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## SANTO STEFANO ROTONDO: CONJECTURES\*

For Caecilia Davis-Weyer

\* This paper is the vastly expanded and revised version of a lecture delivered April 29, 1992, at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

H. BRANDENBURG, "La chiesa di Santo Stefano Rotondo a Roma", *RAC*, LXVIII, 1992, 201 ff., published as this paper in the hands of the editor, presents an admirably clear and sensitive discussion of lay-out and structure of Santo Stefano and of the *status quaestionum* – resolved and unresolved – tuboli, vaulting, pavements, wall decoration, the hierarchy of spaces, covered or open to the sky. He provides an exhaustive bibliography and altogether complements and where

needed corrects *CBCR*, IV, 199 ff. In the meantime two further papers have appeared dealing with the structure and contributing further to the archeological evidence: S. Storz, „S. Stefano Rotondo: Untersuchungen am ... Marmorfußboden ...“, *Koldewey Gesellschaft*, 37. *Bericht* (1992), 59 ff.; and H. Brandenburg and S. Storz, „Die frühchristliche Kirche S. Stefano in Rom ... Zwischenbericht“, *Das Münster* (1993), 277 ff., and *ibid.*, (1994), 33 ff. Neither are concerned with the doubts and questions raised nor with the conjectures tested in this essay.



I am reverting to a query or two that have pursued me and that I have pursued for half a century and more – the origins of Santo Stefano in Rome and the disturbing discrepancy between its form and its function. I have not found an answer to my queries. But I should like to float a couple of conjectures which seem to me to carry a degree of plausibility. I therefore present them for examination. However, I want the hypothetical character of these pages clearly understood. A curse on whoever takes these speculations as facts proven.

First however, I have to withdraw a careless phrase written a quarter of a century ago. Based on the wording of the *Liber Pontificalis*, “Simplicius . . . dedicavit basilicam Sancti Stephani in Celio monte . . .”,<sup>1</sup> I maintained that “dating the construction . . . of Santo Stefano Rotondo could not be simpler.”<sup>2</sup> It turns out on the contrary to be quite complicated. I had at the time not given adequate thought to the meaning of *dedicare* as used in Late Antiquity and in particular by the sixth-century compiler of the *Liber Pontificalis*. Professor Geertman meanwhile has done so and set off *dedicare*, to consecrate, against a group of terms referring to founding, building, repairing or completing a church, such as *fecit*, *construxit* and the like.<sup>3</sup> I am grateful for the corrective and the clarification of terminology established. In fact, in developing this paper I have been led to probe further into the use in fifth and sixth century parlance in Rome of the term *dedicare*.

I might as well skip discussing in detail the alterations Santo Stefano has undergone over the centuries past. Suffice it to say that its present condition by and large is determined by a thorough remodelling in the twelfth century and by a second restoration undertaken in 1452 by Nicholas V.<sup>4</sup> Rather I shall try to envisage what the church looked like by 530 when construction had been completed as far as ever it was, the pavements had been laid and the bare brick walls faced with *opus sectile*, stucco ornament and apparently mosaic. Moreover, given the context I have in mind, it might be best to place myself in the position of a sixth-century visitor. From afar he would have seen the towering drum of the central rotunda, 22 meters across and roughly of the same height. The entire structure has a total

span of over 64 meters. Approaching he would see rising from the tall perimeter wall in the orthogonal axes the walls and the roofs of four cross arms (fig. 1). In the diagonal axes extending between the cross arms two gates in each of the four sectors opened in the perimeter wall, eight in all. Entering any one of these, the visitor found himself inside a roofed corridor hugging the perimeter wall (fig. 2). It has yet to be established whether the inner concentric wall of the corridor was windowless and the corridor therefore pitch dark or whether, pierced by dwarf arcades, it was lit indirectly from the adjoining inner segment of the sector. In either case the visitor inside the corridor would be expected to turn sideways towards a sizeable door at its short end and through it enter one of the cross arms. Of these, only the one to the northeast survives; but from the traces left the other three cross arms would seem to have been essentially alike: timber-roofed, tall, trapezoidal in plan and resplendent with marble pavements, marble faced walls, and stucco ornament, they were well lit by a pair of aculi flanking a cross-shaped window in the front, that is the perimeter wall, and by three rectangular windows in each of the side walls.

The inner wall of the cross arm, concentric with the perimeter wall, was carried by five high arcades. Through them the visitor would perceive a space lit more sparingly and beyond that a further space flooded with light – an annular ambulatory and the rotunda of the central nave. However, rather than proceeding straight on to these, he might again turn sideways and pass through a trabeated arch, a *Serliana* – one in each sidewall of the cross arms – into one of the inner segments of the diagonal sectors: courtyards, it seems, to start with, delimited right and left, by the walls of the cross arms and their *Serliane*, by the concave curved wall of the corridor and, opposite, by six convex curving arcades leading into the ambulatory. Possibly fountains or pools were planned for the courtyards; cisterns have been ascertained below three of them. (The courtyards were vaulted in tubular construction – an afterthought: the seatings for the vaults have been hacked into the wall surfaces rather than provided for during construction.)<sup>5</sup> Timber-roofed like the cross arms, the ambula-

1 *LP*, I, 249.

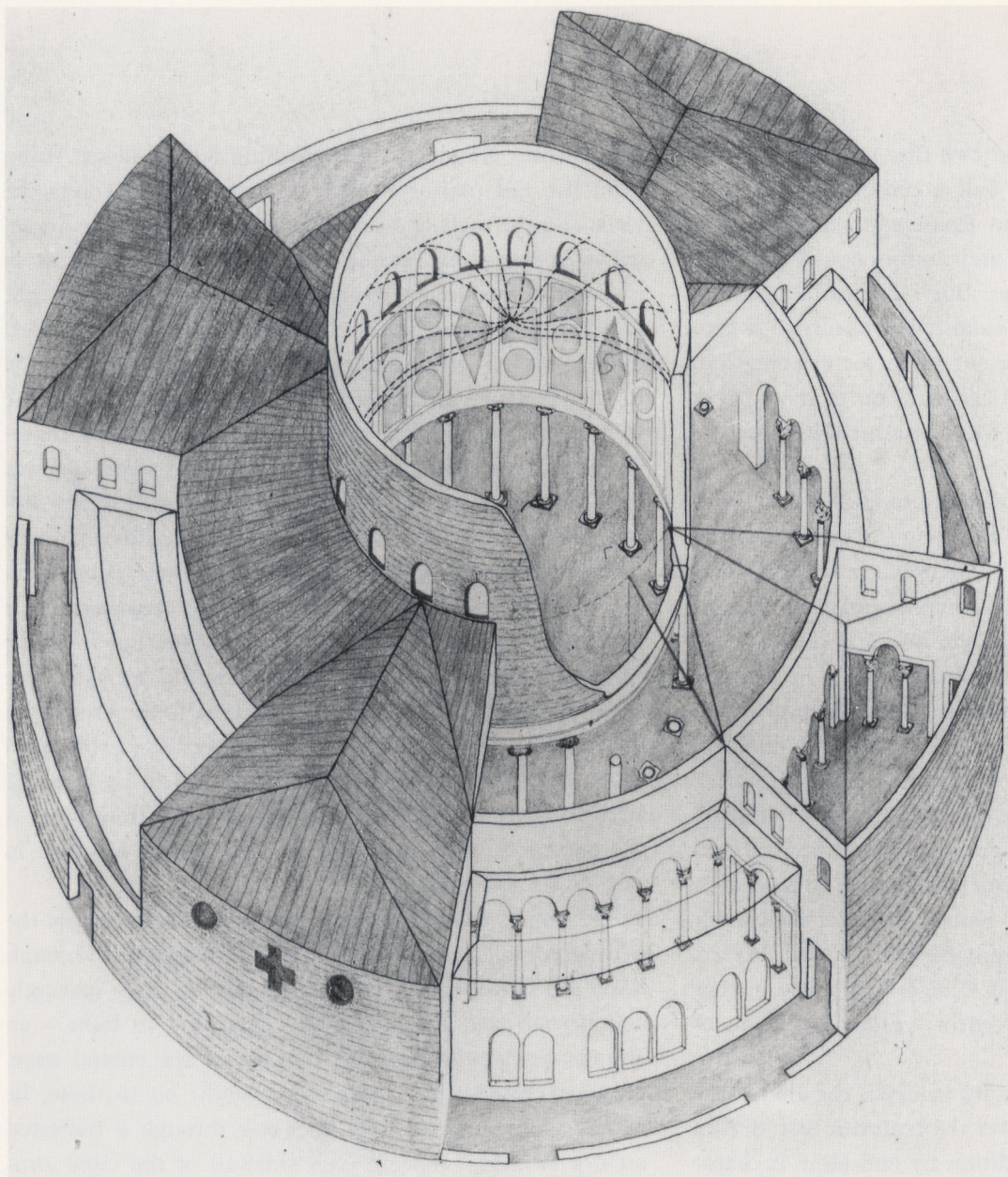
2 *CBCR*, IV, 236.

3 Geertman, 184ff.

4 For the evidence, both documentary and archeological. I refer to Colini, 245ff.; to *CBCR*, IV, 199ff. and to Ceschi.

5 The correct interpretation of the evidence (this against our, Spencer Corbett's and my own, in *CBCR*, IV) is due to Sebastian Storz who jointly with Hugo Brandenburg is preparing a new survey of the structure.

1. Reconstruction of  
Santo Stefano Rotondo  
(Angela Coccia)



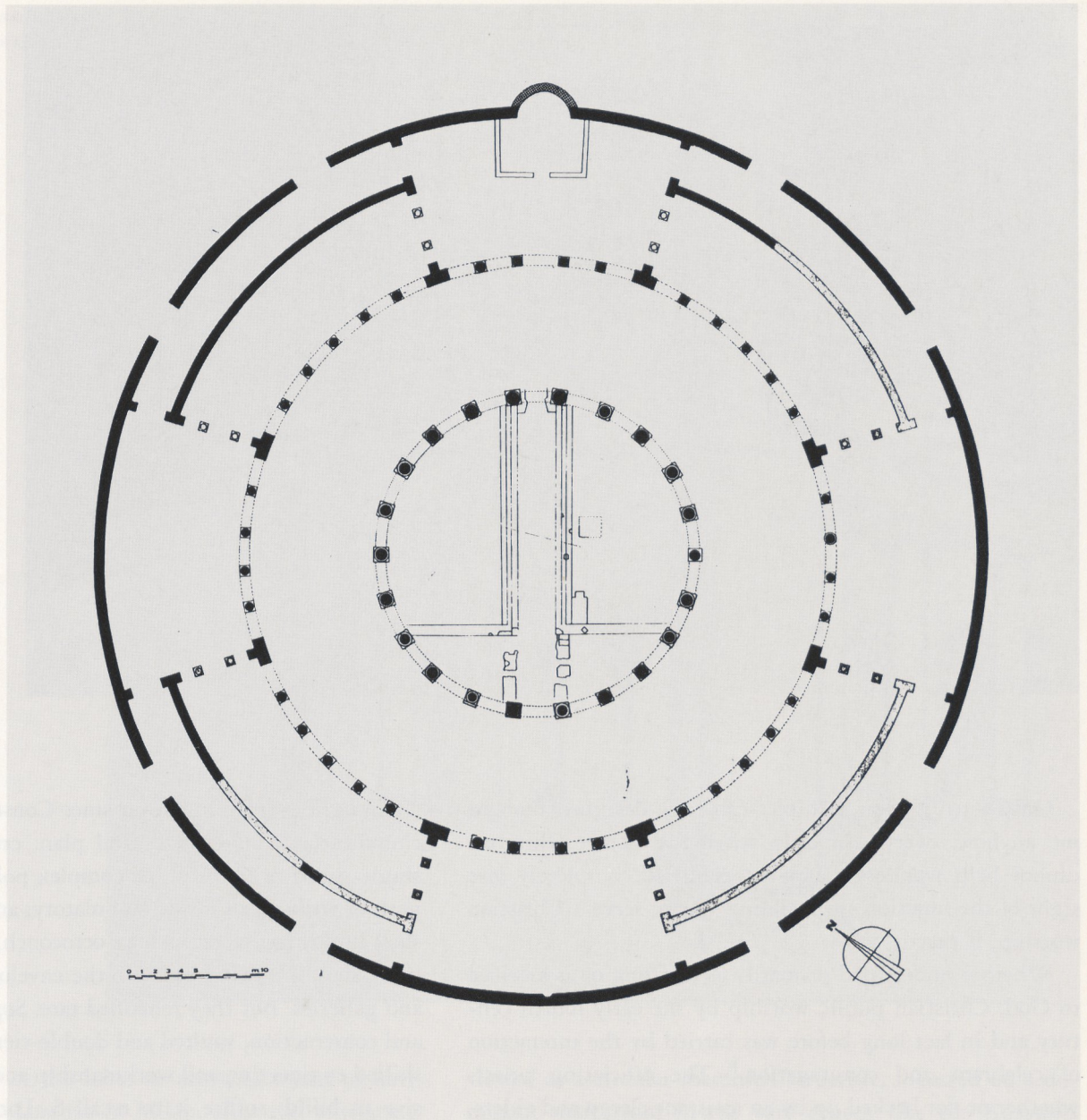
tory then was reached either from there or from the courtyards in the diagonal sectors. Wandering along its ring, the visitor had to one side the tall trabeated colonnade of the central rotunda, the nave; on the other side he skirted a long series of forty-four open arcades – they were blocked in the twelfth century remodelling; alternating in groups of five and six, they were set off from one another by piers. The five groups opening from the cross arms on the orthogonals of the plan are taller than the six groups towards the courtyards in the diagonals.

The arcades of the ambulatory all being open at the time, the alternation of cross arms and courtyards beyond would have turned the ambulatory, unadorned otherwise, from the dark and dullish annular tunnel that today it is into a ring

of eight alternating successive stretches: all lit on that side indirectly, yet with different intensity and interacting with the clearness entering from the opposite side through the intercolumniations of the circular nave colonnade.

From the ambulatory finally the visitor would reach the rotunda of the nave and understand the interlocking of spaces through which he had made his way: from the perimeter corridors to the cross arms, from there to the courtyards, then to the ring of the ambulatory until he had reached the central nave, the very focus of the complex structure. Spanning over 22 meters in diameter, the cylinder of the rotunda rises tall, supported by twenty-two columns carrying Ionic capitals and a high entablature. Pierced far up in the clerestory zone by twenty-two round-arched

2. Groundplan  
(C. Ceschi)



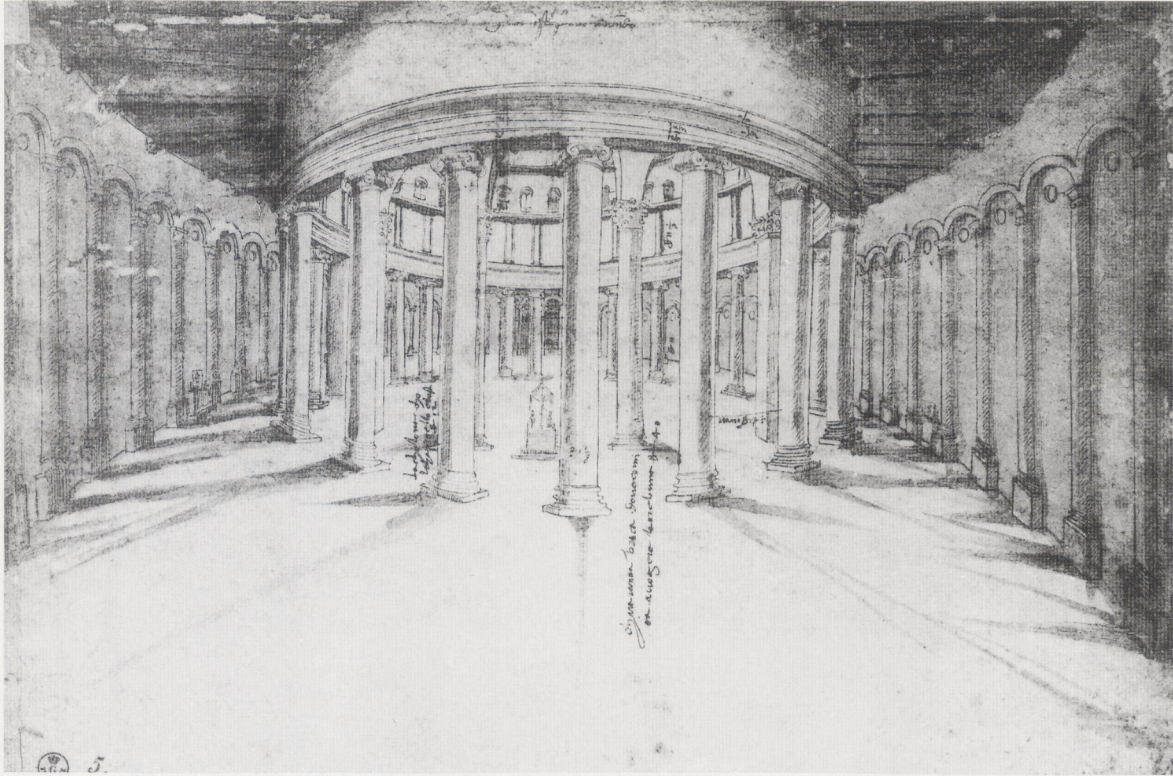
windows, its wall was faced in *opus sectile*. Seated atop the entablature and rising to the sills of the window zone, that revetment was articulated by an order of pilasters axial to the supporting colonnade and terminated by a cornice, inlaid like the pilasters. A splendid drawing of early sixteenth century date, Uff. Sant. 161 (figs. 3, 4), shows the revetment still *in situ*. (The drawing, formerly attributed to Cronaca, has now been given convincingly to Baldassare Peruzzi.<sup>6</sup> It fails to render the design of the panels framed by the pilasters; that we have to imagine.) Above the clerestory windows and their voussoirs the cylinder of the wall rises further to terminate, originally it would seem, at over

21 meters from floor level, equalling in height roughly the diameter of the nave. (Raised in two stages, in the late VIII<sup>th</sup> and XII<sup>th</sup> century respectively, to carry the beams of successive roofs it now reaches up to 24.10 meters.)

A ledge, level with the springings of the window arches in the clerestory zone, has been convincingly explained as the seating for a dome:<sup>7</sup> an umbrella dome, the arches of the windows raising the webs and filling the lunettes. Constructed presumably of terracotta tubes it might have been quite low. Had it been built, it would have been the crowning element of the design.

<sup>6</sup> C.L. FROMMEL, "Peruzzis Römische Anfänge", *RömJbKq*, XXVII/XXVIII, 1991/92, 137 ff.

<sup>7</sup> F.W. DEICHMANN, "Die Eindeckung von S. Stefano Rotondo", *Miscellanea Giulio Belvederi*, Città del Vaticano, 1954/55, 437 ff.



3. Baldassare Peruzzi,  
Interior of Santo  
Stefano, Uffizzi  
Santarelli 161

Only a truly great architect can have designed that, to me anyhow, overwhelmingly stirring structure. But one cannot help wondering how he could so completely lose sight of the function the building was to serve – Christian worship; if that it was.

Whether understood primarily as teaching or as sacrifice to God, Christian public worship by the early fourth century and in fact long before was carried by the interaction of celebrant and congregation.<sup>8</sup> The officiating priest, whether or not backed up by an assistant clergy and elders, stood as a rule behind the altar face to face with the crowd of the faithful gathered in the larger part of the room. A structure laid out along a longitudinal axis thus lent itself best to the demands of the service: a spacious lengthwise hall terminated by an apse to shelter the assistant clergy, seated, and to serve as a foil for the celebrant and the altar. Church leaders and architects thus from an early moment gave preference to a longitudinal variant of an age-old building type, the basilica: timber-roofed, uncomplicated in lay-out and construction, quickly built and endlessly adaptable, it rapidly became the dominant church type both East and West, whether single-naved or flanked by aisles.

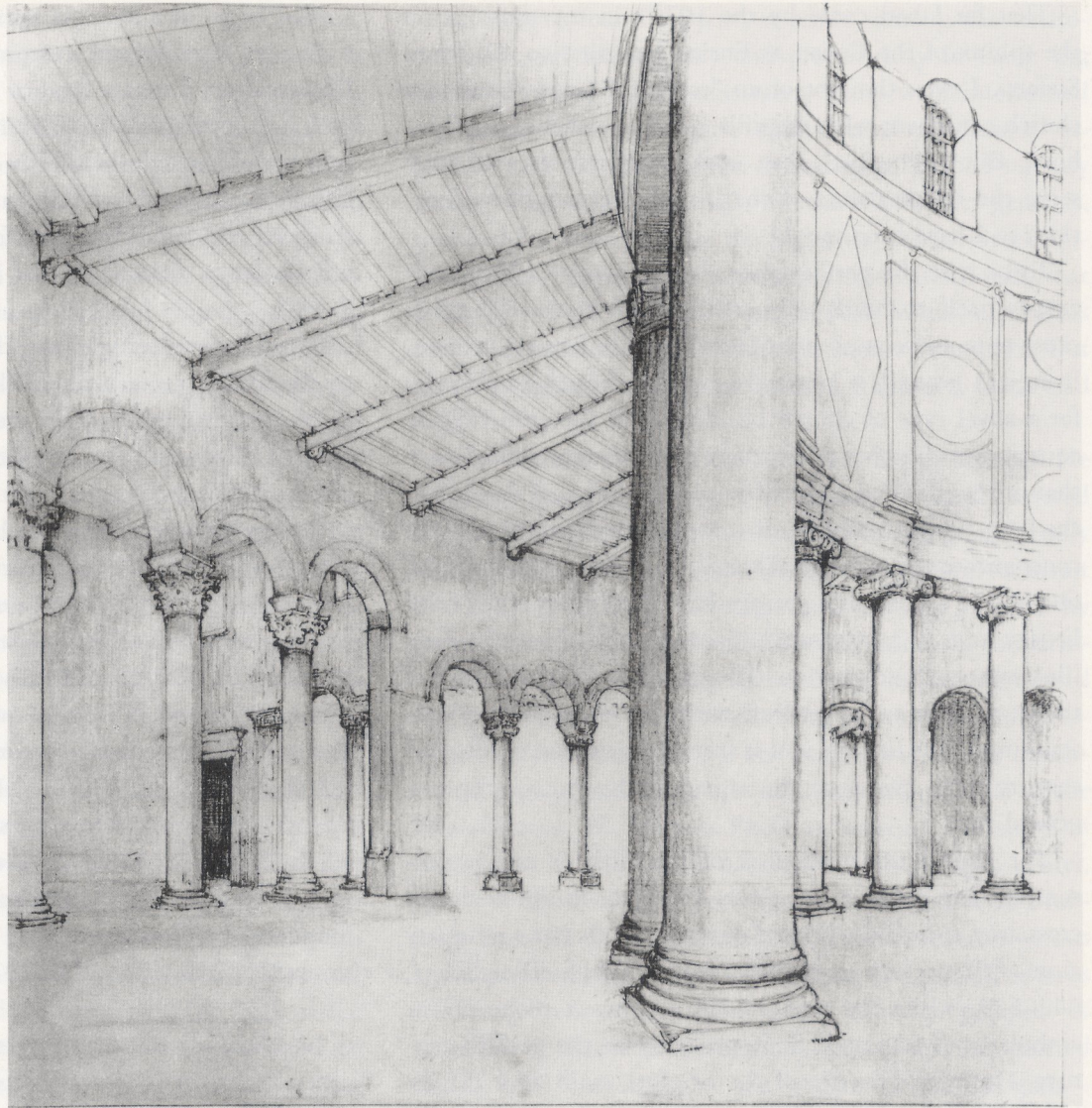
8 O. NUSSBAUM, *Der Standort des Liturgen am christlichen Altar vor dem Jahre 1000. Eine archäologische und liturgiegeschichtliche Untersuchung*. 2 vol., Bonn, 1965, passim.

Alongside, to be sure, ever since Constantine's days, rose churches laid out on a central plan: cruciform, the arms single-naved or basilical; or complex polygonal structures, with or without an inside ambulatory; and intricate double shell buildings, tetraconch or octoconch, the niches of the inner shell billowing out into the enveloping ambulatories and galleries. But they remained rare. Sophisticated in plan and construction, vaulted and double-tiered, they called for skilled engineering and workmanship and thus were expensive to build: suffice it to recall S. Lorenzo in Milan, or for that matter to envisage the earliest central type church known, the Golden Octagon at Antioch, laid out on a plan presumably resembling that of S. Vitale in Ravenna two hundred years later.<sup>9</sup>

However, the design of any central plan church, whatever the variant, runs counter to the principle of interaction between celebrant and congregation face to face which certainly in Early Christian times was at the very base of the liturgical performance. Altar and celebrant if placed in the center would in a cross plan church face only one arm, in a tetraconch one lobe and part of the nave; those of the congregation gathered in the lateral conchs or arms would view the sacrifice sideways – contrary to liturgical custom.

9 W. DYNES, "The first Christian Palace Church type", *Marsyas*, XI, 1964, 1ff. The erroneous identification of the central plan church type as palace-churches was regrettably my suggestion.

4. Interior, ambulatory and nave, reconstruction (Spencer Corbett)



If moved into one of the lobes or arms, as seems to have been the case at S. Lorenzo in Milan, altar and officiating clergy were still hidden from large parts of the congregation assembled sideways, not to mention those in the ambulatory. The obvious solution was to superimpose on the central plan a longitudinal axis: either by stretching it lengthwise, as did Anthemius and Isidorus in Justinian's Hagia Sophia; or else, to attach to the body of the church a projecting arm, a chancel to shelter altar and clergy, as was done at S. Vitale at Ravenna. However, if anything, that increased the amount of dead space in the nave whence the congregation was to participate in the performance of the liturgy.

In planning Santo Stefano Rotondo no attempt seems to have been made at integrating the lay-out of the structure with even the most basic demands of Christian public worship. On the contrary design and function clash violently. True, the rotunda and the embracing ambulatory could be

viewed as a circular memorial structure, focussed on a dominant martyrdom in the very center, like the Anastasis rotunda in Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> However, there is not nor was there ever a relic of the protomartyr at Santo Stefano Rotondo. As to the outer ring of spaces, they are a total waste, liturgically speaking: the quadrupling of the cross arms on the orthogonals, of the courtyards in the diagonals, whether before or after vaulting, or of the corridors. The eight gates in the perimeter wall, the intricate approaches leading inside, strike us as sheer extravagance. In the context of the liturgy as prevailing in fifth-century Rome Santo Stefano Rotondo, superbly beautiful though it is, is a freak.<sup>11</sup>

10 As I did quite some time ago: R. KRAUTHEIMER, "Santo Stefano Rotondo a Roma e la Chiesa del Santo Sepolcro a Gerusalemme", *RivArchCrist*, XII, 1935, 51 ff.

11 R. KRAUTHEIMER, "Success and Failure in Late Antique Church Planning", *Age of Spirituality*, ed. K. Weitzmann, New York, 1980, 121 ff.

That far I had come by the 1970's in my musings on the sphinx of the Celian as Enrico Josi used to call Santo Stefano. I even thought of an "edifying" pope planning a church consonant with the villa buildings of the neighborhood. But I remained ill at ease. A church after all is to serve the requirements of the liturgy. Form follows function, so I have been taught.

To be sure the performance of the liturgy is flexible. It adapts itself to nearly any architectural space; either because none more appropriate is at hand; or because on non-liturgical grounds a pervasive claim has been established for a novel type of church building. The fifteenth-century equation of churches and ancient temples interlocked with that of temples and the central plan. Combined this led to the long-lasting adoption of central plan churches and the concomitant adjustment of the liturgical performance. Or, finally, the adjustment springs from a new concept of the liturgy and its performance. Santo Stefano Rotondo itself illustrates such adaptation. The present central position of the main altar is in keeping with the recent new understanding of the liturgy; and it revives a situation of fifteenth century date, based on the equation church = temple = central plan.

The site of the main altar of late fifth or early sixth-century date remains unknown. The altar in the northeast cross arm, splendidly decked out in 1736, is but a reliquary altar, first set up and dedicated by Pope Theodore I, 642–649; while the altar in the southwest niche of the ambulatory was placed there probably in the twelfth century. However, the site of the original main altar can be inferred, at least approximately, from the foundations of a chancel arrangement dug up in the 1960's.<sup>12</sup> The entrance gate of a solea opened between the columns of the northeastern intercolumnation of the nave rotunda (fig. 2). From there the solea, framed by parapet walls and barely three meters wide, ran southwest for a length of 17 meters, a good four fifths of the span of the nave; at that point, wing walls jutted out at a right angle from the solea walls extending as far as the nave colonnade. Foundations in line with the solea parapets but beyond the traverse of the wing walls possibly belonged to the chancel. The original altar then may have stood in that very end sector of the nave; unless it was placed further southwest in the ambulatory or even in the southwest cross arm.

12 Ceschi, 99 ff.

13 T. F. MATHEWS, "An early Roman chancel arrangement", *Riv. ArchCrist*, XXXVIII, 1962, 73 ff; also E. DE BENEDICTIS, *The Schola Cantorum in Rome during the High Middle Ages*, PhD-thesis, Bryn Mawr, 1983. F. GUIDOBALDI, *San Clemente. Gli edifici romani, la basilica paleocristiana e le fasi altomedievali*. Rome, 1992, 175, note 257, doubts the fourth century origins of the long solea.

The long solea and the wing walls are characteristic of a chancel arrangement customary in Rome starting with Constantine's Lateran basilica and prevailing through the fifth and into the sixth centuries.<sup>13</sup> From the eighth century on the solea as a rule is widened and provided with benches as indeed was done at Santo Stefano around 800 A.D. Hence I would suggest for the original liturgical layout at Santo Stefano a late fifth or early sixth century date.<sup>14</sup>

That chancel arrangement, then, was an attempt to adapt to the building, as best possible, the demands of the liturgy: the placing of altar, clergy and congregation. The faithful filled the nave or part thereof. The celebrant and the assistant clerics occupied the space of the nave behind the wing walls, the chancel, having reached it by way of the solea. That space to be sure was somewhat confined, if limited to the southwestern end sector of the nave. The clergy present at a solemn papal mass was huge in numbers; they may have required a chancel expanded into the southwest ambulatory or into its cross arm. If the altar was in that cross arm, a small congregation would find room in the ambulatory. However, the nave and large parts of the ambulatory were liturgically sheer waste, not to mention all the large spaces outside the cross arms in the diagonal sectors. Can one imagine an architect, can one imagine the founder of a church, a pope, being that oblivious of the smooth co-ordination of ritual and church plan?

Nowhere, to be sure, does the *Liber Pontificalis* or any other source attribute to Simplicius the foundation or the construction of Santo Stefano Rotondo. His biographer only states that he consecrated it "... dedicavit basilicam sancti Stephani ...". Hence it has been suggested that the church had been built by his predecessor Pope Hilarus:<sup>15</sup> He would seem to fit the part. He was bitten by the building bug: his was a luxurious villa near S. Lorenzo f.l.m. long vanished; his a colourful courtyard by the Lateran Baptistery, also gone, but described in the *Liber Pontificalis*; his the transformation into the oratory of S. Croce of a garden pavillion nearby – it was demolished in 1585. However, naming alongside the dedicating pope the founder, whether or not his predecessor, would be a duty and a point of honour for the compilers of the *Liber Pontificalis*.<sup>16</sup> Had

14 Ceschi, *loc. cit.* Parapet posts and other fragments with interlace and tendril designs found during the excavation led Ceschi to assign the solea to the late eight or ninth centuries. In my opinion they date from a remodelling of the solea at that time. Does the fragment of a sixth century parapet once at Santo Stefano (F. GUIDOBALDI/C. BAR-SANTI/A. GUIGLIA-GUIDOBALDI, *San Clemente. La scultura del VI secolo*. Rome, 1992, 163, fig. 247) belong to the original chancel screens?

15 Geertman, 186 f.



Hilarus or any other pope founded or built Santo Stefano, his biographer or that of Simplicius would have pointed it out.

With that in mind Caecilia Davis-Weyer a few years ago raised an intriguing question:<sup>17</sup> did the biographer of Simplicius pass over the name of the founder of Santo Stefano because he had no place in a record of papal activities – being a layman? He would have been rich, not bound by the local Roman convention of basilical church planning; and – a key question – in a position to hand over to the Church the site where Santo Stefano was to rise. Mrs. Davis' candidate for that position is Anthemius, emperor of the West from 467 to 472. I find the proposal convincing.<sup>18</sup>

Born into a great Eastern family, enormously wealthy, a senator and a son-in-law of the East Roman emperor Marcian, Anthemius had proven himself a successful commander fighting barbarian raiders in the Balkans. Marcian's successor Leo sent him to the West in 467 to succeed a shadow emperor, Libius Severus, and to bring help to the *magister militum* Ricimer in his desperate fight against Burgundian and Visigoth invaders in Gaul and Spain and Vandal pirates cutting the sea routes. Anthemius was to hold what remained of the Western empire – Italy, Gaul and parts of Spain. His most important task, though, was apparently to re-establish in Rome an active Imperial presence. With a large expeditionary force he sailed West and with a military escort was landed in Italy; the bulk of the army and the fleet continued towards Carthage only to be decimated by the Vandals. Meanwhile Anthemius was crowned – outside Rome: Ricimer presumably opposed the coronation's taking place in Rome and throughout he countered Anthemius' policies; he probably had not bargained for an emperor with a mind of his own being sent over in place of one chosen by himself.<sup>19</sup> However, Anthemius reached the city, and settled down to a turbulent reign, ever threatened by invaders, shifty allies and conspiracies and in open enmity with Ricimer. In 476, after two uneasy years of coresidence with the emperor in Rome, Ricimer moved to Milan with a considerable body of troops. An attempt at reconciliation failed<sup>20</sup> and in July 472 Anthemius was killed in the streets of Rome by the invading allies of Ricimer.

16 Under Pope Pelagius I "... initiata est basilica apostolorum Philippi et Jacobi ..."; Pope John III "... perfecit ecclesiam ... Philippi et Jacobi et dedicavit eam ..." *LP*, I, 303, 305; cf. also the dedicatory inscriptions, *ICUR*, II.1, 69, 135, 248; *CBCR*, I, 77.

17 Davis-Weyer, 61 ff.

18 *PLRE*, II, 96 ff.

19 J. M. O'FLYNN, *Generalissimos of the Western Roman Empire*, Edmonton, 1983, 104 ff.

Anthemius found support, it seems, among the senatorial circles in Rome, Italy and prominently in Gaul: big landholders and high magistrates, many with intellectual aspirations, and conservative upholders of the classical inheritance of the Latin West. Nonetheless he had no easy stand. The opposition, led by the Germanic generals, snubbed wherever possible the Easterner – that "Greek emperor", that "graeculus" – a contemptible little Greek; that Galatian – from the hinterlands of Asia Minor, one of his grandfathers hailed from there, that country bumpkin. But that was only fair: Anthemius called Ricimer a Goth clad in pelts.<sup>21</sup>

Even his standing as a Christian was highly suspect. He had been brought up as one, to be sure.<sup>22</sup> Hardly arrived in Rome however, he ran into trouble for being on friendly terms with a heretic church leader and willing to admit into the city sectarian congregations. Publicly rebuked by pope Hilarus, he yielded under an oath taken on the sacrament.<sup>23</sup> Yet, he remained branded: for having permitted the celebration of the *lupercalia*<sup>24</sup>; as paganminded, *hellenophronos*; as a 'philosopher', of one bent of mind with unconcealed pagans; and under the influence in particular of the Neo-platonist Fl. Messius Phoebus Severus<sup>25</sup>: a native of Rome, but self-exiled to Alexandria, a neo-pagan center, where he lived in style receiving visitors as exotic as Brahmins from far India. Returned to Rome with Anthemius and appointed by him patricius and in 470 consul, Severus was rumoured to have held out to him the prospect of resurrecting Rome from her fall and of having plotted jointly with him to revive the worship of the old gods – "the muck of idols"<sup>26</sup>; "a most Christian man piously guiding the empire", so ironically a Byzantine chronicler.<sup>27</sup>

20 ENNODIUS, "Vita B. Epiphani", *CSEL*, VI, 1882, 344.

21 The insults are quoted as coming from Ricimer (Ennodius, as note 20) and from the *praefectus praetorio* of Gaul, Arvandus, whom Anthemius brought to trial on a conspiracy charge (SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS, *Poems and Letters*, Epp. I. vii. 5 [LCL, I, 370]). Anthemius' slur against Ricimer is quoted by Ennodius, *loc. cit.*

22 The Easter Chronicle *ad an.* 5468 (*PG*, 92, 828) attributes to Anthemius the foundation of a church of St. Thomas in Constantinople; R. JANIN, "Les Eglises et les monastères", *La Géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantine*, Paris, 1953, III, 1, 260, convincingly refers that foundation to the homonymous grandfather of our Anthemius. W. E. KAEGLI, Jr., *Byzantium and the Decline of the West*, Princeton, 1968, 61 ff., views Anthemius as a sincere Christian, mistakenly I feel. His coinage, being official, obviously had to employ Christian iconography.

23 GELASIUS, "Ep. ad Dardanos", *CSEL*, XXXV, 1895, 390 f.

24 GELASIUS, "Ep. adversus Andromachum", *ibid.*, 457.

25 *PLRE*, II, 1005.

26 PHOTIUS, *Bibliothèque* VI, ed. R. Henry, Paris 1971, 335 b, 339 b, 349 a (from the Life of Isidore the philosopher).

27 THEOPHANES, Chronology, *ad an.* 5057 (*PG*, 108, col. 289).

Neo-paganism in the fifth and far into the sixth centuries was fashionable among intellectuals.<sup>28</sup> Turned off by the growing intolerance of Christian orthodoxy they were intent at preserving classical culture and the appropriate way of life in the face of barbarian invaders and a crumbling empire. To be sure, they did not threaten Christianity; few would openly and defiantly proclaim their adherence to the old gods. Most would stay within the Church into which they had been baptized, for safety's sake and for the sake of their careers: even though the authorities often closed an eye, legally non-Christians were barred from public service. However, being Christian for many an intellectual did not preclude collaterally believing in and practicing the rituals of the mystery cults that for half a millenium had held out to the initiate the promise of good luck in life and of an afterlife blessed forever. Such prospect or the revival of Platonic and Pythagorean ideas reinterpreted mystically would appeal to the reasoning intellectual more than the hair-splittings of Christian theologians. Finally, the ancient gods had not died.

The masses by the fifth century in the big cities presumably were solidly and fanatically Christian. Among country folk the old gods, Greek, Roman or local, survived for a long time. Intellectuals were in a quandary. Few, if any, believed in them. However, cultural tradition and patriotism both created a warm attachment to their memory. Rome had been great under their rule. Their deeds and their worship were interwoven with the writings of any author, Greek or Roman. The longing for a golden past and the dream of its glorious return lay at the very core of late antique thought. The cultivation of the classical heritage and the inherent nostalgia for its revival, both cultural and political, were after all a social phenomenon bred into the upper crust of late antique society – the court, civil servants, the old families, intellectuals.

That nostalgia to be sure was ever present. But it was felt more strongly and proclaimed more loudly – this rather than revived – when that classical legacy and its carrier, that top layer of society, felt its values and its very existence physically threatened. Pagans and Christians alike felt the shock when Rome fell to Alaric in 410 – one recalls Jerome's lament “capta est urbs quae totum cepit orbem.” Rutilius Namatianus, a pagan and a high civil servant from Gaul, a few years later terminating a visit to Rome breaks into defiant protestations – she would rise again.<sup>29</sup> Only a

few weeks after the Vandal raid of 455, Sidonius Apollinaris, a Christian from way back, in a panegyric to the emperor Avitus – he ruled for but three months – verbatim takes up Rutilius' claim: Rome, undaunted, as she had ever done, would gain strength from disaster, “... adversis sic Roma micat cui fixus ab ortu ordo fuit crevisse malis.”<sup>30</sup> In 458, the emperor Maiorianus attempts, as his predecessors had tried forever in vain, to outlaw the quarrying for private use of public monuments, “that adornment of Rome”, specifically including pagan temples; punishment was to be harsh, the hands were to be cut off “which desecrate the monuments of the ancients.”<sup>31</sup> As late as 483 a member of the Anicius clan, Christians forever, took care of restoring a statue of Minerva damaged by the collapse of her shrine on the Roman Forum “pro beatitudine temporis.”<sup>32</sup>

The myth of Rome, solidly bred into their consciousness, blended out the wretched economic and political realities even in those that daily had to cope with them – big landholders, high civil servants, political leaders. In this climate the reports on Anthemius' and his circle's hopes – call them their phantasies – of resurrecting the Roman Empire in the face of all odds gain credibility. Even the dream of reverting to the old gods does not seem so very implausible in that light. After all, we have seen in our own time such blending out of reality by myths firmly implanted into men's minds.

As Caecilia Davis has pointed out only the emperor could dispose of the site where Santo Stefano was to rise. Large remains of the *castra peregrina* have come to light below the church and nearby, the barracks of a military unit, detached from troops stationed in the provinces – hence *peregrini* – and seconded to Rome for special services, as secret police among others.<sup>33</sup> Covering a large area on the plateau of the hill, the camp had been laid out around 130 A.D. Thoroughly altered a century and a half later, it remained in use through a large part of the fourth century.<sup>34</sup> Along with the barracks proper, it must have comprised buildings comfortable enough to house a distinguished state prisoner and his retinue.<sup>35</sup> However, for nearly another hundred years new structures of unknown

28 J. GEFFKEN, *Der Ausgang des griechisch-römischen Heidentums*, Heidelberg, 1929; (English translation, *The last days of Greco-Roman paganism*, ed. S. MacCormack, Amsterdam–New York–Oxford, 1978).

29 RUTILIUS NAMATIANUS, *De reditu suo*, ed. E. Doblhöfer, Heidelberg, 1972.

30 SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS, *Poems and Letters*, as above, note 21, *Carmen* VII, 6f.

31 TH. MOMMSEN/MEYER, “Nov. Maiorianus”, *Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus sirmondianis et Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*, 2 vol., Berlin 1904/05, II, 161.

32 CIL, VI.1 526.

33 W. HENZEN, “Osservazioni a) The castra peregrinorum”, *Bullettino dell'Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica*, 1884, 186ff.

34 Colini, 237 ff.; Ceschi, 7 ff., and *ibid.*, E. LISSI CARONNA, *Appendice* II, 175 ff.

function were set up on the site at a higher level. Their walls as well as those of the barracks were cut to just below the intended level of the church creating a platform into which to sink its foundation walls. Till then, however, the ground of the encampment was property of the fisc or of the crown. No bishop of Rome could have the barracks and the later structures razed or build on the site. Only the emperor could do so.

However, if Anthemius built Santo Stefano, that still leaves the bothersome question of a church, laid out that wastefully, that oblivious of the needs of the liturgy, that contrary to contemporary Roman church planning. His neo-pagan antics quite aside, Anthemius had been brought up and remained, *pro forma* anyhow, a member of the Church. He knew the demands of the liturgy. So did any architect he would employ. Also, both as a Church member and as emperor, he would probably have respected the law requiring the bishop's consent for any church to be funded and built in his diocese. No bishop in his senses would have approved the layout of Santo Stefano.

Simplicius "... *dedicavit basilicam Sancti Stephani in Celio monte.*" However, what is the particular meaning of *dedicare* as employed in Rome from the fifth into at least the seventh century?

*Dedicare* in the *Liber Pontificalis* as well as in dedicatory inscriptions is used in a number of distinct situations.<sup>36</sup> Often these are specified. The pope dedicates a church built by himself and is referred to as both founder and consecrating priest; or he dedicates one, built by another individual – layfolk, clerics, his predecessor; or he reconciles to Rome a church built and used by heretics; or else, he reconsecrates a church badly damaged and therefore desecrated. Most frequently, however, *dedicavit* stands by itself, without such explanatory indications. That way it is used by the biographer of Simplicius when referring to the consecration of Santo Stefano. That same way it is employed when in the seventh century Pope Honorius turns into a church the *Curia Senatus*; or when a late biographer of the earliest popes attributes to Pius I the conversion into the church of S.

Pudenziana of the *Thermae Novatianae*, another secular structure. Just so, the *vita* of Simplicius records the consecration as a church of the basilica of Junius Bassus, the reception hall of a great *domus*, moreover with decidedly pagan religious overtones in its decoration. Just so it refers to the conversion into churches of two mausolea, one Christian, one pagan – not secular but decidedly non-ecclesiastical structures. All four *dedicationes*, moreover, the biographer of the pope lists in one breath starting with that of Santo Stefano.

The conclusion seems obvious. Santo Stefano was laid out by the emperor. That emperor presumably was Anthemius whose reign falls into the last month of the pontificate of Pope Hilarus and the first years of Simplicius. However, the building was not planned as a church. It was envisaged as a secular, a non-ecclesiastical structure. Simplicius took over whatever had been built and dedicated it to Christ in honour of Saint Stephen. Thereupon construction was completed and the building, lavishly decorated, was adapted to Christian services. So far, I think, my hypothesis rests on solid ground.

The terrain becomes slippery once the quest turns to architectural context, function and intent of the structure devised and begun by Anthemius. The pattern is rooted it seems to me in the multiform repertory of late antique palace and villa architecture. The 'Great Triclinium' in Hadrian's villa below Tivoli is a trilobe, the *Minerva Medica* a decagonal variant within that category. And, like the building that became Santo Stefano they are devised as composites of spaces, alternately roofed and open-aired, some with pools or fountains, and linked to one another by colonnaded screens, the entire design airy and interlocking.

That shared pattern also suggests, I propose, the function that the building as planned by Anthemius was to serve. The designation of the structure at Tivoli as a triclinium rests on nothing but its trefoil plan traditionally assigned to dining rooms; just so the *Minerva Medica* is termed a *nymphaeum* because of the pools adjoining.<sup>37</sup> In fact, both belong to a category of late antique buildings widely varying in plan and pattern, but all pleasure domes, designed for purposes of representation and of multiple and interchangeable use: for formal banquets, as entrance vestibules to a city palace, and most frequently for receptions by the master of the house, the *dominus*, of larger and smaller gatherings of a quasi-public character, the *salutatio*.

35 A chieftain of the Alemanni, captured in 357, was interned in the camp. AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI.12.66 (LCL, I, 300). The ceramics found below the pavement of Santo Stefano suggest to the experts a date "shortly after 400" for the abandonment of the *castra*. The structures built atop that level were traced by Ceschi only in the southwest sector. Their existence has been recently questioned (A. MARTIN, "L'importazione di ceramica africana in Roma", *L'Africa Romana, Atti VI convegno di studi ... 1988*, Sassari, 1989, 475 ff.; C. PAVOLINI, "L'area del Celio", *La storia economica di Roma nell'alto medioevo alla luce dei recenti scavi archeologici*, ed. P. Delogu and L. Paroli, Rome, 1993, 53 ff.).

36 For references, see Excursus.

37 Professor EUGENIA SALZA PRINI RICOTTI, the soprintendente at Villa Adriana prefers to simply term the structure "edificio a tre absidi" ("L'irrigazione della Piazza d'Oro", *AttiPAccRend.*, LXII, 1989/90, 121 ff., esp. 149).

The ritual of the *salutatio*, the early morning-call on the mighty, was an affair not to be taken lightly in Roman life.<sup>38</sup> Ever since late Republican times the ceremony was obligatory: for the patron's good friends and best friends, *amici primi et secundi loci* – the classification had been established ever since the time of the Gracchi<sup>39</sup>; and for his large clientele: freedmen, hangers-on, petitioners; all in their best Sunday togas trying to catch the patron's eye and then rushing on to the next call on their list, across town. Cicero complains of the throng, but of course loves it; Juvenal and Martial ridicule the custom; Jerome four hundred years later warns his rich lady friends of the nasty customers, layfolk and clerical, showing up at their morning *salutatio*.<sup>40</sup>

The emperor's *salutatio* obviously was attended by many hundreds. The protocol was rigorous and the callers strictly classified. The first *admissio* would be seen by the Majesty *secretim*, in the privacy of his own rooms or in a *salotto*, in small groups: high ranking officials, embassies from the provinces or from abroad, close relatives and the emperor's *amici* of the first class – the members of his 'kitchen cabinet', his powerful private council. The *secunda admissio* – provincials, officials of lesser rank, embassies of small significance – were received in batches in a large hall or in a garden, the emperor walking about and suite and callers trying to keep up with him.<sup>41</sup> Whether first or second *admissio*, however, all had to show up and wait, if only to be sent home after long hours. The crowd of *inferiores*, too, milling around the palace gates just to catch a look of the emperor, on occasion might be allowed to pay obeisance *en masse* in a large courtyard or audience hall to watch the Majesty dispense justice or receive an embassy from a foreign country.

Hence provision was made for the ceremony of the *salutatio* in the palaces and villas of the emperors and the *potentes*: a large audience hall or a spacious vestibule for greeting the crowd; smaller reception rooms for callers of the first and the second *admissio*; waiting rooms or open-air areas presumably again separate for callers of different rank.<sup>42</sup> All these spaces could be arranged within the com-

pact block of a town palace, say that of the emperors on the Palatine. Or they were scattered over a wider area or a park, as in Villa Adriana or at Piazza Armerina. The several rooms to serve the ceremony likewise varied widely in shape and size. The large reception hall, the *salutatorium*, might follow tradition and be laid out as an apsed *aula*, like those large and small at Piazza Armerina.<sup>43</sup> Or, rather than being apsed, such halls ended in a trefoil, as frequent in North Africa or, for that matter, in the East, at Dura-Europos in the third and at M'shatta in the seventh century. Trilobe structures, too, would serve as reception rooms or they would be used interchangeably for receptions and formal banquets. Or else, reception halls were designed on a central plan. The quatrefoil of early fourth-century date inserted into the courtyard of the Library of Hadrian at Athens was after all in all likelihood the audience hall of the provincial governor.<sup>44</sup> By the same token, the huge rotundas customary at the entrance of fifth century palaces in Constantinople should be viewed it seems to me as ceremonial reception halls rather than simply as vestibules.<sup>45</sup> Circular or hexagonal in plan and domed, they opened on the hemicycle of a colonnaded forecourt, or on a portico interposed, and were flanked by minor, yet sizeable rotundas or polyconchs, possibly intended for greeting more intimate callers; or else, the grand main hall was backed up by an equally grand banquetting hall. A monumental area of representation was formed at the very entrance of the palace. Moreover one and the same building would serve, it seems, several functions. A *salutatorium-cum*-dining hall would carry the features of a nymphaeum as well, as did apparently the 'Great Triclinium' at Tivoli or the Minerva Medica: of its nine billowing niches, four open on the flanking pools through colonnaded screens.<sup>46</sup>

In this ambient of ceremonial buildings I propose very tentatively to place the structure envisaged and begun by Anthemius that became Santo Stefano: a spacious edifice

38 L. FRIEDLAENDER, *Sittengeschichte Roms*, I, Leipzig, 1888, 338f.; F. MILLAR, *The emperor in the Roman World*, London, 1978, 15f., 21f.; RE, IA2, 2066ff.

39 SENECA, *De clementia*, I.10.

40 CICERO, *Ed. ad Brutum*, II.4.1; JUVENAL, *Satires*, V. 19ff. (LCL, 68ff.); MARTIAL, *Epigrams*, VIII. XLIV (LCL, II, 32); IX. XCII (LCL, II, 138ff.); XII. XXVI (LCL, II, 336); and *passim*. JEROME, *Epistulae*, XXII.28.

41 PHILO, *Legatio* (LCL).

42 PLINY, *N.H.*, XV.10.38; AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes atticae* IV.1.1; XIX.13.1; XX.1.2 (LCL, I, 308; III, 397; III, 406).

43 A. CARANDINI, *Filosofiana*, Palermo, 1982, *passim*: there are five such apsed halls at Piazza Armerina, designed for receptions, public and intimate: the large basilica, those in the master's and his lady's apartments, the music room and one, possibly a waiting room of the *xystos* fringing the basilica.

44 A. FRANTZ, "Herculius in Athens", VII CAC, 1965, 527ff., considered that possibility, as had J. Travlos before. The interpretation of the structure as the Great Church from the very outset, with which I reluctantly concurred (*Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Harmondsworth, 1986, 473, n. 43) remains unconvincing.

45 W. MÜLLER-WIENER, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbul*, Tübingen, 1977, 122ff., 238f., 240f., with bibliography.

46 M. STETTLER, "St. Gereon in Köln und der sogenannte Tempel der Minerva Medica", *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums*, IV, 1957, 123ff.; for the surrounding structures, R. LANCIANI, *Forma Urbis Romae*, Rome, 1896, repr. 1986, pl. 24.

designed for representation and only for that – receptions, grand and small, and possibly formal banquets. The callers would enter through the eight gates in the perimeter wall, orderly one imagines, and separate from one another, crowds and those of higher ranks, *primi* and *secundi loci*. Filing through the entrance corridors they would reach the courtyards and the cross arms, waiting spaces “*areae cum salutationem Caesaris opperiremur*”<sup>47</sup> and *vestibula*, ante-chambers or halls set aside for greeting groups of select visitors. They would enter the ambulatory to linger further until admitted where the Majesty awaited them in the nave. Possibly, too, in that project Anthemius and his architect envisaged the rotunda as a courtyard, open to the sky, as such open areas formed the focus in many of the ceremonial buildings at Villa Adriana.<sup>48</sup> As customary, the diverse spaces would be segregated by curtains.

Objections to my conjecture (and conjecture it is) are readily at hand. First, the *salutatorium* devised by Anthemius, if that it was, is located far from where he would be expected to have resided. Emperors in the fifth century when in Rome customarily stayed in *palatio*, in the still habitable parts of the old Imperial palaces of the Palatine, as did later Theodoric and Narses, viceroy of the Byzantine emperor.<sup>49</sup> So may Anthemius have done. In that case, however, would he not have used for the ceremony of the *salutatio* the facilities of the palace where any number of reception rooms, large and small, were at his disposal? The walk from the Palatine to Santo Stefano, to be sure, is not very far.<sup>50</sup> Yet, even from the East rim of the palaces it takes half an hour or so, downhill and uphill. However, there is no shred of evidence that Anthemius resided on the Palatine. Possibly he could not reside there, because Ricimer held the palace occupied. After all, the *magister militum* had attempted to bar Anthemius from entering Rome and placed obstacles in his way wherever possible. The Palatine was a key strategic point; Ricimer would need to control it. If so, Anthemius had to look for accommodations elsewhere. To spin the speculations a bit further, right next to the *castra* east on the Celian, there rose since the third century the grand *domus* of the Valerii.<sup>51</sup> It had

been laid waste (*dissipata*) by a raiding party in the sack of Alaric and sold by the owners at a bargain price “as if it had been set on fire”.<sup>52</sup> However, that does not sound as if the buildings had been seriously impaired. In the course of the nearly sixty years between the raid of 410 and Anthemius’ arrival, the new owners of the property would certainly have repaired the damage caused by Alaric’s soldiery. Anthemius or anyone willing to pay the price could move into what still remained a grand mansion. In fact the two hypotheses support each other. The construction of the huge ceremonial building that later became Santo Stefano makes sense best if Anthemius occupied the adjoining *domus Valeriorum*.

To be sure, I have not found a reception or banqueting hall or for that matter any late antique building designed on the same plan as Santo Stefano or close to it. Nor has anyone else whom I have read or consulted. The ceremonial building laid out as I propose by Anthemius remains unique, as does the church that rose on its foundations. Scholars dislike *hapax legomena*. But they have to face the possibility of their occurring. Hence I ask myself whether Anthemius devised a structure that out of the ordinary and that eccentric for reasons unexplored so far.

What follows is pure speculation, to be sure, and not quite proper for a serious scholar’s attention. However, I shall try out yet one more conjecture.

Anthemius, if the records are trustworthy viewed himself as a philosopher-king. He was reputed to be pagan-minded and was close to Severus, a major figure in Neoplatonist and Neopythagorean circles. In the philosophies of these groups cosmologies linked to mathematical systems held a key position.<sup>53</sup> The constituents of the cosmologies were threefold – the universe, its building stones, their mutations. The universe was envisaged in concentric rings – the earth, the ocean, the starring sky. Its building stones as well as those of time and life – the year, man – were conceived in groups of four, *tetrads*: the four elements, the cardinal points, the seasons, the temperaments. Each of these tetrads mutated under the impact of the humours: two pairs of opposite qualities, hot and cold, dry and humid. One of each pair is attached to each of the tetrads – hot and dry to air, earth, spring, sanguine; in such a way,

47 Aulus Gellius, as above, note 42, XX.1.2 (LCL, III, 406).

48 F. RAKOB, “Litus Veneris”, *RömMitt*, LXVIII, 1961, 114ff.

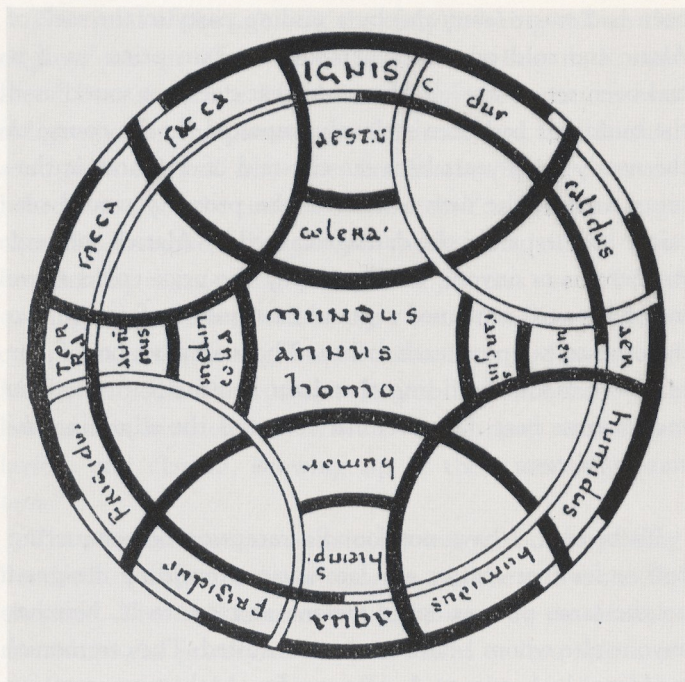
49 Davis-Weyer, 66f., with reference to the sources.

50 Davis-Weyer, 67.

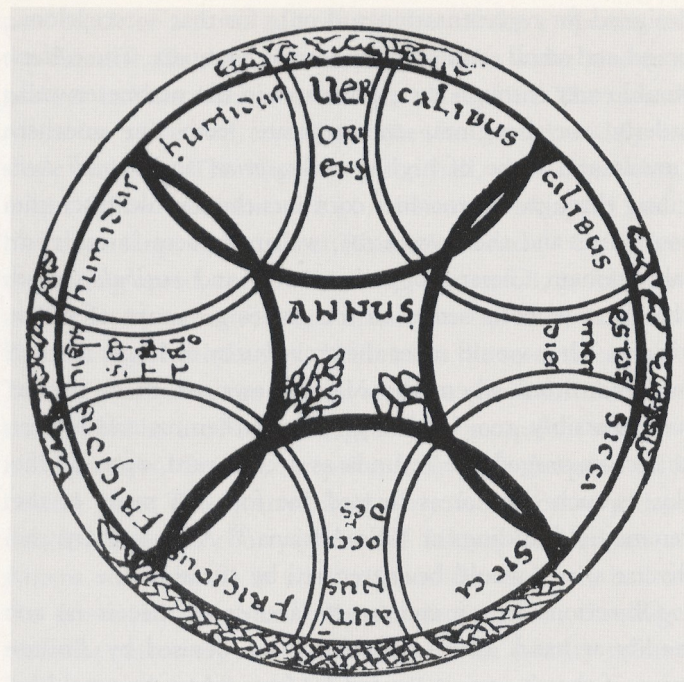
51 Colini, 253ff.

52 *Vita Melaniae junioris*, c. 14 (*Analecta Bollandiana*, VIII, 1889, 16ff.). The phrasing “pro nihilo venumdata est quasi incensa” (so also the Greek *vita*, ed. D. Gorce, Paris, 1962) “as if it had been set on fire”, refers to the sale at bargain prices of houses burnt down or still on fire. However, the *quasi* makes it quite clear that actually it had not burnt down.

53 Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt had long urged me to look into the interplay of architectural planning and cosmological design. She also introduced me to the bibliography on cosmologies and cosmological patterns in Renaissance publications. I thank her warmly, although I still remain somewhat diffident. But there is no harm in trying out the cosmological approach to the unusual lay-out of Santo Stefano – always *coniecturaliter*.



5. Cosmological diagram. Isidore of Seville, *De rerum natura*, after J. Fontaine, 216 bis.



6. Cosmological diagram. Isidore of Seville, *De rerum natura*, after J. Fontaine, 202 bis.

however, that each of the humours links up in a cat's cradle with the adjoining tetrad as well – hot with fire, south, summer, cholera; dry with earth, west, autumn, melancholy. From Late Antiquity these cosmologies were handed down to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

As a memnotechnical device of such intricate cosmological systems, illustrated medieval manuscripts and, later, printed books employed diagrams of varying design. The underlying pattern is as a rule a series of concentric circles (fig. 5). That base is invaded by two sets of four half-circles each. Placed in the orthogonals and diagonals on the outer circle's periphery, the half-circles intersect. The center of the diagram is allotted to the dominant entities – mundus, annus, homo; the tetrads – air, oriens, ver, the sanguine temperament – are inscribed on the base of the halfcircles in the orthogonals. The humours, finally, occupy the bisected half-circles on the diagonals; marked twice in each half-circle, right and left, they link up as required each with two of the tetrads. In an intricate variant of the diagram the intersecting perimeters of the halfcircles turn into an endless band of circular segments and loops which interweave with the base pattern of concentric circles, crossing alternately above and below their rim (fig. 6).

Such cosmological diagrams have survived, as far as known, first in Carolingian copies of Isidore of Seville's *De rerum natura*.<sup>54</sup> From these they migrated into ninth-century and medieval encyclopedias and later on in ever new

variations into Renaissance publications. No illustrated manuscripts contemporary with Isidore's early seventh-century work seem to survive. However, he and his contemporaries would have been familiar with such diagrams from late antique illuminated manuscripts: from Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metereologica*; from other astronomical treatises, from schoolbooks and encyclopedias; and presumably from cosmologies of Neo-pythagorean and Neo-platonic origin.

Is it then foolhardy to conjecture that Anthemius and his architect in drawing up the plan of his ceremonial building meant it to reflect diagrammatically cosmological ideas of the philosopher on the throne? The base pattern of Santo Stefano, *hapax legomenon* that it is, is after all formed by four concentric rings: the foundations of the perimeter wall, the circular segments bisecting concentrically the diagonal sectors of the ambulatory foundation and that of the nave – a tetrad (figs. 1,2). Likewise, the tetrad of the cross arms cutting across the two outer circles recalls the placing of the half-circles on the orthogonal axes of the diagrams. On the diagonal axes the courtyards as well as the corridors interlink each with two of the cross-arms much as in the diagrams the humours are bonded each to two tetrads on

<sup>54</sup> ISIDORE de SEVILLE, *De natura rerum*, ed. J. Fontaine, Bordeaux, 1960, 216 bis, 202 bis; M. REUTER, *Text und Bild im Cod. 132* (*Münchener Beiträge zur Mediaevistik*), München, 1984, 12 f. and *passim*.

the orthogonals. The emperor's audience hall would be a structure unprecedented and confusing to the non-initiate. But the adept might trace in the uniqueness of its lay-out the signals of his imperial fellow-pythagorean's cosmological credo.

The conjecture aside however, Anthemius could hardly have managed to build the structure as envisaged. Its size was megalomaniac, quite out of tune with reality. It was planned to hold a crowd of a couple of thousand, far larger than the ruler of the Western empire and of Rome, shrunk as they were, could ever expect to pay him homage. The sheer amount of brickwork needed was nearly half of what had gone into building Old St. Peter's in the course of ten years or so. Anthemius was no Constantine; armies of workmen and labourers could no longer be raised by his command; the organizations of logistics and of engineering had broken down; financial resources were swallowed by the defense budget and by subsidies to hold off threatening invaders. Anyhow, within four years of his arrival Anthemius was dead and in 476 the last semblance of an Imperial presence in the West had vanished. How much Anthemius had been able to build is hard to tell; presumably the foundation walls were in place, possibly some parts of the rising walls had gone up, but they certainly had not reached the clerestorey level of the Northeast cross arm – the cruciform window in its front wall is, after all, a Christian symbol.

Simplicius took over the site, ownerless once the last shadow of imperial authority had vanished. He converted to ecclesiastical use whatever had been built and dedicated to Saint Stephen the church to rise: the first church inside Rome to be placed under the protomartyr's patronage.<sup>55</sup> But then, Rome was notoriously late in accepting the cult of Stephen, sixty-odd years after it had spread widely in Spain and North Africa.<sup>56</sup> The date of the dedication by Simplicius can be placed tentatively but safely, it seems to me, on August 2, 481.<sup>57</sup>

Simplicius, ailing by then, presumably did little, if any building at Santo Stefano during the eighteen months of his life remaining. Work was taken up by his successors, possibly starting in the nineties. The climate by then was favourable. Theodoric had brought peace to Italy and had settled the frictions between Rome and Byzantium on the politico-theological level. In Rome the old senatorial clans

had taken over under his patronage. Popes were elected with their consent and from their midst. Like Anthemius they strove to preserve the traditions and to revive the grandeur of Rome. But unlike him they faced reality: they kept to the local and cultural level, cooperated with the Ostrogothic king and left to him the major political issues. Within this climate work on Santo Stefano would revive and the splendour of its completion make sense. The resources of the Church were vast. Her holdings extended through Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and Gaul. They prospered and by the time of Felix III (483–492), Simplicius' successor, the income flowed into her coffers from all these lands unimpeded by civil war or invasions. She was far richer than the emperor of the West had been. Moreover, Gelasius (492–496) possibly already as his predecessor's archdeacon, had introduced a strict budgeting system of income and expenses. Work at Santo Stefano was terminated by 530.

During construction, however, a number of telling structural changes were deemed necessary to adapt the building as far as possible to its function as a church. The four courtyards in the diagonal axes were vaulted in lightweight *tuboli* construction turning then from outdoor into interior spaces.<sup>58</sup> Concomitantly the windows in the side walls of the cross arms were blocked; moreover the corridors fronting the ex-courtyards, formerly roofed, may have been left open to the sky. Finally, six out of the eight gates in the perimeter wall were blocked. Only the two right and left of the Northeastern cross arm stayed open thus marking that arm as the only entrance area remaining, the atrium of the church. Finally, at that time the solea was inserted into the area of the nave rotunda and a chancel altar and possibly a cathedra were set up presumably in the Southwestern cross arm and the corresponding segment of the ambulatory.<sup>59</sup>

55 Santo Stefano in Via Latina dedicated under the pontificate of Leo I (440–461) lies *extra moenia* and was a private foundation on privately owned ground.

56 Stephen's name only at the same time is also included in the *Nobis quoque* of the Roman Canon of the Mass (C. V. KENNEDY, *The Saints of the Canon of the Mass*, Vatican City, 1938).

57 December 26, generally accepted as Saint Stephen's *natalis* marks the anniversary of the discovery of his grave in 415. The date by the mid-sixth century had not yet entered the *Sacramentarium Veronese* (*Cod. Bibl. Capit. Veron. LXXXV, 80*), ed. L. C. MOHLBERG, Rome, 1966. Instead, that sacramentary carries nine mass formulas for the protomartyr on August 2, long established as the *natalis* of Pope Stephen I (died 257). Presumably then, the feast of Saint Stephen by the time the *Veronese* was compiled, was celebrated in Rome on the homonymous pope's *natalis*. The last of the formulas carried on that day by the *Veronese* is for the dedication of a church in the Saint's honour. The only church *intra moenia* consecrated to him by the mid-sixth century was Santo Stefano Rotondo. Given the custom of dedicating churches only on Sundays and the fact that in the pontificate of Simplicius and after the death of Anthemius or for that matter after 476, Sunday falls on August 2 only in 481, I take this to be the date of the dedication of Santo Stefano.

58 See above note 5.

59 Davis-Weyer, 78f., has pointed out all these changes.

That leaves open a number of questions. Why did Simplicius consecrate as a church a structure begun, so I propose, for secular use by Anthemius? Why not let the remains collapse and decay? Why in a half-century of much reduced ecclesiastical building in Rome focus on Santo Stefano, continue and complete construction and splendidly adorn a church that huge, that wasteful, that costly and that incompatible with liturgical requirements? Why one more church near the Lateran? Why give it a status equal only to S. Maria Maggiore and S. Croce in Gerusalemme –

without a congregation, without an endowment, without a clergy of its own; serviced from and controlled by the central administration of the papacy; yet with but a minor part in the Church calendar, whether in Lent or Advent, much in contrast to S. Croce not to say S. Maria Maggiore, a subsidiary cathedral?

I have at this point no answer to these questions, not even a hypothesis. Santo Stefano Rotondo remains the sphinx of the Celian.

## EXCURSUS

### Dedicare

The meaning of de-dicare in Roman Law is to divest oneself (*de-dicare*) in favour of a divinity<sup>60</sup> of a piece of property: an object, a building lot, a building, a son or daughter, one's own person.<sup>61</sup> The act frequently is preceded and caused by a *votum*, a vow solemnly made or by a mandate received to bring the offering. It is a binding legal act performed by the donor under the guidance of a pontifex who recites the ritual formulas and with whom is deposited the deed of gift made out in true legal form. This, the *dedicatio*, is distinct from the pursuant second act, the *consecratio* by which the dedicated object or person is turned over ritually to the Godhead and thus transferred from the profane to the sacred sphere. The Christian Empire continues setting apart and performing the two acts separately.

The *dedicatio*, making out the deed, and the material operations, such as constructing and outfitting the building are up to the donor or founder, whether layman or cleric, and are credited to him. The *consecratio* on the other hand can be performed only by a cleric, as a rule the bishop: "... a fundamentis Julianus Argentarius edificavit ornavit atque dedicavit consecrante ... Maximiano episcopo ..." or "... Bacauda et Julianus a fundamentis fecerunt et dedicaverunt ...", so the inscriptions at S. Vitale, S. Apollinare in Classe and S. Michele in Africisco in Ravenna.<sup>62</sup>

Such clear terminology however is limited, it seems to Ravenna in the sixth century under Byzantine rule; it may well be a conscious archaizing revival of older formulas. As early as the first century B.C. in fact the terms *dedicatio* and *consecratio* were taken to be equivalent and that conflation persisted through the following six hundred years and on

into the Middle Ages<sup>63</sup>: activities and obligations of the donor remain those inherent in the act of *dedicatio*: providing the gift, erecting the building, outfitting and endowing it for maintenance, lighting and servicing. However, the term *dedicare* no longer applies to these activities. In Rome anyhow, inscriptions as well as the Liber Pontificalis either specify one or more of the founder's contributions – *votum posuit, constituit, construxit, ornavit, exquisivit*; more frequently they sum up all these activities by the all-purpose word *fecit* as their ancestors had done for many centuries – "sepulchrum sibi fecit", or "fecit Constantinus Augustus basilicas istas ...". For the act of consecration on the other hand the proper term *consecrare* is but rarely used in the context of church buildings. Its place as a rule is taken, if improperly, by the term *dedicare*.

Whenever the sixth century compiler of the Liber Pontificalis and his successors over the following two hundred years set off against each other the terms *fecit* or *perfecit* or rarely, *construxit* and the term *dedicavit* they clarify the meaning.<sup>64</sup> The first group of terms refers to the founder who financed and built the church or completed construction and outfitting. That founder may be the ruling pope "(Damasus) ... basilicam quam ipse construxit ...". Or he may be a lay person, specifically mentioned: Constantine; a couple, Albinus and Glaphyra, who on their own property had built a church "... facientes basilicam ..."; or the lady Vestina who in her will directs "ut basilica sanctorum martyrum (scil. Gervasius and Protasius) construeretur." The *dedicavit* on the other hand, the consecration, is always up to the clerical authorities, in the Liber Pontificalis the pope. Pope Innocent "dedicavit basilicam Gervasi et Protasi" after having it built under the supervision of a group of clerics on his staff *ex delegatione* of the lady Vestina. The same

60 To dedicate a book to another person is late antique terminology.

61 L. VOELKL, *Die Kirchenstiftungen des Kaisers Konstantin im Lichte des römischen Sakralrechts*, Köln, 1964; RAC, III, 643 ff. (L. Koep).

62 F.W. DEICHMANN, *Ravenna, Kommentar II*, Wiesbaden, 1976, 4ff.

63 RAC, III, 643 ff. (L. Koep).

64 Geertman, 184ff.



situation obtained at Santo Stefano in Vita Latina<sup>65</sup>; Demetrias in her will entrusted Pope Leo I with having a church built on her ancestral estate in honour of Saint Stephen; the pope in turn commissioned the presbyter Tigrinus, possibly the head of Buildings and Grounds in the papal administration,<sup>66</sup> to supervise construction. Likewise in the sixth century Pope Symmachus dedicates the church built by Albinus and Glaphyra, and John III completes SS. Apostoli begun by his predecessor and consecrates it "... perfectit ecclesiam ... et consecravit eam."

Things are more complicated where *dedicavit* appears by itself without reference to a founder or builder in a papal biography, as it does in that of Simplicius "... dedicavit basilicam Sancti Stephani in Celio Monte". At times the meaning is obvious. Gregory the Great "dedicavit ... ecclesiam Gothorum ... in nomine sanctae Agathae ...", that is he reconsecrates an Arian church for Catholic use; the case is made explicit by the heading of a chapter in the *Dialogues* "De Arianorum ecclesia quae ... Catholica consecratur."<sup>67</sup> It is equally clear when a church demolished or badly damaged and possibly desecrated by Arian use during the brief occupation of the city by Alaric's Goths has to be reconsecrated as was the basilica Juli (which of the two founded by that pope, 337–352, was it?) by Pope Celestine "post ignem Gothicum"<sup>68</sup>; or also, "restauravit atque dedicavit".<sup>69</sup> The need for such a reconsecration is the subject of a succession of papal letters "... fabrica ... ecclesiae diruta et instauranda ... si consecrationis solemnitas debeat iterari."<sup>70</sup> Or else, if rarely *dedicare*, for reasons of meter, is employed so as to conflate the double role of the pope as both builder-founder and consecrating priest "... nova tecta dicavi ...", as in dedicatory poems of Damasus and Sixtus III<sup>71</sup>; in both cases other sources clarify their contribution as builders as well "... condere tecta ... and "... fecit basilicam sanctae Mariae ..."<sup>72</sup>.

*Dedicare* then is a multinominal term. So is *fecit* in the vocabulary of the Liber Pontificalis. Honorius I "... fecit ecclesiam beati Adriani in Tribus Fatis quam et dedicavit ...".<sup>73</sup> Surely the pope's biographer does not intend to sug-

gest that Honorius built the *curia senatus*. Rather the meaning is that he turned to ecclesiastical use a structure heretofore secular and consecrated it as a church – "fecit ecclesiam", this rather than "basilicam". The biographer of Honorius applies the same wording to the conversion of secular buildings into the churches of S. Lucia in Selci and of the Quattro Coronati,<sup>74</sup> a fact amply supported by archaeological evidence.<sup>75</sup>

Just this appears to apply to a group of buildings where the compiler of the Liber Pontificalis uses the term *dedicavit* by itself to record their being consecrated by the ruling pope. Four of them appear in the biography of Simplicius, headed by S. Stefano Rotondo: the other three are: S. Andrea "iuxta basilicam sanctae Mariae ...", S. Stefano "iuxta basilicam sancti Laurenti ..." and S. Bibiana.<sup>76</sup> A fifth inserted into the biography of Pope Pius is based on the late fifth or sixth century Passio of Praxedis and Pudentiana "... dedicavit ecclesiam thermas Novati in honore ..."<sup>77</sup>, the very wording employed in the life of Honorius for converting into churches non-ecclesiastical structures. Of the three mentioned in the Simplicius vita in one breath with S. Stefano in Celio Monte, S. Andrea is of course the early fourth-century basilica of Junius Bassus, willed to the Church by the fifth-century owner, Valila: a secular building with strong pagan overtones to boot in the imagery of its wall revetment; an inscription set off the testator's offering from the consecration by the pope "... mens Valilae devovit ... Simplicius ... sacris caelestibus aptans effecit vere muneris esse tui ...".<sup>78</sup> S. Stefano on the Verano, near S. Lorenzo f.l.m. was the trefoil mausoleum of one fourth-century bishop Leo, a convert from paganism as stressed by the inscription<sup>79</sup> – a sacred, but not an ecclesiastical structure, hence not previously consecrated. S. Bibiana likewise would seem to have been a mausoleum "... ubi corpus eius (scil. the martyr) requiescit ...", so the Liber Pontificalis<sup>80</sup>; the passio of Bibiana calls it her *cubiculum*, as customary for tomb structures.<sup>81</sup> Given its location it would have antedated the construction of the Aurelian walls and obviously have been pagan.

65 LP, I, 738; ILCV, 1765; CBCR, IV, 241 ff. (watch out: no word of dedication!).

66 ILCV, 3420.

67 *Dialogi* III.30 (PL, LXXVII, 288); also Epp. III.19 (PL, LXXVII, 618 f.).

68 LP, I, 230.

69 LP, I, 346, 348.

70 Vigilius, Epp. 1, c. IV (PL, LXIX, 18); also Gregory, Epp. VI.45 (PL, 77, 832).

71 A. FERRUA S. J., *Epigrammata Damasiana*, Rome, Città del Vaticano, 1942, no. 59; ICUR, II.1.

72 Ferrua, as above, no. 58; LP, I, 232.

73 LP, I, 330.

74 LP, I, 329 f.

75 CBCR, II, 186 ff.; IV, 1 ff.

76 LP, I, 249.

77 LP, I, 132.

78 ICUR, II.1, 436. 115; ILCV, 1785 for the first, dedicatory inscription of Junius Bassus, *ibid.*, 59; see also C. HÜLSEN, "Die Basilika des Junius Bassus", *Festschrift für Julius Schlosser*, Zürich, Leipzig, Wien, 1927, 53 ff.

79 ICUR, II.1, 92. 62 and 107. 48; for the identification, LP, I, 508.

80 LP, I, 249.

81 E. DONCKEL, "Studien über den Kultus der Hl. Bibiana", *RömQs*, XLIII, 1935, 23 ff.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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|-------------|---|------|--|
| CAC         | Congresso internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana.  | ICUR | GIOVANNI BATTISTA DE ROSSI, <i>Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae</i> . 12 vol., Rome 1857–1990.                        |
| CBCR        | RICHARD KRAUTHEIMER, SPENCER CORBETT, ALFRED K. FRAZER, <i>Corpus basilicarum Christianorum Romae</i> , 5 vol., Città del Vaticano, 1937–1980.  | ILCV | ERNST DIEHL, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres</i> . Berlin, 1925.  |
| Ceschi      | C. CESCHI, <i>Santo Stefano Rotondo</i> , Rome, 1982 (AttiPAccMem, XV).   | LCL  | Loeb Classical Library.  |
| CIL         | Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum.   | LP   | LOUIS MARIE OLIVIER DUCHESNE, <i>Le Liber pontificalis</i> . Texte, introduction et commentaire. 3 vol., Paris, 1886–1957. |
| Colini      | A. M. COLINI, <i>Storia e topografia del Celio</i> , Rome, 1944 (AttiPAccMem, VII).   | PLRE | A. H. M. JONES/J. R. MARTINDALE/J. MORRIS, <i>Prosopography of the later Roman Empire</i> , 3 vol., Cambridge, 1971–1992.  |
| CSEL        | Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.   | RE   | <i>Paulys Realenzyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , hrsg. von GEORG WISSOWA. Stuttgart, 1893 – 1980.    |
| Davis-Weyer | C. DAVIS-WEYER, "S. Stefano Rotondo and the Oratory of Theodore I", <i>Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance</i> , ed. W. Tronzo, Bologna 1989, 61 ff. |      |  |
| Geertman    | H. GEERTMAN, <i>More veterum. Il liber Pontificalis e gli edifici ecclesiastici di Roma nella tarda antichità e nell'alto Medioevo</i> . Groningen, 1975.                               |      |  |