The Popes as Rulers of Rome in the Aftermath of Empire, 476–769

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This article explores the degree to which the rule and style of the bishops of Rome after the deposition of the last Roman emperor in the West in 476 had any imperial elements, in the light of the evidence contained within the Liber pontificalis. *Papal rule in Rome was cast as a replacement of imperial rule in religious matters, an opportunity for the bishop to assume political responsibility and also a deliberate emulation of imperial behaviour. This is manifest above all in the textual record in the* Liber pontificalis *of the papal embellishment of Rome, and in the physical evidence of the extant basilicas of the city. The deliberately imperial elements of papal self-presentation and the importance of Rome's primacy, apostolic succession and orthodoxy, all articulated so emphatically within the* Liber pontificalis*, indicate the multitude of strands by which the papacy wove the fabric of its own* imperium *or power.*

The bishop of Rome in the year 476 was Simplicius. When in that same year the military leader Odoacer deposed Romulus Augustulus, the sixteen-year-old puppet emperor of the West who had reigned for a mere ten months, Simplicius had already been bishop for eight years; he held the see for a further seven years thereafter. Simplicius's biography in the text known as the *Liber pontificalis*, first compiled in the 530s, records that it was he who dedicated the church of San Stefano Rotondo on the Caelian hill, as well as some other churches, and that he instituted the 'weekly turns' (i.e. regular liturgical observance) at the basilicas of Saint Peter, San Paolo fuori le Mura and San Lorenzo fuori le mura. On receiving a report from Acacius, bishop of Constantinople, that Peter, bishop of Alexandria, was a 'Eutychian heretic', and given that the church of Rome was the 'first apostolic see', Simplicius condemned Peter, 'awaiting the time of his repentance'. In addition to gifts of gold and silver to Roman churches,

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Simplicius also ordained fifty-eight priests and eleven deacons and consecrated eighty-eight bishops; he was buried in St Peter's.[1]

There is not a whisper in this Life concerning imperial politics in Italy, not even in the form of a dating clause, still less of the event in 476 regarded as so momentous as to be dubbed subsequently, however misleadingly, as the 'Fall of Rome'. Simplicius's successor Felix III, moreover, who held the see between 483 and 492, is simply described, in a matter of fact statement, as 'bishop in the time of King Odoacer until the time of king Theodoric'.[2] This is the only allusion to Odoacer's period of rule, Theodoric the Ostrogoth's ruthless takeover as ruler of Italy and recognition by the Eastern emperor Zeno, and Odoacer's assassination at a 'reconciliation banquet' held by Theodoric in Ravenna in 493.[3]

Such a lack of comment on the part of the narrator(s) of Pope Simplicius's life might be regarded as similar to the lack of immediate recognition among contemporaries of the significance of Christopher Columbus's first voyage and his discovery of the New World. In manuscript additions made in Deventer for the years from 1482 to 1513, for example, at the end of a composite volume from the Florencehuis comprising the 1483 edition of Eusebius-Jerome's Chronicle and the 1513 edition of the Chronicle of Sigebert of Gembloux (Athenaeum Bibliotheek 111.E.13), 1492 is recorded as the year the Jews were expelled from Spain. Even though Columbus's letter of 1493 about his achievement was printed and reprinted widely throughout Europe, it was many years before the full significance of his discovery began to be extrapolated.[4]

[1] 'Eodem tempore fuit ecclesia, hoc est prima sedis apostolica, executrix'; 'expectans tempus paenitentiae': *Liber pontificalis*, ed. Louis Duchesne, *Le* Liber pontificalis. *Texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2 vols (Paris, 1886, 1892), 1: 249 [hereafter: *LP*]. For convenience I also provide page references to the easily accessible and excellent translation by Raymond Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs (*Liber pontificalis*): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, TTH 6, 3rd edn (Liverpool, 2010), 40.

[2] '[H]ic fuit temporibus Odoacris regis usque ad tempora Theodorici regis': *LP* 1: 252 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 40).

[3] Numerous modern narrative accounts and studies of these events exist, from the classic Thomas Hodgkin, *Italy and her Invaders,* 3: *The Ostrogothic Invasion* (London, 1896), to the essays in *Teodorico il Grande e i Goti d'Italia*, Atti del XIII Congresso internazionale di Studio sull'Alto Medioevo, Milan, 2–6 novembre 1992 (Spoleto, 1993). Still a useful account is Peter Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages*, 2nd edn (London, 1993); and a stimulating interpretation is offered by Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge, 1997). Odoacer's period of rule remains relatively neglected.

[4] See the summary of the many editions and translations in Thomas R. Adams, 'Review: A. Payne (ed.), *The Spanish Letter of Columbus. A Facsimile of the Original Edition*

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Nevertheless, the lack of reaction by the authors of the *Liber pontificalis* to the events in Ravenna in 476 acts as a warning not to assume that the Byzantine historians' representation in the sixth century of the 'fall of Rome',[5] still less what subsequent ideologues and imperial and papal apologists made of the relationship between Church and empire, whether in the West or in the East, are the only ways to understand the transformations of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. Contemporaries, whether of the 'deposition of the last Roman emperor in the West' or of the 'discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus' apparently did not attach the same significance to these events as more recent commentators have done. Even acknowledging this, however, the *Liber pontificalis* author deliberately constructed the history of the early popes with a very specific agenda and audience in mind, as will become clear in what follows. The interpretations of the significance of the conquest of the Lombard kingdom and coronation of Charlemagne as 'emperor of the Romans', or the issues raised by the Investiture Controversy concerning the right of rulers to confer the symbols of office on bishops or abbots, are yet further extrapolations, too often understood in the terms set by nineteenth- and twentieth- (even twenty-first-) century historians rather than those of contemporaries.[6] The silence about Odoacer's deposition of Romulus in the *Liber pontificalis*, therefore, is a prompt to look further at the relationship between the bishop of Rome and the Roman emperors, whether of the West or in the Eastern portion that became known in due course as the Byzantine empire. Further, the degree to which the rule, or even the style, of the bishops in Rome had any imperial elements should

published by Bernard Quaritch in 1891 (London, 2006)', *Book Collector*, Autumn 2007, 441–3.

[5] Brian Croke, 'A.D. 476: The Manufacture of a Turning Point', *Chiron* 13 (1983), 81–119.

[6] From a vast literature, the following provides both a useful synthesis and a new appraisal: Mayke de Jong, 'The Empire that was always Decaying: The Carolingians (800–888)', *Medieval Worlds* 2 (2015), 6–25 [online journal], at: <https://doi.org/10.1553/medievalworlds_no2_2015s6>, last accessed 20 January 2017; see also Laury Sarti, 'Frankish Romanness and Charlemagne's Empire', *Speculum* 91 (2016), 1040–58. The classic account remains Peter Classen, *Karl der Großen, das Papsttum und Byzanz. Die Begründung des karolingischer Kaisertums*, ed. Horst Furhmann and Claudia Märtl (Sigmaringen, 1985). For new perspectives on the Central Middle Ages, see John Eldevik, *Episcopal Power and Ecclesiastical Reform in the German Empire: Tithes, Lordship and Community, 950–1150* (Cambridge, 2012); John S. Ott, *Bishops, Authority and Community in North-West Europe,* c.*1050–1150* (Cambridge, 2015).

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be explored.[7] Above all, we need to look at the aftermath of 476 from the perspective of the bishops of Rome. What will emerge is an enriched and rather different understanding of the complex early history of the papacy, which has tended to offer too simplistic an emphasis on apostolic primacy and the cult of St Peter.

Let me start, therefore, with the *Liber pontificalis* itself. The title is an eighteenth-century one; early medieval manuscripts, such as Paris, BnF lat. 13729, from the early ninth century, refer to it as *Liber episcopalis* or *acta* or *gesta pontificum urbis Romae*.[8] The narrative is improbably credited to Pope Damasus, writing at the prompting of Jerome, in two prefaces at the beginning of the text and present in all the earliest complete manuscripts, though none of these is earlier than the late eighth century.[9]

The distinctive narrative structure of the *Liber pontificalis* takes the form of serial biographies from St Peter in the first century to Pope Stephen V at the end of the ninth century, 112 Lives in all, numbered in sequence in most of the earliest manuscripts. The biographies were written piecemeal, the first stage of which is usually dated *c.*535 (the exact date is disputed) and contains the biographies of the fifty-nine or sixty popes from Peter to either Agapitus or Silverius.[10] Although the sixth-century portion drew on contemporary knowledge, the biographies covering the centuries before that appear to have been based on earlier and ever scrappier information,

[7] I am, of course, not the first to explore this aspect: see in particular Mark Humphries, 'From Emperor to Pope? Ceremonial, Space, and Authority at Rome from Constantine to Gregory the Great', in Kate Cooper and Julia Hillner, eds, *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2007), 21–58; idem, 'Valentinian III and the City of Rome (425–455): Patronage, Politics, Power', in Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly, eds, *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2012), 161–82.

[8] Giovanni Vignoli, *Liber pontificalis seu De Gestis romanorum pontificum quem cum cod. MSS Vaticanis aliisque sumo studio et labore conlatum emendavit*, 3 vols (Rome 1724–55); cf. the rival edition by Francesco Bianchini, repr. in PL 127, 128.

[9] Emmanuel Schelstrate, *Antiquitas ecclesiae dissertationibus monumentis ac notis*, 2 vols (Rome, 1692), 1: 369–75, was apparently the first to refute this. The attribution of the text to Anastasius Bibliothecarius in the later ninth century has taken rather longer to be discarded: but see Klaus Herbers, 'Agir et écrire. Les Actes des papes du IX^{e} siècle et le *Liber pontificalis*', and François Bougard, 'Composition, diffusion et réception des parties tardives du *Liber pontificalis* romain (VIII^{e}–IX^{e} siècles)', in François Bougard and Michel Sot, eds, *Liber, gesta, histoire. Écrire l'histoire des évêques et des papes de l'antiquité au XX^{e} siècle* (Turnhout, 2009), 109–24, 127–52. See also the comments on the eighteenth-century editions in Carmen Vircillo Franklin, 'Reading the Popes: The *Liber Pontificalis* and its Editors', *Speculum* 92 (2017), 607–29.

[10] Herman Geertman, 'La Genesi del *Liber pontificalis* romano. Un Processo di organizzazione della Memoria', in Bougard and Sot, eds, *Liber, gesta, histoire*, 37–107.

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such as martyr *acta*, the papal letter and estate registers, the Liberian catalogue with consular dates framing the list of the popes included in the Calendar of 354,[11] extant inscriptions and the like,[12] mostly dating from the third and fourth centuries onwards. Subsequent sections of the *Liber pontificalis* were added in the seventh century (Lives 60–71) and thereafter on a mostly Life-by-Life basis to the end of the ninth century (Lives 72–112). This can be schematized in a way that reflects the indications of the phases of manuscript transmission, as follows:

LP I (1st redaction – surmised from the existence of early Epitomes F and K),[13] *c.*530: Lives 1–56, Peter to Felix IV (d. 530)
LP I (2nd redaction), *c.*535: Lives 1–59/60, Peter to Agapitus (d. 536) / Silverius (d. 537)
LP IIA: Lives 60–71, Silverius to Boniface V (d. 625)
LP IIB: Lives 72–8, Honorius to Eugene I (d. 657)
LP IIC: Lives 79–81, 82–90, Adeodatus to Agatho, Leo II to Constantine I (d. 715)
LP III: Eighth-century Lives 91 (2 versions), 92, 93, 94 (three versions), 95, 96, 97.1–44, 97.45 to end, Gregory II to Hadrian I (d. 795)
LP IV: Ninth-century Lives 98–112, Leo III, Eugenius to Stephen V (d. 891)[14]

The dating of the first section of the *Liber pontificalis* is hugely significant, for the text was produced in the course of the Ostrogothic wars, when the Emperor Justinian deployed armies, led by his generals, first Belisarius and then Narses, in an attempt to reverse two centuries of political development and 'reconquer' Italy, by then

[11] *LP* 1: 1–12; see also Michele Renée Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 1990).
[12] See the useful summary in Davis, *Pontiffs*, xx–xxxiv.
[13] On Epitomes F and K, see *LP* 1: xlvix–lvii, but this element of the *Liber pontificalis*'s redaction is open to challenge: see Geertman, 'La genesi del *Liber pontificalis* romano'; Andrea Antonio Verardi, 'La genesi del *Liber Pontificalis* alla luce delle vicende della città di Roma tra la fine del V e gli inizi del VI secolo. Una proposta', *Rivista di storia del cristianesimo* 10 (2013), 7–28; Rosamond McKitterick, 'Perceptions of Rome and the Papacy in Late Merovingian Francia: The Cononian recension', in Stefan Esders et al., eds, *East and West in the Early Middle Ages: The Merovingian Kingdoms in Mediterranean Perspective* (Cambridge, forthcoming).
[14] Reproduced from Rosamond McKitterick, 'The Papacy and Byzantium in the Seventh- and Early Eighth-Century Sections of the *Liber pontificalis*', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 84 (2016), 241–73, at 248.

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ruled by the Ostrogothic kings, and bring it under the direct rule of the emperor based in Constantinople. The decision to compile the biographies of the first fifty-nine (or sixty) bishops of Rome from Peter to Agapitus (or Silverius), moreover, was apparently taken by officials within the papal administration. The author or authors had access to the papal registers and the documents relating to church estates and property in the *vestiarium* as well as the other chronological lists and historical narratives mentioned earlier. The context is the moment when Italy was not only suffering the consequences of the advances of the armies of Justinian led by Belisarius, but the Christians of Rome had also recently experienced the schism with Byzantium known as the Acacian schism, as well as the tensions usually assumed between Catholic and Arian in Italy itself as a consequence of Ostrogothic rule.[15] The text was precipitated by more than local schism or Roman propaganda wars, although, as I have argued elsewhere, it can indeed be considered as contributing to a wider argument in the first few decades of the sixth century, conducted in the form of historical texts, in which the perception of the imperial past was transformed by the popes themselves.[16] Both the text's format and its content, therefore, need to be read in the light of the political crisis of the 530s. The *Liber pontificalis* is potentially a key piece of evidence for the consolidation of the ideological position adopted by the papacy in the new political configuration of the former Western Roman empire. This involved far more than Rome's primacy and the pope's role as St Peter's successor, crucial elements though these were. Rather than a reiteration of the various statements in papal letters and decretals more usually brought to a discussion of the popes within the post-Roman empire, therefore,[17] it is the *Liber pontificalis* and its

[15] Useful background in Jonathan J. Arnold, M. Shane Bjornlie and Kristina Sessa, eds, *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy* (Leiden, 2016).

[16] Rosamond McKitterick, 'Roman Texts and Roman History in the Early Middle Ages', in Claudia Bolgia, Rosamond McKitterick and John Osborne, eds, *Rome across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas c.400–1400* (Cambridge, 2011), 19–34. For schism, see K. Blair-Dixon, 'Memory and Authority in Sixth-Century Rome: The *Liber pontificalis* and the *Collectio Avellana*', in Cooper and Hillner, eds, *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage*, 59–76; cf. also Davis, *Pontiffs*, x–xii; Thomas F. X. Noble, 'A New Look at the *Liber pontificalis*', *AHP* 23 (1985), 347–58; Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, 'The Roman *Liber pontificalis*, Papal Primacy, and the Acacian Schism', *Viator* 45 (2014), 1–16.

[17] For the conventional approach, see Walter Ullmann, *Gelasius I. (492–496). Das Papsttum an der Wende der Spätantike zum Mittelalter*, Päpste und Papsttum 18 (Stuttgart,

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implications, somewhat overlooked hitherto,[18] that I propose to explore further in this article.

Of crucial importance to the theme of Church and empire, first of all, is the way the *Liber pontificalis* recast the genre of imperial serial biography, with all the ideological implications such a historiographical choice implies. The closest parallels to the papal biographies are the imperial biographical narratives of Suetonius, (pseudo)-Aurelius Victor and the *Historia Augusta*, rather than Old Testament kings, martyrs or saints, as can be seen from the schematic comparison on the next page.[19]

There are, first of all, consistent structural parallels between late antique imperial biographical narratives and the *Liber pontificalis* in the formulaic presentation of information about the subject's name, origin, parentage and career before and after elevation to the imperial or papal throne, including details about disputed elections and rival candidates, challenges to his authority, public works, patronage, buildings and religious observance, his length of reign, death and burial, even if the length accorded each topic varies considerably. I shall return below to the significance of the buildings as a way of establishing a physical presence and lasting memory.

Secondly, the authors portray the relations between the popes and the emperors in a manner that highlights the pre-eminence of the

1981); idem, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power* (London, 1970); but for refreshing new assessments of these same letters, see Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, ed. and transl., *The Letters of Gelasius I (492–496): Pastor and Micro-Manager of the Church of Rome* (Turnhout, 2014). Some new perspectives are to be found in Philippe Blaudeau, 'Narrating Papal Authority (440–530): The Adaptation of the *Liber Pontificalis* to the Apostolic See's developing Claims', in Geoffrey D. Dunn, ed., *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity* (Farnham, 2015), 127–40.

[18] A notable exception is Blaudeau, 'Narrating Papal Authority'; Blaudeau covers some of the same ground that I do here, albeit from a complementary perspective and with different emphases.

[19] Rosamond McKitterick, 'La place du *Liber Pontificalis* dans les genres historiographiques du haut moyen âge', in Bougard and Sot, eds, *Liber, gesta, histoire*, 23–36; for a more extended argument than the short summary here concerning the model provided by Roman imperial biographies, see McKitterick, 'Roman Texts and Roman History'. On Roman martyr narratives, see Clare Pilsworth, 'Dating the Gesta *martyrum*: A Manuscript-based Approach', in Kate Cooper, ed., *The Roman Martyrs and the Politics of Memory*, special issue of *EME* 9 (2000), 271–324; Marios Costambeys, 'Review Article: Property, Ideology and the Territorial Power of the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages', ibid. 367–96; Marianne Sághy, 'The Bishop of Rome and the Martyrs', in Dunn, ed., *Bishop of Rome*, 37–56.

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Table 1. Serial Biography: Structural Models

Imperial Lives in Suetonius, *Lives of XII Caesars*; *Historia Augusta*; Eutropius, *Breviarium*; *Kaisergeschichte*; Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus*	**Papal lives in *Liber pontificalis***
Emperor's name and origin	Pope' s name and origin
Life before he became emperor	Career before he became pope
Process of becoming emperor, including disputes and rivals	Election as pope, including disputes and rivals
Career as emperor: includes rebellions, legislation, public works, buildings, patronage, religious observance	Career as pope: includes challenges to authority, legislation, public works, buildings, patronage, religious observance
Death and burial	Death and burial
Length of reign	Length of reign

bishop in Rome. This takes a number of forms. It is particularly apparent in the representation of the early Christian community in Rome as a small and vulnerable group, sometimes tolerated and sometimes persecuted, led by a 'monarch bishop'.[20] In contrast to other texts relating to the many Christian groups in Rome before the early fourth century, the *Liber pontificalis* gives only a slight indication of underlying divisions and divided loyalties or any of the tensions within the Christian communities of Rome discussed by Allen Brent.[21] The theologian Hippolytus (170–235), for example, is only mentioned as a priest who accompanied Bishop Pontian (pope 230–5) into exile. The challenge presented by the rigorist Novatian (200–58), author of letters to Cyprian of Carthage and to Bishops Fabian (236–50) and Cornelius (251–3) (Lives 21 and 22) in the middle of the third century, is subordinated to the curious story in the life of Bishop Cornelius about the translation of the bodies of Saints Peter

[20] For a fuller commentary on this portion of the *Liber pontificalis*, see Rosamond McKitterick, 'The *Liber pontificalis* and the Transformation of Rome from Pagan to Christian City in the Early Middle Ages', in Maijastina Kahlos, Katja Ritari and Jan Stenger, eds, *Being Pagan, Being Christian in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Helsinki, forthcoming), on which I draw here.

[21] Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch Bishop, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 31 (Leiden 1995); see also John Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 2000); James A. Papandrea, *Novatian of Rome and the Culmination of Pre-Nicene Orthodoxy* (Princeton, NJ, 2011).

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and Paul from the Via Appia to new resting places on the sites of their respective executions.[22]

The bishop of Rome is presented, moreover, as the principal creator of the institutional structure, administration, clerical office and liturgy, not merely for Rome but for the whole Church by the beginning of the fourth century. The text thus affirms the antiquity of the church in Rome and the apostolic underpinning of all its arrangements long before the conversion of Constantine and formal legal recognition of Christianity within the Roman empire.

The insistent catalogue of steadfast bishops killed for their faith by the pagan emperors before Constantine also underpins the bishops' role. Only with the appearance in the narrative of Constantine are the emperors cast in a more favourable light, but even then the author(s) of the *Liber pontificalis* contrive to indicate that it is the bishop who is masterminding the affairs of the Church and in Rome. According to Life 34, Silvester (315–35) not only baptized the emperor Constantine, but is also credited with convening the synod of Nicaea, as well as a synod in Rome at which many provisions for clerical organization and behaviour were made.[23]

The provision of a chronological framework by reference to the reign of emperors in the *Liber pontificalis* might be thought significant. They are noted up to Life 37 of Liberius while the *Liber pontificalis* was still able to follow the Liberian catalogue.[24] Thus Julius (Life 36) was 'bishop in the time of Constantine'. But this seems to be a simple chronological device used while it was available from an already existing list. After Liberius, the next regnal year dating point offered is not until that of Odoacer and Theodoric for Felix III already referred to. For the rest of the period of Ostrogothic rule, dating clauses were inserted as follows:

Life 51: Gelasius I, in the time of Theodoric and the emperor Zeno.
Life 52: Anastasius, bishop in the time of King Theodoric.

[22] *LP* 1: 150; see, for example, Henneke Gülzow, *Cyprian und Novatian. Der Briefwechsel zwischen den Gemeinden in Rom und Karthago zur Zeit der Verfolgung des Kaisers Decius* (Tübingen, 1975).

[23] 'Hic fecit constitutum de omne ecclesia. Etiam huius temporibus factum est concilium in Nicea Bithynia et congregati sunt CCCXVIII episcopi catholici': *LP* 1: 171 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 14).

[24] Also in Life 48, Hilarus issued a decree 'in the consulship of Basiliscus and Hermenericus' (*consulatu Basilisco Hermenerico*): *LP* 1: 242 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 37), a phrase which seems to have been extracted from the document referred to.

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Life 53: Symmachus, bishop in the time of King Theodoric and the emperor Anastasius.
Life 54: Hormisdas, bishop in the time of King Theodoric and the emperor Anastasius from the consulship of Senator to that of Symmachus and Boethius.
Life 55: John I, bishop from the consulship of Maximus to that of Olybrius in the time of Theodoric and the Christian emperor Justin.
Life 56: Felix IV, bishop in the time of King Theodoric and of the emperor Justin from 12 July in the consulship of Maburtius to 12 October in that of Lampadius and Orestes.
Life 57: Boniface II, bishop in the time of the heretic king Athalaric and of the emperor Justin.
Life 58: John II, bishop in the time of king Athalaric and the emperor Justinian.[25]

These too can be regarded as a simple means of adding some chronological precision rather than offering statements about political affiliations or sympathies. It may be significant that it is only during the Ostrogothic period that the secular rulers are particularly acknowledged. Thereafter there are no regnal years of any secular rulers added, except for insertions in a couple of Carolingian manuscripts for the eighth-century lives which again simply seem to be insertions by scribes to provide more precise chronological landmarks.

Rather more substantial narrative strategies to represent relations between the bishops of Rome and the emperors while still in the West either report imperial interference in Roman affairs or concern doctrinal dispute. Thus Julius, Liberius and Felix II were exiled in turn by Constantine II and Constantius, the heretic sons of Constantine. Damasus was noted in passing as being bishop in the time of Julian. The interference of the Emperors Valentinian III and Honorius and the Empress Placidia in the disputed election of Boniface and Eulalius in 418 resulted in the success of the candidate preferred by the imperial family, but the biography of Boniface made it clear that Eulalius, consecrated in the Constantinian basilica, was favoured by the clergy and people of Rome. Valentinian III intervened again when Sixtus III was arraigned by the aristocrat Bassus, a descendant of the famous fourth-century Christian prefect of the city of Rome, Junius Bassus, by ordering that a synod be convened to consider

[25] *LP* 1: 255, 258, 260, 269, 275, 279, 281, 285 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 40, 41, 42, 45, 48, 49, 50).

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the charge. Sixtus was declared innocent and Bassus condemned, though the synod conceded that he was not to be denied the last rites. Valentinian and Placidia were indignant about this concession, condemned Bassus themselves and confiscated his estates, though they were 'merged with the catholic church'; Sixtus nevertheless saw to it that Bassus's body, on the latter's death soon afterwards, was buried in the family tomb chamber in St Peter's basilica, and Sixtus 'saw to the wrapping of his body with linens and spices with his own hands'.[26] Only in the notorious case of Vigilius's elevation as a hoped-for puppet pope by Justinian, however, does the *Liber pontificalis* retrospectively record direct secular intervention to impose an imperial candidate.[27] The *Liber pontificalis* does not record Felix IV as Theodoric's appointee, or John II as Athalaric's.

The episodes concerning the papal standoffs with the Christian emperors on matters of doctrine during the Acacian schism and Three Chapters dispute and prolonged papal resistance to Monophysite and Monothelite interpretations of the Trinity, culminating in the Lateran Council of 649, in addition to persecution and punishment by heretic emperors, are numerous but consistent. These doctrinal controversies have been exhaustively addressed by scholars over the past few decades, so I offer only a sample here.[28] The *Liber pontificalis*'s entry for Leo I is happy to record that the synod of Chalcedon was gathered in the Emperor Marcian's presence, but it is the statement of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in the *Tome* of Leo and Leo's

[26] '[O]mnia praedia facultatum eius ecclesiae catholicae sociavit … cum linteaminibus et aromatibus, manibus suis tractans': *LP* 1: 232 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 34).

[27] For Felix IV, see Louis Duchesne, 'La Succession du pape Félix IV', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome* 3 (1883), 239–66. For a judicious appraisal of Vigilius's actions, see Claire Sotinel, 'Autorité pontificale et pouvoir impérial sous le règne de Justinien. Le Pape Vigile', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Antiquité* 104 (1992), 439–63; eadem, 'Mémoire perdue ou mémoire manipulée. Le *Liber pontificalis* et la controverse des Trois Chapîtres', in eadem and Maurice Sartre, eds, *L'Usage du passé entre antiquité tardive et haut moyen âge* (Rennes, 2008), 59–76; ET in Claire Sotinel, *Church and Society in Late Antique Italy and Beyond* (Farnham, 2010), chs 1, 3. See also eadem, 'Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: The Western View', in Michael Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2005), 267–90.

[28] See, for example, Patrick T. R. Gray, 'The Legacy of Chalcedon: Christological Problems and their Significance', in Maas, ed., *Companion to Justinian*, 215–39; Celia Chazelle and Catherine Cubitt, eds, *The Crisis of the Oikoumene: The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean* (Turnhout, 2007), especially Richard Price, 'The Three Chapters and the Council of Chalcedon', 17–37; idem, with Philip Booth and Catherine Cubitt, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649* (Liverpool, 2014).

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authority which is emphasized. The 'pious emperor Marcian and the empress Pulcheria' even 'laid their royal majesty aside and expounded their faith in the sight of the holy bishops' and insisted on a written version being sent to Pope Leo.[29] Leo's famous embassy to the Huns, moreover, is introduced with the statement that he did it '[f]or the sake of the Roman name' without reference to the emperor.[30] Leo's successor Hilarus (461–8) confirmed the statements of faith from the three synods of Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon and Leo's *Tome*, condemned the teaching of Eutyches and Nestorius, and asserted 'the dominion and preeminence of the holy, catholic and apostolic see'.[31]

The *Liber pontificalis* offers a steady narrative of the Acacian schism. It starts with the condemnation of Peter of Alexandria (who was suspected of Eutychianism) mentioned in the life of Simplicius, the condemnation of Acacius and Peter by Felix III/IV (483–92) and the excommunication of the Roman legate Misenus for accepting Byzantine bribes, the restoration of Misenus by Pope Gelasius I, Gelasius's offer of refuge to the Catholic rival John, bishop of Alexandria, and Gelasius's subsequent condemnation of Acacius and Peter once more and his composition of five books against Nestorius and Eutyches.[32] Anastasius (496–8) earned a thoroughly negative portrait in the *Liber pontificalis*, even though he was buried in St Peter's basilica along with his predecessors. Because he had 'wanted secretly to reinstate Acacius' and had failed to 'consult the priests bishops and clerics of the whole catholic church', he was 'struck down by God's will'.[33] Hormisdas (514–23), on the other hand, made such a determined effort to assert the orthodox position maintained in Rome that the enraged the emperor vigorously protested: 'It is our wish to give orders, not to take them', only to be struck down by a divine thunderbolt.[34]

It was King Theodoric, not the emperor, who was asked to adjudicate in the disputed election between Laurentius and Symmachus, but Theodoric's relationship with the bishops of Rome is

[29] '[D]eposita regia maiestate, fidem suum exposuerunt ante conspectum sanctorum episcoporum': Life 47.3–4, *LP* 1: 238 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 36–7).
[30] 'Hic propter nomen Romanum': *LP* 1: 239 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 37).
[31] '[E]t confirmans dominationem et principatum sancta sedis catholicae et apostolicae': *LP* 1: 242 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 37).
[32] *LP* 1: 255 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 41–2).
[33] '[Q]ui voluit occulte revocare Acacium … sine consilio presbiterorum vel episcoporum vel clericorum cunctae ecclesiae catholicae … qui nutu divino percussus est': Life 52 (496–8), *LP* 1: 258 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 42).
[34] 'Nos iubere volumus, non uobis iuberi': Life 54, *LP* 1: 270 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 46).

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inconsistent and needs fuller analysis than can be attempted here.[35] It was Theodoric whose advice Hormisdas sought in order finally to effect a reconciliation with the new Emperor Justin and restore 'unity with the apostolic see'.[36] The account of Theodoric's treatment of Pope John I (523–6), by contrast, adds a perplexingly sour note to the presentation of a mostly cooperative working relationship between the bishops of Rome and the Ostrogothic kings as rulers of distinct domains.[37]

Thereafter the *Liber pontificalis* reiterates the zeal, even anxiety, with which the emperors reassure the pope of their orthodoxy, reinforced in the life of John II (533–5) by splendid gifts of gold and silver vessels and purple-dyed cloth by the Emperor Justinian to St Peter. This first section of the *Liber pontificalis* culminates in the trouncing by Pope Agapitus of both the Emperor Justinian and the Patriarch Anthemius of Constantinople in argument, and his affirmation of the two natures in one Christ. The emperor then 'abased himself before the apostolic see, prostrating himself before the blessed pope Agapitus'.[38]

The seventh- and early eighth-century sections of the *Liber pontificalis* further enhanced and reinforced the popes' theological and political relationship with the Byzantine emperor, and represent the Roman perception of occasional and irritating imperial intervention in Roman affairs. Not least in relation to a pope's candidature and election and the announcement sent as a courtesy to Constantinople, the Roman perception articulated in the *Liber pontificalis* was that imperial intervention in Roman affairs was not necessary to validate or legitimate the pope's position. I have further suggested, in a recent article on the papacy and Byzantium in the seventh and early eighth centuries, that the composition of the *Liber pontificalis* was resumed in the seventh century in order both to provide a historical record

[35] But see the interesting suggestions offered by Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge, 1997), 195–235.

[36] '[A]d unitatem sedis apostolicae': Life 54.8, *LP* 1: 270 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 47).

[37] Life 55, *LP* 1: 275–6 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 48–9); see Thomas F. X. Noble, 'Theodoric and the Papacy', in *Teodorico il Grande e i Goti d'Italia, Atti de XIII congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto Medioevo Milan 1990* (Spoleto, 1993), 395–429. For more recent discussion, see K. Sessa, 'The Roman Church and its Bishops', R. Lizzi Testa, 'Bishops, Ecclesiastical Institutions and the Ostrogothic Regime', in Arnold, Bjornlie and Sessa, eds, *Companion to Ostrogothic Italy*, 435–50 (especially 441–2), 451–79.

[38] '[H]umiliavit se sedi apostolicae et adoravit beatissimum Agapitum papam': *LP* 1: 288 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 52).

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of the popes' confrontations with Byzantium and the patriarch of Constantinople in doctrinal matters and to affirm the papal position in relation to Monothelitism.[39] The *Liber pontificalis* became, in the first and second continuations (Lives 60–71, from Silverius to Boniface V, and Lives 72–90, from Honorius to Constantine I), therefore, an essentially political argument articulated in the form of historical narrative. In so doing, the second and third generations of *Liber pontificalis* authors maintained the very particular agenda of their predecessors, and represented the pope as upholder of the orthodox Christian faith, the leader of the Church, the ruler of Rome and a rival to Byzantium. The second continuation culminates in another papal visit to Constantinople, where Pope Constantine I celebrated mass, after 'the Christian Augustus, crown on head, had prostrated himself and kissed the feet of the pontiff'.[40]

In the form in which it was circulated in the seventh and eighth centuries,[41] the *Liber pontificalis* became a powerful and influential text for Frankish, English and even Byzantine knowledge and understanding of the popes and of their championing of orthodox doctrine, especially of the papal leadership in insisting on Chalcedonian Christological orthodoxy and the principal decisions of the councils of the Lateran in 649 and Constantinople in 680/1.[42] That knowledge and understanding also underpinned the separate lives of the eighth-century popes of the 'third continuation' (Lives 91–6 from Gregory II to Stephen III), up to the eve of Charlemagne's conquest of the Lombard kingdom.[43] While still *sacellarius* and a deacon, for example, Pope Gregory II (715–31) had accompanied Pope Constantine I to Constantinople. After he became pope he headed the opposition to remnants of imperial taxation in Italy and opposed the new ideas

[39] Rosamond McKitterick, 'The Papacy and Byzantium in the Seventh- and Early Eighth-Century Sections of the *Liber pontificalis*', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 84 (2016), 241–74. On the doctrinal issues, see M. Jankowiak, 'The Invention of Dyothelitism', *Studia Patristica* 63 (2013), 335–42; Price, *Lateran Council of 649*.

[40] 'Augustus christianissimus cum regno in capite sese prostravit et pedes osculans pontificis': *LP* 1: 391 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 88–9). On the imperial 'renewing of the church's privileges' (*omnia privilegia ecclesiae renovavit*) during this same visit, see my comments in 'Papacy and Byzantium', 264–5.

[41] For preliminary comments on this, see ibid. 268–72.

[42] See Michael T. G. Humphreys, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology in the Iconoclast Era, c.650–850* (Oxford, 2015).

[43] See Clemens Gantner, *Freunde Roms und Völker der Finsternis. Die päpstlichen Konstruktion von Anderen im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar, 2014), 60–138.

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about iconoclasm emanating from the Byzantine empire, as did his successor Gregory III (731–41): this holy man sent 'written warnings, with the authority of the holy see's teaching, for them to change their minds and quit their error'.[44] Gregory III's messenger George was too frightened to deliver them and when he was allowed by the pope to try again, the imperial authorities in Sicily detained the luckless George en route and prevented subsequent messengers from delivering their messages as well. Having made the point about the emperor's intransigence, the author of Life 92 says no more about the pope's contact with Constantinople. Life 93 on Zacharias (741–52) records only the sending of the 'usual' profession of orthodox faith to Constantinople. Life 94 of Stephen II (752–7) simply mentions the attempts by imperial envoys to prevent the pope's envoys reaching the Frankish ruler Pippin. His brother Pope Paul I (757–67), however, was rather more active in reaction to the iconoclast council of Hieria. He is credited with sending envoys frequently to the emperors in Constantinople, exhorting them 'to restore and establish in their erstwhile veneration the sacred images of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, his holy mother, the blessed apostles, and all the saints, prophets, martyrs and confessors'.[45] On the fourth day of the synod of Rome in 769 recorded in Life 96 of Stephen III, the Roman attitude to Byzantium and its affairs appears to be neatly summarized in the comment that they 'disallowed and anathematized the execrable synod recently held in the districts of Greece for the removal of these sacred images'.[46]

From these examples, the portrayal in the *Liber pontificalis* of the bishop of Rome in relation to the secular rulers usually assumed to be in political control of Rome is particularly striking. A

[44] '[U]t ab hoc resipiscerent ac se removerent errore, commonitoria scripta vigore apostolicae sedis institutionis'; ET Raymond Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber pontificalis)*, TTH 13, 2nd edn (Liverpool, 2007), 19.

[45] '[P]ro restitundis confirmandisque in pristino venerationis statu sacratissimis imaginibus domini Dei et salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi, santaeque eius genetricis atque beatorum apostolorum omniumque sanctorum, prophetarum, martyrum et confessorum': *LP* 1: 464 (Davis, *Eighth-Century Popes*, 82).

[46] '[C]onfundentes atque anathematizantes execrabilem illam synodum quae in Grecie partibus nuper facta est pro deponendis ipsis sacris imaginibus': Life 96.23, *LP* 1: 477 (Davis, *Eighth-Century Popes*, 100). For subsequent developments, see Thomas F. X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia, PA, 2009); on *Greci*, see Clemens Gantner, 'The Label "Greeks" in the Papal Diplomatic Repertoire in the Eighth Century', in Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, eds, *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2013), 303–49.

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comparison with the formulation of the history of the Coptic patriarchs of Alexandria in the seventh century is instructive. The *History of the Patriarchs* is thought to have been compiled first of all in the context of the Arab incursions into Egypt for the benefit of the vulnerable Christian community, to aid them to forge communal bonds. It survives in an eleventh-century Arabic version of the text. The history of a community within the jurisdiction of the bishop of Alexandria is achieved by focusing on the bishop, whom the authors clearly wished to be seen as the leader.[47] In the case of both the *Liber pontificialis* and the *History of the Patriarchs*, that leadership in its turn was given a long pedigree in the text, not just by claiming a direct line of apostolic succession from St Peter and St Mark respectively. In Rome's case this leadership was not only of the many Christian religious communities of Rome but extended to the entire Christian Church. Its representation, moreover, was cast not only as a replacement of imperial rule in religious matters and as the opportunity for the bishop to assume political responsibility in Rome and its territories as well, but also as a deliberate emulation of imperial behaviour.

This is manifest above all in the record included in the *Liber pontificalis* of the papal embellishment of Rome. The *Liber pontificalis* is famous, from the Life of Silvester onwards, for the lists and lavish descriptions of buildings dedicated, constructed, repaired and decorated and filled with gifts of gold, silver and bronze furnishings, lights, liturgical vessels and silk hangings, initially by Constantine and his immediate successors, but with Mark's founding of two basilicas in 336, almost exclusively by the popes.[48]

[47] I am grateful to Christian Sahner for bringing the *History of the Patriarchs* to my attention: see Basil Evetts, ed., *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria I–IV*, PO 2, 4, 21, 50, also available online at Roger Pearse's invaluable Tertullian project website: <http://www.tertullian.org>, last accessed 20 January 2017; Johannes Den Heijer, 'Coptic Historiography in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Periods', *Medieval Encounters* 2 (1996), 67–98; Johananes Den Heijer, *Mawhūb ibn Manṣūr ibn Mufarrij et l'historiographie copto-arabe. Étude sur la composition de l'Histoire des Patriarches d'Alexandrie*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium Subsidia 83 (Louvain, 1989).

[48] The literature on these is too great to be listed here. Davis, *Pontiffs*, xxvii–xlv, offers a convenient summary of the early papal endowments. I offer some preliminary remarks about the Constantinian basilica, in particular in 'The Constantinian Basilica in the Early Medieval *Liber pontificalis*', in Lex Bosman, Robert Haynes and Paolo Liverani, eds, *The Lateran, Rome*, British School at Rome Monographs (Cambridge, forthcoming). For articles on many aspects of both decoration and buildings, see the indispensable Federico Guidobaldi and Alessandra Guiglia Guidobaldi, eds, *Ecclesiae Urbis. Atti del congresso*

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This textual replacement of emperors with popes as patrons and benefactors in the *Liber pontificalis* is reflected in the architectural styles of Rome's churches as well as the materials from which they were constructed and embellished. Just as the text offers imperial parallels which are then developed in a distinctively papal context and manner, so too in the material evidence their (self-)presentation develops in distinctively complex ways. I can only touch on this issue here, for I intend to develop it more fully elsewhere. Massive Christian basilicas resembling imperial *aulae* or assembly halls, and built with expensive marble and stone, *opus sectile* pavements and revetted walls, mosaics and frescos, ornamented in decorative schemes similar those of imperial temples and palaces, offer visual physical evidence of imperial emulation. How deliberate this was has become a matter of debate. In particular, the use of late antique *spolia* in these buildings has prompted a range of interpretations, from assigning it momentous symbolic significance to treating the reuse of older Roman building materials as a practical expedient. These extremes are not necessarily mutually exclusive, for in many instances it can be demonstrated that there is meaning to be perceived in such reuse, though of course contemporary – as distinct from our own – perceptions may well need to be distinguished.[49] In an exposition that has precipitated considerable constructive as well as critical debate, for example, Maria Fabricius Hansen has suggested with reference to the Lateran baptistery, endowed by Constantine and built early in the fourth century but remodelled under Sixtus III (432–44), that the Christians borrowed imperial 'badges of grandeur and rank' in using purple porphyry stone, as well as recycling *spolia* from imperial buildings. She has drawn attention in particular

internazionale di studi sulle chiese di Roma IV–X secolo, Studi di antichità cristiana 59 (Vatican City, 2002); Herman Geertman, *More veterum. Il* Liber Pontificalis *e gli edifici ecclesiastici di Roma nella tarda antichità e nell'alto medioevo*, Archaeologica Traiectina 10 (Groningen, 1975). For more recent studies, see Eric Thunø, *The Apse Mosaic in Early Medieval Rome: Time, Network, and Repetition* (Cambridge, 2015); Cecilia Proverbio, *I cicli affrescati paleocristiani di San Pietro in Vaticano e San Paolo fuori le mura*, Bibliothèque de l'antiquité tardive 33 (Turnhout, 2017).

[49] See especially the Introduction by the editors, 'On the Reuse of Antiquity: The Perspectives of the Archaeologist and of the Historian', Arnold Esch, 'Reading *spolia* in Late Antique and Contemporary Perception', and Paolo Liverani, 'The Reuse of Older Elements in the Architecture of Fourth- and Fifth-Century Rome: A Contribution to the Evaluation of *spolia*', in Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney, eds, *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine* (Farnham, 2011), 1–52.

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to the massive porphyry exterior columns of the narthex of the baptistery with composite second-century capitals and white marble first-century bases. The capitals may have been transferred from the Temple of Venus Genetrix in the Forum of Caesar. Hansen has further suggested that the builders 'may have wished to make the point that the principles of renewal and procreation embodied in Venus Genetrix were now replaced by baptism'. The building's entablature, very like that of the temple of Hadrian, and the ornamented marble *opus sectile* revetment may be further deliberately Christianizing elements of the decorative styles of imperial buildings now translated into the decoration of Christian holy places.[50] Although partly remodelled under Pope Urban VIII (1623–44), the columns of the baptistery are also of imperial purple porphyry, as are the doorways to the chapels built by Pope Hilarus (461–8), to which were added magnificent bronze doors, with his responsibility clearly indicated on the lintel.[51] The implications of Hansen's arguments for a broader aesthetic interest in recontextualizing aspects of the imperial past in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages merit further exploration and testing that are not possible in this article.

Many of the foundations credited to Constantine, most notably St Peter's basilica, afterwards became recipients of papal munificence, and popes sometimes persuaded later emperors to make generous offerings. Thus, at Sixtus III's request, the Emperor Valentinian III presented an elaborate gold sculpture to St Peter's *confessio*. He also replaced the silver *fastigium* (quite what this was is still disputed)

[50] Maria Fabricius Hansen, *The Spolia Churches of Rome: Recycling Antiquity in the Middle Ages* (Aarhus, 2015), 88–92, with colour illustrations, is a useful summary of the ideas expounded in eadem, *The Eloquence of Appropriation: Prolegomena to an Understanding of* Spolia *in Early Christian Rome* (Rome, 2003). For discussion, see in particular Dale Kinney, 'Instances of Appropriation in Late Roman and Early Christian Art', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 28 (2012), 1–22 [online journal], at: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ems.2012.0005> or <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/507995>, last accessed 20 January 2017; and the comments by Elizabeth Marlowe in 'CAA Reviews', online at: <http://www.caareviews.org CrossRef DOI: 10.3202/caa.reviews.2004.69>, last accessed 20 January 2017. For detailed observations on the fabric and archaeology of the Lateran with rather different interpretations from those offered by Hansen, see Olaf Brandt and Federico Guidobaldi, 'Il Battistero lateranense. Nuove interpretazioni delle fasi strutturali', *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 84 (2008), 189–282.

[51] Handy details of all these churches and their inscriptions are given in Matilda Webb, *The Churches and Catacombs of Early Christian Rome: A Comprehensive Guide* (Brighton, 2001); for illustrations, see Hugo Brandenburg, *Die Frühchristlichen Kirchen Roms vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Der Beginn der abendländischen Kirchenbaukunst* (Milan and Regensburg, 2004), 37–52.

originally donated by the Emperor Constantine to the Constantinian basilica or Lateran.[52] At St Peter's, the Emperor Honorius constructed a family mausoleum at the beginning of the fifth century, close to the basilica and the saint's shrine. Leo I, who also appears to have commissioned the extensive narrative cycle of biblical scenes in the nave and the representations of Peter and Paul on either side of the triumphal arch, was the first pope actually to be buried in Old St Peter's, as if to outdo the imperial claim to proximity to the saint, and thus inaugurated a papal necropolis intimately associated with the shrine of the apostle St Peter.[53] In the middle of the eighth century Stephen II and his brother Pope Paul I appropriated Honorius's mausoleum and consecrated it as a chapel dedicated to the newly discovered and translated saint, Petronilla.[54]

In some cases, indeed, known imperial endowments, such as the Empress Eudoxia's foundation of S. Petro in Vincoli at the end of the fourth century,[55] the construction of San Paolo fuori le mura under the Emperors Valentinian II (375–92), Theodosius I (378–95) and Arcadius (395–408), completed under the Emperor Honorius (395–432), or the donation of the triumphal arch at San Paolo by the Empress Galla Placidia, recorded in contemporary inscriptions, are simply not mentioned in the *Liber pontificalis*. The church of San Paolo itself, however, was in any case more or less claimed by Pope Siricius with the mounting of two inscriptions to record that the building was directed by Flavius Filippus and built in the time of *Siricius episcopus tota mente devotus* ('the bishop Siricius [to Christ] with all the devotion').[56] The inscriptions concerning the completion of the basilica make it clear that the emperors are serving the saint: 'Theodosius began and Honorius finished this hall made sacrosanct by the body of Paul, teacher of the world'. The tribute to Galla Placidia cleverly shifts the attention to Pope Leo (440–61): 'Placida's

[52] *LP* 1: 233 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 35).
[53] Rosamond McKitterick, 'The Representation of Old Saint Peter's Basilica in the *Liber Pontificalis*', in eadem et al., eds, *Old Saint Peter's, Rome*, British School at Rome Studies (Cambridge, 2013), 95–118.
[54] Meaghan McEvoy, 'Late Roman Imperial Christianity and the City of Rome in the Fifth Century', ibid. 119–36; Caroline Goodson, 'To be the Daughter of Saint Peter: S. Petronilla and Forging the Franco-Papal Alliance', in Veronica West-Harling, ed., *Three Empires, Three Cities: Identity, Material Culture and Legitimacy in Venice, Ravenna and Rome, 750–1000* (Turnhout, 2015), 159–82.
[55] Davis, *Pontiffs*, xxxix.
[56] Webb, *Churches and Catacombs*, 210.

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devoted heart is delighted that all the dignity of her father's work shines resplendent through the zeal of Pope Leo'.[57]

San Paolo became an even more flamboyant assertion of papal rule, self-advertisement and what appears to be deliberate emulation of the imperial images and portraits customarily on public display in late antique Rome.[58] The fourth-century building contained large roundels depicting the popes in succession from St Peter to Laurentius, originally above the arches on the south and north sides of the nave. The installation, if not first commissioning, of these portraits has been credited to Pope Leo but they were probably then augmented by the anti-pope Laurentius up to Laurentius himself as part of his attempt to consolidate his election as pope in rivalry to Pope Symmachus.[59] This first set is usually dated on stylistic grounds to *c.*500. They were then continued in the Middle Ages but quite how far is not clear, for many of these portraits were destroyed in the catastrophic fire of 1823. Some survive in the Lapidary Museum at San Paolo, but a record of the first series in the form of watercolour reproductions in reduced format was also made in 1634 by Antonio Eclissi.[60] Old St Peter's had a similar set of portraits, all destroyed by the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Roman equivalents of the 1960s town planners in Britain when they pulled down the old basilica.[61] This series was allegedly created during the reign of Bishop

[57] 'THEODOSIUS COEPIT PERFECIT HONORIUS AULUM DOCTORIS MUNDI SACRATAM CORPORE PAULI'; 'PLACIDAE PIA MENS OPERIS DECUS OMNE PATERNI GAUDET PONTIFICIS STUDIO SPLENDERE LEONIS'; ET ibid. 212. For an illustration of the arch and inscriptions, and two of the extant fresco portraits, see Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen*, 127–9.

[58] Meriwether Stuart, 'How were Imperial Portraits Distributed throughout the Roman Empire?', *American Journal of Archaeology* 43 (1939), 601–17; see also Robert Coates-Stephens, 'The Reuse of Statuary in Late Antique Rome and the End of the Statue Habit', in Franz Alto Bauer and Christian Witschel, eds, *Statuen in der Spätantike* (Wiesbaden, 2007), 171–88.

[59] See my discussion with reference to the earlier literature: Rosamond McKitterick, 'Narrative Strategies in the *Liber pontificalis*: St Paul and San Paolo fuori le mura', *Rivista di storia del cristianesimo* 10 (2013), 115–30; see also the classic study by Lucien de Bruyne, *L'antica serie di ritratti papali della basilica di S. Paolo fuori le mura*, Studi di antichità cristiana 7 (Rome, 1934).

[60] Now Vatican City, BAV, Barberini MS lat. 4407.

[61] For a scholarly reconstruction of elements of the old basilica, see McKitterick et al., eds, *Old St Peter's, Rome*.

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Liberius (d. 354) and they were described by Giacomo Grimaldi in 1619.[62]

The representation of the popes in mosaics in some of the churches they endowed, moreover, differs from representations of imperial apotheoses in that the popes are depicted in the company of, and usually even in intimate proximity to, Christ, Mary the Virgin and the saints, and are portrayed as donors. Pope Felix IV (526–30), for example, added a mosaic to the apse of the hall of the 'Temple of Romulus', converted it into a church and dedicated it to the twin martyr 'medical' saints, Cosmas and Damian, announcing to all who saw the mosaic: 'Felix has made to the Lord this offering, worthy of the Lord's servant, that he may be granted life in the airy vault of heaven'.[63] The glorious apse mosaic, today visible at eye level in the upper church because of the seventeenth-century rebuilding, depicts Felix offering a model of his church to Christ, the apostles Paul and Peter and the two saints Cosmas and Damian.[64]

As part of the extraordinary efforts the popes dedicated to the promotion of martyr cults in Rome,[65] Pelagius II (579–90) created a gallery basilica over the tomb of the martyr Lawrence (d. 258) on the Via Tiburtina. The mosaic on the triumphal arch which divides the sixth-century basilica from the thirteenth-century extension created under Honorius III (1216–27), sets Pelagius, holding a model of his church as donor, in the company of Christ, the apostles Peter and Paul and the martyrs Lawrence, Hippolytus and Stephen. An inscription, once probably in the apse, records the decision made by Pelagius to create the shrine for Lawrence.[66]

[62] BAV, Barberini Lat. 2733; published as Giacomo Grimaldi, *Descrizione della basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano: Il codice Barberini 2733, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana*, ed. Reto Niggl (Vatican City, 1972), 138–57 and figs 52–8; Proverbio, *I cicli affrescati palaocristiani*, ch. 2.

[63] 'OPTULIT HOC DNO FELIX ANTISTITE DIGNUM MUNUS UT AETHERIA VIVAT IN ARCE POLI'.

[64] See *LP* 1: 279 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 49). The portrait of Felix is a seventeenth-century reconstruction; see Webb, *Churches and Catacombs*, 126–9, including the inscription and translation. For illustrations, see Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichem Kirchen*, 223; and the important new interpretations of the Felix portrait as well as other papal representations in Thunø, *Apse Mosaic*.

[65] See Cooper, ed., *Roman Martyrs*, 273–396.

[66] *LP* 1: 309 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 59). For details of the inscriptions and building, see Webb, *Churches and Catacombs*, 240–5; for illustrations, see Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen*, 236–7.

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A model of his church of Santa Agnese fuori le mura, perhaps in emulation of his predecessor, Pelagius II, was presented by Pope Honorius (625–38) to St Agnes in the mosaic recording his replacement of the church built by Pope Symmachus (498–514), who is also portrayed in the apse mosaic. The inscription evokes the gold and purple of the *tesserae*, and ends as follows: 'what all can see in a single upward glance are the sacred offerings dedicated by Honorius. His portrait is identified by robes and by the building. Wearing a radiant heart, he radiates in appearance also'.[67]

In the seventh-century chapel added to the Constantinian Baptistery at the Lateran by Pope John IV 640–2), mosaics commissioned by his successor Theodore (642–9) depict Christ, the two Saints John (the Baptist and the Evangelist), the Virgin Mary, St Paul, the martyr Venantius, Pope John IV holding a model of his chapel, St Peter, Pope Theodore I and another martyr, presumably among those whose remains John IV had had brought along with those of Venantius from Dalmatia. The apse inscription records John's gift: 'John bishop by God's consecration, made devout prayers to the martyrs for the Lord Christ'.[68]

The self-advertisement of Pope John VII (705–7) seemed rather extreme to the author of his Life in the *Liber pontificalis*, for he commented in the account of John's munificence, especially the paintings commissioned for the church of Santa Maria Antiqua, that the bishop 'provided images in various churches; whoever wants to know what he looked like will find his face depicted on them'.[69] The portrait of John VII still extant in the Vatican Treasury was once part of a larger mosaic depicting him with the Virgin.[70] It was John, moreover, who

[67] 'SURSUM VERSA NUTU QUOD CUNCTIS CERNITUR UNO PRAESUL HONORIUS HAEC VOTA DICATA DEDIT VESTIBUS ET FACTIS SIGNATUR ILLIUS ORA LUCET ET ASPECTUM LUCIDA CORDA GERENS': *LP* 1: 323 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 62). For details and the inscription, see Webb, *Churches and Catacombs*, 246–8; for illustrations, see Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen*, 244–6, who identifies the second episcopal figure as Pope Gregory I (590–604).

[68] 'MARTYRIBUS XPI DNI [*Christi domini*] VOTA JOHANNES REDDIDIT ANTISTES SANCTIFICANTE DEO': *LP* 1: 330 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 64); see Webb, *Churches and Catacombs*, 47–8. For illustrations, see Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen*, 53.

[69] 'Fecit vero et imagines per diversas ecclesias quas, quicumque nosse desiderat in eis eius vultum depictum repperiet': *LP* 1: 385 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 86).

[70] See Antonella Ballardini and Paola Pogliani, 'A Reconstruction of the Oratory of John VII (705–7)', in McKitterick et al., eds, *Old St Peter's, Rome*, 190–213; and the illustration

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appropriated the structures above the church on the Palatine hill, possibly hitherto used by secular officials, to build an *episcopium*.[71]

Most spectacularly of all, Paschal I (817–24)'s basilica of Santa Prassede, with its apse, triumphal arch and the mosaics of the chapel Paschal dedicated to St Zeno as a memorial for his mother '*episcopa* Theodora', is a dramatic indication of the continuation of the papal display established by his predecessors. Paschal had himself portrayed with a square nimbus and holding a model of his church and flanking the saints Praxedis and Pudenziana, Zeno, and Christ at his Second Coming. Paschal added his distinctive monogram to the decorative scheme. The inscriptions, set out in gold glass *tesserae* on blue, reiterate the announcement of Paschal's gift: that he was the 'alumnus' of the apostolic seat. The verse at the entrance to the chapel states: 'Ornament shines in the hall, the work of the prelate Paschal, because he made devout prayers and was earnest in paying this due to the Lord'.[72] Paschal's portrait is also to be seen in the apse mosaics of Santa Maria in Domnica and Santa Cecilia in Trastevere.[73] Paschal may have derived the idea for the flamboyant location at least of his monogram from the inscription 'Sixtus the bishop to the People of God' that Sixtus III (432–40) placed at the centre of the triumphal arch in his church of Santa Maria Maggiore.[74]

By 500 there were twenty-seven churches inside the walls of Rome and seven major basilicas outside the walls, including St Peter's

of John VII's mosaic in Maria Andoloro, ed., *Santa Maria Antiqua tra Roma e Bisanzio* (Rome, 2016), 249, and discussion, 250–9.

[71] See Andrea Augenti, 'Continuity and Discontinuity of a Seat of Power: The Palatine Hill from the Fifth to the Tenth Century', in Julia M. H. Smith, ed., *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough* (Leiden, 2000), 43–54.

[72] 'PASCHALIS PRAESULIS OPUS DECOR FULGIT IN AULA QUOD PIA OPTULIT VOTA STUDUIT REDDERE D[omin]O'.

[73] *Liber pontificalis*, Life 100.9, *LP* 2: 54; ET Raymond Davis, *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes (*Liber pontificalis*): The Ancient Biographies of Ten Popes from A.D. 817–891*, TTH 20 (Liverpool, 1995), 10–11. For details of the church and the inscription, see Webb, *Churches and Catacombs*, 68–71; for full discussion, see Caroline J. Goodson, *The Rome of Paschal I: Papal Power, Urban Renovation, Church Rebuilding and Relic Translation, 817–824* (Cambridge 2010). On the significance of the square nimbus, see John Osborne, 'The Portrait of Pope Leo IV in San Clemente, Rome: A Re-Examination of the so-called "Square" Nimbus in Medieval Art', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 47 (1979), 58–65.

[74] 'XYSTUS EPISCOPUS PLEBI DEI': Webb, *Churches and Catacombs*, 64, for the inscription; see also the virtual tour, online at: <http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm_maggiore/index_en.html>, last accessed 20 January 2017.

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and San Paolo fuori le Mura.[75] Between Simplicius in the later fifth century and Theodore in the middle of the seventh, many more popes are credited in the *Liber pontificalis* with endowing and embellishing churches, both within Rome and in outlying districts. They are presented as continuing an imperial tradition of display and religious devotion.

The *Liber pontificalis* rarely mentions churches built or paid for by ordinary citizens or clergy of Rome. A notable exception is Santa Sabina, for in the Life of Sixtus III the patronage of Peter the priest for the construction of the fifth-century basilica of St Sabina on the Aventine hill is confirmed by the spectacular contemporary inscription still in this church recording his endowment, in which Peter refers to the time when 'Celestinus held the highest apostolic throne and shone forth gloriously as the foremost bishop of the whole world'.[76] The widow Vestina, moreover, in the time of Pope Innocent (402–17) left her jewellery to fund the building of basilicas (St Gervasius and Protasius),[77] the handmaid Demetrias gave land for the building of St Stephen's basilica, the *matronae* Priscilla and Lucina who gave land for cemeteries; the latter also made her own house into a *titulus*.[78]

This has not been the place to offer a detailed challenge to the assumptions concerning the pope's relationship to the Byzantine empire, especially in the aftermath of the Ostrogothic wars. Instead, I have argued that this Roman narrative challenges the usual assumptions about the consequences both of the deposition of the last Roman emperor in the West and of Justinian's military campaigns in Ostrogothic Italy. The authors of the *Liber pontificalis* created a powerful picture of the popes and a coherent articulation of their ideological and practical position, especially within the city of Rome itself, as the

[75] See the useful maps in Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312–1308* (Princeton, NJ, 1980), 32, 51, 74. For full documentation, see idem, Spencer Corbett and Wolfgang Frankl, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae. Le basiliche cristiane antiche di Roma (sec. IV–IX) / The Early Christian Basilicas of Rome (IV–IX cent.)*, 5 vols, Monumenti dell'antichità cristiana 2nd ser. 2 (Vatican City, 1937–77).

[76] 'Culmen apostolicum cum caelestinus haberet. Primus et in tot fulgeret episcopus orbe': Life 46.9, *LP* 1: 235 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 38); see Webb, *Churches and Catacombs*, 173; for an illustration of figures of *ecclesia* and *synagoga*, see Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen*, 174.

[77] *LP* 1: 220 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 32).

[78] *LP* 1: 150, 164, 238 (Davis, *Pontiffs*, 9, 13, 38–9). On Lucina, see Kate Cooper, 'The Martyr, the *Matrona* and the Bishop: The Matron Lucina and the Politics of Martyr Cult in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Rome', *EME* 8 (1999), 297–318.

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rulers of Rome and of the Church. It is no accident that it was most probably during the pontificate of Pope Paul I (757–67) that the notorious claims in the document known as the *Constitutum Constantini* or Donation of Constantine were forged. There are close textual parallels with many details, especially the gifts of Constantine listed in the Life of Silvester. Most obviously, however, the ideological position adopted in the *Constitutum* and the *Liber pontificalis* is very similar, as the most striking sentences from the *Constitutum* demonstrate:

> This sacred church as we determine is to be named, honoured, venerated and proclaimed as the head and summit of all the churches throughout the whole world, just as we have determined through our other imperial decrees.

and further:

> … the city of Rome and all the provinces of the whole of Italy and the western regions, their districts and cities, we grant and relinquish to that aforesaid pontiff of ours Silvester the universal pope; these … are to be administered by his power and authority and that of the pontiffs who shall succeed him, and we grant that they shall remain under the jurisdiction of the sacred church of Rome.[79]

Charlemagne's conquest of the Lombard kingdom and the creation of an entirely different political configuration in the West certainly had long-term consequences for the papacy itself, but the deliberately imperial elements of papal self-presentation, quite apart from the importance of Rome's primacy, apostolic succession and orthodoxy articulated so emphatically within the *Liber pontificalis*, indicate the multitude of strands by which the papacy wove the fabric of its own *imperium* or power, an *imperium* like no other because of the apostolic claims to succession from Christ's disciple St Peter.

[79] '[Q]uam sacrosanctam ecclesiam caput et verticem omnium ecclesiarum in universo orbe terrarum dici, coli, venerari et praedicari sancimus, sicut per alia nostra imperialia decreta statuimus'; 'quamque Romae urbis et omnes Italiae seu occidentalium regionum provincias, loca et civitates saepefato beatissimo pontifici, patri nostro Silvestrio, universali papae, contradentes atque relinquentes eius vel successorum ipsius pontificum potestati ... disponenda atque iuri sanctae Romanae ecclesiae concedimus permanenda': MGH Fontes iuris 10, 84, 93–4; ET M. Edwards, *Constantine and Christendom: The Oration to the Saints; The Greek and Latin Accounts of the Discovery of the Cross; The Edict of Constantine to Pope Silvester*, TTH 39 (Liverpool, 2003), 107, 113. For a useful survey of recent interpretations, albeit offering a later date for the composition of the text than I favour here, see Caroline J. Goodson and Janet L. Nelson, 'Review Article: The Roman Contexts of the "Donation of Constantine"', *EME* 18 (2010), 446–67.

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