, that is in the centre of the chord of the apse, is the altar, and on it "the Lamb standing as it were slain" and receiving adoration, being "censed with golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of saints". And, lastly, "under the altar," in the precise place that is occupied in these churches by the tomb of the martyrs, St. John sees "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held". Other coincidences might easily be noted. But even these are too exact and too numerous to be wholly due to chance, and we have further evidence that it is no mere coincidence, in the mosaic decorations which were erected contemporaneously with the churches, and which again and again depict the visions of the Apocalypse for us. Thus we may see, to note but a few examples, the Lamb with the sealed book and the seven candlesticks at SS. Cosmas and Damian; the twelve stars and the emblems of the evangelists at S. Clemente; and at S. Paolo the white-robed ancients casting down their crowns before the throne.<sup>2</sup> We cannot doubt, therefore, that the similarity is due to an intentional imitation of the imagery of the vision, and that as the worship of the Old Covenant was prescribed to Moses in the holy Mountain of Sinai, so also the worship of the New Covenant was deliberately formed in accord-

<sup>1</sup> Apoc., iv. and v.

<sup>2</sup> In this connection *cf.* Ciampini, *De edificiis*, p. 43; and *Vet. Mon.* Also Mr. G. G. Scott, "Essay on English Church Architecture".

ance with that which God had revealed to St. John as taking place in the courts of heaven itself.

We have no record of the date of the building of the great basilica on the Vatican Hill, but there can be no doubt that it was really, as tradition has constantly asserted, the work of Constantine himself. In such a case tradition might be safely trusted, even if unsupported; for our written records in the *Liber Pontificalis* are not so very far from being actually contemporary; but in this instance support is forthcoming in the shape of two monumental proofs. The mosaics of the principal arch, which spanned the nave some distance in front of the altar, bore a dedicatory inscription which recorded the fact:—

QUOD DUCE TE MUNDUS SURREXIT AD ASTRA TRIUMPHANS  
HANC CONSTANTINUS VICTOR TIBI CONDIDIT AULAM.

For the existence of this inscription we have abundant evidence, for it was copied by pilgrims again and again while it was still legible. Maphæus Vegius<sup>1</sup> copied it in the fourteenth century, and says it was on the great triumphal arch, *in arcu majore ac triumphali*, in letters the very ancient and dilapidated appearance of which showed that they dated back to the time of Constantine himself. Before this it had been copied by Sabinus,<sup>2</sup> who places it *in arcu prelato*, for which De Rossi, quite unnecessarily, desires to read *præalto*. Before Sabinus, and at a much earlier date, they are recorded by the *Einsiedeln pilgrim*<sup>3</sup> in the eighth century. The mosaic also showed the figure of the Emperor Constantine himself presented by St. Peter to our Lord, and offering to Him the new basilica he had built. The memory of this mosaic had entirely perished, although the inscription which formed part of it had survived, and attention has only recently been drawn by Mr. Frothingham, an American archæ-

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Christ.*, ii., p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 410.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

ologist, to a passage in a work, *De Concilio*, published by Cardinal Jacobacci in 1538, which gives a slight description of it.<sup>1</sup> This chance allusion constitutes at present all the information we have on the subject. The other proof, although since we have known of this mosaic no further proof seems to be needed, is that in the rebuilding of the basilica in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many tiles, etc., were discovered bearing the name of the emperor, and therefore indisputably belonging to the period of his reign.<sup>2</sup>

The shape and size of the new basilica was largely determined by the conditions existing at the spot. As we have said, the tomb of the apostle was a two storied building, of which the lower half was underground. It therefore would stand up some fifteen feet or so above the level of the ground. This tomb was situated near the wall of the great circus originally built by Caligula, but more generally known as the Circus of Nero, and was separated from it by a paved road which skirted the circus. No large church could in consequence be built round the tomb, unless the circus were first destroyed. This, therefore, Constantine determined to do, and to utilise as far as possible the foundations and materials which were thus provided ready to his hand. The circus was surrounded by three walls running parallel to one another, with arches running from one to another so as to form the foundations of rows of seats for the accommodation of the spectators. These three walls he determined to utilise as the foundations for the exterior wall of his church, and for the two rows of columns which were to

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Bull. arch. cr.*, 1883, p. 91. The passage in Jacobacci is as follows, "Cum adhuc temporibus nostris fuerit in ecclesia S. Petri in frontispitio majoris arcus ante altare Constantinus in Musico depictus literis aureis ostendens Salvatori et beato Petro Apostolo ecclesiam ipsam a se ædificatam, viz., ecclesiam S. Petri". It is on the last page.

<sup>2</sup> Ciampini, *De Vet. Mon.*

form his double aisles. In this way the dimensions of the two aisles were more or less fixed. The width of the nave was also a dimension which was determined for him, for it obviously had to be twice the distance from the outer wall of the circus, on which the inner row of columns was to stand, to the centre of St. Peter's tomb. Judging from indications in the existing building, however, this last dimension was not accurately adhered to, and it is probable that the tomb of St. Peter was not quite exactly in the centre of the church. There is also some evidence which may mean that the sides of the tomb were not quite parallel with the line of the circus which had now determined the axis of the church. The difference, however, was not so important that it could not be overcome, so that it would not strike the eye, and the economy of utilising the old foundations was no doubt great at the moment, though it was an economy which was to cost dear in the end, for it was precisely the weakness of those foundations, together with the hurried construction of the church from old materials, that caused it in later years to lean over to that side, until it became absolutely dangerous, and was taken down. The only dimension in plan that was left to Constantine to determine was the length of the church, and this was no doubt decided by considerations of proportion to the width that was already fixed. The tomb was arranged to be in the place of honour, bisecting the chord of the apse, which was the position which the altar always occupied in the churches of the earliest period. The high altar had to be over the tomb, so that the Holy Sacrifice might be offered over the body of St. Peter himself. So far as can be ascertained, the front of the altar, that is of course the western side, at which the officiant would stand facing eastwards down the church, was arranged to be exactly over the end of the sarcophagus below, so that the spot where the chalice would stand would be exactly over St. Peter's head.





The level of the church would seem to have been some eight or ten feet above the level of the ground, and therefore about half way up the upper chamber of the tomb, which accordingly stood up some eight feet above the floor of the church. The question of the ground level is a little complicated by the fact that the church was built on the lower slope of the Vatican Hill. Still it is evident that, when the level of the church was decided on, it was fixed to be some eight feet, or a little more, below the level of the top of the tomb. It was therefore necessary, if the altar was to be placed on the top, and the tomb itself was to be left as far as possible without change, to provide a raised platform in the tribune, so as to give access to the western side of the altar. This was accordingly done, and two flights of seven porphyry steps, one on each side of the tomb, led up to this raised platform, and so to the altar.<sup>1</sup>

Now however a difficulty at once presented itself. If a massive stone altar were to be placed on the top of the upper chamber of the tomb, it would of course, unless special precautions were taken, have crashed through the roof, or the platform which had now taken the place of the roof. This was obviated in a very simple way. The whole of the lower chamber was filled up with masonry, except immediately above the sarcophagus, which was either now itself lifted five feet up, the whole level of the floor of the vault being raised to that extent, or else had been before standing on a support or pedestal five feet high, to the level of which the vault was now raised. This, we venture to suggest, is the true meaning of the enigmatical record in the *Liber Pontificalis*, which details what Constantine actually did ; a record which dates probably from about A.D. 530, that is within a hundred years of the execution of the work, and which may possibly be based upon information that is strictly contemporary.

<sup>1</sup> Severano, *Le sette chiese di Roma*, p. 111.

“*Eodem tempore Augustus Constantinus fecit basilicam beato Petro Apostolo in templum Apollinis, cujus loculum cum corpus Sancti Petri ita recondit : ipsum loculum undique ex ære cypro conclusit, quod est immobile : ad caput, pedes V. ; ad pedes, pedes V. ; ad latus dextrum, pedes V. ; ad latus sinistrum, pedes V. ; subter, pedes V. ; supra, pedes V. ; sic inclusit corpus beati Petri Apostoli et recondit.*”<sup>1</sup> That is, as we may freely translate it, “At this time Constantine built a basilica to blessed Peter the Apostle, near the temple of Apollo. And he hid away the stone coffin which contained the body after this manner. He enclosed the coffin altogether in bronze from Cyprus, and then *built the whole up with masonry, (quod est immobile)*, five feet at the head, and five at the feet, five feet on the right hand and also on the left, five feet below and the same above. After this manner he enclosed the body of blessed Peter and hid it away.” That the word *immobile* cannot agree with *loculus*, which would require *immobilis*, is evident : though we must not insist too much on grammar with a writer who puts *cum corpus*. The word is more naturally taken with what follows, and if the translation “solid” is admissible it gives an intelligible sense at once. However it seems clear that the space actually above the coffin to the ceiling was left free, because not only does the passage before us in the *Liber Pontificalis* go on to tell us that Constantine made a gold cross and put it “above the body of blessed Peter above the bronze with which he had shut it in, exactly fitting the place,”<sup>2</sup> but also because we know that in after years objects of devotion were lowered through the ceiling to touch the coffin and so be hallowed as relics of the apostle. We must also suppose

<sup>1</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne ; p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> “Super corpus beati Petri, supra aere quod conclusit fecit crucem ex auro purissimo, pens. lib. cl. L. in mensura locus.”

a passage left open from the doorway, for visits were certainly paid after this time *ad corpus*.

This work, however, although it provided a foundation for what was to come above, did not of itself help towards supporting the great altar, and we have therefore next to ask what it was that Constantine did on the higher level to form the actual base on which the altar was to stand. Here the *Liber Pontificalis* fails us, for it gives no details except as to what was done just round the coffin itself, but we can look for ourselves at the place, (since this part immediately below the altar is not below ground but may be visited by going down to the confession, and into the crypts), and can see how the altar is held up now, which will probably be in the same way as it was then. Under the altar at the present time, as any one may see by examining the plan of the crypts given on p. 314, there is a solid belt of masonry seven feet thick, which, however, is pierced in the centre by an arched recess which goes almost through, and is terminated by an apsidal end. This recess, which is the celebrated *Confessio*, on which so much has been written, and of which we shall give a minute account presently, is now only about two feet four inches wide, but there is reason to think it was originally wider, probably as nearly as possible four feet. On plan therefore it was seven feet by four feet : that is, it is precisely the same size as we have thought it likely that the *loculus* of St. Peter would be. Moreover it lies exactly above it, for in its centre is still in existence the orifice through which, as we have said, handkerchiefs and other objects were lowered on to the tomb. The floor of the present niche of the confession is a little above the level of the floor of the old basilica, but here again there have been alterations, and the older floor of the niche, which can still be traced, was exactly on the level of the basilica, and therefore was some feet above the level of the floor of the old upper chamber of the tomb. The floor of the

niche, which consisted of marble slabs, was therefore put in only for convenience, and underneath there was an empty space intervening between it and the floor of the upper chamber, which was also the ceiling of the actual tomb.

We will not examine further just now into the actual state of this niche of the confession, which we now understand to be exactly over St. Peter himself, and to form part of the upper chamber or *memoria* which Anacletus erected over his tomb in the first century, for at this stage we shall only be confused by the alterations which have been necessary in the fifteen centuries which have passed. We have now enough before us to enable us to understand Constantine's plan, and we go on accordingly to trace this out, reserving till a later time the careful examination of the existing remains and the reconstruction of the historical occurrences which made the successive changes necessary. Constantine had already, as we have seen, provided a foundation for the works that were to be constructed above, by filling up with solid masonry the actual vault in which St. Peter lay, leaving only a passage of access to the tomb, and also a clear space seven feet by four feet immediately above the actual coffin itself. The upper chamber, measuring in size seventeen feet by fourteen feet or thereabouts, still remained untouched. Above this, and in the centre of it, there was to be erected a stone altar, probably, in accordance with the customs of those times, nearly square, and measuring, we may conjecture, about eight feet by seven feet. In order to support the weight of this altar Constantine now built out two masses of masonry each measuring seven feet by five feet, from the side walls of the chamber, thus dividing the old *memoria* into three parts, of which the centre portion measured seven feet by fourteen feet, and each of the others five feet by fourteen feet more or less. The diagrams opposite p. 144 will make this clear.

The floor of the front or eastern portion was raised to the general level of the basilica, and the front wall and roof, which otherwise would have obscured the view of the altar, were removed. Indeed the whole of the roof had probably been removed first of all. The side walls of this portion were allowed, at any rate in part, to remain, and against them right and left were placed the two flights of porphyry steps which led up to the tribune. The hinder part remained altogether unchanged and formed a small chamber under the tribune, approached by a passage from the back, and at a later date was made into the chapel which, slightly altered and enlarged by Paul V. at the time of the rebuilding of the basilica, is still used by all priests who obtain permission to say Mass over the body of St. Peter. It retained and shared with the niche in front the title of the Confession of St. Peter, to which each alike were entitled, since each formed part of the original *memoria* or "confession" erected by Anacletus above the tomb. The centre portion, now reduced to a space seven feet by four feet only in extent, and fifteen feet in height, was divided into two chambers one above the other, by the insertion of a floor of marble slabs on the level of the basilica. The lower of these two chambers was yet further reduced by rough masonry which supported these slabs, so that it finally measured only about a yard either way, and being entirely enclosed served only as a passage of communication between the upper chamber and the tomb itself. The upper portion was finished off with a rounded end towards the western side, and became the niche of the confession very much as we know it to-day, lying immediately over the actual sarcophagus of St. Peter and being placed in communication with it by means of two cataracts, or gratings which could be raised, the one in the new floor on the level of the basilica, and the other in the old floor of the *memoria* which was also the ceiling of the vault in which the tomb itself was. By

raising these cataracts objects could be lowered down to touch the top of the sarcophagus itself. In two respects the niche of the confession differed notably in those times from its present state. It was wider, as has already been said, and instead of being, as it is now, notably to the left of the centre of the altar above it, its centre was nearly, not quite, underneath the centre of the altar. Secondly, instead of being roofed as it is now by a circular arch, it was bounded by a flat ceiling of marble, which ceiling was in fact the lower side of the *predella* or footpace of the altar above. Whether this *predella* was of one piece or not we have no means of saying, for though it is probably *in situ* it is entirely hidden, and no part of it can be reached. However, since it would be exceedingly difficult to procure and transport a piece of marble sufficiently large; and since, further, there was no real reason why it should be in a single piece; it is more probable that it was composed of several pieces of marble placed side by side, and supported by the two masonry piers already spoken of which formed the two sides of the "niche". Since the *predella* must have been at least seven or eight feet in width, the pieces of marble would project nearly two feet on either side over the piers, and in this way were rendered easily capable of bearing the weight of the altar which was placed over them. Round the altar four columns of porphyry held up the *ciborium*, or marble canopy above it, and on the two sides, abutting on the walls of the old *memoria*, were the two flights of seven porphyry steps, leading down from the higher level of the tribune to the level of the rest of the church. The niche of the confession was closed with metal gates, and in front of it on the floor of the church was placed a row of six curious columns called *vitinæ* from their shape and carving, which suggested the growth of a vine, which had been brought, it was said, from the temple of Jerusalem, and one of which was held in very special veneration, since

it was said that our Lord Himself had leaned against it on one of the occasions on which He had addressed the people in that place. These six columns were united by *pectoralia*, or breast-high marble railings, and formed a kind of vestibule in front of the confession, separating it from the choir, which was also surrounded by similar *pectoralia* like the existing one, the only one of the kind which still survives, at S. Clemente. The tribune or apse itself was gorgeously decorated with mosaics. In the centre, behind the altar, rose the papal throne, and stone seats for the cardinals were on either side, as in so many other Roman churches.

The width of the steps on each side cannot have been less than ten feet, because we know that the porphyry of which they were composed was utilised in the new church to form the two steps running across the whole width of the nave, and leading up to the tribune. The width of the nave of new St. Peter's being about seventy feet, it follows that the porphyry which will make two steps of seventy feet, would, when used to form fourteen steps, as was formerly the case, have sufficed to allow of a breadth of about ten feet. Moreover the longest piece of porphyry still existing is just about ten feet long, and probably formed one of these steps. In any case this proves that the two flights were not less than ten feet in breadth, and that they were not much more is shown by the fact that the distance between the wall of the old *memoria* and that of the existing chapel of S. Salvatorino in the crypts, each of which are old walls which existed in the old basilica, is, as far as can be ascertained, not more than thirteen or fourteen feet. Now it is between these walls that the steps must anciently have been, for they are spoken of in an entry in the *Liber Pontificalis* as "adjoining the confession on the right hand and the left".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Duchesne, i., p. 510.

Access to the chamber at the back of the tomb, the third portion of the old *memoria* or upper chamber, was given by a circular passage running beneath the tribune and following the wall of the apse on the inner side. From the centre of this semicircular passage another passage led directly into the chamber. Very possibly too there was a doorway leading through the wall of the apse and so giving access to this chamber from outside, but it cannot now be stated with certainty whether this was the case in the original Church of Constantine or not. If it was not, such a doorway was certainly made by the end of the fourth century, and led into the so-called "Temple of Probus," which was built on to the apse in the position occupied by the Lady chapel in some of our Gothic cathedrals.

Near the entrance from the church into this semicircular passage on the southern side there was, we may suppose, a doorway which shut off the flight of steps of which we have already spoken in the last chapter, as forming the means of access to the subterranean vault in which the body lay. Such a staircase, judging from the analogy of similar tombs of the period which have survived, *e.g.*, the well-known tombs on the Latin Way, would be rather steep, probably one in one, with a tread and rise alike of about ten inches. There would be exactly space enough for such a staircase in the place that we have assigned for it, and probably the old steps were simply left in the same position they had always occupied ever since the tomb was originally constructed in A.D. 68. The distance between the inside of the wall of the semicircular passage and the outside of the wall of the old *memoria* (which last presumably corresponds exactly with the wall of the vault beneath, upon which it is founded), is about fifteen or sixteen feet, and since fifteen feet is also about the probable amount of the descent which would have to be made, the necessary space is exactly obtained. A

reference to the plan and section on page 144 will make all this clear and intelligible enough.

We have now succeeded—by the double process of arguing inductively as to the probable results of building a basilica round a two-storied tomb, situated as we know that of St. Peter to have been, without disturbing the tomb more than might be absolutely necessary, and also deductively from the appearance of the tomb and its surroundings as we have it to-day—in arriving at a very plausible reconstruction of the arrangements of Constantine's basilica.

It now remains to test that reconstruction by all the means that are available—that is, first, by all the existing records and notices of the tomb and its surroundings, prior to the great changes of the sixteenth century; secondly, by the various churches that copied or imitated the arrangements of St. Peter's before that period; and thirdly, by a more detailed examination of the existing confession and its surroundings with a view to proving that it not only may have been, but actually has been, evolved from just such a construction as we have already sketched.

Before, however, we go on to make this detailed examination of the evidence, it will be well once more to insist on two or three of the more salient points which have been so far established, in order to ensure readers having a firm grasp of these, for otherwise it will not be possible clearly to understand the argument that is to follow.

The first point then, to be most carefully noted and remembered, is that the confession of old St. Peter's was not like those which are commonly known by that name to-day, *viz.*, a subterranean excavation in front of the altar with steps leading down into it by which nearer access is given to the tomb of the martyr. On the contrary it was a niche or recess under the altar on the level of the church itself, and therefore approached without any

steps at all ; the altar above it being raised some seven or eight feet above the general level of the church. The reason why St. Peter's thus differed from other churches was that St. Peter's tomb, which was the decisive element that determined the form which the construction of this part of the church should take, was a two-storied tomb, having a *memoria* or upper chamber as well as the subterranean vault ; while the tombs of the martyrs over which the other churches of Rome were built were simple subterranean vaults. The confession in St. Peter's was a portion of the old upper chamber, the confession in other churches led down to the vault itself.

On this point almost every writer on the subject has fallen into error, for they have all assumed, almost as a matter of course, that the confession of St. Peter's was like all others with which they were acquainted, and that it was therefore beneath the general level of the church and approached by steps. We may quote amongst others who have fallen into this mistake, Bonanni<sup>1</sup> Lonigo,<sup>2</sup> Borgia,<sup>3</sup> Mignanti,<sup>4</sup> Marrucchi,<sup>5</sup> Armellini,<sup>6</sup> Grisar,<sup>7</sup> and even De Rossi<sup>8</sup> himself.

The reason is simple enough. The new basilica is raised eleven feet above the level of the old one. Hence the confession, which was on the level of the old basilica, has to be reached by steps from the floor of the new one. They forgot that after going down the steps, and so reaching the level of the confession, one is standing on the actual floor of the old basilica. The truth was, however, pointed out long ago by Sarti and Settele,<sup>9</sup> and after them by Duchesne,<sup>10</sup> which makes the mistake of the more recent

<sup>1</sup> *Templi Vaticani Historia*, p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> *Confessio Vaticana*, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> *Le Memorie dei SS. Apostoli*.

<sup>7</sup> *Le tombe Apostoliche*.

<sup>9</sup> *Appendix ad Dionysium*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, I., p. 194.

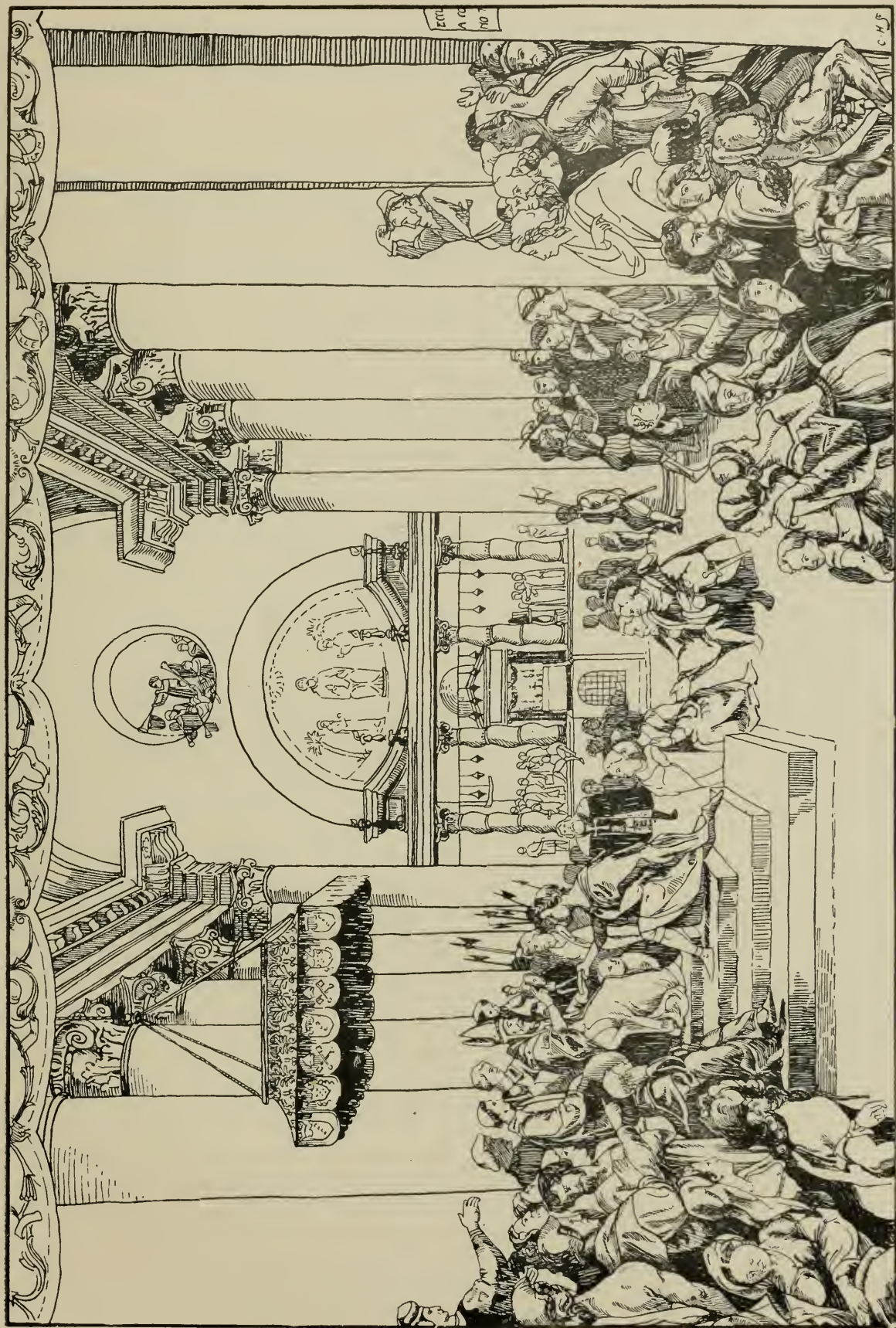
<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Bonanni.

<sup>4</sup> *Basilica Vaticana*, p. 177.

<sup>6</sup> *Chiese di Roma*, p. 724.

<sup>8</sup> *Inscr. Chr. II.*, p. 236.





THE DONATION OF CONSTANTINE.  
(Fresco by Raphael in the Vatican, showing Altar of Old St. Peter's.)

[To face page 176.]



of the above quoted writers the more extraordinary. Moreover there exists a pictorial representation of the place, trustworthy in this point if in little else, in the well-known fresco of Raphael in the Vatican, representing the Donation of Constantine. A pen and ink drawing from this picture will be found opposite page 176.

The second point which it is important to remember is that the small chamber at the back under the tribune, which was later on made into a chapel, probably by Gregory the Great, shared the name of confession with the niche under the high altar. The reason for this again is clear enough, for each alike had originally formed part of the first confession or *memoria* built above the tomb. No writer on this subject, so far as we know, has ever noticed the fact that there were in old St. Peter's two places known by the name of "confession"; and hence all manner of confusion and misunderstandings have arisen; for the references to an altar of the "confession" are numerous, and it is obvious that the niche under the high altar can never have had an altar within it. Another source of mistake has arisen from the fact that this Chapel of the Confession, being under the tribune, and preserving the old level of the upper chamber unchanged, was of course on a lower level than the basilica. Hence we frequently meet with the expression "descending to the confession," an expression which no doubt has helped to increase the misconception about the confession of which we have already spoken.

Thirdly, we must remember that there was not, and never could have been, any access to the vault containing the tomb from the eastern side. The original entrance must have been from the south, and it is there that it must have been also in the basilica of Constantine. Hence, if any traces of that entrance still exist at the present time, it is on the southern side, and in the little Chapel of S. Salvatorino in the crypts, that they will be

found. For this Chapel of S. Salvatorino is in fact the commencement of the old semicircular passage that led underneath the tribune, round the inside of the apse, to the Chapel of the Confession.

Bearing these three points carefully in mind we now go on to examine such documents and monuments of the past as may perhaps, on the one hand, afford a test of the truth of the theories at which we have arrived, while, on the other, supposing the truth of those theories to be established, they may add new details to those we have already been able to obtain.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### VICISSITUDES OF A THOUSAND YEARS.

THERE are at least two distinct tests to which we may subject the theories sketched out in the last chapter, with a view to discovering how nearly we have approached to the recovery of the true history of the tomb. The first of these two tests is to be found in the various allusions to the place, amounting sometimes to more or less exact descriptions of it, which are still extant in the writings of past centuries which have come down to us. If our theories be true, it will clearly follow that these allusions and descriptions will become more intelligible to us through the light which they afford. Passages which hitherto have seemed obscure will now have an obvious meaning ; and others, the interpretation of which has been considered doubtful, will be seen to be really unambiguous. On the other hand, if the theories be unsound and untrue, the fact will be made evident the moment these records of the past are examined ; for passages which are already obscure will be rendered more difficult of interpretation than ever ; while words and phrases will often crop up which it will be impossible to bring into accord with the theories which we are endeavouring to prove. In these records, therefore, we have ready to our hands an admirable touchstone, on which to try whether the ideas at which we have so far arrived have any historical value, or whether they are only ingenious dreamings, mere edifices of cards, destitute of solid foundation, which the first

breath of true investigation is sufficient to destroy. This test, therefore, we propose to employ, and further, we propose, that we may leave no possible loophole for mistake, to go on to apply another test which is almost equally searching, and that is the comparison of the appearance of the tomb, as we have reconstructed it, with other edifices of a similar period and purpose, and with the various imitations and reproductions of itself which were from time to time constructed in Rome and in other countries. The basilica of St. Peter was for many centuries the centre of Christian devotion. New churches that were built in the city of Rome were naturally often constructed more or less on its model, and copied the arrangements of its altar. These churches have in some cases survived almost unaltered, and so we are still able to study in them what is certainly a conscious approximation, even if only a rough one, to the condition of St. Peter's at the various periods at which they were built. Again, pilgrims from foreign countries came to Rome to visit the tomb of the apostle. When they got back to their own country they were desirous of enabling their fellow-countrymen, to whom the long, expensive and dangerous journey to Rome was an impossible undertaking, to know something of the appearance of the shrine they had visited; and perhaps also to gain some of the spiritual privileges which a pilgrimage to that shrine would have obtained for them. So they built churches at home, which were designed more or less exactly after the model of St. Peter's at Rome, though of course on a less magnificent scale, and got them enriched with indulgences and other privileges which could be obtained by those who came on pilgrimage to them. That was the origin of many of our own churches in England, and notably of the Abbey of Peterborough—the great church which is now Peterborough Cathedral. In some cases, the portions of such churches

which were imitated from St. Peter's can still be traced, and in them we have another test by which to try the exactness and truth of our theories and reconstructions. We proceed then to apply these two tests in order. Our first task will be to quote the most important passages in ancient writers which bear upon the condition or appearance of the tomb—or, in later years, of the altar of the basilica—pointing out, as we go on, how far each passage either confirms the ideas at which we have arrived, or is at variance with them.

I. *Before the time of Constantine, A.D. 67-325.*

Our authorities for this period are the *Liber Pontificalis*; the apocryphal Acts of St. Peter; the Acts of various martyrs; and one or two allusions in the writings of the fathers. In the form in which we have them, none of these authorities rank as contemporary, except of course the last. The *Liber Pontificalis*, in this part, took its present form about the end of the fourth century, the various Acts of the saints generally not earlier than the sixth. They are, however, in almost every case based upon earlier records, and possibly often on contemporary ones. The tomb, it will be remembered, was at this period, if our theories be correct, an ordinary sepulchral edifice such as were common at the time; at first wholly subterranean, but later with a chamber above ground, standing among others close to a road which ran along the side of Nero's Circus.

1. *Passio sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli*.<sup>1</sup>—  
“The bodies of the holy apostles were kept at the place called Catacumba, at the third milestone on the Appian Way, for the space of one year and seven months, until the places in which their bodies were laid had been constructed. And they were brought back thence with triumph and singing (*cum gloria hymnorum*) and the body

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Lipsius, p. 175.

of St. Peter was laid on the Vatican at the Naumachia (*in Vaticano Naumachiæ*), and that of St. Paul on the Ostian Way at the second milestone ; where answers are granted to prayer for ever and ever. Amen."

2. *Liber Pontificalis*.—Peter "was buried on the Aurelian Way, at the temple of Apollo (*via Aurelia, in templum Apollinis*), near the place where he was crucified, near the palace of Nero, on the Vatican, near the *Territorium Triumphale*".

"(Anacletus) constructed and arranged the *memoria* of blessed Peter, inasmuch as he had been ordained priest by blessed Peter, and also other burying-places in which bishops might be laid. Here too he was himself buried, close to the body of blessed Peter."<sup>1</sup>

3. *Caius*, a Roman presbyter, who lived at the beginning of the third century, writing against the Catechrygian heretics, says:—

"I can show you the trophies (*tropæa*) of the apostles, for if you go on the Vatican or on the Ostian Way there will meet you the trophies of those who founded the Church."<sup>2</sup>

This is the earliest mention of the tomb to which we can assign a date. It proves that, 150 years after the time of the martyrdom, the tombs of the two apostles were already known and venerated at the precise places in which they are now supposed to be.

4. *Eusebius*, born A.D. 268.—"Nero, the very chief and standard bearer of all the enemies of God, raged against the apostles themselves. So it is recorded that in his reign Paul was beheaded at Rome, and Peter was fastened to the cross. And the truth of this story is

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Duchesne, i., pp. 118, 125 ; *Hic memoriam b. Petri construxit et composuit, dum presbyter factus fuisset a b. Petro, seu alia loca ubi episcopi reconderentur sepulturæ ; ubi tamen et ipse sepultus est, juxta corpus b. Petri.*

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, ii., 25.

abundantly confirmed by the monuments bearing the names of Peter and of Paul which may yet be seen in the cemeteries of the city of Rome.”<sup>1</sup>

5. There are a great many allusions to the existence of the tomb as a place of pilgrimage to be found in the Acts of the Martyrs. These Acts are often of little historical value in their present form, but they are generally based on earlier data, and in such a detail as this may be presumed to be accurate, especially as it is found in so many instances, all of which are entirely independent of one another. Most of these instances have been already given in an earlier chapter, but we will go through them rapidly once more. We read, for example, of St. Marius that he came from Persia about the year 270, with his wife Martha, and his two sons Abbacus and Audifacius for the purpose of praying at the tombs of the apostles; of St. Paternus that he had come from Alexandria during the Decian persecution, in the middle of the third century, that he might visit their shrines (*ad memorias Apostolorum*); of St. Maurus that he had come on a like pilgrimage from Africa. So, again, in the Acts of St. Sebastian, we are told how St. Zoe went to pray at St. Peter's "confession" and was there taken and martyred, and how St. Tranquillinus, jealous of her fate and determined not to be outdone by a woman, went in like manner the next day to that of St. Paul, and so, being captured, was put to death. But it is perhaps in the story of the Gaulish martyrs, SS. Simplicius, Constantine and Victorian, that we have most clearly brought before us the veneration in which these spots were held by the Christians of Rome in the ages of persecution; a veneration which was well known to the pagan authorities, and which, indeed, was counted on and made use of as a means of capturing fresh victims, who in this way had betrayed

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, ii., 14, *nomine insignita monumenta.*

the fact, which otherwise might have remained unknown, of their profession of the Christian religion. These three saints had been brought from Gaul to undergo their martyrdom at Rome itself.<sup>1</sup> After their arrival in the city they succeeded in escaping from the soldiers by whom they were guarded. Having thus obtained their liberty, what was the use that they made of it? They did not attempt to hide themselves; it does not seem that it even occurred to them to do so. Their first thought was rather to satisfy their devotion, so they went at once to the Vatican and to the shrine of St. Peter, and while they were there praying they were found by the guards from whom they had escaped, who seem to have known at once what was the most likely spot in which to search for their fugitives, and forthwith, in the immediate neighbourhood of the shrine, were crowned with the martyrdom they desired.

## II. *After the Building of the Basilica.*

The notices we have so far been able to collect have been no doubt few and meagre, but still they are sufficient at least to prove that there was a spot in Rome, the hill of the Vatican, which was known throughout the ages of persecution as the tomb of St. Peter, and which was the object of constant pilgrimages and abundant devotion on the part of the Christians of the time. With the peace of the Church, and the building of the great basilica over the shrine, our notices increase both in number and in definiteness of description. Our principal authority continues to be the *Liber Pontificalis*, which from this time onwards may be regarded as in the main a strictly contemporary record, and the continuous story which we draw from its pages needs only occasionally

<sup>1</sup> For all these instances see the *Roman Martyrology*, and the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum*, on the feasts of the respective saints.

to be supplemented from other sources. It is from this *Liber Pontificalis*, it will be remembered, that we have those most important, though somewhat difficult, details of the doings of Constantine in connection with the tomb, which have been already quoted, and indeed have formed the foundation of most of what was said in the last chapter; and as the passage was quoted there in full, both in Latin and in English, there is no need for us to quote it again. The other details which we get from the *Liber Pontificalis* are for the most part records of individual gifts which were made by popes and emperors and other distinguished persons for the enrichment and beautifying of the shrine. These gifts have almost all long since disappeared, having either perished through age, or else having been carried off as plunder in some one of the many sacks of Rome. The value therefore of the record to us, beyond the purely antiquarian interest which such a catalogue of gifts necessarily possesses, consists in the opportunity which it affords us now and again of testing whether our reconstruction of the shrine, as it was during this period, is fairly accurate. If we can give an intelligible meaning to these obscure records we may be sure that our theories have not led us very far from the truth. It will be most convenient if we follow the order of the Popes, in recording the gifts which were made to the shrine during their respective reigns.

SYLVESTER.—“Above the body of blessed Peter, on the top of the bronze with which he had closed him in, Constantine made a cross of the purest gold, according to the measure of the place (*in mensuram loci*), weighing 150 pounds, and on it this legend: CONSTANTINUS AUGUSTUS ET HELENA AUGUSTA HANC DOMUM REGALEM SIMILI FULGORE CORUSCANS AULA CIRCUMDAT, written in letters of *niello* on the cross itself.”

Here the principal difficulty is that relating to the size of the cross. The natural interpretation is that it was the

same size as the *loculus* or sarcophagus, which would mean approximately seven feet long by four feet across the arms. M. Duchesne, in his note on the passage, says it was probably not a simple cross but the well-known monogram  $\text{P}$ , but it is not clear on what he bases his conjecture. The "domus regalis" of the inscription would seem to apply to the vault in which the sarcophagus lay. The inscription itself is manifestly faulty, and De Rossi has suggested, in order to give it an intelligible meaning, the insertion of the words *auro decorant quam* between *regalem* and *simili*. In any case the sense is clear enough, and is that Constantine and Helena, as they had decorated with gold the "aula" of the basilica, so also decorated the chamber in which the body actually lay.

The times immediately after Constantine were marked by the struggle for life of the Catholic Church against the powerful Arian heresy, which was backed by the influence of the emperors, and accordingly we do not find the record of any further decoration of the shrine during the fourth century. In the next century, however, we find ST. CELESTINE<sup>1</sup> (422) presenting candelabra in which lights might burn before it. Then, in the reign of his successor XYSTUS III. (432), we come upon the first traces of a most interesting piece of decoration, which has, we believe, survived to a certain extent even to the present time. We read:—

"This Pope adorned the confession of blessed Peter the apostle with silver, to the weight of 400 pounds. And at his request Valentinian the emperor offered a golden image with twelve gates and twelve apostles and the Saviour, adorned with precious gems (*imaginem auream cum XII. portas et apostolos XII. et Salvatorem gemmis pretiosissimis ornatam*). This he placed as a votive offering above the confession of blessed Peter the apostle."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

Of this votive offering of the Emperor Valentinian we can form a good idea, because, as we have said, there is reason to suppose that some traces of it still remain; a subject on which we shall have more to say in another chapter, when we come to make a detailed examination of the present surroundings of the shrine. It appears to have been a long narrow piece of gold plate ornamented in relief, with a seated figure of our Lord in the centre, and on either side six figures of the apostles, each standing under an arch. This must have been the most noteworthy piece of ornamentation that St. Peter's yet possessed, and it was placed, in accordance with the desire of the donor, "above the confession"; that is, immediately over the recess of the confession, and therefore immediately beneath the high altar. It would seem, indeed, that it formed the decoration which concealed from view the great stone which formed at once the roof of this recess and the predella of the altar above it. Rough masonry can be still made out behind it.

ST. LEO I. who succeeded Xystus III. is not recorded to have done anything in St. Peter's beyond general repair and renovation, and, although the Popes who followed made many gifts, these gifts are not specially connected with the confession, and so may be passed over here.

There is a passage<sup>1</sup> in the writings of St. Paulinus of Nola, a Father of the Church who wrote in the fourth century, which gives us a description of the basilica as it was in his time, almost fresh from the hands of Constantine and Sylvester. Unfortunately there is hardly anything to be gathered from this description which gives us any exact idea of the place. The saint speaks of the great crowds which throng the church, the raised *solium* or throne of the apostle, by which he means not the chair, but the tribune on which the altar stood. He also tells

<sup>1</sup> Paulinus Nolanus, *Epist.* xiii., ad Pammachium.

of the lights round the tomb which at once arrest the eyes of those who enter, of the great height of the central nave, and of the folding doors by which access to the church is obtained. He tells too of the *atrium* with its central fountain under a canopy held up by four pillars, and of the steps which lead up to the entrance. Altogether the description is a vivid one, perhaps the most vivid that we possess of any church of the period, if we except the basilica of Felix at his own town of Nola, of which this same Paulinus has elsewhere written, and the basilica built by Constantine at Tyre, which is minutely described in the pages of Eusebius. But vivid as it is there is no exact knowledge to be gained from it, and so there is nothing to be done, except regretfully to pass it by.

We have, however, in the sixth century, in the writings of St. Gregory of Tours (m. 595), the first, and indeed the only detailed description which has come down to us of the arrangements of the shrine, and the way in which pilgrims paid their reverence in these early times. St. Gregory had not himself been to Rome, but he had full descriptions given to him by his deacon Agiulphus<sup>1</sup> who had made the pilgrimage, and he gives us in his book *In gloria Martyrum* a very full and intensely interesting account of what took place. These are his words:—

“Sepultus est (S. Petrus) in templo quod vocitabatur antiquitus Vaticanum. . . . Hoc sepulchrum sub altari collocatum valde rarum habetur. Sed qui orare desiderat, reseratis cancellis, quibus locus ille ambitur, accedit super sepulchrum, et sic fenestella parvula patefacta, immisso introrsum capite, quæ necessitas promit efflagitat. Nec moratur effectus si petitionis tantum justa proferatur oratio. Quod si beata auferre desiderat pignora palliolum aliquod momentana pensatum jacet intrinsecus, deinde vigilans ac

<sup>1</sup> This has been proved by M. Duchesne, *Mélanges de l'école Française*, 1882, p. 277.

jejunans devotissime deprecatur, ut devotionis suæ virtus apostolica suffragetur. Mirum dictu, si fides hominis prævaluerit, a tumulo palliolum elevatum, ita imbuitur divina virtute, ut multo amplius, quam prius pensaverat, ponderetur; et tunc scit qui levaverit, cum ejus gratia sumpsisse quod petiit. Multi enim et claves aureas ad reserandos cancellos beati sepulchri faciunt, qui ferentes pro benedictione priores, quibus infirmitates tribulantium medicantur. Omnia enim fides integra præstat. Sunt ibi et columnæ miræ elegantia candore niveo quatuor numero quæ ciborium sustinere dicuntur.”<sup>1</sup>

There are some points which are not very clear in this account, but in the main it is intelligible enough, and we may translate it somewhat as follows:—

“St. Peter is buried in a church called from ancient times the Vatican. . . . His sepulchre, which is placed under the altar, is exceedingly rarely entered. However, if anybody desires to pray, the gates by which the place is fenced are opened, and he goes in above the sepulchre, and then, having opened a little window, puts his head within and makes request concerning his needs. Nor is the result delayed, if only the petition be a just one. For if he desires to carry away with him some blessed memorial, he throws within a little handkerchief that has been carefully weighed, and then, watching and fasting, he prays most fervently that the apostle may give an effective answer to his devotion. Wonderful to say, if the faith of the man prevails, the handkerchief, when it is raised from the tomb, is so filled with divine virtue that it weighs much more than it did before, and then he who has raised it knows that he has obtained the favour which he sought. Many also make golden keys to unlock the gates of the blessed sepulchre, and then they take away

<sup>1</sup> *In Gloria Martyrum*, c. 27, ed. Krusch; or ed. Migne, *P. L.*, vol. 71, col. 728.

those which were used before, as a sacred treasure, and by these keys the infirmities of the afflicted are cured. For true faith can do all things. There are also there columns of marvellous elegance and as white as snow, four in number, and these are said to hold up the canopy of the altar."

This account is in almost perfect agreement with the theory we have arrived at on independent grounds. The actual sepulchre, the subterranean chamber, that is, in which the sarcophagus was placed, was scarcely ever opened, and was not accessible even at this early date to ordinary worshippers. The most that they could hope for was to be allowed to visit the confession under the altar. Such a one, therefore, passed up the church until he came to the gates which were in the centre of the six twisted columns which enclosed the area immediately in front of the confession, and when these had been opened to let him pass, found himself with the high altar, and the recess of the confession beneath it, immediately in front of him. There were no steps to ascend or descend, for it was all on the general level of the church. He passes on, throws himself with his body prostrate within the recess, raises the little window or grating which closed the aperture in the floor, and so puts himself in communication, not indeed with the tomb itself, but with the space which intervened between the confession and the vault, which space had once formed the lowest part of the old upper chamber or *memoria*. From the vault and the actual sepulchre he was still shut off by a second grating, or "cataract," which closed an orifice similar to the one through which he was now looking. The custom of lowering handkerchiefs and other objects to touch the tomb, and then to be carried away as relics, could easily be illustrated from other contemporary writings. Indeed, until the eighth or ninth century, the Western Church distributed as a rule no other relics

of the saints than these mementos, and the practice of giving portions of the actual bones of the saints came in only when the bodies of the martyrs were transferred from the catacombs, where they were no longer safe, to the churches within the city walls. Keys of the confession, no doubt obtained in the way of which St. Gregory tells, are still preserved among the treasures of more than one continental church.

The four white columns of which he speaks present a certain difficulty. Probably he has confused the four porphyry columns which supported the canopy of the altar with the six white twisted columns which formed the portico in front of the confession, a thing which he might the more easily have done, since, so far as we know, he had never himself been to Rome, but was dependent on the descriptions supplied to him by others.

Now we return to the catalogues of the Popes and of their gifts to the shrine, though for the sake of brevity we shall notice only those which seem to throw light upon the arrangements of the place.

ST. HORMISDAS reigned from 514 to 523. In the year 520 application was made to Rome on behalf of Justinian, who had not as yet succeeded to the Eastern Empire and therefore appears only as Count, for some relics of the holy apostles for a new basilica which was being erected by him in their honour at Constantinople. The papal legates at that city, to whom he had applied, had informed him that primary relics could not be obtained, but they made application for him for secondary relics (*sanctuaría*), that is, for objects which had been placed upon the tomb and had thus been hallowed. They add the special request that these objects should be "lowered to the second cataract" if that were possible (*si fieri potest ad secundam cataractam ipsa sanctuaría deponere*).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Epist. leg. ad Horm. papam, inter Epp. Horm.*; Thiel, *Epp. Rom. Pont.*, p. 873; Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, 63, col. 474; Labbe, *Conc.*, v., p. 647.

This most interesting passage has considerably puzzled commentators ; but it seems to be perfectly explained by what we have already said. The object aimed at was that the things which were to be hallowed should not remain in the little intermediate chamber, but be lowered through the second opening so as to rest upon the actual tomb itself. The words "if it be possible" seem to imply that even this was a privilege but rarely granted.

PELAGIUS II. (579-590) "invested the body of blessed Peter the apostle with gilded plates of silver".<sup>1</sup> At first sight we should be inclined to suppose that this refers to the actual sarcophagus, and it appears to have been so taken by Mallius, a writer of the twelfth century, for he says that the sarcophagus is of silver. However, we are inclined to think, on the evidence of a letter of St. Gregory the Great, the successor of Pelagius on the Papal throne, in which letter some work of the kind done in his predecessor's reign is referred to, that it was not at the sarcophagus, but on the floor of the niche of the confession, that these silver gilt plates were placed. These are St. Gregory's words : "When my predecessor of blessed memory was anxious to change the silver which was above the holy body of the blessed apostle St. Peter, but about fifteen feet away from the said body, a sign of no little dread appeared to him".<sup>2</sup> We thus learn that the floor of the niche is fifteen feet above the sarcophagus, which, as a reference to our plan will show, is precisely the distance at which we have already arrived as being most probable on our hypothesis.

ST. GREGORY himself (A.D. 590-604) is recorded to have made the ciborium, or canopy of the altar, and the pillars which supported it of silver ; that is, presumably, to have covered them with silver plates. He also "*fecit ut super corpus beati Petri missas celebrarentur*," "arranged

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 309.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist.* iv., 30, ad Constantinam.

for masses to be celebrated above the body of St. Peter".<sup>1</sup> This may refer only to some order for a succession of masses to be said, but it is more probable that it means that St. Gregory now for the first time placed an altar in the chamber of the confession under the tribune; the predecessor of the altar which is there to this day; and that in this way he made it possible for ordinary priests to offer the sacrifice over the body of the saint; since the high altar then as now was only used by the Pope himself, or by others with his express permission.<sup>2</sup>

HONORIUS (625-638) "invested the confession of blessed Peter with pure silver".<sup>3</sup>

SEVERINUS (640) "renewed the mosaics of the apse".<sup>4</sup>

SERGIUS (687-701) "put candelabra upon the beams at the entrance of the confession".<sup>5</sup> These beams must have formed an architrave joining the tops of the six twisted columns which Constantine had placed in this position. The columns would clearly have needed something of the kind, and there are many allusions to such an architrave in later times.

ST. GREGORY III. (731-741) was the first of a series of great benefactors to the shrine. He came to the throne at a critical period, when the Iconoclastic heresy was at the height of its power, and replied to the threats of the persecuting Emperor Leo the Isaurian by not only refusing to destroy the images in St. Peter's, of which the well-known bronze statue which is still there was especially the object of the emperor's attack, but by adding to their number and increasing their splendour.

"He brought six twisted marble columns which were given him by Euty chius the exarch, and set them up by the presbytery, in front of the confession, three on the

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 312.

<sup>2</sup> In proof of this, see the story of St. Gerard of Tours, who vainly tried to obtain the privilege, *Acta Ep. Tull.*, cap. v.

<sup>3</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, p. 323.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

right hand and three on the left, next to the other six which matched them and were already there.”<sup>1</sup> Alfarano’s plan, published nearly a hundred years after this portion of old St. Peter’s was destroyed, shows these twelve columns arranged in two rows of six each, and in this arrangement he has been followed without misgiving by every writer who has touched on the subject. He is, however, in direct contradiction to the only authority which even approximates to being contemporary, namely, the well-known fresco by Raphael which represents the Donation of Constantine, for in that fresco only a single row of columns appears. The natural interpretation of the passage before us is that Gregory arranged the pillars three on each side, so that with the six already there they enclosed a space in front of the confession. This interpretation is confirmed by the next item in the list of his benefactions, which tells us that “on these columns he placed beams covered with silver, having on one side representations of the Saviour and the Apostles, and on the other of the Mother of God and the Holy Virgins, and on the top of the beams he placed lilies and silver candelabra”. We may note too, as an additional confirmation of this, that there was certainly an arrangement of this kind at St. Paul’s,<sup>2</sup> and the two basilicas constantly copied one another. If any attempt be made to draw out Alfarano’s plan on a large scale its impossibility becomes evident at once.

PAUL I. 757-768. In the reign of this Pontiff a gift of an altar (*mensa*) for the basilica was received from Pepin King of France. A letter from the Pope to the king is still extant, which announces the arrival of the altar at Rome, and says that it was brought with much ceremony below (*infra*) the church (*aula*) of the prince of the

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> See a drawing by Mr. Brewer in *St. Ignatius of Loyola*, by Stewart Rose.

apostles, and presented by the messengers who were charged with it "in the holy confession, above the body of the said porter of the kingdom of heaven".<sup>1</sup> The Pope goes on to say that he had himself consecrated it, and offered the first mass upon it, and that it never should be alienated from the Church of St. Peter.

The position in which this altar was placed seems to have been the Chapel of the Confession under the tribune. We have already shown that there are some grounds for believing that St. Gregory the Great had already placed an altar in this chapel. If so, this new and doubtless more splendid altar replaced the original one of St. Gregory. If, however, we were wrong in drawing the conclusion we did about St. Gregory, it may be that this was the first time that an altar was placed here.

HADRIAN I (772-795) was the next great benefactor to the shrine. "He covered over with pure silver to the weight of 150 pounds the pavement from the gates (*rugæ*) at the entrance up to the confession,"<sup>2</sup> *i.e.*, evidently, the whole of the space enclosed by the twisted columns. He also gave "a great candelabrum in the shape of a cross, to hang in front of the presbytery. This held 1365 candles, and he ordained that it should be lighted four times in the year: at Christmas and at Easter, on the Feast of the Apostles, and on the birthday of the Pontiff." This great candelabrum would seem to have resembled those which, on a smaller scale, may still be seen in St. Mark's at Venice, and in other Italian churches, consisting of a framework in the shape of two intersecting crosses, and made to sustain a great number of lights. Either this very one, or at any rate one on the same model, was still in use in the old basilica until its final destruction in 1606, and may be seen very roughly pictured in the pages of Ciampini.<sup>3</sup> "He also caused to be made six representa-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted Borgia, *Vaticana Confessio*, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., pp. 499-503.

<sup>3</sup> Ciampini, *De sacris ædificiis*.

tions (*imagines*) covered with plates of silver, and placed three of them over the gates at the entrance to the presbytery." These three represented respectively our Lord, St. Michael and St. Gabriel. The other three, representing our Lady between St. Andrew and St. John, he placed "over the second gates, that is, in the midst of the presbytery". It is evident that the word "presbytery" was used at St. Peter's at this time to denote the whole enclosed space of the choir, and therefore the gates between the twisted columns will be the ones meant by those "in the midst of the presbytery". He further "adorned the whole confession within with plates of pure gold, with various historical representations (*historiis*) and made new gates (*rugas*) of silver in the presbytery on the side of the men and of the women, and also other gates at the top of the presbytery in front of the confession". Within the confession itself he placed a "golden image in the form of the Gospels" ("*imaginem in modum evangeliorum*"), and enclosed the confession with railings of gold which are said to have attained the almost incredible weight of 1328 pounds.

Hadrian was thus by far the most munificent benefactor that St. Peter's had known since the time of Constantine, and this record of his gifts fits in very fairly with what we already know of the shrine. Moreover, in his reign there took place the celebrated visit of Charlemagne to Rome and his pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Peter, and from the narratives of this event we can gather some further important details.

Charlemagne went to Rome for Easter in the year 774. The magistrates and senators went out to meet him some thirty miles from the city, and as he approached nearer another procession was sent to receive him, bearing crosses and sacred banners. So soon as the emperor saw the cross coming towards him he dismounted, as also did all his suite, and the rest of the journey to St. Peter's

was accomplished on foot. At St. Peter's the Pope was waiting for him at the top of the great flight of steps which led to the courtyard before the church. Charlemagne ascended the steps on his knees, as was the custom of devout pilgrims, kissing each step as he went up. Arrived at the top he embraced the Pope, and both went in together side by side into the church, while the choir intoned the anthem "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord". They went at once to the confession, and there knelt in prayer. Then the Pope and the emperor, together with the Roman and Frankish magistrates, "went down in like manner to the body of blessed Peter (*descendentes pariter ad corpus beati Petri*)".<sup>1</sup>

It was, however, on the Wednesday of Easter week that the most important ceremony took place. This was the celebrated "Donation of Charlemagne," by which he confirmed the gifts of his father Pepin, and further extended the territories over which the Popes should henceforth rule. The ceremony took place in St. Peter's, and the deed of gift was laid with the utmost solemnity, first on the altar of St. Peter, and then "within in his holy confession". The actual signature was attached to the document "within over the body of blessed Peter, under the Gospels which are kissed there". This allusion to the Gospels seems to show clearly enough that the place meant in this passage is the recess under the altar, but at the same time we can scarcely be wrong in saying that the visit paid to the body of St. Peter on the Saturday of the emperor's arrival must mean that the actual vault of the sepulchre was opened in his honour: for the words can hardly be supposed to mean no more than that they went down to the little chapel under the tribune of the church. Evidently there is implied some nearer approach

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, I., p. 497.

to the relics than was afforded by the confession, and this would not be given by the chapel at the back, which indeed was not directly over the relics at all, and does not seem to have been held in very great reverence at this period, for it will have been noticed that none of the gifts which Hadrian and his predecessors lavished upon the shrine seem to have been destined for its ornamentation. We have, however, from another source a certain proof that this chapel existed at this period, and that it was visited by pilgrims, in the narrative of the pilgrim of Einsiedeln, who visited Rome in the eighth century or thereabouts, and who tells us that, before he went to the confession, he was taken round "by crypts to the head of St. Peter";<sup>1</sup> that is, clearly, to the chapel and altar of the confession which were situated close to, though not actually over, that end of the sarcophagus where lay the head of the apostle. If therefore we are right in concluding that Charlemagne did actually descend into the vault to visit the tomb, the passage is of the greatest importance, since it proves that the vault and tomb were still accessible, and were allowed on rare occasions to be opened, as late at any rate as the year 774.

ST. LEO III. was Hadrian's successor, and he too was a great benefactor, so that in his time the shrine attained the summit of its splendour. His gifts to the basilica fill many pages of the records, but only a few of them are of any importance for our immediate purpose. "In the confession he made gates (*rugas*) of pure gold with various gems."<sup>2</sup> "He put many candelabra of silver round the altar and in the presbytery. He made a new presbytery of beautifully sculptured marble;" a fresh proof that "presbytery" in dealing with St. Peter's must be taken always to denote the enclosed choir. "He covered the front of the altar from top to bottom with plates of silver, and

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 1 *seq.*

within the confession he placed images of the Saviour standing, and of St. Peter and St. Paul on the right and left, and the floor of the confession he covered with gold.”<sup>1</sup> These images were apparently of mosaic, and it is quite possible that the figure of our Lord which may be seen to-day at the back of the recess of the confession may be the very one that St. Leo placed there. The figures of St. Peter and St. Paul are also still there, but they have been entirely renewed. He put twisted columns of silver “both at the entrance of the body (*in ingressu corporis*) on the right hand and on the left, and also at the top of the presbytery right and left, or on the side of the men and of the women, eight pairs, weighing altogether 190 pounds. Also eight arches of silver weighing 143 pounds.”<sup>2</sup> Here the unusual expression “at the entrance of the body” seems most naturally to refer to the doors which gave access both to the circular passage which led to the chapel of the confession, and also, probably, to the stairs leading down to the vault. “He placed a golden image of the Saviour on the beam over the entrance of the vestibule.” “He covered with pure silver the beam that is above the golden images at the entrance to the vestibule.” The vestibule is clearly the enclosed space in front of the confession, but the arrangement of the beams and the images is a little puzzling, nor is the difficulty much lessened by the notice on the following page, which tells us that he “put angels of silver gilt right and left in front of the confession, and also the two other angels which stand on the larger beam (*in trabe majori*) above the entrance of the vestibule, right and left of the golden image of the Saviour”. Apparently an architrave ran right round the enclosure above the twisted columns. This architrave was covered with silver plates with figures in relief. Above it were the lilies and candelabra of Gregory III. Over the

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

gateway in the centre there would seem to have been a second and higher beam, which we may perhaps identify with the *regularis* which is elsewhere spoken of as existing here—an ornament of which no one can define the exact nature. However, any attempt at an accurate restoration of the arrangement must, since so much remains obscure, be largely based on mere conjecture.

The next Pontiff, PASCAL I. (817-824), was occupied chiefly with the work of bringing the bodies of the martyrs from the Catacombs, and of preparing churches within the city to receive them, and so he did not add very much to the glories of St. Peter's shrine. However, he built a great and splendid oratory within the basilica, and dedicated it to St. Processus and St. Martinianus; and he also erected an altar to St. Xystus, which was situated "*ante aditum quæ ducit ad corpus in loco Ferrata*";<sup>1</sup> that is, in front of the southern entrance to the circular passage under the tribune, and close to the railings which enclosed the space in front of the confession. Apparently, therefore, the way down to the vault was still open in 820.

In 845, in the time of Sergius II., Rome had once more the honour of an Imperial visit, this time in the person of Louis II., who came, however, not so much from pious motives, as in anger because his consent to the election of the Pontiff had not been asked. He was received with the same ceremonies as Charlemagne had been before him, and went up and knelt before the confession. It is noticeable however, that in this case there is no mention of any visit to the body of St. Peter. This may mean either that the way down had already been closed, or, more probably, that Louis was not adjudged worthy of so great an honour.

We now come to the great crisis in the history of St. Peter's; the only time in fact at which the relics were

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 53.

ever in actual danger of desecration. This crisis was the invasion of Rome by the Saracens, in 847. In the previous invasions by the Goths and other nations from the north, the shrine had been held in honour, for the invaders though not Catholics were Arians, and therefore respected the apostle and his tomb;<sup>1</sup> but these Saracens were Mahometans, who would have no reason for any such forbearance. For some years they had been ravaging the coasts of Italy, having possessed themselves of the island of Sicily, and making that their headquarters and base of operations. In 843 they had plundered Montecassino, and now they aimed at the far more extensive booty that was offered them by the city of Rome. The details of the matter are far from clear, for the manuscripts of the *Liber Pontificalis* are unfortunately deficient just as they come to the most interesting moment, and not much light can be gained from other contemporary chroniclers. It seems clear, however, that they sailed up the Tiber and attacked the city, and that, although the walls were sufficient to prevent their entrance into the town itself, they had the two great basilicas at their mercy, since both were at this time outside the walls. From Prudentius of Troyes we learn that they actually occupied St. Peter's, and that on their retreat a few days later "they carried off all the ornaments and treasures, together with the actual altar which had been raised above the tomb of the chief of the apostles".<sup>2</sup> With this slight notice we must for the present content ourselves, although in a later chapter we shall hope to show that the building still bears the traces of the mischief that was then done. Some of the treasures of gold and silver may perhaps have been carried into the city, and so have been saved,

<sup>1</sup> Orosius, *Hist.*, vii., 39. See also Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, chap. xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> *Annales Bertiniani (Prudentius Trecensis)*, ann. 846.

but most were no doubt carried off, and, although the most precious treasure of all, the sacred body of St. Peter, does not seem to have been interfered with, it must have been with sad hearts that the Romans entered again into the basilica, after the Saracens had left it at the end of their short stay. They found the altar destroyed, the shrine battered and stripped of its gold and jewels, and the whole church desecrated and befouled by the presence of the infidel soldiery. It was under these sad circumstances that ST. LEO IV. (847-855) ascended the throne, and he at once set himself with undaunted energy to repair the damage that had been done, and to try to restore in some measure the splendours of the past; but the task was far beyond the powers of a single man to accomplish, and the shrine of St. Peter never again attained to anything like its former glory. Still, very much was accomplished, and everything was done as far as possible on the ancient lines, though sometimes a baser material had to be employed, and for some ornaments where formerly nothing less than the purest gold had been used it was necessary now to be content with silver to replace it. The altar itself was soon repaired, and re-decorated with plates of gold studded with gems, so that its magnificence is said to have been even greater than before.<sup>1</sup> After the altar the confession was taken in hand, and adorned with plates of silver "on which we see the Saviour sitting on His throne, and having on His right the Cherubim and on His left the figures of the apostles and of others". The Pope "also made gates of silver for the sacred confession, having on them the figures of the blessed Peter and Paul, and weighing 208 pounds". He also, among many other benefactions, restored the ciborium or canopy of the altar, and the gates of the vestibule of the confession, and covered the architraves afresh with plates

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 106 *seq.*

of silver, and restored the candelabra and hangings much as they had been before, so that the shrine once again began to present an appearance of considerable magnificence. With his death, however, the work of restoration came to an end. The latter half of the ninth century and the whole of the tenth were dark days at Rome, during which little could be expected in the way of addition to the glories of the basilica, and we must go on to the eleventh century and the times of Hildebrand before we have much more to record. Still, even in these dark days, there are one or two benefactions worthy of notice. BENEDICT III. (855-858) is recorded to have given a cover of pure gold to the *billicum*,<sup>1</sup> or upper "cataract" of the confession; that is, of course, the little orifice in the floor, the "fenestrella," or little window, of St. Gregory of Tours. And in his reign there came to Rome, as some of his predecessors had already done before him, Ethelwulf of England with his little son, afterwards to be so well known as Alfred the Great. He was drawn thither doubtless by the devotion to St. Peter and to St. Peter's tomb, which was such a marked characteristic of our English forefathers. The story of his pilgrimage is alluded to in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and is told at greater length by Prudentius of Troyes and in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. He stayed at Rome, according to the last authority, for twelve whole months, and left Alfred at the Papal Court for his education; so that it was at Rome, and from the Pope himself, that he learnt the virtues which he afterwards so magnificently displayed in the course of his later life. Our present interest in the matter lies in the benefactions which Ethelwulf made to the shrine of St. Peter. He gave a corona and other ornaments of gold, besides a number of vestments, and especially created by will a perpetual charge upon his

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 146.

land of 300 crowns to be annually sent to Rome, 100 of which were to be devoted to the illumination of the basilica of St. Peter on Holy Saturday and on Easter Day.<sup>1</sup>

We pass on accordingly to the eleventh century, and the dawn of brighter times for the Church at Rome. In that and the following century we have indeed no record of costly gifts to refer to, but we have three documents at least of importance which tell us something about the condition of the shrine. These documents are the letter of St. Peter Damian to the Empress Agnes, written about 1070; the liturgical writings which bear the name of Benedict the Canon; and the history of the Vatican Basilica by Peter Mallius; both of which last are of the twelfth century. St. Peter Damian reminds the empress of a general confession she had made to him in St. Peter's, in a spot which we readily recognise as the subterranean Chapel of the Confession under the tribune; a spot which, it is interesting to note, still shared the name of "the confession" with the recess under the high altar. "Would that those who are flocking," he says, "to the thresholds of the apostles would imitate the wholesome example of thy piety, who didst cause me to sit before the holy altar under the secret confession (*sub arcana confessione*) of blessed Peter, and with bitter groans and doleful sighing didst begin to pour forth in a truthful relation, as if the blessed apostle himself had been there in bodily presence, all, however subtle and minute, that had been able to tempt thy humanity, all that had been vain in thy thoughts or superfluous, from the time that you were but newly weaned and an infant of five years old."<sup>2</sup>

Our next authority, a passage in the "Polypticus" of Benedict the Canon, dates from about the middle of the

<sup>1</sup> See Baronius, *Annals* x., ann. 847-855; Matt. Westm., ann. 854; *Asser's Life of Alfred*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* iv., *ad Agnetem*.

twelfth century, and is very interesting. He is describing the service for the third Sunday of Advent at St. Peter's, and tells how at a certain moment the Pope "goes down to the body, and censes the altar over the sepulchre of St. Peter: and sits there on a bench (*subsellio*) with candelabra before him," while the Vigils were sung. Afterwards "he ascends to the high altar and censes it, and then descends to the 'pectorale' before the altar, with the deacons round him. The bishops stand at the other 'pectorale,' the cardinals in the choir with the canons of the Church. The chamberlains put torches before the Pope, and he begins to chant Matins."<sup>1</sup> Here all is fairly intelligible. The altar over the sepulchre may possibly be the altar of the Chapel of the Confession, but would seem more probably to denote the actual niche of the confession, the whole space under the high altar being regarded as part of the altar itself. The Vigils were, according to this interpretation, chanted in the "vestibule" in front of the confession, the high altar was censed between the Vigils and Matins, and then for Matins the Pope passed beyond the twisted columns and took his place at the west end, that is the end nearest to the altar, of the enclosure of the choir. It must be noted that "Vigils" and "Matins" were distinct services, a double office being said at this time in St. Peter's.

Benedict does not notice in connection with St. Peter's another most interesting ceremony which took place on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul. He does, however, give an account of the parallel custom at St. Paul's for that day, and since we know from an "Ordo Romanus" of the next century that it existed also at St. Peter's, we will notice it in this connection. The custom was for the Pope, after the fourth lesson at Matins had been sung, to descend to the "arca,"<sup>2</sup> or recess of the confession, and

<sup>1</sup> *Apud* Mabillon, *Mus. Ital.*, ii., 122.

<sup>2</sup> Misprinted *area* in Mabillon.

thence to draw out from the space below the "billicum," which he now raised, a thurible, which had been hanging there ever since the corresponding feast in the preceding year, suspended from a hook. The charcoal which was in the censer was distributed to the people by the arch-deacon, and was by them regarded as being, when crushed and mixed with water, a sovereign remedy against fever. The censer was then filled afresh, and there was laid upon the charcoal a candle of glass filled with incense (*candelam vitream plenam incenso*). Then it was replaced within the orifice, the cover was shut down, and it was so left for another year.<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to know at what date this ceremony, which was evidently still in use in the thirteenth century, was discontinued, and what were the reasons which led to its being abandoned. We may surmise that the practice was of considerable antiquity from the notices in the *Liber Pontificalis* of the gift of thuribles for this purpose. St. Leo III. is recorded to have presented a gold thurible to St. Peter's, weighing two pounds and five ounces. He also gave two to St. Paul's, one weighing two pounds, and the other exactly the same as the one at St. Peter's, two pounds and five ounces, and of this last it is specially said that "he put it within over the body of the saint".<sup>2</sup> Whether the one at St. Peter's was carried off by the Saracens or not, we have no record, but it seems probable that it was, for we find that, among the gifts made by St. Leo IV. to repair the damage that had been done, there was "a thurible of the purest gold adorned with various gems".<sup>3</sup>

We turn to our third and last authority of this period, the history of the Vatican Basilica written by Peter Mallius, with great expectations of finding much that will be of interest and value. Unfortunately, however, although it is of the greatest importance for the history

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *Mus. Ital.*, ii., 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 119.

of the basilica as a whole, and for such details as the arrangements and privileges of its altars, it throws hardly any fresh light upon the appearance of the shrine at this period. Still, it is not only from what is actually said that we can draw our conclusions, for often silence may be as eloquent as words; and here in particular we may infer from his omission to make any reference to any passage by which the actual tomb could be reached, that all such access had been cut off before his time, and probably so long before that all memory of its having ever existed had died away. Inasmuch as the object for which he was writing was the glorification of the Vatican Basilica in comparison with that of the Lateran, on account of the great number and the special sanctity of the tombs of the saints that were contained in it, such silence would be quite inexplicable had any means of access to the sepulchral vault been still available in his time.<sup>1</sup> Mallius wrote about the middle of the twelfth century, and this silence of his makes us at once distrust the statement of Michael Lonigo, who lived in the sixteenth century, and whose writings on the Vatican Confession may be found epitomised in the pages of Bonanni.<sup>2</sup> Lonigo says that it was Pope Innocent III., who lived some fifty years after Mallius wrote, who finally closed up the tomb and forbade access to it, and that his motive was fear lest the relics should be seized by the Antipopes of the time, with a view of deporting them to Constantinople or to some other place outside of Rome. Such a motive does not seem at all an adequate one, and as Lonigo's statement is entirely unsupported by any independent authority, while he himself is a most unsatisfactory writer, with a perfect genius for drawing wrong conclusions from the facts which he adduces, we need not pay much attention to what he

<sup>1</sup> The important parts of Mallius have been printed by De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., 199 seq.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. Templi. Vat.*, second edition only.



says; although his statement has been repeated as if it were historical by quite a number of subsequent writers, and especially by Mignanti in his history of the Vatican Basilica.<sup>1</sup> This writer not only follows Lonigo in saying that it was Innocent III. who closed up the tomb, but goes into minute and utterly misleading particulars describing exactly what was done, for all of which details he has no more solid foundation than his own imagination, not too well informed, as to the probable appearance of the shrine and its surroundings before and after these more than doubtful alterations took place. Still, although there is no historical ground whatever for supposing that any important changes of this kind were instituted by him, it is true enough that the name of Innocent III. must always be connected with the story of the confession of St. Peter. There still exists, bearing his name upon it, the grating of gilded bronze which he put up above the recess. It bears the following inscription:—

SIC CUM DISCIPULIS BIS SEX CHRISTUS RESIDEBIT  
 CUM REDDET CUNCTIS POPULIS QUOD QUISQUE MEREbit,  
 TERCIUS HOC MUNUS DANS INNOCENTIUS UNUS  
 SIT COMES IN VITA TIBI PETRE COISRÆLITA.

It seems to be generally supposed that this grating formed the upper part of the gates which closed the recess of the confession, and that the lower portions, the actual gates themselves, have been lost. With this judgment we cannot agree. The gates which had been placed in front by Leo IV. may very probably still have been there in the twelfth century, or possibly to an even later period. The fresco by Raphael representing the Donation of Constantine shows gates which have a semicircular top. The grating of Innocent III. seems rather to have been a protection put up to guard what was behind it from being

<sup>1</sup> Mignanti, *Basilica Vaticana*, i., p. 178.

altogether kissed away by the devotion of the faithful, and it was therefore from the first within the outer gates, just as it is now, and visible only when those gates were opened.

This brings us, so far as the shrine is concerned, to the end of the period of the middle ages. Later Popes carried out various changes in the basilica at large, but there is nothing to chronicle about the confession itself or its surroundings, except that it is recorded in an ancient *Martyrology* belonging to the basilica, that the high altar was replaced and reconstructed in the year 1122. We have therefore gone through all that is known to exist in the way of records or descriptions which could throw light on the arrangements of the shrine of St. Peter, and may fairly claim, not only that we have found nothing whatever which would tend to make us modify the conclusions which we had reached by a different road, but that those conclusions are on the whole distinctly strengthened and confirmed. It remains to test them once more by a comparison with other monuments which were constructed for a similar purpose, or which were actually and consciously copies of St. Peter's. This, however, since it will be a somewhat lengthy process, had better be reserved for another chapter.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS WITH WHICH THE TOMB OF ST. PETER MAY BE COMPARED.

THERE is no lack of tombs of the first century or thereabouts still remaining, whose form so far resembles what we suppose to have been that of the tomb of St. Peter, that they are constructed in two stories. The best known and best preserved of these at Rome itself are doubtless the well-known ones on the Latin Way, near the ancient basilica of St. Stephen. But these tombs vary very much in form, so much so in fact that we may safely say that there was no accepted plan on which these monuments were constructed, but that every builder was free to follow his own ideas. It is not possible, therefore, to argue with any confidence from the form of any one or more of these contemporary tombs that the tomb of St. Peter would probably resemble it. Still, there are a few general characteristics which run through them all, and which therefore we may fairly expect would not be absent. For instance, we should expect that the roof of the lower or subterranean chamber would be vaulted, that the access to this chamber would be by a steep and narrow staircase, that it would, not improbably, be lighted by an opening in the centre of the vaulting and in the floor of the upper chamber, and that the height of the vault would be fourteen or fifteen feet. These are characteristics which occur in almost all similar tombs, and we have already been led by the slight indications which necessarily form our sole guides in the matter, to suppose that each and

all of them actually existed in the monument we are discussing. So, too, the measurements which we have been led to believe were those of this monument, some eighteen feet by fourteen, namely, inside the walls, must be acknowledged to be a very probable size for such a vault as this, which was to contain the sarcophagus of a single person. In one point only have we any reason for supposing that this tomb varied in any way from the generality of others of the same period. They for the most part, with a view to economising the frontage as far as possible, were built with the narrower side towards the road. St. Peter's tomb, however, would seem to have been built otherwise, having its larger side parallel with the road that ran beside it. This divergence from the ordinary rule is however easily accounted for when we take into consideration the desire of the Christians, even of this early period, to lay their dead, whenever circumstances allowed of its being done, so that the body might lie east and west, rather than north and south. This, however, is the only detail by which, so far as we can judge, the tomb of St. Peter was distinguished in outward appearance from the others by which it was surrounded, and among which it is interesting to note there were not a few which were, like itself, of two stories. Bosio in his *Roma Sotterranea*<sup>1</sup> has recorded for us the discovery of several such in his own time. They were found when the foundations of the new basilica were being excavated, and he describes them as "Edicule o Cappelle," little churches or chapels; which is very much the character we may suppose was possessed by the upper chamber of St. Peter's tomb, in which doubtless the Holy Sacrifice was frequently offered in the times when the persecution happened for the moment to be less acute. One large room in particular is mentioned by Bosio as being "like

<sup>1</sup> Bosio, *Roma Sotterranea*, p. 67.

a chapel with windows and doors," and ornamented with pictures of various animals. This tomb was discovered in 1574, under the campanile of the old basilica.

All these tombs were of course pagan, for the plot of ground owned by the Christians on the Vatican was exceedingly small. We naturally ask, therefore, what was the purpose for which these two-storied tombs were constructed by the heathens; and the answer is interesting as throwing light on the kind of use to which the Christians would have been able safely to put the little chapel that Anacletus had built over St. Peter's body. It was the custom of the Romans to visit at intervals the graves of their friends and relations, and especially was this done on the anniversary of their death. On these occasions oblations were brought to be offered, and solemn feasts were held in honour of the dead; and it was for greater convenience in these ceremonies that in the larger tombs a second chamber was frequently added. The Christians, who, as we have already said, owed so much of their opportunity for worship to the Roman reverence for the dead and for the *loci religiosi* which were hallowed by burials having taken place within them, were not slow to avail themselves of these customs. They too visited the tombs of their dead, and offered oblations over their bodies, though those oblations were offered not to the dead themselves, but to God alone, and on behalf of those who were dead. The name *Natale*, which became the official designation for the anniversary of a martyr, is the actual word which constantly meets us in connection with the similar pagan ceremonies. The church was always ready to utilise and assimilate all that she lawfully could of the customs of the day, for in this way she was best able to secure for her children the free and unmolested exercise of their religion. It is therefore hardly possible to doubt, when we find Anacletus within the first century adding a second

story to the tomb of St. Peter, that he did so with the express purpose of rendering possible at least the occasional celebration of the sacred mysteries above those holy remains, and at the spot which had become a centre for all time of the devotion of the Christian Church.

We have seen already how it was arranged that the successors of St. Peter upon the papal throne should be laid in death close around the tomb of their great predecessor, and how, when the limited space that was available on the Vatican soon rendered the continuance of this custom impossible, the next idea seems to have been, since they could not any longer be laid round the tomb in which he was, that they should be placed, as the next best alternative, in proximity to that other spot which he had hallowed by his temporary presence. This thought also, natural though of course it is, had an antecedent among the heathen Romans, by which it may quite possibly have been suggested. What St. Peter was to the Popes, that Augustus was to the Cæsars of the empire. And just as Anacletus arranged that the Popes in succession should lie round the body of St. Peter, surrounding him, "like bishops assisting at a council," as one remarks who was privileged to be present when their tombs were uncovered in the seventeenth century;<sup>1</sup> so also we find that before his time it was arranged that the successors of Augustus should be laid in turn within the walls of the mausoleum he had built for himself; that mausoleum the walls of which still stand, facing the Church of St. Peter from the opposite side of the Tiber, but, alas! it is fallen and degraded from the purpose for which it was originally designed, put to base uses as a place of public entertainment of indifferent character, and called, not perhaps wholly inappropriately, if we consider the many other acts of vandalism for which the new *régime* in Italy has been responsible, after the

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, p. 337.

name of the present ruler of "United Italy," the Circo Umberto.

The tomb of St. James at Santiago di Compostella in Spain is said to date from apostolic times, and is therefore of special value to us for purposes of comparison. It is interesting to note that recent excavations and examinations tend to show that the original tomb there also was of two stories, and that the internal measurement was six metres by five, which is very much what we have supposed to be that of St. Peter's. There does not seem to be any trace of an orifice or "cataract" in the roof of the vault at Santiago, nor is there any record, so far as we have been able to learn, of any custom there of lowering handkerchiefs or other articles to touch the sarcophagus in which the body of the apostle lay, with those of St. Athanasius and St. Theodore, his two companions, in separate tombs on either side. Santiago, however, does provide us with a striking parallel to the story of the removal of the bodies of SS. Peter and Paul from their respective tombs to the *Platonia* in the third century. Just as the relics of those two apostles were then supposed to be in danger of desecration, so also was there fear of a similar outrage at a much later date at Santiago, at the hands of Sir Francis Drake and the English fleet in the reign of Elizabeth. Drake had announced his intention of coming to Santiago and sacking the shrine, and at the same time of preventing the possibility of any revival of its popularity as a place of pilgrimage by giving the body of the apostle to the flames. Accordingly in 1589, at dead of night, the then Archbishop, D. Juan de San Clemente, with a few chosen and trustworthy companions descended into the vault and opened the tombs. They wrapped the remains of the three holy bodies, each separately and with the greatest care, in white linen, and buried them hard by in a place which could easily be identified when occasion offered, in the apse of the

cathedral and close to the high altar. The secret was closely kept, and the people generally knew nothing of what had happened. By-and-by the archbishop died, and so also did all those who had been concerned with him in this translation, and with them there perished also all knowledge of the place in which the relics had been hidden. It was only quite recently in 1879 that they were rediscovered.<sup>1</sup> The similar cases of St. Cuthbert<sup>2</sup> at Durham, and, as some think, of St. Thomas at Canterbury will occur to the minds of all.

A yet closer parallel to the tomb of St. Peter is to be found of course in that of St. Paul, which was originally almost its exact counterpart, having been constructed at precisely the same time, and under very similar conditions of soil and position. There was, however, one great difference between them, which arose when St. Peter's became a two storied tomb, while St. Paul's was left to its original state as a simple vault, and this difference in the two tombs led to very marked differences in the structure of the basilicas which rose over them. The tomb of St. Paul therefore can only be of help to us in throwing light upon the shape and conditions of the lower part or sepulchral vault of that of St. Peter's; that is, precisely upon that part concerning which we have the least authentic information. Unfortunately the tomb of St. Paul is also entirely hidden under the altar, and it is difficult to arrive at any exact knowledge about it. Still there is something to be learnt from it even for our purpose, while in itself and in connection with the history of the development of Christian architecture it is of the highest possible interest and importance, and worthy of

<sup>1</sup> *Recuerdos de un viaje a Santiago de Galicia*; Fita y Fernandez Guerra. See also the Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, 25th July; Floraz *España Sagrada*; and Morales, *Viaje Sante*; for accounts of the shrine

<sup>2</sup> "Where is the body of St. Cuthbert?", in the *Ushaw Magazine*, 1897.

very much more attention than has ever been given to it. An outline of its history will be desirable before we go on to examine in detail its present condition, for without this it will be almost impossible to understand the meaning, and the bearing on our present subject, of what is still to be seen.

St. Paul, then, when his body was brought from the Catacombs a year and seven months after his martyrdom,<sup>1</sup> was laid in a tomb which had been prepared for him, close to the Via Ostia and about a mile nearer to the city than the place at which he had been beheaded. The exact site of the tomb was doubtless determined by the accident of the spot selected being already in Christian hands. The Via Ostia, which was one of the principal roads of the empire, being the communication between the city and its port, runs in this part almost due south, and the tomb is situated on the right hand or western side of the road. In this case, therefore, there was no difficulty whatever in arranging that the body should lie with the head towards the west, and the feet to the east, or towards the road, for that was the natural way in which a tomb in such a position would be placed, presenting its narrower side towards the road, and so taking up as little of the valuable frontage as possible. The entrance, for motives of convenience, would be placed at the eastern end, that being the nearest to the road, and we may assume that it was by a steep and straight flight of narrow steps that access was given to the vault. The whole tomb was doubtless subterranean, and the top would be scarcely, if at all, raised above the ground level. In this state it remained, probably without any change, until Constantine determined to build the basilica. The proximity of the great road determined the size of the church, which was a perfect basilica with aisles, and with an *atrium*, or square courtyard surrounded by an arcade, between it and the

<sup>1</sup> See *supra* p. 107.

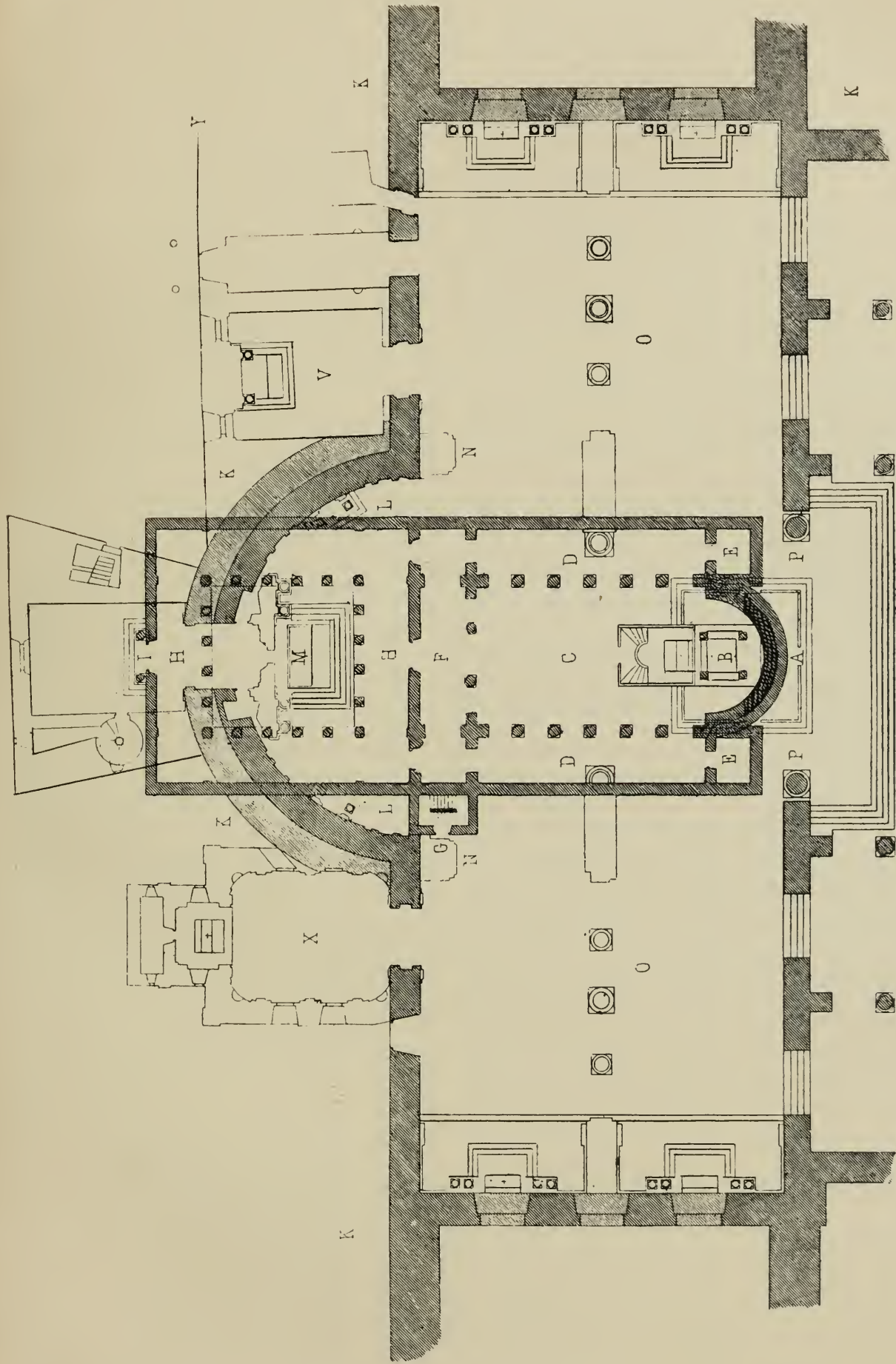
road. Its small size will be understood when it is realised that the entire church, *atrium* and all, only occupied the space between the present altar and the outside of the present apse. No disrespect was meant to the apostle of the Gentiles when his church was thus built so much smaller than that of St. Peter, but it was simply the result of the conditions of the place, and of the rules of church building as recognised in the fourth century.

We are told in the *Liber Pontificalis* that the tomb of St. Paul was treated in exactly the same way as that of St. Peter; the *loculus* or sarcophagus, here too, was covered with bronze, a cross of gold like that at St. Peter's was laid upon it, and the altar of the church was erected immediately above it. In this case the altar would stand immediately above the vaulted roof of the sepulchral chamber itself, without the upper room which intervened at St. Peter's. This vaulted roof may have been strong enough to bear the weight of the altar, and in that case nothing further would need to be done. The entrance to the vault would remain as before by a steep narrow staircase, which would now open out in the floor of the nave, a few feet east of the altar.

The church was not long allowed to remain in this its primitive condition. Before the century had passed away it was felt that so small a church was no fitting memorial of the great apostle of the Gentiles, and it was accordingly determined that it should be rebuilt on a larger scale; but this, on account of the difficulty which still remained, caused by the proximity of the road, could only be done by reversing the direction in which the church should be built.<sup>1</sup> The tomb and the altar above it were left undis-

<sup>1</sup> The fact that the church had been thus turned round when it was rebuilt in A.D. 386, was only discovered in the present century when the foundations of the original church were uncovered. The whole of the evidence may be read in a work by the architect Paolo Belloni, *Della grandezza e disposizione della primitiva Basilica Ostiense*, Rome 1853.

turbed. A great arch was raised above the altar, and westwards from that point a vast church of five aisles was built, rivalling both in size and magnificence the sister basilica of St. Peter. East of the great arch, the whole space which had been filled by the old church, besides a good deal more to right and to left of it, was occupied by a vast transverse nave, at right angles to the great nave, and of similar height, and out of this again opened the tribune or apse with the pontifical throne and the semi-circular benches for the clergy. The exigencies of the situation were thus met by two striking innovations, each destined to have very important consequences in the history of the ecclesiastical architecture of later times ; namely, the introduction of the transverse nave, and the reversal of the accepted relations between the altar and the church in which it stood. The transverse nave came into existence through what we may almost call the accidental circumstance that it was necessary to reverse the direction of the basilica of St. Paul, without either disturbing the tomb in which the apostle lay, or allowing any portion of the ground already consecrated for the existing church to return again to secular uses. There may, or may not, have been an intention also of reproducing the form of the cross in the new plan of the basilica ; but whether this was intended or not, the church so constructed no doubt first suggested the idea of cruciform architecture, and so led on in later years to the beautiful development of the later Gothic churches of the North. Nor was the innovation as to the altar less fertile in its consequences. Hitherto the rule had been invariable that the celebrant at the altar stood facing eastwards down the church, and having the altar between him and the great body of the faithful who were assisting at the Mass. Now in St. Paul's, and in that church alone, this rule was reversed, and the celebrant stood with his back to the people and his face towards the apse in which was the bishop's throne. The conse-



PLAN OF EASTERN PORTION OF THE BASILICA OF ST. PAUL,  
 Showing the Relations of the First and Second Churches. (From Belloni.)

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quence was that pilgrims to the Eternal City might see, possibly on consecutive days, the Pope saying Mass at St. Peter's, facing eastwards down the church, and at St. Paul's, still facing eastwards, but occupying the reverse position with regard to the church in which he was celebrating.<sup>1</sup> So striking an object lesson could not fail to impress men's minds, and the idea soon gained ground that the really important matter was the eastern position of the celebrant, and that it was of no consequence, so long as this was preserved, whether he faced down the church or towards the apse. The next step is illustrated by the history of Canterbury Cathedral, or better still perhaps by that of Mainz on the Rhine, and by many other churches both in England and on the continent. These churches were originally ordinary basilicas having the apse at the western end, with the altar duly placed on the chord of the apse, the celebrant facing eastwards down the church, and the bishop's throne in the apse behind the altar. Later, possibly for the greater convenience of the monastic bodies serving the cathedral, we find a second apse thrown out at the eastern end of the church with a second high altar, at which the celebrant stood with his back to the people, and a second and monastic choir. By degrees, owing perhaps to the greater frequency of the services at the monastic altar, the tendency grew up to regard the new altar, and not the original or episcopal altar, as the principal altar of the cathedral. Hence the lesser churches copied its arrangements for their own altars, and so by degrees the older basilican arrangement

<sup>1</sup> It has commonly been supposed, on the authority of the plans published in the sixteenth century, that Constantine built the basilica of St. Peter in the shape of a cross, and that this was the beginning of cruciform architecture. Evidence, however, exists, and is given in chap. xi., showing that this is a mistake. Old St. Peter's was probably originally built in the ordinary basilica form, and it was only at a much later date that a transverse nave was built in imitation of that at St. Paul's.

died out of use, so that now it can scarcely be met with anywhere out of Rome. It is worth notice, perhaps, that the second altar was generally erected over the tomb of some notable saint, and that it seems to have been frequently copied from the High Altar of St. Peter's at Rome, such variations only being made as were necessitated by its being at the eastern and not the western extremity of the church.

But we must leave this digression, interesting as are the issues which it opens up, and go back to the story of the tomb of St. Paul. That tomb and the altar above it were, as has been said already, left absolutely untouched and unchanged at the rebuilding of the church, only they were now enclosed by a larger and more magnificent building than had formerly been the case. The first hint of any change in the arrangements which had been made by Constantine occurs in the reign of St. Gregory the Great. We have already noted how he caused Masses to be celebrated (*fecit ut missas celebrarentur*) over the body of St. Peter, and have stated our belief that what was actually done was that an altar was placed in the remaining portion of the old *memoria* which still existed under the tribune of the church. But the chronicler goes on to say that he did the same at St. Paul's (*item et in ecclesiam beati Pauli eadem fecit*).<sup>1</sup> But there was no corresponding chamber to be put to this use at St. Paul's. In what way then could St. Gregory have made arrangements for Masses to be said here over the body? A glance at the plan of the church, as it was before the great fire of 1823 and the consequent rebuilding, may perhaps supply us with an answer. Between the altar and the apse there was a "confession," not like the one at old St. Peter's, but similar to those existing in the new St. Peter's, and in many other churches; that is, an excavated

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 312.

space with steps leading down into it. In that "confession" there was, what is very unusual in such places, an altar standing close up against the tomb. We may suppose therefore that what St. Gregory did was to enlarge the original flight of steps leading to the tomb, and to excavate this space on the lower level so that an altar might be placed in it. This altar would then occupy almost exactly the same relation to the tomb as the other one which had been placed in St. Peter's, the only difference being that the latter was close to, though on a higher level than, the head of St. Peter, while the former was adjacent to the feet of St. Paul, and approximately on the same level as the sarcophagus in which the body was contained. This explanation is raised to the level of something more than a mere conjecture by a reference in a letter of St. Gregory to the Empress Constantina,<sup>1</sup> the same letter which we have quoted already more than once, to certain excavations which he had caused to be made at St. Paul's, close up to the actual tomb. He has just been speaking of the works undertaken by his predecessor Pelagius II. for the adornment of the confession of St. Peter's, and continues: "I was myself also anxious to make somewhat similar improvements near the most holy body of the apostle St. Paul, for which purpose it was necessary to make excavations (*effodi altius*) quite close to his sepulchre". These words seem to denote some such undertaking as that of which we have been speaking.

The placing of the altar in this "confession" did not however at once lead to the closing of the means of access to the sepulchral chamber itself. For long after the time of St. Gregory, and as late as the time of Leo III., we read of a shield being set up *super ingressu corporis*, "above the entrance leading to the body," an expression

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.*, xl.

which it does not seem possible to interpret otherwise than of a door leading into the vault of burial and presumably situated behind the altar of the confession. It is exceedingly to be lamented that, when the basilica was rebuilt after the great fire of 1823, not only was no attempt made to investigate and place on record the exact condition of the tomb, but such investigation was rendered impossible for the future, by filling up the ancient confession and excavating a new one on the other side, thus destroying the most distinctive feature of the basilica, and obscuring for ever the interesting history of its development.

If, however, the rebuilding of the basilica has thus resulted in the loss of one special characteristic of the tomb, we have on the other hand to thank it for bringing to light another and even more interesting feature, which in the course of the ages had been totally lost and forgotten. This is the marble slab under the altar, which bears the sepulchral inscription. :—

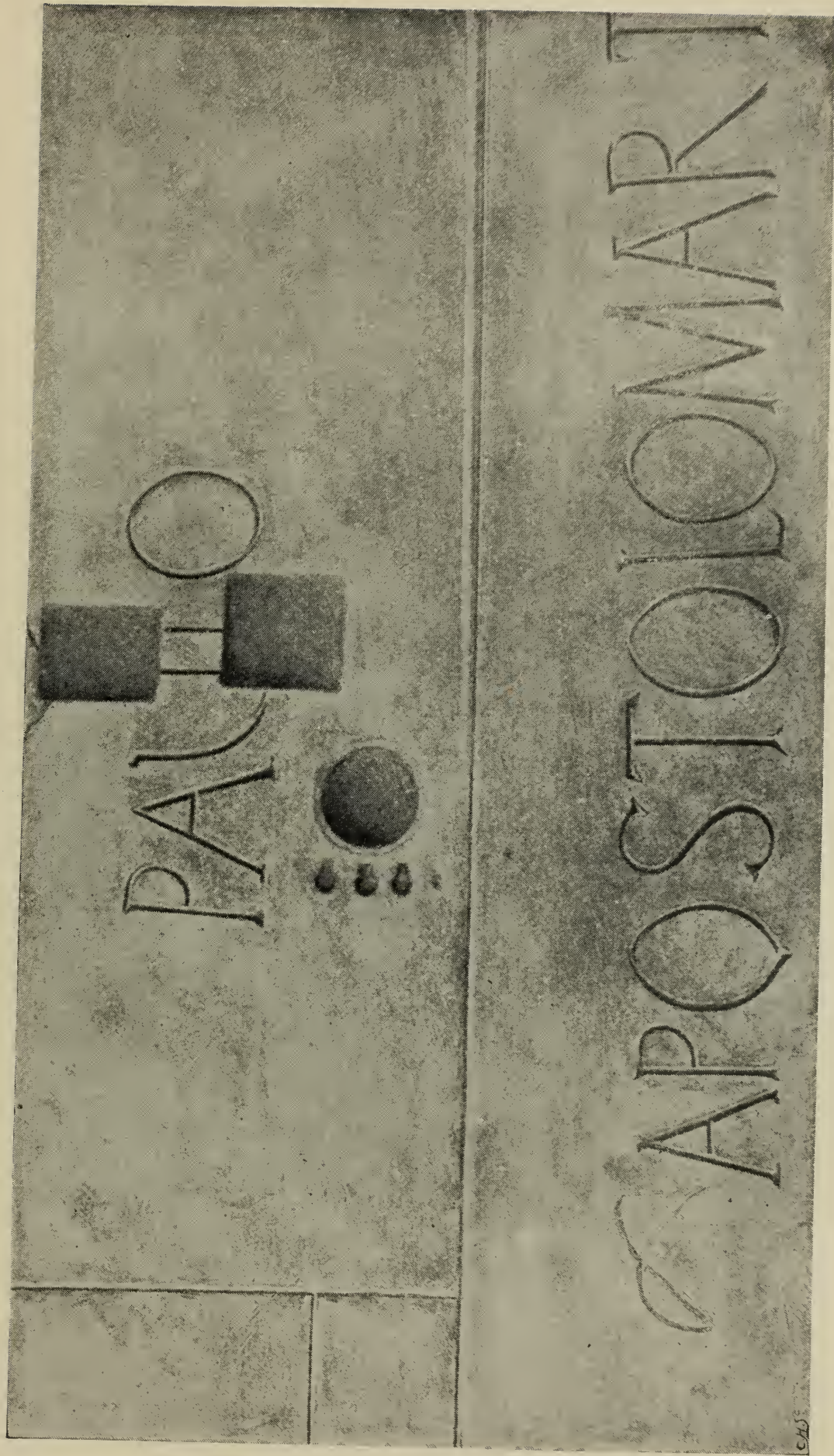
PAVLO

APOSTOLO MART.

It was discovered in the year 1838, on the occasion of the reconstruction of the high altar, and was not in any way disturbed, as Moroni, who was living in Rome at the time of the discovery, has recorded in his well-known *Dizionario di erudizione ecclesiastica*, which was published in 1841. He also tells us that the first word of the inscription, PAVLO, had always been visible, but, even so, it had been utterly forgotten, for none of the many writers on the basilica and its inscriptions seem to have known of it, and it is not mentioned even in the voluminous works of Margarini or of Nicolai.<sup>1</sup>

The slab, or rather slabs, of marble in question are to

<sup>1</sup> Margarini, *Inscriptiones Basilicæ S. Pauli.* ; Nicolai, *Della Basilica di S. Paolo.*



MARBLE SLAB OF FOURTH CENTURY UNDER HIGH ALTAR OF ST. PAUL'S.

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be found directly under the *mensa* of the high altar, and nearly five feet beneath it. In the eastern face of the altar, but commonly concealed from view by the *antependium*, there is a grating which can be opened, and this leads into a space beneath the altar, the floor of which is formed by the marble slabs of which we are speaking. The spot has been recently measured and examined very carefully by Fr. Grisar, S.J., who has published the results of his search in an Italian periodical which goes by the name of *Studi e Documenti di Storia e Diritto*, from whence we now take the details that we have to present to our readers. The size of the marble, and therefore of the chamber of which it forms the floor, is about seven feet by four feet two inches, while its thickness is only about two inches. There is no ornament whatever upon any of the four pieces of which it is made up, except that there is a slightly raised border running along part of one edge of the upper of the two larger pieces, an indication that this is not the first use to which that piece of marble has been put, but that it was originally designed for, if it did not actually fulfil, some other purpose. There are three apertures by which the whole is pierced, of which one is circular and carefully worked, while the other two, which are evidently of later date, since they cut into the inscription, are square. The circular aperture was evidently at one time provided with a cover, the traces of which are still easily to be distinguished. These three apertures form the mouths of three little wells, sunk in the solid masonry on which the marble rests, which little wells are connected one with another in a somewhat singular way. The first, the largest superficially, is sunk to a depth of nearly eight inches, and then communicates by a horizontal channel with the second, which is twelve and a half inches deep, and this again communicates in a similar way with the third, which is the circular one. This circular one is twenty-three and a

half inches in depth, and five and a half inches only in diameter.

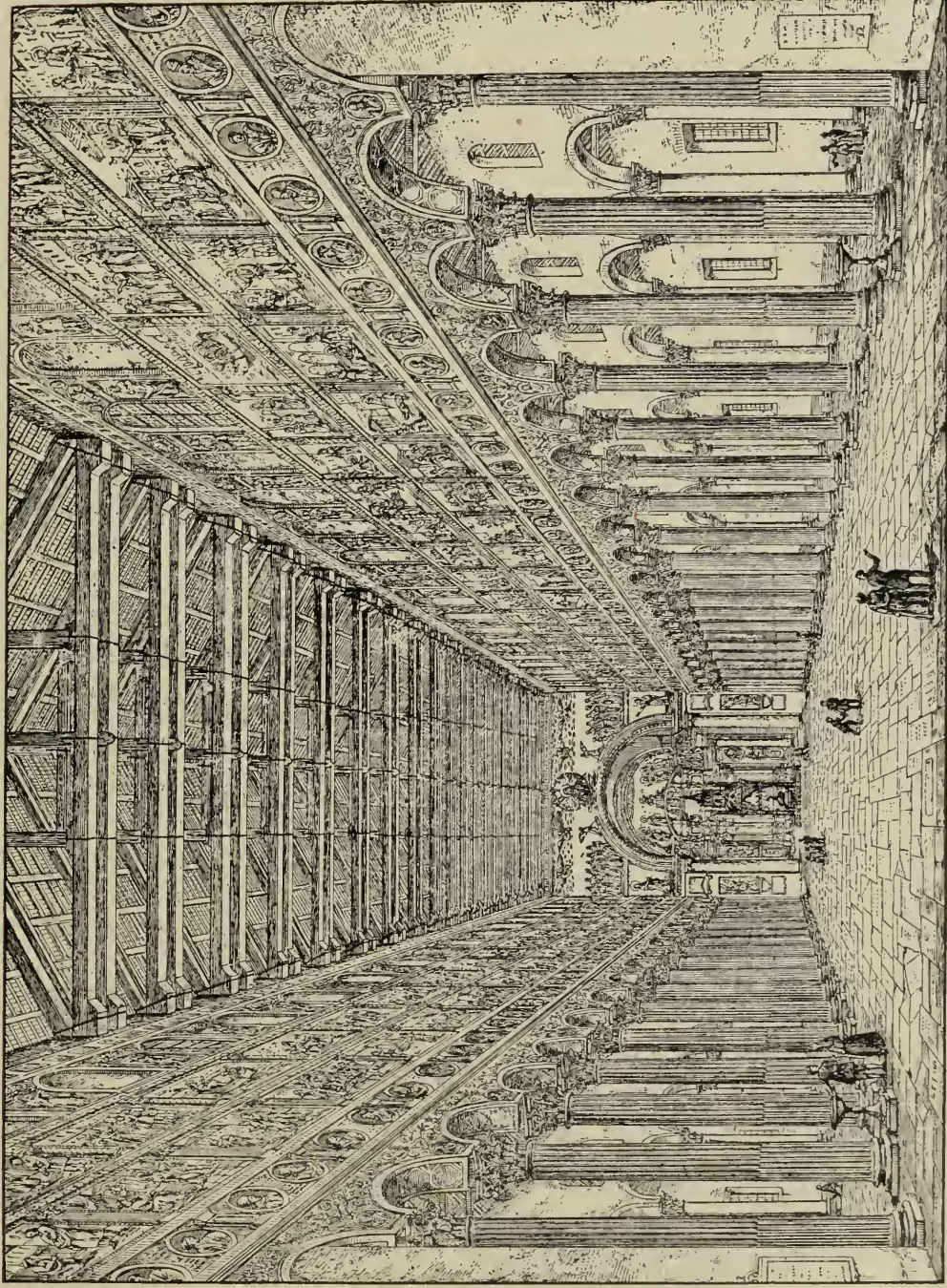
The inscription, the letters of which are reversed to any one who looks at them through the grating in the front of the altar of which we have already spoken, and which therefore was evidently intended to be approached from the other side, is somewhat roughly incised, in characters of unequal height which average about eight and a half inches. They are not very deeply cut, nor is there any trace of colour. The form of the letters, and the character of the inscription, which lacks any such title as *sancto* or *beato*, each denote the earlier part of the fourth century as the date at which the inscription was cut, and De Rossi<sup>1</sup> than whom there is no greater authority on such a matter, had no hesitation in assigning it to the age of Constantine and the period at which the first basilica was constructed; a judgment which has been concurred in by Armellini,<sup>2</sup> Lanciani<sup>3</sup> and other archæologists who have since written upon the subject.

When we go on to consider the probable relation of this marble to the actual tomb, we find ourselves at once in difficulties for want of information. What we want to know is whether, either when the old "confession" was filled up, or when the new and corresponding one was dug out on the other side of the altar, or else when the foundations were excavated for the foundations of the column of the new ciborium, any ancient walls were uncovered which could possibly have been the walls of the sepulchral crypt; and if so, what was the exact position of these walls in relation to the altar, and to this marble under the altar. Unfortunately, it would seem that no record of any kind was kept, at any rate, so far as we know, none has ever been published. Possibly some

<sup>1</sup> *Bull. di arch. crist.*, 1883, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> *Gli antichi cimiteri cristiani*, p. 481.

<sup>3</sup> *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 158.



BASILICA OF ST. PAUL AT ROME.  
(From a drawing made before the Great Fire of 1825.)

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record which might throw light upon the matter may exist still unpublished among the archives of the basilica. Meanwhile, we can only consider the facts that are before us, and draw from them the conclusions that seem most probable, premising that it is not possible to arrive at any very certain result on account of the scantiness of the available evidence.

We note then, first, that the size of the marble, seven feet by four feet roughly, corresponds exactly with that of the recess under the altar of St. Peter, and this would seem to imply that it corresponds with and is exactly over the sarcophagus itself. If that be so, St. Paul must lie, not in the direction we have suggested above, but north and south. There would seem no great difficulty in accepting this hypothesis, except that one does not quite see what was the cause which led to a divergence in this case from the more usual custom of burying, where it was possible, with the face to the east. In the Catacombs, where exigencies of space made the observance of this custom difficult, if not impossible, we find the graves constructed with every possible orientation, so that, if there was any strong reason, of which we are unaware, for departing from the more usual plan in St. Paul's case, it is evident that there would have been no insuperable objection to so doing.

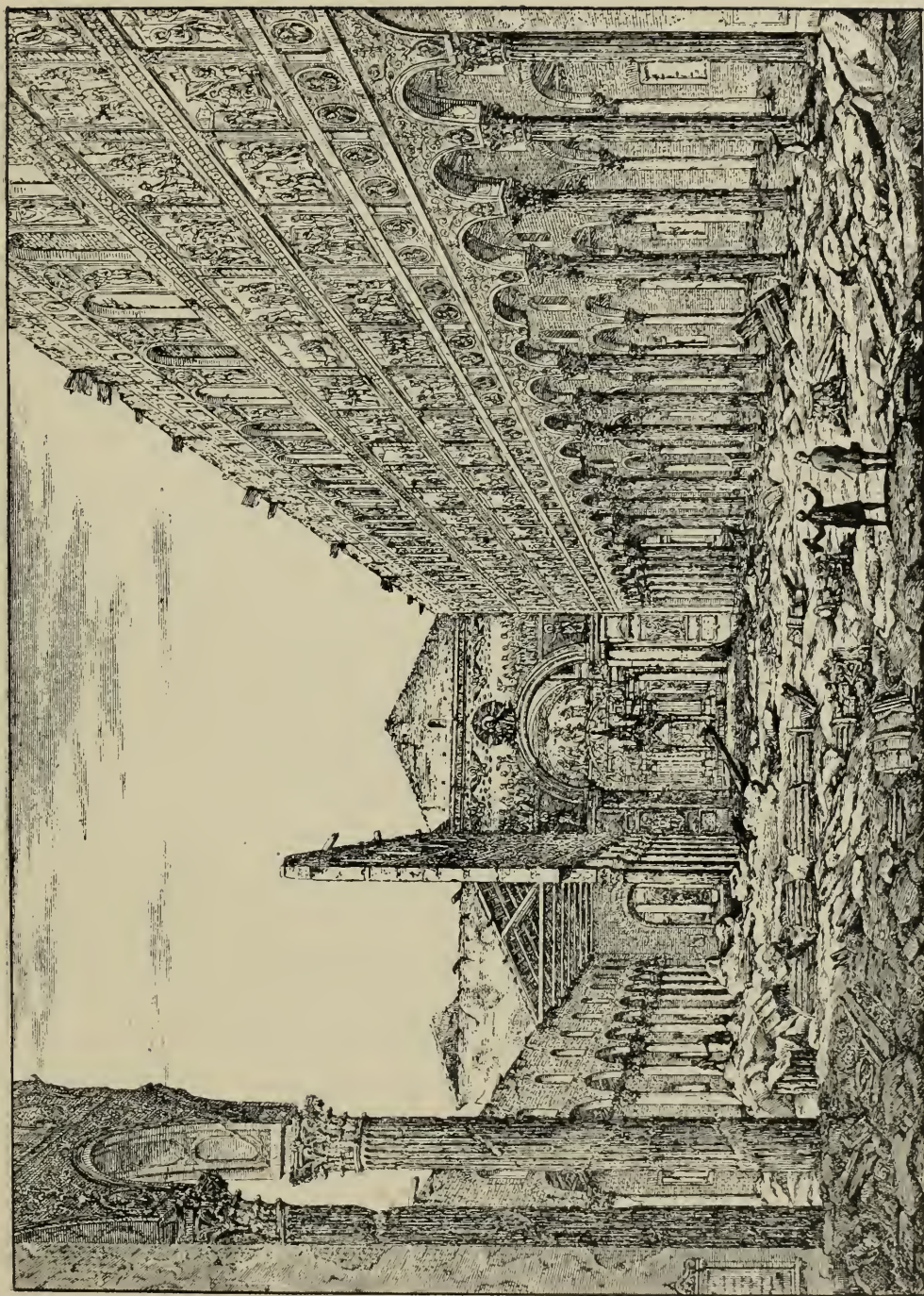
Next, it is clear that the marble cannot be, as M. Duchesne<sup>1</sup> most unaccountably seems to suppose, the cover of the actual sarcophagus itself. The little wells, as we have called them, by means of which we know that there is solid masonry to the depth of at least two feet beneath the marble, are enough to disprove that hypothesis. But there seems to be no reason why it may not be part of the vaulted roof of the sepulchral chamber, for we should naturally expect that to be quite two feet in

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., p. 195. So also Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 157.

thickness. In that case the circular orifice will be the "billicum confessionis," corresponding to that at St. Peter's, and will mark for us the central point of the vault and of the sarcophagus. The cover, of which, as we have said, the traces remain, will have been the "cataract," and the hole will have served for the lowering of handkerchiefs and other objects to be hallowed by resting on the sarcophagus, when access to the vault itself was not permitted. It must have been closed at the other end at some later period, probably when the actual vault was finally rendered inaccessible. The use of the other two "wells" and of their communication with this central "billicum" remains quite obscure. So far as we are aware, no other tomb has anything of a similar character. Father Grisar<sup>1</sup> may be right in supposing that they too had some connection with the hallowing of secondary relics, but he is clearly wrong in thinking that these were the "cataracts," and in quoting the letter of the legates at Constantinople to Pope Hormisdas<sup>2</sup> as throwing light upon their use. There is no evidence that there ever were two cataracts at St. Paul's. The second "cataract" at St. Peter's was rendered necessary by the fact that it was a two-story tomb, so that there was, in addition to the orifice in the roof of the vault which corresponded to this one at St. Paul's, a second opening in the floor of the recess under the altar, which last is still visible. The covers of these two apertures were the two "cataracts". What the legates desired was that the relics should actually touch the sarcophagus of St. Peter, and not merely be lowered, as was usually the case, into the space which intervened between the two "cataracts". Father Grisar, in making them ask as a great favour only that their relics might be placed in the second of these little wells instead of the first, reduces their request to an absurdity.

<sup>1</sup> *Studi e Documenti*, 1892, p. 329.

<sup>2</sup> Thiel, *Epp. Rom. Pont.*, p. 873.



BASILICA OF ST. PAUL, AFTER THE GREAT FIRE OF 1825.

(From a contemporary drawing.)

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It must be admitted that on the whole we have found singularly little to our purpose by this examination, from which we hoped so much, of the tomb of St. Paul. We may gather, however, that it is probable that the thickness of the vault of the sepulchre at St. Peter's is not less than about two feet, and that we are right in supposing that it is pierced in the centre by an aperture leading directly into the vault below. Whether there is or is not at St. Peter's a corresponding floor of marble, or an inscription of Constantine's time, or little wells communicating with the central aperture, there are no means of ascertaining. But, clearly, the great difference between the two tombs which arises from the existence of an upper chamber at St. Peter's, prevents us from assuming that any of these exist in that church, until we have more definite proof than that they have been shown to exist at St. Paul's. Indeed, the balance of probability, if the circumstances of the case be carefully considered, would seem to incline strongly against there being anything of a corresponding character to be found at the Vatican tomb.

In the Church of the Holy Apostles at Rome, where are the bodies of St. Philip and St. James, there is under the high altar an arrangement in many ways similar to that at St. Paul's. It was discovered in the year 1869, and appears to be of the sixth century. There is a horizontal slab of marble pierced by a circular hole, corresponding exactly with the relics contained in a kind of chest below. Above was an *arca* or niche, somewhat similar to that at St. Peter's. Drawings of it will be found in the sixth volume of Garrucci's great work on the *History of Christian Art*, plate ccccxiii.

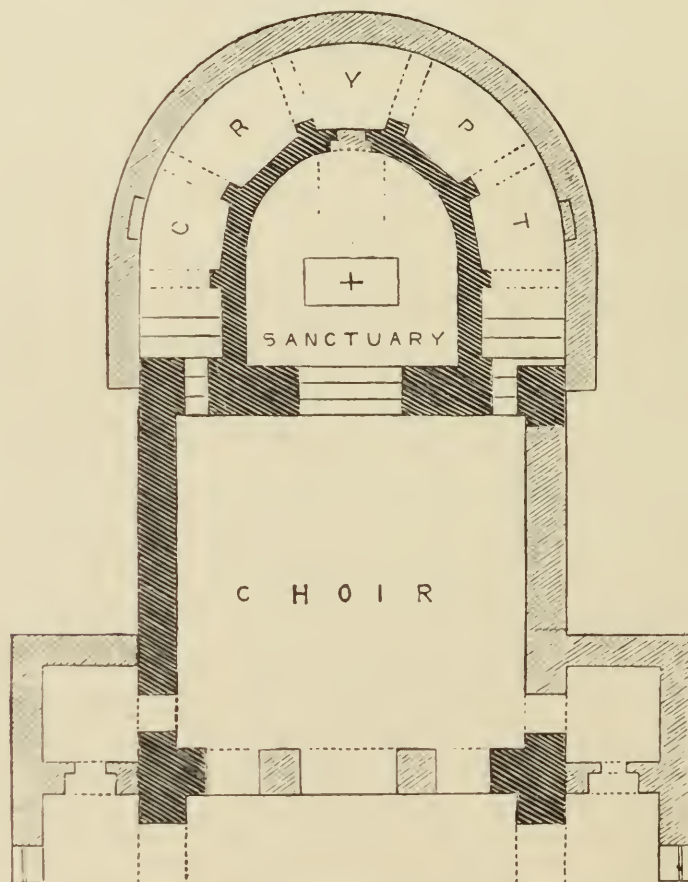
We come next to the consideration of a class of buildings which must be very much more numerous than is commonly supposed, and to which it is surprising that more attention has not already been called,—the churches, namely, which were direct copies or imitations, as regards

the arrangements of their altars, of the basilica of St. Peter. In the days when the tomb of St. Peter was the principal shrine of Christendom, and the pilgrimage thereto its most popular devotion, there sprang up all over Europe, and especially in England, where the devotion to St. Peter was extraordinarily strong, a number of secondary shrines, for the benefit of those to whom the long, expensive and arduous journey to Rome was an impossibility. These shrines were, so to speak, little counterparts of St. Peter's at Rome, churches or chapels dedicated to St. Peter, bearing a more or less marked resemblance on a smaller scale to the great basilica, and enriched with such ample indulgences as made the accomplishment of a pilgrimage to them equal in spiritual privileges to one undertaken to Rome itself. The best known of these foundations in England was most probably Peterborough, the Abbey Church of which was founded with the express object that "men who could not go to Rome might there be able to seek their patron," and so that, "just as blessed Peter was present in body at Rome, so he might also be present in this spot in spirit".<sup>1</sup> Vows of visiting Rome could be satisfied there, and all the special indulgences attached to the shrine could be obtained. In a lesser degree the cathedrals of Exeter, of Gloucester, and of Ely, with the abbeys of Westminster, Ripon and many another of lesser note up and down the country, all of which were dedicated to St. Peter, shared in these privileges. It is not unlikely that in Saxon times many of these churches had the arrangements of the high altar, and the crypt which was generally beneath it, copied from that of St. Peter's at Rome, but of that we cannot be sure, for no sufficient details have come down to us, and the churches have in every case been rebuilt and altered so often that hardly

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale, *Monasticon*.

any trace of the original arrangements remain to us. We have, however, in the Saxon towers, of which a good number still exist, one remaining proof of the very wide extent to which Roman architecture was imitated in England before the Conquest. No one, who has once had his attention drawn to the matter, can doubt that these towers are direct imitations, in a different material, and perhaps from hearsay information only, of the campanili which are so marked a feature of Roman churches now, and among which the great tower of old St. Peter's, built in the eighth century by Hadrian I., was the largest and most beautiful of all. The shape of the windows in both these two classes of towers is identical—two small arches, namely, separated by a baluster—and, so far as we are aware, it is not found elsewhere. It looks very much as if the pilgrims from England to Rome in the ninth and tenth centuries, who were so numerous that a whole quarter of Rome close to St. Peter's took its name from them as *Burgus Saxonum*; a name which still survives in the titles of the well-known churches of San Spirito and San Michele in Sassia; and who included among them many of the crowned heads and of the bishops of the period, caused these towers to be built on their return, in memory of the great campanile of Hadrian I.; imitating the form of the original so far as was possible with the different materials and the rude skill which alone were available in their native land. We have also many churches, such as Ripon Cathedral and Hexham Abbey, Ryton near Newcastle and Repton in Derbyshire, where the arrangements of St. Peter's at Rome seem to have been followed in the parts about the principal altar. The crypt chamber still survives in all of these churches, and is approximately of the same size and shape as that of St. Peter's. At Ripon and Hexham local tradition still tells that these crypts were once used as "confessionals," a legend obviously derived from the fact that they were once

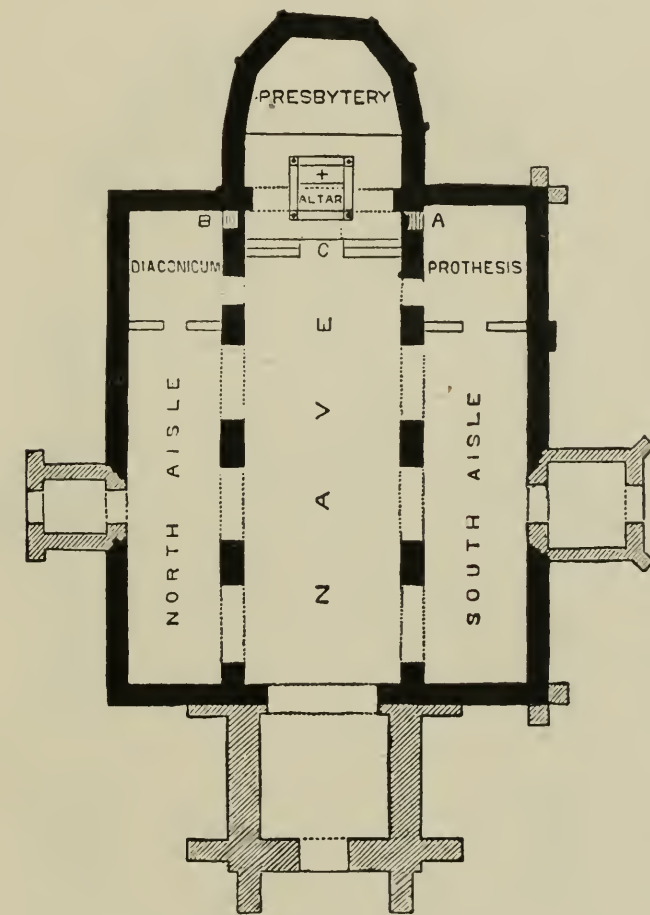
known as "confessions," from the analogy of that which they copied. Two churches in particular, Brixworth in Northamptonshire, and Wing in Buckinghamshire, still retain the raised tribune in the apse, and underneath it the curious crypt, approached by a circular passage running close round the apse, which must have been directly imitated from St. Peter's. The form is so singular that it could never have been adopted by accident.



Plan of Brixworth Church, Northamptonshire, with semicircular passage and crypt under altar.

How it came into being at St. Peter's itself we have already shown. There, it was the natural outcome of the circumstances of the place, circumstances which could hardly exist elsewhere; and therefore we are justified in saying that wherever else we find a crypt of this very remarkable shape it owes its origin to an imitation, direct or at second hand, of St. Peter's tomb, and the crypt of

the confession. Very possibly there are many other instances in England itself, or elsewhere in Europe. We ourselves have only noted one other such outside of Rome, namely the beautiful church of S. Apollinare in Classe, near Ravenna. In Rome itself, however, there are many instances, notably at Sta. Prassede, Sta. Cecilia, SS. Quattro Coronati and S. Saba, in all of which the resem-

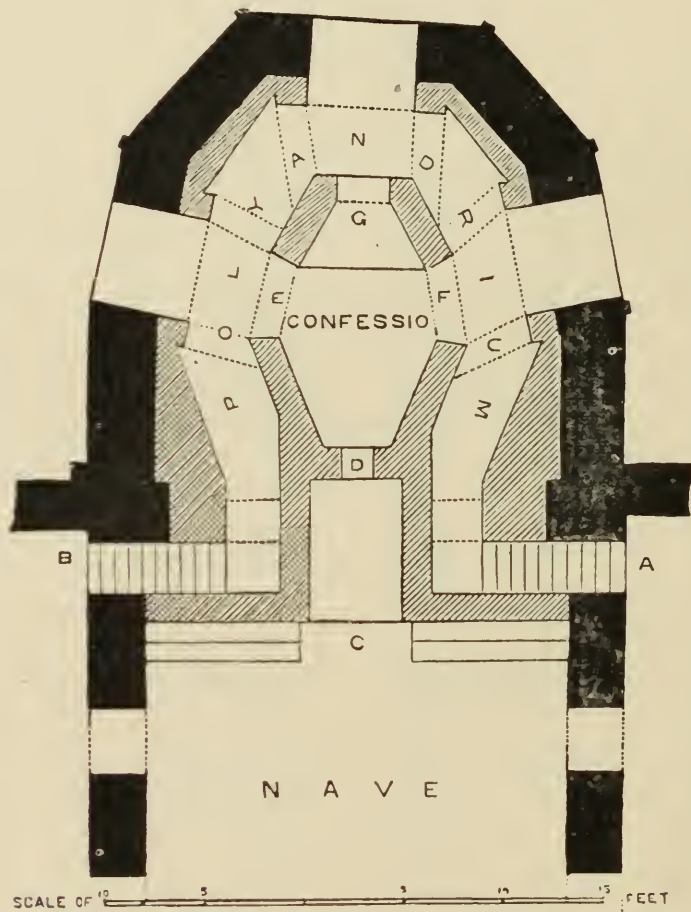


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Wing Church, Buckinghamshire, general plan.

blance is well marked. These churches all date from the eighth and ninth centuries, so far at least as relates to the portions with which we are now concerned, so those centuries evidently constitute the period at which the wish to copy the details of the shrine of St. Peter in other churches was most strongly marked. The fronts of the

high altars have naturally tended to change more rapidly than the crypts, and there are not so many instances to be brought from existing churches of the imitation of the recess of the confession. Still, the altar of old St. Peter's was clearly the origin of the arrangements which survive at Sta. Cecilia and at Sta. Maria in Trastevere, and in a less marked degree at S. Giorgio in Velabro, and S. Clemente. The confessions in all of these churches are



Wing Church, Buckinghamshire, plan of crypt.

recesses under the high altar, on the general level of the church, and not approached by any descent, but flanked on either side by a flight of steps leading up to the higher level of the tribune and the apse. They therefore reproduce the general idea of St. Peter's. It will be noted that Sta. Cecilia in Trastevere is the only one which has preserved both the recess under the altar and also the

crypt with the tomb, and it is there accordingly that the arrangements of St. Peter's are more closely reproduced than in any other existing church. At present, however, the recess under the altar is closed by the well-known statue by Maderno which represents the martyrdom of the saint, and which was taken directly from the body when it was discovered in 1595 quite incorrupt, and just as it had been buried in the Catacombs thirteen centuries before. Bosio and Baronius have both left us interesting accounts of how all Rome flocked to see and marvel at the holy relics, which were exposed for popular veneration for several days.

So far we have concerned ourselves solely with the existing traces of reproduction or imitation of St. Peter's shrine in other churches. There remain two interesting descriptions of similar constructions which have come down to us from very early times, and are worth quoting here for the light they throw on our subject, although no trace of them now remains in existence for our study.

The first of these is the account that is given by St. Gregory of Tours of the basilica of St. Peter at Bordeaux. It so exactly fits in with the details of St. Peter's at Rome that we can hardly doubt that here again we are dealing with a reproduction for devotional purposes of the arrangements of the shrine, and if so, since St. Gregory wrote in the sixth century, this will be the earliest instance of such a reproduction of which we have knowledge, most of the others belonging, as we have already said, to the eighth and ninth centuries. "A certain woman," St. Gregory tells us, "weighed down with old age, but sustained by singular faith and piety, used to be in the habit of tending the lamps which burnt in the churches of the saints. One evening she was as usual engaged in this work and went for the purpose to the basilica of St. Peter. Now the altar of this church is raised on a high platform (*altare positus in altum pulpitis*

*locatum habetur*), and there is a crypt beneath closed with a door, which also has its own altar with the relics of the saints. Into this the good woman descended in order to light the lamp, having with her only one little girl as a companion. While she was thus engaged night came on and it grew dark, and the clergy, having finished their office, locked up the door of the crypt and departed, not knowing that the woman was within. So she lighted her lamps and hastened to the door to go out, and finding it locked began to call out the name of him whose duty it was to open it, but her voice was so feeble with age that it could not penetrate the vaults; and at length, when she found that no one would hear her, she threw herself on the pavement, saying, 'I will pray for mercy for my sins, and for those of the people, to God who made us all, until such time as he shall come whose duty it is to unlock the door of this church'. So she lay and prayed, and about midnight she saw the doors open and all the basilica filled with a marvellous light. Then a choir of singers entered the basilica, and when at length their psalmody ceased with ascription of glory to the Blessed Trinity, she heard the men complaining one to another and saying, 'The holy Deacon Stephen keeps us waiting, we ought to be visiting the other basilicas, but we cannot do so till he comes'. And when they had said this several times, suddenly there came in a man habited in white. And all the multitude humbly saluted him with the words, 'Bless us, Stephen, thou holy and sacred Deacon'. So he saluted them in return; and then, after he had prayed, they asked him why he had thus delayed them and kept them back from visiting the other holy places. And he answered, 'There was a ship on the sea, in danger of being lost, and I was called upon and had to go to their help, so I saved the ship, and now here I am. See, that you may be assured of the truth of what I am saying, the garment which I wear is all wet with salt water.'

Meanwhile the woman, who was still prostrate on the pavement, watched all that was done with much fear. When they were gone, however, she found the doors were unlocked by divine power, so she went to the place on which the saint had stood, and with her handkerchief carefully gathered up all the drops which had fallen from his robe. And she showed it next day to the bishop, and he took it with much joy and wonder and kept it. And many sick were healed by that handkerchief, and the bishop, when he consecrated churches, was wont to take relics from it, and to place them carefully in the new church. All this story we had from the said bishop himself.”<sup>1</sup>

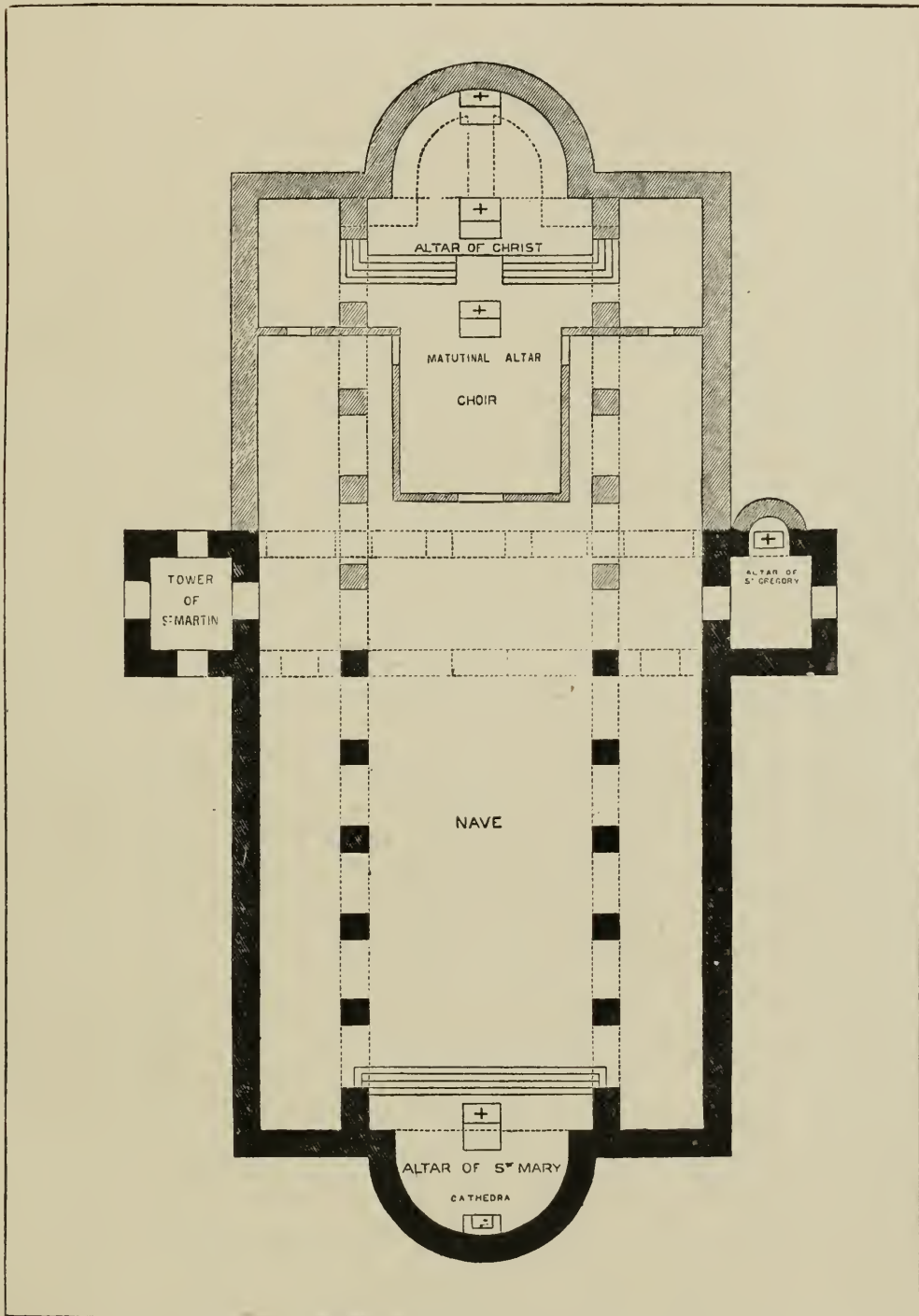
The other account is much more minute, and is of very special interest to Englishmen. It is the account of the ancient Cathedral of Canterbury, which was written by Eadmer the Monk early in the eleventh century.

“The Venerable Oddo had translated to Canterbury the body of blessed Wilfred the Archbishop of York, and had placed it in a goodly urn under the high altar, which stands against the east wall of the presbytery, and is built of unpolished stone and cement. For that church was the work of Roman workmen, as Bede bears witness in his history, and was in some part an imitation of that church of blessed Peter the prince of the apostles, in which his holy relics are venerated by pilgrims from all the world. Besides the high altar there was another, some little distance in front of it, dedicated to the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, at which every day the holy mysteries are celebrated. To these two altars one ascended by steps from the choir of singers, and underneath there was a crypt, or confession as the Romans call it, which was constructed after the pattern of the confession of blessed Peter, where also the vault

<sup>1</sup> Greg. Tur., *De gloria Martyrum*, xxxiv.; Migne, *P. Lat.*, 71, p. 736.

is so much raised that it can only be approached by a number of steps. This crypt had within it at the eastern end an altar, and to the west there was a place separated by strong masonry from the rest of the crypt. Here St. Dunstan lay buried deep in the ground at the foot of the steps by which one went up to the presbytery, and having above him a fine monument of pyramidal form of considerable size and height. At his head was the morning altar (*altare matutinale*) at which Mass was said daily. Thence westwards was the choir for the singers, which extended into the nave of the church, and was separated off from the people by a low wall of goodly workmanship."

On the whole this account of Canterbury does not help us so much as we might have expected. It is valuable evidence in favour of what we have already said on the subject of the practice of copying the shrine of St. Peter in other churches, for here—although Canterbury Cathedral was not dedicated to St. Peter—not only was St. Peter's altar and its surroundings taken as the model for imitation, but workmen were actually imported from Rome itself, at what must have been in those times a very considerable expense and difficulty, in order that the resemblance might be as perfect as possible. [Nevertheless, as we read the description, we can see that the model was not reproduced at all exactly, but that, on the contrary, very considerable differences existed between the two churches. At St. Peter's the altar stood on the chord of the apse, and the episcopal chair stood behind it against the wall of the apse. At Canterbury, on the other hand, the high altar stood close to the wall and a second "Jesus" altar occupied the position filled by the high altar at Rome. Nor again do the arrangements of the two crypts sound by any means identical. The reason for these divergences was doubtless that to which we have already alluded, namely, that this so-called high altar at Canterbury was not really the high altar at all, but a second



THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF CANTERBURY, CONJECTURAL PLAN BY  
MR. G. G. SCOTT.

(This shows the Church as it was before the Fire of A.D. 1067. The black parts represent the original Basilica, the shaded parts the later additions.)

[To face page] 236.



altar in an apse, and having a monastic choir for the use of the monks, erected at the eastern end of the church, while the original high altar with the bishop's throne remained where it had always been, in the apse at the western end. These changes, therefore, were probably made on account of the fact that this new altar at Canterbury orientated in the opposite direction from that at St. Peter's, and therefore necessitated a corresponding change in the position of the celebrating priest.

This account of the old Cathedral of Canterbury concludes the evidence at our disposal, so far as concerns the churches which were copied from St. Peter's. Very possibly it might be considerably increased by any one with the necessary leisure, and knowledge of continental and English ecclesiology. There probably exist other crypts, dating from the eighth and ninth centuries, which present the same general features, but hitherto it has not been pointed out that they were derived from St. Peter's, and so they have not attracted any particular attention. Still, even so, the evidence we have been able to put together is quite sufficient to constitute an important confirmation of the general accuracy of the lines of reasoning which we have pursued, and to prove that we are not far from the truth in the surmises on which we have ventured with regard to the ancient form of the various parts of the shrine of St. Peter. We now go back to the basilica and examine the existing state of the confession and its surroundings, with a view to ascertaining how far and with what objects that ancient form has since been modified, and, if it be possible, to tracing the steps by which the confession of the time of Constantine has been changed into that which we know so well to-day.

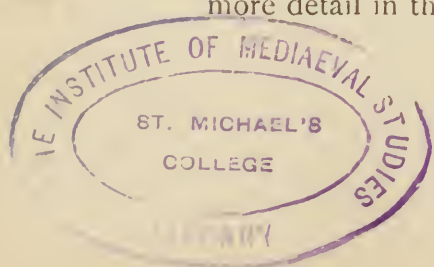
## CHAPTER X.

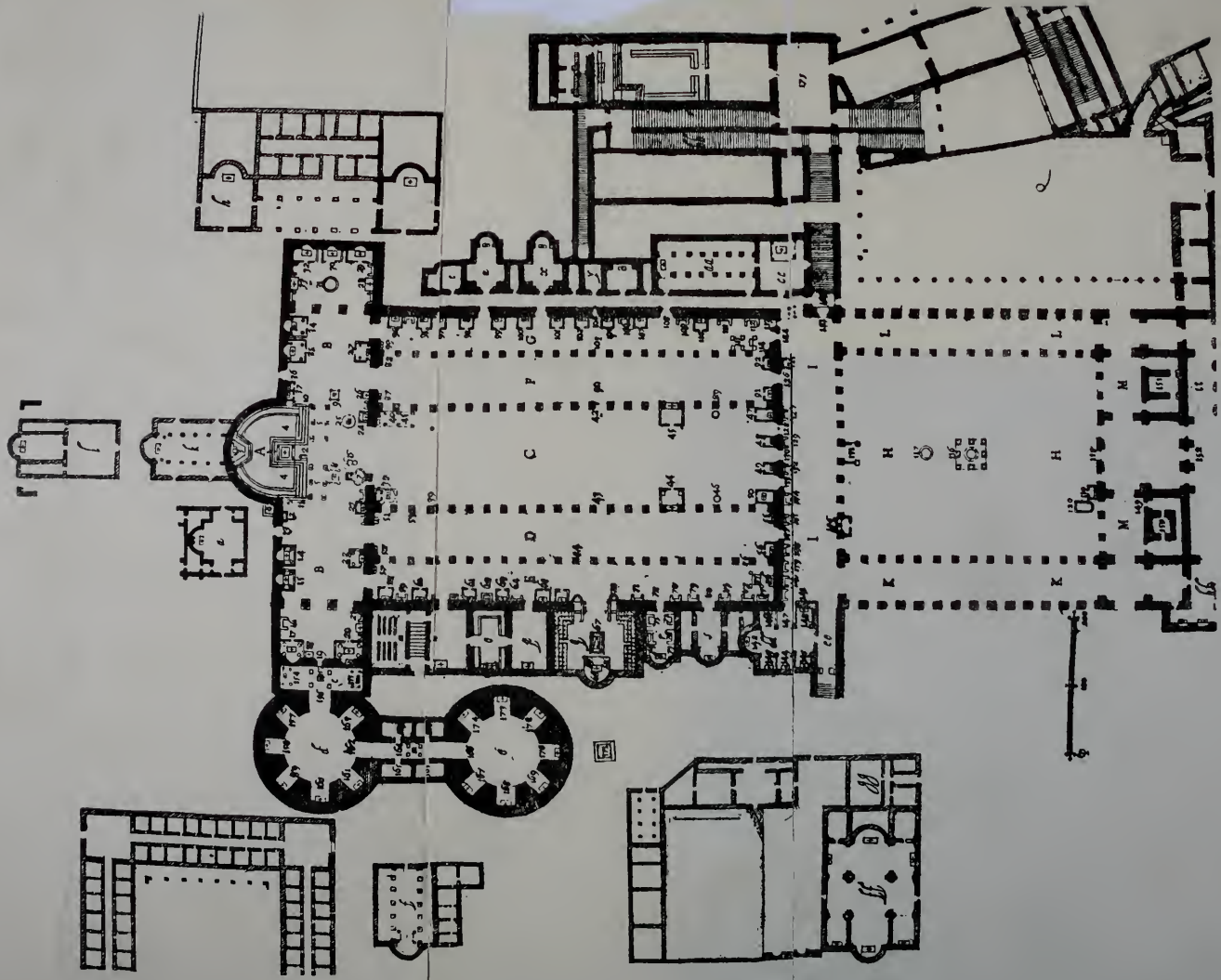
### OLD ST. PETER'S

ALMOST all the exact knowledge that we have of the shape and size of the old basilica of St. Peter has come to us through an elaborate plan published in the year 1589 by one Tiberio Alfarano, a *beneficiato* of the church, and a most careful antiquarian. This plan has been republished again and again, with some variations, in almost every book which has been written on the subject since that time, and may be taken as constituting the standard authority on the matter. It will be found reproduced on a slightly reduced scale opposite this page.<sup>1</sup>

So far as regards the *atrium* in front of the church, and the church itself in its lower part, extending to the dotted line which cuts across it about the middle of the nave, this plan may be taken as absolutely authentic, for Alfarano was a most painstaking and trustworthy worker, and all this portion of the ancient edifice was still standing at the time the plan was published, and indeed was not destroyed until some years afterwards, in the year 1606. The case is rather different as regards the upper portion of the church; that portion, namely, which is in greater proximity to the high altar and the tomb of St. Peter; for all this part had been destroyed in the year 1506, long before Alfarano was born and more than eighty years before he published his plan. Even here, however, his evidence is

<sup>1</sup> The copy from which our reproduction is made differs from all others we have seen. It is on a rather larger scale, and gives a little more detail in the surrounding buildings. It is in the British Museum.





PLAN OF OLD ST. PETER'S BY ALFARANO, 1589.  
(From a copy in the British Museum.)



of very great value. Although the building itself had been pulled down, the foundations no doubt could still often be traced, and in some cases we are told expressly that he had been able to measure them. Moreover, it was a time of revival of interest in antiquarian matters, and in his younger days old men would still have been living whose memory would go back to the earliest years of the century, and who would have been able to tell him what was the general appearance of the old church as they remembered it, and even to point out the places where the more important altars and shrines had stood in those bygone days. One such old man there was in particular, one Giacomo Herculano, who died in 1573, once like himself a *beneficiato* of the church, afterwards a canon, and almoner to the Pope, a man of the greatest holiness of life, and devoted heart and soul to the great church which he served; and from his lips he gathered and committed to writing every precious detail he could find upon the history and appearance of the venerable building, the last remnants of which were so soon to be swept away. This plan, therefore, is of much more than mere hearsay value, and comes to us as the work, not indeed of an eye-witness, but of one who had exceptional opportunities, of which he made good use, of gathering his information at first hand from men who had known and loved the church, the description and details of which he has been the means of handing down to our times.

By far the earliest external view of the church is to be found on an old sarcophagus of the fourth century now in the Museum of Christian Antiquities at the Lateran. There can scarcely be any question but that the sculptures on this are intended to represent the basilicas which had just been built at Rome, but they do not help us much, for it is quite impossible to say which of them is intended for St. Peter's. So far as it goes, however, this piece of evidence seems to support two theories which will be

found set forth at length below ; the one, that the original church at St. Peter's had no transverse nave, but was of the ordinary basilica form ; the other, that the baptistery was detached and circular in form.

There exist, also, two more or less detailed accounts of the basilica written in the sixteenth century, before Alfarano's work was published, by Pompeo Ugonio and Onofrio Panvinio, and these supply us to some extent

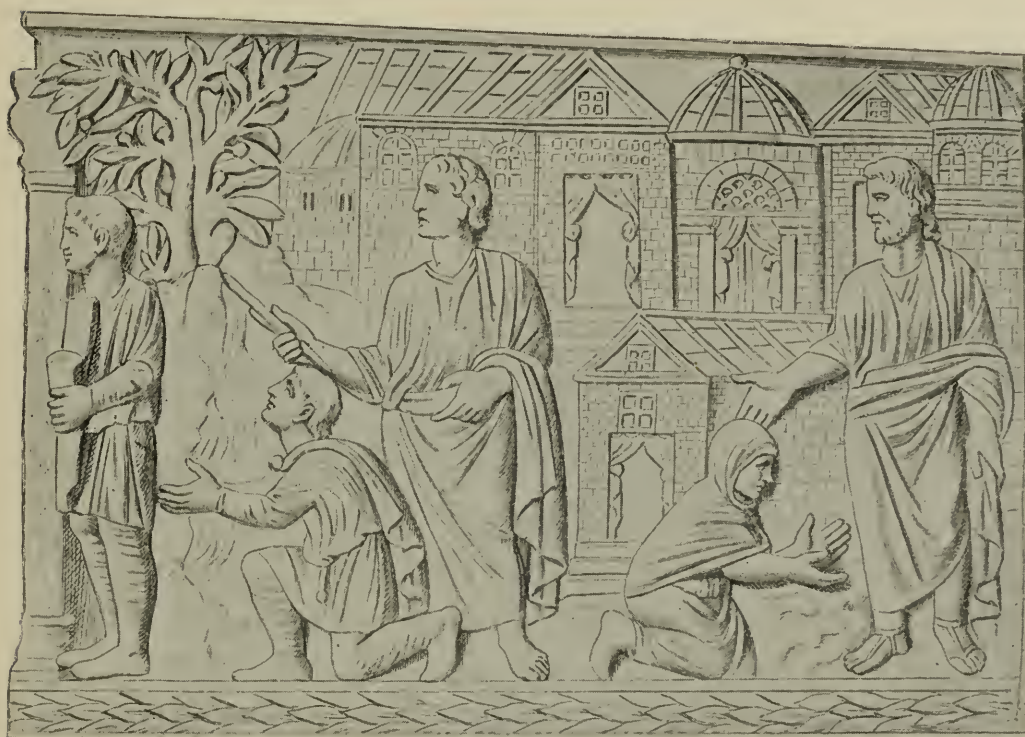


Sarcophagus of fourth century now in the Lateran Museum, showing views of Christian Basilicas.

with the means of checking the plan, especially in connection with the arrangement of the altar. Then, in the seventeenth century, Severano, who was one of the companions of St. Philip and the earliest members of the Congregation of the Oratory, collected in his work on the seven churches of Rome a great amount of information about the old basilica, much of which is derived from

ancient sources which are not now known. This collateral support gives us warrant for believing that Alfaraño's plan provides in the main a thoroughly trustworthy representation of the basilica as it was in the early years of the sixteenth century.

But, when we come to examine it in connection with the scanty notices which have come down to us from earlier years, we are at once conscious that there are



Sarcophagus of fourth century now in the Lateran Museum, showing views of Christian Basilicas.

difficulties which need explaining. It is merely a negative fact, no doubt, but still a singular one, that we have no mention at all in any early writer of the very remarkable fact that St. Peter's differed from all the basilicas which were before it, in being of a cruciform shape. The first mention of this fact, so far as we are aware, is made by Ugonio<sup>1</sup> in 1588, who states as a piece of hearsay evidence

<sup>1</sup> *Stazione di Roma*, p. 96.

that "they say that this church was once like St. Paul's, but now it is in two parts, the old and the new". So, again, Panvinio speaks of "the cross" of the church, meaning thereby the transverse nave, but no earlier writer, so far as we are aware, speaks of this portion of the church by this name. Moreover, there are difficulties and divergencies which are hard to reconcile, even in so simple a matter as the number of columns which the church contained. St. Gregory of Tours for instance, in the passage we have already quoted,<sup>1</sup> is quite explicit on the subject. He says the basilica had four rows of columns, numbering ninety-six in all, twenty-four that is in each row, and that these with the four round the altar made up exactly one hundred, excluding those which hold up the *ciborium* of the sepulchre, by which last he presumably means the twisted columns in front of the confession. Now here we have a description which is quite clear and definite, and which seems on the face of it to be worthy of our confidence, for the person who furnished St. Gregory with these facts had been anxious, we can see, to make up the number of columns to exactly one hundred. His sense of order and fitness made him wish that the number should be exact, very likely he had heard the church spoken of as "the basilica of a hundred columns," and he was disappointed when he counted them and found only ninety-six. Then he comforted himself by adding in the four round the altar, and so made his total come exactly to the round number that he wished. Such a person, we feel, is unlikely to have made a mistake. He came with a preconceived idea as to the number which ought to be there, he counted and found that it was not as he had thought; probably he counted again

<sup>1</sup> *De Gloria Martyrum*, i., 28: "Quatuor ordines columnarum valde admirabilium numero nonaginta sex habens; habet enim quatuor in altari, quæ sunt simul centum præter illas quæ ciborium sepulchri sustentant".

to make sure that the error did not lie with himself; and then, at last, he bethought himself of four others he had not counted, and added them in to make his total right. The account impresses us as being trustworthy, and yet when we turn to our plan we cannot reconcile the two. Alfarano shows four rows of columns, it is true, but there are only twenty-two, not twenty-four, in each row, so that they make up, not ninety-six, but only eighty-eight. True, there are four others in the transverse nave, but these are not at all in line with the others, and would naturally be mentioned in a separate category. And even if we waive the point, and count them in, we are still left with only ninety-two in all, which with the four at the altar make up not the round hundred but only ninety-six.

The discrepancy was noted by Bonanni, who wrote a careful and painstaking book upon the basilica in A.D. 1696,<sup>1</sup> and he solved it in a very simple way by supposing that the mistake was Alfarano's, a mistake excusable enough considering the difficulties under which the plan was made, and that the true number of columns in each row must have been twenty-three instead of twenty-two. But, unfortunately for this theory, there exists a proof, which Bonanni might have applied had he thought of doing so, which proves that this was not the case. When the upper half of the old basilica was pulled down, a wall was built across the end of the part which remained standing, in order to admit of its being still used for public worship. This portion of the church still contained eleven columns in each row, so the wall must have been built westward of, that is nearer to the altar than, the eleventh column from the bottom of the church. Now we can measure with exactness the distance that this wall was from the high altar and the western wall of the church, because a bit of it, including one of the doors which permitted

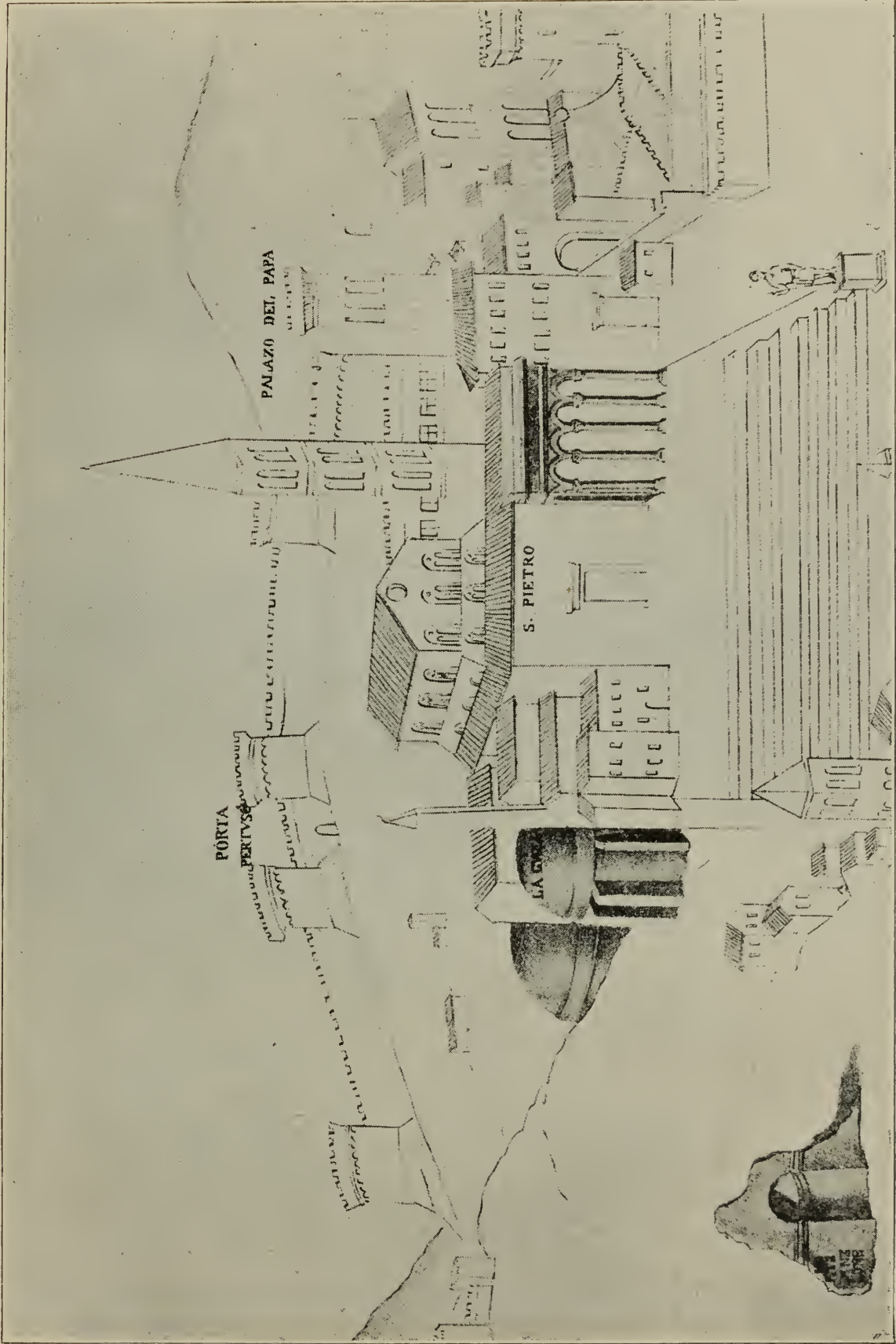
<sup>1</sup> Bonanni, *Hist. Templ. Vatic.*, p. 17.

passage from this surviving portion towards the altar and the tomb, is still in existence in the crypts. The distance is 292 palms. Further, Severano has preserved for us the record of the breadth of the transverse nave and of the length of the great nave. These were respectively 78 palms and 406 palms. Hence if we allow 8 palms for the great arch separating the two naves, which, judging from the analogy of other measurements he has recorded, Severano will not have included, and take the resulting 86 (78+8) palms from the whole 292, we get 206 palms as the length of that part of the great nave which was destroyed, while the remaining part, including the thickness of the wall, cannot have measured more than 200. Hence we can deduce an equation. Let  $x$  equal the width of one column together with the distance between each pair of columns. Then

$$200 = 10x + y,$$

the pilaster nearest the wall being reckoned for this purpose as a column. Concerning  $y$  we know only that it must be more than 12, which is the least we can allow for one column and the thickness of the wall, and that in any case it is not more than  $x$ , as otherwise there would be another column. Hence we get as a probable value of  $x$  that it equals 18 palms or a little more, and, applying this measurement to the whole nave of 406 palms, we find that it is much more likely that there were only twenty-one columns than that there were twenty-three in each row.

This difficulty about the columns, however, is but a trifling one compared to the next that meets us. Any one who will look at the picture of the old basilica as reconstructed by Mr. Brewer on the basis of the information derived from Alfarano, Severano, and the other writers of the period, will see at once that the most striking feature of the church must have been this great transverse nave—of the same height, as Severano expressly



OLD ST. PETER'S IN ABOUT 1470. (From De Rossi's *Piante di Roma*.)



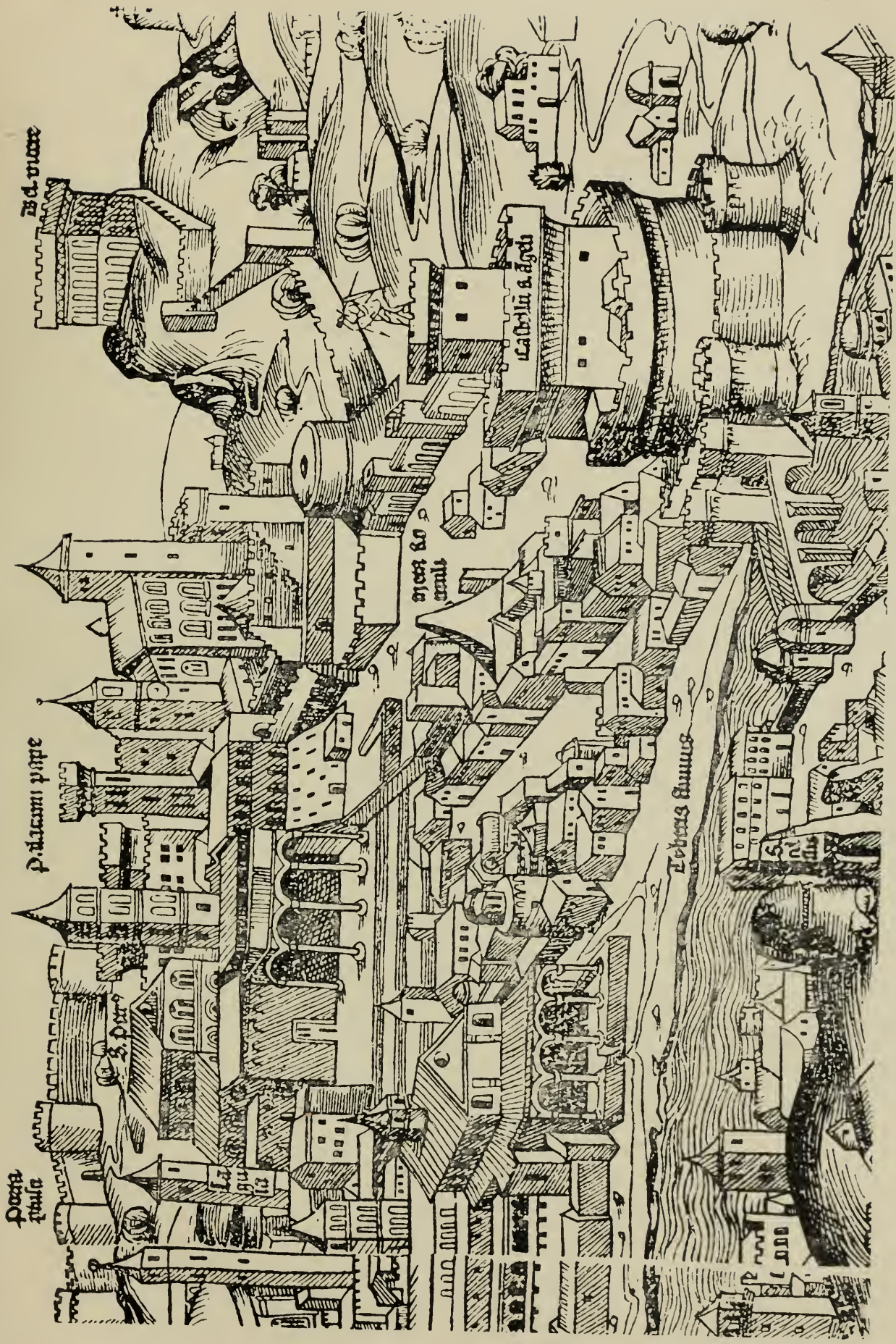
records, as the main body of the church—which must have presented from outside the appearance of enormous transepts. It is this feature which gives its character to the church, and by which we feel we should always be able to recognise a picture of it. Hence we should expect to find these transepts clearly expressed in every representation of the church, however slight and rudimentary that representation may be, and indeed should almost as soon expect to find a picture of new St. Peter's without the dome, as one of the old basilica which did not mark the transepts. But when we come actually to examine the representations of the church which have come down to us—and of these there are not a few to be found in the various plans of the city, illustrated with drawings of the principal buildings, which were issued at a date earlier than 1500—we find to our astonishment that in not a single instance is there any trace of such a transept to be seen. Several of these plans were reproduced and published by De Rossi in 1879<sup>1</sup> and since then a number of others have been brought to light,<sup>2</sup> so that at the present time at least twelve are known to exist, and in not one of them is an external transept drawn in the representation of St. Peter's Church. This is not because they are too slight in detail, for in several we can recognise even such comparatively insignificant portions of the building as the rose window in the great façade, and even the Gothic tracery in the windows of the clerestory. Moreover, in two or three cases, the transept is quite clearly visible at the church of St. Paul, although the scale on which that church is drawn is much smaller than that used for St. Peter's, which latter is generally represented in the fore

<sup>1</sup> *Piante Icnografiche e Prospettiche di Roma anteriori al secolo xvi.*

<sup>2</sup> Stevenson, *Di una pianta di Roma*, Roma, 1881; Muntz, *Notice sur un plan inédit de Rome*, Paris, 1883; Lazzaroni, *Osservazioni sopra alcuni monumenti principali di Roma*, Roma, 1803; Gregorovius, *Una pianta di Roma*, Roma, 1883.

ground of the picture. Each of these pictures taken by itself is perhaps too vague to allow of its being considered as satisfactory evidence, but the unanimous consensus of all the twelve provides us with a much firmer basis to work on, and does seem to imply a strong probability that at the time when these pictures were taken—that is to say, up to some time in the latter half of the fifteenth century, which is the probable date of the latest of them—St. Peter's was not provided with any transepts or transverse nave at all, but that its roof both of nave and aisles ran continuously from end to end of the church. Such a mode of construction would of course involve the provision of columns to support the roof on the farther side of the great arch just as in the nave, and in this fact there may obviously lie the solution of the difficulty of which we have already spoken as to the divergent accounts of the number of these columns.

Our first impulse on noting these facts about the representations of the church, and the impossibility of reconciling them with the transverse nave of Alfarano's plan, is to jump to the conclusion that Alfarano made a mistake, that St. Peter's never had a transverse nave at all, and that the origin of the blunder must have been the not unnatural tendency to suppose that the two great basilicas of St. Peter and of St. Paul, constructed as they were so nearly at the same period, must have been built on identical plans. On this theory we must suppose that when a doubt arose about the shape of the western end of St. Peter's, which had been destroyed no less than eighty years before, Alfarano thought himself safe in supposing that it was sure to have been constructed in the same manner as that of St. Paul's, which was still existing and well known to every one. That would seem a possible explanation, and we might be inclined to adopt it as a working hypothesis, were it not that it is altogether put out of court by the fact that there exists in the Uffizi



ST. PETER'S ABOUT 1470. (From the Nuremberg Chronicle.)

[To face page 246.]



Gallery at Florence a drawing by Bramante,<sup>1</sup> one of many of his which are there preserved, which shows the ground plan of old St. Peter's in the middle of a sketch of a form suggested for the new church. Now Bramante died in 1510, so the drawing cannot possibly be later than that year, while it is probably some years earlier. It was made therefore either before the commencement of the destruction of old St. Peter's in 1506, or else immediately after that event had taken place, and in either case may claim to rank as strictly contemporary evidence. Now this drawing shows the plan of the church, with one or two slight exceptions to which we will return, to have been just as Alfarano drew it eighty years later, and the accuracy of Alfarano's plan is therefore triumphantly vindicated. In spite of the evidence of the earlier drawings it is clear that the transverse nave did actually exist, at any rate in the year 1506. On the whole, and taking all the evidence into account, the case stands thus: We have on the one side a number of pictures, of which the latest may be taken as dating from about 1470, which show St. Peter's without transepts, and roofed continuously from end to end without a break. These pictures are confirmed by the negative evidence that we have no mention in early documents of the church as being cruciform, and by the positive evidence that the account of St. Gregory of Tours as to the number of columns in the church cannot be reconciled with the later plans. On the other side we have the evidence of these later plans, of which the earliest may perhaps date from 1505, that the transepts existed, and these are backed by the writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

There is only one way in which we can possibly extricate ourselves from the difficulty without a wholesale discrediting of our witnesses, and that way seems itself to

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in Geymüller, *Die ursprünglichen Entwürfe für Sanct Peter in Rom.*, Vienna, 1875.

involve a great improbability. Is it possible that at some date between 1470 and 1505 the whole western portion of the church was pulled down and then rebuilt as a transverse nave, and that then in 1506 the whole was pulled down again? Such a hypothesis would reconcile all the differences to which we have alluded, but it involves a serious difficulty, for we can hardly suppose that an operation of such magnitude could possibly have been carried out at such a period, without some mention of the fact having been made in some one of the records of the time. Still, there is a good deal of evidence, much of which has only recently come to light, that some great work actually was put in hand about this time, and it is at least as likely to have been this rebuilding as anything else, for in any case no record of what it was has come down to us. This work, whatever it was, was connected with the "tribune" of St. Peter's, for a medal was issued in 1470, during the Pontificate of Paul II., bearing a representation of the apse or tribune, with the altar and its baldachino underneath, and the inscriptions *Anno Christi MCCCCLXX has aedes condidit*, and also *Tribuna S. Petri Roma*.

This clearly proves that some important work, of the exact nature of which we have no knowledge, was carried out in 1470 in connection with the apse. That it was not confined to the apse is proved by the extracts from the account books of the Vatican which have been lately published by M. Eugene Muntz.<sup>1</sup> The sums which were paid, and the record of the amount of building that was carried out, are altogether inconsistent with any such idea, nor can the matter have reference only to any mere restoration however extensive. Thus in a single entry only, for 6th December, 1471, we have the record of payment made for no less than 1793 *cannæ* of masonry, the *canna*

<sup>1</sup> Muntz, *L'art au Cour des Papes*, vol. iii., pp. 44, 45.

being a measure which varies in different localities, but may be taken as roughly equivalent to seven English feet. M. Muntz quotes a passage from Cannesio, the biographer of Paul II., to the effect that "he attempted to carry through at his own expense the apse, which some call the tribune, which had already been begun on a magnificent scale by Nicholas V., and spent more than 5000 gold pieces on this work".<sup>1</sup> On the strength of this one passage, which is unsupported by any other statement in any contemporary writer, he supposes that this work carried out in about 1470 in connection with the *tribuna* of St. Peter's, was an attempt to continue the work of Nicholas V., which had been abandoned at that Pontiff's death, and in this conclusion he is followed both by M. Geymüller<sup>2</sup> and by Dr. Pastor.<sup>3</sup> All these writers accordingly assume that the tribune begun by Nicholas V., which is generally believed, on the evidence of Condivi in his life of Michael Angelo,<sup>4</sup> never to have risen to a height of more than a very few feet above the ground, was in fact continued and almost completed under Paul II., although it was afterwards again demolished to make way for the new plans of Bramante in 1506. Still they have to confess that there is no record of the matter which they can refer to, and that no writer in 1506 mentions the fact of any such destruction. Nor does it seem likely that, if so large an amount had been spent on the new building only a few years before, public opinion would have allowed it to have been thus utterly wasted, without any mention of the fact having been made in some one of the many writers of the period.

In the place of this theory put forth by M. Muntz, which does not seem, for the reasons we have given, to

<sup>1</sup> Cannesio, *Pauli II. . . . Vita*; ed, Quirini, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Geymüller, *Die ursprünglichen Entwürfe für Sanct Peter*.

<sup>3</sup> Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste*.

<sup>4</sup> Condivi, *Vita di Michelagnolo*, p. 19.

be so solidly grounded as to be more than a hypothesis to account for the facts as they are known to him ; we would venture to suggest that the work which was actually done under Paul II. was not on the foundations left by Nicholas V., outside St. Peter's altogether, but was nothing less than the rebuilding from the ground level of the whole of that portion of the church which lay westward of the great arch. This rebuilding was presumably rendered necessary by the ruinous state into which that part of the basilica had fallen, and it must have resulted in the complete transformation of the appearance of the church from outside ; since it was now furnished with a transverse nave, copied from that which had existed for more than a thousand years at St. Paul's Without the Walls. It is no doubt a remarkable thing that no record of so striking a change should have been made ; even more remarkable than would have been the silence which M. Muntz believes to have been kept, concerning the work which he thinks was done at this time ; but we must remember that we were led by quite different considerations to the conclusion that this change actually was made about this period, and that we have used the evidence of the Vatican accounts, which are almost the sole basis on which the other theory rests, for no other purpose than to fix the exact date at which the work was carried out.

It would seem then that the original church, as it was built by Constantine and remained until the middle of the fifteenth century, differed from other basilicas in no way, except that it had a great arch—a chancel arch, as it would be called in Gothic architecture—which divided its length into two parts, and afforded an additional means of support for what would otherwise have been a very daring construction. The roof of its aisles must have run from end to end continuously and without any external break, and it follows that there must have been columns to sup-

port this roof in the part beyond the arch as well as in the rest of the church. Accordingly we find that these columns are actually mentioned by one writer of the fourteenth century, whose remarks have been found very difficult of explanation by those who believe the transverse nave to have been part of the original church. Giovanni Dondio, the writer in question, was a man of considerable scientific attainments, a friend of Petrarch, and physician to Gian Galeazzi Visconti of Milan. He came to Rome about 1375, and the notes of his visit, and of the monuments which he saw, are now in the Library of St. Mark at Venice. Of St. Peter's he writes: "In this church there are four rows of columns, twenty-two in each row as far as the cross of the church (*citra crucem ecclesiæ*), and on each side of the cross there are six columns. Hence altogether there are a hundred marble columns, besides those which are round the altar."<sup>1</sup> De Rossi saw the difficulty of interpreting "the cross of the church" as being the equivalent of the transverse nave, for in that there were not twelve columns, but only four. He therefore says, probably correctly, that it must mean the great hanging cross, the gift of Pope Hadrian I. Then he interprets the "six columns on each side of the cross," most indefensibly as it seems to us, as the twelve twisted columns round the vestibule of the confession, which Dondio expressly excepts in the words "besides those which are round the altar". However it was the only course open to him, or to any who believe the transverse nave to have existed in the fourteenth century, and it also involves for them the further difficulty that Dondio in his enumeration of the columns of St. Peter's must be assumed to have forgotten to take count of the four largest and most important of all. If, on the other hand, we are right in supposing that the aisles continued beyond the great arch,

<sup>1</sup> Codex Venet. Marc., xiv., 223. Printed by De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., 331.

these columns are evidently the ones which held up the roof, and we learn that in this part of the church there were three in each row, which is just the number we should have expected from the measurement of 78 palms given by Severano. There still remains one slight difficulty, for Dondio gives twenty-two columns in each row in the body of the church, and his total therefore adds up exactly to one hundred, which is four more than St. Gregory of Tours tells us were there in his time. On the whole it seems most probable that it is Dondio who is wrong. St. Gregory's informant wished to make up a hundred, but could not without counting those of the baldachino, so he seems to have counted carefully. Dondio had very likely heard that there were a hundred columns, and may have got his twenty-two in each row by calculation and not by counting; subtracting twelve from one hundred, and then dividing by four. We conclude then that the true numbers of the columns were twenty-one in each row in the body of the church and three in each row beyond the great arch. Twenty-one is the number shown in Bramante's drawing, but this is not by itself quite conclusive, as the drawing ends abruptly at the twenty-first column.

We can even, with the aid of the measurements given by Severano, go a step farther, and by means of a double equation recover the approximate size of the base of each column and the space which divided them. Thus if  $a$  be the base of each column or pilaster, and  $b$  the space between any two—

$$5a + 4b = 78$$

$$23a + 22b = 406.$$

This works out to  $7\frac{1}{2}$  palms for the bases of the columns, and  $10\frac{1}{2}$  for the interval separating them, and gives 18 palms as the distance from the centre of one column to that of the next. These measurements seem likely enough to be correct, for 18 palms was the corresponding measure-

ment in the old basilica of St. Paul's, and since we also know from Severano that the thickness of the columns was about 6 palms,<sup>1</sup> and that the bases were distinctly larger than the columns they supported,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  palms does not seem an improbable size for them. Moreover, this furnishes us with the explanation of a discrepancy in Severano's measurements, which has caused Bonnani and others to throw discredit on his accuracy. Severano gives the total breadth inside the church as 285 palms, and then gives the breadth of the nave and the two aisles as 106, 38 and 39 palms respectively. These measurements when added together give only 260 palms as a total instead of 285. The explanation is simple enough. The authority whom Severano is quoting, for he could not have taken the measurements himself, always measured along the floor and from base to base of the columns. He therefore ignores these bases altogether, and gives inside measurements in every case. If the bases of the columns in the two central rows were  $7\frac{1}{2}$  palms each in width, we have 15 palms accounted for, leaving 10 palms, 5 palms each, for the bases of the other two rows. This again is a very probable measurement for we know that these columns were 4 palms through, and that their bases did not project so much as was the case with the centre ones. So the measurements work out exactly—

$$39 + 5 + 38 + 7\frac{1}{2} + 106 + 7\frac{1}{2} + 38 + 5 + 39 = 285.$$

We have already assumed this peculiarity of the measurements given by Severano, in the calculations already entered into in connection with the columns. It involves, if we wish to get the total length of old St. Peter's, the addition of some 8 palms to represent the thickness of the great arch. Eight palms was the thickness of the corresponding arch, the famous arch of Galla Placidia at St. Paul's, so the one at St. Peter's is not likely to have

<sup>1</sup> *Le Sette Chiese*, p. 38.

been more, while at the same time we can hardly assign much less for this measurement. The depth of the apse is given by Severano as 44 palms, and this is confirmed from other sources. Hence the total length would be :—

$$44 + 80 + 8 + 406 = 538 \text{ palms ;}$$

or 494 without the apse. Reducing this into English feet we get a total length of about 340 feet without the apse, and a total breadth of about 196, not including the external chapels.

The measurements of old St. Peter's have been a fruitful field for discussion among antiquaries, but it never seems to have occurred to any of them that they had the means of deciding the question for ever by a careful examination of the crypts. The *billicum* of the confession provides a fixed point which has never been tampered with all through the history of the basilica. The circular passage now leading to the chapel of the confession has the outer wall of the old apse as its inner boundary. The inner side of the same wall may be traced both in the chapel of S. Salvatorino, and in the chapel of the confession, so that both the breadth and the depth of the apse can be ascertained with absolute accuracy. The length of the old church can be found by measuring from the confession to the doors of the present church, and subtracting whatever it may be necessary to allow for the width of the old portico and the thickness of the outer wall of the old church (said by Grimaldi to be about 8 palms). The breadth of the old church, and of each of its parts, may be ascertained by means of the old passage which once led to the Vatican from the crypts, for in the part which is still remaining, and which is used as an oil store, the position of the old walls, and of the foundations of the columns can still be traced. So again, the position of the first column on the left is probably preserved in the spot where three walls now meet in the chapels of Sta. Maria in Portico, and Sta. Maria delle Partorienti. The

wall of this last chapel is the western wall of the old church, and the passages which lead from either side into the present confession mark the eastern extension of the ancient tribune. We have in this way all the data necessary for an accurate reconstruction of the plan of old St. Peter's, but the measurement would be in many cases exceedingly difficult to take with accuracy, nor would the correction made be likely, so far as we can judge, to differ by more than a few inches from the rough estimates we have already given.

After this digression on the measurements of old St. Peter's, we go back to the question of the destruction of its western end in 1470 or thereabouts, and the building of the new transverse nave. We have now learnt that there were twelve ancient columns in the part that was destroyed, and in the transverse nave Alfarano's plan shows only four. Are these four some of the twelve that had been there before, and if so what became of the other eight? We will answer the last half of this question first. The drawing by Bramante which is in the Uffizi at Florence, and of which we have already spoken, has one peculiar feature in which it differs from all the later plans of the church. It shows two columns at the end of each of the aisles, where was the junction with the transverse nave. Here then we have at once the eight columns accounted for. They were not removed from the church, but were put in pairs at the end of each of the aisles. If the four columns shown by Alfarano can also be some of the original twelve we have the whole number satisfactorily accounted for, but it hardly seems that this can be the case, for columns of a larger size would seem to be imperatively demanded for such a position. Now it is a remarkable fact that we have the record, preserved to us by the chance curiosity of a German tourist, of the transport of four gigantic monoliths from an old building near the Pantheon for use in the choir of St. Peter's. This

was in the time of Nicholas V.; some twenty years before the building of the transverse nave. The columns were sixty-one spans in height, and eight spans through, and therefore considerably larger than the ordinary columns in St. Peter's.<sup>1</sup> These, we can hardly doubt, were the ones which were now utilised for the transverse nave, for which they would have been quite suitable. We still have therefore to find a destination for the four which still remained of the original twelve. Now Severano tells us that four columns from this part of St. Peter's, which he naturally identified with the four shown in Alfarano's plan, were used in the construction of the Porta del Popolo. The columns now to be seen at that gate, which flank the colossal statues of St. Peter and St. Paul on its outer side, hardly look large enough from below to have been any of those in the old basilica. Certainly they are not large enough ever to have filled the place that Severano says they came from. If they are from old St. Peter's at all they must have been some of the ordinary columns, and in that case we may assume that we have in them the remaining four columns of this part of the church.

The arms of the transverse nave were made to project a little, Severano says forty-four palms or about thirty feet, on each side beyond the rest of the church. This detail was not copied from St. Paul's, where the corresponding nave does not project at all, but finishes at the outer wall of the church. It was intended no doubt in the first place to accentuate the idea of a cruciform building, which had become familiar to all through Gothic architecture, and secondly to allow of the external oratories which had been added to the original church being now included within its walls. On the southern side, the left to one advancing up the church, there had been two such

<sup>1</sup> Muntz, *Bibliothèque de l'École Française*, iv., p. 108.

oratories adjoining this portion of the building, the one dedicated to SS. Processus and Martinianus, dating from the eighth century, and built by Pope Paschal I. ; and the other one dedicated to our Lady, and known as the Oratory of Sta Maria dei Cancelli. The new nave now probably followed the line of the outer walls of these oratories, while the two great columns were placed on the foundations afforded by the old outer wall of the church.

On the northern side the corresponding projection was utilised for the baptistery, a building which up to that time had been distinct and entirely separated from the basilica, but which had fallen into decay. It is a curious thing that so little attention has been paid to this point by writers on St. Peter's, for in any case it is abundantly clear that the descriptions of the baptistery in the earlier writers cannot by any possibility be fitted to the arrangement marked in Alfarano's plan, and that there must have been an earlier building. There is not, so far as we are aware, a single word on the subject in any of the writers who have made St. Peter's their theme, though others who have treated of the matter merely *obiter*, and in illustration of another subject, have been more clear-sighted. It will be worth our while, in default of a more detailed study of the subject, to delay a little, although for us it is only a digression, to consider the history of this interesting building.

The Church of Constantine did not possess a baptistery at all. In those earliest days of the Church's history baptism and confirmation were both administered at a single service, and by the bishop himself. There was in consequence but a single font in every town, and that not inside any church, but in a separate building closely adjoining the cathedral. The reason of this provision of a separate baptistery was that unbaptised persons might not enter a consecrated church, a rule which was enforced

with great strictness. It was therefore necessary for the sacrament of initiation to be administered in some place exterior to the actual church, while the convenience of the bishop obviously also required that it should be near the cathedral. Rome itself formed no exception to these general rules; it also had originally but a single baptistery, and this was duly provided by Constantine close to the church which had been made the Cathedral of Rome, St. John Lateran, and has survived to the present day. Only half a century passed before a second one was built, and then it was St. Peter's which received the honour, though under somewhat peculiar circumstances. We learn from the *Gesta Liberii*, an apocryphal life of that Pope, which dates from the early years of the sixth century, that in the year 356, or thereabouts, Pope Liberius had been dispossessed of the Lateran Church and Palace by the schismatic party, and, having been driven from Rome, was living outside the Porta Salaria, in the neighbourhood of that Ostrian cemetery of which we have already spoken, as having been for so long the dwelling place of St. Peter. Easter came, and the baptismal ceremonies on the eve could not be carried out with due solemnity. Instead of the baptistery of the Lateran the Pope had to content himself with the spot hallowed by St. Peter's action, and baptised for that occasion "at the springs of Peter, where St. Peter used to baptise" (*ad nymphas Petri ubi S. Petrus baptizabat*). Pentecost was coming too, and there seemed no chance of recovering the Lateran in time. Then Damasus the deacon (he is called priest in the story), who was destined to be the next Pope, came forward with a suggestion. Why should a baptistery not be erected at St. Peter's? That church was outside the walls, so there would be no difficulty in going there. The Pope received the suggestion favourably, and Damasus constructed a basin on the right side of St. Peter's, and deflected into it the waters which tended to make

the Vatican Cemetery into a marsh. There the Pope on the eve of Pentecost baptised many neophytes.

All this story is discredited by the Abbé Duchesne ; it does not very clearly appear on what grounds. He thinks it is all built upon the inscription, still extant in St. Peter's, which Damasus set up to record the fact of his achievement. To us the argument seems to be rather the other way. If the compilers of this life had no other evidence than the inscription before them, they would not have thought of connecting the origin of the baptistery with Liberius rather than with Damasus. The story does not seem improbable, and it accounts in a satisfactory manner for a baptistery having been constructed at St. Peter's at all, which would otherwise be a difficulty. But however the case may stand with regard to Liberius, there can be no doubt of the connection of St. Damasus with the font of St. Peter's. Of that the inscription which he set up is an absolutely conclusive proof.

SICCAVIT TOTUM QUIDQUID MADEFECERAT HUMOR  
INVENIT FONTEM PRÆBET QUI DONA SALUTIS.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear too that it was not inside the church that the font was set up, for the earlier lines of the inscription tell us that it was with immense labour that the hill was cut away, and the bowels of the earth were laid open for this purpose.

The next time that the baptistery is mentioned is in the time of Symmachus (498-514). In his reign there was added to it, in addition to two altars dedicated to the two St. Johns, an oratory dedicated to the holy cross ; and a relic of the true cross was enclosed within a cross of gold which was there set up.<sup>2</sup> This cross survived until the fifteenth century, and there is an interesting account in one of the Grimaldi MSS. of the discovery of

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., p. 411.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., p. 261.

the relic when Nicholas V. pulled down the oratory in 1450.<sup>1</sup> Grimaldi, however, says that the cross was of mosaic, and this is not the only instance of this apparent discrepancy. It is apparent only and not real, for the mosaic was probably of a golden colour. By the time of St. Leo III. (795-816) the original building seems to have already fallen into a state of impending ruin, which agrees well enough with the account of its hasty construction by Liberius. "Seeing," we are told, "that the baptistery from its great age was threatened with ruin, and that the place was too small for the people who came for baptism, he rebuilt it from the foundations, making it of circular form and of larger size, and placed the sacred font in the midst of this enlarged space, and adorned it all round with porphyry columns, and placed in the midst a column with a lamb upon it of pure silver, pouring water . . . He also adorned the baptistery all round with pictures. At the same time he rebuilt from its foundations the Oratory of the Holy Cross, which was going to ruin from age, and adorned its apse with mosaics."<sup>2</sup> The more usual form for a baptistery was octagonal, the number eight being the symbol of regeneration, but here we learn that the one at St. Peter's was circular. It is quite possible, however, that it may have been octagonal also either inside or outside, as this combination was not at all unusual.

We next come to the end of the eighth century, and to the visit of an unknown pilgrim whose account of what he saw is perhaps the most valuable evidence we have as to the arrangement of St. Peter's at this period. He has visited most of the altars in the church, and at last after the high altar and the confession comes to the baptistery. His notes are thrown into the form of a guide to other pilgrims, and are as follows: "Next you must go to the porch (*portico*) in which the standard of the life-giving

<sup>1</sup> Muntz, *Les arts à la cour des Papes*, 1889, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 17.

cross is preserved. As you enter the baptistery (*ad fontem ingredientis*) the altar in the wall is that of St. George. Then you come to St. John the Evangelist, and having saluted him you go on to St. John the Baptist; and under his guidance to the cradle of St. Mary."<sup>1</sup> Here there is not much to help us, but we may note that the Oratory of the Holy Cross was a kind of vestibule to the baptistery itself, and that the pilgrim on leaving did not enter the church again at once, but passed down the passage outside, which no doubt was left for the express purpose of allowing persons to have access to the baptistery without entering the church, and went to the altar of Sta. Maria ad Presepe, or Our Lady of the Crib, near the entrance of the basilica.

There is a statement in a life of Hadrian IV., in the series collected by Cardinal Boson in the twelfth century, and reprinted lately by the Abbé Duchesne as an Appendix to the *Liber Pontificalis*, which is very puzzling, and to which we hardly know how to assign a meaning. It is to the effect that that Pope "built up the wall above the Oratory of St. John in Fonte at St. Peter's on three sides and made it equal to the nave of the church".<sup>2</sup> It must be confessed that these words would be much easier to explain if we could apply them, as M. Duchesne does, to the end of the transverse nave, as shown in Alfarano's plan. Applying them to a circular building exterior to the basilica itself, it is not at all clear what they can possibly mean. Mallius, who also wrote in the twelfth century, adds nothing whatever to our knowledge, nor have we any further information till we come to Maffeo Veggio, who wrote in the early part of the fifteenth century. He tells us that there was "an oratory fur-

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ed. Duchesne, ii., p. 395: Super oratorium sancti Johannis in Fonte murum a tribus lateribus erigens navi ejusdem ecclesiæ cœquavit.

nished with many altars which had been built as a baptistery by Pope St. Damasus. This oratory was in his time already ruined (*dirutum*), but the subterranean channels by which the water was brought still survive."<sup>1</sup> His testimony as to the ruined state of the old baptistery is corroborated by another fifteenth century book, which went through a great number of editions, entitled *Mirabilia Urbis Romæ*,<sup>2</sup> and it is quoted by Panvinio in the next century, with the additional note that by that time the last vestige had disappeared. Panvinio goes on to speak of the Oratory of St. Lucy, which he says was on the left side of the basilica to one facing the doors, "in front of the baptistery and the Oratory of the Holy Cross and joined on to the wall of the church (*adhærens muro ipsi*). When this oratory was destroyed the altar of St. Lucy was erected within the basilica, and it still exists, although its place has again been changed. Close to the baptistery and on its left, towards the extreme angle of the basilica, Pope St. Symmachus built the Oratory of the Holy Cross. . . . This oratory was a large one, and held in much devotion, and women were not allowed to enter it. When it was destroyed the wood of the holy cross was found in its apse."<sup>3</sup> In another work too Panvinio speaks of the baptistery as having been on the left of the basilica and outside it.<sup>4</sup> It is strange that two such careful antiquarians as De Rossi and Duchesne, with all this evidence before them, should still have gone on writing as if the baptistery shown in Alfarano's plan was the original one of the time of Damasus. Nor is our wonder lessened by the consideration that if this had really been the case, it would have

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> *Mirabilia Urbis Romæ*, ed. 1485.

<sup>3</sup> Panvinio, *De Basilica Vaticana*, printed in Mai, *Spicilegium*, vol. ix.

<sup>4</sup> Panvinio, *De præcipuis Urbis Basilicis*.

constituted a most noteworthy fact in ecclesiology, since the practice of erecting the baptistery within the church would have been anticipated by many centuries, in direct contradiction to all the ecclesiastical regulations of the time. It is worth while noting, perhaps, that Canterbury Cathedral, which in so many points resembled St. Peter's, had its external baptistery of octagonal form in the tenth century, in a position exactly corresponding to that which we have tried to show existed at the same time at St. Peter's.

In our next chapter we will go on to describe the old basilica as it was in the time of its splendour in the fourteenth century, before the decay consequent upon the neglect of ages had led to any very serious result.

## CHAPTER XI.

### OLD ST. PETER'S.

It would be quite useless to attempt to give, within the limits of a single chapter, anything like a detailed description of so large a church, and one so filled with works of art and with the tombs of saints and of distinguished men, as was the old basilica of St. Peter's. All that we can now undertake is to endeavour to provide such a sketch of the main features of the building as may serve to explain the view which is given as the frontispiece, and the plan reproduced opposite p. 238; pointing out the more famous chapels and altars, and saying just what may seem most necessary to be known upon their history and the privileges attaching to them.

The church, as any one who will look at the view given in our frontispiece may see, was approached by a long flight of steps, thirty-five in all, divided into five sets of seven steps each. These steps were generally ascended by devout pilgrims on their knees, as is done to this day at the Santa Scala of the Lateran, or at the stairway of St. Benedict at Subiaco. It will be remembered that it was in this manner that Charlemagne made his approach to the church on his first visit to Rome in 774 in the time of Adrian I. In earlier times than that which has been selected for our view there had been a magnificent covered way, with columns on either side, down to the Ponte S. Angelo. From the other side of the bridge the colonnade began again, and led on in one

magnificent and unbroken line all the way to St. Paul's, a distance perhaps of three miles. All this, however, had disappeared in the middle ages, and no traces of it remained after the fourteenth century.

The edifice with three lofty arches, in the centre of the space on the top of the steps, was part of the original building of Constantine, and by its three gates access was given to the *atrium*, or "*paradisus*" as it is sometimes called, perhaps because it was planted with trees and flowers, in front of the church itself. This *atrium* was a large square space with arcades running all round it. One use of these arcades in the earliest times was to provide a place in which the poor might be fed at the expense of the charitable; especially on St. Peter's Day, which was a day of feasting throughout Rome. St. Jerome in one of his letters is alluding to this custom, when he says: "We must be careful to celebrate the Feast of St. Peter not so much by abundance of food as by exaltation of spirit, for it is absurd to try to honour by such excess a martyr who we know to have pleased God by his fasting".<sup>1</sup> Even in St. Jerome's time it would seem that the custom had degenerated into licence, and we find hints of the same in other writers of the period. "The table of Peter receives what the doctrine of Peter abhors," cries St. Paulinus,<sup>2</sup> while St. Augustine is even more severe, and writes to a friend that, "Every day there are instances of excess (*vinolentiæ*) at the Basilica of St. Peter."<sup>3</sup>

There were two fountains in the *atrium*, both of which are shown in our view. The object of these fountains was to enable the dusty and travel-stained pilgrim to purify himself before he entered into the church. The nearer of the two fountains to the entrance is the one which was erected by Damasus at the same time that he built the baptistery. It was afterwards adorned in a

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* xxxi., ad Eustochium.

<sup>2</sup> *Poem.*, xxxv., v., 569.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.* xxix., ad Alip.

magnificent manner by Symmachus, who placed there the celebrated *pigna* or pine-cone of bronze, which still exists and gives its name to one of the courts in the palace of the Vatican. Readers of Dante will remember how the poet speaks of it:—

I.a faccia sua mi pareva lunga e grossa,  
Come la pina di san Pietro a Roma,  
E a sua proporzion eran l' altr' ossa.<sup>1</sup>

This open courtyard in front of the church was in the later periods of the middle ages used as a permanent market for objects of devotion. Here were the stalls of the *paternostrari* or vendors of rosaries; and others at which were sold *Veronicas*, representations evidently of the portrait of our Lord for which St. Peter's was famous. There were also stalls with eatables for the refreshment of the pilgrims, so that the scene must have greatly resembled that which may still be seen at any Italian pilgrim resort on the day that the *festà* is held. In a document of 1384 quoted by Armellini we find mention of licences granted in this way to sellers of figs, of bread and fruit, and salt fish, and even, what we should scarcely have expected, drawers of teeth and itinerant physicians.<sup>2</sup>

The arcade nearest to the church itself, into which the five great doors opened, was in early times the burial place of the Popes, for it was a long time before any ventured to cross the threshold, and to be laid to rest in the actual presence of the prince of the apostles inside the church. "The place that doorkeepers fill in the halls of kings," says St. John Chrysostom, "is filled by kings in the basilica of the apostle."<sup>3</sup> The Popes were buried on the left hand, "in front of the sacristy," as we read so often in their lives in the Roman Breviary. The private

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, cant. xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Armellini, *Chiese di Roma*, p. 731.

<sup>3</sup> Chrysost., *In 2 Cor.*, Hom. 26.

entrance of the Popes when they rode from the Lateran to the Basilica of St. Peter on the occasion of some special function, was by the staircase on the left hand side. At the top of the staircase was a chapel in which they put on their vestments, and which was known from this circumstance as the *secretarium* or sacristy. Just behind this chapel there will be noticed a small but perfect basilica adjoining the great church. This building has a curious history which has never yet been told clearly.<sup>1</sup> It seems to be the original basilica of St. Andrew, built by St. Symmachus in the fifth century. This is rendered practically certain by comparing the dedication of the altars in this church as given by Alfano with those which we know to have been placed at a much earlier period in the Basilica of St. Andrew. Moreover it is the only basilica that existed, so far as we know, close to St. Peter's. In later times, however, it became known as the church, not of St. Andrew, but of St. Gregory; because Pope Gregory IV. about the year 840 translated the body of St. Gregory, which till then had rested with the other Popes in the portico, and laid it under the high altar in this church. In this way it was gradually forgotten that the church ever had been dedicated to St. Andrew at all, and when, after some centuries more, the farther of the two round edifices beyond was in its turn dedicated to St. Andrew in the twelfth century, it came to be supposed that this building was the original basilica built by Symmachus, although it is quite clear that it never was a basilica at all. The confusion exists to the present day and is to be found in every book hitherto written on St. Peter's, and involves, as may be supposed, a great deal of difficulty in explaining how a circular building came to be called a basilica, and where

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of this curious confusion, see an article by the author in the *Downside Review*, December, 1898, entitled "The Tomb of St. Gregory".

room could be found within it for no less than seven altars and two doors.

These two round buildings, however, deserve a few words to themselves. In the sixteenth century they were commonly thought to be heathen temples, and it is only quite recently that their true origin and history have been made known to us through the labours of De Rossi. The whole story, which is a most interesting one, has already been told at some length in English by Professor Lanciani in his admirable book on *Pagan and Christian Rome*, so we will confine ourselves here to a very short statement. They were not temples at all, but the mausolea of some of the earliest Christian emperors who desired to be laid as close as possible to the tomb of St. Peter. The coffins of some of these princes were discovered, and rifled of the wealth of jewels and of gold and silver which had been buried with them, at various times between 1458 and 1544. All these jewels, vases, and other precious objects, of priceless value for the history of art, have utterly disappeared, and only a few rough drawings remain to show us what they were like. Never has a greater act of vandalism been committed.

In later years, when the object for which they had been erected had been forgotten, each of these edifices received an altar and they were used as churches. The western one was dedicated to St. Petronilla, and contained her body. This one was destroyed in 1544 to make way for the new church. The other, originally dedicated to St. Andrew, was later known as Sta. Maria della Febbre. It became the sacristy of the new church and was only destroyed in 1777, when the new sacristies were erected.

The great obelisk, which is now removed, and forms so glorious a central ornament to the piazza in front of the church, is seen in its old position on the centre of the *spina* of Nero's circus, so that we can see exactly where the martyrdom must have taken place. It was one of

the most famous of the monuments of mediæval Rome, and is shown prominently in almost every known plan of the city. It was known by the name of "*La Guglia*" a corruption apparently of the late Latin *aculea*,<sup>1</sup> a needle; much as we too speak of "Cleopatra's Needle" on the Thames Embankment. An absurd derivation was current in the middle ages which gave "Julius" as the origin of the name, and invented a legend that the ashes of Julius Cæsar were contained in the round ball at the top. The removal of the obelisk, though it seems not to have presented much difficulty to the engineers either of Egypt or ancient Rome, was regarded as practically an impossibility in the sixteenth century, and Bramante, who saw the advantage which such a monument would give to the approach to his church, actually suggested the removal of the tomb of the apostles, necessitating of course a corresponding change in the orientation of the church, so as to get the obelisk in front of his main entrance. This was fortunately not allowed, and a few years later the removal of the obelisk was successfully accomplished by Fontana. The ball at the top has been replaced by a cross in which a relic of the true cross is contained. The memory of the place where it stood for so many centuries is preserved by a stone, bearing an inscription, let into the pavement at the exact spot.

At the extreme western extremity of the church, connected with the apse, and occupying the position which in a Gothic cathedral would generally be given to the Lady Chapel, there was a building known as the Temple of Probus. This was the first portion of old St. Peter's to be destroyed, and it was removed about 1450, when Nicholas V. began his new "tribune". It was originally erected at the close of the fourth century to serve as a mausoleum to one Anicius Probus and his wife. Probus

<sup>1</sup> See De Rossi, *Piante di Roma*, p. 85, *hanc peregrini acum S. Petri appellant.*

was a man of the highest distinction and position in Rome at that time, and he stands alone in having secured for himself and his family such a burying-place as this, attached to the basilica of St. Peter, and communicating directly with one of its most venerated shrines, the Chapel of the Confession under the tribune. All our knowledge of this mausoleum is derived from one Maffeo Veggio, a humanist of the fifteenth century, who chanced to enter it shortly before it was destroyed, and has left his impressions on record. "It was," he tells us, "a noble building, and possessed of many marble columns, but utterly neglected and left unentered by any one. The ignorant used to say, I know not how they came to dream of such a thing, that it was the confession of blessed Peter, and that he had lived there when he was alive, . . . but it was really a sepulchre built in memory of one Probus, a man of great eminence, by Proba his wife. Into this temple, some six months before it was destroyed, I was led to enter, I know not for what object. For I had seen that there were letters cut into the marble architraves above the columns in front and on either side, and these letters I copied, with considerable labour on account of the moss which had grown over them. However, the inscription, which was in honour of Probus, would have perished altogether had I not done this, for very soon afterwards these marbles, which were of remarkable beauty, were made use of by the workmen in various ways. . . . The sarcophagus of Probus was found when they were digging out the foundations to a greater depth. It was of marble and carved with sacred images. It was covered with rubbish, but had a quantity of gold inside which had once formed part of the garments in which he was wrapped."<sup>1</sup>

This sarcophagus has a curious history. It is one of

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., p. 348.

the most beautiful and elaborate examples of the Christian art of its period, and it has never been taken out of St. Peter's. For a long time it served as the font, and was moved from one chapel to another as the destruction of the old basilica progressed. In the present church it is placed in the first chapel on the right hand side, where is the *pieta* of Michael Angelo, but it is no longer used for baptisms.

What Maffeo Veggio says about the tradition that the Temple of Probus had once been the house of St. Peter, absurd though it is, yet has considerable interest and importance. Now that we have established the right of the Chapel of the Confession to be called by that name, since it is part of the original *confessio* or *memoria* built by St. Anacletus, it is easy to see how the name and tradition extended itself to this Temple of Probus, which communicated directly with that chapel and with no other part of the basilica. It also sheds much light on the statements of some of the early pilgrim itineraries, in which we find that, even in the seventh century, pilgrims were shown in St. Peter's "the apostles' chair, and their table and couches, all of marble, and the table like an altar which St. Peter made with his own hands".<sup>1</sup> The chair was doubtless that which has always been at St. Peter's, and which in the seventh century must still have been in the baptistery of St. Damasus, but the table and couches of marble, and the other table "which St. Peter made with his own hands," would seem to have been most probably the table and couches which were contained in this family burying-place of the Anicii, as in other similar mausolea of the time, and about which even at this early period we see that legends had already gathered.

In Alfarano's plan this Temple of Probus is shown as a complete little basilica with its own apse and altar. He

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Roma Sott.*, i., p. 141.

claims to have measured it very carefully from the foundations, which still remained in his time, but it is hard to think that he can be right in this matter, and he may very well have been misled by preconceived ideas as to what was probable. The basilica form does not at all agree with Veggio's account of columns that were returned, (*in fronte atque utroque ex latere*), nor is there any reason to believe that the building ever contained an altar. It is never spoken of as a chapel, nor have we any mention of any function being performed within it. It is much more likely that it was of the nature of a vestibule, permitting entrance to the Chapel of the Confession from outside, and that just as the Popes and others were being buried at this time in the vestibule or portico in front of the church itself, so also it was permitted to the Anician family to have their own burying-place in a vestibule leading to one portion of the shrine. Hence it would come naturally to be known as the "Temple of Probus," and not as the chapel or oratory of any saint. All who now go to the chapel of the confession still pass through the wall of the ancient apse by means of the doorway by which that chapel was approached from the Temple of Probus.

There is no other building which need detain us outside the basilica, so we retrace our steps and enter the church by means of one of the five great doors which opened into the portico. Five was the original number, but in later times a sixth was added to serve as the *Porta Santa*, opened only for Popes on their accession, and in times of jubilee, but kept walled up at other times. A similar custom is still prevalent in Tuscany, where houses often have a special door which is never opened except to allow of the passage through it either of a bride who enters, or a corpse which is carried out. The great central doors—the *Porta Argentea* was the name they went by—were used only for great functions and special

occasions, but the other doors were all open and free to all, though in earlier times the women entered only by that on the right, and kept to that side of the basilica, the side on which was the baptistery ; while the men entered on the other side. There may still be seen in the older churches of Rome, especially in that of Santa Maria Maggiore, the holes in the columns from which were once suspended the curtains which thus effectually separated the two sexes in public worship. The nave was occupied by the enclosed choir, with its low marble walls like those at San Clemente, and was kept clear from ordinary worshippers. This choir seems to have been raised two steps above the ordinary level of the church. This is a point to which attention has not hitherto been drawn, but it is proved by the fact that that portion of the existing crypts where fragments of the original pavement remain *in situ* is two steps above the level of the rest of the crypts, although there is no reason to suppose that these other portions, *e.g.*, the two chapels dedicated to our Lady, do not also retain their original level. The enclosing walls of the choir disappeared about the twelfth century, though it is probable that some fragments still survive in the crypts.<sup>1</sup>

The special features which once distinguished St. Peter's from all other basilicas in Rome must have been its great height and open roof, features which it shared to some extent with the sister church of St. Paul, although the height of old St. Peter's was considerably the greater of the two. The long rows of columns were not very uniform, for they were all of them taken from ancient pagan buildings, and had to be fitted in as best they could, since all were not exactly the same size. Hence the general effect must have been rather irregular, much as it still is in the contemporary churches of S. Lorenzo

<sup>1</sup> Sarti e Settele, *App. ad Dionysium*, p. 108.

and S. Agnese fuori, or in the Aracoeli. The capitals were of various styles, and sometimes even there was no capital at all, but a longer column than the rest reached up to the architrave. Here and there a pagan inscription still remained, so that even in Severano's time there could still be seen one that bore the name of Trajan, another that of Galienus, while on others there were evident the proofs that they had come from the circus that had once occupied the site, for the word *speculator* could be plainly read.<sup>1</sup> Above the architraves there were mosaics and paintings, for the most part work of the middle ages, and placed there probably in the thirteenth century, when a very considerable work in the way of restoration and adornment seems to have been carried out under Innocent III. The earliest work of this kind was done under Formosus,<sup>2</sup> and it is of course possible that some of this survived even to the end. The great arch which spanned the nave formed another distinctive feature of the church, for no other basilica in Rome except that of St. Paul, to which we must add the Lateran in its later development, possessed such a feature. St. Peter's differed, however, from each of these others in the fact that the high altar was not under the great arch, but in the usual place in basilican churches, in the centre of the chord of the apse. The raised floor of the tribune, the porphyry steps on each side of the altar, the niche of the confession beneath, and the vestibule enclosed by the twisted columns, were all of them features possessed by no other basilica, save where in the later churches some of them had been deliberately copied, and must have given St. Peter's its own very distinctive individuality. These, however, have already been treated of so fully that there can be no need for anything more to be said of them now.

<sup>1</sup> Severano, *Le sette chiese*, p. 41. The *Speculatores* were a school of gladiators.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 227.

The altars of old St. Peter's were very numerous, and it is by no means easy to fix the exact spot where each of them stood. Alfarano has shown a large number on his plan; but so far at any rate as concerns those which stood in the western portion of the church, his authority is not beyond discussion, for his arrangement is not always easily reconciled with the notices that have come down to us from earlier times. The discrepancies may be accounted for without difficulty, if we may assume the truth of the theory which we have attempted to prove in an earlier chapter, and suppose that all this portion of the church was pulled down and rebuilt in the fifteenth century, for this would no doubt necessitate certain changes in the altars. The number of these secondary altars which the church contained is variously stated. Alfarano gives the positions of sixty-nine; but these are not all different altars, for in some cases the position of an altar is given as it was both before and after the destruction of 1506. This cannot be a complete list, for we have records which speak of a much larger number. Thus, for instance, William Wey, who was a Fellow of Eton who went on a pilgrimage to the holy places in the fifteenth century, and wrote an account of his travels, says that there were no less than 105 altars in the church,<sup>1</sup> and in the *Mirabilia Urbis Romæ*, a guide book to Rome which had a considerable sale in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we read that "there are 109 altars in this church, but many of them have now been destroyed".<sup>2</sup> Both these computations however no doubt take into account the altars in the various oratories adjoining the basilica, which may be the explanation of a part of the discrepancy.

It would clearly be impossible, without stretching this chapter to an undue length, to attempt to give any

<sup>1</sup> *Itinerary of William Wey, in 1462*, Roxburgh Club, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. of 1485, in British Museum.

adequate account of the whole of these altars, so we will confine ourselves to the consideration of those seven to which, as Panvinio tells us,<sup>1</sup> there were attached in the sixteenth century the same indulgences as to the visit to the seven churches of Rome; and which are accordingly spoken of in the *Mirabilia* and other guide books of the time as the seven principal altars of the basilica.

The first of these was the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, situated in the great nave between two of the columns on the left-hand side. Here were the bodies of St. Simon and St. Jude, an account of whose exhumation, and removal to the altars in the new church where they now lie, may be found in one of Grimaldi's manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> Bosio has also left an account of this translation. He tells us that they were found in a large tomb, the walls of which were formed by slabs of marble, raised above the soil by bands of iron to avoid damp, and that in consequence they were in a state of good preservation. The bodies were lying with their faces to the east, and had bay leaves under their heads,<sup>3</sup> a custom which was common in the early ages, and signified, according to Durandus, that "they who die in Christ do not cease to live".<sup>4</sup> They were translated to their present sepulchre under the altar dedicated in the name of the Crucifixion of St. Peter, and lie still with their heads to the south, and their faces turned towards the east, as they always did. This altar was very ancient and is mentioned by Mallius in the twelfth century.<sup>5</sup> Bonanni,<sup>6</sup> however, is in error when he says it was originally begun by Pope Pelagius I., and finished by John III. in the sixth century.

<sup>1</sup> *Sette chiese*, p. 75, ed. 1570.

<sup>2</sup> *Liber Instrumentorum*, f. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Bosio, *Roma Sotterranea*, p. 55, 80.

<sup>4</sup> Durandus, *Rationale*, vii., 35.

<sup>5</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., 213.

<sup>6</sup> Bonanni, *Hist. Templ. Vat.*, p. 41.

He has apparently confused it with the Basilica of the Santi Apostoli. It was only made the altar of the Blessed Sacrament by Paul III. in 1524, when it was rebuilt by San Gallo. Two of the twisted columns which had formerly stood in front of the confession were apparently used in its adornment.<sup>1</sup> These are probably the same two which now stand at the altar of St. Maurice in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament.

The second altar was that of St. Veronica, where was preserved the great relic of the *Sacro Volto*, the handkerchief with which the saint wiped the face of our Lord on His way to Calvary, and which miraculously retained the likeness. This altar was situated in the northernmost aisle of the church near the entrance. There is a picture of it in the crypts, which is copied in Ciampini. Grimaldi tells us that there was above it a tabernacle of Chian marble which held the relic. The whole altar was very highly ornamented with marbles and mosaics, and dated from the time of Pope John VII. at the beginning of the eighth century.

The third altar was that known as "the Madonna of Innocent VIII." This altar was situated in the sixteenth century in the same northernmost aisle in which was the altar of St. Veronica. In the earlier centuries it had been the chapel of the choir, originally built by Gregory III., and restored in turn by Eugenius III. and Innocent VIII. It had always been very rich in relics, and in 1492 there was added to the rest the great relic of the Sacred Lance, which was brought in that year from Constantinople. It was no doubt the possession of this relic which gave this altar its title to be reckoned among the seven, even after it had ceased to be the altar of the choir. The choir from 1464 to 1472 was held in the old church adjoining the portico, and successively known

<sup>1</sup> Ciampini, *De ædificiis*, gives a picture both of this altar and of that of St. Veronica.

as the church of St. Andrew and of St. Gregory,<sup>1</sup> of which we have already spoken in this chapter. In 1471-72 a new chapel was built for the purpose by Sixtus IV.

The fourth of the seven altars was the high altar of the basilica, of which there is no need to say anything more in this place.

The fifth altar was the one which had been erected at the eastern end of the northernmost aisle by Pius II. (Piccolomini) to form a shrine for the head of St. Andrew, which had been brought from Constantinople after the capture of that city by the Turkish forces. Cardinal Bessarione was the bearer of this precious relic, and it was received in Rome with the utmost enthusiasm. More than 30,000 men are said to have borne candles in the procession which escorted it to St. Peter's from the Church of Sta. Maria del Popolo, and the head of the procession had already reached St. Peter's before the Pope bearing the relic had started. It was placed first on the altar of the Volto Santo, of which we have already spoken, then this new altar was prepared for it, and it was placed in a magnificent shrine supported by four marble columns. Soon afterwards it occurred to the Pope to remove the body of St. Gregory, which had been for nearly six hundred years under the high altar of the adjoining church, and to place it under this new and magnificent altar which he had erected. In this way the traditional connection between St. Gregory and St. Andrew was once more illustrated, and the new altar became known as that of St. Gregory and St. Andrew, and was, as might naturally be expected, considering the two saints whose relics it held, one of the most venerated of all the altars in the church. Of this altar again we have a representation in Ciampini.

<sup>1</sup> Muntz, *Les arts à la cour des Papes*, i., p. 293, quotes an item in the Vatican accounts for the expenses connected with the removal of the choir to this church.

The sixth altar mentioned by Panvinio is a little difficult to identify. He calls it "the altar of the relics of the sacristy". Now the *secretarium*, or place where the Popes vested when they came from the Lateran Palace to attend any function at St. Peter's, had been for centuries fixed in the Church of St. Andrew adjoining the basilica, in which St. Gregory lay. But St. Gregory had been translated into the basilica itself when Panvinio wrote, and we have no knowledge of any other "altar of relics" there. Moreover, the church was being used temporarily as the choir chapel, a fact which has only quite recently been known through an entry in the Vatican account books of the period. It would seem then that on the choir being placed here, the round chapel afterwards known as S. Maria de Febribus, formerly the mausoleum of Honorius, was made the *secretarium*. This latter continued to be the sacristy of St. Peter's until the building of the new sacristy in the last century. Its principal altar was originally dedicated to St. Appollinaris, and later to St. Servatius and St. Lambert, and was in later times generally known by the title Panvinio gave it, "the altar of relics". It had been repaired and decorated in the fifteenth century by a canon of the basilica named Cesarini, and close by it, in six ambreys or recessed cupboards, there was kept the collection of relics belonging to the church, a fact to which no doubt it owed its name.

The seventh and last altar was known as "the altar of the dead," *altare mortuorum* or *de mortuis*. Until the sixteenth century, this altar was situated in the western portion of the basilica near the baptistery. After 1507 it was re-erected at the eastern end, between two of the great entrances to the church. Its title was of course derived from the fact that it was enriched with special privileges which attached to masses for the dead, and especially with the so-called Gregorian privilege,

which was possessed, when Panvinio wrote, by no other altar in the basilica except that of St. Gregory and St. Andrew.

It would evidently be impossible for us to go through all the rest of the altars of old St. Peter's, since their number was so great, and yet it is very difficult to make a selection, for almost every one was distinguished by some special feature of beauty or of historical interest. Perhaps the best way, therefore, in which we can bring this chapter, which must necessarily remain very incomplete, to a fitting close, will be by simply enumerating the very few instances in which marbles and works of art belonging to the old basilica have been utilised for the decoration of the new. In the crypts of course there are stored a great number of these relics, hidden away and seldom visited except by privileged persons, but of these we do not propose now to speak, for we will confine ourselves exclusively to those in the upper church. This task may be the more useful, since the modern guide books for the most part agree in passing them over unnoticed, or at best with the most perfunctory and unsatisfying description of their history.

As the visitor to St. Peter's passes into the great portico in front of the church, he will see, if he turns round and faces the obelisk, a mosaic which is placed above the doorway by which he has entered, and which represents St. Peter walking on the sea. It was known as the "*Navicella*," and was over the entrance to the *atrium* of the old church. It was originally designed by Giotto, but has suffered terribly in the removal to its present position, as may be seen by comparing it with the copy of the original, before the alterations, which is preserved at the church of the Capuccini at Rome. Opposite this mosaic are the great central doors of the basilica, which were once those of the Porta Argentea in the old church, though they have been lengthened both at the





top and bottom to make them fit their new position. These doors are of bronze, in high relief, and were originally designed by Antonio Filarete and Simone Ghini in 1445, at the command of Eugenius IV.; to commemorate the Council of Florence, and the reunion between the Eastern and Western Churches which had been arranged at that council but was destined to have so very transitory an existence. The subjects on the panels have reference to the events connected with the council. On each side of these doors there is a column of the marble known as *Africano nero*, the two largest pieces of this marble known to exist. These two columns were formerly the two nearest to the great doors inside the basilica, and were regarded as being of great price. They were known respectively by the names of Peter and Paul.<sup>1</sup>

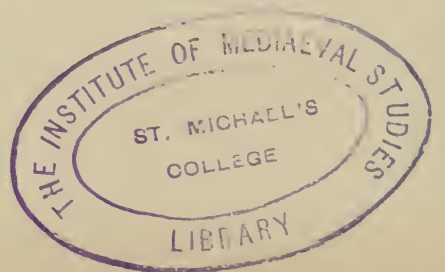
Inside the doors and near the eastern end of the church is a large circular disc of red porphyry. This was one of several for which the old church was famous. There was one in particular in the centre of the nave, between the altars of St. Simon and St. Jude and that of St. Philip and St. James, which is continually mentioned in the *Ordines Romani*<sup>2</sup> and other documents. It seems to be depicted, with other smaller discs round it, in the picture already mentioned by Jehan Foucquet, and this makes it likely that it is the one alluded to in a document of the time of Charlemagne, quoted by Severano, which speaks of a certain part of St. Peter's known by the name of *ad quatuor Rotas* (the four discs). On this spot the emperors were crowned, and it is to be regretted that in 1606 no steps were taken to remove so historic a stone. It lies buried, as both Torrigio<sup>3</sup> and Severano<sup>4</sup> tell us,

<sup>1</sup> Ugonio, *Stazione di Roma*, 1588, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Mabillon, *Museum Ital.*, ii., 216; *Lib. Pont.*, ii., 340, 392.

<sup>3</sup> Torrigio, *Le sacre Grotte Vaticane*, ed. 1635, p. 520.

<sup>4</sup> *Le sette chiese*, p. 128.



some ten feet below the present pavement, exactly under the arms of Paul V., which are in the ceiling of the church. The disc which we now see, therefore, is not, as it is usually asserted to be, this one of so great historic interest, but it has an interest of its own. It was not inside the old church at all, but in the portico just outside the Porta Argentea. There was a tradition that beneath it there lay buried no less a person than the Venerable Bede. This tradition was ancient, for we find it in Mallius in the twelfth century, with the additional particular that at that time it was customary, out of reverence for him who lay beneath, that no one, not even the canons, should walk across the stone.<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting perhaps in this connection, that at Subiaco also there is the tomb of yet another Venerable Bede. No satisfactory explanation has as yet been given of the way in which these traditions grew up. St. Bede did visit Rome, although he died in England and was buried at Durham, so it is possible that the stone may have been connected with some event in his life, and that this gave rise to the idea that he was buried beneath it. There is no record of any tomb having been discovered when the stone was removed to be placed in its present position.

Turning to the right, in the last chapel on the right-hand side we shall find the Colonna Santa, one of the twelve twisted columns from the confession. Against this column it was believed that our Lord had leant when He taught in the temple at Jerusalem, and it was supposed to have miraculous powers for the cure of those who were possessed. It is a very difficult thing to say how much credence should be given to the story that these columns came from the temple at Jerusalem. Our only trustworthy authority on the subject would seem to be the *Liber Pontificalis*, and from it we learn that all the

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., 217.

twelve columns were not brought at one time, but that only six were there originally, having been brought by Constantine from Greece,<sup>1</sup> and that the other six were given 400 years afterwards by the Exarch of Ravenna to Pope Gregory III. In any case, since they are all exactly alike, they must have come from a single temple somewhere, and probably from the East. The term Greece in the fifth century was often used tersely to denote the East generally. Of the original twelve, eleven still remain in the present church—two being at the altar of St. Maurice in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, and eight in the *loggie* or balconies in the four great pilasters under the dome. The twelfth according to Briccolani was given away by Pope Paul V., but nothing is now known of its whereabouts. The protection of marble and of iron which encloses the Colonna Santa, raises another difficulty. Raphael's fresco in the Vatican, which is practically a contemporary authority, shows the twisted columns before the confession raised on high pedestals, and with low walls of marble, *pectoralia* as they were called, separating column from column. This is in accordance with what we know from other sources, and has generally been taken as a correct representation. But the marble *podium* which protects the column bears the date 1438, and is therefore nearly a hundred years earlier than the picture. This seems to prove clearly that in 1438 the column stood as it does now, on the ground level, for otherwise no protection would have been needed, or at any rate it would not have been carried to anything like its present height. After the destruction of the upper part of the basilica in 1506, the other columns seem to have been removed, and not to have been included in Bramante's little temple which enclosed the confession. Two of them appear, as we have said, to have been

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 176, 419.

utilised at once at the altar of St. Simon and St. Jude. The Colonna Santa, however, seems to have been left standing unprotected in the open while the new church was being built. It is shown in this condition in a contemporary drawing preserved at Berlin.<sup>1</sup> At a later date it was placed close to the spot where the bronze statue of St. Peter now is,<sup>2</sup> and from thence it was removed to its present place in the time of Urban VIII.

The sarcophagus of Probus in the same chapel has been already spoken of. It served as the baptismal font of the basilica from 1507 to 1699, in which later year the present font, which is in the chapel exactly opposite, across the church, was constructed by Fontana. This new font, however, also has its own ancient memories. The great porphyry basin, the largest piece of porphyry known to exist, was originally the cover of the sarcophagus of the Emperor Otho II., who died in 984, and was buried in the *atrium* of St. Peter's,<sup>3</sup> on the side nearest the entrance to the *atrium* from outside. Torrigio, who wrote before the piece of porphyry had been utilised, and while it was still covering the sarcophagus of Otho in the spot to which it had been removed in the crypts of the new church, quotes Benedict the canon as saying that it was at a yet earlier period the cover of the sarcophagus of the Emperor Hadrian, and was removed from his mausoleum, which is now of course the Castle of St. Angelo, to serve the same function for Otho II.<sup>4</sup> In the course of removal it was unfortunately broken into no less than ten pieces, but the hardness of the porphyry and the consequent cleanness of the fractures made repair easy, and it is now hardly possibly to detect that it has been broken at all.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This drawing is reproduced by Geymüller.

<sup>2</sup> *V. Drei's* plan opposite p. 304.      <sup>3</sup> Ditmar, *Chron.*, t. iii.

<sup>4</sup> Torrigio, *Le sacre Grotte*, ed. 1635, p. 364.

<sup>5</sup> Mignanti, *Hist. Basil. Vatic.*, ii., p. 119.

The next chapel beyond the Chapel of the Holy Column is a small oval one, known as the Chapel of the Crucifix, from a large wooden crucifix, carved by Cavallini in the fifteenth century, which is there preserved. This crucifix in the old basilica stood over the altar of St. Simon and St. Jude, in the days before that altar had become the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. It was put there to replace a celebrated one of silver which had been given to that altar by Pope Leo IV., to replace a yet earlier one which had been given by Pope Leo III., and was carried off by the Saracens in 850. The second one disappeared in its turn during the troubles of the fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup> This crucifix over the altar of St. Simon and St. Jude, and another one over the altar of St. Philip and St. James which corresponded to it on the other side of the nave, caused this portion of the church to be known by the name of *ad crucifixos*,<sup>2</sup> "the two crucifixes," a name which occurs frequently in mediæval accounts of the church, and always denotes these two altars.

Passing up the church, and examining the altars on either side as we go, there is nothing which can be with any certainty identified as ancient, although no doubt many of the columns which flank the various altar pieces are really so, until we come to the confession itself. This, as we have shown, has remained almost unaltered, but there is no need to say more about it now. The steps leading down to it were made from the architraves of the old church, and no doubt have carving concealed from view on their lower sides. The two steps of por-

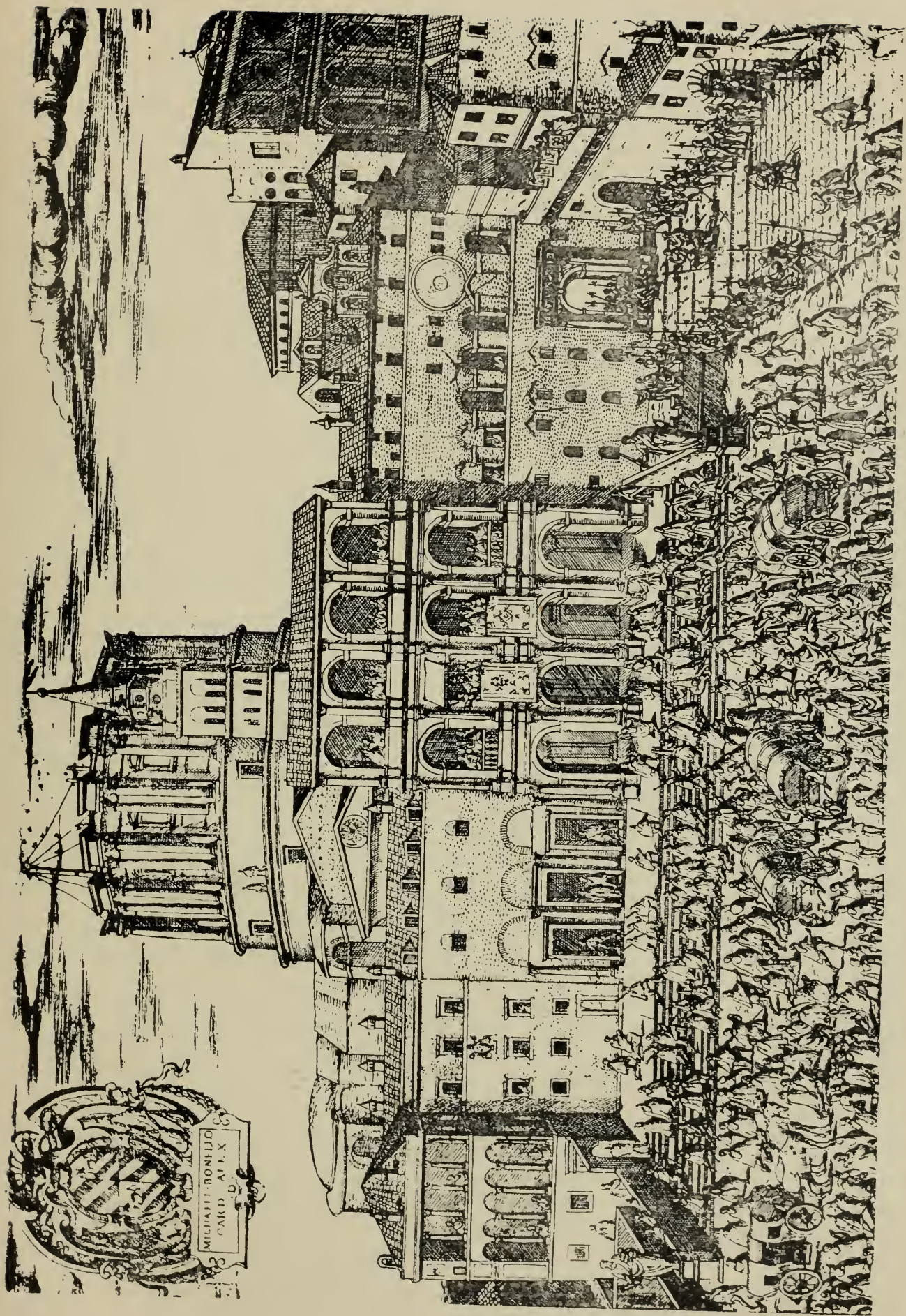
<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, ii., pp. 11, 128. M. Duchesne in his note on p. 40 misinterprets this as being a cross under the great arch. In a second note, p. 138, he confuses it with the cross in the baptistery.

<sup>2</sup> In early times, before the second crucifix had been given, it is spoken of as *ad crucifixum*. See e.g. *Lib. Pont.*, ii., p. 31. De Rossi, *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., pp. 231, 331, confuses this locality with the vestibule in front of the confession, though he has the right explanation on p. 119.

phyry, which extend entirely across the church a little farther on, were made from the fourteen steps, seven on either side, which led up to the raised platform of the tribune. Turning next to the right, in the Capella Gregoriana, at the altar where reposes the body of the great doctor of the Eastern Church, St. Gregory Nazianzen, there is a celebrated picture known as the Madonna del Soccorso, or Our Lady of Help. This picture was in the old basilica in the Chapel of St. Leo, where, according to Alfarano, whose MS. Severano<sup>1</sup> quotes, it had been placed by Paschal II., when at the beginning of the twelfth century he brought the bodies of SS. Leo II., III., IV. and laid them in the same chapel. This Madonna, with one exception, is the only one of the many which were in the old basilica which has found a place in the new church, though there are two or three more in the crypts. The other one in the upper church is the curious Madonna Della Colonna, which is at the next altar to that of St. Leo the Great, in the southern transepts. This picture was painted on one of the great columns of the nave, the third on the right hand of one entering the church. The round form of the column may be seen quite plainly by any one who examines it carefully in its present position. Its age is not very easy to fix. Alfarano in the sixteenth century speaks of it as "very ancient," though he adds that the special devotion to it did not show itself to any great extent before the year 1575. Apparently the picture has been sawn out of the original column, for the whole column does not seem to be there.

There remains now but a single other monument of the old church to be described, and that is the celebrated bronze statue of St. Peter, so well known to every Catholic. The tradition, which, however, does not seem to be

<sup>1</sup> *Sette Chiese*, p. 88.



ST. PETER'S ABOUT 1550.  
(From a scarce print in the British Museum. The Pope is giving his blessing "*Urbi et Orbi*".)

[To face page 286.]



supported by any very definite evidence, is that it was made by the order of St. Leo to commemorate the deliverance of Rome from the attack of Attila, and that it was cast from the bronze which had once served for the statue of the Capitoline Zeus.<sup>1</sup> The style of a work of this kind cast in metal, is never so decisive of its age as in the case of a marble statue, but critics seem to agree that it may well be of the fifth century, though Professor Lanciani finds a difficulty in the shape of the keys, which, however, he thinks may be a later addition.<sup>2</sup> It is thought that in any case the statue must be older than the eighth century, since it must almost certainly be the one alluded to in the celebrated letter of the iconoclastic emperor, Leo the Isaurian, to Pope Gregory II., containing the threat that he will "send to Rome and destroy the statue of St. Peter" (*imaginem confringam*).<sup>3</sup> This statue was not originally kept in the basilica itself, but in one of the smaller churches adjoining it, the Monastery of St. Martin, which was accordingly, as we learn from Veggio, one of the most frequented of all the sacred places of Rome in the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> When the church was destroyed by Nicholas V. in 1450, to make room for his projected new-tribune, the statue was brought into the basilica itself, and placed in the Oratory of SS. Processus and Martinianus. Thence it was again removed on the destruction of all that part of the church in 1507, and followed this altar to a position close to the new western

<sup>1</sup> Torrigio, *I sacri trofei*. The improvement often found in Protestant controversial writings to the effect that this statue is merely the old statue of Zeus adapted to its new use is baseless and absurd. Indeed the best authorities seem to discredit even the idea that the bronze was thus obtained.

<sup>2</sup> *Pagan and Christian Rome*. The use of the keys as the symbol of St. Peter's jurisdiction began in the fourth century.

<sup>3</sup> Severano, *Le sette Chiese*, p. 103; cf. Baronius, *Annal.*, vol. ix., ann. 715.

<sup>4</sup> Veggio, *De Rebus ant.*

wall, which was built to preserve the part of the church which still remained standing. There is a picture of this altar with the organ over it, and the statue at its side, among Grimaldi's drawings, and this drawing is reproduced in Ciampini. The statue was finally placed in its present position by Paul V. in 1607. The rather grotesque custom of decorating it with cope, tiara and ring on the great feasts can boast a respectable antiquity, for it is recorded that not only this statue, but also the large stone one which was once over the great doorway, and is now in the crypts, were thus adorned in mediæval times.<sup>1</sup> The custom indeed is obviously a mediæval survival and is not likely to have originated in more recent years.

<sup>1</sup> Torrigio, *Le sacre Grotte Vat.*, p. 74, ed. 1635.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CHANGES IN THE FIFTEENTH, SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.

WHEN the Popes returned to Rome after their seventy years' absence at Avignon, they found the churches and other ecclesiastical buildings of the city, as was only to be expected, in a state of extreme decay. When Martin V. made his solemn entry into Rome on the 30th September, 1420, amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the people, the city, as one of his biographers tells us, was in so terrible a state of misery "that it scarcely bore the appearance of a city".<sup>1</sup> At St. Peter's itself the poverty was so great that in 1414, "even on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul they could not afford to light a lamp before the confession of the prince of the apostles".<sup>2</sup> "The other structures of the city had also suffered dreadfully during the vicissitudes of the schism; most of the houses had fallen; many churches were roofless, and others had been turned into stables for horses. The Leonine City was laid waste; the streets leading to St. Peter's, the portico even of the church itself, were in ruins; and the walls of the city were, in this quarter, broken down, so that by night the wolves came out of the desolate campagna, invaded the Vatican Gardens, and with their paws dug up the dead in the neighbouring Campo Santo."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Martini V.*, in Muratori, iii., 2, 864.

<sup>2</sup> Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum scriptores*, xxiv., 1043.

<sup>3</sup> Pastor, *History of the Popes*, i., 215.

Such was the sad condition of Rome in 1420, and it was therefore necessary at once to make the most strenuous efforts in order to preserve what remained, and to prevent the decay from going farther. The Pope appealed to the cardinals to undertake the repairs of their titular churches; he himself undertook the parish churches and the great basilicas. Great sums were expended on St. Peter's, including 50,000 golden florins which were contributed from the Papal treasury for repairs to the roof.<sup>1</sup> We shall have a suggestion to make as to the way in which this vast sum was spent. The *atrium* and the colonnades which surrounded it were also repaired and decorated, and these and other similar works in other churches were duly commemorated by the issue of a medal with the portrait of Martin V. on one side, and on the other the façade of a basilica with the legend "Dirutas ac labantes urbis restaur. eccles."

Now there was one very important work carried out about this time at St. Peter's, and perhaps paid for by the 50,000 florins already mentioned, to which we must now draw attention. Except so far as it is commemorated by the issue of the medal, all memory of it has been lost, and the fact that it was ever carried out has passed out of knowledge. We will now try to show what this was. A few years ago, on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of the well-known Roman archæologist Cav. G. B. de Rossi, the French Academy at Rome determined to publish a complimentary volume in his honour. Among other articles in this volume, which is entitled *Mélanges G. B. de Rossi*, and forms part of a series published by the Ecole Française de Rome, is one by M. Paul Durrien of the Musée du Louvre, drawing attention to the illumination existing in a fifteenth century MS. Book of

<sup>1</sup> Bonanni, p. 36, "tectum pluribus in partibus fatiscens stabilivit, quo in opere 50,000 florenos insumpsisse narrat in suis annalibus Albertus Argentinensis".



INTERIOR OF OLD ST. PETER'S ABOUT 1440.  
(From a drawing by Jehan Foucquet now in the National Library at Paris.)  
[To face page 290.]



Chronicles which is preserved in the National Library at Paris.<sup>1</sup> This illumination is by the well-known painter Jehan Foucquet, and undoubtedly represents the interior of old St. Peter's. The date of the book is not earlier than 1458, and Foucquet died in 1481, which gives the latest possible date for the execution of the work. It represents, however, the basilica as it was at a much earlier date, for Foucquet's only known visit to Rome was, at latest, in 1447.

We turn therefore with great interest to examine this unique and precious representation, the only ancient one, so far as is known at present, that exists of the interior of the old church, and we are surprised to find that it is not at all in accordance with our expectations. We can dimly make out the apse with its mosaics and windows at the far end of the church, and in front of it there is certainly a great arch ending the nave. But this arch is not at all the kind of arch we should have expected. It is extraordinarily plain and massive, not to say ugly. There is no sign of the mosaics, which nevertheless we know were there, nor does it look at all like the noble arch of Galla Placidia which still remains more or less in its original condition in the Church of St. Paul. On the contrary, it is of perfectly plain brick, without any trace of ornamentation, or attempt of any kind to relieve its massive heaviness. It is, too, of singular thickness, apparently ten or twelve feet at the least, so that it resembles nothing so much as a modern arch built to sustain the permanent way of a railroad where it crosses some deep ravine. Such an arch, we say at once, cannot possibly date from the fourth century, nor have formed part of the original church, but must have been added at some later period, when art was in a very low condition, as a mere precautionary measure in order to

<sup>1</sup> MS., fo. 6465.

hold up the walls or roof of a building that otherwise was in serious danger of falling. The real arch of Constantine's Church, since we know from other sources that it was still in existence many years after Foucquet's visit to Rome,<sup>1</sup> must be hidden from sight by this unsightly erection that has been built up in front of it.

Now if we go down into the crypt of St. Peter's we shall find that the floor of the present church is supported by a number of thick squat pillars of masonry, all of which are of the same form, with only one exception, where the pillars, instead of being approximately square in section, are oblong, and nearly twelve feet in thickness. There must have been some cause for this peculiarity, but apparently none can be suggested, unless it be that we have here the foundations of the great arch shown in Foucquet's picture, and that these foundations have been utilised as supports to hold up the floor of the church above. If this be indeed the case, we shall be able to locate the position of the arch with some exactness. It must have been situated between the first and second columns of the nave, and apparently filled up the whole of the space between them, as well as the space occupied by the second column, which would allow of its being just about twelve feet in thickness.

One other point deserves to be noticed before we leave Foucquet's picture. There will be noticed close to the great arch a strange stockade of wood. This is the enclosure of the choir, as it was at this period, *ex ligno vili artificio confectus* as a contemporary tells us. The original choir chapel had been close to the confession, where it was erected by St. Gregory III. in 731, that the Divine Office and the Chapter Mass might be sung as near as possible to the shrine. Thence it seems to have been moved to the spot shown in this picture; thence

<sup>1</sup> Jacobacci, *De Concilio*, the last page, quoted *supra*, p. 165.

under Pius II. to the old *secretarium*, from which the body of St. Gregory had just been moved, in 1464, and lastly Sixtus IV. built the great chapel on the south side of the basilica in 1479.

The repairs executed by Martin V. were, however, not sufficient to render the great building safe, and only a few years afterwards in the time of Nicholas V. who reigned in the middle of the century, its condition was sufficiently alarming to cause further schemes of reconstruction to be brought forward. Two leading architects of the time, Alberti and Rossellino, were summoned to Rome from Florence, to give their advice and to draw up plans for the work. Into the details of the various schemes that were put forward, both at this time and in the course of the next hundred years, we cannot enter here;<sup>1</sup> for the story of the rebuilding of St. Peter's, and of the way in which the idea of the new church was modified as time went on, would need a volume to itself, and is not closely connected with the history of the tomb. It must suffice to say that an ambitious scheme was adopted of rebuilding if not the whole church at least the western portion of it, and that the work was at once put in hand. This involved the destruction of the so-called Temple of Probus, and of some other buildings close to the basilica, but the church itself was untouched. The foundations of a new apse were put in, some distance to the westward of the old one, and the new building was already some feet above the ground when all work was stopped on account of the death of the Pope in 1455. Troublous times soon followed in Rome, and so the great scheme was abandoned, to be revived afterwards on different lines, so that all that was done under Nicholas V. was merely wasted labour and expense.

<sup>1</sup> A good many details may be found in Muntz, *Les Arts à la Cour des Papes*, vol. i., and in Pastor's *History of the Popes*, and the volumes of M. Geymüller should also be consulted.

We have already in a previous chapter stated our grounds for believing that the next work that was done at St. Peter's was the rebuilding of the western portion of the church in the shape of a transverse nave. Although this must have made a most striking change in the appearance of the church from outside, the difference in the ground plan would not have been great, and the old foundations could have been utilised to a great extent. This work we may suppose to have been substituted for the larger scheme of Nicholas V. on account of the much smaller expenditure which would be involved. It would seem, if we may trust the evidence of the medal, to have been either begun or completed in 1470; and we may suppose that it left the church, if not very beautiful to the eye, at least in a safe condition and serviceable for the purpose of public worship.

Accordingly, the next step towards the rebuilding of the basilica would seem to have been prompted, not, as was the case in the time of Nicholas V., by the alarming condition of the building and the urgent necessity of doing something before some catastrophe occurred, but rather by the ambitious desire of the reigning Pontiff to connect himself with the commencement of a church which should surpass both in size and magnificence anything that the world had yet seen, and in which there might be found a fitting site for a gorgeous monument to be raised to his own memory.

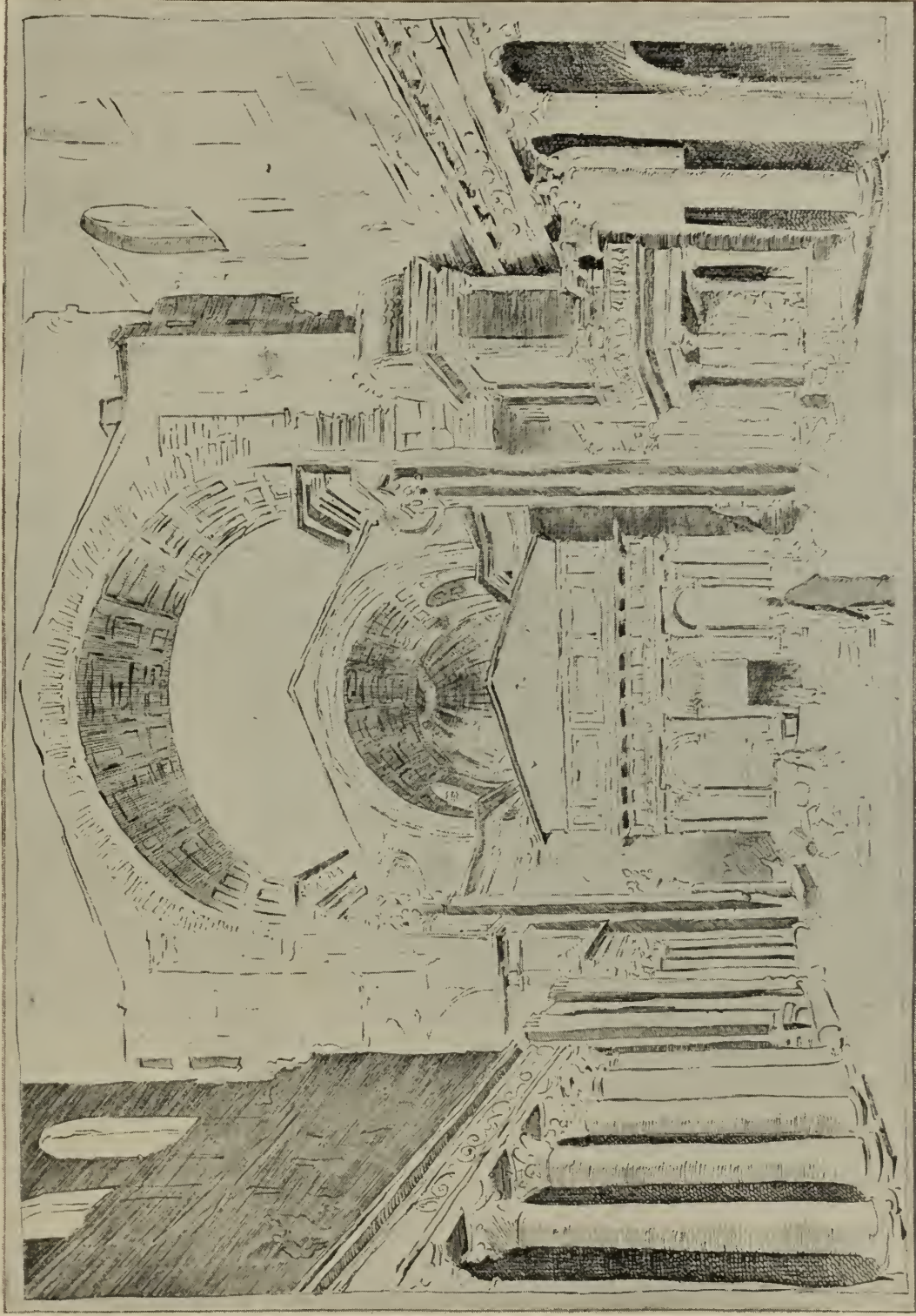
If we may trust Condivi, who wrote the life of Michel Angelo, it is to that artist that we owe the destruction of the old church with all its unrivalled historical associations, and the substitution for it of the present building, whose size and grandeur can never make up to us for the loss of its predecessor. Condivi<sup>1</sup> tells us that Michel Angelo had come to Rome at the request of Pope Julius

<sup>1</sup> Condivi, *Vita di Michel Angelo*, sec. ed., Firenze, 1746, p. 19.

II., and was engaged upon the design of a tomb which that Pontiff desired to prepare for himself to occupy. Michel Angelo had designed a monument of very great size, of which the well-known figure of Moses which is now in the church of S. Pietro ai Vincoli was to form part, and indeed is the only portion that was ever executed. He had met the Pope by appointment at St. Peter's in order to decide on the spot which this great monument should occupy; and since no fitting position could be found in the old basilica, he drew the Pope's attention to the work which had been commenced by Nicholas V. some fifty years before, and which had afterwards been abandoned; and suggested that it would be easy, if that great work were now resumed, to provide in the new building a fitting position for the great monument to occupy. Julius was taken with the idea, and being reassured by Michel Angelo on the question of cost, sent at once for the architects, San Gallo and Bramante, and ordered them to prepare plans without delay for the rebuilding of the church. Bramante's plans were accepted, and the order was soon given for the destruction of the upper portion of the old building, including apparently all that had been so recently re-erected. So eager was Bramante to commence the work that not only was no record made of the buildings before they were destroyed, but the actual work of destruction was itself carried on with such indecent haste as to lead to an indignant protest from Michel Angelo, who went to the Pope and complained that columns were being needlessly broken, and valuable works of art irreparably injured.<sup>1</sup> So perished old St. Peter's, and with it, sad to relate, perished all exact knowledge of the great church which for nearly 1200 years had been the central shrine of so much of the devotion of Christendom. Two

<sup>1</sup> Condivi, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

points stand out as some slight relief to the general gloom of this destruction. The immediate surroundings of St. Peter's tomb were not touched, but were enclosed in a little temple which Bramante built for the purpose. In this way the apse and its mosaics, the high altar and the confession, and the chapel under the tribune, were all carefully preserved; and the usual religious functions were duly performed within this little temple all through the period of the rebuilding. So also, by special order of the Pope, the floor of the old choir, and of that portion of the left transept wherein the four SS. Leo were buried, was not allowed to be disturbed, but was preserved intact, so that to-day in the crypts beneath the church we can still actually tread upon the floor of the old basilica, the ancient pavement of which may here and there even now be seen. But with these two exceptions the ruin was complete, so far as the upper portion of the church is concerned. The lower portion of the nave, and the altars that were in it, still remained standing. It seems, however extraordinary it may appear, that no effort was made to preserve this portion from the weather; no wall was built for many years to close it in at the western end, and it remained completely open and exposed, so that the wonder is that it was able to stand at all. However there can be no doubt of the fact, for we can see it for ourselves in a most noteworthy drawing of the period which is in the Sloane Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and which preserves for us the aspect of the place at this most interesting epoch. It shows us the west end of the church completely open, and the altars exposed to the wind and the weather. Many of the columns of the old church are still upright, even in the part which had been pulled down, but between them there rises into the air a single vast arch, the first beginnings of the new church; which enables us to fix the date of the drawing as not much later than 1508. Beyond, there is Bramante's little



ST. PETER'S ABOUT 1510.

(From a contemporary drawing preserved in the Sloane Museum.)

[To face page 296.]



temple enclosing the high altar and the tomb, the only representation, so far as we are aware, of this structure; the existence of which is however known to us also from Vasari, who describes it as being very beautiful and of the Doric order.<sup>1</sup> Some traces of this temple are believed still to remain in the crypts of the present church.<sup>2</sup>

The work of rebuilding was commenced at once, and the first stone was laid by the Pope in person on the 26th April, 1506, on the spot above which there now rises the great pilaster of St. Veronica. Once started it went on rapidly for some years, until it was checked first by the deaths of Bramante and of Julius himself, and then by the disturbed times which followed, and which culminated in the terrible sack of Rome in 1527 by the troops of the Constable de Bourbon. A fresh start was made under Paul III., when Michel Angelo was put in charge of the work, and under his auspices the great dome, the most wonderful and daring feat of architecture that the world has seen, rose slowly above the tomb of St. Peter. At last, in the time of Innocent IX., in the year 1591, the work was so far advanced that the pavement of the new church could be constructed, and since the level of the new church had been fixed about eleven feet above that of the old, the *Grotte Vecchie*, as the crypts are now called, were thus brought into existence. The pavement of the upper church was at this time continuous; not broken by any cutting, like the present confession, by means of which the level of the lower church could be reached. So there were practically two churches, one above the other; the new St. Peter's with a high altar under a baldachino supported by four columns, and standing upon a platform approached by steps from each of the four sides; and part of old St. Peter's underneath with no altar, but with the recess of the confession, still,

<sup>1</sup> Vasari, *Vite dei piu eccellenti pittori* (Life of Bramante).

<sup>2</sup> Sarti e Settele, *Appendix ad Dionysium*, p. 42.

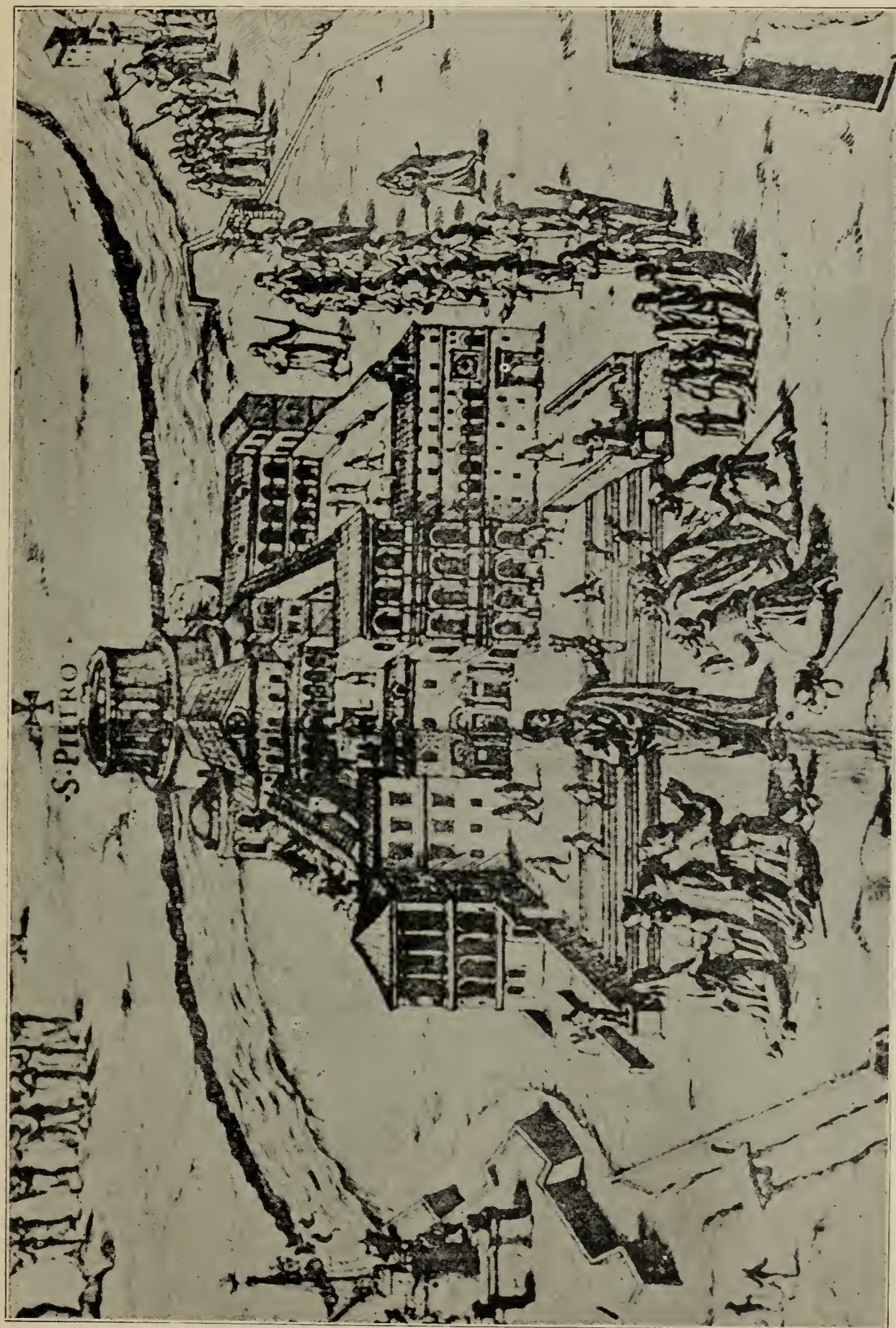
as it had always been, on the same level as the church, at the western extremity of which it now stood, though there was still access through doors to the chapel of the confession with its altar, farther back. Between these two churches there was no communication at all, except by two staircases, the entrances to which were close to the two eastern pilasters which supported the great dome, where now are the statues of St. Andrew and St. Longinus, but where at this period there stood, on the left, the great tomb of Paul III., which is now in the apse, and on the right, the holy column, which had once stood with the others in front of the confession, and which is now found in the first chapel on the right hand as the basilica is entered. A drawing of the high altar as it was at this period, and until the new confession was excavated by Paul V., may be found in a work on St. Peter's by a French architect named Tarade, published about 1650. A copy of his work is in the British Museum.

With the recess of the old confession we need not now concern ourselves, for it is clear that no alteration was made here at this period, except so far as was involved in erecting the pavement above it and so placing it in a crypt. The new high altar, which was larger and on a higher level than the old one, which it enclosed within itself, was consecrated in 1594 by Clement VIII., its *mensa* being composed of a single slab of Greek marble which had been discovered a short time before in the forum of Nerva. This altar does not contain any relics, since it is built immediately above the body of St. Peter. Clement VIII. also turned his attention to the old Chapel of the Confession, and here very considerable changes were introduced. It will be remembered that this chapel formed a portion of the ancient *memoria* erected by Anacleto, and that it was approached in the old basilica by an annular passage running close to the inside of the wall

of the apse, and under the raised tribune of the high altar. This ancient passage seems now to have been stopped up, and a new passage of similar shape, but running outside instead of inside the circular wall of the ancient apse, was constructed. From this new passage access to the chapel was probably obtained without any fresh cutting through the wall, by means of the doorway by which the chapel had anciently been approached from the Temple of Probus. Although the old annular passage was now no longer used for its original purpose, portions of it were still retained, and are still to be seen at the present day. A small portion close to the left or southern entrance was converted into the little chapel of S. Salvatorino, so called from a curious ancient marble representation of our Lord which now forms its altar piece. This chapel still exists though it is never used, and we shall have more to say about it presently. Then the parts of this circular passage on each side of the straight passage leading to the chapel itself were also utilised, though very much disguised, and now constitute the two arms which give the present chapel its cruciform shape. When this had been done the next step was to raise the level; for there was now additional head-room, since the level of the floor above was so much higher than of yore; and this raising of the general level of the chapel of course necessitated the raising and reconstruction of its altar. It was while this last operation was being carried out that a most interesting incident, of very great importance in the history of the tomb, would seem to have occurred. At least the express mention of the altar in the course of the narrative which follows appears to point to this conclusion; for it can hardly be the high altar which is intended, although every one has hitherto assumed this to be the case. A communication between the high altar and the chamber of the tomb is practically impossible, since the recess of the confession intervenes. On the other hand, nothing is

more probable than that the altar of the chapel should have been provided with some such communication ; since there was nothing but the roof of the chamber to be pierced, and it was with a direct intention of allowing priests to celebrate in as close a vicinity to the tomb as was possible that we believe the altar to have been originally erected by Gregory the Great. The story will be found in Bonanni,<sup>1</sup> who claims to be quoting a MS. relation by Torrigio, who was alive at the time it is said to have happened, and is as follows. The architect in charge of the works at this time was Della Porta. " This man one day reported to Pope Clement VIII. that an aperture (*foramen*) had been by him uncovered, through which the tomb (*monumentum*) of St. Peter could be seen." The Pope therefore summoned three cardinals, Bellarmine, Antoniano and Sfondrato, and in their company went to the place. A torch was held by the architect, and by its light there could be made out the golden cross lying on the top of the sepulchre. " The Pope ordered that most ancient altar to be left undisturbed where it was, and the aperture to be filled up with cement in his presence. He then ordered a new and more magnificent altar to be erected, which altar was consecrated on the 26th July, 1594, the Pope himself consecrating it, and offering first of all the holy sacrifice upon it." " All this Torrigio asserts to have been told by Cardinal Sfondrato to Aloisio Cittadino, canon of the basilica ; and to Giovanni Bartetto who was in charge of the said holy confession." Such is the story as we find it in Bonanni, but it is not quite clear whether he is quoting *verbatim*. It may be that the confusion which has led to the whole story being referred to the high altar is due to Bonanni himself, or to Torrigio. In any case the story becomes very much more probable if we may consider it

<sup>1</sup> Bonanni, *Templi Vaticani Historia*, p. 149.



ST. PETER'S ABOUT 1580.

(From a scarce print in the British Museum representing the Pilgrimage to the Seven Churches of Rome.)

[To face page 300.



as applying to the altar of the Chapel of the Confession ; although that altar seems to be the original one and not a new one. It is worth noting, too, that it has a chamber for relics, which the high altar has not, thus confirming the conclusion at which we have already arrived, that it is not directly above any portion of the body of St. Peter. The story is too circumstantial to be devoid of all solid foundation, and whether we are right or not in assigning it to this place and time, we can scarcely be wrong in assuming that, in its main outline, it did take place as narrated. The importance of this is very great, for the existence of the gold cross is proof positive that the tomb had never been disturbed. It was treasure that the Saracens and all other possible desecraters of the tomb were in search of ; and therefore the fact that the cross has survived is sufficient to prove that they never were able at any time to enter the actual chamber of the tomb.

Up to this time parts of the old basilica were standing, but it was now found necessary for the completion of the new church to commence once more the work of destruction. It was at this period apparently that Bramante's little temple round the high altar was removed, and with it the old tribune of the apse with its mosaics. It was felt that the destruction of this relic was so important an event that some account of it ought to be officially placed upon record, a step which, most unfortunately, had not been thought necessary with regard to the destruction of any other portion of the ancient edifice. The document has been printed in full, and may be read in the pages of Ciampini.<sup>1</sup>

The lower part of the church, and all the *atrium* in front of it, remained intact until the year 1606. We have been able to reproduce several contemporary engravings which show St. Peter's in this state, with the great dome

<sup>1</sup> Ciampini, *De sacris ædif.*

of the new church already rising behind what remained of the old. The tale of the destruction of this portion also, and of the total disappearance of old St. Peter's, has been already told in English by Professor Lanciani in his *Pagan and Christian Rome*. We no longer have to complain that we have no record of what took place; on the contrary, the difficulties of any historian who may in future times desire to tell the story of 1606, and the years which immediately followed, will arise from the excessive bulk of the materials at his disposal. Everything was noted down by Grimaldi as the work progressed, and his voluminous manuscripts have never yet been thoroughly examined. For us the matter lies outside our immediate aim, for nothing was done at this period in the part of the church which immediately surrounded the tomb. We pass on, therefore, to the consideration of what is more closely connected with our subject—the excavation, namely, of the new confession, in a form similar to that which already existed in other churches of Rome, although there had never previously been anything of the kind in St. Peter's itself.

Paul V. was not content with putting in hand these great undertakings with regard to the extension and completion of the great church. He determined also to do something to bring the ancient confession of St. Peter into greater honour. This confession, it will be remembered, was now hidden away in the crypt, where no light of day could ever reach it, and where access to it for purposes of devotion must have been extremely difficult and inconvenient. Two plans for its ornamentation were submitted. The first was by Ferrabosco, and involved very radical changes. He proposed to make a circular passage running all round the tomb, and lighted from the top by means of gratings, and to give access to this by staircases opening out close to the high altar above. There is a drawing of this plan in Bonanni, and

for a long time a model of it in wood was preserved in the sacristy. Fortunately it was not accepted, for it would have utterly destroyed all traces of the past story of the spot, and have substituted a new structure for that around which so many associations of historical and devotional interest had gathered. The other plan, which was carried out, was that of Maderno, and was very simple. It consisted only in cutting away a portion of the pavement on the eastern side of the altar; and then, by means of a wall built up from the floor of the lower church, constructing what had come to be called a "confession" in other churches in Rome; but which instead of giving access to the tomb itself, as was its purpose in these other churches, in this case gave access to the true "confession" of St. Peter; that is, to the recess under the high altar. This work, which brought the spot into its present state, was not completed until 1615; indeed, it did not receive its final touches till some years later, but it seems to have been commenced as early as 1607, and the discoveries which were made in the course of the excavations for the foundations of the enclosing walls and the laying of the new pavement are full of interest, although unfortunately we have not nearly as full details of them as we could wish. Severano, the companion of St. Philip, who wrote his book only a few years after this time, has preserved for us the detail that the steps, by which the descent into this "confession" is made, were formed out of the marble which in ancient times had served for the architraves above the columns of the old basilica; and then he goes on to say as follows:—

"In the construction of these steps and the opening out of this place there were found certain bodies in separate coffins, clothed and bound up with bandages, cross-wise, just as we read in the Gospels that Lazarus was 'bound feet and hands with winding bands'. There was, however, one exception—a body which was vested as

a bishop. None of them had any names, but it was thought very probable that they were the bodies of the ten immediate successors of St. Peter, especially since there was also discovered a marble slab which bore the inscription S. Linus. All of them were left in the same place where they were found.”<sup>1</sup>

To this account of Severano's, we can add a few more details from Torrigio<sup>2</sup> who was not only a contemporary, but a *beneficiato* of St. Peter's, and, as he himself tells us, actually present when the discovery was made :—

“ There were found there,” he says “ many sepulchres of saints, including a Pope vested in a chasuble and pallium, who must have been of great stature. He was not disturbed, but by command of our superiors was immediately covered up again. There were also found many bodies rolled up in bandages of about a finger's breadth, which bandages crossed each other after the ancient fashion. Further, there was a fine coffin some two feet long containing the body of a little child, and these again were not touched. There was another on which was written *Linus*, and one in particular from which there came forth such an odour that all present held it to be marvellous, as those who were there when it was found have told me.”

These two accounts seem to be the only contemporary ones which have survived, but they are supplemented by an engraved plan which was issued in the year 1635 by one Benedetto Drei, who was clerk of the work at St. Peter's. This plan is not drawn strictly to scale, nor is it at all accurate in details, but nevertheless it is an invaluable record of the discoveries which were made at this time. It was originally designed in 1635 to serve as a kind of guide-plan for Torrigio's book upon the

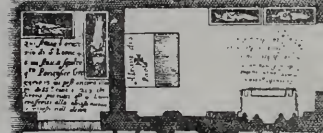
<sup>1</sup>Severano, *Le sette chiese*, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Torigio, *Le sacre Grotte Vaticane*, ed. 1618, p. 58.

SIC ROSA NECTVS IOHVS  
 ET IOTO ORBE CHRISTIANO  
 CELEBERRIMVS DICTVS  
 CONFESSIO S. PETRI AD  
 QVAM POST CONSTANTINVM  
 PRIMVM PRIMI ORBIS PRINCIPES  
 PRO LOCI RIVERENTIA SE PROSTRAR  
 VERE DEPOSITIS DIADEMATIS

LA LA CRISTIANITA  
 CHIAMATO LA CONFES  
 SIONE DI S. PIETRO

AVANTI LA QVLE R  
 RIVERENZA DEL IVCO  
 AD ESSEMPIO  
 DI CONSTANTINO  
 MAGNO  
 LI PRINCIPES E  
 PRINCIPESSE  
 DELLA TERRA  
 POSTE GIULI  
 LORO CORONE  
 E DIADEME SI  
 PROSTRARANO

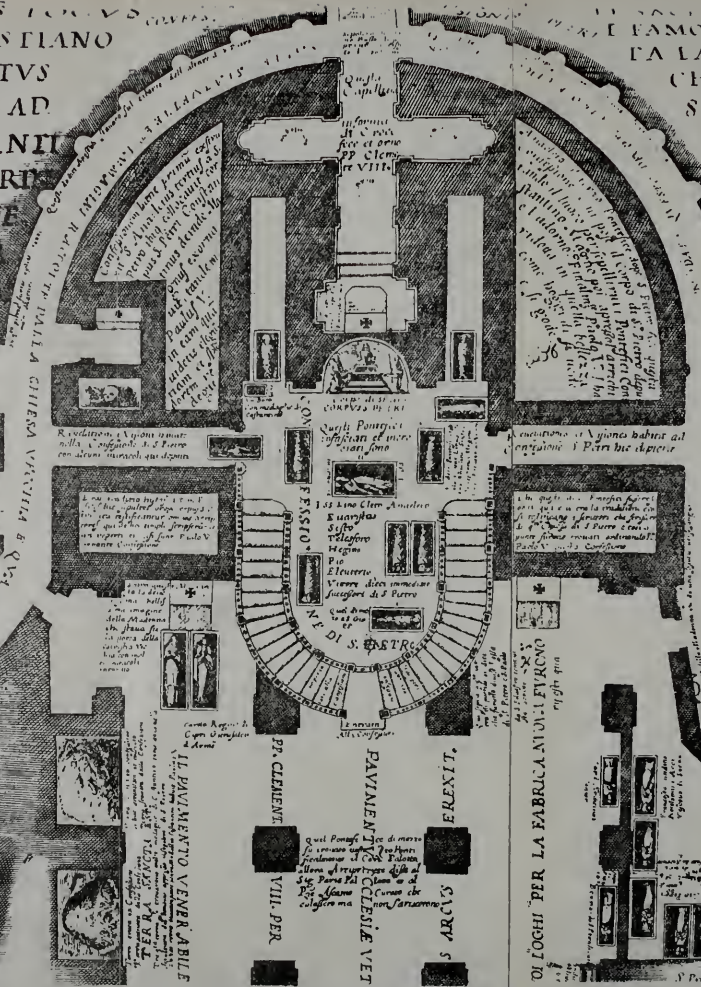


BRACHIV VETERIS ECCLESIAE  
 SIVE QVE REFEREBAT FOR-  
 MAM CRVCIS

Dal Brevario Romano  
 Nella Dedicatione della Basilica di S. Pietro

Tra i luochi sacri che ne tempi antichi erano in gran venerazione appresso i Cristiani furono famosissimi e frequentatissimi quelli ne quali situano i sepolcri e sepelliti i Corpi de Santi, e v'era qualche reliquia sp...

...o augstigio de Marcelli e v'era queste principalmentefu segnalata quella parte del monte Vaticano che chiamano la Confessione di S. Pietro doue come a ... e come a fondamento della fabbrica si v'arrenda un'immagine di Iacopo sacre del spolero del Prenci...



...o Brevario Romano  
 ...o loca sacra quodlibet...  
 ...o v'arrenda un'immagine...  
 ...o in publico celebrata...  
 ...o e si veneratissima fuerunt...  
 ...o in publico celebrata...  
 ...o e si veneratissima fuerunt...  
 ...o in publico celebrata...  
 ...o e si veneratissima fuerunt...

PART OF MAP OF CRYPTS BY BENEDETTO DRILL 1618.  
 (From a unique copy in the British Museum, the writing being all in the Author's own hand, and signed by him.)



crypts, from which we have just quoted, but it was hardly published when it went out of date on account of the alterations made by Urban VIII., who constructed the four staircases, one in each of the great pilasters which hold up the dome, by which at present the crypts are reached. All the reproductions therefore of this plan of Drei's are taken from an altered edition, but the earlier and original edition is much the more interesting, since it preserved for us a record of many facts, of which we should otherwise know nothing, connected with the story of the alterations made in these earlier years of the seventeenth century. This plan is now exceedingly rare, but there are several copies in the British Museum Library, two of which are of exceptional interest. Of these, one (Maps 23810 [2]) shows the present arrangement drawn in ink upon a copy of the original edition, and so by comparison enables us to see exactly how far the alterations extended. The other, which has hitherto escaped attention, being bound up in a large volume with many other engravings, is of altogether surpassing importance. It is a very early copy of the original edition, before any of the writing had been engraved, a proof before letters as we may say, and is covered in every part with MS. notes, in the handwriting of, and signed by, Benedetto Drei himself. A portion of it, reproduced in facsimile, will be found opposite p. 304. It is full of forgotten, or half-forgotten, details about the history of the basilica. We can learn from it, for instance, how the tomb of Paul III. once stood where now is the statue of St. Andrew in the great pilaster, and that opposite to it on the other side was the *Colonna Santa*. We find that the picture of the Madonna Della Bocciaata, here spoken of as "the Madonna who once shed blood," was then in the passage which led down to the crypts, and the altar at which it is now to be found was then known as the altar of St. Paul. We see exactly how the old entrances to the crypts were con-

trived, and can even count the number of the steps. And we have preserved to us the places of many tombs now forgotten, and the names of those who were buried in them. This plan unfortunately is, as we have already said, not drawn strictly to scale, and to this extent the value of the evidence concerning the tomb which we can obtain from it is lessened. We note, however, that the excavation at this period rendered it certain that the external wall of the old *memoria* or upper chamber, built by St. Anacletus, still exists on the north and south sides, and that it is precisely in the position in which we have been led to place it by the measurements given in the *Liber Pontificalis* and already quoted and discussed. This is a very important point indeed, for it is only from this plan that we can derive any trustworthy information on the matter. The exact position of the outward side of the wall seems to be marked in the existing church by the inner edge of the niches on either side which contain respectively the statues of St. Peter and St. Paul. The front wall of the old *memoria* can also be traced by the position of the two tombs nearest to the shrine. These two tombs probably belong to two of the first Popes who were buried round St. Peter, and they no doubt abut against the ancient wall of the *memoria*, no part of which now exists above ground, and mark its position, which again is just where we should have expected to find it. The reason why there are only two such tombs on this side is probably that room had to be left between them for entrance. It is difficult to say whether any of the other tombs are those of the early Popes. Possibly the one on the right of these two may be one, and it may abut on to the northern wall in like manner; but, if so, it would seem to be drawn a little out of its place. The two in between the two walls can hardly be in the original position, for the outer wall on each side is modern, that space having been occupied in the old basilica by the steps which led

up to the Tribune.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps they had to be removed from some spot close by, and were only then placed in this position. The other tombs which contained bodies, swathed in mummy-like fashion, are probably not those of the Popes, in spite of what Severano says. Our reason for saying this is, that, as we shall see in the next chapter, similar tombs were discovered all round the central shrine, all carefully arranged to radiate from it; so that they surrounded St. Peter, "like bishops assisting at a council". These therefore were most probably those of the Popes, and the others must be supposed to be martyrs of the first centuries, or others who were adjudged worthy to be laid so close to St. Peter. In any case they must be very early in date, for, as we have said, there is reason to believe that the Christian burial-ground here was exceedingly small, and that it was quite filled by the beginning of the third century at latest.

It is very interesting to note that Drei has put down the Pope who alone is habited in pontifical vestments as St. John I. No name is assigned to this body by any other authority, and it is of course now not possible to tell what were the indications which led Drei to form this opinion. However, in itself it is not altogether unlikely. Pope St. John I. died in prison at Ravenna, whither he had been carried by Theodoric, who wished to put him to death, but dared not do it for fear of Justin the emperor. However, since the Pope died in prison, and in consequence of ill-treatment, he was reckoned as a martyr. His body is known to have been brought to Rome for the purpose of being buried in St. Peter's, and an anonymous chronicler has recorded for us how its progress was marked by a miracle, and how in consequence the people strove to obtain portions of the

<sup>1</sup> From the narrative printed below on p. 324, we learn that these walls are for the purpose of supporting the modern altar, and date from the time of Clement VIII.

robes to keep as relics.<sup>1</sup> It would seem likely enough, therefore, that he was on this account, as one who had shed his blood for Christ, admitted to this close proximity to the holy tomb, while other Popes contented themselves with the vestibule of the church, and dared not even pass its threshold. If it is not St. John I., it is extremely difficult to suggest any other Pope who is likely to have obtained such an honour. The one argument against it would seem to be that the practice of burying in vestments is not generally thought to go back to so early a date as this (A.D. 530). On the other hand, we have no exact record as to the nature and apparent date of the vestments, and Drei may have had some really strong reasons for what he says. In that case, however, it is strange that he contented himself with putting "body of a Pope," without any name, in the editions of the plan which were actually published.

There is another interesting detail, noted in connection with the tomb of the little baby. The fact that the body of a baby should have been found thus in the holy of holies, has always given rise to much conjecture. Who could the little child have been, and how did he obtain so coveted a privilege? Some have thought that we have here an unconscious martyr, one who, like the Holy Innocents, gave his life for his Master before he was old enough to know what he was doing, but this theory is negatived by Drei's note. There was found in the coffin a medal of Constantine. The presence of the medal of course fixes the date of the burial, but it only increases the difficulty. If martyrdom were not the passport that brought the infant thus to the threshold of the apostle, what else can be supposed to have done it, in an age when no one, not even a Pope or an emperor, was laid within the church at all. The only conjecture

<sup>1</sup> *Anonym. Vales.*, cap. 92.

which suggests itself as even plausible, is that we have here the body of an infant prince, possibly a child of the Emperor Constantine himself, who died immediately after the reception of baptism, and whose unstained purity therefore admitted him to a privilege from which older and sin-stained mortals, of whatever worldly greatness, were held to be perforce excluded.

It is very unfortunate that the plan has nothing to tell us about the shape of the recess of the confession. Drei has simply drawn a semi-circular space, bearing no relation to the actual form of the recess, and has put on it a little picture representing a well in the centre with figures of our Lord at the back, and of St. Peter and St. Paul on either side. That is to say, he has drawn precisely what was there, but in such a way that we can learn nothing definite from his representation. It is to be regretted, however, that so admirable and careful an antiquarian as Professor Lanciani, in reproducing a part of this plan in his well-known book on *Pagan and Christian Rome*, should have, of course unintentionally, falsified its testimony in two particulars. He has, in the first place, omitted to reproduce this little picture in the semi-circular space, with the result that any one might be led to suppose that the recess of the *confession* is accurately shown, and that it was, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, semi-circular in shape. Secondly, he has put in certain lines of his own, showing the *fenestrella*, etc., of the tomb as he imagines them to have been, but as we venture to think they certainly were not. There is a note at the bottom of the page stating that these lines are not part of Drei's plan, but the note is easily overlooked, and the lines are very misleading to any ordinary reader, who would almost certainly regard them as being just as authentic as the rest of the plan.

One other point of interest remains to be discussed, and that is the question which arises in connection with

the tomb of St. Linus. If a reference be again made to Drei's plan, a nameless tomb will be seen in the passage on the left hand leading into the confession. This tomb contains a skeleton, not, like most of the others, a body swathed in bands. When Drei made these MS. notes, it would seem that he did not remember a fact which he duly registered in the later published plan, *viz.*, that it was at this tomb that the inscription with the name of Linus was discovered. The question is, whether the antiquarians of the seventeenth century were right in coming, as they did, to the conclusion that this inscription showed that we have here the actual tomb of St. Linus, the immediate successor of St. Peter on the pontifical throne. The position of the tomb is satisfactory, for while it is recorded that Linus was buried in the Vatican close to the body of St. Peter,<sup>1</sup> we must also remember that he died and was buried before St. Anacletus built the *memoria* and the tombs which surrounded it, and therefore that his tomb would probably not be one of those in immediate proximity to the shrine, while at the same time the small extent of the original Vatican Cemetery precludes the possibility of its being at any considerable distance. If the actual inscription had been preserved, the form of the letters would help us to fix its date, but since the original is still probably hidden under the pavement, and no rubbing or exact copy is available, we can only fall back on the wording for our arguments. Here, however, we are met by a conflict of evidence. Severano tells us that the inscription was *S. Linus*, and if he is correct this would prove that it was not earlier than the fifth century, the accepted form in the first centuries being simply to put the name without any prefix, and in the dative case; and then to put titles of honour, such as *Episcopo Martyri*, after the name. How-

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 121.

ever, we cannot put any confidence in Severano's testimony on this point, for as De Rossi has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> he is not consistent with himself, seeing that in an autograph MS. of his work preserved at the Roman Oratory he has written, "A slab of marble was found near these tombs with the inscription '*Lin. P.P.*'".<sup>2</sup> It is evident therefore that Severano, who had not seen it, was relying on memory for what he had been told, and that we cannot be certain that he has preserved the exact wording. Turning to Torrigio, we find much the same state of affairs: In his published work he tells us that it was a coffin (*pilo*), and that it bore the name *Linus*, with no mention of any other words or of any prefix or affix. De Rossi, however, again quotes from an unpublished work of the same author which is in the Vatican Library, and in which the following occurs in connection with St. Linus: "He was buried near the body of St. Peter, and in 1615, when excavations were being made there for the construction of the confession as it now is, there was found a slab of marble which served to cover a sarcophagus, and on which was read *linus* with other words which could not be deciphered on account of the ravages of time. Round about were many other coffins, some also of marble and some of brick, with slabs of terra-cotta, within which were thought to be the bodies of the Popes mentioned in the Breviary, which says for instance of S. Linus . . . Some of his relics were discovered at Ostia in 1430, in the search that was made for the body of S. Monica." Now, as we have said already, the testimony of Torrigio is worth more than that of Severano, because it is that of an eye-witness, and from what he says it seems clear that the only letters which could be read were LINUS, but that there had been other letters which time had erased. He does not say whether these other letters pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Inscr. Chr.*, ii., 236.

<sup>2</sup> *Cod. Vallic. G.*, 19.

ceded or followed the name. If the former, it is possible that we have here only the concluding letters of the actual name, as (Marcel)linus or (Aqui)linus. However it seems that Torrigio himself was clear that it was the whole name, and not part only, that had been found, and this looks as if the other letters, whether they preceded or followed, seemed to form separate words.

It is noteworthy also that Linus is the only one of these earliest Popes of whom relics exist now, and did exist as early as the ninth century. Rhabanus Maurus,<sup>1</sup> writing in 822, records the fact that relics of St. Linus and of St. Xystus were sent at the same time into Germany. Now the altar of St. Xystus II. was erected just about that time by Paschal I. in St. Peter's, and it stood almost immediately above this spot where the slab bearing the name of Linus was found in 1615. The coincidence is striking, and it suggests that in making the altar the tomb of St. Linus was discovered and opened, and that some relics were then taken out. At that time the words on the slab would no doubt still be legible, and they seem to have been taken in the ninth century, just as in the seventeenth, as marking the tomb of the saint. The fact that the tomb had then been already opened for the purpose of removing the relics, would account for there being, as Drei has noticed, only bones within it. The original bandages, which no doubt were once round his body as well as the others, had probably fallen into dust when exposed to the air, just as we read happened to the others when they were opened in their turn. On the whole, therefore, while some doubt must necessarily remain until the slab is once more uncovered and examined, we seem to be justified in believing that we have here the actual tomb of the Linus who was the friend of St. Paul, and the immediate successor of St. Peter.

<sup>1</sup> Duemmler, *Poet. Lat. med. ævi.*, ii., p. 216; cf. also Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, 6th September, p. 543.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE DISCOVERIES IN 1626.

THE high altar, even after the confession had been made by Paul V., remained without any decoration of sufficient importance to give it its proper value in the general scheme of the basilica. It was surmounted by a canopy supported by poles held by four colossal angels carved in wood, a decoration beautiful enough in itself, but altogether on too small a scale for the position which it occupied, and which therefore seemed rather to dwarf the altar than to give it dignity.<sup>1</sup> When Urban VIII. (Barberini) came to the throne he determined to replace it by the great bronze baldachino which is there now, and which he caused to be designed and executed for the purpose by the well-known architect Bernini, who was at that time the first artist in Rome. The metal for this work was obtained from the ancient roof of the portico of the Pantheon, which had survived till then. The removal of this bronze was regarded by the conservative party in Rome as an act of vandalism, and gave rise to the well-known Pasquinade :—

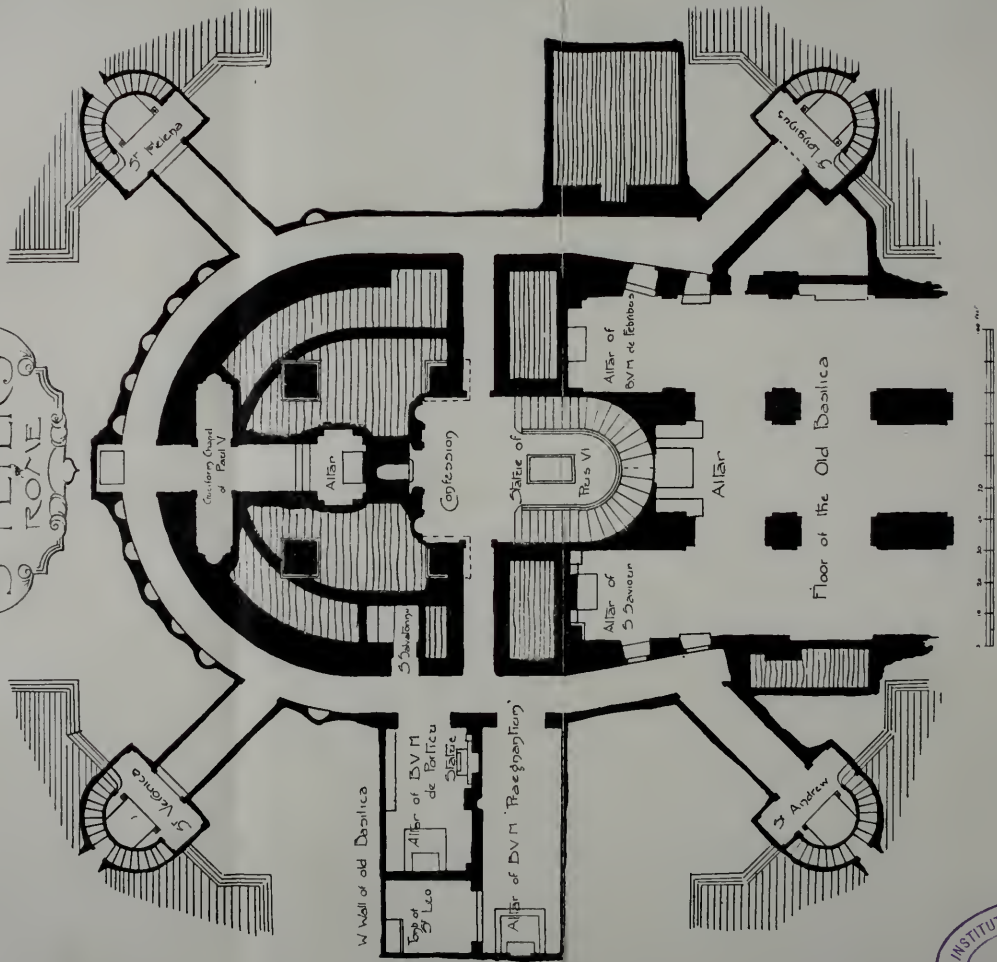
*Quod barbari non fecerunt, fecit Barberini.*

As, however, the metal at the Pantheon was out of sight, and the structure does not seem to have been much injured by its loss, the vandalism of the act was not so very great after all.

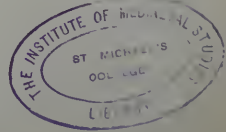
<sup>1</sup> See the design in Bonanni, *Hist. Vat. Templi*, p. 155.

Whatever judgment may be pronounced upon the details of this great work of Bernini's, and it must be confessed that it is very open to hostile criticisms, at least we cannot withhold the admiration that is due to the successful carrying out of so ambitious a scheme. The vastness of St. Peter's dwarfs everything that is in it, and probably scarcely one in a thousand of the visitors to the basilica has any conception of the size of the great baldachino, which is one of the most stupendous works ever carried out in metal. The Palazzo Farnese is the most imposing of all the palaces of Rome, and Rome stands unequalled for the grandeur of her palaces; yet the cross on the top of the baldachino stands higher above the pavement than all the height of that palazzo; and if a second such structure could be erected on the top of the first, so as to reach to double its height, the total attained would be greater than that of the western fall at Niagara. And yet the tourist passes it by with little more than a casual glance, and is quite unaware that there is anything extraordinarily remarkable about it; so effectually is the eye deceived by the vast spaces on every side in the great church. Such a structure, with the tremendous weight of metal involved, could not be supported without great foundations, and it was certain that the excavations of these foundations in a spot immediately contiguous to the tomb of the apostle, could not fail to be productive of discoveries of the highest archæological and religious interest. Most fortunately we have in this instance, for almost the only time in all the long history of the tomb, a full and detailed account of all that happened and of all the wonderful things that were found. The account was written down at the time by one Ubaldi, a canon of the basilica, and therefore privileged by his position to be present, and to make personal investigations whenever any fresh discovery was made. His narrative lay hidden and forgotten in the Vatican ar-

PLAN OF THE CRYPTO  
AT  
ST PETERS  
ROME



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chives, and was only brought to light once again a few years ago by Don Gregovio Palmieri, who was one of the custodians of those archives. It has since been transcribed and published in full by Professor Mariano Armellini in his book *Le chiese di Roma*, and may there be read in the original Italian by any who are interested. It is of such interest and importance that, since it has never before been translated into English, and is therefore inaccessible to many who do not happen to be acquainted with Italian, we shall give the pertinent parts in full, omitting nothing but some rather verbose historical disquisitions which do not shed any particular light on our present subject. Here and there a word is illegible in the MS.

AN ACCOUNT OF WHAT WAS FOUND IN THE EXCAVATION OF  
THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FOUR BRONZE COLUMNS  
ERECTED BY URBAN VIII. AT THE ALTAR OF THE  
BASILICA OF ST. PETER.

By Signor R. Ubaldi, canon of the said basilica.

“ All that takes place near the body of St. Peter is worthy of perpetual remembrance. Pope Urban VIII., at the commencement of his pontificate, was desirous of following the example of his predecessors, and making some worthy addition to this glorious tomb and altar. He saw, however, that none of the designs which had been sent in up to that time had been well proportioned to the breadth of the dome and the size of the church, but that all on being tried had proved either to be so insignificant as to be utterly lost, or else unduly to interfere with the view of the church. He therefore charged Cav. Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini of Florence, who had much talent in architecture, to make a new design, which should be dignified in itself, and yet should allow all the charm and grandeur of the church to be freely seen.

The proposal was to erect round the altar four great columns of bronze of the finest workmanship, and to place above these four angels holding up the baldachino. This would be a work which would require much time and great expenditure, but the Pope was desirous of doing further honour to this great edifice, and therefore approved the plan and commanded the work to be begun. Three whole years were spent in the careful preparation of the designs and in casting the columns, and then at last matters were so far advanced that it seemed possible to begin the actual erection of the work. In consideration therefore of the fact that, on account of the great weight of the columns, it would be necessary to place the pedestals upon a solid and firm foundation, orders were given to make experiments, with a view of seeing what degree of security was provided by the foundations of the high altar, and by the arches round it which held up the pavement. But the most skilled architects were amazed, and almost inclined to attribute it to miracle, when they saw that the foundations were placed scarcely half a palm above sepulchres, and were without any firm basis to rest on. Nor could they understand how the altar with the baldachino over it was supported, and how it was that there was never any sign of danger when great crowds of people were collected together on the occurrence of sacred functions. However, God gave at the same time great cause for joy to these skilled architects, when they saw that holy place actually built 'on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,' and recognised that those glorious saints were with their bodies performing the office of 'stones well compacted,' just as they themselves were living stones of the spiritual edifice of the Church. Still there was so much fear of the altar falling, that they took the precaution of propping it up with beams and scaffolding, and of taking away the wooden columns which were round it, and also the whole of the baldachino. The

altar remained thus stripped and uncovered for some months, and many thought that it then appeared more dignified and beautiful than it ever had done with the baldachino of the previous design.

“The necessity of excavating the foundations so close to the tomb of St. Peter gave occasion to various fears and anxieties, on account of the body of St. Peter being so bound up with the faith of Rome, and with the firmness, the glory and the splendour of her empire. Hence in such a place the smallest disorder was dreaded as a terrible danger, and the lightest fault as a grave sacrilege. All prudent and pious suggestions were gladly received by the Pope, and he gave particular charge to one Niccolo Alamanni, who was a Greek, and custodian of the Vatican Library, a person well versed in antiquity, a great linguist, and a very learned man, to put on paper, and carefully to weigh the doubts and the dangers which existed and had to be considered.”

*“Answers to the reasons urged against excavations being made near the altar of St. Peter :—*

“Among many reasons which could be adduced, Alamanni chose three only to lay before the Pope, as being of the greatest moment :—

“The first was the danger lest doubt should arise as to the existence of the body of St. Peter in Rome, if no vestige of a tomb should be discovered close to the altar : just as happened in the time of Sixtus V., when in Santa Maria Maggiore the body of St. Jerome was not found to be in the place where it was wont to be honoured.

“The second was the danger that the actual body of St. Peter might be accidentally removed, for, since many other Popes had been buried close round him, it might be found impossible to distinguish their sepulchres and tombs from one another.

“The third was the danger that, since the tomb of St.

Peter was now so ancient, it might happen that it should be in some way disturbed or broken into, so that unexpected consequences might arise.

“No little wonder was caused by the fact that Alamanni omitted to quote the letter of St. Gregory (*Ep.* 30, *ad Augustam*), which was the foundation and reason of all the doubt; a letter so much esteemed and revered that it is enrolled on the index of the relics of Rome, and kept among the most important archives of that church; nor can we acquit him altogether of blame, for either he omitted to see it, or else having seen it he neglected it. He contented himself with giving a learned answer to the objections advanced. To the first, he answered that the existence of the body of St. Peter in Rome ought not to be doubted, since the honour paid to it there is supported by the writings of so many fathers, whose testimonies are so numerous and so authoritative that they would convince even a heretic that Rome was the heir of the teaching, of the martyrdom, and of the body of St. Peter. He further said that it was well known that in the times of the barbarian invasions his sepulchre had been particularly regarded and revered, and that the site of that sepulchre was for ever marked off and distinguished from the others by the following indications, *viz.*: (1) the mosaic image of the Saviour made by Leo III. within a little niche under the altar. (2) The hole in the middle of the niche, called by Anastasius the librarian *Billicum confessionis*, things taken from which were said to come from the body of St. Peter, and to which the faithful used to betake themselves to ask any favours which they desired through the intercession of St. Peter. (3) The bronze grating restored by Innocent III.

“All these indications were still visible. Moreover, not only the site where the body lies, but also the actual sepulchre itself, had its own distinguishing marks; being, as Anastasius records, shut in and rendered immovable; that

is, as Alamanni interpreted it, surrounded by bronze, five feet thick on every side ; and with the further indication of the cross of gold, bearing the names of Constantine and of Helena his mother. Thus it was certain not only that the tomb could not possibly be confused with the others in whatever way it might be uncovered, but also that it could not have been much damaged by time, or be injured by any accident such as might be feared either from a workman's blow, or from some other casual injury such as was the third danger suggested. This written opinion was published with all the credit and reputation of Alamanni, and by its means, supported as it was by other things which he said by word of mouth, every scruple was taken away from the cardinals who had charge of the fabric, and the intention of the Pope was greatly confirmed."

*How they began to dig, and of the fears which were caused by the death of Alamanni.*

"So soon as a definite order to commence the excavations had arrived, Bernini, leaving the pavement above untouched, measured carefully in the crypt the places where the bases of the pilasters would come, and began on the 29th June, 1626, to excavate under the walls which were in the way. At a distance of somewhat less than ten feet from the *billicum* of the confession, they found, when they came to the lower pavement, that all that part was full of sepulchres and tombs. He therefore stopped the workmen, and gave notice to the authorities : and there accordingly came together to consider the matter, and to make provision concerning it, the Bishop of Sulmona, who was vicar of the basilica : Mgr. Angelo Georio, cupbearer to the Pope, canon and altarist of the church ; and Mgr. Mario Bovio, who also was a canon and principal sacristan. When the first tombs were opened and the bodies raised, Alamanni was called to

be present, and he gave various opinions concerning the site, and the nature of the tombs, and the appearance of the bodies, which led to an idea being formed, perhaps without sufficient consideration, that these first bodies were not those of saints, or even of ecclesiastics. This happened on the 10th of July. The following day Alamanni was taken very ill, and his malady, which from the first was judged to be mortal, so increased, that on the 14th he died. There were not wanting natural reasons by which his death could be accounted for, without attributing it to miracle, since he had that summer, contrary to his usual manner of living, been working in some cemeteries at unsuitable hours and seasons, it being his duty to send some bodies of saints into Spain. It was, however, commonly believed that this was just one of the cases of which St. Gregory had given a warning, and people began to blame him for having incautiously, and on account of mere empty doubting, rendered nugatory a work which had been undertaken through a truly pious and religious zeal for that holy place. And this belief gathered strength when it became known that first one Don Francesco Schiaderio, a private chaplain of the Pope, Alamanni's dearest and most intimate friend, who shared all his thoughts, had died after a short illness; as also had Bartholomew his amanuensis, of an extraordinary malady; and that one of his servants had been condemned to death for a murder he had committed. These misfortunes caused a great change in the minds of many, for they thought that these new examples were a confirmation of what happened in St. Gregory's time. But what more than anything else disturbed men's thoughts was that the Pope himself happened at the time to be somewhat indisposed, and it came to pass that every passion that was found in Rome was represented in the people's words and thoughts. Some were disturbed through feelings of religious reverence, others through human respect, and

they no longer applauded the work as they had done at first. Even the priests of the basilica, who at the beginning esteemed it a special privilege to be allowed to assist in this undertaking, began to draw back, and men came to think that an irreverence and almost a sacrilege which a little before they had looked upon as a devout and reverent homage. People spoke of nothing else but of the epistle of St. Gregory, which was for the time as much in the hands and on the tongues of the common people as of the learned: but the Pope, since he knew his intention to be most upright, and that the action itself had no other object than the honour and glory of God, judged with great courage and prudence that these popular sentiments afforded no reason for withdrawing from the work; at any rate until it had been seen, by learned and pious persons, whether the cases referred to in the epistle of St. Gregory were really analogous in themselves and in their circumstances; for he feared lest through a false interpretation, what had been recorded by that glorious Pope for the greater glory and honour of the holy apostles should be taken as a reason for leaving their sepulchres unadorned, and their altars unprotected."

*Orders of the Pope concerning the precautions to be used on this occasion.*

"It being necessary to disturb such holy ground, and to expose treasures that had been hidden away, the Pope did not fail to take sufficient precautions for the preservation of the reverence due to the spot, and for the security of the relics. He commanded that, while the labourers were at work, there should always be present some of the priests and ministers of the church, whose duty it should be to open the sepulchres, and to take out and replace the bodies, the bones, the dust and the ashes of the saints. He prohibited, under pain of excommunica-

tion, every one, of whatever grade and condition, from going down at this time into the confession, except only those who were deputed for the purpose, or were needed to perform the actual labour. He further forbade under the same penalty any one to carry away bones, medals, wrappings, ashes, or even the dust or earth of the place. Further, the architect and foremen were warned not to touch or excavate any farther than was absolutely necessary, and orders were given that all bodies and bones of the saints which might be found should be replaced in chests of cypress, and kept locked up and under seal within the confession, so that they might afterwards be re-interred. The earth which was found near the ashes and bones of martyrs, or mixed up with fragments of bones, was to be kept within the little chapel of the Trinity under the mortuary, and all the rest of the earth was to be kept in the crypts, and to be replaced in other fitting receptacles within the confession. One Giovanni Batt. Nardone, a Roman cleric, and notary to the chapter, who was also attached to the archives of St. Peter's, was commanded to be constantly present, and to make inquiries as to all that might be there found or done. Orders were also given to Gio. Batt. Calandra, superintendent of the fabric, who was a person well-skilled in drawing and painting, to make sketches of any notable object which might be found. In short, no thought or care was neglected to avoid any kind of inconvenience or disorder. The whole work was committed and entrusted by the Pope to Angelo Geori, his cup-bearer, who was also canon and altarist, and he with vigilance, zeal and great care superintended and governed all."

*The digging of the first foundation.*

"They began to excavate the first foundation under the confession at the back of the epistle end of the high

altar, some . . . feet away from the hole within the niche of the Saviour. Only two or three inches under the pavement they began to find coffins and sarcophagi, as has been said ; some laid side by side, some above one another : not however according to any certain order or rule, but casually, and apparently at different times. Those nearest to the altar were placed laterally against an ancient wall, which wall they thought turned towards the altar, and from this they judged that these must be the bodies buried nearest to the sepulchre of St. Peter. There were coffins of marble made of simple slabs of different sizes, without any inscription or other mark, either because these early Christians avoided imitating the heathen, who were accustomed to inscribe their names on their tombs, or for greater safety, that the coffins might not be taken up for any reason whether of injury or honour. This seems to have been the practice for very many years, since not only the coffins in this excavation, but also those discovered at other times in this basilica, have generally been found thus, as is recorded in our archives. Over many of them were placed tiles of terra-cotta in a pyramidal form for safety's sake. Two of the principal coffins were uncovered, and each of them was seen to contain two bodies. The shapes and forms could be distinguished, and also that their heads were towards the altar. They were clothed with long robes down to the heels, dark and almost black with age, and were swathed with bandages like infants ; the bandages passing also over the head. There was scarcely any noticeable odour. These bodies were placed side by side with the most exact care. Both these and all the others in the coffins, as soon as they were touched and moved, were resolved into dust, and except some portions of clothing, nothing resisted the touch. It was not possible to form any particular or individual idea of either the names or size of these bodies, but the tradition is very

clear and certain that close to the body of St. Peter there were buried those first patriarchs and fathers of our Church, whose blood was the seed of this holy and great republic. And although on the bodies in these coffins there was no outward sign or mark of martyrdom, as there was with the bones which were found lower down, it must be remembered that it was difficult to make observations, since their heads were tied and bound up with the rest of the body, and further that it is historically certain that not all the holy Popes and the martyrs died by the sword. It is also well known that the privilege of being buried, not only close to the sepulchre, but even anywhere within the basilica of St. Peter, was most strictly denied to all who were not martyrs, and, if the concession were ever made to any, it was only by express licence founded on some great prerogative of merit. Some of these licences may still be read engraved in marble, belonging to the times of Hormisdas and John III., and are preserved beneath the confession, and recorded in our archives. St. John Chrysostom said, that 'emperors were proud to stand in the hall, and keep guard at the fisherman's door,' and in truth there were seen in the old *atrium* the tombs of the emperors Otho II., Valentinian, and Honorius, while the Popes who came after Sylvester were buried in the portico. We can, therefore, only conjecture that those who were found so close to the body of St. Peter must have been the first martyr Popes, or their immediate successors. And this was the conclusion that Clement VIII. came to, when, on the erection of two pilasters for the greater security of the new altar, an ancient sepulchre was discovered, which contained a body in good preservation and some other objects. Tiberio Alfarano records that Clement, out of reverence for the place, and because of his firm belief that this was one of the pontiffs who first founded the Roman Church, desired

that it should remain in the same place without being touched.

“At this same level, close to the threshold of the door, was found a stone coffin cut through the middle, which was recognised as being that which had been cut through in the time of Paul V. in order that it might not project over the lower pavement of the confession. It contained some bones, heaped together and mixed with earth which had been carelessly thrown in, and was covered by several pieces of marble, which had been put there without much care at the time when it was discovered, its own ancient slab having been removed elsewhere. There were on these pieces of marble some letters which showed that they had been used for the burial of Christians in more modern times.

“Next, on the same level, close up to the wall, there were found two other coffins of smaller size, each of which contained a small body, apparently of a child of ten or twelve years old. It was only necessary to remove one of these, and this was found to be bound up like the others, with a dress that appeared to have been white. There were some who were much surprised at finding in this place bodies of such tender years, but without much reason, when we consider that in the Church every age and condition has been found ready to suffer and to die for Christ. Nor perhaps was the opinion expressed by others ill-founded, that some, on account of great merit, may have obtained for a little son or nephew the grace and privilege of being laid near the sepulchre of the martyrs. Thus we read of St. Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, that he ordered the boy Celsus to be laid at the foot of the martyrs. And St. Ambrose thought it well that his brother Satirus should be buried at the feet of SS. Gervasius and Protasius, whither he also allowed his sister Marcellina to be borne—‘For the reason,’ (says Maximus, whose writ-

ings are to be found with those of St. Ambrose [Serm. 77]), 'for which it was provided by our ancestors that we should associate our bodies with the bones of the saints, is that, since hell fears them, punishment may not reach us, and that, since Christ illuminates them, the shadows of our darkness may be dispelled'. But so close to the grave of St. Peter such a privilege can scarcely be presumed, because of the great sanctity in which the place has always been held.

"Close by, under the two great coffins which were first discovered, were found two others, of ancient terracotta, full of ashes and burnt bones, one of which through the carelessness of the workmen was broken. In one of these coffins there was found a tooth, so large and beautiful that it was taken to be shown to the Pope. Other fragments of similar coffins were found deeper down, as the excavations proceeded, and also pieces of glass from broken phials, which showed that all this earth was mixed with the ashes, and tinged with the blood of martyrs. It was therefore collected and preserved with a special reverence. There were also found pieces of charred wood, which one might believe had served for the burning of the martyrs, and had afterwards been collected as jewels, and buried there with their ashes. No sooner did martyrdom commence in the Church, than the Lord God put into the hearts of the Christians this great care and zeal for the honour of the martyrs. Our histories are full of the dangers run, and of the diligence that was used by these first Christians, even by maidens and young girls, that, if it were possible, not a hair of the martyr should perish. The instruments of their martyrdom were sought for, and carefully preserved as signs of their greatness, and trophies of their triumph. Thus we see the stones of Stephen, and the coals of Laurence, shining in the church like so many jewels, and the chains of Peter and Paul esteemed as crowns and diadems. And in this

very basilica, in the time of Paul III., when excavations were being made on the spot where that Pope is now buried, there was found among similar bodies of saints that hooked weapon called in Latin *ungula*, which is now kept with so much honour among the relics; formerly made use of by cruel pride to tear the limbs of the martyrs, but now the instrument of holiness and of the grace of God; formerly abominated and avoided by the vilest through its connection with the infamous executioner, but to-day revered and kissed by sovereign princes and holy priests on account of its sacred connection with the martyrs.

“ There were also found drain-pipes of terra-cotta, full of similar ashes and blood-stained dust.

“ *The first coin.* In the two coffins already mentioned there was found a coin, on which, when it was cleaned and shown to persons who were skilled in these matters, there could be read round the head, although with difficulty, these letters: M. COMM. ANT. P. FEL. AUG., that is, *Marcus Commodus Antonius Pius Felix Augustus*. On the reverse was a single standing figure, holding a spear in the left hand and a palm in the right, and here there were only these letters IMP. P. M. TR. P., that is, *Imperator, Pontifex Maximus, Tribunitiæ Potestatis*. This seemed to confirm the opinion which had been already formed, that on going deeper there would be found relics of the martyrs of the first persecutions. Commodus reigned in the year 182, and was very hostile to the Christians, who, not being able to leave the names of the martyrs to posterity, devised this plan of putting coins of the emperor among their ashes, to bear witness as to the time of their martyrdom.

“ Lower down there was discovered a very fine slab of the marble known as *porta santa*, which covered a large coffin. On opening this there were seen two bodies swathed in bandages in the same manner. One was of

ordinary size, and the other a head and shoulders shorter. This latter, however, appeared to be only a child, but nothing could be ascertained with certainty as to the shape of the bones, for everything on being touched fell to dust. On going on with the excavation, there was next found the mouth of a small well or receptacle, in which were a great number of bones, mixed with ashes and earth, then again another coffin like the other two. Near this was found another square place, on the sides of which more bodies were found, while one side was the continuation of a very ancient wall, already mentioned. This wall contained a niche which had been used as a sepulchre, and in it were found at the top five entire heads, fixed with plaster and carefully arranged, all being well preserved. Lower down were the ribs all together, and the other parts in their order, mingled with much earth and ashes, not laid casually, but with accuracy and great care. All this holy company were shut in and well secured with lime and mortar. Hence we understood how those who were called *laborantes*, from their office of wrapping up and covering the dead bodies, may have come to be also called *fossarii*, through their office of placing these same bodies in these walls and trenches,<sup>1</sup> for Epiphanius makes mention of this name also, in a passage that Baronius<sup>2</sup> quotes. Similar modes of burial may be seen even to-day in the catacombs outside of Rome. Among the ashes in this niche was found another coin.

“*The second coin.* Round the head there was read these letters: IMP. MA. VAL. MAXIMIANUS AUGUSTUS, that is, *Imperator Cæsar Marcus Valerius Maximianus Augustus*. On the reverse was a nude figure of Jupiter, standing, and holding the thunderbolt in his right hand and a spear in his left, and round this JOVI CONSERVAT.

<sup>1</sup> *Fosse*

<sup>2</sup> Baronius, *Annal.*, 44.

and underneath IXXIT. It was under Maximian, who was emperor with Diocletian, that, in the year 285, there took place cruel massacres of Christians. On the other side of this square, there were found trenches, as so often seen, hollowed out with the greatest care in the solid earth, red with fresh blood so that one might have stained the hand. This was observed with much wonder, amongst others by Signor Giovanni Battista Gonfalonieri, who is now Archivist of Castello, and a person of piety and singular learning. Here again were other bones heaped together, all enclosed like the others with plaster. In the middle of the square were two heads with part of a body.

“ *The third coin.* In the mouth of one of these heads was found a coin, which was discovered by means of the green discoloration which it had caused round the teeth. This coin was broken and worn, but after the most diligent examination possible, was thought to be of Cornelia Salonina, daughter of the King of the Marcomanni, and wife of the Emperor Galienus. Round the head nothing could be deciphered. On the reverse a standing figure, holding a cup in the right hand and a spear in the left, and at the sides s.c. that is *Senatus Consulto*. Galienus began to reign with Valerian his father in the year 254, and was a fierce persecutor of the Christians.

“ Solid ground having here been reached, the digging of the first foundation ceased. The ground which was excavated in this spot seemed to be rather moist, and of darker colour than the rest, and, on examination, traces of small drains and pipes showed that this part had been very subject to injury from water. Hence some conjectured that an ancient wall,<sup>1</sup> discovered underneath near the small door (*porticella*) of the confession on this side, may have been the structure made by Damasus, to preserve the sepulchre of St. Peter and the other saints

<sup>1</sup> This wall was perhaps that of the staircase leading down to the vault.

from the waters. However, the verses which can still be read in their old place on the stone under the confession, and which are also registered in our archives, are sufficient of themselves to disprove this hypothesis. They run as follows:—

“ CINGEBANT LATICES MONTEM TENEROQUE MEATU  
 CORPORA MULTORUM CINERES ATQUE OSSA RIGABANT  
 NON TULIT HOC DAMASUS COMMUNI LEGE SEPULTOS  
 POST REQUIEM TRISTES ITERUM PERSOLVERE POENAS  
 PROTINUS AGGRESSUS MAGNUM SUPERARE LABOREM  
 AGGERIS IMMENSI DEJECIT CULMINA MONTIS  
 INTIMA SOLLICITE SCRUTATUS VISCERA TERRAE  
 SICCAVIT TOTUM QUIDQUID MADEFECERAT HUMOR  
 INVENIT FONTEM PRAEBET QUI DONA SALUTIS  
 HAEC CURAVIT MERCURIUS LEVITA FIDELIS

“ These lines show that the works carried out by Damasus were outside of, not within, the basilica, and that they were of much greater expense and importance than the building of a single wall. Nevertheless it may well be that this wall was also built for the purpose of remedying the dampness, either at this or at some other time, but so far as was apparent, and as experts could judge, it could not have been of any service to the sepulchre of St. Peter, but only to the graves placed at a yet lower level.

“ It now became necessary to consider how the holy bones and bodies which had been taken up might best be laid in some fitting and honourable place. They had been placed in several cases of cypress wood, and had been carried before the little altar of St. Peter in the confession, and here, all through these days, they had been kept locked up and under seal. It was felt that they ought not to be deprived of the privilege of being near to the body of St. Peter, but that, as in the past so also in the future, this prerogative and honour should serve them

in place of the glorious inscription which was their due. So it was resolved, that as they had been found buried together and undistinguished by names, so still one grave should hold them all, since the holy martyrs are all one in charity, as St. Gregory Nazianzen wonderfully says. When, therefore, the foundation had been raised to a level some four or five feet below the lower pavement, a suitable and capacious grave was there constructed, and on the 28th day of July, on which day there happened to fall the Feast of St. Victor, one of the Popes who were buried near the body of St. Peter, their reinterment took place. Several canons were present, with other priests attached to the basilica, and there, with lights, hymns and psalms, ministered and did service to these their glorious patrons. And thus in a certain way was this foundation consecrated, and the pillar which was to rise above it was committed to the guardianship and protection of these saints. There was placed within the tomb cut in a plate of lead this memorial, *Corpora Sanctorum prope sepulchrum sancti Petri inventa cum fundamenta effoderentur aereis columnis ab Urbano VIII. super hac fornice erectis, hic simul collecta et reposita die 28 Julii 1626.*"

*The digging of the second foundation.*

"They began to excavate for the second foundation opposite the first, in front of the confession. Not more than three or four feet down there was discovered at the side a large coffin made of great slabs of marble, but, since this did not interfere much with the site needed for the foundation, it was thought sufficient only to cut it back. When its end had been cut off they were surprised to see within ashes with many bones, all adhering together and half burned. These brought back to mind the famous fire in the time of Nero, three years before St. Peter's martyrdom, when the Christians, being falsely accused of causing the fire, and pronounced guilty of the crime,

afforded in the Circus of the Gardens of Nero, which were situated just here on the Vatican Hill, the first spectacles of martyrdom. Some were put to death in various cruel ways, while others were set on fire, and used as torches in the night, thus inaugurating on the Vatican, by the light that they gave, the living splendour of the true religion, just as the others had provided with their blood the new purple of more worthy and lasting honour. These, so they say, were buried close to the place where they suffered martyrdom, and gave the first occasion for the religious veneration of this holy spot, which from that time was called by the various names of martyrdom, confession, and oratory. Three years afterwards, this place, already made by these martyrdoms into a precious ring, received as its jewel the greatest of all stones.<sup>1</sup> How marvellous, again, was the eternal counsel which ordained that there should precede the cross of Peter, as also that of Christ, the slaughter of so many Innocents. We therefore revered these holy bones, as being those of the first founders of this great basilica and the first fruits of our martyrs, and, having put back the coffin, allowed it to remain in the same place.

“No other coffins were found, throughout the whole of the excavations for this foundation, which it was necessary to touch or to remove. Some few bones, but not many, were collected with the earth.

“*The fourth coin*, found in the second foundation. There was found here a coin of Faustina, daughter of Antoninus Pius and of Faustina, the wife of the Emperor Commodus. Round the head was written, FAVSTINA AVGVSTA. On the reverse was a standing figure, holding a palm in the right hand and a cornucopia in the left, with the legend HILARITAS, etc., and on the sides S.C. This was the last of the coins which were found. Just

<sup>1</sup> *Pietra*, a play on the name of the apostle, Pietro.

as they were the special tokens of times of cruelty and barbarity towards the Christians, so also were they the marks of the chief and most glorious martyrs. And since with the glory of the martyrs there is always conjoined the shame and infamy of their oppressors, probably these were not the only emperors who had experience of the sword of the Divine vengeance. Commodus, after having tried to poison himself, was strangled by Marcissus, at the instigation of Marcia his concubine, Electus his chamberlain, and Letus the prefect of his army. Galienus saw Valerian his father the prisoner of Sapor King of Persia, who for seven years kept him in a cage, and, when he rode, made use of him as a mounting stool, and who finally had him flayed alive. Against Galienus himself, who from the year 254 reigned seven years with his father, and afterwards eight years alone, there rose in rebellion the thirty so-called tyrants, and he was slain near Milan in 269. So also was it with Maximian, who resigned the empire at the same time as Diocletian, and at the last was strangled.

“About twelve palms under there were found some earthenware tiles, of the same make, and placed in the same manner, as the others of which we have already spoken. These covered a whole body of great stature, which was found on being measured to be more than six feet long; the head was towards the altar, the hands laid the one on the other, and all the remainder of the body perfect and in its proper place. There was no sign of clothing, nor any coin or other token, but the bones were very well preserved, and the usual care had been taken in plastering it up. This body was replaced, together with the other bones, in that same coffin in which had been left the half-burned remains already spoken of. This was done with the same care and veneration as had been used for the first, the . . . day of August.

“The depth to which this foundation was dug was

twenty feet, and the earth which was taken out was of a different quality from the first, being much less soft, and of yellow colour, and less disturbed, nor were there found on this side any vestiges of ancient walls, as there had been on the other, that part being closer to the portion of the circus, which was included by Constantine within the building of the old church."

*The digging of the third foundation.*

"They began to cut away the wall under the vaulting, beginning from the first foundation, until they came to the site where this third one was to be placed on the Epistle side. In front of the high altar they discovered part of the wall of the old presbytery, where were the seats of the cardinals, and this, as being a relic of the past, attracted the veneration of all who saw it. This same wall was again found when digging on the opposite side for the fourth foundation, and by observing its curvature and direction, it was seen that it corresponded exactly to the position of the niche under the altar, where is the *fenistrella* of bronze; so that it was not exactly opposite the middle door of the basilica, but to one side, towards the *Cappella Gregoriana*. On examining what solid foundation there might be under this wall, our wonder was increased when we found new graves and coffins almost as soon as the soil was broken by the spade. Here too there was again discovered, not many feet beneath, that same ancient wall, against which, as we have said above, there were placed laterally the tombs and sepulchres of the first excavation. In its upper part it was adorned for some inches with stucco ornament, still well preserved, which showed that the greater part of the fabric had been underground, and that this was the remains of some little temple or theatre of heathen times. There was found also in this excavation, not far beneath the level of the pavement, a coffin a good deal larger than

the others, which had a large ring of iron on one side of the upper slab that covered it. This was raised, but nothing could be recognised except a little dust and ashes, and it seemed to have been opened already at some earlier time. In the centre there was a slab of marble supported by two iron brackets, with another ring, but under it we could not discern the shapes of any whole bodies, but there was a great deal more dust than in the first compartment, all of . . . colour, and with a great deal of moisture. Continuing the excavation about four feet lower, the bottom slab of a tomb was struck and broken. This was not a regular coffin, but simply three slabs joined together in a triangular shape, and within it there were found many bones still in their places, with some portions of a vestment which seemed to be a chasuble, the material of which had apparently been woven with much gold, for there were a great many threads of gold mixed up with the ashes and dust. On the outside of these slabs there were no letters or mark of any kind, except that on the underside of the upper slab there were engraved certain names of consuls. Similar slabs and stones, which had originally served for secular heathen purposes, and had afterwards been converted by the Christians to their own uses, have been found in great numbers at different times, both in these and in other excavations, as is recorded in our archives. Nor need this cause surprise, when we consider how all this locality, bordering on the circus and gardens of Nero, was full of tombs, statues and images, and that Heliogabalus, finding these to interfere with his chariot races, caused many of them to be thrown to the ground. It was among these infamous and degraded memorials of the heathen that the first Christians were obliged to hide away and bury the first jewels of martyrdom. Had they dared to break down statues or to violate sepulchres, not only would they have exposed themselves to grave penalties, (which

indeed was only what they desired, for we read how willingly the Christians, in order to bury the martyrs, became martyrs themselves), but they would have exposed the ashes and bones of the martyrs to new insults and injuries. When, then, the persecution had ceased in the time of Constantine, it would seem that the emperor and Pope Sylvester, seeing that the Vatican had already, on account of the blood of the martyrs and of all the holy bodies which were buried there, been turned from a stinking dung heap of heathendom into a kind of terrestrial paradise, and from a vessel of dishonour to one of glory, must have thought that they would do an injury to the spot if they had still wished to purge it from these ancient marbles and memorials. When therefore the new church was built, without touching or digging up what was old, they left it to be trodden by the feet of sinners, who should thus hold heathendom bound and imprisoned under their feet. Moreover, it is well known in history that Constantine was always unwilling to use violence or force, or to issue an edict, but that he simply allowed ancient memorials and images of this kind to be broken, injured, and exposed to ridicule, in order that heathenism might little by little pass away to an unhonoured grave. We need not therefore be surprised to hear that, on the excavation being continued, there was discovered about twelve feet beneath the surface the statue of a heathen. This statue was recumbent, after the fashion of the ancients at table, one hand supporting the head, the other stretched out towards a kind of vase or bowl. The figure was vested in a senatorial robe, and the feet were bare, according to the custom of those times, when men used to go from the baths to the table. The head was broken at the top, but the rest was entire. It was not considered a work of any great excellence, and therefore it was taken up and placed among the other marbles of the fabric. A little lower down were found some ancient

tiles, which covered a body of great stature, but this it was not necessary to remove, because the excavation was brought to an end, solid ground having been reached. Other coffins were discovered at this depth with the sides carved in relief with fables and profane stories, and these were not touched. The quality of the earth in this part was similar to that in the digging of the first foundation. The bodies and bones which were removed were reburied with the same veneration and honour the 12th September, 1626."

*Fourth Foundation.*

"Opposite the third, on the Gospel side of the altar, they began excavating for the fourth foundation, and, in order to reach the spot where it was to be placed, uncovered the other side of the wall of the old presbytery, as has been already noted. Almost at the level of the pavement there was found a coffin, made of fine and large slabs of marble, and larger than the ordinary size. This coffin was placed, just as were also the others which were found on the other side, within the circle of the presbytery, in such a manner that they were all directed towards the altar like spokes towards the centre of a wheel. Hence it was evident with how much reason this place merited the name of 'the council of martyrs,' a name which was given, as the *Roman Martyrology* notes on the 23rd of June, to those places where many martyrs were laid. These bodies surrounded St. Peter, just as they would have done when living at a synod or council, so that the words of the *Martyrology* seem especially suitable to this sacred resting place.

"This tomb, thus situated, contained two bodies swathed with bandages just as was observed in the case of the others. Their faces could be distinguished and their clothing seemed large and full and reaching to the feet. In one case there could be seen the shape of the

vestments open over the shoulders, and in both the fine texture of the albs, which were worked for a space of two fingers from the bottom with a small arabesque pattern. The under garments were large and full, and of monastic shape, dark and almost black in colour. Everything was almost dust, except only the hair which was long and hanging, of a chestnut colour, but straight, looking as if it had been recently cut. Some few bones were also found preserved in a box apart. Many conjectured these to be two of the first Popes, who were Greeks. No other coffin was removed during this excavation, for there were not many others which caused any impediment. There were, however, discovered under these coffins some hollow places filled with bones heaped together, with some heads fixed with plaster, and of these it was necessary to empty one which had been injured by the workmen. On this side only . . . feet in depth were excavated, for they soon found solid ground for building the foundation. A fitting tomb was constructed close by, and on the 12th September there were placed in it the ashes and bones found here, all together, and also the box, and in it the hair which has been mentioned. This interment took place on the same day as that on which the bodies found in the third foundation were buried. The Pope granted a chest full of the earth from this excavation to the Theatine Fathers, for a new church which they were building in Naples in honour of St. Peter. He also granted some to the Discalced Carmelites, who made urgent application for it as a precious relic, applying to St. Peter the words which Prudentius uses of St. Laurence.

“To write the history of that which is to be erected above these foundations, is a task which must be left to clearer wit and to an abler and more eloquent pen.

“L.D.B.V.M. ac SS. Apostolis.”

There are some few remarks on this interesting narrative which we should like to make, in order to point out more clearly what is the real value of its evidence. By 1626, 120 years after the destruction of the old basilica, the traditions about its shape and concerning the exact arrangements round its altar had become rather vague, and it is, therefore, not unnatural that Ubaldi and the others who were present did not always recognise the walls and other objects which were uncovered in the course of these excavations.

The very ancient wall which they came upon while digging the first and second foundations, and which they thought, (quite rightly, although they could not make sure of the point without excavating farther, which from motives of reverence they were unwilling to do), turned at right angles towards the altar a little farther on, was, no doubt, the same wall which is marked on Drei's plan, and which we have already identified as the outer wall of the ancient *memoria* built by St. Anacletus. Against this wall were placed coffins, containing bodies swathed in the Jewish fashion already described in the last chapter. Similar coffins, placed in the same manner, were found on the other side and so we are led to conclude that St. Anacletus, when he prepared places for the burial of his successors on this spot, arranged them so that they should be all round, and as close as possible to, the central tomb, which was St. Peter's.

It is remarkable that this wall was only found when the first and third foundations were being dug, and not, as we should have expected, also in the case of the two foundations on the other side. This would seem to suggest that St. Peter's sarcophagus does not occupy the exact centre of the vault, as we have been led to conclude from the passage in the *Liber Pontificalis* which records the measurement as five feet in every direction. The "five feet" is not likely to have been an exact, but only

an approximate measurement, since the vault was not built with that object, and the coincidence, had all these measurements come quite uniformly to exactly five feet, would have been a remarkable one. Nothing is more probable than that the sarcophagus should have been placed a few inches nearer to the back wall than to the door, to allow more room for entrance. Then, since the *billicum* was over the centre of the sarcophagus and not over that of the vault, and since the excavations as we know were based upon measurements taken from the *billicum*, it would easily happen, especially since these few inches would be doubled in their practical result, that the wall would be just uncovered on the one side, and be left hidden and undiscovered on the other. It is strange that when, in course of digging the third foundation, this wall was found to be ornamented with stucco, and to be like a little temple, they should have thought it to be a pagan building, and not have realised that they had the old *memoria* before them; and the more so when we remember that they had reason to think that this wall turned towards the altar a little farther on, so that they knew it must contain the tomb within it.

The circular wall which they uncovered in the third and fourth excavations, and which all crowded to see with such interest as being part of the wall of the old presbytery, was really the inner wall of the circular passage which led to the Chapel of the Confession, all memory of which would seem already to have perished, since the new passage had been made outside the apse. The fact which they noticed about this circular wall, namely, that its position did not answer accurately to the axis of the new basilica, which proved that the new church was not built precisely with the same orientation as the old, is perfectly true, though it again seems to have passed out of memory. If any one will look at the plan in Ciampini's *De sacris Ædificiis*, where both the old and the new

basilicas are shown, the one superimposed upon the other, he will see that the axes of the two buildings do not quite coincide, and that the centre gates of the one are not exactly over those of the other. Probably ninety-nine out of every hundred who have noted the discrepancy have put it down simply to bad printing, or to the imperfect skill of the engravers whom Ciampini employed, but it is not so. It is an attempt, though perhaps not a very accurate one, to record an actual fact, which is duly recorded by Carlo Fontana<sup>1</sup> in his book on St. Peter's. Fontana is defending an ancestor of the same name, who was architect in charge of the works at St. Peter's in the time of Sixtus V., that is, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and who is principally known through his great achievement of removing *La Guglia*, or the obelisk which had stood in the centre of Nero's Circus, and at the foot of which St. Peter was crucified, and re-erecting it in the centre of the great piazza in front of the basilica, where it still is. Now this obelisk is not immediately opposite the great doors of the church, but is some ten or twelve feet to one side of its true position. For this the architect Domenico Fontana was blamed, although in so vast a space the error is quite immaterial, and indeed is almost impossible to detect even when attention has been drawn to it. Carlo Fontana, however, who lived about a century later than his namesake and wrote in 1694, protests that the error was not Domenico's at all, but that it must be set down to Maderno. The obelisk was moved in 1586, while the lower half of old St. Peter's was still standing, and was set up by Fontana quite well and truly opposite the central entrance of the *atrium*. But in 1606, when the old church was finally destroyed, Maderno was commissioned to build the remaining half of the new church. This he did, but he laid out his lines so badly

<sup>1</sup> *De Templo Vaticano*, lib. v., cap. viii.

that the new part is not true with the old, but deflects to the south. The error may be noted by examining the walls and pilasters just where Maderno's work joins that of Michel Angelo. The angles made by these pilasters with the wall will be found not to be true right angles, but on the one side slightly obtuse, and on the other acute to a corresponding degree. The great size of St. Peter's makes the deflection difficult to notice, and indeed since none of those who have recently written descriptions of the church seem to be aware that it exists, it has apparently been entirely forgotten that any error was ever made or that the architecture is not absolutely true.

One other point deserves a few words of explanation. While they were digging the first foundation they came across certain arrangements for drainage, which some thought to be the work carried out by St. Damasus when he supplied the baptistery, which had been built by his predecessor, with water from the springs which rose above St. Peter's on the Vatican, and thus rendered the tomb of St. Peter safe from all danger of being flooded. It was, however, soon pointed out that the work of St. Damasus, which was commemorated by a long inscription, must have been on a very much larger scale than these arrangements now discovered, and that, besides, it was not within the basilica at all, but outside on the hill above, for the purpose of bringing water down into the baptistery. What they had now found was probably an earlier work, and designed simply to protect the tombs. They judged, however, that it could be of no use to the tomb of St. Peter, because it was too deep down, but that it must have been placed there with a view to other tombs on a lower level. Here they were probably wrong, not realising how deep below the ground must be the bottom of the vault in which St. Peter lay. They were imagining a simple tomb under the altar and did not know that, between the altar and the floor of the

vault in which the sarcophagus was, there intervened a space of probably not less than thirty feet, since the altar was not built immediately above the vault, but above the *memoria* or upper chamber which had been constructed over the vault. There would seem, therefore, to be no reason on the score of mere depth beneath the surface for saying that these drainage works were not intended to serve St. Peter's tomb, but other tombs at a lower level; especially since we have no record of any such tombs, and no reason whatever for supposing that they exist. We may further note that they were found in the exact position where we should have expected that they would be if they were connected with the tomb of the apostle, for they were just where they would have served to carry off the water which otherwise would have flowed down the steps of the entrance whenever there was heavy rain, and, in the absence of any arrangement for carrying it off towards the Tiber, would have flooded the sepulchral chamber and surrounded the sarcophagus of the apostle.

On the whole, then, we may fairly say that the discoveries in 1626 confirm, in a quite wonderful manner, all the conclusions we have already come to as to the original form of St. Peter's tomb. Any one who was in possession of the facts and arguments adduced in our earlier chapters could have prophesied accurately much of what would be brought to light in the course of the excavation of each of the four foundations. Such a confirmation is sufficient proof that our arguments and deductions have been in the main correct, and that the original form and subsequent history of the venerable monument must have been very much as we have there described.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### PRESENT APPEARANCE OF THE TOMB.

SINCE the great baldachino was erected by Urban VIII. no alteration of any importance has been made in that part of the basilica which lies immediately round the altar and the tomb, and therefore we have, with the narrative printed in the last chapter, come to an end of the written evidence that is available. It will, however, be remembered that we said in an earlier chapter that there had manifestly been some alterations of importance, in connection with the recess of the confession and the old entrance into the sepulchral chamber, to which we should return later in giving an exact description of the spot as it is to-day. It is only from an examination of the actual spot, and through the evidence thus preserved by the stones themselves, that we can hope to arrive at a knowledge of the truth, for although alterations have certainly been made, there is no record either of these alterations or of the circumstances which may have brought them about.

We will suppose that it is some great feast day at St. Peter's, and since on such occasions the great bronze gates which ordinarily close the recess of the confession are always opened, we will avail ourselves of the opportunity that is offered us, and go down to make our examination for ourselves. We descend the flight of sixteen steps, recalling to mind as we do so the fact that they are made from the marble that once served as the intablature above the pillars in the nave of the old basilica, and find our-

selves on the floor of the confession of Paul V., where is the kneeling statue of Pius VI., which is one of Canova's finest works. We are now on the level of the old basilica, but not on its actual pavement, for all this part was repaved with marble when the new confession was constructed. Immediately in front of us, under the high altar, is the recess of the confession which we have come to see. We are struck at once by the fact that it is not under the centre of the altar, but lies quite a notable distance, perhaps a foot or eighteen inches, to the left of the centre as we look at it. On bending down to look in, we see that it runs back some six or seven feet, and that the walls are completely covered with mosaics. And here our eye is caught by another peculiarity, namely, the extraordinary and irregular curve at the back, where is the ancient mosaic representing our Saviour. Or, rather, it is not a curve at all, but a combination of two curves, both apparently being more or less accurately segments of circles, but the portion to our right drawn with a much shorter radius than that to our left. Taken in conjunction with the fact, already noted, that the recess is not now immediately under the centre of the altar, it suggests irresistibly that this recess was once wider than it is now, and that it has been narrowed by being built up on the right-hand side, care being taken at the same time to preserve as much as possible untouched. From the sides we get no help. They are covered with mosaics of the time of Urban VIII., 1630 or thereabouts. These mosaics represent St. Peter and St. Paul, and were put there to replace other and similar mosaics which had been there from time immemorial, the first mention of them being under Leo III. in the eighth century. They were renewed, or at least repaired, by Innocent III. in the twelfth century. The ceiling is semicircular throughout in section, and is also covered with mosaics of the time of Urban VIII. It shows no sign of any extraordinary curve like that at

the end of the recess ; and therefore (the point is a not unimportant one), it received its present shape at some date not earlier than that at which the narrowing of the recess was effected. What that date may have been we have, so far, no means of telling, except from the fact that the mosaic figure of our Lord, which seems to be of the style of the ninth century, must have been placed in its present position after the narrowing had been effected. If, therefore, this mosaic has not been relaid at a later date, it follows that it is in the ninth century that we may expect to find the cause which led to the change of the shape of this recess.

We next raise our eyes and examine what there is above the recess. Here we see the grating of gilded bronze, which bears the name of Innocent III. and the inscription already quoted,<sup>1</sup> praying that he, who caused the grating to be made, may have grace to share the life eternal with St. Peter, when "Christ shall thus sit with His twelve disciples". We are struck, too, at once by the form of the grating, which is nearly eight feet in length, and about sixteen inches wide, and which, therefore, is much longer than the width of the recess beneath can ever have required. This suggests that it may be connected not so much with the recess as with the old altar which was formerly above it, and must have been situated at about this height, for we know that the present altar has been raised some feet above the old level.

The grating, however, conforms to the present shape of the recess, and has a semicircular piece which exactly fits its upper part. This proves, of course, that the date at which the narrowing of the recess took place must have been anterior, probably by a considerable period, to the construction of the grating by Innocent III. in the twelfth century, and confirms the conclusion we were led

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 208.

to by the apparent age of the mosaic at the back of the recess, that the narrowing of the width of the recess and the building up of its northern part took place at some date within the ninth century.

Now, what was the purpose for which this grating was originally placed in this position? Was it connected with the confession beneath, or with the altar above? It is often asserted<sup>1</sup> that Innocent III. put new gates to close the confession, and that this grating is the upper portion of those gates, and the only part of them that still survives. This, indeed, is the generally accepted explanation, but it is one that can be shown to be certainly false. It is negatived conclusively by the shape of the grating itself, which is much longer than can ever have been required for the purpose of gates to close the confession. If an attempt be made to reconstruct in imagination these fancied gates, it will be seen at once that they must have been, if they fitted the grating above them, of a shape that was positively grotesque, not matching one another in size, and having, at the place where they opened, the oddest of protuberances to enable them to close in the circular top of the confession itself. Again, the design of the grating is not that which would have been adopted in the twelfth century for such a purpose, for it is simple and severe even to ugliness, and in no way suitable for a position of such importance. If indeed we knew for certain that Innocent III. had constructed new gates in this place, we might consider the possibility, improbable as it seems to us, that this grating may have formed part of them; but since there is not a particle of evidence that he ever did anything of the kind, and since the received opinion is founded on nothing more than the fact that the grating is there, and that some explanation had to be found to account for its existence, we are justified in

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* by Mignanti, and almost all earlier writers.

putting that hypothesis altogether away, and saying that whatever may have been the cause which led to the grating being put where it is, at any rate it is not part of any gates designed to close the opening of the confession.

But, in that case, what was its purpose? It is not beautiful in itself, on the contrary, it is almost ugly in its absence of ornament, so it must have been placed there for some strictly useful purpose. Now, if it is not part of a gate, there is only one other function which such a grating can have been intended to serve. It must have been placed to protect something which is behind it, and which was otherwise in danger of perishing. If that be the object for which it is there, it accounts at once for the strangeness of the shape, and also for the plainness of the construction; for the shape will of course have been fixed by that of the object it was intended to protect, and it is plain, because it was not meant to be looked at for itself, but was so designed as to interfere with the view of what was behind only so far as was absolutely necessary for the purpose of protecting it from injury. And, now we come to look, there is something behind, something with ornament raised in relief, which runs the whole length of the grating in front of it, and coincides with it almost exactly in shape. Can this have been the object which Innocent III. was so anxious to protect; and which, in that case, the grating which he designed for this purpose has protected so effectually that its very existence has been actually forgotten and ignored? And, if so, what was the object in question, which so long ago as the twelfth century, in an age that was not distinguished for veneration of the past, was yet considered worthy of having such exceptional measures taken for its protection and preservation? It must be, we are sure, something of quite remarkable interest, and of real historical importance.

It is, surely, one of the most extraordinary omissions, and we have had occasion already to draw attention to several that are extraordinary in connection with the history of St. Peter's, that out of the scores of books that have been written, some of them dealing expressly with the confession and with nothing else, there should not have been one single one that attempts to throw any kind of light on the history of the object of which we are speaking; and only one, and that little more than a mere guide-book, which so much as alludes to its existence. Yet we have here something which no one can fail to see, for it is plainly visible through the grating; something which is obviously ancient and interesting; which occupies what we may call the place of honour, immediately over the confession itself, the very holy of holies, we may say, of St. Peter's Church; and yet we can find no mention even of its existence in any of the scientific books which profess to describe the locality. None of the earlier pilgrims and writers before the fifteenth century allude to it; there is no mention of it in Panvinio, or Ugonio, or Severano, or any writer of that time; even Bonanni and the careful Sarti and Settele ignore it; while, to come to our own time, nothing about it is to be discovered in any of the writings of Duchesne or De Rossi, of Lanciani or Armellini, of Marucchi or of Muntz. Pages have been written upon the grating that is in front of it; the inscription on that grating may be found copied in every book; and yet, although no one can look at the grating without seeing it, there is not a word to be found written anywhere about the treasure for the protection of which the grating was made, and to the ornamentation of which the inscription must obviously allude. To the general silence, there is, however, as we have said, a solitary exception, to be found in the pages of a French writer, in an insignificant little work, in which we have no right to look for antiquarian knowledge

or historical detail, but only for an accurate description of what is now to be seen in the churches of which he is writing. Even he does not attempt to tell us what it is; but he does mention that it exists; and he gives us a description, accurate as far as it goes, of its present condition. We shall therefore quote his description, and supplement it a little by some further details which we have ourselves collected. Then we shall be in a better position to discuss the questions which will arise, as to what this interesting relic actually is, and how it originally came to occupy a position of so great importance and honour.

“Above the semicircular arch which forms the top of the recess of the confession, there is a long shrine (*chasse*) of wood on which there are still to be seen some remains of enamelled work in low relief; there is enough of this remaining to enable us to judge of the effect that must have been produced by the whole. It consisted of a continuous row of arches, supported on small columns, and at the corners (*aux écoinçons*) there rose small turrets with a conical top. Under each arch there would have been seated an apostle, while the figure of the Christ occupied the centre. This shrine is protected by a grating in front.”<sup>1</sup>

This description is naturally very brief and general in its character, for it occurs in a little sixpenny guide-book designed to assist the tourist to understand the treasures of the crypt of St. Peter's. It is, however, as we have said, quite accurate as far as it goes, and it is surely very much to the credit of this author that he not only has noticed what seems to have escaped the eye of all the professional archæologists of Rome for some centuries, but has also realised that the sole purpose of the grating is to protect this object which is behind it.

<sup>1</sup> Barbier de Montault, *Les souterrains et le trésor de St. Pierre*, Rome, 1866, p. 71.

Further, as will be seen directly, he shows a quite remarkable insight, when he attempts to reconstruct, from the small fragments which alone survive, the nature and appearance of the ornament in its earlier days.

If we make as close an examination of it as its position behind the grating now allows, we shall find, corresponding with the grating in size, a long board of wood of dark colour, perfectly smooth in itself, but with many marks showing that something has been fastened on to it in the past. Indeed, there still remain, in a very dilapidated condition, two arch-shaped pieces of metal, one still fixed and the other lying loose; and also two columns of metal which evidently served to separate the arches one from another. On these columns there are still traces of enamel, and they have at one time been richly decorated. Round the arches there can be traced a pattern of stars, lightly cut, and there are in the middle a couple of holes, showing no doubt where the rivets once went that held on the figure beneath. The arcade was not continuous along the whole length, but was broken in the centre. There, no doubt, as M. Barbier de Montault says, was the central figure, which has been cut into by the rounded top of the niche of the confession underneath. Indeed the board is almost cut into two unequal halves by the niche, and it appears to have been completely broken at the time when this was done, for there has been nailed on along the top a strengthening piece of wood, some three inches wide, and half an inch in thickness, with the lower edge bevelled off. Unless the board itself be broken there would seem to be no reason why this additional piece should have been nailed on. On the strengthening piece itself, however, there still remain three ancient settings for precious stones, each about three quarters of an inch across. The stones themselves, if we are right in thinking these are settings for stones, have disappeared. The ends of the board were apparently

originally square, but are now roughly rounded by the action of time, possibly assisted by the depredations of pious pilgrims in search of mementoes to carry back from the shrine. Behind the board there seems to be rough stone work. The metal of the ornament is of a yellowish colour, but it is difficult in its present condition to pronounce with any certainty whether it is gold or silver gilt, or only gilded bronze, though it appears to be of the latter material.

These details make it pretty clear that we have here the foundations of some very ancient piece of metal work. The board itself was not originally intended to be seen, but was completely covered with metal. It must have been a work of some importance, for the position in which it was placed was once exceedingly prominent. It was immediately below the high altar, on its eastern side, facing down the church, and immediately above the confession. From its shape and position we are justified in assuming that it was once the decoration which concealed the rough stone of the footpace or *predella* on which the altar stood. Any pilgrim visiting the shrine, on passing up the church and entering the space enclosed by the twisted columns, would have had this directly in front of him at about the level of the eye, while immediately beneath it there opened the entrance to the niche of the confession which he had come to venerate. When we remember the splendours of old St. Peter's and of the shrine, we shall realise that the position was not one that would be occupied by any work of inferior value or importance.

We can make a guess too at the age of the work, although there is hardly enough left to enable us to speak with any certainty. But the fact that it is cut into and mutilated by the circular roof of the niche proves that it was there before that roof was made, and that, as we have already shown cause for believing, was not later

than the ninth century. Probably, indeed, it is considerably older than the ninth century, for, unless it was then ancient and venerated, it would not have been left in its place when it became necessary thus to mutilate it, but it would have been removed, and its place taken by some new decoration more in accordance with the altered requirements of the place. It is worth while, therefore, to search the records of the gifts made to the confession in early times, which we find in the *Liber Pontificalis* and elsewhere, to see if we cannot discover some notice of its being given to the shrine, and perhaps some more detailed description of the appearance which it then presented. We bear in mind as we do so, the conjecture of M. Barbier de Montault, which seems sober and well founded, that it must have originally consisted of a figure of the Christ in judgment seated in the centre, with the twelve apostles each under an arch, six on either side.

But, surely, the description is familiar. There was such an ornament, exactly as has been described, which was presented by an emperor to St. Peter, and was placed exactly in this position. We have mentioned it already in an earlier chapter, but to save the reader from the necessity of turning back we will give the account of it again. About the year 435, "at the request of Pope Xystus III., Valentinian the emperor gave a golden image, with twelve gates (*portas*) and twelve apostles, and the Saviour, adorned with precious gems, and he placed it as a votive offering above the confession of the blessed Peter". The coincidence is so remarkable that it leaves no room for a doubt, and we do not need to look further to discover the origin of our mysterious ornament. We have here, decayed and dilapidated it is true, but still in its original position and able to be identified, an ornament presented to the church by an emperor of the first half of the fifth century, which was placed where we now see it before St. Leo came to the papal throne, and

has remained there ever since; guarded and preserved by the reverent care of earlier centuries, but now for hundreds of years quite forgotten; and, although clearly visible to every pilgrim who comes to pay his visit *ad limina Apostolorum*, left unnoticed and without recognition even by those who have made it the task of their lives to write of St. Peter's and of the treasures it contains.

We can collect a few details from ancient sources as to its subsequent history. About sixty years after it was given, a copy in silver seems to have been placed by Symmachus in a corresponding position over the confession of St. Paul. It is curious to note how the two great basilicas always go together. Again and again we find the details of one reproduced in the other, so that at last, after reading of any work carried out at St. Peter's by a Pope of the early centuries, we almost expect to find following as a matter of course, "*Idem fecit apud beatum Paulum*". He did just the same at St. Paul's.

Our ornament was still in its place and uninjured at the beginning of the ninth century, for at that time we find it mentioned in a letter written by one of the Popes to Charlemagne. Charlemagne had shown himself inclined to side with the Iconoclasts, and to take up a position hostile to the employment of images in any form within the walls of a church, and Hadrian I. wrote to him on the subject. He reminds the Emperor how his predecessor Valentinian, more than four centuries and a half before, had presented images to St. Peter's, and it is quite clearly this ornament that he refers to. "At the request of the Pope, Valentinian the emperor made a golden image with twelve gates, and the Saviour, adorned with precious gems, and he placed it as a votive offering above the confession of blessed Peter the apostle; and from that time even up to the present day, it is venerated here by all the faithful." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hardouin, *Concilia*, iv., p. 812. Mansi, xiii., p. 801.

From that time onwards we have no clear reference to it, but this piece of evidence is very important as helping us to fix the date at which the mutilation of our ornament must have taken place, through the necessity for giving to the top of the recess of the confession its present circular form. We have already come to the conclusion that this was not done at any date later than the ninth century, because of the mosaics at the back. We are now able absolutely to fix it to that century, because we can show that the gift of Valentinian was still intact in the opening years of that century. It will therefore be at this period that we shall expect to find the cause which led to these alterations being made.

It is worth while noticing also that, whereas we have hitherto had no more solid reason than an inference from the curves at the back of the recess; for supposing the top of the niche of the confession to have been originally straight, we are now proved to have been absolutely correct in that inference. For we know now that the figure of the Saviour once occupied the centre of the ornament above and that it has been destroyed by this rounding of the roof. If it had been always round, and not straight, there never could have been space for any such figure to have been placed there.

There is nothing more to be discovered above the confession, so we lower our eyes and proceed to make a careful examination of the floor of the recess. Here we see the gold casket, the gift of Pope Benedict XIV., which holds the *pallia*. The pallium is the special badge of archiepiscopal jurisdiction; and it is sent to newly appointed archbishops "from the body of St. Peter," as from the apostle from whom all ecclesiastical jurisdiction is derived. If this casket be removed, there is underneath a pavement of mosaic, obviously of no very ancient date; which, indeed, we are able, by means of the well-known badge of the dove with the olive branch which

occurs in its decoration, to assign at once to the pontificate of Innocent X., who reigned from 1644 to 1655. The design of the decoration of this floor is remarkable, and consists of a large Greek cross surrounded by rays in gilded bronze, surmounted by a papal tiara, and flanked by the keys of St. Peter in marble mosaic of admirable execution. In the right-hand top corner of the cross may be seen a small keyhole, and in fact this portion of the metal can be lifted up, and gives access to a little square well leading straight down in the direction of the tomb.

Here we have manifestly the modern representative of the ancient *Billicum Confessionis*; the "first cataract"; the *fenestrella*, or little window, of St. Gregory of Tours; the means by which in former days handkerchiefs and other objects were lowered down to touch the sarcophagus and so be hallowed for ever by their near approach to the bones of the great apostle. As might be expected, the opening of this little door is an event which takes place but rarely, and, as a rule, only on the occasion of the visit of some great personage. It was opened in 1749, and again at the end of the century; once more in 1845, on the occasion of the visit of the Czar of Russia; and lastly, a few years ago, in order that a careful survey of the spot might be made and put on record. It is not probable, therefore, that an opportunity for making a fresh examination will soon occur, and so we must content ourselves with the evidence which is available at second hand, and which fortunately is very full and minute.

An account of what was seen in 1749 will be found in Sindone and Martinelli's work on the *Vatican Basilica* published in 1750. Both of the authors were actually present when the little door was opened, so their account is that of eye-witnesses. It is as follows:—

"On the thirteenth of May in the year last past, 1749, this little bronze door was unlocked and opened, and,

forthwith, in the floor of the recess of the confession there was seen the subterranean opening or *fenestrella*. In form it is square, as to material it is mostly covered with plates of bronze, but the lower part is of marble, showing signs of smoke. From the lip there projects a hook of metal, firmly fastened into the wall, so that from it a moderate weight could be safely suspended. Below, with the aid of a lamp, there was discovered to be a large empty space, surrounded by a wall, which, in the judgment of one of the workmen attached to St. Peter's who was present, was pronounced to be very ancient and of rude workmanship. The height of this chamber was found to be five palms and a sixth [about three feet six inches] nor could any greater depth be reached, on account of a wall of some solid material which closed it."<sup>1</sup>

The authors then go on to cite the passage which we have already given, on p. 206, in explanation of the use of the hook, and the smoked appearance of the marble.

A much fuller and more accurate description may be found in an article called "Le tombe Apostoliche di Roma," published in a Roman periodical in 1892 by Father Grisar, S.J., who was present and made careful investigations when the door was opened on the last occasion in 1891. His account, which agrees with that of Sindone and Martinelli in all important particulars, is as follows:—

"When the little door is opened one can look down with the help of a lamp lowered by a cord. It is, however, by no means an easy task to make observations, for the narrowness of the opening does not permit of the head being placed in it, nor can it be enlarged, forming as it does part of the fixed covering upon the actual walls. The first thing to be noticed is the interior of the little well. This is square and covered with bronze.

<sup>1</sup> Sindone e Martinelli, *Della sacrosanta Basilica di S. Pietro*.

From its mouth this little well goes down to a depth of thirteen and a half inches, keeping always about the same size (that is, about eight and a half inches by six and a half); then it opens out into a chamber which is some two feet eight inches deep in addition to the depth of the well. Underneath this chamber again, according to tradition, the sacred body lies.

“The bottom of this lower chamber is covered with loose stones and broken masonry. I succeeded in probing it to some nineteen inches in depth precisely under the little well, but did not reach the bottom, so that the depth must be greater than that. The walls are of careless construction, and very irregular. . . . On the right hand there is a projection of rectangular form going quite up to the top.

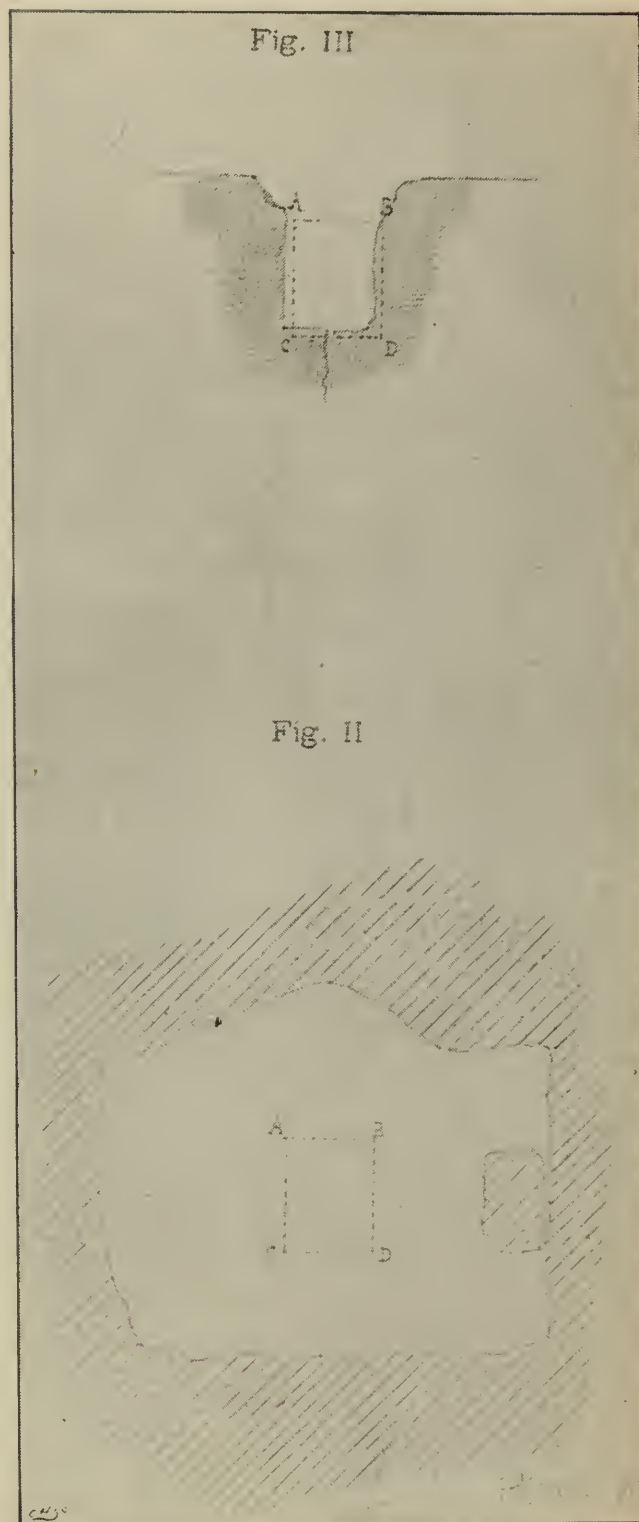
“Where the well enters the chamber there is a large white marble slab, a little more than an inch in thickness, which forms, as it were, the ceiling of the chamber. I was able to note, at least partially, that it reached to the wall on every side except on that which is towards the apse of the basilica, and on that side it stops short in a straight line. It still shows the regular cuts of a square aperture by which it was formerly pierced. . . . The most important observation that I was able to make, to determine the use for which this slab was destined, is that it still retains in one angle on the left of the aperture its perfect original sharpness. The other sides of this square hole are broken away and decayed. It would seem that this hole can only be the original liturgical opening which served for the hallowing of the relics.

“Not only are the sides of the whole thus partially worn away, but the slab itself is broken into two pieces. The break runs from the hole more or less at right angles towards the front or eastern<sup>1</sup> side of the tomb. On the

<sup>1</sup> Father Grisar writes “western”. He forgets, however, that he is writing of a basilica, and has his points of the compass wrong all through.



Fig. I.



THE CONFESSION OF ST. PETER.  
 Fig. I. Section. Fig. II. Plan of lower chamber. Fig. III. Hole in marble slab, one side missing. Reproduced from Fr. Grisar's drawings in *Studi e Diritti*.

[To face page 358.]



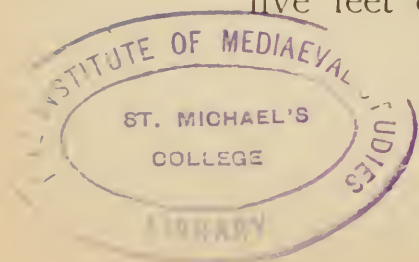
other, or western side, the slab still preserves, to the right and left of the broken angles of the square hole, its sharp edge and its straightness . . . I was not able to discover any inscription on this slab, nor could I feel any trace even of a single letter."

That is the whole of Father Grisar's description which is of any value to us now. The parts we have omitted are concerned for the most part with arguments based on a false conception of the relation of this slab to the tomb beneath, and therefore do not concern us. Father Grisar gives a description of the slab of marble over the tomb of St. Paul which bears the inscription, PAULO APOSTOLO MARTYRI,<sup>1</sup> and considers this one at St. Peter's as corresponding to it exactly. He forgets that at St. Peter's there were two "cataracts," while at St. Paul's there was only one, or rather he evades this consideration by interpreting cataract in a novel and indefensible way. Very possibly there may be a slab of marble at St. Peter's which does correspond exactly with the one at St. Paul's, but if so we have no knowledge of it, for it is hidden away under the rubbish with which the chamber between the two "cataracts" has been filled up. We can gather a few more details from a drawing with which Father Grisar's article is illustrated. We are, however, a little shy of putting unlimited faith in the illustrations of this article, which seem to have been done for the author by an amateur friend, because in two distinct instances we have found that they do not correspond with the measurements given in the text. In this instance, however, since there is no means of testing the accuracy of the drawing, we must be content to argue from the *data* which it affords. We gather, then, that the chamber into which the well opens, and which is all that now remains of the lower part of the upper chamber or *memoria* above the tomb,

<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, p. 222.

is only about two feet to two feet six inches square, and that the well opens very nearly in the centre of it. The walls seem to be quite rough, and not even squared, so that it was evidently never intended to be seen, but served merely as a means of communication between the two cataracts. It has been built up and reduced to the small dimensions which are all that are necessary for such a purpose, in order that it may better serve as a support for the floor of the recess above, of which floor the marble slab with its square hole once formed a part. A very important point, which we learn only from the drawing, for Father Grisar does not draw attention to it in his article, is that this small chamber does not lie directly under the recess in its present form, but directly under its centre as we have supposed it to have been in earlier days, before it was built up on the right hand side; thus proving absolutely that this building up was not part of the original construction, but has been done at a later period. The broken slab of marble we see too in the drawing droops in the centre, and the projection which he speaks of as being on the right hand side looks as if it had been introduced after the breakage to give additional support to one side of the slab.

We can make a guess at the possible depth of the rubbish which now covers the bottom of this chamber, and which must have been poured in from the top through the hole of the *billicum* or upper cataract. If we take the lower edge of Innocent III.'s grating as being approximately the level of the ceiling of the old *memoria*, and measure fourteen feet downwards, that being a very probable estimate of its height inside, we shall get the position, as nearly as we can guess it, of the floor in which the second or lower "cataract" must be situated. Such a calculation, which is necessarily very rough, would seem to show that there is probably a depth of at least four or five feet of rubbish to be penetrated before the floor



would be reached. It is no wonder, therefore, that Father Grisar did not succeed in reaching anything solid, for he only penetrated to a depth of eighteen or twenty inches. The thirteen inches of solid work above the old slab, which is penetrated by what we have called "the little well" which leads into this chamber, is probably caused by successive relayings of the floor of the recess with decorative pavements, by which means it has been raised, as we can see at once, quite a foot above the level of the floor of the old basilica.

We have now completed our survey of the confession in its present state, and have learnt all that can be known of the changes which have been made in it since the time of Constantine onwards.

These changes, it will be noticed, are surprisingly few, and in the main we still have the shrine presenting the same appearance as it has done all through its history. We are in a position therefore to see how very wide of the mark are the guesses and surmises which have been put forth on the subject by various writers, and which have been adopted even by such careful antiquarians as Bonanni, De Rossi and Duchesne. All these writers quote with more or less approval an author of the seventeenth century, one Michael Lonigo, who tried to reconstruct the ancient confession from the scattered notices he found in the *Liber Pontificalis*, the *Ordines Romani*, and other ancient books, but with an infelicity of result which is quite remarkable. Nevertheless he has held his place down to the present day as the leading authority on the subject, and is, as we have said, quoted as such by even the most serious archæologists. He must have been a man of considerable learning for his time, and he quotes his authority for every detail. Unfortunately it never seems to have occurred to him to test his conclusions by a comparison with the actual place itself, and since he has not understood that the word confession at

St. Peter's, for reasons which we have already explained, was used of two distinct places, he has combined all the various notices together, and so constructed an imaginary confession that has scarcely anything in common with the reality. His work was not published in his lifetime, but has been twice printed since, once by Bonanni, in his second edition published in 1700, and again quite lately in a Florentine periodical.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately he has been regarded as an authority on the subject, and his description has become to those who have followed him a fruitful parent of errors. Thus, for instance, to take but a single example, this is the description of the ancient confession which is given by Mignanti<sup>2</sup> in the most full and detailed history of the Vatican Basilica that has yet seen the light. Almost every detail is either imaginary or else really existed elsewhere. He first describes the gates through which the space enclosed by the twelve columns was entered, and then goes on as follows: "We next enter a vestibule of proportionate size, into which there opened a staircase to give access to the floor beneath, and in the middle of which was placed a rail all of silver. There were twelve steps, and at the bottom there was another door fastened with lock and key, of open metal work. This door was completely covered with gold by Hadrian I., and above it there were more statues of gold, representing our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Holy Apostles, all given by the same Pope who made use of 1328 pounds of gold for the purpose. . . . The chamber which was entered by means of this gate was just the same size as the presbytery above it, and perhaps, like it, was furnished with a pontifical throne at its western extremity, and seats on either side. This indeed must have been the case, for the whole large staff of the Vatican clergy took their places there, when it was

<sup>1</sup> *Archivio dell' Ecclesiastico*, vii., p. 485 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Mignanti, *Istoria della Basilica Vaticana*, i., p. 177.

their duty to keep vigils before the blessing of the holy *pallia* and on other feasts. So also, when the Pope himself celebrated the divine office in the basilica, it was his custom, after having censed the nine altars in various parts of the church, to descend hither with his whole court, which was not inconsiderable in number, and to take his seat on the throne, whence he sang matins. From these two considerations we can see how large the holy confession must have been, but if they are not enough, we must remember that here were held councils, at some of which as many as eighty-three bishops were present, and that Pope Hadrian and Charlemagne were able freely to descend into it with the whole of the numerous suite in attendance on both, a thing which would have been impossible if the chamber had been narrow and confined.

“ This chamber was vaulted, and its roof was higher than the level of the basilica, and reached to the floor of the presbytery. The ceiling was completely covered with plates of gold. Near the centre there was the altar, exactly underneath that of the basilica above, and turned like it to the east, adorned with four columns, which according to Mallius were twisted. This altar was the one which is spoken of by ecclesiastical writers as the altar of the tomb, or again, as the altar within the confession. It was not wholly of stone, as St. Sylvester ordained, but hollow, like a box or chest lying on its side, and was quite open in front. This opening was called the confession of the altar, and there was another opening, or rather hole, in the centre of the space beneath. These two openings each had a door, which at first was of silver but later of gold, and the one in the floor was called by the special name of *umbilico*, or centre of the confession. Any one who looked down through this hole would have seen beneath another chamber still lower down, and in the centre of it a great monument of bronze, within which, enclosed in a case of silver on which was a

golden cross weighing 150 pounds, were the holy remains of St. Peter, the blessed prince of the apostles."

Mignanti never quotes his authorities, lest, as he tells us in his preface, he should seem thereby to be making an undue parade of his learning; but those who have read the earlier chapters of this book will have no difficulty in assigning most of the sources from which this truly astonishing description has been compiled. It is an admirable instance of the unwisdom of endeavouring to reconstruct the monuments of the past from the pages of written authorities, while ignoring the traces of them which still actually survive.

We must leave these imaginations, and get back to the more solid ground afforded us by our investigations into the present state of the locality itself, for there still remains a question to be solved which is of the greatest interest and importance. All the changes we have noticed as having been made in the recess of the confession seem to point to a single great catastrophe which happened in the ninth century. What was the cause which led to the narrowing of the niche; to the rounding of its roof in spite of the consequent mutilation of its most venerated ornament; to the breaking of the marble slab that formed its floor; and finally, though we have as yet no proof that this was done at the same period, to the cutting off of the access to the tomb through the second cataract, by pouring so considerable a quantity of loose rubbish into the chamber above it. All this, we have had some reason to suppose, took place in the ninth century. That, at least is the date that is suggested by the appearance of the monument, although it cannot be said that we are in a position to prove that it was actually in that century that the changes were made. But it is precisely in this ninth century that the one event took place to which we should naturally have turned as providing us with a probable solution, and that event is the invasion of

the Saracens in the year 846. The earlier invaders of Rome, the Goths and other northern barbarians, were not heathens but Arian heretics; and, though they did much injury to other churches of Rome, had always treated St. Peter's with marked veneration and respect. So, again, later marauders, although they looted the golden ornaments and other valuables of the shrine, had no quarrel against the Catholic religion, and would have shrunk from any outrage directed against the actual tomb of the prince of the apostles. But in 846, for one whole week, the basilicas both of St. Peter and St. Paul were in the hands of infidels, whose work of absolute destruction in both of the churches has already been spoken of. "They sacked the basilica of St. Peter," says a contemporary chronicler, "and carried off all its ornaments and treasures, and even the very altar that had been erected above his tomb."<sup>1</sup> They can scarcely have carried off the actual altar, which was of stone and of no value at all, but the evidence at least shows that the damage that was done extended to the altar itself, and no doubt to the shrine that was beneath it.

It was the fear of another similar attack, which perhaps might be even more disastrous in its results, which caused the erection of the fort of Johannipolis around the basilica of St. Paul, and the enclosure by St. Leo IV. of St. Peter's and its dependencies by the wall which still gives its name of "the Leonine city" to that part of Rome.

This attack of the Saracens did not take the Romans altogether by surprise, nor were they unmindful of the danger in which the two great basilicas would be placed, seeing that they were outside the walls of the city, and that there existed no means of giving them protection. A letter had been received from Corsica, warning them of the attack that was imminent, and urging strongly that

<sup>1</sup> Prudentius Trecensis, *Annales*, anno 846.

“if it were in any way possible the bodies of the apostles should be carried within the walls, lest the accursed pagans should have cause for exultation through the destruction of those precious relics”.<sup>1</sup> To remove the bodies was scarcely possible, at any rate it was not attempted, but we can hardly suppose that nothing was done to conceal the means by which they might be approached. The entrance to the sepulchral chamber was probably closed and hidden, and the “cataracts,” through which the golden crosses of Constantine and Helena could no doubt still be descried, seem also to have been shut off. At St. Paul’s there was nothing to be done but to close the hole with cement, and this seems to have been the course that was adopted, but at St. Peter’s the space between the two cataracts suggested another expedient, the pouring down, namely, of rubbish through the upper opening, and so effectually preventing all access to the lower except through very considerable labour and the expenditure of a good deal of time. Having thus put the relics in safety, they withdrew to the shelter of the walls, carrying with them, we may suppose, at least the more portable of the golden ornaments of the shrine.

The Saracens sailed up the Tiber, easily defeated the troops that were sent against them, burnt and destroyed the castles at Gaeta and at Porto, and, when at last they were checked by the walls of the city, gave themselves up to the congenial task of plundering the defenceless basilicas. That they left even the walls of them standing must, as Gibbon observed, “be imputed to the shortness of their stay rather than to any scruple as to their sanctity”.

For eight days or so St. Peter’s seems to have been given up to pillage, but at the end of that time reinforcements arrived, the Saracens were defeated, and were forced to retire in the direction of Civita Vecchia.

<sup>1</sup> *Liber Pont.*, ii., 99.

Studying the confession, we can easily, with a little imagination, picture to ourselves the condition in which the Romans found the basilica when they were again able to enter it. Everywhere there was confusion and destruction. The Saracens, in search of treasure, or perhaps in the desire of finding and of desecrating the relics, had broken down the altar. The stones which formed the footpace were broken in half, and now, incapable of supporting even their own weight, slanted downwards into the recess of the confession. The ornament of gold which Valentinian had given was in halves, the board on which it was mounted being broken in two, and the figure of Christ in the centre, the object of the especial fury of the infidels, had been hacked and injured beyond the possibility of repair. Down below, the gold had been stripped from the floor of the recess, and the marble underneath, like the footpace of the altar above, had been broken across and hung loosely in two portions. Still, great as the damage had been, it might easily have been far more serious; the expedients for concealing the relics had been successful, and no effort had been made to remove the loose stones and rubbish from the chamber between the cataracts. Probably, indeed, it had never occurred to the invaders, just as it has not occurred to any in our own times, that there was anything of value or of interest which the rubbish was hiding from them.

The work of repair was put in hand at once. Everything, as far as was possible with the means that were available, was restored to its former condition, and soon the chief difference that could be noted was that silver had taken the place of the gold that had been carried away. But, in dealing with the confession, there were other considerations to be thought of besides the mere restoration of the magnificence that was gone. Every stone in that sacred spot was hallowed by antiquity as well as by the purpose

to which it had been put. It was better that the shrine should appear mutilated for all time, than that one single one of those hallowed fragments should be needlessly removed from its place. It was in this spirit that St. Leo IV. and the citizens of Rome seem to have acted. Broken and shattered as they were, every stone was left in its old position, and the least possible change was made that was consistent with restoring to the shrine an appearance of being decently cared for. The broken slab which formed the floor was raised and supported by a rough piece of stone that was placed beneath it. This stone, in its turn, rested upon the loose rubbish that was beneath, and, having thus no solid foundation, has sunk a little in the course of ages, and has allowed the marble which it supports to fall once more a little below the true horizontal level. Then, since the old broken marble could no longer be safe, a new floor was placed above it, pierced like the older one with a square hole in the centre which corresponded with the *billicum* beneath, and furnished as that had been with a little door to close it.

The break in the stone of the footpace would seem to have been not quite in the centre, but some inches to the left. On the left side, therefore, the stone had kept its position, but on the right, where the leverage was greater, it hung down and needed support. This, therefore, was probably the reason which led to the building up of the right side of the recess, with its consequent result of throwing the middle of the opening some inches to the left of the centre of the altar. The object for which it was done was to gain the means of supporting the broken stone above it, which in its turn had to hold up the altar. That so disfiguring an expedient should have been adopted speaks volumes for the strength of the reverence which forbade the removal of that which had been broken, and its replacement by new and sounder

material. It was reverence also, no doubt, which led to the adoption of the strange curve at the back of the recess; the old curve being retained as far as possible, in spite of its being unsuitable for the narrowed space in which it was now situated. The fractures of the stone above were next concealed by the simple expedient of hollowing it out, so as to give a semicircular or barrel top to the whole of the recess, and then lining it entirely with gold mosaics. Even the remains of the votive gift of Valentinian were carefully preserved, although the central figure was no longer there, and it was replaced in its old position, the two portions being united by a fresh piece of wood nailed on to hold them together, while the broken parts were cut away and fitted exactly to the new semicircular opening behind. Then the work was complete, all that was possible having thus been religiously kept, and from that day to this, in spite of the thousand years that have passed away, and the extraordinary transformation that has taken place in the church around, nothing more has been done than to repair what was then arranged; with the result that we have apparently before us the confession of St. Peter in exactly the same condition as when its restoration was completed by St. Leo IV. in the middle of the ninth century.

For all that has been suggested there is no documentary evidence of any kind available. It is simply a deduction from the appearance of the confession as it is to-day, and it may, of course, easily be that we have not been able to reproduce the history with absolute exactness. Still, the story as we have laid it down does give an explanation which is at least plausible and not improbable, of every one of the various singular details of its arrangements, and it is unlikely that this could be done successfully unless we had arrived at a fairly close approximation to the true story.

There remain, however, one or two difficulties which

we must speak of. We read in the *Liber Pontificalis* that Pope Leo IV., when he was repairing the ravages of the Saracens, put in the confession a work which sounds as if it was meant to replace the mutilated gift of Valentinian. "So also did he restore the confession of the holy altar to its former beauty and condition with plates of the finest silver, on which we see the Saviour seated on a throne, with precious gems upon His head, and having cherubim represented on His right, and faces (*vultus*) of the apostles and others on His left."<sup>1</sup> It is not quite clear where this was placed, but it could not have been exactly where the older one had been, because the rounded top of the confession would have cut right into it. Besides, we have shown that the old one was left in its former position. It may be that a new footpace was necessary immediately above the one that was broken and that this in its turn was decorated with this new ornament. We are led to this conclusion by the fact that in the seventeenth century there seems actually to have been an ancient representation of our Lord which occupied just this position. It is mentioned by Torrigio in his book on the crypts of St. Peter's. "Innocent III. made an ornament which we have already spoken of, and a grating in front of the opening. This can still be seen, as also can a small figure of the Saviour with a royal crown on His Head, all of bronze, which the people to this day are wont to kiss with devotion. There used also to be there the symbols of the four Evangelists, the Man, the Ox, the Lion and the Eagle, but of these only the Eagle, which is of bronze, can now be seen. These symbols used formerly to be kissed by the faithful, who declared by this act before the body of St. Peter, that they accepted all that was written by the four Evangelists. They are alluded to by Anastasius, when he describes

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Duchesne, ii., 114.

the confirmation by Constantine of the donation made by Pepin of the city and other places, in the Pontificate of Stephen III. The copy of this Deed was placed on the body of St. Peter, for he says: 'The most Christian King of the Franks caused the deed of gift to be written by Eucherius, and with his own hands placed it inside over the body of St. Peter, under the Gospels which are there kissed'."<sup>1</sup> Torrigio certainly speaks of a bronze image, whereas the one placed by St. Leo IV. was of silver, but silver when it is old and dirty is often hard to recognise, and Torrigio may have made a mistake. The symbols of the evangelists also afford a difficulty. From what Torrigio says they too seem to have been of metal, and one seems to have survived even to his time. His quotation is from the *Liber Pontificalis*,<sup>2</sup> but under Hadrian I. and not under Stephen III., and it seems to show that some similar representation was there at the time of Charlemagne's visit to Rome. In that case this may have been the *evangelia cum tabulis aureis cum gemmis pretiosis*<sup>3</sup> which were presented to St. Peter's by Clovis in 523, and M. Duchesne is wrong in considering this gift to have been that of a book of the liturgical Gospels. These symbols perhaps may have been carried off by the Saracens and have been replaced later by those in bronze of which Torrigio speaks, but of this there is no record. It is strange too that nothing is known of the fate of this image of the Saviour and of the eagle, which seem still to have been in their place over the confession at so recent a date as 1635.

<sup>1</sup> *Le Sacre Grotte Vaticane*, ed. 1635, p. 462.

<sup>2</sup> i., 498.

<sup>3</sup> *Lib. Pont.*, i., 271.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CAN THE TOMB STILL BE REACHED?

THERE remains now but one point of importance for us to deal with, and that is the question whether there still remains any means of gaining access to the actual sepulchral chamber in which the body lies. To some extent we have already touched upon this question in an earlier chapter, making, as will be remembered, the suggestion that in all probability the ancient entrance to the chamber, in the days when it was merely a tomb standing in the open air, was still preserved and utilised in the building of Constantine's basilica, and therefore that the most probable place for the door leading to the steps by which the tomb was approached would be at the commencement of the semicircular passage leading round under the tribune to the Chapel of the Confession, and on the left hand, or southern side, of the altar. Now, most fortunately, just this very portion of the ancient passage is precisely the one and only part which has survived the changes of the sixteenth century, the whole of the rest of the passage having either been filled up, or else transformed into the arms which give the Chapel of the Confession its present cruciform shape. Most fortunately, we say, because the preservation of this important section of the old passage was not due to any vague tradition that it was at that spot that the stairway to the tomb had had its entrance, but to the accident that it was there that the bones and earth removed from the immediate neighbourhood of

St. Peter's shrine had been reverently placed, in a chamber constructed for the purpose at the extremity of the passage, and called, from the use to which it was put, a *Polyandrium*, or burial place of many persons. This was done in 1545, as is recorded by an inscription which is still to be seen in the wall. To give access to this *Polyandrium*, since it was felt that many of the bones that were contained in it were probably those of saints or martyrs, a small portion of the passage was retained when the rest was filled up, and this section, entered by what is no doubt the ancient doorway which led into the passage from the church, was at a later date made into a little chapel, called, from a curious bas-belief of our Lord which is over the altar, the Chapel of S. Salvatorino. This chapel is now never used, and, since it contains no very important work of art, is very seldom visited, so that even those who know the basilica well, and have paid frequent visits to the crypts beneath it, are for the most part quite unaware of its existence. Access to it is shut off by an iron gate which is kept locked, and, unless visitors specially request to be taken into it, the chapel is never shown by those who are charged with the duty of taking strangers round.

For us, however, the little chapel has an interest quite distinct from the artistic merit of its decorations. It has a real historical value, for we remember that through that doorway, and along the passage to which this was the entrance, there passed all the long line of illustrious pilgrims who visited Rome and the tombs of the apostles during the period of more than a thousand years which followed the building of the basilica. Perhaps there is hardly any spot, even in Rome, which has seen a more brilliant throng go by. But all this is now forgotten, and no one stops to think of all these glories of the past, for it has passed out of mind that the entrance to the Chapel of the Confession was ever different to what it is

to-day, nor does it apparently occur to any to ask how it was that this quaint little chapel of S. Salvatorino came into existence, or what light it may have to throw upon the many difficult and much-debated questions of the church. But there is a further interest, besides the historical one, which is possessed by this little chapel, for it is here, if anywhere, that we may hope to solve the enigma which St. Peter's tomb presents, and to find out whether there is any possibility of pilgrims once again being permitted to descend into the sepulchral chamber, to lay their hands on the actual sarcophagus in which the body rests, and to see with their own eyes the gold cross which has rested on its top ever since the far-off days of Constantine and his mother Helena. For if any one will look for a moment at the plan of the crypts opposite p. 314, and will in imagination draw a straight line at right angles to the axis of the church from the *billicum* of the confession, which straight line will represent the direction that the ancient staircase must probably have taken, he will see at once that it is precisely in this little Chapel of S. Salvatorino that we may expect to find the traces of it, if any still remain until the present time.

It was with this idea in his head that the present writer, accompanied by two friends, and armed with a special order from the Holy Father himself, permitting him to make all necessary investigations, went down into the crypts one morning in February, 1898, to see what he could find. He had already formed a theory as a working hypothesis, which might he hoped be some guide as to what to look for, although of course it might very probably have to be modified in accordance with what might be found. It seemed very probable, for instance, that the time at which the closing of the old staircase took place would have been the same as that at which the changes were made which have been detailed in the last chapter, and that the cause was here again the

attack made by the Saracens in 846, and the consequent necessity of doing something to preserve the relics from desecration. The very scanty evidence available seemed to fit in with these dates, for on the one hand the latest occasion on which a visit seems to have been paid to the sepulchre itself was at the end of the eighth century, when Charlemagne went down; and on the other hand, as De Rossi has pointed out, there was no means of access known in the twelfth century when Mallius wrote his book about the basilica and its privileges. He would not have been silent on the point if the actual tomb had been accessible in the days when he was writing his book, for he was always eager to seize every opportunity of magnifying the glories of his own church in comparison with those of the senior basilica of St. John Lateran.

We assumed therefore that the cause which had led to the closing of the stairway was the desire of concealing it from the eyes of the Saracens, and so of cutting off their means of access to the tomb, and so we expected that we should find it totally concealed and not merely bricked up. To brick up a doorway would under such circumstances have been of little use, for the newness of the masonry would at once have made it manifest that there was a passage there which had been but recently closed, and the breaking down of the new brickwork would have followed as a matter of course. A more probable expedient for them to have adopted would have been the old device of the Catacombs, when it was necessary to conceal some special shrine from the eyes of the persecuting Romans; the building, namely, of a masking wall right across the passage in question, and so completely hiding the doorway and giving no reason for the supposition that a passage had ever existed. Such a plan would be the more certain of success in this case, because no one who was unacquainted with the history of the tomb would think of searching at the side of the

shrine to find the entrance to the vault ; and the newness of the masonry would be the less likely to be detected, since here, as in the Catacombs, no light, except from lamps and torches, could ever penetrate.

It was, then, with the desire of making a close investigation into these points, and in the hope of finding some details which would either go towards proving the truth of this theory, or else suggest some other theory as more probable, that we went to the Chapel of S. Salvatore. Our hopes were not altogether disappointed.

We first noticed that the *predella* of the altar seemed to have been disturbed, and that now there was only a movable wooden board in front of the altar, in place of the stone which must once have been there. This, we were told by the priest who acted as our guide, was the result of certain excavations made in 1848, during the revolutionary period, when the Pope was at Gaeta. So far as we could ascertain, there is no record available, either as to the object with which the excavation was undertaken, or as to any discoveries made in its course. If, as appears to have been the case, the direction taken was westwards under the altar, they would not have been likely to find anything except the continuation of the old semicircular passage. Very little seems to have been done, and the whole was stopped at once on the Pope's return.

Our next discovery was a much more important one. In the wall nearest to the tomb—the wall, that is, which we believed to mask the doorway leading to the sepulchral chamber—there is a square recess, a kind of ambry without doors, intended to serve as a *crédence* to hold the cruets when Mass is said at the adjoining altar. This recess we at once proceeded to examine with some minuteness. We found it to be oblong in shape, about thirteen inches by eleven, and eight and a half inches in depth, but not quite regular, so that exact measurements are difficult to

give. The top slanted down from the front towards the wall. These details are unimportant, but what was of greater interest was that the wall at the back appeared to be of a quite different construction from the rest of the wall of the chapel, and was rough and ancient in appearance. Moreover, one of our party, after a careful examination of the coloured plaster ornamentation with which the wall is covered, gave it as his strong opinion that there had been a slight subsidence of this back wall, but not of the wall in front, at a later period than the execution of this coloured work, that is, within the last 250 years. The grounds on which he based this opinion were not very apparent to the others of the party, but as he alone was a trained architect, and therefore presumably knew something of what he was talking about, it may have been a case where indications were visible to the professional eye which the untrained layman could make nothing of. We also noted that this back wall was not quite parallel to the wall of the chapel. The divergence was not great, and it was difficult to measure on account of the roughness of which we have spoken, but it was quite apparent to the eye, and perhaps amounted to about one in forty or fifty, the greater depth of the recess being on the left as we stood facing it. Now these facts, it seemed to us, had a considerable significance, and they entirely bore out the conjecture we had formed before coming to the place. Apparently there *is* a masking wall there, a wall whose thickness we were able to measure, eight inches and a half; a wall which is quite distinct from, and unconnected with, that which is behind it, so that a settlement in the one does not affect the other; and which further is not exactly parallel with the earlier wall it adjoins. So far we had prospered beyond our hopes in finding evidence to support our ideas.

The next step was to ascertain whether any traces could be found of the doorway, which we were now more

than ever convinced was concealed behind this masking wall. The whole chapel is lined with plaster, ornamented with colour, but possessing little or no artistic value. There remained, therefore, since we had no authority to excavate, which is the only way in which this question can really be answered with any certainty, nothing to be done except to tap the wall carefully with a wooden mallet, and to listen attentively for any differences in the sounds that might be thus produced. Accordingly we began to do this, commencing on the right-hand side, above the recess already described, and at the point most distant from the altar in the chapel. The sound given was uniform for a distance of twenty-three inches, and seemed to be given back from a perfectly solid mass, then it suddenly changed, and for twenty-eight inches the sound was on a different note, and suggested the existence of a hollow space behind. Then again to the altar the old solid sound was produced. Further investigations seemed to show that the hollow space extended down to the ground, and to a height of five feet three inches, the width being uniformly twenty-eight inches. We tried it again and again, but always with the same result, and the difference of sound was so marked that any one of us standing with his back towards the wall, or even outside the chapel altogether, could tell at once the moment when the hammer reached the hollow space. The possibility of imagination having anything to do with it was in this way disposed of.

It is worth while also to notice how exactly the hollow space that seems to exist corresponds with the position in which we should have expected to find the doorway, if a doorway there actually is. If a line be drawn from the *billicum* of the confession in the plan on p. 314 so as to be at right angles to the axis of the church, it will be found to cut the wall of the Chapel of S. Salvatorino at a distance of four and a half palms from the back wall of

the chapel. This, since the *billicum* marks the centre of the tomb, should give us the middle point of the doorway, if the entrance were opposite the middle of the sarcophagus, which is the natural place for it. Now four and a half palms is equal to thirty-seven inches or thereabouts, since a Roman palm is a little over eight English inches. The beginning of the hollow-sounding space was, it will be remembered, twenty-three inches from the wall and fourteen inches more, thirty-seven inches in all, take us to its middle point. That is to say the hollow sound is to be found exactly, to a fraction of an inch, in the spot where on *a priori* grounds we should have searched for it, a coincidence sufficiently marked to rank as an additional evidence of the truth of our hypothesis. On the other hand, the height of the hollow space above the ground is considerably greater than we should have expected, for the level of the floor has been raised some feet. Here for the present we are bound to let the matter rest. It is impossible to find out anything more accurately until either the north wall of the chapel is taken down, or, at the least, excavations are made in the floor, so as to permit of this wall being examined below the present floor level, where presumably it is not covered over and hidden from view by plaster as it is above. The level of the chapel at present is much higher than it was of old, and an excavation could easily be made without disturbing any ornamental feature. The ancient pavement is probably intact underneath, and the lower part of the wall will be free from the plaster with which the upper part was covered 200 years ago. The character of the masonry would then decide at once whether this wall is part of Constantine's Church, or whether it is, as we suggest, only a masking wall some nine inches in thickness, immediately in front of the more ancient wall behind it. If the masonry proves to be only of the ninth century, and to be but of slight construction, such as would naturally

be used in a nine-inch wall which was not intended to support any weight, then it will be practically certain that the theory here set forth is the correct one. In that case it will be an easy matter to pierce this wall at some point below the present level of the chapel, and if it is then found that there really is an open space behind, the lost entrance to the sepulchral vault in which St. Peter lies will have been discovered, and it will only be necessary to enlarge the opening sufficiently, to permit of pilgrims once more descending the stairway and visiting the tomb which no eye has seen for more than a thousand years. If, on the other hand, no such discovery be made, and it be found that the hollow sound is due to other causes, and that there never has been a doorway on this spot, then nothing would be easier than to fill up the excavations and relay the floor, and no trace will remain to show that any such investigations have been carried out. It does not seem too much to hope that this very simple matter may, before any very long time has passed, be carried out by those who are in charge of the basilica and of the shrine, especially since it could be done quite quietly, and without coming to the knowledge of any of the visitors to the church, so that no undue excitement or curiosity need be aroused.

The facts we have stated will probably be sufficient to convince most that, if there is any way down to the vault at all, it will be found in the place we have indicated. There will perhaps, however, still be some who will feel that it is not sufficiently proved that any such way ever has existed, and who will be inclined to go on believing that in the time of Constantine access to the actual vault was finally cut off, and that no one since then either has penetrated to it or ever can do so. They will point to the undoubted fact that the expression *ad corpus* is not infrequently used in ancient documents, when the meaning is either the recess of the confession or else the

chapel of the crypt; and they will argue that it always denotes one of these two, and that the passages we quoted from St. Gregory of Tours, and also from the *Liber Pontificalis* with regard to the visit of Charlemagne, must be interpreted in such a way as to bring them into accord with the others. To this we would answer, first, that the passages which denote the recess of the confession by the phrase *ad corpus* prove nothing, for since, as we have shown, that recess exactly occupies the space above the body, the words are always applicable to it, and would naturally be used of it. Again, the use of the same words to denote the Chapel of the Confession is confined to a short period about the eleventh or twelfth centuries, and may only show that when the actual vault was no longer accessible the term *ad corpus* was transferred to this chapel, which now became the nearest point to the body which could be reached. There is, however, another and distinct line of argument of which we shall now avail ourselves, and which goes to show that there certainly must have been some means of access to the actual sarcophagus itself, at a date much later than that of Constantine, and in all probability as late as the beginning of the ninth century. This argument is derived from the existence and veneration in the Catholic Church of relics *ex ossibus Apostolorum*, fragments of the bones as well of St. Peter as of St. Paul. Of these there are many in various places, the most famous of course being the well-known relics of the heads of the two apostles which are kept above the papal altar in the Church of S. Giovanni Laterano. If it be true that Constantine finally sealed up the tomb, and that access to it was by him rendered impossible, it follows, of course, that either all these relics must have been extracted from the sarcophagus before it was thus rendered inaccessible, or else, a hypothesis which no Catholic will entertain for a single moment, that every one of these relics are

forgeries—the inventions, fraudulent or otherwise, of a later age.

We can, however, demonstrate that they were not extracted before the time of Constantine, or for a long time afterwards. The proof of this is the simple and notorious fact that the Western Church did not adopt the custom of removing portions of the bones of the saints for this purpose, until a much later period. It is not necessary to quote many authorities to prove this point, because the letter of St. Gregory the Great to the empress at Constantinople, which we have already had occasion to quote several times, is quite enough to make the whole matter clear.<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that the empress had sent expressly to request that the head of St. Paul, or at least some notable relic of his body, might be sent to her for the new church just built at Constantinople in honour of that apostle. Now St. Gregory does not reply that the tomb is no longer accessible, or that his stock of relics taken in the time of Constantine is exhausted. On the contrary, the whole argument of his letter implies that the tomb was accessible, and that he could get the relics from it if he would. And it must not be forgotten that all that he says of St. Paul's is also true of St. Peter's, for Constantine is recorded to have treated both the tombs in exactly the same way. If therefore the sarcophagus of St. Paul was accessible in St. Gregory's time, so also was that of St. Peter. St. Gregory's argument is that he dare not open the tomb, "since no one dare even pray there without much fear". He goes on to relate various portentous occurrences which have coincided with unduly close approaches to the remains of these saints, and also of St. Laurence, and says that he can do no more than send a handkerchief which has been lowered to touch the tomb, but that she must treat that

<sup>1</sup> Greg. Magn., *Ep.* iv. n. 30, *ad Constantinam*, ed. Ewald, p. 264.

with all the reverence which she would pay to the actual body itself, for that its miraculous powers were equally great. Then he continues: "In Rome and throughout the West it is held to be most intolerably sacrilegious for any man to touch the bodies of the saints, and if any have so presumed their temerity will assuredly not remain unpunished. Wherefore We are astonished almost beyond belief to hear it asserted that it is the custom among the Greeks thus to raise the bones of the saints." He states further on that the *sudarium* or handkerchief with which the eyes of St. Paul were bound when he was beheaded was in the tomb with the body, but he does not make any definite statement about the head, although, since it was the head that was asked for, the whole letter implies that it was then not at the Lateran but with the body at St. Paul's. It would clearly have been impossible for St. Gregory to have written in these terms to the empress, if it was well known to everybody in Rome, and therefore to the legates whom the empress had sent, that he had the relics she wished for in his possession, but that he did not care to part with them.

In the eighth or ninth century, however, the sentiment of Rome was changed upon this point. They no longer shrank from the idea of touching the body of a saint to remove a relic for separate veneration, but rather held that the saint was thereby greatly honoured. The reason of the change of sentiment was no doubt the necessity for the wholesale translation of the bodies of the martyrs from the dangerous solitudes of the Catacombs to a place of safety within the walls of Rome. For the first hundred years after the peace of the Church the Catacombs had continued to be used as places of interment, and to be visited with great devotion as containing the shrines of so many martyrs. The Churches of S. Agnese and S. Lorenzo, and several others, remain to us as a standing proof of the strong feeling against any

translation of the relics of a saint, which was so characteristic of these earliest centuries. These churches are not built above the cemeteries, but are cut deep down into the earth, so that the tomb of the saint might be used, without any translation or disturbance of the relics, as the high altar of the church. Thousands of graves must have been destroyed that honour might thus be paid to one. At S. Agnese this is especially noticeable, and every one will remember the long flight of stairs by which the descent to the church is made, but at S. Lorenzo the excavation was made in the side of a hill which has since been cut away all round the church, so that no descent is necessary. The Damatine inscriptions, many of them still intact in their original places, also show us how great was the devotion both of Romans and of pilgrims to these holy spots throughout the fourth century, the period of the greatest glory of the Catacombs of Rome. The changes came early in the fifth century with the terrible invasion of Alaric and the Huns in 410, when, as St. Jerome puts it, "all the world perished in the destruction of a single city".<sup>1</sup> The Catacombs shared in the general catastrophe at this time, and were again injured, perhaps to an even greater extent, in the later invasions of Totila and the Goths. The barbarians found the cemeteries, which of course were entirely outside the walls of Rome, quite at their mercy, and they ransacked them for gold and treasure, broke down the shrines of the martyrs, and reduced many of them to a state of ruin, especially those on the Via Salaria, where the damage done seems to have been more extensive than anywhere else. We find the traces of all this in the inscriptions of the time, set up to commemorate the restorations which were put in hand by Vigilius, the Damasus of the sixth century. One, for

<sup>1</sup> St. Jerome, *Proleg.*, in *lib. i.*, *Ezech.*, v., 16.

instance, in one of the cemeteries on the Via Salaria Vecchia, runs as follows:—

HIC FUROR HOSTILIS TEMPLUM VIOLAVIT INIQUUS  
CUM PREMERET VALLO MCENIA SEPTA GETES.<sup>1</sup>

No one was buried in the Catacombs after 410, but they still remained accessible, and were visited by all the pilgrims. Indeed, after the works of repair undertaken by Vigilius, they seemed to have recovered their old splendour, and an inscription which occurs more than once even claims that in some cases the shrines were richer than ever, rejoicing over the injury done, and the new adornment that followed, something after the manner of the famous *O felix culpa* of St. Thomas of Aquin:—

PLANGE TUUM GENS SÆVA NEFAS, PERIERE FURORES  
CREVIT IN HIS TEMPLIS PER TUA DAMNA DECUS.<sup>2</sup>

The barbarians, though they robbed the shrines, and broke down the marbles and inscriptions, do not seem to have violated the tombs, and Rome still had her “coronet of martyrs” as St. Jerome picturesquely phrased it, quite intact around her. The pilgrims of the earlier part of the eighth century still visited the cemeteries and copied the inscriptions on the spot. Then there came a much more terrible calamity, for the Lombards, whose invasion occurred in 755, did not hesitate to open the graves themselves, and even to carry off with them bodies of the saints on their return to Pavia. This it was which at last woke up the Pontiffs to the necessity for greater precautions, and it was in the following year, 757, that the first translations of the bodies of the martyrs took place. Paul I. (757-768) was then Pope, and had just built the Church of S. Silvestro cata Pauli, the same which

<sup>1</sup> Gruter, 1170, 13. See Armellini, *Cem. Ant. Cr.*, pp. 129-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 1171, 18.

has now become, after many vicissitudes, the national church of the English-speaking people in Rome, and is known as S. Silvestro in capite. To this church, therefore, the first martyrs who were brought from the Catacombs were taken, and the fact was recorded on a marble tablet which is still in the *cortile* in front of the church. For a long time the right half of this marble was lacking, but it was found quite recently, in the course of some repairs which were being carried out, so that we now have the complete and authentic list of the saints whose bodies were translated at this time. It includes no less than eight Popes, Silvester, Stephen, Antherus, Miltiades, Lucius, Caius, Zephyrinus and Dionysius; the most interesting among the other martyrs being St. Tarcisius, the boy martyr of the Blessed Sacrament, whose death is so beautifully recorded in Cardinal Wiseman's *Fabiola*, and whose epitaph by St. Damasus is one of the strongest proofs of the belief of the fourth century in the Real Presence, and in transubstantiation as it is held to-day.

TARCISIUM SANCTUM CHRISTI SACRAMENTA GERENTEM  
 CUM MALE SANA MANUS PETERET VULGARE PROFANIS  
 IPSE ANIMAM POTIUS VOLUIT DIMITTERE CÆSUS  
 PRODERE QUAM CANIBUS RABIDIS CÆLESTIA MEMBRA.<sup>1</sup>

“He preferred to give his own life rather than to allow the limbs of Christ to be torn by ravening dogs.”

This work of removing the bodies of the saints was continued by later Popes, although Hadrian I. (772-795) made one more last effort to preserve the Catacombs as of old. Paschal I. (817-822), in addition to translating St. Cecilia and others to particular churches, removed no less than 2300 bodies of the martyrs at one time, and placed them in the Church of Sta Prassede; and St. Leo IV., a little later, did the same for almost all that still remained

<sup>1</sup> *Carmen*, xviii.

outside the walls, placing them this time in S. Martino ai Monti..

There is, in the crypts of St. Peter's in the part known as the *Grotte Vecchie*, and close to the door by which entrance to this portion of the crypts is gained from the staircase in the pilaster of St. Veronica, an ancient marble tablet bearing a mutilated inscription of the eighth century. It records the deposition of certain relics of the saints in the old basilica, and the interesting point is that the list of names coincides exactly with that given on the marble at S. Silvestro. Evidently Paul I., when he was carrying out the translation of these saints, removed a small portion from each body, and conveyed it to St. Peter's. This would seem therefore definitely to fix the period at which it became the custom in Rome to take relics from the bones of the saints, a custom which as we have seen was unknown and even reprobated there 150 years earlier. We cannot fix the date accurately, but there is evidently no improbability involved in the supposition that the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul were also opened, and relics of the bones removed, by some one of the Popes who lived between the time of Paul I. and St. Leo III., that is, at some time after the middle of the eighth century, but before the final closing of the tombs on the occasion of the invasion of the Saracens in 846.

This supposition agrees well with the few other facts that are known to us in this connection. The heads of St. Peter and St. Paul at the Lateran were certainly placed in the Chapel of St. Laurence, known as the *Sancta Sanctorum*, at some period considerably anterior to the year 1227, in which year they were found built up in the wall in a cavity which had been made for them. The eighth or ninth century may well have been the time at which this was done.

As early as the twelfth century, and probably a good

deal earlier, there was an altar in the basilica, situated close to the high altar on the right hand, which was dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, and popularly known as the altar *De ossibus*. It is mentioned by Mallius<sup>1</sup> in his history of the basilica, and also by Alfarano.<sup>2</sup> It would seem to have been ancient even in the twelfth century, for Romanus, in his additions to Mallius, says of it that "here S. Silvester divided the bones of the apostles," a legend which could hardly have become attached to it if the altar was well known to be of recent date. It looks very much as if this altar had been erected in the ninth century to receive the relics of the apostles which had then been lately taken from their respective tombs. In any case it is worth our while to examine the story just alluded to, about the division of the bones of the apostles, because it furnishes us with such an admirable example of the growth of legend, and in this case of a legend which even now is by no means wholly discarded, although discredited by all works of repute. Those who have visited the crypts of St. Peter's will probably remember that they were shown a large slab of porphyry, with an ancient inscription close by, which states that it was upon this slab of porphyry that the division of the apostles was carried out by St. Sylvester. This slab is the *mensa* of the old altar *De ossibus*. The story to which the inscription alludes appears first, so far as we are aware, in a work by Johannes Belet, published in 1162, with the title *Divinorum Officiorum, ac eorumdem rationum brevis explicatio*. He is treating of the feast of "the Division of the Apostles," which occurs in many ancient martyrologies and calendars on July 15th, on which day it is still kept in many parts of the church. He first states, perfectly correctly, that this feast com-

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi. *Insc. Chr.*, ii.

<sup>2</sup> Notes to plan. Also in MS. in Archives of St. Peter's, cap. vii; cf. Severano, *Sette Chiese*, p. 110.

morates the separation of the apostles when they left Jerusalem to go to preach the Gospel in all parts of the world, but then goes on to say that some think it refers to the division of St. Peter and St. Paul of which he has already spoken elsewhere. On following up his reference we find the following story.<sup>1</sup> "The bodies of these two apostles were laid in the same place and in the same tomb. But when, after the conversion of the Roman emperor, Christianity began to grow and flourish, a separate church was built in honour of each apostle. It was necessary, accordingly, to separate the bodies, but they could not tell which were Peter's bones and which Paul's. They therefore set themselves to fast and to pray, and an answer was given them from heaven to the effect that the larger bones belonged to the Preacher, and the smaller to the Fisherman. They were then separated one from another in accordance with this answer, and placed in their respective churches." Durandus, who wrote in the following century, carries the fable a step farther. He puts it as the first and authentic meaning of the feast, and merely adds at the end that some do say that it commemorates the parting at Jerusalem. Otherwise he tells the story just as Beleth does, but with the fresh detail appended, that St. Sylvester did not take either body intact to its own church, but that "he with the greatest care and reverence weighed the bones, and placed one half in one church and the other half in the other". The popularity of Durandus' book was very great, and the story as he told it came to be accepted without question at Rome in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, so that we have it asserted, not only in the inscription already mentioned in connection with the old altar *De ossibus*, but also in another which Torrigio tells us was to be seen in his time above the altar of St. Paul's. "Under this altar lie the glorious bodies

<sup>1</sup> Ed. published at Venice, 1577, p. 366.



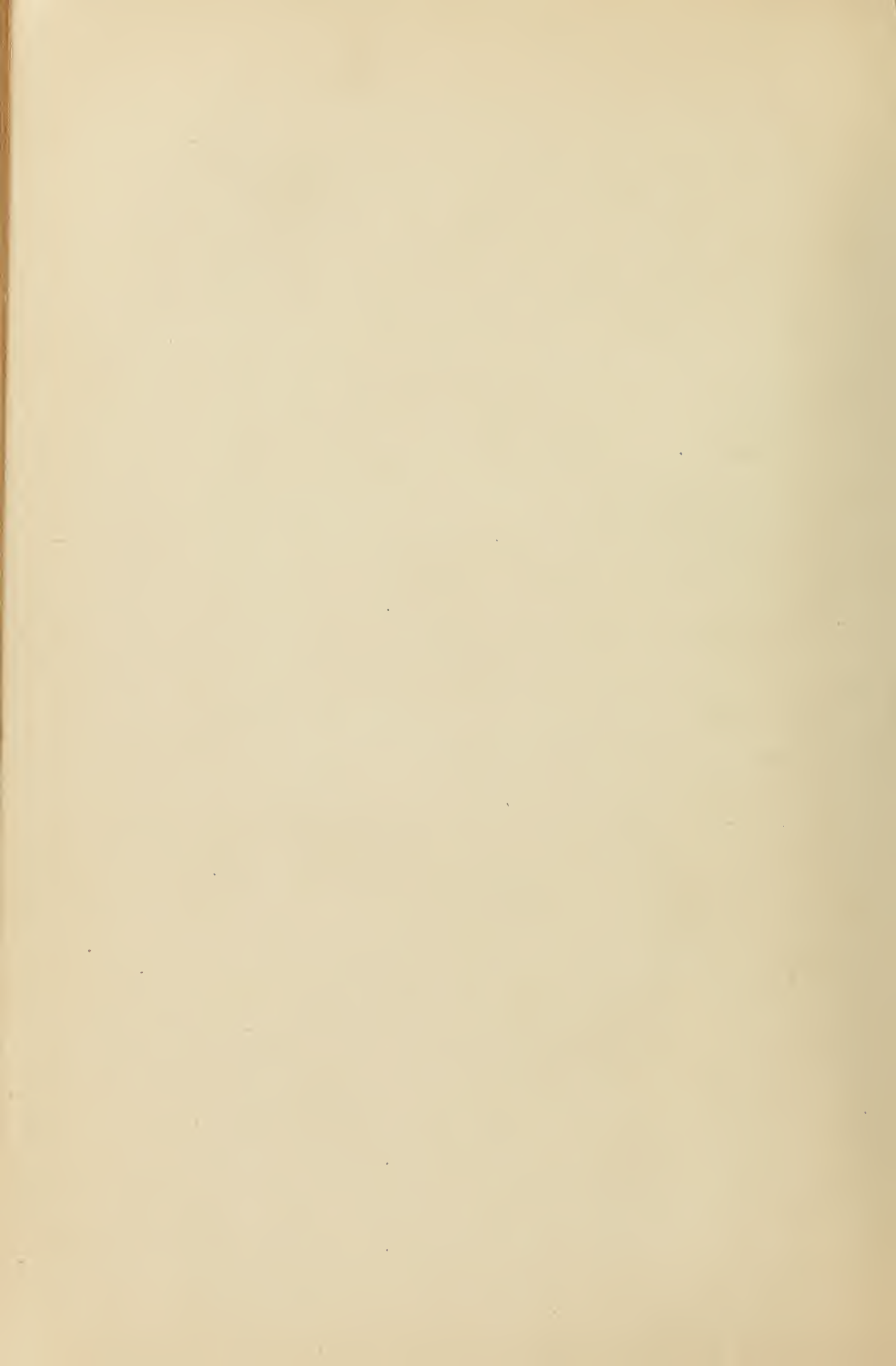
of the apostles Peter and Paul, half of each of them, the other half being at St. Peter's, and their heads at St. John Lateran."

It is not often that we can trace so easily and clearly the sources from which a legend such as this has had its rise. The whole fantastic story is based upon four facts with which we have already dealt, but each of them has been distorted because imperfectly understood. It was known that the two apostles St. Peter and St. Paul had for a time shared a common sepulchre, and that from thence their remains had been translated to their respective churches, or rather to the tombs around which those churches were to be built. Next, there was the tradition, probably perfectly true and well founded, that the relics of both apostles had been united, and were preserved in each of the two great churches, and further that the altar *De ossibus Apostolorum* in St. Peter's was in some way connected with this fact. Add to this the existence of a feast in honour of the division of the apostles, a title that could so easily be misunderstood, and we have all the elements that are necessary for the growth of our legend. The miraculous details of the voice from heaven, and the rest, are due to the pious imagination of some mediæval writer, and are quite on a par with much of the same kind with which any student of the apocryphal lives of the saints, and even of the apocryphal Gospels, will be very familiar. It is strange, however, that the longer bones should have been assigned to St. Paul and the shorter to St. Peter, for the general tradition of the appearance of the two apostles is quite the other way, it being usually supposed that St. Paul was of small stature, and that St. Peter surpassed him in height.

Here then, and until fresh data become available by means of further excavations, we must bring our investigations to an end. In so large a field, in much of which he has had to work as a pioneer, unaided by the con-

clusions of others who have laboured before him, the author is well aware that he can hardly hope not to have made many blunders and mistakes. Sometimes too he may have failed to draw a conclusion which others will at once see is rendered obvious by the premises which he has collected. All this will be set right by the criticisms of those who are more learned in these matters than himself. But he will feel himself amply rewarded if he has succeeded in drawing attention to some points which have hitherto been overlooked in the story of the basilica, and has contributed something to the historical basis on which we hold it to be a most certain fact that the prince of the apostles lived and died in Rome, and lies buried beneath the glorious dome of the greatest church that Christendom has ever known.

A.M.D.G.



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