

When and by whom was the Roman *Basilica Apostolorum* built?

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The church of San Sebastiano, located at the ancient site called ‘*ad Catacumbas*’ on the old Via Appia a mile or so outside the modern city, conceals behind its seventeenth century façade the remains of the fourth century basilica of Peter and Paul, the so-called *Basilica Apostolorum*. The latter seems to have been built in the first half of the fourth century, but no-one is quite sure when or by whom. Traditionally it has been associated with Constantine and his considerable church-building programme in Rome and environs from 313 on, recorded in the sixth century recension of the *Liber Pontificalis*.¹ But no entry in it either under Silvester or any later bishop of Rome makes any mention of the basilica. On the other hand, the imperial monogram discovered by Paul Styger on the threshold of the gateway to the complex could very well be that of Constantine (if also of Constantine II, Constans or Constantius II).² The basilica was built on the site of an earlier *memoria* or *martyrium*, the so-called *Memoria Apostolorum*, dedicated to the two princes of the apostles.³ They were the object of the earliest datable Roman martyr cult (29th June 258),⁴ which from the beginning attracted pilgrims not only from Rome and Italy but also from Africa, Egypt and the Orient.⁵ Such a renowned site and cult must surely have attracted the attention and interest of Constantine, who, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, was persuaded by Silvester (314-35) to build individual basilicas in honour of St Peter and St Paul, endowing them lavishly.⁶

However a number of scholars have suggested that the *Basilica Apostolorum* might actually have been begun under Maxentius (306-12) and merely been completed by Constantine.⁷ If so, it would be the city’s earliest Christian basilica, the prototype of a series of recently identified U-shaped cemeterial basilicas in the Roman

suburbs, commonly designated as ‘ambulatory’ or ‘circiform’.⁸ The evidence to which these scholars appeal seems to be twofold. First there is the aforementioned silence of the *Liber Pontificalis*, to which one could add that of Eusebius of Caesarea. The former does include several of these U-shaped cemeterial basilicas built and endowed by Constantine, not only SS. Marcellinus and Peter on the Via Labicana,⁹ and St Lawrence on the Via Tiburtina,¹⁰ but even that on the Via Ardeatina, built by Mark (336), recently plausibly identified by Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai.¹¹ If these are all included, why not the internationally famous and popular *Basilica Apostolorum*, which Mark’s basilica in particular strikingly resembles?¹² However, if it had been built and endowed by Maxentius, acknowledged by Eusebius (grudgingly) and Optatus of Milevis (more positively) to have been friendly-disposed to the Christians,¹³ it might not have been included, even if completed by Constantine, in view of his campaign to blacken Maxentius’ memory.¹⁴ Such a massive undertaking, involving large-scale movements of earth, would certainly have been impossible without the financial support of either or both emperors, as well as their permission as *Pontifex Maximus* to authorise the necessary destruction of part of the underlying catacomb.¹⁵ The second piece of evidence cited is architectural: both the style of building and particular details of it are strikingly similar, as Styger was the first to point out, to the complex of Maxentian buildings (circus, palace, circular mausoleum of his son Romulus) on the other side of the Appian Way, constructed around 309-11, perhaps by the same architect.¹⁶

Further light on the silence of the *Liber Pontificalis* could be shed by my hypothesis about who was originally responsible. I would argue that the *Basilica Apostolorum* derived not from an episcopal or imperial initiative but from the efforts and concerns of members of the community of the *titulus Byzantis* on the Caelian hill,

present site of the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo.¹⁷ It was that community, I surmise, which in 258 had originated the joint martyr cult of Peter and Paul in a recently acquired pagan site *ad Catacumbas*, building a permanent *memoria* or *martyrium* for their supposed relics adjacent to the pagan complex a year or so later.¹⁸ In the following century that same community sought to build a covered cemetery adjoining the *memoria* to house the increasing number of pilgrims and devotees who wanted to celebrate the annual festival and/or *refrigeria*, funerary meals, in honour of the two or of relatives buried at the site, or themselves be buried near the apostles' relics. Indeed a clear link exists between the basilica of St Sebastian, as the *Basilica Apostolorum* later came to be renamed, and the *titulus Byzantis*. Thus sometime in the episcopate of Innocent I (401-17) two presbyters of the *titulus*, Proclinus and Ursus, dedicated to St Sebastian a protective screen round his tomb in the crypt under the basilica.¹⁹ That link must surely go back much earlier. If this were the case, the community's initiative would not have been recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis* under Miltiades (311-14) and been very unlikely to have reached the ears of Eusebius. On this hypothesis building cannot have started much before the autumn of 311, when Maxentius, seeking to curry favour with the Christians, returned church property to them.²⁰ Other arguments for the antiquity of the *Basilica Apostolorum* appeal to its distinctive characteristics as the most likely prototype of the aforementioned U-shaped cemeterial basilicas of the early to mid-fourth century to the south and east of Rome.²¹

However there is strong evidence in favour of Constantine's involvement, but at a rather later date, towards the end of his reign and of Silvester's episcopate. First and foremost, there is the inexplicably overlooked inscription among a collection taken from Roman basilicas and preserved in the tenth century Codex Parisinus

8071,²² to which Orazio Marucchi drew attention in 1921, and which he rightly attributed to the *Basilica Apostolorum*.²³ This does appear to refer to Constantine as beginning to establish the site, and his son (Constans?) completing his father's wishes. It reads: '*Hic Petrus et Paulus mundi [duo] lumina praesunt / Quos coelum similes hos habet aula pares. / Coeperat hanc Praesul fundare terra[m]... / Filius implevit quod voluit genitor. / Quaeris quis Domino astriferum signavit [honorem?]*' (last line missing). Despite Marucchi's strained attempts to link it with Damasus (366-84), whom he saw as the founder of the *Basilica Apostolorum*, the *praesul* who began to establish or confirm (*fundare*) the site must surely be Constantine,²⁴ and the son who finished the plan in all probability Constans. The gateway monogram could well mark Constans' completion of the site.²⁵ This would appear to offer strong support to the view that the *Basilica Apostolorum* was not begun till late in Constantine's reign.

Further evidence for the hypothesis that the *Basilica Apostolorum* was begun in the 330s under Constantine and completed in the 340s under Constans would seem to be supplied by the dates of the graves which form the pavement of the basilica, the topmost of up to five layers in the west end over the earlier *Memoria Apostolorum*. These range from the 340s to 357 and later.²⁶ Moreover the mausolea flanking the south side of the basilica have dates in the same period.²⁷ In addition, the plan of the basilica with its rectangular pilasters and oblique east end wall and its relative dimensions (73.5m long by 27.5m wide) are strikingly similar to those of the cemeterial basilica of SS. Marcellinus and Peter *ad duas lauros* on the Via Labicana (dimensions 65.3m long by 29.3m wide) built by Constantine as part of his funerary complex,²⁸ including the circular mausoleum in which in the end not he but his mother Helena would be buried. The scholarly consensus is that this basilica was built very early in Constantine's principate (315-320?) and that it forms the archetype

of the series of Roman suburban covered cemeteries, not the *Basilica Apostolorum*, which is a later example.²⁹

If this later date were correct, one would have to seek another reason for the omission of the basilica from the *Liber Pontificalis* than as part of a *damnatio memoriae* of Maxentius. One would then also have to explain the later silence of Eusebius of Caesarea both in his *Theophaneia* of the mid 330s, despite his mention in it of the ‘traditional’ memorials of Peter and Paul on the Vatican and the Ostian Way,³⁰ and in his *Life of Constantine*, written after Constantine’s death. In the case of the *Liber* we could repeat our earlier hypothesis that the idea of a basilica for the joint martyr cult, established since 29th June 258, did not derive from a bishop of Rome, such as Silvester, who, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, persuaded Constantine to build basilicas at his own preferred individual cult sites, on the Vatican hill (Peter) and on the Ostian Way (Paul),³¹ but from the Roman community of the *titulus Byzantis* responsible for the original cult. They persuaded Constantine to grant the necessary legal permission and financial resources to enable them to build a U-shaped cemeterial basilica on their cult site.³² This could have occurred early in the 330s.³³ We could also supply the same reason we noted above for Eusebius’ failure to mention it in his later *Theophaneia* and *Life of Constantine*, namely because he did not seem to possess much concrete knowledge of events in Rome after 312. Thus his information in the latter about Constantine’s church building programme in Rome is a generalization based on Constantine’s letters and edicts of 313 in the West and 324 in the East.³⁴

Such a thesis casts unexpected light on the questions of the dates of and reasons for the rather different cemeterial martyr basilicas of St Peter’s on the Vatican and St Paul’s on the Ostian Way. Unlike the *Basilica Apostolorum* and similar martyr

basilicas (SS. Marcellinus and Peter, St Lawrence, St Agnes), which are U-shaped and ambulatory and have a *martyrium* or mausoleum attached or nearby,³⁵ St Peter's and St Paul's are apsed hall basilicas which include the *martyrium* as a central focus. As noted, both were requested by Silvester of Constantine, but seem from the list of eastern donations and other details not to have been begun before 324, when Constantine left Rome for the East. Indeed a strong case has been made for St Peter's not having been begun till a little before 333,³⁶ and I would argue the same for St Paul's.³⁷ Why did Silvester suddenly decide to ask Constantine to build them at such a late stage, when the latter had long been based in the East and was preoccupied with his plans for building grand basilicas for Christ and the apostles there?

The reasons for them not being begun till then and for their distinctive plans I would suggest really only make sense in the light of the initiative of the *Byzas* community in having Constantine build and endow a cemeterial basilica for their popular international martyr cult, whose devotees seem even to have included the militant Donatists.³⁸ Silvester, although he seems to have presided at the festival of the joint cult in the *memoria* at *Catacumbas* on 29th June 314, as hinted at by the letter of the Council of Arles,³⁹ and arguably annually thereafter, must have been unhappy with the success of this popular martyr cult with its international following and appeal to heterodox groups. The last straw may have been the cemeterial basilica. He must have felt the need to counter that cult, its festival and basilica, with individual cults of Peter and Paul at the sites traditionally associated with them at least since the mid second century, the Vatican hill and the Ostian Way.⁴⁰ Interestingly, as Snyder has pointed out, there seem to be no clear traces of a cult of Peter or of Christian graves at the Vatican site prior to the building of the cemeterial basilica.⁴¹ Unfortunately, we cannot say anything much about the Ostian Way site until full excavations have been

carried out. It must therefore have been Silvester who suggested that Constantine build at both sites because of the tradition and the hierarchy's claim that these, not the site *ad Catacumbas*, were the true locations of the remains of Peter and Paul.⁴² Why else would Constantine have been persuaded to build at such a difficult sloping site as that presented by the Vatican?

Silvester's status and arguments must have prevailed on the emperor to build and endow two more cemeterial basilicas for Peter and Paul, one for each.⁴³ Silvester may well also have suggested the unique design of each, a cemeterial basilica containing the *martyrium* or *memoria* as central focus, not least since this arrangement is unparalleled in Constantine's other cemeterial martyr basilicas in both East and West.⁴⁴ Certainly the plan of St Peter's, with its nave and four aisles and novel transept, allowed vast crowds of pilgrims to have access to the *memoria*, as well as providing a very large cemetery, thereby upstaging the rival basilica at *Catacumbas*.⁴⁵ The apparent smaller size of the basilica for St Paul,⁴⁶ despite the larger endowment for the latter indicated by the *Liber Pontificalis*,⁴⁷ again suggests Silvester's real priority, the church of St Peter, from whom, as founder of the church of Rome, he claimed direct succession. He and his successors would thus have a very good reason for not including the *Basilica Apostolorum* in the *Liber Pontificalis*, even if it had been begun by Constantine. However, Silvester's own immediate successor, Mark (336), seems to have been so impressed by the design of the *Basilica Apostolorum* that he persuaded Constantine to build and endow a remarkably similar one nearby, off the Via Ardeatina, in which he was buried.⁴⁸ Conversely it may well have been his successor, Julius (337-52), who managed to remove the alleged relics of Peter and Paul from the *Basilica Apostolorum* as well as Marucchi's inscription and have the *memoria* demolished as redundant.⁴⁹

This evidence seems decisively to resolve the question of when the *Basilica Apostolorum* was built, removing the problem of the lengthy interval that the Maxentian hypothesis leaves between the date of original construction, on the one hand, and the filling-in of the graves and building of the mausolea, on the other.⁵⁰ It also confirms Constantine's role and supplies a plausible candidate for the group originally responsible. Finally it offers a rationale for the date, construction and distinctive design of its two contemporary rival martyr basilicas, St Peter's and St Paul's-outside-the-walls.

¹ L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis: Introduction, Texte et Commentaire* (Paris, 2nd ed., 1955) 1 170-87 under the Silvester entry.

² P. Styger, *Römische Märtyrergriifte* 2 vols (Berlin, 1935) 1 26, presumes Constantine I. However; A. Ferrua, 'Lavori a S. Sebastiano', *RAC* 37 (1961) 203-36 (230), argues for Constans. As we shall see, besides his appeal to epigraphy (including the later Christological monograms), Constans (337-50) is a more likely candidate than either Constantine I or Constantius II (337-60), despite the arguments of N.M.-Denis Boulet, 'L'inscription Damasienne "Ad Catacumbas"', *RAC* 43 (1967) 111-24, in favour of the latter. See R. Krautheimer, S. Corbett, W. Frankel (eds), *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae: The Early Christian Basilicas of Rome (IV-IX cent.)* 4 (Vatican City/New York, 1970) 104, 143, 146.

³ Styger, 'Il monumento apostolico della via Appia', *Dissertazioni della pontificia Accademia romana di Archeologia* Series 2, 13 (Rome, 1917), 48; *Die römische Katakomben: Archäologischen Forschungen über den Ursprung und die Bedeutung der altchristlichen Grabstätten* (Berlin, 1933) 176-84, 335-51; *Märtyrergriifte* 1 13-43.

⁴ See the Philocalian *Depositio Martyrum* of 354 (Duchesne 1 11.13-14): *III kal. iul. Petri in Catacumbas et Pauli Ostense, Tusco et Basso cons.* [258]. On the evidence and problems see e.g. H. Chadwick, 'St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome: The Problem of the Memoria Apostolorum ad Catacumbas', *JTS* NS 8 (1957) 31-52.

⁵ On its international character as deduced from the 200 or so *graffiti* see R. Lanciani, 'La "Memoria Apostolorum" al III miglio dell' Appia e gli scavi di S. Sebastiano', *Dissertazioni della pontificia Accademia romana di Archeologia* Series 2, 14 (Rome, 1920) 89; R. Marichal, 'La date des "graffiti" de la basilique de Saint-Sébastien à Rome', *La Nouvelle Clío* 5 (1953) 119-20; E. Josi, 'La venerazione degli Apostoli Pietro e Paolo nel mondo cristiano antico', in V. Saxer & P. Testini (eds), *Saecularia Petri et Pauli: conferenze per il centenario del martirio degli apostoli Pietro e Paolo tenute nel Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana* (Studi di Antichità Cristiana, 28) (Vatican City, 1969) 166-7.

⁶ Duchesne, *Lib. Pont.* 1 176. 1-178.11 (St. Peter's: note the eastern origin of the donations, implying a date after 324); 178.11-179.9 (St Paul's: again note the eastern donations).

⁷ Styger, 'monumento' 17, 88f., 92-3; Krautheimer, *CBCR* 4 145; E. Jastrzębowska, 'S. Sebastiano, la più antica basilica cristiana di Roma', in F. and A.G. Guidobaldi (eds) *Ecclesiae Urbis: Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi sulle Chiese di Roma (IV-X secolo) Roma 4-10 Settembre 2000* (Studi di Antichità Cristiana, 59) 3 vols (Vatican City, 2002) 2 1141-55.

⁸ F.W. Deichmann and A. Tschira, 'Das Mausoleum der Kaiserin Helena und die Basilika der heiligen Marcellinus und Petrus an der Via Labicana vor Rom', *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 72 (1957) 44-110; R. Krautheimer, 'Mensa – Coemeterium – Martyrium', *Cahiers Archéologiques* 11 (1960) 15-40; H. Brandenburg, *Roms frühchristlichen Basiliken des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1979) 61-120; 'Die konstantinischen Kirchen in Rom: Staatsragender Kult und Herrscherkult zwischen Tradition und Neuerung', in O. Brehm and S. Klie (eds) *MOUSIKOS ANHR: FS für Max Wegner zum 90. Geburtstag* (Bonn, 1992) 28-58 and pl. 6; F. Tolotti, 'Le basiliche cimiteriali con deambulatorio del suburbio romano: una questione ancora aperta', *MDAI.R* 89 (1982) 153-211 (172ff.); W.N. Schumacher, 'Die konstantinischen Exedra-Basiliken', in J.G. Deckers, H.R. Seeliger, G. Mietke (eds), *Die Katacombe 'Santi Marcellino e Pietro'*, *Repertorium der Malereien* (Roma sotterranea cristiana, 6) (Vatican City/Münster, 1987) 132-86; F. Guidobaldi and A.G. Guidobaldi (eds), *Ecclesiae Urbis* 2 1097-1262 (thematic session on circiform basilicas); G.F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine* (Macon, rev. ed. 2003) 171-89; R.R. Holloway, *Constantine and Rome* (New Haven/London, 2004) 86-115. Like Krautheimer, 'Mensa' 39, he rejects the designation 'circiform' as unjustified. He prefers 'apse-ended'.

⁹ Duchesne, *Lib. Pont.* 1 182.11-13.

¹⁰ *Lib. Pont.* 1 181.5-6.

¹¹ *Lib. Pont.* 1 202.4-6. See V. Fiocchi Nicolai, 'Basilica Marci, Coemeterium Marci, Basilica Coemeterii Balbinae. A proposito della nuova basilica circiforme della Via Ardeatina e della funzione funeraria delle chiese 'a deambulatorio' del suburbio romano', in F. Guidobaldi and A.G. Guidobaldi (eds), *Ecclesiae Urbis* 2 1175-1201.

¹² E. La Rocca, 'Le basiliche cristiane 'a deambulatorio' e la sopravvivenza del culto eroico' in F. and A.G. Guidobaldi (eds), *Ecclesiae Urbis* 2 1114. Thus its dimensions are similar (66m long by 28m wide as compared to 73.5m long by 27.5m wide), and it has the same rectangular pilasters and apse/presbytery separated by a transverse wall or triforium (Nicolai, 'Basilica Marci' 1178 fig. 3) as the *Basilica Apostolorum*, and, just like it, appears to have had an apsidal mausoleum in the middle of its left side (Nicolai, 1180 figs 4 & 5). It too is carpeted by graves several layers deep, with catacombs nearby.

¹³ Eus. *H.E.* 8.14.1; Optatus, *De schism. Donatist.* 1.18 (CSEL 26 19.4ff.).

¹⁴ As attested by Eusebius (*H.E.* 8.14.3ff.; *V.C.* 1.26, 33ff.). See T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA, 1981) 37-8; J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 2000) 76-9. Eusebius seems to know little of what happened in Rome during and after the Great Persecution, apart, tellingly, from his report about Maxentius' depraved behaviour.

¹⁵ Cf. *Cod. Theod.* IX.17.2 of 28th March 349 on tomb violation.

¹⁶ Styger, 'monumento' 16-17; *Katakomben* 345; *Märtyrergrüfte* 1 26; Krautheimer, *CBCR* 4 145; T.L. Heres, *Paries: A Proposal for a Dating System of Late Antique Masonry: Structures in Rome and Ostia* (Studies in Classical Antiquity, 5) (Amsterdam, 1982) 105-6. However Curran, *Pagan City* 99, appealing to J.J. Rasch, *Das Maxentius-Mausoleum an der Via Appia in Rom* (Mainz, 1984) 48 n. 425, argues that Krautheimer's 'similarities' are too superficial.

¹⁷ R. Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae: Le Basiliche Cristiane di Roma (Sec. IV-IX)* vol. 1 (Vatican City, 1937), 265-300. Note the construction of the large assembly hall in the mid-third century (292-3).

¹⁸ The site of it I suggest is the demolished mausoleum 43 in the middle of the south flank: it is the only one with direct access to the basilica, which moreover seems to have been deliberately located in relation to it, despite the problems of the sloping terrain.

¹⁹ Krautheimer, *CBCR* 4 104, 143, 146.

²⁰ *Aug. Brev. Coll.* 3.18.34; *Contra partem Donati post gesta* 13.17 (CSEL 53. 84, 113-4).

²¹ Jastrzębowska, 'S. Sebastiano' passim. However Brandenburg, *Basiliken* 80-2, 89-92, appealing to the continuing pagan artistic activity and lack of legal framework prior to the Edict of Milan, denies a Maxentian provenance.

²² See A.E. Felle (ed.) *Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae* (Bari, 1997) 2.248 no. 17. The anthology includes inscriptions from St Peter's, SS. James and Philip and S. Sabina from a seventh century collection.

²³ 'Di una iscrizione storica che può attribuirsi alla *Basilica Apostolorum* sulla Via Appia', *Nuovo Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* 27 (1921) 61-9. Although Krautheimer cites it (*CBCR* 4 100), he evidently did not read it or consider it germane.

²⁴ *Praesul* is used of bishops in the *Liber Pontificalis*, e.g. Damasus (Duchesne 1 212.4: *et mansit Damasus in urbe Roma praesul in sedem apostolicam*), but must surely refer to a civil ruler here, given the mention of his son.

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- ²⁵ See n. 2. Cf. Krautheimer, *CBCR* 4 135 fig. 120.
- ²⁶ Styger, 'monumento' 27-30, 46; Ferrua, 'Lavori' 211-16; Krautheimer, *CBCR* 4 103.
- ²⁷ Cf. mausoleum 41, the mausoleum of the Uranii, with an inscription dated to 349 (Styger, *Märtyrergrüfte* 30; Tolotti, *Memorie*, 232-3; Krautheimer, *CBCR* 4 103; *ICUR* (NS) 5, 13296).
- ²⁸ Duchesne, *Lib. Pont.* 1 182.11-13. See La Rocca, 'basiliche' 1109-11.
- ²⁹ For the possible reasons, practical and theoretical, for the ambulatory design, see Krautheimer, 'Mensa' 38-40. Here Constantine evidently pioneered a novel plan embracing both imperial mausoleum and covered Christian cemetery. See La Rocca, 'basiliche' 1110-11, 1115, for the scholarly disagreement on the relative dating of these structures.
- ³⁰ *Theophaneia* 4.7 (GCS Eusebius 3.2 ed. Gressmann/Laminski (Berlin, 1992) 175.1-7, 19-23).
- ³¹ Duchesne, *Lib. Pont.* 1 176.1; 178.12. Duchesne's omission of Silvester's role in the former case seems unjustified.
- ³² They may well have deliberately copied the design of his basilica on the Via Labicana not only as a tribute, but also as suiting the terrain and able to accommodate the largest possible number of graves and sarcophagi. See Holloway, *Constantine* 114-5.
- ³³ The cult's supporters in the east might have approached Constantine, constructing his *Basilica Apostolorum* in Constantinople (cf. Eus. *V.C.* 4.60.1-4) and receptive to a Roman basilica for the chief apostles. On the former see G.T. Armstrong, 'Constantine's Churches', *Gesta* 6 (1967) 1-9 (2, 6).
- ³⁴ Cf. Eus. *V.C.* 1.42.2 and the comments of A. Cameron and S.G. Hall (eds) *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford, 1999) 220: 'Probably Eusebius had no actual information about Constantine's church building in Rome after 312'.
- ³⁵ As suggested above, the *Basilica Apostolorum* was attached to the existing permanent *memoria* of Peter and Paul, not deliberately built over a saint's (i.e. Sebastian's) tomb.
- ³⁶ See C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana: Recherches sur l'Eglise de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III* 2 vols (Rome, 1976) 1 54-5. Curran, *Pagan City* 111, notes the plausible argument that the preliminary work of demolishing the Vatican necropolis ended in 333. M.J. Johnson, 'Architecture of Empire' in N. Lenski (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge, 2006) 287, argues for the period between 320 and 330, but he gives no reason for the decision to build then and glosses over counter evidence and the difficulties posed by the site.

³⁷ Against Pietri, *Roma Christiana* 1 33-7. Why would Silvester have deliberately begun with St Paul's rather than with both, particularly in light of the challenge posed by the *Basilica Apostolorum*?

Conversely, Curran, *Pagan City* 107-9, thinks St Paul's may not have been begun till after Constantine's death.

³⁸ Note the significant Donatist devotion to the joint cult attested by W.H.C. Frend, 'The *Memoriae Apostolorum* in Roman North Africa', *JRS* 30 (1940) 32-49. The Donatists had a bishop in Rome from early on.

³⁹ C.H. Turner (ed.), *Ecclesiae Occidentalis Monumenta Iuris Antiquissima* 1 (Oxford, 1939) 382. 24-8: the bishops, echoing Silvester's excuse, speak of him as unable to leave the region 'in which the apostles daily sit (*cotidie sedent*) and their blood without ceasing bears witness to the glory of God'.

⁴⁰ Gaius in Eus. *H.E.* 2.25.6-7. On the rival traditions see Chadwick 'St Peter' 42-5, and Snyder, *Ante Pacem* 202-4.

⁴¹ *Ante Pacem* 198-200.

⁴² Eusebius's evidence in the *Theophaneia* might attest the success of Silvester's strategy of focusing on the 'traditional' sites.

⁴³ This also implies the priority of the *Basilica Apostolorum*: Silvester could probably have dissuaded Constantine from building it if it had postdated the other two.

⁴⁴ G.T. Armstrong, 'Constantine's Churches: Symbol and Structure', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 33 (1974) 9-15. Two seeming exceptions, the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem and the Eleona Church on the Mount of Olives, are not cemeterial. See also E. Kirschbaum, *The Tombs of St Peter and St Paul* (London, 1959) 151, on the claimed influence of Constantine's eastern churches on the design of St Peter's.

⁴⁵ Curran, *Pagan City* 112, notes the intended progression through atrium–narthex–nave–transept (*memoria*).

⁴⁶ For the archaeological evidence see e.g. R. Krautheimer and A. Frazer, 'S. Paolo fuori le mura' in R. Krautheimer, S. Corbett and A.K. Frazer (eds), *CBCR* 5 (Vatican City, 1977) 111-18; Curran, *Pagan City* 106-7.

⁴⁷ Silvester entry (Duchesne 1.178.12-179.9). Duchesne (196 n. 74) queries the claim that the liturgical vessels were the same as at St Peter's (178.16-17), in view of the smaller dimensions of St Paul's, while Krautheimer and Frazer, *CBCR* 5 97, also doubting the evidence of the *Liber Pontificalis*, argue

that the passage was intended to make the latter appear as important as St Peter's. They therefore regard it as an interpolation of later date. Curran, *Pagan City* 107-9, argues against Constantine having built it; it was simply the old *martyrium* with an apse added, later interpreted as a basilica. But Kirschbaum, *Tombs* 176-8, argues from the archaeological evidence for a basilica not much smaller than St Peter's, and the logic of my argument about Silvester's response as well as the evidence of the *Depositio Martyrum* (see n. 4) of a festival at the site before 354, would suggest Constantine at least began a comparable, if smaller, building.

⁴⁸ *Lib. Pont.* (Duchesne 1 202-4). See n. 11.

⁴⁹ Damasus' famous epigram (Ferrua 21), probably installed at the entry to the crypt of St Sebastian, beneath the basilica, recording how once (*prius*) the saints Peter and Paul dwelt (funerary *habitasse*) there, seems to allude to these events, even echoing Marucchi's inscription.

⁵⁰ The claim to Maxentian architectural features is not overwhelming, as Jastrzębowska admits ('S. Sebastiano' 1151-5). It could simply be a matter of later copying (Holloway, *Constantine* 108), of Constantine using the same architect (Curran, *Pagan City* 99) or conservatism.