Excavations in S. Maria in Trastevere, 1865-1869: A Drawing by Vespignani

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In 1863 a visit was paid to S. Maria in Trastevere by Pope Pius IX. According to a contemporary account, the Pope was duly impressed by the basilica's ancient splendor, but equally by its present squalor [1]. On the spot, it seems, he decided to sponsor a restoration. A supervising commission headed by Card. Teodolfo Mertel was quickly appointed, and the design and execution of the project were entrusted to the architect Count Virginio Vespignani. Of major concern was the pavement, which, for all the richness of its marbles, presented two "deplorable indecencies": its surface was very uneven, being considerably higher at the western end; and, partly because of this irregularity, it covered up several of the bases in the nave colonnades (Taf. 5a) [2].

The offending western portion of the pavement, consisting of a central

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1 Canon Gioacchino Cressedi, *Diario dei lavori di restauro e di decorazione della Basilica di S. Maria in Trastevere nel Pontificato di Pio IX*, 20 Agosto 1863; S. Maria in Trastevere, Archivio Capitolare (Arch. Cap. SMT), Arm. II, Binder: *Storia della Basilica*, A–2. All of the archival material here published, including the drawing, was discovered in 1970–72 during my research for a Ph. D. dissertation (for New York University, Institute of Fine Arts) on the history of S. Maria in Trastevere. The Capitular Archive was opened to me by the most gracious kindness of Msgre Silverio Mattei. At the time it was housed in an annex of the basilica; all shelf numbers given here pertain, *faute de mieux*, to that location. I have not seen the Archive in its new quarters, at the Vicariato.

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2 Cressedi, *Diario*, 6 Aprile 1865: "Non si è presa ancora una risoluzione se abbassare il piano del pavimento, livellandolo, anche perché appariscano le intiere basi delle colonne, vi sono delle difficoltà, ma forse si potrà conciliare la cosa in modo che basti abbassare la porzione soltanto del pavimento più prossima alla tribuna, la quale è molto più alta della altra porzione del pavimento; così si livellerebbe l'intiero piano, si eviterebbe molta spesa, e alcune almeno delle basi si potrebbero intieramente scuoprire." Cf. the letter by Francesco Tongiorgi dated 13 October 1865, Arch. Cap. SMT, Arm. XI, Binder: *Restauri di Pio IX:* "... Livellato il pavimento, certo ne acquisterebbe molto l'aula della basilica dal lato artistico e monumentale, oltre allo scomparire di quei due sconci tanto deplorati, delle basi sepolte e della irregolarità del piano ..." After considerable discussion it was, in fact, decided to reset the entire pavement at a lower level: Cressedi, *Diario*, 29 Agosto 1866.

pathway of Cosmatesque-style roundels surrounded by plain or inscribed marble plaques, was removed by February of 1865 [3]. Many of the plaques turned out to be parapets from a medieval *schola cantorum*, the foundations of which were discovered immediately under the floor [4]. The destruction of that enclosure (probably in the sixteenth century) must have been the cause of the higher pavement level at this end of the basilica. The precinct walls were dismantled to their foundations, but the paving of the *schola* (the swath of roundels), which stood at least a step above the surrounding floor of the nave, was preserved. The foundations were concealed by laying the parapets face down at the level of the roundels, creating a new, higher pavement which extended the full width of the nave and through the colonnades, where it enveloped some of the bases [5].

The discovery of the *schola cantorum* was remarked by De Rossi in his *Bullettino* of 1865, and again, with a brief description, in 1866 [6]. Declining to discuss the finds in detail, he noted that they were being carefully recorded and drawn by Vespignani. De Rossi perhaps envisaged a full publication of the site when the records were complete, but no such publication was made. Additional discoveries in 1867 and 1869 received no public notice, and further archeological study was precluded by the completion of the new pavement in 1871 [7]. Cecchelli and Krautheimer, the only modern scholars to concern themselves with the archeology of S. Maria, had to base their conclusions on De Rossi's summary sketch [8].

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3 Cressedi, *Diario*, 18 Febbraio 1865.

4 *Ibid.*: "... Si è posto mano al pavimento della nave mag.e togliendo le transenne della antica Schola Cantorum le quali al presente formavano parte del pavimento nella porzione prossima alla Tribuna vicino alle colonne, mentre nel mezzo esiste una altra porzione eseguita all'Alessandrina che formava il piano della Schola Cantorum chiusa dalle d.e transenne; ciò si è verificato di fatto, giacchè tolte le sud.e transenne si sono rinvenute le mura di fondamento, che sostenevano le transenne e gli amboni, in guisa che apparisce tutta la pianta della nominata Schola Cantorum e degli amboni. Inoltre sono state scoperte le basi intiere di varie forme delle colonne, le quali basi erano più o meno coperte dal piano del pavimento ..."

5 Cf. Taf. 5a. The view and plans of S. Maria in Trastevere by Letarouilly show a border of interlocking roundels around this part of the pavement, between the plaques and the colonnades (Paul Letarouilly, *Édifices de Rome moderne* ..., III, Paris, 1874, pl. 327). This must be a reconstruction, extrapolated from the border which survived at the eastern, les disturbed end of the nave, visible in Taf. 5a. The western part of the border was lost with the destruction of the *schola cantorum*, if not before.

6 Giovanni Battista De Rossi, "Notizie. Roma. Basilica di s. Maria in Trastevere", *Bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, III, 1865, p. 24; "Notizie. Roma – Scoperte nella basilica di s. Maria in Trastevere", *ibid.*, IV, 1866, p. 76.

7 The pavement must have been finished by 25 August 1871, when it was guaranteed by the chief mosaicist, Pietro Palesi: Arch. Cap. SMT, Arm. XI, Binder: *Restauri di Pio IX*. It was still incomplete in February of 1870: Cressedi, *Diario*, 17 Febbraio 1870.

8 Carlo Cecchelli, *S. Maria in Trastevere* (Le Chiese di Roma illustrate, nn. 31–32), Rome, s.d., pp. 31–35; Richard Krautheimer, Spencer Corbett and Wolfgang Frankl, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, III, Vatican City, 1967, pp. 65 ff., esp. p. 71.

The Capitular Archive of S. Maria in Trastevere preserves a wealth of bills, memoranda, letters, and other documents pertaining to the restorations of Pius IX [9]. Among this material is a ground plan of the nave (Taf. 6a, b) which can only be the drawing – or one of the drawings – made during the excavation by Vespignani and alluded to by De Rossi [10]. The foundations, pavements, and other details recorded on the plan coincide exactly with the discoveries of 1865–69 as outlined by De Rossi and by other, independent accounts, the most important of which is the diary of the restorations by the Canon Gioacchino Cressedi, also preserved in the Archive. Moreover, the plan is unquestionably in Vespignani's precise, meticulous, and finely honed style [11]. It is drawn with a fine, hard pencil on a sheet of heavy, high-quality paper measuring 54 × 76 cm., and it has been colored in black, pale blue, green, and several shades of gray. The scale is peculiar [12]. Though probably intended as 1 cm. = 1 m., or 1:100, when measured with a modern rule it its more like 1:85. The anomaly does not, however, seem to reflect any inaccuracy on Vespignani's part, either in his raw measurements or in his scaling. Whenever his measurements can be verified, they prove to be correct. [13].

The drawing is unfinished, and erasures are clearly visible toward the top, in the area framed by the broken semicircle of the apse. Vespignani

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9 The documentation will be analyzed and correlated in my Ph. D. dissertation, cited *supra*, n. 1. I hope to publish the more important items in a monograph on the basilica.

10 Arch. Cap. SMT, Arm. XV, Folio binder: *Diagrammata aedificior. atque praedior.*

11 Cf., for example, the plan and signed elevation of S. Ivo dei Brettoni in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Storia dell'Arte, Rome: Raccolta Lanciani, Roma XI. 38. XII. 14. Besides revealing the same drawing style as the plan of S. Maria, the S. Ivo plan makes a comparable record of several superimposed strata, and is similarly colored (black and light blue; there is also a rose tint not used for S. Maria).

12 The oddity of the scale was first noticed by Frank Brown, whose patient and sensitive observation of the plan greatly enriched my own understanding of it. Many valuable suggestions made by him and by others have been incorporated into the interpretation offered here; some were so fundamental that it is no longer possible, unfortunately, to extricate and acknowledge them individually. In addition to Prof. Brown I should especially like to thank Slobodan Ćurčić, Judson Emerick, Richard Krautheimer, and Ronald Malmstrom.

13 The lack of a reliable survey of S. Maria in Trastevere, indeed of any modern survey at all, makes complete verification impossible, but some help is given by Letarouilly. For example, on his plan of S. Maria (*Édifices*, III, pl. 327) he indicates that the width of the nave – apparently measured between the paired pilasters at either end of the nave colonnades – is 12. 6 m.; Vespignani's plan, when measured with the module provided by his scale and scaled at 1:100, represents precisely the same distance between the same two points.

The discrepancy between Vespignani's centimeter and ours is most puzzling. Perhaps it is related to the fact that in 1865–69 the metric system was still relatively new (officially adopted in Italy only in 1861) and had not yet achieved its modern standardization (a new standard meter was adopted at the International Convention of 1875; cf. *Enciclopedia italiana*, XXIII, Rome, 1934, s. v. "Metrici, sistemi", p. 120).

may have abandoned the plan at this point. In any case, it is certainly not a presentation piece, but seems to have been the architect's working drawing, to which he added details as they were uncovered in the church. Section lines have been drawn in red longitudinally, through the center of the nave, and transversally, between the fourth and fifth, and the seventh and eighth pairs of columns. No section drawings could be found in the Archive, however, nor is there a more finished version of the plan. Perhaps such drawings were never executed, or perhaps they survive in some other Roman archive. Until they are found, the working copy, incomplete and ambiguous as it is, is our most informative record of the nineteenth-century discoveries.

The plan depicts the full length of the present (i.e., twelfth-century) nave, with its colonnades, from the entrance wall at the east to the triumphal arch, opening into the transept, at the west. These walls and columns have been colored pale blue. Some of the patterns of the original pavement, including the "path" at the western end, are indicated in pencil. Everything else on the plan is under the floor level of 1863. These lower elements appeared in several strata, which the draftsman has distinguished by color. Black, apparently denoting rising walls, outlines the large apse found under the nave as well as the smaller one below the south aisle. A small column base at the right, between the tenth and eleventh columns of the north colonnade, is also colored black. Foundations are indicated in two shades of gray. Dark gray colors the L-shaped colonnade which extends eastward from the northern corner of the apse, as well as the symmetrical wall to the south, the walls which return from the inner columns of the "L's" toward the apse, and the two flights of steps which abut these return walls, climbing toward the apse on either side of a central lacuna. A lighter shade of gray tints the oblong enclosure, with its two rectangular protrusions, which begins, roughly, near the eleventh pair of nave columns and extends eastward almost to the mid-point of the nave. Finally, a third, still lighter shade of gray indicates what seem to be paving stones aligned with the return walls of the L-shaped colonnades, and spots of green, apparently representing paving of a different kind, appear at the foot of the steps.

Two separate precincts, then, were discovered one atop the other: a rectangular one, defined by the L-shaped colonnades and colored dark gray on the plan, and a markedly oblong one, projecting far into the nave and indicated by Vespignani in a middle shade of gray. The latter enclosure appears to have been designed in correlation with the "path" of the Cosmatesque pavement, suggesting that it was at a higher, later level than the former precinct. This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that De Rossi's description of 1865, at the very outset of the excavations, clearly refers to the oblong enclosure and not to the colonnaded one:

"Now work has begun on the pavement, and under its surface the outlines of the precinct of the *schola cantorum*, and of the pulpits commonly

called ambos were discovered; and the marble screens of the enclosure were also found" [14].

The "ambos" may be seen in the protrusions from the oblong precinct remarked above: a longer one (5.87×1.74 m.) on the south side, between the eighth and eleventh columns of the nave, to support a pulpit and two flights of steps, and a shorter foundation (3.83×1.70 m.) on the north, for a lectern and a single stairway [15].

In his report of the following year, 1866, De Rossi mentioned several additional finds in S. Maria in Trastevere, including the apse of the pre-twelfth-century basilica, the remains of a high platform within the apse, and steps ascending to the altar that stood upon the platform [16]. He assigned the remains to two building campaigns: the original foundation of the church under Pope Julius I (337–352), and the remodelling of the sanctuary under Pope Gregory IV (827–844), documented in the *Liber Pontificalis*. To the second phase De Rossi attributed the platform, the steps, and the *schola cantorum;* to the first phase, apparently, the apse and a geometric pavement of multi-colored marbles, which may be represented in the patterns marked by Vespignani in green.

The architect's plan clearly depicts the separate items of De Rossi's description, but in a relationship which disproves his interpretation of the stratigraphy. The steps, for example, must belong to an earlier stratum than the *schola cantorum*, because they continue under its foundations to abut the return walls of the L-shaped colonnades. The *schola cantorum* itself could hardly be from the time of Gregory IV, for, as we have seen, it was built in conjunction with the Cosmatesque pavement of the present basilica, which replaced the original church in the twelfth century, under Pope Innocent II (1130–43). Though initially puzzling, De Rossi's misinterpretation is quite understandable, and easily explained with the aid of the diary of Canon Cressedi. Many of the finds mentioned in the *Bullettino* of 1866 were also noted by Cressedi in an entry of November 3: ". . . an ancient pavement, steps, [pieces of] painted plaster, a column base *in situ* . . ." [17] These disco-

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14 De Rossi, "Basilica di S. Maria", 1865, p. 24: "Ora è stato posto mano al pavimento; e sotto il piano di esso sono state scoperte le tracce del recinto della *schola cantorum*, dei pulpiti volgarmente appellati *amboni;* e sono stati rinvenuti i plutei marmorei di quel recinto." Cf. Cressedi, *Diario*, 18 Febbraio 1865, quoted *supra*, n. 4.

15 Measurements have been converted to modern centimeters, cf. *supra*, p. 94.

16 De Rossi, "Scoperte", 1866, p. 76: ". . . Sotto il grande arco dell'attuale basilica edificata da Innocenzo II è stato rinvenuto il principio dell'abside spettante alla basilica più antica. E dinanzi a quell'abside si veggono le vestigia del tribunale costruito da Gregorio IV con i gradini per ascendere all'altare . . ."

17 Cressedi, *Diario*, 3 Novembre 1866: "Nei due mesi trascorsi si sono proseguiti i lavori nel pavimento della nave mag.e, tolto intieramente l'antico mosaico in pietra, ed eseguito guasi già totalmente il vespaio. Nello sterrare presso il grande arco si sono

veries must have resulted from an extension of the original excavations deeper within, and farther outside the precinct of the *schola cantorum*. Seeing the newly revealed steps disappear into the lower foundation walls of the *schola*, De Rossi assumed that they were parts of the same structure and therefore of a single building campaign; the relation of the steps to the L-shaped colonnades could not have been suspected. Indeed, it is obvious from the plan that the nature of the colonnades could have been fully ascertained only by destroying the foundations of the later precinct. At the time of De Rossi's visit, in the fall of 1866 [18], no such destruction had taken place; of the L-shaped colonnades, only one column base (doubtless the one colored black by Vespignani) had been discovered, and its function as part of a chancel enclosure had not yet been perceived. The earlier enclosure remained largely hidden for years. When it was finally unearthed, probably in 1869, De Rossi gave it no public notice; perhaps he never saw it.

The progress of the excavations after 1866 is documented by Cressedi. In February, 1867 he recorded the discovery of a frescoed image of S. Agatha near the *fons olei* – the miraculous fountain of oil, the site of which is venerated in the nave immediately in front, and slightly to the north of the altar [19]. Cressedi remarked that at that time the excavations had attained considerable depth. Almost exactly a year later, he noted that the white marble matrix for the new pavement had been laid in half of the nave, presumably the eastern half, since later entries indicate that the western end was still open for digging [20]. When this entry was made, work on the pavement was stalled for lack of materials. It had resumed, "sebbene lentamente", by June of 1869, when Cressedi made his last record of archeological discoveries in S. Maria:

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scoperti un antico pavimento, gradini, intonachi pitturati, una base di colonna al suo posto (si credono appartenere alla Basilica, quale fù riedificata da S. Giulio), e di tutto l'Architetto ha rilevato la pianta ..." Fragments of plaster with painted decoration were also mentioned by De Rossi ("Scoperte", 1866, p. 76), who declared them comparable to paintings discovered in the confession of S. Marco, remodelled, like S. Maria, by Gregory IV. The column base remarked by Cressedi may have been part of the "costruzioni laterali" noted by De Rossi in conjunction with the apse; he apparently believed them to be part of the fourth-century building.

18 The notice of the 1866 discoveries appears in the Sept.-Oct. issue of the *Bullettino;* the date of their entry in the *Diario* is, as already stated, November 3.

19 Cressedi, *Diario,* 3 Febbraio 1867: "... Vicino al Fons-Olei nello sterrare si rinvenne una imagine di s. Agata a fresco nell'intonaco di alcuni mattoni. Essendo un bel lavoretto fù fatta staccare e riportare il dipinto sù tela ... Si noti che il piano antico della Bas.ª era di molto più basso." I do not know what became of the image after its detachment; it does not seem to be at the church, but it may survive somewhere else in the city.

20 *Ibid.*, 8 Febbraio 1868: "Nei mesi decorsi sono stati collocati i lastroni di marmo bianco, entro i quali debbe essere incassato il mosaico all'Alessandrina, per la metà incirca della nave mag.ª, ma da qualche tempo, mancando alcuni lastroni necessarii, il lavoro è stato sospeso ..."

"... In the excavations of the nave the foundations of the [lacuna] were found. It was a large rectangle, which extended in front of the ancient tribune, also located at approximately the same level, behind which ran the wall of the old apse (a plan of all of this has been drawn by the Architect Vespignani)" [21].

The description is vague and rather puzzled; the lacuna left where a name should appear suggests that Cressedi was not yet certain how to identify the newly discovered stucture. But the "large rectangle", I think, can only be the area enclosed by the L-shaped colonnades, and the foundations must be those of the colonnades themselves. Confusion over the function of the colonnades is understandable, given the previously held assumption that the sanctuary was preceded by the *schola cantorum*. Perhaps Vespignani himself was unable to decipher the interrelationships of the successive strata to one another, and to the tribune in the apse, and this explains why his plan was left unfinished at precisely this point. Lack of time for additional explorations must also have been a factor in his failure to define more clearly the remains nearest the apse. The pavement continued its glacial expansion, covering the excavation site first with a ventilatory substructure (called a "vespaio" in the accounts), then with a white marble matrix, and finally with mosaic inlay. By 1871 the foundations were invisible and completely inaccessible, as they are today.

Between them, Vespignani and Cressedi give a picture of the archeology of S. Maria in Trastevere quite different from that transmitted by De Rossi, but perfectly congruent with the information provided by the literary sources, *viz.*, the *vitae* of the *Liber Pontificalis*. Of the pre-twelfth-century basilica, the nineteenth-century excavations revealed: the main apse, slightly narrower than the present nave but on exactly the same axis; a platform or tribune filling this apse, preceded by a colonnaded screen and equipped with steps; a minor apse, on the axis of the present south aisle. The disposition of the apses strongly suggests that the original church was a two-aisled basilica like the present one, and of exactly the same width; indeed, it seems likely that the foundations of the twelfth-century colonnades and aisle walls rest directly on those of the fourth-century basilica. The *schola cantorum* discovered in 1865 did not exist in the original church but was part of the new, twelfth-century building; it is, in fact, a structure of a type commonly found in Roman churches of that period. The extant example in S. Clemente,

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21 *Ibid.*, 20 Giugno 1869: "Prosegue sebbene lentamente il lavoro a mosaico nel pavimento ... Nello sterrare la Nave mag.e furono rinvenuti i fondamenti della [lacuna]. Era un grande rettangolo, che si stendeva innanzi l'antica Tribuna situata anche essa presso a poco allo stesso livello, dietro la quale girava il muro dell'abside antico (Di tutto fù dall'Architetto Vespignani rilevata la pianta)."

with the lectern on the north and the pulpit on the south side of the precinct, provides an especially close parallel [22].

It is unlikely that many of the elements uncovered in the nineteenth century actually dated from the fourth-century basilica, however faithfully they may have reflected its size and plan. The main apse certainly reproduced the original, for it accommodated the chancel built into the fourth-century apse under Pope Gregory IV, but the wall itself was a reconstruction dating from the pontificate of Benedict III (855–858), mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* [23]. The same passage provides a *terminus ante quem* for the small southern apse, the construction of which is undocumented [24]. While it could conceivably have belonged to the original basilica, it would find a more comfortable context in Carolingian Rome, when churches with one or two minor apses were fairly common [25]. Certainly Carolingian are the altar platform, steps, and colonnades, which represent the "operosam decoramque restructionem" of Gregory IV (827–844). Only the fragment of patterned pavement at the foot of the altar steps may be a fourth-century survival, but it might equally well be a ninth-century facsimile made after the construction of the new chancel.

Pope Gregory's chancel is glowingly described in the *L. P.*:

"... With skillful and accustomed zeal, applying his efforts with innermost diligence, having begun the wondrous work, he completed it excellently. For after digging out the secret cavity, raising the aforesaid bodies [of Popes Callixtus and Cornelius and the presbyter Calepodius, previously buried in the south aisle] with utmost reverence, he hid [them], placing [them] honorably in the western part of this same church, that is within the apse; around which [bodies] adding fill of the greatest possible mass, erecting the tribune adorned with wonderful stones, he decorated [it]. Moreover, providing a connection to the wondrous odor of the hidden ones, he fit in a confession, facing east, under the rising bases of the altar; conspicuously adorning [the altar], ... he built [it] ... in honor of the Holy Mother of God Mary ever Virgin, among the rising steps of the beautiful work. In front of which he

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22 E. Junyent, *Il Titolo di San Clemente in Roma* (Studi di antichità cristiana, VI), Rome, 1932, pp. 211–215, figs. 67–69; cf. the plan on p. 193.

23 L'Abbé L. Duchesne, ed., *Le Liber Pontificalis*, II, Paris, 1892, p. 147: "... Praefatus beatissimus papa ... in ecclesia beatae Dei genitricis semperque virginis Mariae ... quae ponitur trans Tyberim, absidam maiorem ..., que in ruinis posita, noviter atque fundamentis faciens, ad meliorem erexit statum ..."

24 Cf. n. 23. The qualification "maior" naturally implies the existence of a corresponding "absis minor", or perhaps "absides minores".

25 Cf., with two minor apses, S. Angelo in Pescheria (probably of 755; Richard Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum*, I, Vatican City, 1937, pp. 64 ff.); S. Maria in Cosmedin (772–795; Krautheimer–Frankl–Corbett, *Corpus Basilicarum*, II, Vatican City, 1962, pp. 277 ff.); S. Maria in Domnica (817–824; *ibid.*, pp. 308 ff.); with one apse: S. Lorenzo in Lucina (772-795 [?]; *ibid.*, pp. 159 ff., 181, 183).

built from the foundations a *presbyterium* of ample area and elaborate workmanship, to which on the north side he added a *matroneum*, enclosed all around with stones" [26].

With Vespignani's plan, and the notes of De Rossi, this description can be better understood and considerably amplified. Pope Gregory's tribune, or podium, must have filled the entire apse and apparently also projected somewhat into the nave, since De Rossi mentions both a "massive construction . . . deep within the area of the apse" and "vestiges of the tribune" "in front of [the]apse" [27]. The lateral limits of the projecting portion are probably defined by the two walls running from the inner extremities of the colonnades back toward the apse, while its forward extent is delimited by the steps which abut these same walls. The presence of the podium may explain why the foundations of the *schola cantorum* extend only to the eleventh pair of columns in the twelfth-century nave, for west of this point the *schola* could have rested very securely on the "maximae molis . . . aggerem" of the podium itself.

The altar may have stood at the head of the steps, or, as suggested by the phrase "inter consurgentes . . . gradus", perhaps on a landing with additional steps (not preserved) behind it. It seems to have been placed partly within the apse and partly on the projection of the podium; on the plan, faint pencil lines indicate a large rectangle in precisely this position, with four small circles, conceivably representing the imprints of ciborium columns, at the corners [28]. In all likelihood the area of the apse behind the altar contained some kind of seating for the clergy, but no source, literary or archeological, provides direct evidence for this supposition. Beneath the altar was the confession, the burial chamber of the papal relics. The "secret cavity" *(clandestinum antrum)* of the *L. P.* has been generally interpreted as an allusion to a crypt, which would have extended underneath the altar and

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26 Duchesne, ed., *L. P.*, II, p. 80: ". . . Religiosus idem papa . . . solerti solitoque studio cum intima industria operam adhibens, mirificum opus incoans, optime consummavit. Nam effosso clandestino antro, summa cum reverentia praefata sancta corpora elevans, in occidentali plaga eiusdem aecclesiae, hoc est in ambitu abside, honorifice collocando occuluit; circa quae quam maximae molis aggregans aggerem, comptum miris lapidibus tribunal erigens decoravit. Supra que confessionem respicientem ad ortum solis miri odoris celaturarum ornata compagine coaptavit infra consurgentes siquidem bases altaris, quod miri metri et ornatus modulo ex argento perspicue comens, in honore sanctae Dei genetricis Mariae semper virginis, elato scilicet priori, erexit inter consurgentes pulchri operis gradus. Ante quod presbiterium ampli ambitus operosi operis funditus construxit, cui ex septemtrionali plaga lapidibus circa septum matroneum adposuit."

27 De Rossi, "Scoperte", 1866, p. 76; "Gregorio IV costruì il . . . tribunale facendo un aggere *maximae molis* . . . A questo aggere stimo spettare la costruzione massiccia, che apparisce nel profondo dell'area semicircolare a perpendicolo sotto il posto dell'antico altare." Cf. the passage quoted *supra*, n. 16.

28 This seems to be the best interpretation of the rectangle, although it might also represent a portion of the demolished pavement.

tribune to provide access to the confession[29]. However, neither Vespignani nor Cressedi gives any sign that a crypt was discovered, and on re-examining the text, it appears likely that *clandestinum antrum* should not be referred to the apse at all, but to the inconspicuous location in the south aisle whence the relics were exhumed. Moreover, had there been a crypt of the standard Carolingian semiannular type (such as that built by Gregory IV in S. Marco)[30], the confession would have been open at the west, whereas the *L. P.* explicitly describes it as "respicien[s]ad ortum solis". Thus I would postulate that the ninth-century chancel had no crypt, and that the confession was a small, unvisitable space, with the only "connection to the wondrous odor of the hidden ones" being indirect, through a window *(fenestella)* in the podium under the altar.

The *presbyterium* of the *L. P.* should probably be identified as the area at pavement level enclosed by the L-shaped colonnades: that is, the rectangular precincts on either side of the altar and steps, and a formal approach to the sanctuary created by extending the colonnades eastward in front of the steps. The beginnings of these parallel extensions appear on Vespignani's plan underneath the *schola cantorum*, but there is no indication of their eastern terminations, which were apparently not traced[31]. Nothing on the plan seems to represent the *matroneum* which, on the evidence of the *L. P.*, should have been found on the north side of the *presbyterium*. If our previous hypotheses are correct – *viz.*, that the area within the L-shaped colonnades is the *presbyterium*, and that the fourth-century basilica was divided into nave and aisles by rows of supports on the site of the present nave colonnades – then the *matroneum* must have stood in the north aisle, for there is no space for it in the nave.

The "wonderful stones" with which Pope Gregory decorated his tribune are probably the numerous *cancelli* that still adorn the basilica (Taf. 5a, 7a, b). Innocent II must have considered them equally precious, for he reused them in his *schola cantorum*, whence, as described above, they found their way into the pavement and ultimately, in the course of the nineteenth-century remodelling, into the walls of the church porch, where they may still be seen. In the *L. P.* the parapets are associated only with the tribune, and some of them doubtless stood as screens on the edge of that platform; others, however, were probably inserted between the columns of the *presbyterium*, for

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29 E.g., Cecchelli, *S. Maria in Trastevere*, p. 31; Krautheimer-Corbett-Frankl, *Corpus Basilicarum*, III, p. 66. Duchesne (*L. P.*, II, p. 84 n. 11) assumes a crypt without alluding to the *clandestinum antrum*, while De Rossi ("Scoperte", 1866, p. 76) associates the *antrum* with the apse, but does not specifically identify it as a crypt.

30 Cf. Krautheimer–Frankl–Corbett, *Corpus Basilicarum*, II, pp. 238–240.

31 These portions of the colonnades would have been discovered in 1869, and by that time any further eastward pursuit of their foundations would probably have been blocked by the new pavement. Cf. *supra*, p. 98.

there is a striking similarity of measurements between some of the extant *cancelli* and the intercolumniations on Vespignani's plan. For example, between the northwest column base, against the apse, and the next one, colored black, the distance is nearly 180 cm.[32], and the parapet represented in Taf. 5b is 180.5 cm. long [33]. Between the black base and its neighbor to the east, at the corner of the "L", there are 195.5 cm.; the beautiful, but very damaged acanthus panel in Taf. 7a is presently 191.5 cm. long, but we must add at least 3–5 cm. to compensate for its shorn right border [34]. Between the corner base and its neighbor to the south, there are 136 cm. The panel in Taf. 7b is now 129.5 cm. long, but it, too, has been deprived of a border, this time the left. Originally it must have been at least 135 cm. long [35]. Such close correspondences can hardly be accidental.

Bit by bit a fairly complete image of S. Maria's ninth-century chancel comes into focus. An apsidal podium with an eastward projection elevated the altar at least one meter above the nave floor [36]. The confessional window was set in the eastern face of the projection, below the altar and between the two flights of steps which approached it from the nave. The entire podium ("tribune") was surrounded by nave-level precincts (the *presbyterium)*, enclosed by parapeted colonnades. The colonnades may have carried a trabeation, as for example in S. Maria Maggiore [37], or arches as in S. Maria in Domnica [38]; there is no evidence either way. The accuracy of this picture is, of course, dependent to a large degree upon the correctness of the interpretation of Vespignani's drawing here presented. Although it leaves a

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32 Actually, 178.5 cm. All measurements are given in modern equivalents; cf. *supra,* p. 94 and n. 13.

33 The lateral borders are unfortunately cut off by the photograph, but the panel is complete on all sides except the bottom; 180.5 x 90 cm. All of the *cancelli* were trimmed to a uniform height of ca. 90 cm. when they were walled into the porch in the nineteenth century; many were also trimmed on the sides at this time.

New archeological and documentary evidence will require some reconsideration of the chronology established for the *cancelli,* "nach innerer Wahrscheinlichkeit", by Rudolf Kautzsch in 1939 ("Die römische Schmuckkunst in Stein vom 6. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert", *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte,* III, 1939, pp. 1–73). For this reason I will not recite his datings for the separate panels mentioned here.

34 The border visible at the far right of the photograph belongs to the adjacent panel.

35 The length of 129.5 cm. has been measured across the top of the panel, which was cut on the left side to accommodate the frame of the door into the south aisle of the church. It is discussed by Kautzsch, "Schmuckkunst", p. 26.

36 The stairways shown by Vespignani have five steps each, establishing a minimum elevation of ca. 100 cm., but the steps may have been steep, or there may have been more of them.

37 Chancel erected by Pope Paschal I (817–824); Krautheimer–Corbett–Frankl, *Corpus Basilicarum,* III, pp. 7, 31 f., 52 f.; reconstruction on p. 53.

38 Again a remodelling of Paschal I; cf. Krautheimer–Frankl–Corbett, *Corpus Basilicarum,* II, p. 320.

number of enigmatic features unexplained [39], I believe that this reading is essentially sound. It is in full accord with the previously known literary evidence for the history and archeology of S. Maria in Trastevere, and it readily illuminates that evidence in turn. The form, then, of Pope Gregory IV's installation seems well enough established. Its function will be the subject of a future study [40].

[39] Most significant: the various foundation walls, in two shades of gray, east of the minor apse in the south aisle; a number of faint lines in the area of the main apse; the square drawn in the western part of the north *presbyterium* enclosure; the irregular width of the ninth-century steps.

[40] An oral summary of the foregoing arguments was presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians in April, 1974. An abstract of that lecture appears in the Society's *Journal* for October, 1974 (vol. XXXIII, p. 225–226).