

tian to sequester the church, thus withholding it from both contending parties. The next year he gave in to Ambrose and ceded it to the Nicenes.

The anti-Nicenes naturally would have been incensed over that imperial about-face and would have continued to press their claim to the church originally planned for them. The ascension to the throne in 382 of the boy emperor Valentinian II, backed by Justina, provided a new chance for them to demand equality of worship in their own cathedral and for the imperial house to make up for the defeat suffered in 379. Towards the end of 384, an "Arian" bishop, Mercurinus, driven by Theodosius from his see in Rumania, was called by the court to Milan and installed as Auxentius II, the anti-Nicene bishop, early in 386, presumably against considerable opposition—therefore the time lag of over a year between his arrival and his consecration.⁴³ This is the climate in which to view the events of 385 and 386. The "Arian" bishop needed a cathedral, as did his court; the Portiana, S. Lorenzo, originally had been intended for just that purpose. The appointment of the new "Arian" bishop would have exacerbated the conflict, and the existence of the imperial mausoleum attached to the church was an added, if not the principal, reason for Justina's and her son's insistent claim to just that church. Hence, Ambrose's being ordered already in 385 to hand it over; hence, the decree of tolerance issued—better, reissued—in January 386; hence, the contest of wills during Easter week that year, when the anti-Nicenes wanted a place of worship and baptism of their own; hence, the young emperor's pitiful complaint, "I, too, must have a basilica"; hence, Ambrose's triumph after the final victory of his uncompromising policy of ruthlessly combating both "Arianism" and interference by the temporal power in the Church.

This leaves a word to be said about the chapel, later S. Ippolito, attached to the eastward exedra of S. Lorenzo. The plan, cross shaped inside and vaulted throughout, points to its, too, having been a mausoleum. Nearly forty years ago, it was correctly pointed out that the bishops of Milan, from the middle of the fifth century on, sought burial at S. Lorenzo. Could they have taken up a much earlier custom started in the fourth century by their "heretic" predecessors? And could the chapel of S. Ippolito, when planned between 375–76 and 378, have been intended for the belated burial of bishop Auxentius I?⁴⁴ Or is this too bold a conjecture?

Be that as it may, this, I submit, is the political frame within which the building of the S. Lorenzo group outside the walls and the "battle of the cathedrals" in Milan should be seen.

IV

ROME AGAIN

Once Constantinople had been founded, no emperor returned to Rome to take up permanent residence. Nonetheless, the illusion of her being the legitimate capital of the Empire—though no longer the only one—had been carefully nurtured by Constantine. Long after him, moreover, by general consensus Rome remained *caput mundi*, as conceived by Augustus and Virgil. That concept lived on, in the face of catastrophes, political and economic, through the centuries. However, as her importance in the realm of secular politics dwindled, a new reality came to the fore. Rome again became a capital: the capital of the bishop of Rome, soon the spiritual leader of the West, and in a sense very different from Virgil's she returned to being *caput mundi*.

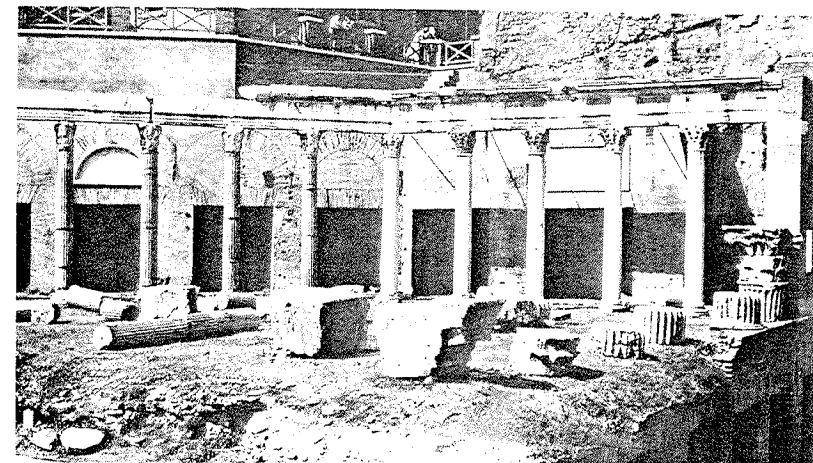
One looks back at the map of Rome under Constantine and the remote location at the Lateran of her bishop's residence and his cathedral, far out in the southeastern corner of the city and near the walls (fig. 1). The site had been chosen by Constantine from considerations of expedience in the political and religious context of Rome in 312–13. By the end of the fourth and increasingly in the fifth century the short-range advantage turned into a long-range liability. The monumental and administrative area in the center of the city was rapidly losing its political and sacral connotations. To be sure, the Senate still met in the Curia; the city prefect still received in his audience hall on the Forum Romanum, now the church of SS. Cosma e Damiano, preceded by a circular domed entrance hall, added in the early fourth century; and near the Forum Boarium the prefect of the annona still occupied the colonnaded hall

presumably built under Constantine and later incorporated into the front part of S. Maria in Cosmedin.¹ And altogether the conservative party, still dominant in the Senate through the better part of the fourth century, fought a desperate battle to retain the traditional, and by implication pagan, character of this the heart of Rome. Alföldi's *Conflict of Ideas*, the essays assembled by Momigliano in the Oxford-Warburg Studies, and Peter Brown's *Augustine of Hippo* all outline the situation. In the realm of public building, the conflict comes to the fore in a conscious continued policy on the part of the traditionalists aimed at restoring the inherited character, both secular and religious, of the Forum and at preserving or reviving as best possible the architectural concepts handed down through the centuries: the Secretarium Senatus was restored; so was the Basilica Julia in 377 along the lines and in the vocabulary laid down nearly four hundred years before. The Temple of Saturn was rebuilt on the old podium, its columns surmounted by Ionic capitals, albeit deviating from the classical norm, but resuscitating an order rarely used in Rome through Imperial times; they carry an entablature of second-century date, splendidly carved and saved from some older building (fig. 84). Not far away, below the eastward cliff of the Capitoline Hill, the *porticus deorum consentium* was built from the ground in 367, entirely composed of such spoils (fig. 85). But the fight for the old gods was in vain. Christianity had become the state religion. Paganism in 395 was declared illegal. The great families were forced to convert, and the few elderly aristocrats who openly or clandestinely clung to their religious heritage played no public role. The temples in the course of the fourth century were closed and deprived of their funds, and by 400 Capitol and Fora were no longer even a shadow of the religious center they had been at the start of the fourth century. Nor did what had been the heart of Rome and the Empire retain by that time any major political importance. The palaces on the Palatine were maintained, but no emperor, no court, no imperial officer of standing resided there. And the Senate, after the blow of 395, could no longer cling to the illusion of political power it had still nurtured some ten years earlier when fighting under Symmachus's leadership for the altar of Victory in the Curia.²

Rome by the early fifth century was a Christian city, as any visitor could see. Clearly, many of the unobtrusive community centers of old, installed in mansions or tenements, continued to function, some until the ninth century; others, indeed, were newly acquired in the fourth century. But nearly half such *domus ecclesiae* between 380 and 440 were being replaced and their number supplemented by large basilicas, splendidly appointed and increasingly claiming public standing. A few large but modest halls, to be sure, already served Christian congregations by the middle of the fourth century: of one, large parts lie buried next to the



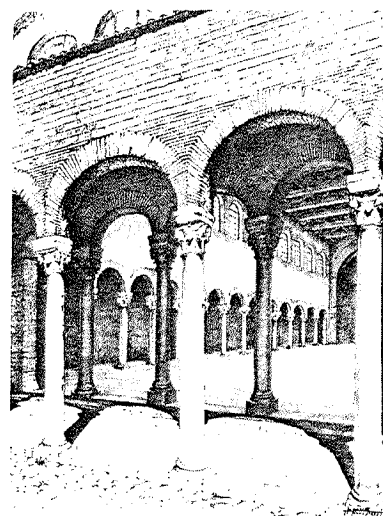
84. Rome, Forum, Temple of Saturn



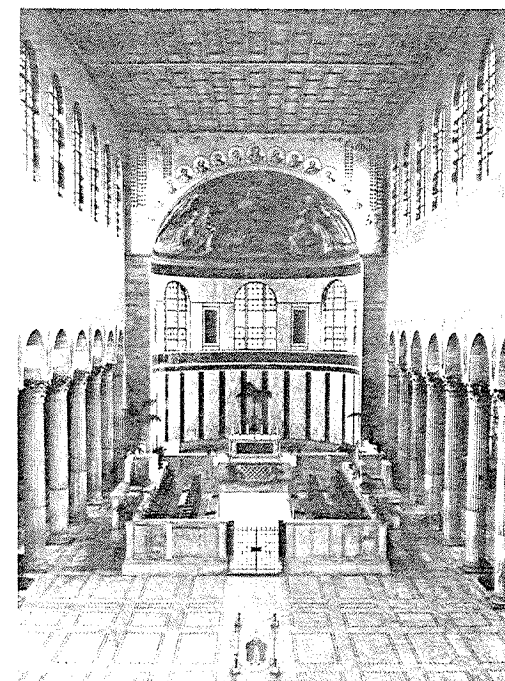
85. Rome, Forum, porticus deorum consentium

twelfth-century church of S. Crisogono; of another, founded in 336 by Pope Mark at the foot of the Capitoline Hill, some elements, including a sumptuous pavement, survive below the present church of S. Marco; of the first church of S. Maria in Trastevere, built between 337 and 352 by Pope Julius I and buried below the huge extant twelfth-century basilica, little is known so far save its existence. But the majority of the new churches date from the last third of the fourth through the first third of the fifth century: S. Anastasia, S. Clemente, S. Lorenzo in Damaso, S. Sisto Vecchio, S. Pietro in Vincoli, SS. Giovanni e Paolo, S. Vitale, S. Sabina, S. Lorenzo in Lucina, and S. Marcello al Corso.³ Built in roughly that sequence, the new churches were remarkably homogeneous. Constructed in mortared rubble with double brick facing, as long customary in Rome, all follow a standard plan composed of a nave, terminating apse, high clerestory carried by colonnaded arcades, and two aisles. Where a building of the type, such as a *thermae basilica*, was available it was purchased and refurbished as the audience hall of Christ, as witness S. Pudenziana with its grand apse mosaic (fig. 22). All are meant to hold large congregations ranging in size from eight to nearly fourteen hundred. Deviations from the standard are comparatively minor, and even the dimensions vary little. But the differences in the quality of design, the proportions, and the splendor of decorations are considerable. Taste and financial backing apparently varied. The contrast between S. Clemente or S. Vitale (fig. 86) on the one hand and S. Sabina on the other (fig. 87) speaks for itself. The former buildings, low and bare from what is known, with crude columns and plain capitals; the latter beautifully proportioned, carried by a splendid set of columns—spoils from some Roman building—profusely lit by large windows, planned with a coffered ceiling, and lavishly decorated with marble paneling above the arcades (fig. 88), painted decoration in the aisles, and mosaics in the apse, on the nave walls, and below a quintuple window on the façade, the latter with the dedicatory inscription still surviving. Outside, nave and apse rise, and always rose, high over the surrounding gardens and mansions (fig. 89).

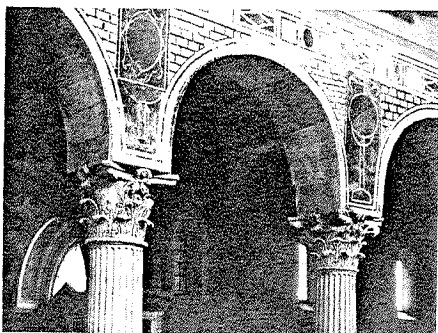
All these new churches, whether modest or grand and richly appointed, seem to reflect a conscious building policy on the part of the papacy. The bishop of Rome as head of the Church increasingly had his name linked to the new basilicas, whether or not he was the actual founder. It has indeed been suggested that an unwritten understanding obliged a newly elected pope to build a church or to found a community center, just as such an obligation bound a Roman magistrate to finance public building or circus games. In fact, during the fourth century nearly every pope gave his name to a new foundation: Sylvester I to the *titulus Sylvestri*; Mark I to S. Marco; Julius I to the *basilica Julii* (or *titulus Callisti*) on



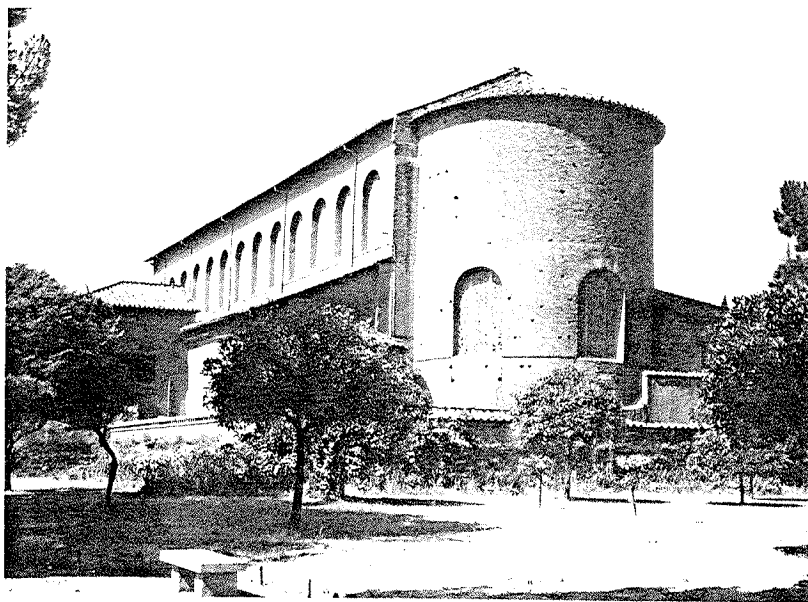
86. Rome, S. Vitale, reconstruction



87. Rome, S. Sabina, interior



88. Rome, S. Sabina, interior, *opus sectile* decoration above arcades



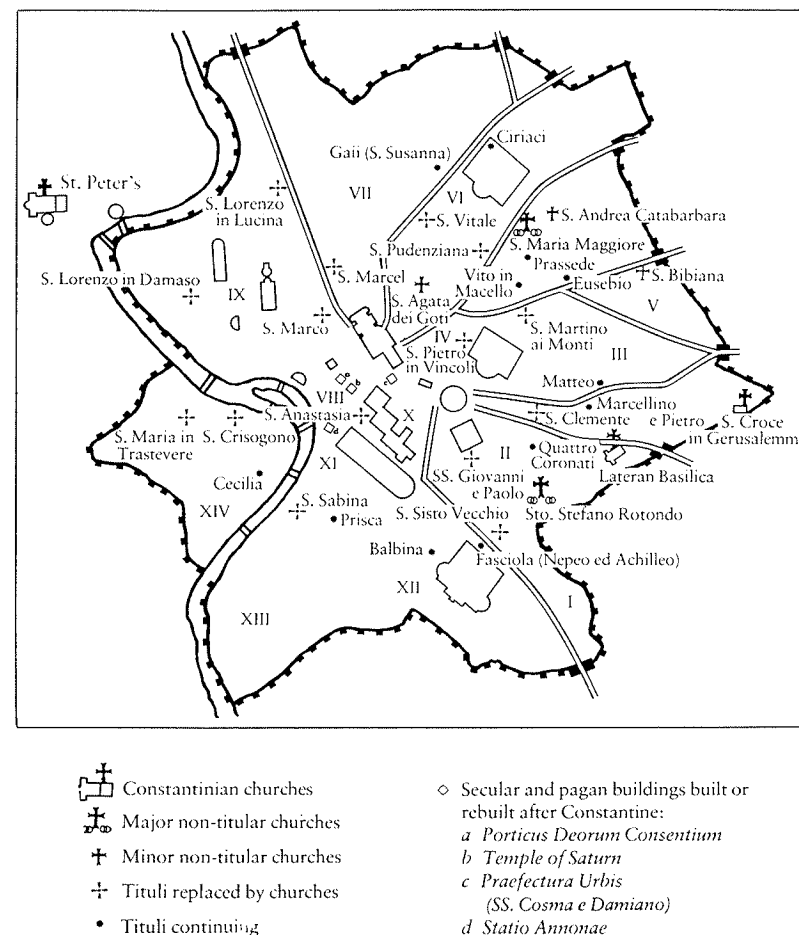
89. Rome, S. Sabina, exterior

the site of S. Maria in Trastevere; Damasus to the *titulus Damasi*, installed in his family mansion near S. Lorenzo in Damaso. Still, S. Sisto Vecchio at the end of the century was apparently built by Pope Anastasius I using his own resources. Where a pope's means were insufficient, a wealthy parishioner or clergyman would provide the funds. But the name of the ruling pope would be prominently connected with the foundation. This seems to have been true already when under Pope Sylvester the *titulus Equitii* was founded, and it became general practice from the last years of the fourth through the first third of the fifth century, the only exception being S. Paolo fuori le Mura, the last great donation of the emperors in Rome. A bequest from a moderately wealthy lady, Vestina, financed the construction of S. Vitale, but the biography of Pope Innocent in the *Liber Pontificalis* stresses that he organized the work and dedicated the church. Similarly, at S. Sabina construction and decoration were financed by a wealthy presbyter from Illyricum, Peter, but the dedicatory inscription begins, not with his name, but with the name of the ruling pope Caelestin, while the *Liber Pontificalis* goes further by placing the construction in the biography of Sixtus III, under whom, perhaps, the finishing touches were put on the decoration. Again, at SS. Giovanni e Paolo, where construction was financed by the enormously wealthy senator Pammachius, whether during his life or after 410 through a bequest, the dedication poem for the decoration of the vestibule starts out with the name of the pope, whether or not Leo I, and mentions the actual founder only at the end. From 390 to 410, under Popes Siricius and Innocent, the procedure would seem to have been institutionalized by setting up a standing committee in charge of financing and supervising the building activity of the Church in the city and at the great martyrs' shrines: at S. Pudenziana, S. Vitale, S. Agnese, and S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura. The committee was composed of apparently wealthy clergymen headed by the presbyter Leopardus, though changing in membership; but the ruling pope, in his biography in the *Liber Pontificalis*, is presented as the *spiritus movens*. Beginning with Sixtus III (432–40), the situation changes further, and the pope claims outright for himself the honor of being the founder: at S. Pietro in Vincoli, where the actual founder Philippus and even the imperial subsidies provided are barely mentioned; at S. Lorenzo in Lucina; at S. Maria Maggiore; and at the Lateran baptistery—but the last two, as we shall see, are special cases. From here on *hic fecit*, or *hic reparavit*, *hic dedicavit*, become standard phrases in the papal biographies from Leo to Symmachus at the end of the century; only for imperial donations, rare in the fifth century, does the papacy abandon its claim of being the founder. Even the occasional reference in inscriptions to the cleric supervising construction disappears after Leo I. Indirectly and directly, then, through the fifth century the

papal see appears to have financed and certainly supervised a program of monumental church building in Rome, emphatically stressing its claim to that effect.⁴

A program on such a scale, when distributed over sixty-odd years, was well within the means of the Church. By the late fourth century a large patrimony had accumulated in the hands of the Roman bishop. Constantine's gift of estates and income for the maintenance of his church foundations in Rome had been considerable; the market value has been estimated as roughly 300,000 gold solidi, the income at 25,000 solidi, "at a time when three or four gold solidi bought a man's food for the year." These gifts had been enlarged by donations from other sources, encouraged by governmental and ecclesiastical legislation: voluntary offerings and bequests by the faithful from the very rich to those of modest means, reversion to the Church of the property of bishops and other clergy in case of childless or intestate death, tax privileges and exemption from onerous civic duties, the prohibition of church consecration without previous provision of endowment.⁵ This capital invested in real estate seems to have increased further during the fifth century, notwithstanding the loss of the North African possessions through the Vandal invasion and the successive raids into Italy as far as Rome by Visigoths, Huns, and Vandals. On the contrary, rich families driven away by general insecurity or unable to keep up maintenance or individuals withdrawing into religious life, like the Roman ladies from Jerome's circle, would leave their estates to the Church, or else the Church would be able to acquire them by purchase. The huge landholdings thus accruing around Rome and through Central Italy produced a sizable income, and a budgeting system going back to the third century and solidly established in Rome by the end of the fifth assigned one-fourth of the income to the upkeep, lighting, and, obviously, building of churches, the other three-fourths going one each to charity, maintenance of the clergy, and the household of the bishop.⁶

Intensifying pastoral care and facilitating the work of overall administration were no doubt guiding elements in this building program. In fact, the new churches appear to have been distributed very deliberately in conformity with the administrative regions of Rome as established by Augustus and continued on the civic level for centuries (fig. 90).⁷ By 440 all the *regiones* each boasted, along with the surviving community centers and the few churches of fourth-century date, at least one of the new basilicas, all, that is, except the regions comprising the center of the monumental show area—the Fora, the Capitoline Hill, the Palatine—regions IV and VIII. That sector was overcrowded, and the Church, one suspects, still may have shied away from the old civic and pagan religious center, long after paganism had been declared dead. But the other



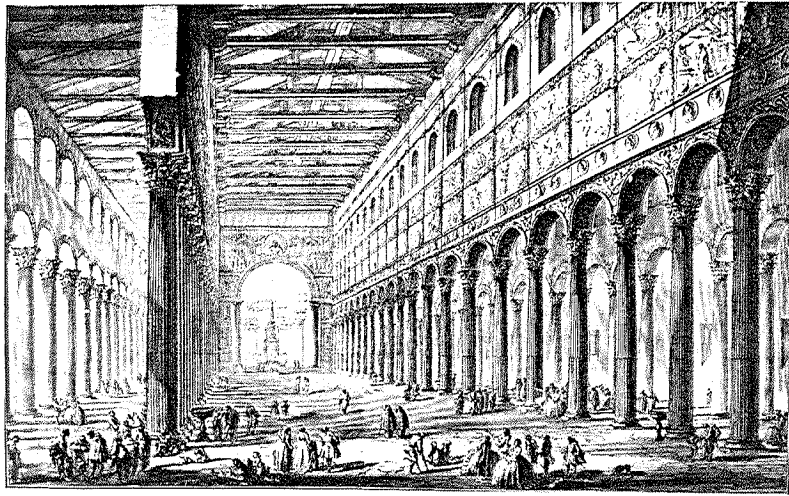
90. Rome ca. 500, showing regions, ancient monuments, old community centers, and new basilicas

regions all were provided with the new churches, from Trastevere to the Aventine, the Viminal, the Celian, and the Campus Martius. Region I, Porta Capena, and adjoining it region XII with the Baths of Caracalla, both in the greenbelt of ancient Rome and thinly settled, were taken care of by one single church, S. Sisto Vecchio, founded by Pope Anastasius I; in region II, Caelimontium, the Celian Hill, likewise in the greenbelt, at roughly that time SS. Giovanni e Paolo was built by the rich Pamphili. S. Pudenziana from about 390 on served the inhabitants of region V, the Esquiline; S. Pietro in Vincoli, those of region III, the Oppian Hill. S. Vitale ministered to the people of region VI on the Quirinal and Viminal and in the separating valley, along the *vicus longus*; S. Anastasia, to those of region XI, Circus Maximus, at the foot of the Palatine. In the Campus Martius, region IX, S. Marco served the southern part, down to the densely settled riverbank near the bridges; S. Lorenzo in Damaso took care of the western sector; the northern part was serviced by S. Lorenzo in Lucina, built between 432 and 440. S. Marcello, east of the Corso, of about the same date, would have belonged to region VI, *via lata*, while region VII, *alta semita*, on the Quirinal, was provided for, not by a newly built church, but by the impressive fourth-century reception hall of a great mansion, the *titulus Caii*, now incorporated into the church of S. Susanna. On the Aventine, region XIII, in the greenbelt like regions I, II, III, and VII, rose S. Sabina, Peter the Illyrian's foundation. Finally, densely populated Trastevere, region XIV, had been served ever since the first half of the fourth century by two churches, S. Crisogono and S. Maria in Trastevere, presumably along with quite a few *domus ecclesiae*, led by the *titulus Caeciliae* installed in a large mansion. It is hard to believe that distribution could have happened by accident. Rather, it smacks of bureaucratic planning—a building program extended over some sixty years which appears to have assigned the new churches nearly alike to thinly and densely settled parts of town, one or sometimes two or three to a region (see below, fig. 97).

Clearly the intention in erecting these new basilicas was to replace old community centers by what might be called parish churches, capable of holding congregations far larger than the former could ever have accommodated. Still, the number of such parish churches built in Rome in the century following Constantine's death, while large in proportion to the known number of *domus ecclesiae*, is amazingly small when set against the probable size of the total Roman congregation: a bare eleven, offering space for no more than ten thousand. Even adding the roughly seven or eight thousand faithful the Lateran cathedral and St. Peter's together would hold, it was an astonishingly limited provision for a population, Christian by now, of a few hundred thousand. The larger part of the community must have still frequented community centers. Of

these there must have been in the fourth and perhaps fifth centuries more than twenty-five, *pace* the figure given by the sixth-century compiler of the *Liber Pontificalis*, and probably more than the twenty-nine whose clergy attended the Roman synod of 499.⁸ As much, then, as to provide additional space for larger congregations and to intensify pastoral care, the new basilicas were meant to claim public standing for the Church. To be sure, by the early fifth century the position of the Church as a public institution was no longer in doubt. By then the See of Rome, as represented by its bishop, was a power of the first magnitude, among the biggest landowners from Provence to North Africa, the spiritual lodestar of the West, and, with the decline of the Empire, forced to fill a power vacuum throughout Italy and Western Europe. *De facto*, if not *de iure*, the Roman bishop was the ruler of the city and of large parts of Italy. The decline of imperial power in the West after 400 strengthened his position, and the building policy of the papacy from the late fourth century through the pontificate of Sixtus III, 432–40, reflects this, their claim to rule from Rome, their Christian capital.

At the same time, as Rome became a Christian capital, the Church and her policy, including her building program, became increasingly imbued with the traditions of ancient Rome. Where clergy and congregations in Rome prior to 360–70 seem to have been indifferent, if not hostile, to the classical heritage, Christian leaders from the last third of the century on increasingly turned towards that past. This Romanization of Christianity, promoted by the conversion of aristocratic leaders to the Church and by the influx into the ecclesiastical hierarchy of men trained in the classical tradition, such as Pope Damasus (366–85), Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine of Hippo, reached its peak after 400 when the last great families became Christian. Alaric's sack of Rome and the ensuing shock—"Haeret vox . . . capta est urbs quae totum cepit orbem" ("my voice fails . . . fallen has the city to which the world once fell"), writes Jerome from Bethlehem—both reinforced the position of the papacy and, by reaction, furthered its Romanization. A generation earlier, with the pontificate of Damasus, foreign-born martyrs had already acquired, as it were, posthumous Roman citizenship through having shed their blood in Rome. Peter and Paul, rather than Romulus and Remus, were the city's true founders and guardians. Classical learning and art had been shunned heretofore by Church leaders in the West because of its links with pagan gods, heroes, and myths. Now, having become innocuous through the death of paganism, antiquity was absorbed by the Roman Church in the poems of Damasus, in the lettering of his inscriptions, in the writings of Augustine, and in sarcophagi such as that of the younger Junius Bassus, which dates shortly after 359. In the planning of churches, patrons and architects strove for building on a large scale, for monumental design,



91. Rome, S. Paolo fuori le Mura, interior as of ca. 1750, engraving G. B. Piranesi

for lavish interior decoration unheard of in Rome since Constantine. At the same time, the classical tenor reached in the new churches looks back to the Hadrianic and Augustan past of Rome.⁹

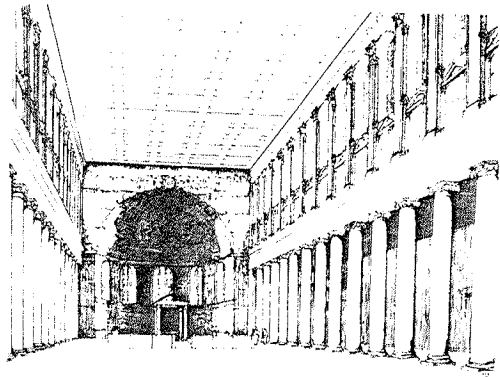
The renaissance in church building appears to start somewhat later than that in the figurative arts. It has its roots, it seems to me, in the last fifteen years of the fourth century with the replacement of a small Constantinian (or post-Constantinian) church over the grave of Saint Paul on the Ostian way by a basilica as large and sumptuous as that of Saint Peter on the Vatican Hill. The initiative, I submit, came from Pope Damasus as a counterstroke against the increasing strength of the pagan revival of the eighties in Rome. Whether directly or through Ambrose in Milan, he approached the ruling emperors, and they presumably decided to finance construction a year or two before 384. The basilica, completed around 400, was damaged in 441 and repaired by Pope Leo I. Thus it stood until 1823, when it burned down and was rebuilt, though in a nineteenth-century idiom, on the old plan: nave, twin aisles on either side, transept, and apse. The original structure, as repaired under Leo I, survives in descriptions, paintings, drawings, and engravings antedating the catastrophe of 1823 (fig. 91): nave colonnades, formed by homogeneous sets of shafts and capitals, all removed from older buildings, elegant stucco foliage in the arcade spandrels, murals—repainted in the thirteenth century—framed by stucco colonnettes and friezes, and a huge mosaic on the triumphal arch. Much of the decoration dated from Leo's refurbishing. But a uniform set of classical columns, mosaics perhaps in

the nave arcades, and a gilded ceiling already marked the late fourth-century structure and signaled the start of a classical revival which was to grow in intensity and understanding of the classical spirit through the first half of the fifth century.¹⁰

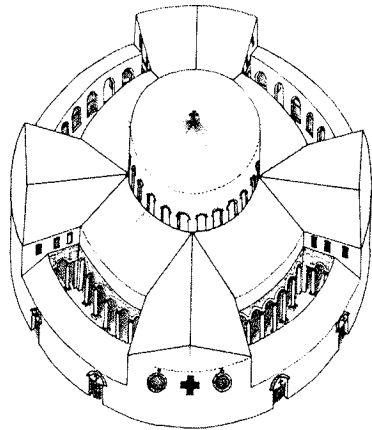
As at S. Paolo fuori le Mura, homogeneous sets of splendid classical columns and capitals were carefully assembled around 400 for the building of S. Pietro in Vincoli and of S. Sabina twenty-odd years later. Finally, at S. Maria Maggiore, completed under Sixtus III between 432 and 440, the new style reaches its peak (fig. 92). Orders of fluted pilasters articulate the upper walls, corresponding to the long rows of Ionic columns below, trabeated rather than arcaded, as had been the custom for nearly a century. Figural mosaics cover the triumphal arch and once cov-



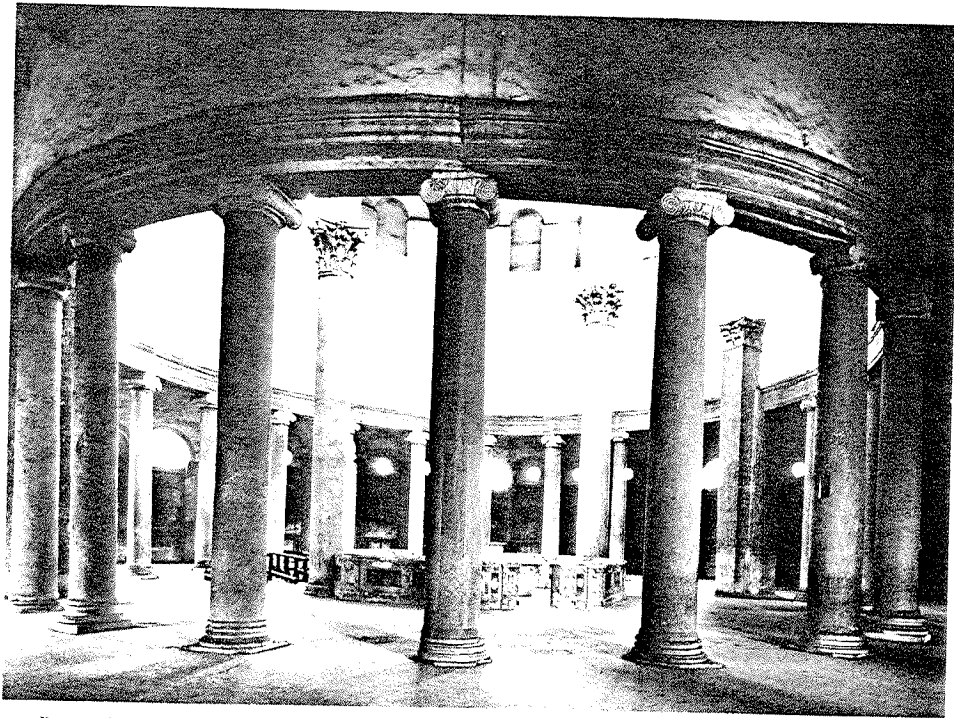
92. Rome, S. Maria Maggiore, interior



93. Rome, S. Maria Maggiore, interior, reconstruction



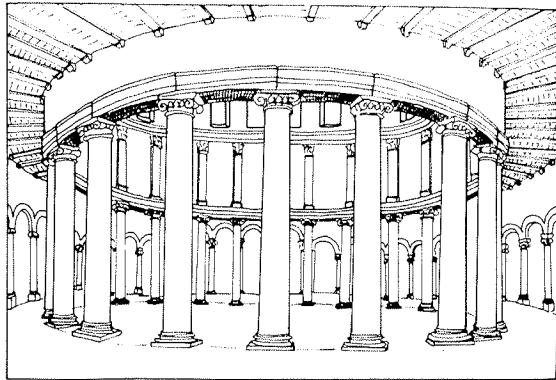
94. Rome, St. Stefano Rotondo, exterior, isometric reconstruction



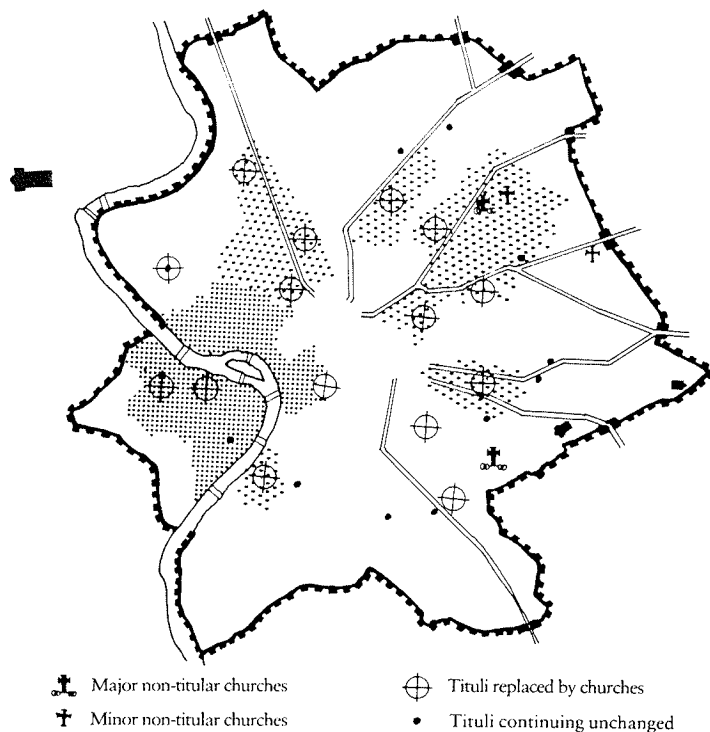
95. Rome, St. Stefano Rotondo, interior

ered the vault of the apse, which was directly attached to it in the fifth century. (The present transept and apse were added between 1288 and 1292.) Mosaics likewise stand in each bay of the nave between the pilasters, executed in the splendid impressionistic technique that had characterized Roman painting ever since the first century and that reached its last peak in the fifth century. These nave mosaics until the end of the sixteenth century—witness contemporary drawings—were framed by gabled and colonnaded aediculae; twisted colonnettes flanked the windows, one in each bay; a classical tendril frieze, of which a small piece survives, ran atop the pilasters; and a coffered ceiling covered or was intended to cover the nave (fig. 93). Similarly, St. Stefano Rotondo, begun perhaps only a generation after S. Maria Maggiore, looks back, it seems to me, to models of antiquity, centuries older. The cylindrical nave, planned to be covered by a scalloped dome, the enveloping ambulatory, the four projecting tall chapels, the intervening courtyards, originally, it seems, sheltering fountains or pools and terminated by porticoes attached to the enclosing ring wall—all make for a plan in which spaces and volumes, light and shade are intertwined (figs. 94 and 95). Such planning has its root, I submit, in late Roman villa design, ultimately Hadrianic in origin, befitting the location of St. Stefano in the greenbelt of the Lateran quarter; the Anastasis Rotunda in Jerusalem may have served collaterally as a model. The vocabulary of St. Stefano likewise revived the traditions of classical building: trabeated Ionic columns, albeit crudely imitated, carry the nave wall, while in the outer zones marble pavements, stucco cornices, and traces of *opus sectile* revetment survive in fragments; the sheathing of the nave wall from the colonnade to the window zone can be reconstructed from a fifteenth-century drawing (fig. 96). Plan and decoration both, then, reflect the renaissance of classical antiquity, shortlived, but representative of a papacy sure of itself and penetrated by the old educated classes, Christian by now yet conscious of the obligation to carry on the traditions of the classical past and of the grandeur of Rome.¹¹

Given the new political weight of the Church both in Rome and in the world, her financial power, her amalgamation with the old Roman families, and her insistence on maintaining the classical tradition and the memories of Rome's ancient glory, the pope's residence and cathedral at the Lateran were more than ever the city's religious, political, and cultural center. But they were less than ever its topographical focus. Placed by Constantine in a quarter of elegant villas and thus never densely populated, they had always been on the outskirts of the city. By the middle of the fifth century, if not before, many of the mansions along the crest and on the slopes of the Celian Hill, from the Sessorian Palace and its church, S. Croce in Gerusalemme, to the Lateran and west to St. Ste-



96. Rome, Sto. Stefano Rotondo, interior, reconstruction showing *opus sectile* decoration on nave wall



97. Rome ca. 500, showing hypothetical density of settled areas and distribution of new churches

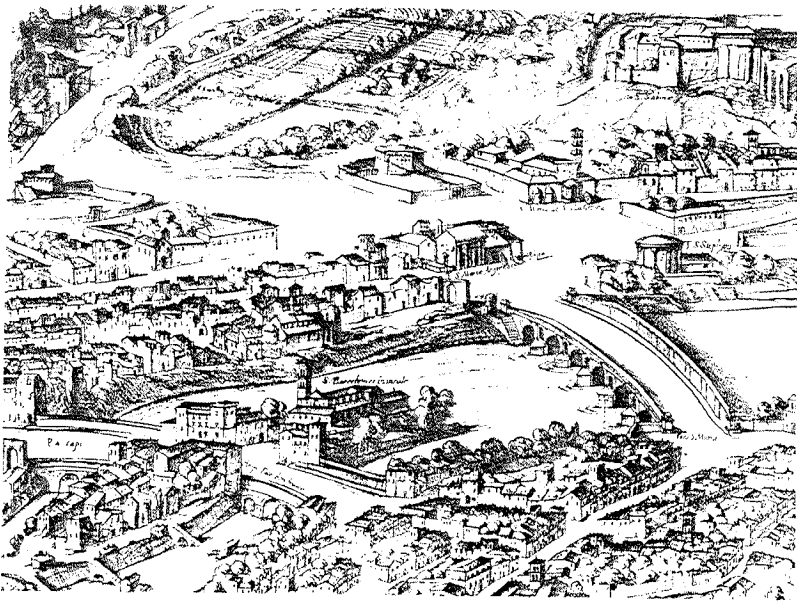
fano Rotondo and SS. Giovanni e Paolo, seem to have been abandoned. Some became church property, such as the mansion of the Valerii, turned first into a hostel and later into the convent of S. Erasmo; others remained deserted. Likewise, the stretch from the Lateran north toward the Esquiline seems to have been depopulated: two community centers in that area appear to have lost their congregations and indeed were abandoned in the course of the sixth century. Maintenance of estates grew costly, and families of means were attracted to the fleshpots of Ravenna and Constantinople and to their secure possessions in the eastern parts of the Empire, before and after the fifth-century sackings of Rome. Altogether, the population of Rome was rapidly shrinking. From perhaps 800,000 around 400, the number had dropped to 500,000 by 452, and it rapidly sank lower, to no more than 100,000 by the end of the fifth century. What was left, lived or was moving to parts of the city away from the Lateran; where exactly is hard to document, but an educated guess, based on both archaeological evidence and later development, is possible (fig. 97). The abandonment of the greenbelt—gradual, to be sure—and the resulting isolation of the Lateran were accompanied by the shrinkage of the densely inhabited area and its concentration near the river, in the bend of the Tiber and in Trastevere. Outside that *abitato*, to use a sixteenth-century term, only a few suburbs survived, two comparatively close to the Lateran: one on the Esquiline, extending perhaps as far as Via de' Selci and Via Urbana; another near the Colosseum, where S. Clemente late in the fourth century had replaced what may have been a large workshop and a small mansion given over to a Mithraic congregation. But the core of town seems to have been further west still: at the north and northwest foot of the Capitoline Hill and along the south stretch of the Corso, where tenements and warehouses installed in the third century were still in use three centuries later, and from the west cliff of the Palatine down to the river. There, the cattle market still functioned on the Forum Boarium, and, as recently as the fourth century, the tetrapylon misnamed the Janus Quadrifrons and the nearby *statio annonae* had been built, the latter the seat of the official in charge of provisioning and therefore not far from the river docks downstream. The tenements crowded on the Tiber island when the marble plan was drawn in the early third century are likely still to have been inhabited two hundred years later. There, too, as they did in the sixteenth century, three Roman bridges linked the riverbanks, leading to Trastevere, overpopulated for centuries and in the fifth century presumably still the most densely settled quarter of town. The Lateran was far away (fig. 98).¹²

The drawbacks of so remote a site for Rome's cathedral and the residence of her bishop were evident. Being forced by circumstances into the role of both political and spiritual leader of his flock, he needed closer

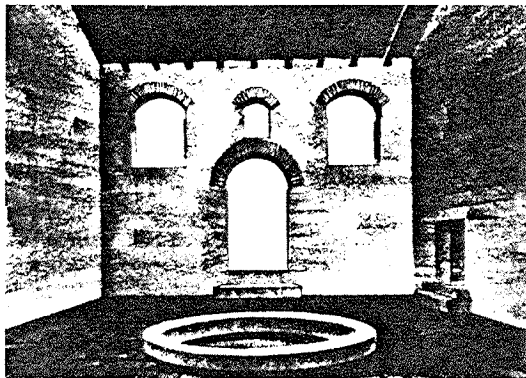
contact with them than ever. The people clamored to see him and to listen to his sermons. One thinks of Leo the Great as a political as well as a religious preacher. He, or for that matter his predecessors, obviously might have spoken out to his flock in any sizable church within or outside the city walls more easily accessible than the Lateran. However, there were times when attendance at the cathedral was required of any member of the Roman community: baptism customarily could be imparted only by the bishop, only at Easter, and only at the Lateran; and at Christmas or Easter the community as a whole would want to gather at the feet of their bishop in his cathedral, for many an hour's walk away. On the other hand, moving the bishop's cathedral and his residence elsewhere inside the city—St. Peter's, one recalls, like all martyr's shrines was outside the walls—was inconceivable; only when prevented by opposition from entering town would a pope reside and exercise his functions in a cemetery church outside the walls, as did Pope Liberius at S. Agnese. The Lateran was and remained the Roman bishop's see. It had been established as his cathedral and residence by Constantine himself; it was the signal monument to the triumph of the faith in the old capital and, indeed, in the Western world. Historical sense favored retaining the old site and its buildings, which by their very presence stressed the importance of the See of Rome. Also, for a century or more the Lateran palace

had served the bishop and his administration well; it had been enlarged and beautified; the papal bureaucracy, one may safely assume, was comfortably installed and, with the inertia inherent in any bureaucracy, reluctant to move to new quarters. Indeed, in terms of sheer material convenience the site out there by the city walls was not too bad: airy; in the green zone, with many a mansion nearby, abandoned by the owners and fallen to the Church by donation or default; easily provisioned from fields and gardens within and beyond the walls; and with plenty of water from the nearby aqueducts—they functioned with some repairs as late as the twelfth century. It was a good place to live. Moving from the Lateran was out of the question.

However, the drawbacks inherent in the situation had to be countered: the increasing isolation of Rome's cathedral and her bishop's palace; the resulting separation of bishop and clergy from the Christian people; and the inconvenience for the latter in reaching the Lateran on great feast days, particularly for the baptismal rite at Easter, or to hear their bishop speak to them at Mass. Some of the difficulties could be overcome. Pressure on the Lateran at Easter and inconvenience for the faithful was alleviated by administering baptism at other times and places as well. Thus, by the mid-fifth century Pentecost had been set aside along with Easter as a proper time for performing it, and in urgent cases other times of the year were admitted. Concomitantly, from the late fourth century on the Roman bishop apparently also imparted baptism outside his own baptistery at the Lateran and delegated, it seems, the privilege of performing the baptismal rites to the parish clergy and those officiating at the martyrs' shrines. Hence additional baptisteries were set up in the city and at the great sanctuaries outside the walls. One had existed at the covered cemetery basilica at S. Agnese ever since Pope Liberius, then in exile, had it installed when residing there from 355 to 358, and it continued to function. St. Peter's was provided with a baptismal font by Pope Damasus—it was placed in the exedra of the north arm—and a generation later Popes Boniface and Celestine completed the decoration. Starting with the early fifth and continuing into the sixth century, baptisteries were attached to or baptismal vessels provided for a few old and a number of newly built churches both within and beyond the walls: among parish churches, at S. Anastasia, Pope Damasus's foundation, a quarter of a century after his death, between 402 and 408; at S. Vitale at roughly the same time; at S. Sabina by Pope Sixtus III, shortly after 432; at S. Lorenzo in Damaso, presumably some time after the founder's death; finally, both at S. Marcello al Corso and at S. Crisogono, where baptismal fonts of fifth-century date still exist (fig. 99). Likewise, Sixtus III rebuilt the Lateran baptistery and provided S. Maria Maggiore, as he founded it, with baptismal vessels. Finally, Leo I and Hilarus installed baptisteries



98. Rome in 1593, A. Tempesta, detail showing Tiber island and three bridges



99. Rome, S. Crisogono, baptistery, reconstruction

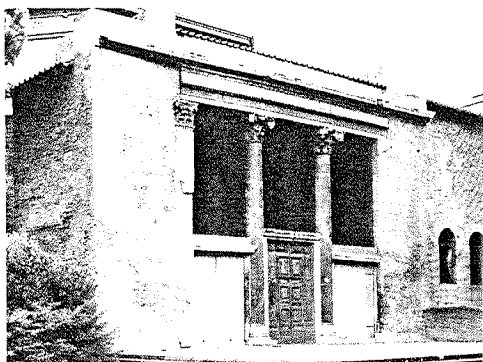
in sanctuaries outside the walls: the former at S. Paolo and Sto. Stefano in Via Latina, the latter at S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura. The baptisteries outside the city may have been intended in the first place, though not exclusively, for the people living in the Campagna and for pilgrims, while those in town naturally would serve the resident population.¹³

Concomitantly, the construction between 380 and 450 of the large new basilicas or the conversion into churches of sizable secular halls such as S. Pudenziana seems to interlock with a liturgical innovation which came to the fore at that very time: the development of station services in the urban churches of Rome. In the fifth century these were services held at given times throughout the liturgical year at which the bishop of Rome would officiate in person on a set day in one of the city's churches, having come from the Lateran, accompanied by the clergy of the cathedral and by his administrative staff. Thus pressure was taken off the Lateran; the community of Rome did not have to come all the way there; and the bishop was enabled to meet his entire flock, albeit successively, during the season of the great festivals. As it happens, the full calendar of the station services is best known from the Middle Ages, when they were spread all over the year, mostly coinciding with the festivals of the patron saints of the station churches. Origins and early history of the stations want further study. By the fourth century they apparently had long been customary at the martyrs' shrines beyond the walls, as aliturgical prayer meetings, with or without benefit of clergy, held in the great covered cemetery basilicas—at S. Agnese or S. Lorenzo—while Mass was celebrated, it seems, at the grave in the nearby catacomb or in the basilica itself. The custom, well attested in the fourth century, continued through the fifth and sixth centuries at least. Thus, by the latter part of

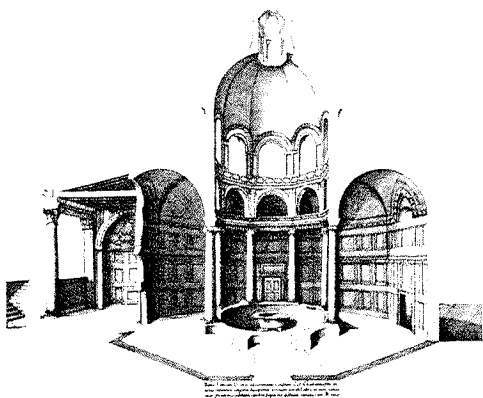
the fourth century, on Christmas Day Mass was celebrated by the pope himself at St. Peter's, as it still was a hundred years later; likewise, by the mid-fifth century Pentecost was celebrated at St. Peter's. Within the walls, the original and most important station services were those in the Lateran cathedral: at Eastertide, in the fifth century the entire community of Rome was still expected to assemble there both for aliturgical prayer meetings and papal sermons and for the celebration of Mass during Holy Week, except Good Friday and Easter Sunday.¹⁴

However, by the middle of the fifth century liturgical station services comprising Mass were apparently customary in old and new churches and community centers throughout the city, for between 461 and 468 Pope Hilarus donated one large station chalice (*scyphus*) and twenty-five sets of altar vessels "to go around the established stations. . . ." Obviously, then, liturgical station services by that time were a matter of course, and they were held in at least twenty-five centers of worship. The sixth-century compiler of the *Liber Pontificalis* interpreted the number as referring "per titulos" to the twenty-five *tituli*, which he believed to have existed in town ever since the third century. Hence the assumption that the stations were held there at the time of Pope Hilarus; in fact, by the fifth century a station is attested *ad duas domos*, that is, the *titulus Caii, S. Susanna*.¹⁵ But station services within the city were clearly not limited to *tituli*, nor were they assigned to all of them. On the one hand, as pointed out earlier, in the fifth century twenty-nine *tituli* were functioning. On the other hand, some stations at that time definitely fell to churches outside the walls, St. Peter's for instance, others to churches in the city, but not among the *tituli*—more of this anon—and surely quite a few of the old community centers among the *tituli* were too small to be serviceable for the large station assemblies. However, the new basilicas certainly were large enough, and while none would hold more than a part of the faithful in Rome, station services held there made attendance easier for large sectors of the population living in parts of town far distant from the Lateran and at the same time relieved pressure on the cathedral (fig. 97).¹⁶

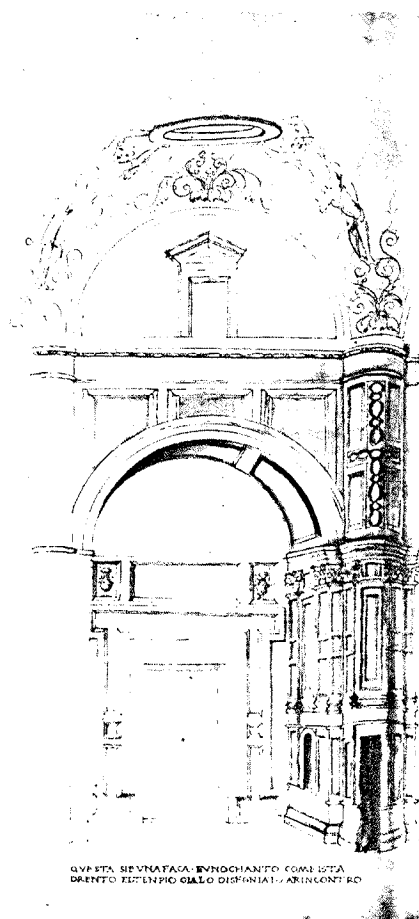
Nonetheless, the legitimate focus of the Roman community remained at the Lateran. The cathedral and the bishop's palace were its religious center, the seat of the papal administration and the symbol of the papacy; and the new exalted position of the Roman bishop both in the spiritual realm and as *de facto* ruler of Rome and of large parts of Italy made it imperative to maintain his see and enhance its splendor. Hence, throughout the fifth century the Lateran complex was enlarged, remodeled, and redecored. In the church, between 428 and 430 the plain gold ground of the apse was replaced, apparently by a figural mosaic. A quarter of a century later, Leo I had the walls of the nave covered with



100. Rome, Lateran baptistery, narthex



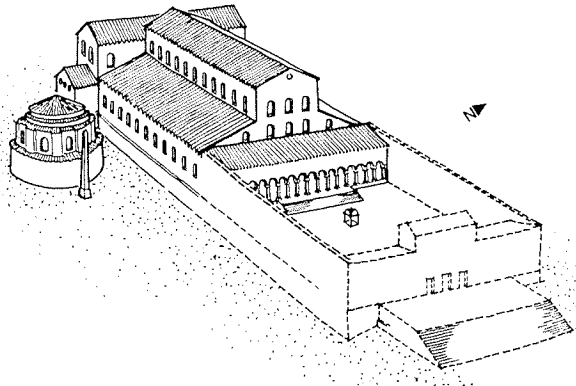
101. Rome, Lateran baptistery, reconstruction, 1575, engraving A. Lafréri



102. Rome, Lateran, chapel of the Holy Cross as of ca. 1500, drawing Giuliano da Sangallo

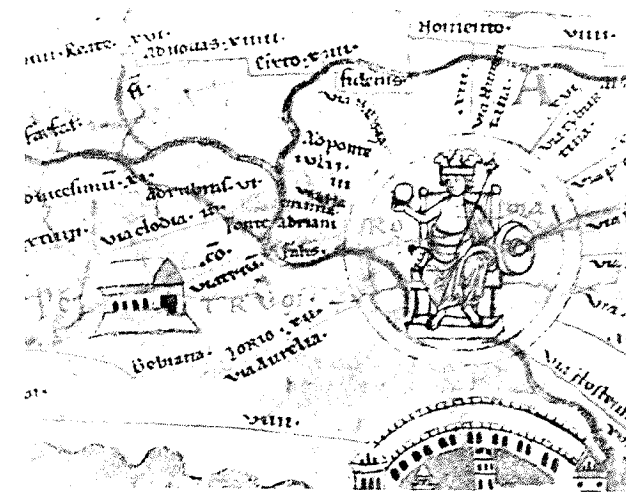
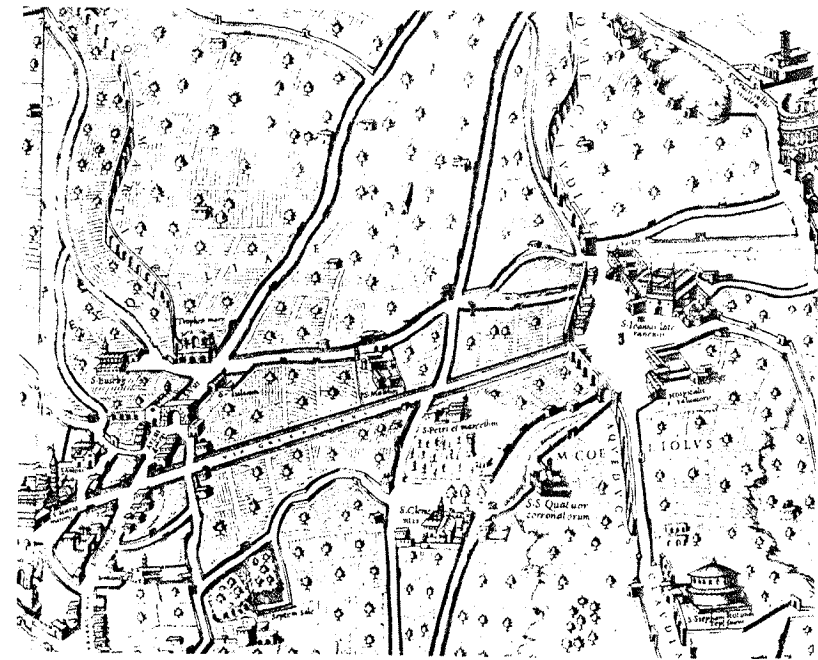
murals, presumably a typological cycle, drawing on the Old and New Testaments—it survived into the late eighth century at least, when Pope Hadrian I referred to it in a letter to Charlemagne. Behind the basilica, Constantine's baptistery was thoroughly rebuilt by Sixtus III (432–40). It survives as remodeled again in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Constantine had planned it as a simple octagon, presumably unvaulted; the outer walls, in my opinion, are still his. Eight huge columns, collected from older buildings, were to stand in the inner corners. But they were not set up by him; Sixtus placed them, not against the walls, but, as today, on the corners of the baptismal font in the center, carrying architraves, a second order of smaller columns, and a clerestory. Thus they delimited a central nave, surmounted probably by a scalloped dome; it was enveloped by an ambulatory, originally barrel vaulted, the walls sheathed with marble revetment and the vaulting covered with mosaic and composed, it seems, of hollow tubes. A narthex was added, terminated at either end by absidioles, its façade carried by two splendid porphyry columns (fig. 100)—shafts, capitals, bases, and frieze being spoils from some grand Roman structure. Inside the narthex, fragments of *opus sectile* on the walls and the mosaic in one of the apse vaults survive. Lafréri's reconstruction as engraved around 1560, while erroneous in the proportions, gives an approximate idea (fig. 101). The whole recalled imperial mausolea, such as S. Costanza.¹⁷ A generation later, the adjoining chapels of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist were built and their mosaics commissioned by Pope Hilarus; and a nearby garden pavilion of second- or third-century date, cross-shaped, its convex corners concealing small octagonal alcoves, all covered with marble sheathing and mosaics, was consecrated by the same pope as a chapel of the Holy Cross, presumably to house the relic kept till then at S. Croce in Gerusalemme. The insertion of a cross into the mosaic of the main vault was enough to convert to Christian use the charming structure (fig. 102). It was torn down in 1588, but it made a deep impression on the architects of the Renaissance, and a number of their drawings still show its complex plan and its sumptuous decoration. A fountain courtyard, laid out by Hilarus, linked the chapel to the baptistery. Known only from a long description inserted into the pope's biography, it was apparently composed entirely of spoils taken from ancient buildings. But the very grandiloquence of the biographer reflects the light in which the papacy meant its buildings, and by implication itself, to be seen.¹⁸

If the high political and spiritual place claimed by the fifth-century popes made it imperative to clothe the Lateran with new splendor as part of their building program, another motive was the need to compete with St. Peter's. Ever since Constantine a conflict had been built into the map of Christian Rome. He had established by imperial fiat the Lateran in the



103. Rome, Old St. Peter's as of ca. 330, exterior, reconstruction

furthest southeastern corner of the city as the political, religious, and administrative center of the Christian community. Across the river, to the northwest of the city on the Vatican Hill, he had built St. Peter's basilica. Huge, larger even than the Lateran cathedral, it sheltered the shrine of the apostle and offered space for the celebration of Mass and for burial and funeral banquets (figs. 24 and 103). Situated outside the walls, it was yet easily accessible from the city by the bridge at Hadrian's mausoleum, Ponte S. Angelo. Long before Constantine, Romans and pilgrims from afar had gone to pray at the grave of Saint Peter, as they went to the graves of the other great martyrs. Indeed, his shrine and, as soon as built, his basilica overtook all other martyrs' sanctuaries of Rome in riches and importance. In ever larger numbers through the fourth and fifth centuries and beyond, the faithful flocked there to heap gifts upon it and to beg for salvation. Mausolea crowded about, among them by 400 that of the Western imperial dynasty. The Christian people of Rome never had taken and never did take to the Lateran. As a *popular* religious center, St. Peter's by far outdid their cathedral, and increasingly the Vatican basilica competed with the official focus of Christian Rome and the seat of the papacy. On the Peutinger map as brought up to date in the early fifth century, the hallmark of Rome is the basilica *ad scum Petrum*, just as the Column of Constantine-Helios is the hallmark of Constantinople (fig. 104).¹⁹ The inherent conflict and the resulting claims for primacy by each competitor, both built by Constantine—St. Peter's the popular usurper, as it were, rivaling the legitimate but not so popular cathedral at the Lateran—grew stronger during the Middle Ages. The popes of the Renaissance tried to settle it by moving to the Vatican, but it has never died. To the popes of the fifth century the built-in clash of claims must

104. Roma, personified and marked by representation of Old St. Peter's, *Tabula Peutingeriana*, detail

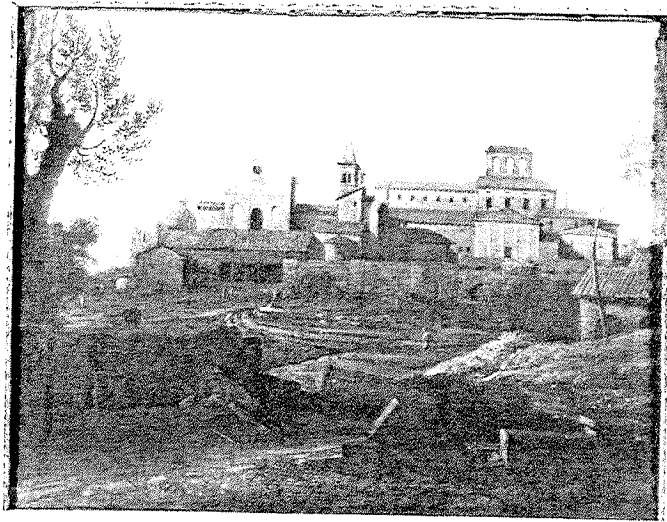
105. Rome in 1576, M. Cartaro, detail showing Lateran, S. Croce in Gerusalemme, S. Maria Maggiore, and Sto. Stefano Rotondo

have been evident, and a reaffirmation of their seat at the Lateran as the official center of Christian Rome as against the popular center at the Vatican would have seemed more than necessary.

However, the papacy reached further out, it seems, in reaffirming the Lateran's place and making it the true center of its capital. Looking at the map of Rome, one notices four churches, three founded in the fifth century and all four located between half a mile and a mile from the Lateran on the perimeter of a triangle: to the north S. Maria Maggiore, to the northeast S. Bibiana, to the west Sto. Stefano Rotondo, and to the east S. Croce in Gerusalemme. The first was built or completed by Sixtus III; S. Bibiana and Sto. Stefano were built between 468 and 483 by Pope Simplicius or possibly by his predecessor; S. Croce in Gerusalemme, of course, is Helena's palace church. The fifth-century church of S. Bibiana has disappeared; the present one, remodeled by Bernini, is small and of thirteenth-century date; sixteenth-century maps no longer show it. But the others survive (fig. 105) and stand out among Roman churches by their size, by their location, and by their status. S. Maria Maggiore and Sto. Stefano are nearly twice as large as any of the parish churches built at that time; while the largest of the *tituli* basilicas, S. Sabina, holds at best 1,400 people at services, S. Maria Maggiore accommodates close to 2,000, and Sto. Stefano (counting only nave and ambulatory), nearly 3,500, almost as many as the Lateran basilica. Clearly these churches were meant to offer space to extraordinarily large congregations, approaching in size the crowds at the Lateran; they were intended for services, then, celebrated *tutta Roma presente* rather than for the congregation of a single parish. Only S. Croce, not being newly built for the purpose, is smaller. Likewise, they stood apart in status. No presbyter *Sanctae Mariae Maioris* or *Sancti Stefani in Caelio Monte* attended the synods of 499 and 595; nor, incidentally, was S. Croce in Gerusalemme, Helena's church not far from the Lateran, represented at these meetings, as were all *tituli*.²⁰ Apparently, then, S. Maria Maggiore, Sto. Stefano Rotondo, and S. Croce were not parish churches. They had no clergy of their own and no resident congregation. Presumably they were serviced from the Lateran by the pope or his delegate. Given their size, it looks as if they had been laid out or, in the case of S. Croce in Gerusalemme, utilized as station churches for the great feast days: Christmas vigil at S. Maria Maggiore; Good Friday at S. Croce in Gerusalemme; the day after Christmas, December 26, the anniversary of St. Stephen, at Sto. Stefano Rotondo. Some of the sets of altar vessels donated by Pope Hilarus would have been intended for these services. Precise information on the location of these feast day stations, to be sure, starts only with the sixth century when, indeed, Christmas early Mass (at cock's crow rather than midnight) took place at S. Maria Maggiore and Good

Friday services at S. Croce. But, as Monseigneur Duchesne used to point out, there is such a thing as good horse sense applicable also to the history of liturgy. It is only reasonable to assume that Christmas vigil was celebrated at S. Maria Maggiore from the time it was dedicated to the Virgin by Sixtus III. The mosaics of the apse arch relate to Christ's revealing himself in the flesh and to his youth. The apse mosaic showed the *Theotokos* flanked by martyrs, and the prayers for the Christmas vigil collected in the earliest sacramentary surviving, the *Veronense*, make sense only if offered in a church dedicated to her.²¹ Similarly, Good Friday was celebrated, I submit, by the fifth century if not before, at S. Croce in Gerusalemme. The church had housed a relic of the True Cross, as the *Liber Pontificalis* asserts, ever since the days of Constantine. By the late fourth century it was common knowledge that the relic had been brought by Helena from Jerusalem, and early in the fifth century, if not in Constantine's days, the church went simply by the name *Hierusalem*. It is only logical that Good Friday services took place there from the outset. Pope Hilarus, it seems, transferred the relic, perhaps for safekeeping, to the Lateran, where he dedicated the chapel of the Holy Cross. And from then on, it appears, it was brought on Good Friday in procession to S. Croce in Gerusalemme and adored with a ritual customary in the late fourth century at Jerusalem.²² For Sto. Stefano Rotondo I cannot (nor can the historians of liturgy I have consulted) find any hagiographical explanation; perhaps there is none. Dare one then suggest a very mundane consideration? Pope and clergy on St. Stephen's day, December 26, must have been exhausted from having celebrated the day before at least two if not three masses within six hours at far distant points of town—at cock's crow at S. Maria Maggiore; around eight o'clock perhaps at S. Anastasia; around ten at St. Peter's. They may well have wanted a station service as close as possible to home base.²³

Be that as it may, S. Maria Maggiore, S. Croce in Gerusalemme, and Sto. Stefano Rotondo from the fifth century on were closely linked to the Lateran. Given their extraparochial status, their lack of an independent clergy, and their position as station churches for the great festivals, they are best understood, I submit, as subsidiary cathedrals easy of access from the Lateran for the pope and his clergy, dependent on it and serviced from there. I wonder, however, whether there is not more to the placing of S. Maria Maggiore and Sto. Stefano in the fifth century and their choice, together with S. Croce in Gerusalemme, as dependencies of the Lateran. I have asked myself whether the three churches were not meant to outline the perimeter of a territory extending from the Lateran and set apart as the pope's very own part of Rome. Visitors ascending the Celian from the southeast corner of the Palatine, coming from the riverbank and Trastevere beyond, on approaching the Lateran would



106. Rome, Lateran, view as of ca. 1650, painting G. Dughet

encounter Sto. Stefano Rotondo; those from the north and northwest, by then the core of the city, would be greeted by S. Maria Maggiore; those from the east, from the Campagna roads, the Prenestina and Labicana, would pass by S. Croce in Gerusalemme. Smaller churches, convents, and other ecclesiastical institutions, in the course of the fifth century, rose along and inside the perimeter of the quarter: late in the fifth century S. Bibiana, founded by Pope Simplicius, and S. Andrea in Catabarbara, installed in a sumptuous reception hall, formerly of Junius Bassus the Elder; and around 500 S. Martino ai Monti, replacing an old community center. In the vicinity of the Lateran Palace settled the dependents of the papal court, high clergy and laymen, administrative personnel and their households. The old mansions in the neighborhood, abandoned by their former owners, offered convenient space. Nearby smaller folk would crowd, drawing their livelihood and expecting protection from the papal court and the great gentlemen in the area. It looks as if the entire southeastern sector of Rome were meant to become a new hub on the city map. Centered on the Lateran and extending in a vast arc north, west, and east, a *borgo* seems to be outlined, much as the one that some hundred years later extended from St. Peter's and the Vatican to the river. An attempt appears to be delineated to give the fifth-century map of Rome a new focus, reoriented towards the Lateran, just as later it was refocused on the Vatican, and for the same reasons. The new political

center, the residence of the *de facto* ruler of Rome in the fifth century, the pope, claimed a central place on the map of the city.

The project remained abortive. The town proper, the *abitato*, withdrew ever further west, away not only from the Lateran, but from the churches on the perimeter as well, S. Maria Maggiore and Sto. Stefano. By the late sixth century, the cathedral of Rome and the papal palace rose isolated in the wasteland, the *disabitato*, far removed from the inhabited area. Thus it remained throughout the Middle Ages (fig. 106). Instead, St. Peter's on the slope of the Vatican Hill, across the Tiber beyond the opposite edge of Rome and outside the walls, grew to ever greater importance. The tomb of Saint Peter attracted pilgrims, and they in turn drew to the neighborhood innkeepers, vendors of *generi alimentari*, money changers, bankers, and notaries. The suburb, from the basilica to Castel and Ponte S. Angelo, and the quarter of town just across the river became an economic center of major importance. St. Peter's, the Vatican, and the Borgo developed into the hub onto which the city was gradually converging. By the fifteenth century, this process was complete. The map of Rome had been reversed and focused on its northwestern rather than its southeastern edge. Constantine's decision to locate the Christian center of Rome at the Lateran, forced on him by political expediency, had been corrected by the development of a living city.