

# **Remembering Other Beauty**

A Framework for an Architectural History  
from Christian Archaeology to Modernism

Jasper Van Parys





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Remembering Other Beauty.  
A Framework for an Architectural History  
from Christian Archaeology to Modernism

Jasper Van Parys

Supervisor: Prof. dr. ir.-arch. Maarten Delbeke  
Counsellor: Ben Vandenput

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*Here you should know saints once dwelt  
You who seek the names of both Peter and Paul.*

*We freely acknowledge the east sent them as disciples  
For Christ's sake and the merit of his blood  
They followed him across the stars  
And sought heavenly regions, kingdom of pious souls  
Rome has merited to claim them as citizens.*

*Damasus wished to proclaim these things,  
O new stars, to your praise.*

- Damasus

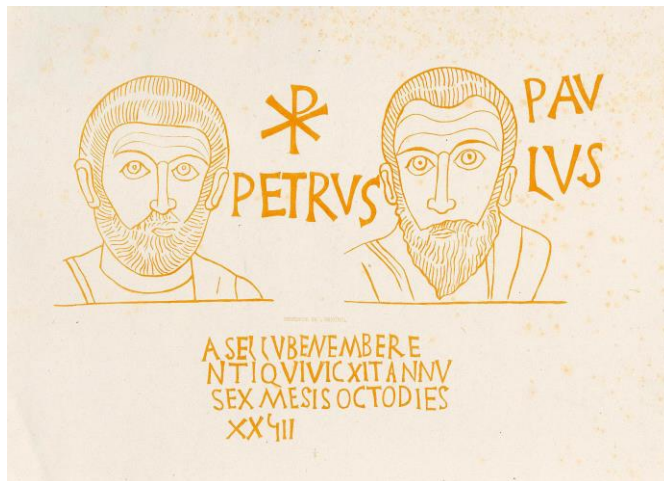
*"Masque nègre" - A Pablo Picasso*

*[...] Visage de masque fermé à l'éphémère, sans yeux sans matière  
Tête de bronze parfait et sa patine de temps  
Que ne souillent fards ni rougeur ni rides, ni traces de larmes ni de baisers  
O visage tel que Dieu t'a créé avant la mémoire même des âges  
Visage de l'aube du monde,  
ne t'ouvre pas comme un col tendre pour m'émouvoir ma chair.  
Je t'adore, ô Beauté, de mon oeil monocorde!*

- Léopold Sédar Senghor

Above: This epigram from the Platonica catacomb of the *S. Sebastiano fuori le mura* basilica of Rome was commissioned by bishop Damasus of Rome (366-384) in 380. It is quoted from: Louis Perret, *Catacombes de Rome*, VI, 1855, 22. For the source of the translation from Latin: Marianne Saghy, *Pope Damasus and the beginnings of Roman hagiography*, 10.  
Below: This poem was part of the exhibition *Picasso Primitif* at the *Musée du quai Branly* in Paris in 2017. Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Chants d'ombre suivi de Hosties noires – poèmes*, Paris, 1956, 23.





Above: *Inscription du musée chrétien du Vatican – bustes de Saint Pierre et de Saint Paul.* From: Louis Perret. *Catacombes de Rome*. V, 1855. Plate XI.

Below: Photograph by the author, Still from the short film *1907: la visite de Picasso au Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro* by Pierre Goismier as exhibited at exhibition *Picasso Primitif* at the Musée du quai Branly of Paris in June 2017.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an exploratory study on the interaction of architecture and Christian archaeology around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As one of the roots of architectural historiography, Christian archaeology – the largely ecclesiastical study of the remains of the material culture of the first Christians – has assumed a crucial role in the discipline of architecture from the final decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It enabled the reconciliation of humanist archaeological interest in classical antiquity on the one hand and Christian apologetics on the other hand. During the 1800s, however, the role which Christian archaeology fulfilled in architecture appears to have been reversed progressively. This dissertation exposes how theorists and architects have debated what ought to be the fundamental aspirations of religious architecture by means of Christian archaeological argument in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Two distinct positions clearly surfaced in the 1860s. Some drove a wedge between form and meaning or defended the devotional potential of classical architecture on the grounds of the omnipresence of classical forms in the oldest Christian remains in the catacombs of Rome. Others, however, designated the catacombs as the origin of a distinctly Christian aesthetic. It was argued a historical perspective on the early Christian arts teaches that the Christian religion itself had set the original believers on a path of renouncement of the intrinsically pagan beauty of the classical arts, towards aesthetics of simplicity. Despite the history of Christian archaeology as a fusing agency, the discipline became instrumental in untangling Christianity and the classical forms which had been the core of ecclesiastical architecture throughout the previous modern centuries. On the grounds of the theological authority inherent in any clear example distilled from the oldest Christian remains, it was argued Christianity had historically induced the aspirations towards fundamentally *other* aesthetics.

Concretely, this dissertation studies a variety of subjects on a European scale. The first part relates three different facsimiles of parts of the catacombs of Rome to one another by means of the publications which originally accompanied them. One was created as part of a procession of martyr's relics in the city of Amiens in 1853, one was built to represent the Holy See at the Paris world fair of 1867 and one was part of an oecumenical scientific project of Dutch academics in Valkenburg around 1910. Juxtaposing these three instances where the catacombs were reproduced, allows discussing some of the ideological foundations of Christian archaeology. A comparison of how archaeological scholarship and devotion to the early Christian martyrs interacted in the procession of Amiens and the scientific project of Valkenburg illustrates how the catacombs of Rome were used to tie the contemporary Church to original Christianity throughout Europe. The world fair catacomb which Pius IX (1846-1878) commissioned on the eve of the completion of the Italian *Risorgimento*, furthermore exemplifies how Christian archaeology obtained new political topicality, validating the discipline's increasing isolation from classical archaeology.

The second part of this dissertation uses a set of theoretical sources. It includes arguments from a debate on aesthetics which was organised during one of the *Assemblées générales des*

*catholiques en Belgique* of the 1860s. The second part also presents the course on Christian archaeology which was taught by theologian Edmond Reusens to architectural engineers at the university of Louvain from 1878 until 1900. These Belgian sources are compared with publications from the archaeological scenes of *Beaux-Arts* Paris and papal Rome. Their comparison reveals how the dissonance which surfaces in the ideas of the Belgian Catholics, echoed, in fact, more fundamental fault lines. Subsequently, this dissertation presents how the metonymical Orpheus-Christ fresco of the catacombs, which exemplifies how theology and aesthetics became inseparable in Christian archaeology, was depicted in an aquarelle by the Catalan architects Antoni Gaudí and Josep Maria Jujol in the 1920s.

In line with Gaudí's aquarelle, a third part finally focusses on signs of reception of Christian archaeology in two different architectural milieus. It first presents the case of the shared architectural patronship of the Belgian diplomat Georges Reusens and his brother. The diplomat's embassy at the Holy See was closed for political reasons by the Belgian liberal government in 1880. As he returned to Belgium after this diplomatic landslide, he and his brother realised a series of buildings which substantiated their newly acquired political status of "*comtes pontificaux*". Employing architects with a distinctly archaeological profile, it seems as though the Reusens patrons mobilised both a classical formal repertoire and the Christian past of Rome and Antwerp. Finally, the last part also builds a case around a few statements of architects in the Parisian press. Excerpts from the Catholic newspaper *La Croix* and the specialised journals *l'Architecture* and *l'Art Sacré* evidence Christian archaeology played a part in the renewal of ecclesiastical architecture in the city of Paris between 1910 and 1940.

Initially, the transformed legacy of the first Christians imagined by the archaeologists accompanied and facilitated the 19<sup>th</sup>-century endorsement of the Gothic style. One, however, finds the same quasi-theological foundations for architectural simplicity to have paved the road of concrete into the interiors of churches in the modernist milieu of the French capital during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The pith of the argument of this dissertation is precisely the apparent paradox this poses. The way the ideas of the Christian archaeologists resurfaced in the work of Gaudí as well as in modernist Paris during the earliest decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, might allow for the insight that tendencies of architectural modernism were similar to – if not partly historically dependent on – dynamics in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century ecclesiastical architecture. There was more to architecture's acclaimed purification than its apparent rationalisation. As 19<sup>th</sup>-century Christian archaeologists often adhered to a dichotomised understanding of beauty in terms of *pagan* and *Christian* beauty, so too *un-modern* beauty was later recognised and actively abhorred as a threat to the integrity of the *modern* mind. In modernism as in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Christian archaeology, *deceptive* aesthetics were to be renounced for *other* beauty of truth.

## ABSTRACT

Dit proefschrift is een exploratief onderzoek naar hoe de architectuur en de christelijke archeologie op elkaar hebben ingewerkt rond het begin van de 20<sup>ste</sup> eeuw. Als een oorsprong van de architectuurgeschiedschrijving heeft de christelijke archeologie – de veelal kerkelijke studie van de materiële overblijfselen van de cultuur van de eerste Christenen – een cruciale rol vervuld voor de architectuur vanaf de laatste decennia van de 16<sup>de</sup> eeuw. Ze had een rol in de verzoening van de humanistische archeologische interesse in de klassieke oudheid met christelijke geloofsverdediging. Tijdens de jaren 1800 lijkt de rol die de christelijke archeologie vervulde in de architectuur echter geleidelijk te zijn omgekeerd. Dit proefschrift laat zien hoe theoretici en architecten aan de hand van christelijk archeologische argumentatie doorheen de late 19<sup>de</sup> en vroege 20<sup>ste</sup> eeuw gediscussieerd hebben over wat de fundamentele ambities van religieuze architectuur zouden moeten zijn.

Twee posities komen duidelijk naar voren. Op grond van de alomtegenwoordigheid van klassieke vormen in de oudste christelijke overblijfselen in de catacomben van Rome dreven sommigen een wig tussen vorm en betekenis, ter verdediging van het devotioneel potentieel van de klassieke architectuur of van vrije kunsten. Anderen bestempelden de catacomben als historische oorsprong van een fundamenteel ander schoonheidsideaal. Er werd betoogd dat een historisch gekaderde kijk op de vroegchristelijke kunst leert dat het Christendom zelve de allereerste gelovigen de weg wees van de intrinsiek heidense schoonheid van de klassieke kunsten naar een esthetiek van eenvoud. Archeologen zochten naar tekenen in de kunst in de catacomben van Rome die konden aangeven dat christenen hun klassieke ambities lieten varen. Ondanks haar voorgeschiedenis als verbindende kracht werd de christelijke archeologie een middel om tijdens de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw het Christendom en de klassieke vormtaal – die de kern van de architectuur had uitgemaakt tijdens de voorgaande vroegmoderne eeuwen – te ontrafelen. Op grond van de theologische autoriteit die inherent is aan ieder aanwijsbaar voorbeeld in de werken van de eerste Christenen, werd bepleit dat Christendom de bron van een streven naar fundamenteel *andere* esthetiek was geweest.

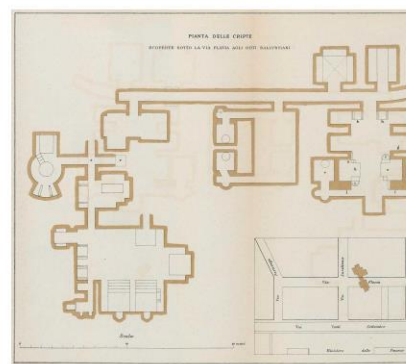
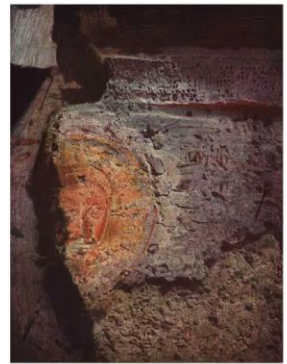
Concreet werkt dit proefschrift met een reeks onderwerpen op Europese schaal. Het eerste deel relateert drie verschillende facsimile's van delen van de Roomse catacomben aan elkaar, door middel van de vergelijking van de tekstuele pendants waardoor ze initieel vergezeld werden. Het eerste facsimile werd gemaakt als deel van een processie van martelaarsrelikwieën in de Franse stad Amiens in 1853. Het tweede werd opgericht om de Heilige Stoel te vertegenwoordigen op de wereldtentoonstelling van Parijs in 1867. Het derde was deel van een oecumenisch wetenschappelijk project van Nederlandse academici in Valkenburg rond 1910. Het samenbrengen van deze drie gevallen waarin catacomben werden nagebouwd, laat toe om in te gaan op ideologische grondslagen van de christelijke archeologie. De vergelijkbaarheid van aspecten van de processie van Amiens en het wetenschappelijk project van de academici in Valkenburg geeft prijs hoe geloof en wetenschap elkaar versterkten in de christelijke archeologie en hoe de 19<sup>de</sup>-eeuwse Kerk zich doorheen Europa via de catacomben van Rome verbond aan origineel Christendom. De bouw van de catacombe op de wereldtentoonstelling, waartoe Pius IX (1846-1878) opdracht gaf aan de vooravond van de voltooiing van de Italiaanse *Risorgimento*, illustreert

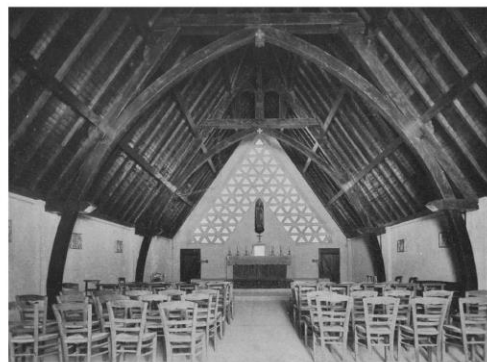
daarnaast hoe de christelijke archeologie een politieke actualiteit bekam die haar isolement van de klassieke archeologie valideerde.

Het tweede deel van dit proefschrift gebruikt een aantal theoretische bronnen. Het presenteert argumenten uit een debat over esthetica dat gehouden werd tijdens een van de *Assemblées générales des catholiques en Belgique* van de jaren 1860. Het tweede deel presenteert ook de cursus christelijke archeologie die door de theoloog Edmond Reusens aan de ingenieur-architecten van de Leuvense universiteit gedoceerd werd van 1878 tot 1900. Deze Belgische bronnen worden vergeleken met archeologische publicaties uit *Beaux-Arts* Parijs en pauselijk Rome. De vergelijking legt bloot hoe de archeologische dissonantie die in de Belgische teksten te traceren is, in wezen een echo was van fundamentele breuklijnen. Vervolgens presenteert dit proefschrift nog hoe de metonymische Orpheus-Christus catacombe-fresco die het best kan duiden hoe theologie en esthetica ondeelbaar werden in de christelijke archeologie, in de jaren 1920 door de Catalaanse architecten Antoni Gaudí en Josep Maria Jujol in een aquarel werd gereproduceerd.

In het verlengde van de aquarel van Gaudí is het derde deel tot slot gericht op de receptie van de christelijke archeologie in twee verschillende architecturale milieus. Het laatste deel stelt eerst de casus van het opmerkelijke en gedeeld bouwheerschap van de Belgische diplomaat Georges Reusens en zijn broer voor. Diens gezantschap aan de Heilige Stoel werd afgebroken door de liberale Belgische regering in 1880. Bij zijn terugkeer naar België na die diplomatieke aardverschuiving realiseerden de diplomaat en zijn broer een reeks projecten die hun nieuw verkregen status als *comtes pontificaux* onderbouwde. Het lijkt erop dat ze daarbij zowel een klassiek vormelijk repertoire als het christelijke verleden van Rome en Antwerpen inzetten, door opdrachten te geven aan architecten met een duidelijk archeologisch profiel. Tot slot betreft het laatste deel van dit proefschrift een aantal verklaringen van architecten in de Parijse pers op elkaar. Uittreksels uit de Katholieke krant *La Croix* en de gespecialiseerde tijdschriften *l'Architecture* en *l'Art Sacré* tonen aan dat voor de christelijke archeologie een rol was weggelegd in de hernieuwing van de kerkenbouw in Parijs tussen 1910 en 1940.

Aanvankelijk begeleidde de getransformeerde nalatenschap van de archeologisch begrepen eerste Christenen de 19<sup>de</sup>-eeuwse hernieuwing van interesse in de gotiek. Het blijkt echter dat dezelfde quasi theologische grondslag voor architecturale eenvoud een wegbereider is geweest voor de introductie van beton in de kerkinterieurs in het modernistische milieu van de Franse hoofdstad tijdens de eerste decennia van de 20<sup>ste</sup> eeuw. De schijnbare paradox die dat oplevert is de kern van dit proefschrift. Dat de ideeën van de christelijke archeologen zowel in het werk van Gaudí als in het modernistische Parijs in de vroegste decennia van de 20<sup>ste</sup> eeuw de kop op staken, kan doen inzien dat de neigingen van de modernisten op zijn minst vergelijkbaar waren met wat op het spel stond in het laat 19<sup>de</sup>-eeuws kerkelijk bouwen. De zo gekende uitpuring van de architectuur was meer dan haar tastbare rationalisering. Zoals de 19<sup>de</sup>-eeuwse christelijke archeologen *heidense* en *christelijke* schoonheid aan elkaar tegenstelden, zo werd later *onmoderne* schoonheid erkend en actief verafschuwd als een bedreiging voor de integriteit van de *moderne* geest. Zowel in het modernisme als in de laat 19<sup>de</sup>-eeuwse christelijke archeologie werd *leugenachtige* esthetiek afgezworen voor een *andere* schoonheid van waarheid.





*Vous avez cru monter dans une église, vous êtes descendu aux catacombes.*<sup>1</sup>

- Philippe Olympe Gerbet (1853)

*Les splendeurs de la beauté chrétienne rayonnent, au contraire [de la beauté païenne] à travers les imperfections de la forme.*<sup>2</sup>

- Resolution of the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* (1863)

*Malgré de nombreuses et inévitables reminiscences [à l'art païen], l'art se purifie dans les sombres réduits où, pendant trois siècles, il semble enseveli avec les martyrs. [Aux catacombes] un art nouveau, un art qui n'a plus pour objet unique le service des passions, est né. L'artiste conçoit l'idéal de la beauté autrement que ne l'a fait jusqu'alors l'art classique.*<sup>3</sup>

- Jules Helbig (1885)

*Because of the pozzolana [the frescoes of the catacombs] became as hard as our best concrete. [...] The sweet paintings of Renaissance have cracked and are covered by a web of dust-filled lines, while the more solid layers of chalk from the first centuries of our calendar remained unspoilt. All-devastating time has thus preserved the oldest murals of the Catacombs; time has spared them for science; it has bowed to Christian art, the daughter of the gospels, who will live on with the gospels until the end of time.*<sup>4</sup>

- Xavier Smits (1916)

*[J]'ai surtout cherché l'expression du sentiment religieux dans la simplicité des formes, la simplicité du décor, la simplicité des matériaux mis en oeuvre et laissés apparents [...] il y a eu des réalisations qui, pour moi, ont imprimé à nos premières recherches d'art religieux la beauté la plus française et la plus influencée par l'époque héroïque des Catacombes.*<sup>5</sup>

- Henri Vidal (1938)

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<sup>1</sup> Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theodosie*, 151-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, I, (Brussels: H. Goemaere, 1864), 151.

<sup>3</sup> Jules Helbig in: Edmond Reusens, *Éléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, (Louvain: Peeters, 1885), 133-4.

<sup>4</sup> Xavier Smits, "De Muurschilderingen der katakomben," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift samengesteld door de archaeologische commissie van advies der katacombenstichting*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 63-4. (translation by the author)

<sup>5</sup> Henri Vidal in: Félix Ollivier, "Edifices religieux d'Henri Vidal pour la banlieu parisienne," *L'Architecture* 51, no. 2 (1938): 59.



*L'Orphée [...] se produit dans nos peintures des catacombes; cette réminiscence chrétienne d'un type profane sert à nous apprendre, par un exemple décisif, de quelle manière une foule de motifs et de symboles payens avaient pu s'introduire, à l'aide des modèles et des traditions de l'art antique, au sein du christianisme.* <sup>6</sup>

- Désiré Raoul-Rochette (1837)

*[D]escendez dans les catacombes, et vous verrez partout [...] les lignes, harmonieuses de l'art antique consacrées à l'expression de l'idée chrétienne et du sentiment chrétien. Descendez [...] et vous y verrez partout [...] des images sacrées, expression ravissante de la foi de ces premiers siècles.* <sup>7</sup>

- Charles Cartuyvels (1863)

*La Mignon de Goethe, cette pale et poétique figure de l'Italie errante et persécutée, ne sait chanter qu'un amour profane: [...] La Vierge chrétienne entonne des chants plus doux; elle chante ce ciel tout parsemé de constellations qu'on appelle les Catacombes. Touchante image de l'art chrétien qui, pour se régénérer, doit redescendre au tombeau pour en sortir glorieux.* <sup>8</sup>

- Louis-Alexandre Foucher de Careil (1863)

*Sans doute, le moindre balbutiement dans une catacombe, ou dans une grange, parvient aussi bien que le chœur des anges et la symphonie des mondes jusqu'à Celui qui entend tout. Mais n'est-il pas naturel que le fidèle veuille donner son culte la magnificence [...] ?* <sup>9</sup>

- Emile Ollivier (1910)

*Aux catacombes, la modicité des ressources, la crainte des regards hostiles devaient être envisagées, mais à voir les précieux restes des chapelles de la Rome souterraine, ces considérations, pour n'être point négligées sans doute, ne paraissent pas dominantes. [...] Que cette ligne soit tracée par le marbre ou la brique, par la pierre ou le ciment, voire le ciment armé dont on parle trop, elle sera avant tout d'essence spirituelle, et alors, mais alors seulement, elle sera bonne.* <sup>10</sup>

- Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin (1910)

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<sup>6</sup> Désiré Raoul-Rochette, *Tableau des catacombes de Rome*, (Paris: Bibliothèque universelle de la jeunesse, 1837), 136.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Cartuyvels in: *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, II, (Brussels: H. Goemaere, 1864), 159.

<sup>8</sup> Foucher de Careil in: *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>9</sup> Emile Ollivier in: Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin, "Après la séparation. Sur les constructions des églises," *La Croix*, Paris, May 15, 1910.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. INTRODUCTION.....	21
<i>differentiating aesthetics and primitives</i>	
1. SIGNS OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE (1853-1916).....	33
<i>early Christianity in devotion, science and papal self-representation</i>	
2. THE ORPHEUS-CHRIST METONYMY (1837-1922) .....	71
<i>Christian archaeology as aesthetic theory</i>	
3. AN OBELISK AND CONCRETE (1884-1938).....	107
<i>early Christianity in architecture, beyond stylistic historicism</i>	
4. CONCLUSION.....	150
LIST OF IMAGES .....	159
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	163
APPENDIX .....	180

*“To the ‘timeless’ beauty envisioned [by the functionalists], words apparently became inadequate.”*

Auke van der Woud, *Onuitsprekelijke schoonheid: waarheid en karakter in de Nederlandse bouwkunst*, (Groningen: Historische uitgeverij, 1993), 6. (translation by the author)

## 0 INTRODUCTION

*differentiating aesthetics and primitives*

0.1 Remembering <i>other</i> beauty .....	22
0.2 Research context .....	24
0.3 From Christian archaeology to modernism .....	27
0.4 Structure.....	29

## 0.1 Remembering *other* beauty

A reference to ‘beauty’ in the title of a dissertation on architectural history requires an explanation, for contemporary architectural culture has a troubled relationship with beauty. Architects shy away from it as a critical term, while beauty is ascribed to buildings incessantly by the general culture and clearly retains a muted role within the discipline itself. Beauty, however, appears to be making a comeback. Professor Maarten Delbeke recently defended the utility of the writing of a long history of beauty in architecture in his inaugural address at the ETH Zürich in December 2017.<sup>11</sup> Nearly a year earlier, the spring 2017 issue of the Venice-based architectural magazine *San Rocco*, edited by Matteo Chidoni, proved the necessity of such a history. This issue was titled *Pure Beauty* and gathered reflexions on beauty from its contributors. Advocating a resurgence of the critical use of beauty, Matteo Chidoni’s editorial to the *Pure Beauty* issue of the *San Rocco* magazine provided its readership with a very straightforward genealogy of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century disappearance of beauty from architectural culture. “*Modern architecture murdered beauty, erasing it from the very core of the architectural discourse*”, he wrote. He characterised modernist architecture by its rationalist emphasis on the “*crude new common sense*” of efficiency and logic, which, according to Chidoni, ostracised those who deemed beauty to be the highest good in architecture.<sup>12</sup>

A much more nuanced view than the Vasarian theory of *San Rocco* editor Chidoni was advanced in the inaugural address *Onuitsprekelijke schoonheid* – or *Ineffable beauty* – of the Dutch architectural historian Auke van der Woud at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in 1993. “*To the ‘timeless’ beauty envisioned [by the functionalists],*” he speculated, “*words apparently became inadequate.*” Part of van der Woud’s address was the idea that it had been the transcendent character of the aesthetic itself, which the modernists aspired to, that silenced the quest for its attainment. Van der Woud gave the example of the sudden emergence of the appreciation of the ‘primitive’ beauty of African ethnographic objects.<sup>13</sup> In the ensuing book *Waarheid en karakter* – in translation that would be *Truth and character* – in which van der Woud developed the ideas of his address, he, however, explicitly abandoned beauty as a historiographical means and shifted his attention to the architectural paradigms of ‘truth’ and ‘character’ in order to allow himself to connect 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century architectural theory.<sup>14</sup>

Van der Woud situated the earliest instance in which a group of Dutch architects declared itself a-aesthetic in 1927.<sup>15</sup> An almost contemporary text by the Belgian architect Henri van

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<sup>11</sup> Maarten Delbeke, “*The positive beauty of architecture from 1650 up to the digital age,*” Inaugural lecture given December 4, 2017, accessed May 31, 2018.  
<https://www.video.ethz.ch/speakers/lecture/a8963f58-9d58-422e-b116-10bf4f9d2560.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Matteo Chidoni, “Editorial.” *San Rocco* 13, (Spring 2017), 3-6.

<sup>13</sup> Auke van der Woud, *Onuitsprekelijke schoonheid: waarheid en karakter in de Nederlandse bouwkunst*, (Groningen: Historische uitgeverij, 1993), 6. (translation by the author)

<sup>14</sup> Auke van der Woud, *Waarheid en karakter: Het debat over de bouwkunst 1840-1900* (Rotterdam: NAI Uitgevers, 1997), preliminary remark n.p.

<sup>15</sup> Van der Woud, *Onuitsprekelijke schoonheid*, 6.

de Velde (1863-1957) provides an interesting counterexample. Van de Velde provided a preface to the art critic Maurice Casteels' publication *L'Art moderne primitif* in 1930. Casteels was a stalwart apologist of van de Velde's work and this book worked as a theoretical manifesto to Casteels' critical practice.<sup>16</sup> In the preface, van de Velde cited how Casteels explicitly refused to recognise the correlation of beauty and art.<sup>17</sup> In the preface, van de Velde himself, however, subtly juxtaposed his own and more articulate understanding of beauty to that of Casteels. Far from what *San Rocco* reproached the modernist architects with, van de Velde ventured into the transcendent linguistic realm required to discuss the aesthetics of functionalism, exemplifying what van der Woud believed to be the grounds of the ineffability of modern beauty.

In his preface to Casteels' *L'Art moderne primitif*, van de Velde specified how the morality of material and conceptual economy brings about the beauty of truthfulness and purity. He described his impatience in the "advent" of the "resurrection of Beauty", then to define the beautiful in a twofold sense. "*Beauté, style; style de la forme rationnelle et pure,*" he wrote, "*il n'est pas besoin d'autre chose pour que, dès demain, il conquiert la terre entière, que s'impose la foi en le dogme de la raison d'être plutôt qu'en celui de la raison de paraître.*" Van de Velde advocated the virtue of the former and denounced the latter. Unconverted architectural makings he characterised as demonic creatures, as "*beings deprived of moral qualities*", which seek to impose "*fantasies and lies*" onto the modern mind.<sup>18</sup>

In literature, similar early modernist eagerness to deploy mystical registers has been conceptualised as 'modernist mythopoeia'. Secular artistic mysticism is thought to have countered materialism, offering solace in the wake of the supposed death of God.<sup>19</sup> In any case, though, van de Velde's preface to *L'Art moderne primitif* exemplifies how even an explicitised primacy of rationality did not originally exclude aesthetic judgement from discourse, contrary to what *San Rocco* recently asserted. Van de Velde's preface touched several essential tendencies of modernism, yet the way it dichotomised beauty is what I hope to contextualise in this dissertation. Dividing the beautiful into false and true beauty may seem like a quintessentially modernist thing to do, yet it has its suppressed past in the long history of ecclesiastical architecture. The idea was cultivated in the Middle Ages and had a famous episode in the context of Protestant objections to Catholic baroque in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>20</sup> The subject of this dissertation is its return in Catholic circles in the late 1800s and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The rhetorical aspect of van de Velde's preface left aside, his fundamental understanding of the value of rationality was grounded in aesthetic theory with a history in religious spheres. The present dissertation provides a framework to trace

<sup>16</sup> Léon Ploegaerts and Pierre Puttemans, *L'Oeuvre architecturale de Henry van de Velde* (Brussels: Atelier Vokaer, 1987), 231.

<sup>17</sup> Maurice Casteels, *L'art moderne primitif* (Paris: Henri Jonquières, 1930), 9.

<sup>18</sup> Henry van de Velde in: *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Scott Freer. *Modernist mythopoeia - The twilight of the gods*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, chap. "Introduction: Modernist Mythopoeia – the Language of the In-Between and of Beyond", Google Books.

<sup>20</sup> Saint Bonaventure, for instance, is known for having contrasted worldly and celestial beauty in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. (Edgar de Bruyne, *Etudes d'esthétique médiévale* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1975), chap. 6.)

both how this ascetic understanding of beauty gained terrain in ecclesiastical architecture during the 1800s and how it escaped into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where it may have underpinned modernism or blended with it.

## 0.2 Research context

To enter 19<sup>th</sup>-century Catholic ecclesiastical architecture on a fundamental level, this dissertation uses the discipline of Christian archaeology. The origins of this auxiliary discipline of church historiography lie in the confessional struggles which followed the Protestant Reformation and polarised Europe in early modern times. The need for historical vindication of both the Protestant and the Catholic position led to extensive historiographical endeavours on both sides of the confessional chasm. Between 1559 and 1574 the *Magdeburger Centurien* were published in Basel to demonstrate by means of mature historiographical work how Catholicism had drifted away from the original Church, established by Christ and Peter. This assault on the very foundations of Catholicism was countered by the *Annales Ecclesiastici* (1587-1607), published under the direction of cardinal Cesare Baronio (1538-1607) in the context of post-Tridentine liturgical reform. Both historiographical parties essentially worked to connect themselves to the primitive church but as the oldest Christian remains were often material rather than textual, late 16<sup>th</sup>-century historiography entailed archaeology. If, for instance, certain frescos depicting contested matters such as the eucharist, saints or the Virgin Mary could be retrieved in early Christian tombs which had remained unopened throughout the ages, they provided the Catholics invaluable means to counter the Protestant refutations. The oldest Christian edifices entered the radar of the historians, making Christian archaeology a root of architectural historiography.<sup>21</sup>

The discovery of the catacomb of Priscilla gave a great impetus to Catholic Christian archaeology in 1578. This was one of the nearly sixty early Christian underground cemeteries which lie just outside of the ancient walls of Rome. They served as the principal burial places for the Christian population of Rome from the middle of the second century to the end of the fifth century.<sup>22</sup> All but four of these catacombs had been abandoned and forgotten in the course of the Middle Ages, yet a subsidence in a vineyard brought this one catacomb to light at an ideal time. Many catacombs were subsequently excavated only to be plundered shortly afterwards, making all possible information they held completely unreliable. Antonio Bosio (1576-1629) was the first to document the catacombs systematically and his learning entered the Counter-Reformation dialogue via his friendship with cardinal Baronio. Bosio's work was published posthumously in the form of the illustrated book *Roma Sotterranea* in 1632, which stood as the definitive authority on the catacombs until the 1860s.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Maarten Delbeke and Anne-Françoise Morel, "Metaphors in Action: Early Modern Church Buildings as Spaces of Knowledge," *Architectural History* 53, no. 10 (2010): introduction.

<sup>22</sup> Jamie Beth Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology" (PhD diss., State University of New York, 2008), 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-5, 47-51.



Archaeological research and historiographical work soon eluded their seemingly narrow applicability by informing architecture and liturgy. Learning became a source of emulation for both Protestants and Catholics from which to generate analogies between contemporary churches and early Christianity.<sup>24</sup> In the Church of England, a tradition of treatises on church architecture eventually spawned the rather well-known and striking example of architect Nicholas Hawksmoor's (c. 1661-1736) plan for a "*basilica after the Primitive Christians*" in 1711.<sup>25</sup> In the Catholic context, it are classically cardinal Baronio's involvement in the renovation of Roman churches or cardinal Carlo Borromeo's treatise (1538-1584) *Instructiones fabricae et supellectilis ecclesasticae* of 1577 which are mentioned as paradigmatic examples.<sup>26</sup>

Christian archaeology as a product of the confessional struggles was an important origin of modern architectural historiography and it was a crucial premise to architecture's own theoretical preoccupation with origins. Most importantly in the context of this dissertation, Christian archaeology had a hand in the reconciliation of Counter-Reformation Christian apologetics and humanist archaeological interest, which underpinned much of Renaissance architectural theory.<sup>27</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century interaction of Christian archaeology and architecture there is a reasonable amount of scholarship. What happened to Christian archaeology during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century has remained much more obscure, although in recent years some important contributions have been made.

Groundbreaking work was done by the French historian Philippe Boutry during the 1970s. Part of his unpublished PhD entered his article *Les saints des Catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1800-1881)*, wherein he reported the results of his study of the large numbers of *corpi santi* that were moved from the catacombs of Rome to France during the French restoration. The exhumation of such 'holy bodies' is an ancient practice itself, yet Boutry emphasised the particular intensity and fervour with which it was repeated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When the catacombs were originally abandoned as places of worship during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century, the most important martyrs were 'translated' into the churches of Rome. The catacombs were allowed centuries of repose, as they fell into ruin and oblivion afterwards.<sup>28</sup> The discovery of the Priscilla catacomb in 1578 initiated a phase in which relics were extracted carelessly, until Protestant critiques were countered by the

<sup>24</sup> Delbeke and Morel, "Metaphors in Action: Early Modern Church Buildings as Spaces of Knowledge," introduction.

<sup>25</sup> Morel, "Glorious temples or babylonian whores: the architecture of church buildings in England (1603-1736) according to consecration sermons," 221. See also: De la Ruffinière du Prey, Pierre. "Hawksmoor's 'Basilica after the Primitive Christians': Architecture and Theology." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 48, no. 1 (March 1989): 38-52. <https://doi.org/10.2307/990405>.

On Hawksmoor's example in context: De la Ruffinière du Prey, Pierre. *Hawksmoor's London Churches: Architecture and Theology*. London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.

<sup>26</sup> On Borromeo, see: Delbeke and Morel, "Metaphors in Action: Early Modern Church Buildings as Spaces of Knowledge," introduction. On Baronio, see: Ibid., Analogous spaces in Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism. On Baronio, see also: Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 44-6.

<sup>27</sup> Delbeke and Morel, "Metaphors in Action: Early Modern Church Buildings as Spaces of Knowledge," introduction.

<sup>28</sup> Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 30-1.

installation of increasingly successful papal restrictions on entry into and extractions from the catacombs from 1667 onwards.<sup>29</sup> Between 1814 and 1847, however, around 2500 *corpi santi* left the catacombs to sanctify churches around the world. Half remained in Italy, while according to Boutry a quarter went to France.<sup>30</sup>

The results of Philippe Boutry's dissertation found their way into the more recent article *Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century* of the Belgian historian Vincent Viaene in 2001. He addressed how the message of Boutry's work had not sunk in, as even among Church historians the importance of the early Christian martyrs remained underestimated as merely one of many aspects of the contemporary ultramontanism. Viaene argued, however, that early Christianity was as important as the well-known contemporary Catholic affection for the Middle Ages. He discussed changes in popular devotion, the veneration of relics, romanticism, the political subtext and the way the martyrs became the leitmotif in religious tourism to urge his readership finally to recognise early Christianity and the martyrs of the catacombs as paradigms of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Catholicism.<sup>31</sup> The great investments made by pope Pius IX (1846-1878) in Christian archaeology from the early 1850s onwards, Boutry and Viaene contextualised as a consequence of the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century enthusiasm with which the *corpi santi* had been dispersed. The relics entailed a wave of Protestant and Catholic scepticism because of the baselessness of most of the canonisations of the unknown early Christian dead. The scientifically reformed use of the catacombs remediated this problem, Boutry and Viaene argued. It allowed the interest of the catacombs to be prolonged under the tutelage of science.<sup>32</sup>

A particularly fruitful year for the understanding of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century history of Christian archaeology was 2008. On the one hand, Anke Reiß's PhD on the stylistic reception of the early Christian past in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century architecture appeared in German academia. On the other hand and in total abstraction of the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century history of the *corpi santi*, an American study fundamentally furthered the understanding of what occurred in Christian archaeology during the pontificate of Pius IX. In the PhD *Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology* by Jamie Beth Erenstoft, steps were taken towards an understanding of what Christian archaeology meant to the papacy of Pius IX politically. Erenstoft studied how Pius IX endorsed the discipline in order to strengthen the cultural position of Rome in the face of the Italian *Risorgimento*, which culminated in 1870 with the annexation of Rome by the Kingdom of Italy after decades of military upheaval. Over eighty of the oldest churches of Rome were renovated and cleansed of baroque embellishments to highlight the idealised simplicity of Christian antiquity; the pope instated the *Commissione di archeologia Sacra* – the *Commission of Sacred*

<sup>29</sup> Philippe Boutry, "Les saints des Catacombes. Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1800-1881)" *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes* 91, no. 2 (1979): 875-8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 885-8.

<sup>31</sup> Vincent Viaene, "Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century," in *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation*, ed. Kate Cooper, et. al. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 301-16.

<sup>32</sup> Viaene, "Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century," 315-6. See also: Boutry, "Les saints des Catacombes. Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1800-1881)," 919-21.

*archaeology* – to organise and supervise a reform of the exploitation of the catacombs; he financed a journal to substantiate the science of Christian archaeology and founded the *Museo Pio-Cristiano* of early Christian artefacts. The way Pius IX purposefully capitalised on Christian archaeology provoked the ideological schism of Christian and classical archaeology which persists until today, Erenstoft argued. Pius IX broke the tradition of over two centuries of classical investment of the previous popes, wherein Christian archaeological scholarship had always taken a backseat.<sup>33</sup>

### 0.3 From Christian archaeology to modernism

In the context of the historicised 19<sup>th</sup>-century architectural culture and the far-reaching interdisciplinarity of archaeology and architecture it entailed, the importance of the ideological schism of classical and Christian archaeology and its validation during the pontificate of Pius IX should not be underestimated. Yet, in today's architectural historiography there is little understanding of this phenomenon. An example is to be found in the pertinent article *Primitive, the word and concept* of the British theorist Adrian Forty of 2006. The article rightly addressed how architecture's affinity with the 'primitive' cannot possibly be advanced – as many have done – as a way of understanding what lies at the heart of modernism. Forty essentially reminded his readership of how theories of architectural origins such as Temple reconstructions and speculation about the primitive hut have been part and parcel of the discipline of architecture for centuries. In line with Joseph Rykwert's *Adam's house in Paradise*, Forty argued that theories of origins repeatedly surfaced when architecture was in need of change, serving affirmative rather than subversive purposes.<sup>34</sup> Forty mentioned 'primitive Christianity' as an example of how 'primitive' remained synonymous to 'original' until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to indicate how a generic 'primitive' should not be mistaken for the essence of modernist architecture.<sup>35</sup>

Forty was right to rebuke essentialisations of architecture's repeatedly recalibrated fascination with origins. In the book *From Cameroon to Paris*, the African studies art historian Steven Nelson carefully demonstrated the extent to which even 'primitive' huts could be incompatible during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. Nelson tracked the reception of the house of *Moussougou* people, first encountered by several 19<sup>th</sup>-century European explorers in contemporary Cameroon. These inhabited domes of mud were renowned specifically for their 'beauty of strange perfection' in the milieu around artist Amédée Ozenfant (1886-1966) in Paris in the 1920s. The most reproduced quote on the mud house from this milieu was part of writer André Gide's (1869-1951) book *Voyage au Congo: suivi de retour du Tchad*. "The [*Moussougou*] hut, it is true, resembles no other;" he wrote "but it is not only strange, it is beautiful; and it is not its strangeness so much as its beauty that moves me."<sup>36</sup> Africanist Steven Nelson also presented how the structure was perceived entirely differently

<sup>33</sup> Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," vii-22.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Rykwert, *On adam's house in paradise: the idea of the primitive hut in architectural history* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Adrian Forty, "Primitive, the word and concept," in *Primitive: original matters in architecture*, ed. Jo Odgers, et. al. (London: Routledge, 2006) 3-14.

<sup>36</sup> Steven Nelson, *From Cameroon to Paris* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 82.

by the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century classical archaeologist Heinrich Barth (1821-1865). This German travelled from Tripoli on a commercial mission into sub-Saharan Africa in the service of the British Empire in March 1850. In the journal he kept on his perilous journey, he squared his descent from European rational culture into the 'heart of darkness' with the gradual disappearance of Roman sepulchral monuments along the road in the north of Africa. When in contemporary Cameroon, Barth imagined himself in an absolutely primitive world, subsequently to be struck by the encounter with the Mousgoum houses. Nelson argued the Mousgoum structures disturbed Barth's perception of architectural history. Because of the very fact these 'primitive huts' were domes, they did not fit the ideal primitive huts of classicism. In Barth's world view, the domes belonged among the Pantheon and the Roman sepulchres, whose increasing rarity he had mourned as the fading spirit of the West.<sup>37</sup>

This brings me to the heart of this introduction. Forty was right in his refusal to recognise a generic 'primitive' as the foundation of what early modernism was about. The exemplary clash of Barth's ideal primitive hut and the Mousgoum dome can illustrate this quite well. Returning to Christian archaeology, the archaeological schism which was validated and nourished by the ideological endorsement of the early Christian past by Pius IX seems to have ended what remained of the mediating role which the discipline had assumed midst Christianity and Renaissance architectural theory. If classicists like Barth viewed architectural history as an evolution from an ideal original hut to the artistic heights of classical sepulchres, then the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Christian archaeologists situated the origins of a reversal or mutation of that evolution in the arts of their catacombs. The classical tomb, the cultural summit in Barth's world view, was the primitive of the 'schismatic' Christian archaeologists. They eagerly recognised the initial similarity of early Christian and classical art, to outline how during the Middle Ages, Christians had progressively abandoned the worldly and vain values of the antique arts for a supposedly transcendent aesthetic, which those illumined by authentic Christianity had learnt to appreciate. I argue this different aesthetic is related to what van der Woud termed 'ineffable', what van de Velde deemed 'rational' and what Gide called 'strange'.

This historical argument of the Christian archaeologists gained importance during the 19<sup>th</sup> century but has its roots in early 17<sup>th</sup>-century Rome, where it was formulated as the earliest critique of Giorgio Vasari's idea of the death of the arts in the Middle Ages.<sup>38</sup> This dissertation exposes how the aesthetic 'primitive' of the catacombs influenced papal self-representation in the 1860s, provides an example of how it entered the education of students of both theology and architectural engineering in Belgium in the 1860s and 70s and survived or flourished – for specificity on the matter the scope of the present master's dissertation is too limited – in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century renewal of ecclesiastical architecture in Paris. In this way, my aim is to credibly present the hypothesis that the ascetic proclivities of modernism at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may have been dependent on their 19<sup>th</sup>-century triumph in ecclesiastical architecture.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 50-68, 82-97.

<sup>38</sup> Italian art historian Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) conceptualised the Middle Ages as a millennium wherein the arts had died because of the barbarian invasion of the Roman empire. On the earliest historiographical critiques on Vasari's work: Gabriele Bickendorf, *Die Historisierung der italienischen Kunstbetrachtung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1998), 65.

## 0.4 Structure

The first part of the present dissertation revolves around three different facsimiles of the catacombs of Rome. The first one of the three facsimiles was realised in the context of the translation of a martyr's relic to Amiens in 1853. The second facsimile was built to represent the Holy See at the Paris world fair of 1867. The third one was created as a scientific project in the Dutch town of Valkenburg around 1910. The facsimiles provide a way to discuss the dynamics of the different interests of the catacombs, without straying too far from architecture itself. It allows an oblique perspective on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century history of Christian archaeology as understood by the limited scholarship on the topic, but renders a more architectural version of it. Simultaneously it allows to connect to the more distant history of the discipline and signals the fundamental change that occurred in the Catholic cultural use of Christian archaeology, seemingly from the 1860s onwards.

The second part is the most theoretical one. It unfolds from the creation of a chair of Christian archaeology at the university of Louvain in 1864. To discuss political strategies for rechristening their liberalised country, the Belgian Catholics had convened in the first *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* in Malines in 1863. Unanimously the participants had agreed the creation of this chair was a necessary step in the realisation of their ambitions in the cultural realm. Aspects of the course of Christian archaeology which was eventually taught to the students of theology and architectural engineering in Louvain, are confronted with the arguments which had been deployed in the debate on the arts and archaeology that preceded the creation of the chair. The two positions which surfaced in this comparison are both complemented by crucial publications with opposed positions on the catacombs. The dissonance of the Belgians is comparable to the differences which set the work of the Parisian scholar Désiré Raoul-Rochette (1790-1854) apart from that of the Roman archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi (1822-1894). The former was a member of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* and published his principal works on the catacombs during the 1830s. The latter was lionised by Pius IX. He published his foremost work in the 1860s and designed the exhibition inside the papal catacomb-pavilion of 1867, discussed in the first part.

The third part discusses two very different architectural contexts. Firstly, it presents how a Belgian diplomat at the Holy See realised three remarkable buildings with his co-patron and brother in the Belgian municipality of Brasschaat. Between 1884 and 1904, three architects with an archaeological background appear to have been employed to substantiate the political status of *comtes pontificaux*, which the brothers acquired through their association with the papal court of Pius IX. The second subsection of the third part has early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Parisian ecclesiastical architecture for a subject. Via the general and architectural press it is possible to signal that Christian archaeology had a hand in the renewal of ecclesiastical architecture at the time.

Each part is also given an epilogue, indirectly introducing the theme of the next part or as a historiographical remark on the part it concludes. The first epilogue gathers the stands which were taken against Renaissance culture in the context of the three facsimile catacombs and weighs the significance of those assertions, by comparison to certain contradictions in the apologetic and art historical writings of English cardinal Nicholas Wiseman (1802-1865).

The epilogue to the second part presents an archaeological aquarelle, painted by the Catalan architects Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) and Josep Maria Jujol (1879-1949), for the aquarelle cut to the very heart of the dissonance which surfaced in the theoretical arguments on the catacombs. The epilogue to the third part is a brief historiographical critique based on the findings from the subsection on Parisian ecclesiastical architecture, which, in a sense, might complement the first pages of the present introduction.

Although the three parts constitute the principle structure of this dissertation, an equally important structure is instilled vertically throughout the three parts. Each part bridges the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century and advances traces of the two opposed theoretical positions which surface most explicitly in the sources used in the second part (for overviews of the two theoretical positions, see the collection of quotes and the juxtaposition of images which precedes this introduction). Essentially, certain theorists argued the omnipresence of classical forms in the arts of the catacombs proved how the first Christians had not correlated form and meaning, as they had tangibly embraced the artistic means of the pagans to express their own religion. The advocates of this position explicitly postulated their archaeological observations to argue the contemporary ecclesiastical arts could flourish freely, without much concern about theological errors potentially intrinsic to certain stylistic choices. On the contrary, papal archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi as well as the course of the Belgian professor of archaeology claimed the arts of the catacombs proved that Christianity itself had inspired the progressive abandonment of 'pagan' aesthetics throughout the Middle Ages. These two distinct positions are also advanced in the first and the last part. The papal catacomb facsimile at the 1867 Paris world fair exhibited de Rossi's art historical position, divorcing classical and Christian art. The catacomb pavilion will be compared to two 18<sup>th</sup>-century projects of papal self-representation which included early Christian findings to manifest the union rather than the opposition of classical culture and Christianity in the heart of the Church. In the third part, the same opposition applies to the two different architectural cases discussed. The buildings of the Belgian diplomat and his brother appear to have tied classical forms to a Catholic agenda through the Christian archaeological past of the involved architects. In early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Paris, it was rather the position of de Rossi and the Belgian course which surfaced again.



*“Vous avez cru monter dans une église, vous êtes descendu aux catacombes.”*

Philippe Olympe Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theodosie* (Amiens: Caron, 1854), 151-52.



# 1 SIGNS OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE (1853-1916) *early Christianity in devotion, science and papal self-representation*

1.1	Introduction .....	34
	The catacomb facsimiles of Amiens, Paris and Valkenburg .....	34
	Three literary pendants .....	35
	Signs of continuity and change .....	39
1.2	Continuity of the dynamics of scholarship and devotion .....	42
	<i>Sainte Theudosie</i> and Gerbet's visions of 'spiritual California' (1853) .....	42
	The <i>Salvatore Olandese</i> and the Valkenburg archaeological commission (1916) .....	45
1.3	Change in papal self-representation .....	52
	The Holy See at the Paris world fair: martyr or prophet? (1867) .....	52
	The <i>Museo Ecclesiastico</i> (1703-10) and the <i>Demonstratio</i> prints (1754) .....	57
1.4	Epilogue: Desecrating Renaissance .....	64

## 1.1 Introduction

### The catacomb facsimiles of Amiens, Paris and Valkenburg

The first part of this dissertation juxtaposes three cases in which evocations or exact reproductions of parts of the catacombs of Rome were realised. These three facsimiles in Amiens (1853), Paris (1867) and Valkenburg (1909-1916) have all been the subject of previous scholarly work in different contexts. With a special focus on the textual documents which accompanied their realisation, these three catacombs are compared both in search of the nuances of their devotional appeal in a historical and spatial sense and in order to establish a preliminary understanding of how the role of Christian archaeology in the Church may have changed ideologically during the 1850s and 1860s.

The first of these three facsimile catacombs was a temporary one. It was realised to play a part in grand festivities which were orchestrated on the occasion of the arrival of relics in Amiens from the actual catacombs of Rome. The event in Amiens has been discussed by the Belgian historian Vincent Viaene in regard to the general importance of the cult of the early Christian martyrs to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Catholicism. Viaene based his work on the earlier scholarship of Philippe Boutry.<sup>39</sup> The latter did systematic research into the 19<sup>th</sup>-century 'translations' of relics from the catacombs of Rome to France. Both Viaene and Boutry deemed the arrival of these specific relics in Amiens to have been the apotheosis of half a century of similar translations of *corpi santi* from the Christian catacombs of Rome to places around the world. Between 1814 and 1847, around 2500 of such *corpi santi* - the remains of early Christians who were deemed to have died a martyr's death - were officially requested from the Vatican and solemnly transported abroad for veneration.<sup>40</sup>

Temporary as well, the second facsimile was built in Paris in 1867. When the modern nations of the world gathered to present their industrial and cultural progress at the world fair of Paris, the Holy See shipped a small catacomb to the *Champ-de-Mars* to represent the contemporaneously besieged Papal States. At the same exhibition, the Kingdom of Italy erected a Neo-Renaissance gallery to demonstrate the cultural principles of the soon to be united peninsula.<sup>41</sup> The catacomb of the Parisian World Exhibition of 1867 was discussed by the Italian art historian Giovanna Capitelli. She presented the pavilion as an example of

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<sup>39</sup> Philippe Boutry, "Les saints des Catacombes. Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1800-1881)," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes* 91, no. 2 (1979) : 875-930.

<sup>40</sup> Vincent Viaene, "Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century," *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation*, (2005): 313-6. On the number of relics exported from Rome: *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>41</sup> Capitelli, Giovanna, "L'archeologia cristiana al servizio di Pio IX: 'la catacomba in fac-simile' di Giovanni Battista De Rossi all'Esposizione Universale di Parigi del 1867," in *Martiri, santi, patroni: per una archeologia della devozione*, ed. Adele Coscarella, Paola De Santis (Arcavata di Rende: Università della Calabria, 2012), 555-66.

the political role which Christian archaeology acquired during the pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878). Capitelli discussed the pavilion as a cultural provocation to both the Kingdom of Italy and the liberal world. The Holy See, she argued, built it to represent itself as “*martyr of modernity*” in the international arena.<sup>42</sup>

The third facsimile which is included here, was created after a Dutch delegation of archaeologists had travelled to Rome to visit and to investigate the catacombs in 1909. They were financed and accompanied by members of a family of industrialists to select and document parts of the catacombs which were eligible for precise reconstruction in the Dutch town of Valkenburg. Eventually, extensive copies of the assembled archaeological highlights were dug from Dutch soil around 1910. The project was intended to become a northern European centre for the dissemination of Christian archaeological knowledge. It was blessed as such by Pius X and supported thoroughly by the Roman *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra*, an institution originally founded by Pius IX.<sup>43</sup> The Valkenburg catacomb has repeatedly been discussed by the Dutch theologian Paul Post. He highlighted its specifically Dutch context, after the project had been discussed from a German angle by Ulrike Lange and the theologian Reiner Sörries on the grounds of the involvement of the German archaeologist Josef Wilpert.<sup>44</sup> The Valkenburg catacomb also resurfaced in the more recent dissertation of Anke Reiss on the reception of the early Christian arts around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was directed by Reiner Sörries.<sup>45</sup>

### Three literary pendants

The scholarship on these three particular projects provides a clear overview of the original texts which accompanied each one of the catacomb facsimiles. It are mainly these original literary pendants to the reproduced catacombs on which the present part of the dissertation will focus. The relics which arrived in Amiens in 1853 were accompanied by a volume of hagiographic texts, notary accounts, sermons and poems. The catacomb-like pavilion which represented the Holy See at the world fair of Paris was accompanied by a visitor’s guide, written by the foremost papal archaeologist and designer of the exhibition inside the building. On the occasion of the completion of the work on the catacomb which was tunnelled out of the Valkenburg soil, finally, a journal of Christian archaeology was founded of which only an initial, commemorative, issue was ever realised.

All the texts which were part of the event of Amiens of 1853 were bundled in the *Livre de sainte Theudosie*. This volume of documents can rightly be called “literary”. Both Philippe

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 555.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Post, “Het ontstaan van de Romeinse Katakomben in Valkenburg en de receptie van vroegchristelijke kunst in Nederland in het begin van de 20e eeuw,” *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 26, (2010): 104-5.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 99-133.

<sup>45</sup> Anke Reiß, *Rezeption frühchristlicher Kunst im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Christlichen Archäologie und zum Historismus*, (Dettelbach: Röhl, 2008), 42-50.

Boutry and Vincent Viaene pointed out its main author made a name for himself as a poet. Philippe-Olympe Gerbet (1798-1864), the later “*poet-bishop*” of Perpignan wrote most of the texts which were included in this *Livre de sainte Theudosie*. The *Livre* includes a detailed account of the history of the relics which were translated, as well as it holds a series of additional documents. It presents the sermons of some of the many cardinals and bishops who were present; it holds several hagiographies and contains Philippe Gerbet’s accounts of the event in the city. Gerbet also contributed poems on the catacombs of Rome, the cathedral of Amiens and on *sainte Theudosie*, the early Christian woman whose remains were brought from Rome.

Philippe Gerbet, the main author of the *Livre*, established a friendship with the bishop of Amiens early on in his life. He befriended the later bishop Louis-Antoine de Salinis (1798-1861) when both were enrolled at the Saint-Sulpice seminary of Paris. Both Gerbet and de Salinis were originally influenced by the famous 19<sup>th</sup>-century liberal-catholic apologist Félicité de Lamennais. They tend to be portrayed in historical accounts as some of the most intimate disciples of Lamennais.<sup>46</sup> When Gerbet was ordained to the priesthood, he first worked as an assistant at the chair of moral theology at the Sorbonne university.<sup>47</sup> From 1836 onwards he edited the journal *l’Université* in cooperation with de Salinis. He also edited Lamennais’ famous journal *l’Avenir*.<sup>48</sup> The archaeological as well as the poetical writing on the catacombs in the *Livre de sainte Theudosie* had their precedents in earlier work of his. During the 1840s Gerbet resided in Rome, where he published the two volumes of his *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne* in 1844 and 1850. This guide to the city of Rome became renowned as a particularly metaphysical alternative to more objective and perhaps better informed guides.<sup>49</sup> During the revolution of 1848, Gerbet fled from Rome along with Pius IX.<sup>50</sup> In 1849, finally, Gerbet came to Amiens on the occasion of the episcopal ordination of his friend de Salinis. Although Gerbet himself was preconized for the bishopric of Perpignan in 1854, he devoted more than a decade to studies in Amiens as he only assumed office in Perpignan in 1864, the year of his death.<sup>51</sup>

Concerning the papal catacomb-pavilion of Paris, Giovanna Capitelli signalled the existence of a visitor’s guide to the pavilion, although she herself largely based her work on the correspondence which led to the realisation of the pavilion.<sup>52</sup> This *Aperçu général sur les catacombes de Rome et description du modèle d’une catacombe exposé à Paris en 1867* was written by papal archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi (1822-1894), the designer of the exhibition of reproduced fragments inside the pavilion. The visitor’s guide is much less rich and revealing than the correspondence which Capitelli studied, yet it was this text which

<sup>46</sup> Antoine Ricard, *Gerbet, Salinis et Rohrbacher*, (Paris: Plon, 1886), 2, 21, 25-6.

See also: Louis Baunard, *Frédéric Ozanam: d’après sa correspondance*, (Paris: J. De Gigord, 1922), 85.

<sup>47</sup> Ricard, *Gerbet, Salinis et Rohrbacher*, 30.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-4.

<sup>49</sup> Philippe Olympe Gerbet, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, vol. 1-2, (Paris: Tolra et Haton éditeurs, 1866).

<sup>50</sup> Ricard, *Gerbet, Salinis et Rohrbacher*, 97-8.

<sup>51</sup> Ricard, *Gerbet, Salinis et Rohrbacher*, 109-25.

<sup>52</sup> Capitelli, “L’archeologia cristiana al servizio di Pio IX,” 563.

officially accompanied the construction and which can therefore be appropriately compared to the *Livre de sainte Theudosie* and the publication which will be used in the case of the Valkenburg catacomb. As its title tells, the guide was composed of two parts. A legend and a small plan of the pavilion and its different exhibits were followed by a lengthy introduction to the different contemporary concerns of the emerging science of Christian archaeology, at the time headed by author de Rossi himself. The second part was linked to the plan and the legend of the pavilion and discussed the different exhibits inside the pavilion in detail.<sup>53</sup>

After the Valkenburg facsimile had been realised, the involved experts collaborated on a commemorative publication in 1916. This *Gedenkschrift* was published as the first issue of what the contributing scholars hoped would become a steady journal of Christian archaeology. It failed in the sense it remained an isolated publication.<sup>54</sup> As such, it nevertheless provides a valuable literary source on the Valkenburg catacomb. Precisely like the *Livre* of 1853 and the pamphlet of the pavilion of 1867, it holds contributions which discussed the general interest of the catacombs of Rome and of Christian archaeology. After some biographical accounts of recently deceased members of the commission of involved archaeologists, three of such contextualising contributions initiated the document. Firstly, the Jesuit historian Petrus Hendricus Albers supplied a general history of the Roman catacombs.<sup>55</sup> He made a name for himself with his seminarists' manual of Church history.<sup>56</sup> Secondly, the reformed theologian and ex-rector of the university of Leiden, Fredrik Pijper (1859-1926), added a history of the most renowned publications in Christian archaeology.<sup>57</sup> Thirdly, the historian and later parish priest Xavier Smits supplied an article of the iconographic themes and general significance of the frescos which can be found in the catacombs of Rome.<sup>58</sup> After those generalising contributions, a second series of articles discussed the Valkenburg project itself. As president of the archaeological commission, the renowned architect Pierre Cuypers (1827-1921) discussed the execution of the required works of construction which he had directed in Valkenburg.<sup>59</sup> In line with Cuypers' more

<sup>53</sup> Giovanni Battista de Rossi, *Aperçu général sur les catacombes de Rome et description du modèle d'une catacombe exposé à Paris en 1867*, (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie, 1867).

<sup>54</sup> Post, "Het ontstaan van de Romeinse Katakomben in Valkenburg," 109.

<sup>55</sup> Albers, "Beknopte geschiedenis der Romeinsche katakomben," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 15-34.

<sup>56</sup> Petrus Hendricus Albers, *Handboek der algemeene kerkgeschiedenis*, (Nijmegen: Malmberg, 1905-1907).

<sup>57</sup> Fredrik Pijper, "De voornaamste werken over de katakomben te Rome," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 35-57. For biographical detail on Fredrik Pijper: A. Eekhof, "Levensbericht van Fredrik Pijper," in *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1925-1926*, II, *Levensberichten*, ed. Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1926) 123-42.

<sup>58</sup> Xavier Smits, "De Muurschilderingen der katakomben," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 57-79. Smits attained a doctorate in archaeology at the university of Louvain in 1907. See: Jan De Maeyer, *Negentiende-eeuwse restauratiepraktijk en actuele monumentenzorg: Handelingen van het Nederlands-Vlaams symposium. Leuven 13-14 september 1996*, (Louvain: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 1996), 48.

<sup>59</sup> Pierre Cuypers, "De reproductie van Romeinsche katakomben te Valkenburg," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 80-7.

practical contribution, the recent Doctor of Theology Heiko Tiberius Oberman (1888-1924) reported how the archaeological commission had functioned.<sup>60</sup> Cleric B. Eras subsequently chronicled the initial trip to Rome of members of the commission.<sup>61</sup> A third set of articles within the *Gedenkschrift* finally made the document into the journal which its editors must have wished it to become. Significantly, a single fresco – discovered in the catacombs by the Dutch in 1909 and depicted as frontispiece of the *Gedenkschrift* – was discussed in both German and French. Jos Schrijnen (1869-1938), the cleric who would later become the first rector of the Catholic university of Nijmegen provided the German contribution, whereas the local cleric Ferdinand Sarton wrote the one in French.<sup>62</sup> Next, two final articles on recent discoveries of early Christian and Roman remains in the Netherlands closed the series of articles of the *Gedenkschrift*. The priest Willem Goossens (1869-1933) discussed Dutch tombstones, whereas archaeologist Jan Hendrik Holwerda (1873-1951) described the foundations of a Roman house in Valkenburg.<sup>63</sup>

It are mainly the articles by Oberman, Sarton and Xavier Smits which make for an interesting set of texts in the context of this dissertation. Although the Valkenburg catacomb was nominally an entirely scientific project, these articles reveal there was more to it. Oberman wrote how the archaeological commission had struggled to maintain its exclusively scientific élan when a martyr's relic, comparable to the one of Amiens of 1853, was gifted to the commission of archaeologists of Valkenburg. Sarton's article, in turn, evidenced how archaeology and devotion remained inseparable even in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Valkenburg. Smits, lastly, went as far as to express his regret about the loss of the different archaeological culture of the 1850s. He stated the regret he felt about the exclusively scientific path on which his fellow archaeologists had collectively embarked.

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<sup>60</sup> Heiko Tiberius Oberman, "Verslag der werkzaamheden van de archaeologische commissie van advies," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 89-93. For biographical detail on Oberman: J. R. Callenbach, "Levensbericht van Heiko Tiberius Oberman," in *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1924-1925*, II, *Levensberichten*, ed Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, 49-54. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1925).

<sup>61</sup> B. Eras, "Rome en de Valkenburgsche katacomben," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 94-103.

<sup>62</sup> Jos Schrijnen, "Das neuentdeckte fresco in der Cäcilienkrypte," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 105-15. Ferdinand Sarton, "La crypte de ste Cécile," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 117-26. For biographical detail on Schrijnen: Christine Mohrmann, "Schrijnen, Joseph Charles François Hubert (1869-1938)," biography originally published in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn1/schrijnenjcfh>.

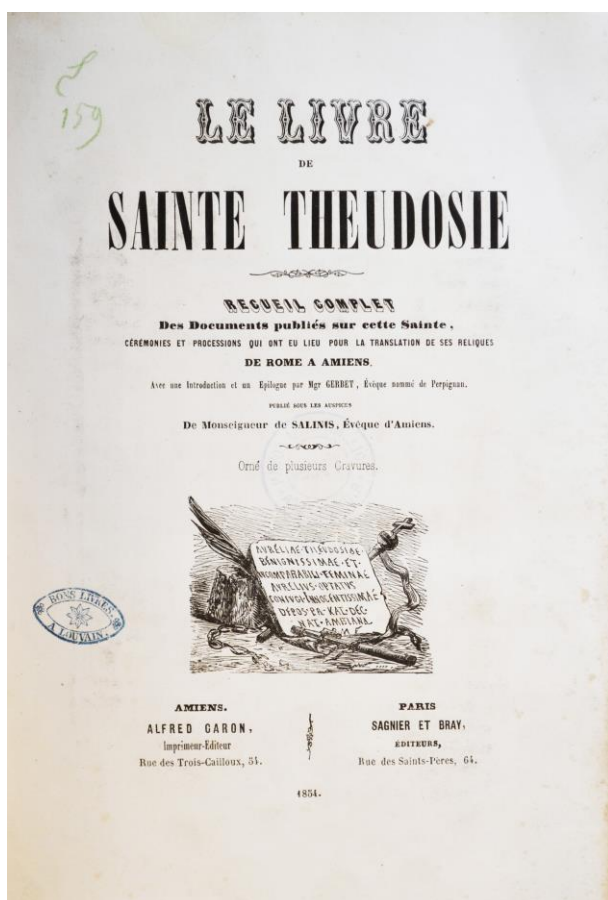
<sup>63</sup> Willem Goossens, "Oud-Christelijke gedenkteekenen in Nederland," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 127-36. Jan Hendrik Holwerda, "De Goudsberg bij Valkenburg," in *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 137-53. For a recent article on one of Willem Goossens' works: Titus Panhuysen, "De archeologie rond het Maastrichtse Vrijthof in de historie," *Publications de la Société Historique et Archéologique dans le Limbourg* 151, (2015): 9-74. For biographical detail on Jan Hendrik Holwerda: J. A. Brongers, "Holwerda, Jan Hendrik (1873-1951)," biography originally published in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn1/holwerda>.

### Signs of continuity and change

The purpose of the first part of this dissertation is to outline something of the broader 19<sup>th</sup>-century relevance of Christian archaeology before focussing on aesthetics and architecture in the following parts. By using these three spatial evocations of the catacombs of Rome in combination with the texts which accompanied them, it is possible to explore ideological matters while never straying too far from architecture. While evaluating how scholarship and devotion interacted in the cult of the early Christian martyrs, it becomes clear how historical analogies were often constructed between early Christianity and the contemporary Church. By using the three catacomb facsimiles, it can, moreover, become clear how those historical analogies were often complemented and facilitated by spatial analogies. The first section of this part of the dissertation looks for such analogies in the *Livre de sainte Theudosie* and the *Gedenkschrift* of Valkenburg. The comparison of Amiens and Valkenburg also illustrates how, in the apparent chasm of the religious procession of Amiens and the scientific project of Valkenburg, very little really changed after all.

A second section renders how Christian archaeology may have assumed a role during the pontificate of Pius IX which differed from the one it fulfilled during previous centuries and focusses therefore on the catacomb-pavilion at the world fair. This building provides an occasion to situate the renewed interest of Christian archaeology in something of its political context. In an attempt to understand the cultural implications of the Parisian catacomb of 1867, two much older examples of projects of papal self-representation which involved Christian archaeology will be discussed in regard to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century pavilion. Containing both classical and early Christian antiquities, those two earlier projects were intended to represent the papal cultural project in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These designs by Francesco Bianchini (1662-1729) and his cousin Giuseppe Bianchini (1704-1764) have recently been studied by the German scholar Brigitte Sölch. Her interpretation of the Bianchini designs can clarify how the relation of Christian archaeology and papal self-representation had changed by the time of the catacomb-pavilion of 1867.

Lastly, an epilogue adds some of the writings of the British cardinal Nicholas Wiseman (1802-1865) to what Philippe Gerbet and Xavier Smits wrote in regard to the cultural value of Renaissance. Wiseman was both present on the 1853 event in Amiens and he was remembered by Xavier Smits in the *Gedenkschrift* of Valkenburg of 1916. The cardinal wrote an early Christian novel and showed himself aware of the contemporary changes in the world of architecture as he reacted against the work of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) in the Catholic journal *Dublin Review*. Wiseman's novel provides an occasion to focus on how both Philippe Gerbet and Xavier Smits portrayed Renaissance in the *Livre* of Amiens and in the *Gedenkschrift* of Valkenburg. As such, the epilogue allows hinting at the controversy which is explored in the second part of this dissertation.



*"Salut, étoile antique et si long-temps perdue [...] Tu verras parmi nous quelque image récente / Des vieux chrétiens, / Le concile où fleurit la tige renaissante / Des temps anciens, / Et le chant dont ta crypte, entonnant la prière / Que nous chantons, / Sur ta première tombe a murmuré sous terre / Les premiers sons."*

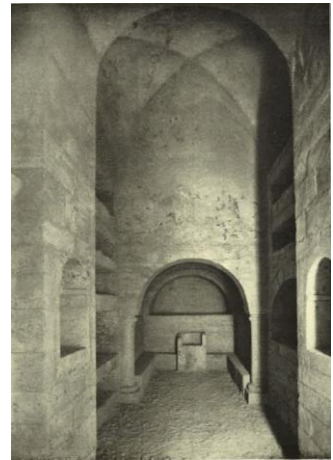
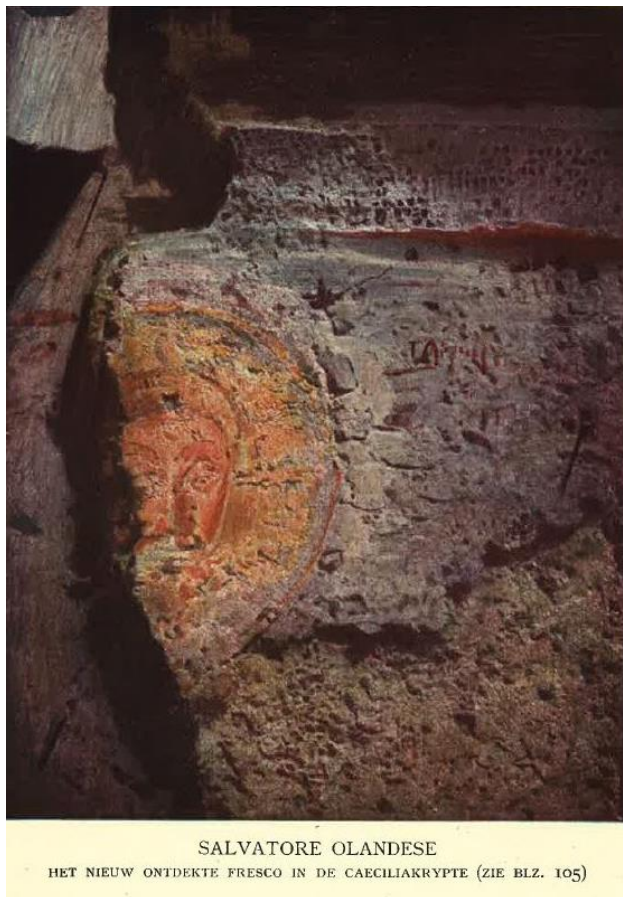
Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie* (Amiens: Caron, 1854), 144-50.

Fig. 1. Frontispiece depicting the tombstone of Aurelia Theudosia. From: Philippe Olympe Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie* (Amiens: Caron, 1854), frontispiece.

Fig. 2. *Chapelle du séminaire*. From: Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Album de Sainte Theudosie*, (Paris: Auguste Vaton Editeur, 1854).

Fig. 3. *Chapelle de Sainte Theudosie Restaurée*. From: Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Album de Sainte Theudosie*, (Paris: Auguste Vaton Editeur, 1854).





*[F]rom its inception onwards [the archaeological commission of Valkenburg] only deemed the scientific significance of the [catacomb]-reproduction to be its terrain, it had nothing to do with the religious use of Catacombs."*

Oberman, "Verslag der werkzaamheden," 92. (translation by the author)

Fig. 4. Frontispiece depicting the *Salvatore Olandese*. From: *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), frontispiece.

Fig. 5. Opening of the first section of the Valkenburg catacombs by prof. O. Marucchi. July, 12 1910. From: *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 80.

Fig. 6. Basilica in the Coemeterium Majus at Valkenburg. From: *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 152.

## 1.2 Continuity of the dynamics of scholarship and devotion

### *Sainte Theudosie* and Gerbet's visions of 'spiritual California' (1853)

In the fall of 1853, the French city of Amiens was stirred by the extraordinary event of the arrival of relics from the catacombs of Rome. On 12 October, an estimated 150,000 enthusiasts and twenty-eight bishops, archbishops and cardinals attended the imposing procession which took the relics to the cathedral of the city.<sup>64</sup> Although fifteen or sixteen centuries of age, the imported saint Theudosia was as new a saint as her relics were new to the French city. Her relics had been exhumed from a tomb which was discovered and opened in 1842 in the Roman Hermes catacomb. Exceptionally, the stone which had marked her tomb situated her origins in Amiens. "*AURELIAE THEUDOSIAE / BENIGNISSIMAE ET INCOMPARABILI FEMINAE [...] NAT AMBIANA*" the catacomb tombstone read, providing the occasion for the eventual festivities of 1853, where a grand procession paraded the relics through the streets of the city. The renowned architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) designed the Gothic shrine which would await the saintly bones at the end of the procession, while it were the young seminarists of Amiens who did the work which makes the procession of interest to this dissertation (see page 40). The relics of *sainte Theudosie* were temporarily located in the choir of the chapel of the seminary before they were ultimately moved in procession to the cathedral. Around the relics, the seminarists decorated the choir of their chapel to resemble the catacomb in which the tomb of *sainte Theudosie* had originally been discovered.<sup>65</sup>

In the *Livre de sainte Theudosie*, Philippe Gerbet narrated how the shrine of the saint was first opened in the presence of bishop de Salinis after its arrival in the diocese of Amiens. Gerbet's account of that moment suggests how relative the importance of the unknown saint herself really was. The first gaze into the opened shrine Gerbet did not characterise as an acquaintance with the saint, but as a "*vision of the catacombs, a kind of apparition of the heroic age of the Church*".<sup>66</sup> Although the festivities were nominally dedicated to the unknown saint, Gerbet's text made the catacombs as prominent as the saint herself. Gerbet's writings demonstrate how time and place were translated to Amiens, much rather than merely the dust of ancient bones. After the initial inspection of the relics by the bishop, their temporary shrine was accommodated in the chapel of the seminary of Amiens. Gerbet seems to have made his initial 'vision of the catacombs' intrude progressively into 19<sup>th</sup>-century reality. He projected it onto the priests and prelates who participated in the veneration of the relics. "*Les lumières qui éclairent cette sépulture, les pontifes et les prêtres qui la vénèrent, retracent l'image sacrée de ces augustes assemblées des premiers chrétiens qui se sont tenues peut-être autour de ces mêmes restes*".<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Viaene, "Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century," 313-4.

<sup>65</sup> Boutry was the one to signal Viollet-le-Duc's involvement: Boutry, "Les saints des Catacombes. Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1800-1881)," 904.

<sup>66</sup> Philippe Olympe Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie* (Amiens: Caron, 1854), 33-4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 43-4.

After having characterised the priests as early Christians, Gerbet spatialised his historical analogy. Although the seminarists had limited their catacomb facsimile to the choir of their chapel, darkness and candlelight allowed Gerbet to transfer the significance of the decorations from the choir onto the building in its entirety. “*Vous avez cru monter dans une église, vous êtes descendu aux catacombes*”, he wrote.<sup>68</sup> As the relic was then publicly processed from the provisory catacomb of the seminarists’ chapel into the cathedral, clouds and rain are said to have disappeared and Gerbet wrote how the procession established a connection between the original catacomb and the cathedral.<sup>69</sup> “[C]ette martyre,” he wrote, “*établit désormais des rapports et une sorte de fraternité entre les étroites galeries du souterrain de saint Hermès, et les grands arceaux du temple*”.<sup>70</sup> Therein lay the significance of the event. “[L]a cathédrale est héritière de la catacombe”, Gerbet concluded.<sup>71</sup>

With the three strongly interrelated poems *Les Catacombes*, *Sainte Theudosie* and *La Cathédrale*, which Gerbet included in the *Livre de sainte Theudosie*, he contributed to the analogy of the catacombs and the cathedral. The grand procession which took the relics from the seminary catacomb to the cathedral was destined as an image of medieval history in its entirety and a symbol of the renewal of a Catholic heyday.<sup>72</sup> Gerbet’s three poems, however, suggested a spatial rather than a historical take on things. Gerbet repeatedly designated the catacombs as both a tomb and a cradle of faith as he sang their praises as places in which absolute dark coincided with the most intense light: “*Descendez, descendez au fond des catacombes, / Aux plus bas lieux; / Descendez, le Coeur monte, et du haut de ces tombes / On voit les cieux!*”<sup>73</sup> According to Gerbet, each Christian sanctuary had been set this example of dark and light by the catacombs and he addressed the Gothic cathedral in those same terms. The cathedral he described as both a tomb and a cradle on the account of both its dark corners and the brightness of its most elevated windows. “*Temple,*” he wrote “*si cette pensée est ton intime essence, / Le contraste, marqué dans ta double apparence, / N’est-il pas bien plutôt ta profonde unité?*”<sup>74</sup>

The festivities which bishop de Salinis orchestrated after his successful effort to obtain the relics of *Theudosie* for the cathedral of Amiens were admired and abhorred throughout Europe. In his account of the state of contemporary European religion, the Anglican canon of Westminster Christopher Wordsworth boldly reacted against the exhumation of the early Christian dead from the treasure trove and the “*spiritual California*” which he deemed the catacombs to be. Their appeal to credulity rather than to real religion he imagined as a safe

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 151-52.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>71</sup> Viaene, “Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century,” 314. For the original excerpt, see: Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie*, 110-1.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 151. These words also resurfaced in a Dutch article on the catacombs of Valkenburg. Apparently, Gerbet’s *Chant des catacombes* acquired some fame: Jos Krijn, “De katakomben van Valkenburg, als een Apologie van het Roomsche Geloof,” *Verhandelingen van de Algemeene Katholieke Vlaamsche Hoogeschooluitbreiding* 14, no. 9 (1912): 52-3.

conduct for later secular retribution and scepticism, as a future source of shame and sorrow for Christianity in its entirety.<sup>75</sup> The specific extremity of the events in Amiens was not lost on Wordsworth. "The present age boasts itself an age of Intellectual Illumination", he wrote. "It vaunts its own shrewdness and sagacity. It seems to suppose that by means of mechanical skill, and scientific attainments, and commercial activity, and diffusion of secular knowledge, it may laugh to scorn the attempts of Superstition. Vain-glorious imagination! Such an assurance is refuted by the recent fête of Amiens".<sup>76</sup>

As canon Wordsworth designated the catacombs as a 'spiritual California' in a denouncing way, he nevertheless touched a truth which is worth exploring. The utopian implications of Wordsworth's demarche did justice to the Catholic understanding of the catacombs. Philippe Gerbet's text illustrates how the catacombs themselves, perhaps as much as the saints who were minted from their abodes, had the potential of becoming vehicles of devotion. Gerbet's vivid accounts of the catacombs were grounded in many a personal visit during the 1840s. Throughout the decade during which Gerbet lived in Rome, he guided French visitors through the catacombs. The cleric Frédéric Ozanam alone, attested to having descended into the catacombs with Gerbet up to five times.<sup>77</sup> "*Rien n'est plus admirable que ce digne M. Gerbet [...] expliquant les peintures et les rites sacrés du temps des martyrs*", he wrote.<sup>78</sup> During his time in Rome, Gerbet worked on his *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*. If this guide to the city acquired contemporary renown, it was partly due to its particularly metaphysical accounts of the catacombs.<sup>79</sup> In the preface of his *Esquisse*, Gerbet expressed the ambition to make the guide both surpass the merit of "*the dry science of the modern archaeologist*" and "*the naive enthusiasm of a medieval believer*", making it a relevant source to consult in search of an understanding of what precisely it was Gerbet intended to transfer onto the buildings of Amiens.<sup>80</sup> In *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, Gerbet characterised the catacombs as a shadow of heaven, where the intensity of the silence and the dark made divine presence unbearably tangible: "*Quand on est arrivé à ce point où rien ne distrahit de la contemplation, de l'adoration, alors on est trop près de vous pour rester sur la terre. On est ange, il faut mourir.*"<sup>81</sup> In Gerbet's original *Chant des catacombes* and the first of the three poems of Amiens, it was this devotional trope which was articulated. To Gerbet, the catacombs were a simulacrum of heaven. Robert Gaston signalled how such 'subterranean theology' had its prototypes in 16<sup>th</sup>-century catacomb vigils.<sup>82</sup> Essentially, it is as old as the 4<sup>th</sup>-century catacomb visit which saint Jerome mentioned in his *Commentarium In Ezechielem*, of which Gerbet proved himself aware, too.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Christopher Wordsworth, *Notes at Paris, particularly on the state and prospects of Religion*, (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1854), 151.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 138, 151.

<sup>77</sup> Baunard, *Frédéric Ozanam: d'après sa correspondance*, 355.

<sup>78</sup> Ricard, *Gerbet, Salinis et Rohrbacher*, 86.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>81</sup> Gerbet, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, I, 238-9.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Gaston, "British Travellers and Scholars in the Roman Catacombs 1450-1900," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 46, (1983): 148, 154.

<sup>83</sup> Gerbet himself also referred to the account of the catacombs in Jerome's *Commentarium In Ezechielem*. See: Gerbet, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, I, 149-50. On Jerome's visit descent in the

*“Hier j’ai visité les saintes catacombes / Des temps anciens; / J’ai touché de mon front les immortelles tombes / Des vieux chrétiens; / Et ni l’astre du jour, ni les célestes spheres, / Lettres de feu, / Ne m’avaient mieux fait lire en profonds caractères / Le nom de Dieu.”*<sup>84</sup>

### The *Salvatore Olandese* and the Valkenburg archaeological commission (1916)

Canon Wordsworth’s articulate critique of the translation of *Theudosie*’s relics was accompanied by a critical discussion of the way the inscriptions on *Theudosie*’s tombstone had been interpreted.<sup>85</sup> The tombstone was printed as the frontispiece of the *Livre de sainte Theudosie* and like the human remains it had covered, it was transported around Europe and carried throughout Amiens for all to behold as proof of the veracity of the relics.<sup>86</sup> The tombstone was of course a key to disgracing the event. It mentioned all kinds of things, save *Theudosie*’s martyrdom.<sup>87</sup> It was when criticism about such practices of baseless veneration arose not only among Protestants but also in Catholic circles, that change was initiated. The translation of *sainte Theudosie* to Amiens has been presented as a tipping point between eras in Catholic devotional practice. Just as 17<sup>th</sup>-century enthusiasm had led to the exhumation of countless *corpi santi*, refilling the shrines of Europe after they had been emptied during times of iconoclasm, so did the Church react after the French Revolution had brought about similar devastation.<sup>88</sup> As archaeology and critical historiography flourished when scholars such as the Benedictine monk Jean Mabillon addressed the threat which careless exhumation posed to the general credibility of the Church, so the initial early 19<sup>th</sup>-century enthusiasm came of age during the 1850s.<sup>89</sup> As it had been the case in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, several decades

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catacombs, see for instance also: Edmond Reusens, *Éléments d’archéologie chrétienne*, I, (Louvain: Peeters, 1885), 41. See also: Gaston, “British Travellers and Scholars in the Roman Catacombs 1450-1900,” 148.

<sup>84</sup> Excerpt from the original *Chant des catacombes*, as integrated in the poem “*Les Catacombes*” in the *Livre de sainte Theudosie*. (Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie*, 141.) See also: “*Descendez, descendez au fond des catacombes, / Aux plus bas lieux; / Descendez, le Coeur monte, et du haut de ces tombes / On voit les cieux!*” (Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie*, 143.)

<sup>85</sup> Christopher Wordsworth, *Notes at Paris, particularly on the state and prospects of Religion*, 148-51.

<sup>86</sup> Boutry, “Les saints des Catacombes. Itinéraires français d’une piété ultramontaine (1800-1881),” 904.

<sup>87</sup> Viaene, “Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century,” 315-6.

<sup>88</sup> Boutry, “Les saints des Catacombes. Itinéraires français d’une piété ultramontaine (1800-1881),” 875-8. See also: Viaene, “Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century,” 305.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 315-6. For an introduction to Mabillon’s position in particular, see: Boutry, “Les saints des Catacombes. Itinéraires français d’une piété ultramontaine (1800-1881),” 876. See also: Gaston, “British Travellers and Scholars in the Roman Catacombs 1450-1900,” 151-2. For an account of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> historiography which situates Jean Mabillon and Bernard de Montfaucon in their common context, see: James Westfall Thompson, “The Age of Mabillon and Montfaucon,” *The American Historical Review* 47, no. 2 (1942): 225-44.

of uncontrolled extraction of early Christian remains from the catacombs of Rome were followed by the papal installation of measures to prevent similar practices from continuing. By the time of the arrival of *Theudosie* in Amiens, the *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra* had been created in Rome in 1852.<sup>90</sup> The relevance of the catacombs was not refuted but secured and renewed by a transition towards a more scholarly use of the catacombs. Science came to the aid of religion and allowed the cult of the martyrs to continue in a transformed way. For instance, while the *Commissione* ensured matters of positive truth, a *Collegium Cultorum Martyrum* presided over by the same archaeologists, organised religious services and public lectures in the catacombs from 1879 onward.<sup>91</sup>

The realisation of the archaeological copies of the catacombs of Rome in the Dutch municipality of Valkenburg was remote to the seminarists' catacomb of Amiens in time as well as in spirit. The intentions of the Dutch financiers and their commission of archaeologists was to found an exclusively scientific hub for Christian archaeology in the north of Europe. In that sense Valkenburg was as much an extreme case in the exploitation of the Roman catacombs as the translation of *sainte Theudosie*. Clerical promises and the relics' origins in the catacombs had sufficed to cast a major city in awe in 1853. It had not mattered the tombstone of *Theudosie* did not present the least indication of martyrdom. In Valkenburg on the other hand, religion was nominally banned in favour of science. Moreover, the group of archaeologists included both Protestants and Catholics.<sup>92</sup> A museum and a journal were founded and a library of valuable archaeological publications was gathered.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, certain articles of the Valkenburg *Gedenkschrift* of 1916 - the first issue of what was to become a steady journal of Christian archaeology - allow for a meaningful comparison of the festivities of Amiens and the archaeological project of Valkenburg.

A way to relate the facsimile of the most estimable parts of the Roman catacombs in Valkenburg to what happened in Amiens was hinted at by Paul Post.<sup>94</sup> Theologian Heiko Tiberius Oberman's article in the *Gedenkschrift* discussed the fundamental choices which the archaeological commission of Valkenburg had been confronted with. Each of his concerns boiled down to whether "*popular demands*" were to be followed or whether a scientific élan was to be strictly maintained. Particularly revealing is the problem posed by the fact the archaeologists of Valkenburg had been gifted martyr's relics in Rome, entirely similar to those of *Theudosie*. As the relics had originally been exhumed and authenticated in 1753, the Valkenburg commission declared it impossible to verify whether the early Christian corpse had in truth been martyred. In order not to jeopardise the archaeological and scientific value of the Valkenburg endeavour, the commission ruled to disqualify the relics as a potential part of the project. Almost naively Oberman stated how "*from its inception onwards [the commission] had only deemed the archaeological-scientific*

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<sup>90</sup> Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology", 185.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>92</sup> Post, "Het ontstaan van de Romeinse Katakomben in Valkenburg," 115.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 108-9.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 115.

*significance of the reproduction to be its terrain, it had nothing to do with the religious use of Catacombs*".<sup>95</sup> In the same article, Oberman expressed the scientific hopes he invested in the library, the museum and the journal of Christian archaeology of Valkenburg. He envisioned a "*vivification of the interest in the life and death of the oldest Christians*" and the "*warm ecstasy*" of the permanent deepening of knowledge which such a vivified awareness would bring about. The apparent paradox of Oberman's initial exclusion of religion only grew as he lauded a personified Valkenburg for its "*surrender, as tunnelled and pierced rock, to the pious and devout praise of the triumphs of ancient religion*".<sup>96</sup>

Oberman's apparently conflicting account is an example of Christian archaeology at its best. In all its contradictions, Oberman's text epitomises how Christian archaeology essentially works. The endorsement of science was to strengthen the religious appeal of the catacombs rather than to refute it. Submitting vehicles of devotion to scrutiny disqualified many a relic, yet it ensured the devotional validity of what stood the scholarly test. In Amiens and Valkenburg different means served a similar goal. Although the French festivities of 1853 revolved in their entirety around the relics of an alleged martyr, the excerpts from Philippe Gerbet's text which were discussed in the previous subsection demonstrate how much of the relevance of the relics was drawn from their association with the history and cultivation of the Roman catacombs themselves anyway.<sup>97</sup>

A palpable example of how essentially only the means differed in the apparent chasm of an overtly devotional occasion such as the festivities of Amiens of 1853 on the one hand and the nominally scientific ambitions of the Valkenburg commission of archaeologists of the 1910s on the other hand, can be found in two other articles of the *Gedenkschrift*. Both an article in French and one in German discussed a single minute fresco. This small depiction of the face of Christ was discovered at the entrance of the '*Crypt of the popes*' in the Callixtus cemetery by the Dutch archaeologists who had explored the catacombs in Rome in order to select fragments for their Dutch facsimile.<sup>98</sup> The minute fresco was the only subject in the *Gedenkschrift* which was presented in languages other than Dutch. Jos Schrijnen's *Das neuentdeckte fresko in der Cäciliakrypte* was written from a scientific perspective and situated the fresco as part of an iconographic evolution.<sup>99</sup> After the scientific study by Schrijnen, Ferdinand Sarton's article *La crypte de ste Cécile* revealed the cause of the prominence of the fresco in the *Gedenkschrift*. Sarton narrated how a member of the financing family of industrialists had discovered the fresco during the inspections of the catacombs in Rome in 1909.<sup>100</sup> Not coincidentally, I argue, a beautifully coloured photograph of precisely this

<sup>95</sup> Oberman, "Verslag der werkzaamheden van de archaeologische commissie van advies," 92. (translation by the author)

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 93. (translation by the author)

<sup>97</sup> The difficulty of accessing the saints' lives was expressed in Gerbet's poem *Sainte Theodosie*. Addressing the saint, Gerbet wrote: "*Ta tombe et ton berceau sont seuls, dans ton histoire, / Des points brillants / Perçant le voile épais qu'étend sur ta mémoire / La nuit des temps*" (Gerbet, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, I, 144.)

<sup>98</sup> On the *Crypt of the popes*, see also section 2.1 "Ultramontane echoes".

<sup>99</sup> Schrijnen, "Das neuentdeckte fresko in der Cäciliakrypte," 105-15.

<sup>100</sup> Sarton, "La crypte de ste Cécile," 118.

fresco was made the frontispiece of the *Gedenkschrift* (see fig. 4). Just as the tombstone of Theudosia had made the frontispiece of the *Livre de sainte Theudosie*, so the fresco which the Dutch had claimed, headed the *Gedenkschrift*.

When local cleric Sarton narrated how the fresco had been discovered by the Dutch, he referred to an article which Orazio Marucchi (1852-1931), the leading Christian archaeologist of Rome at the time, had published in the *Nuovo bullettino di archeologia cristiana*.<sup>101</sup> Marucchi had accepted an honorary membership of the archaeological commission of Valkenburg and he travelled to the Netherlands to contribute to the momentum of the festive opening of the first parts of the Dutch catacomb in 1910 (see fig. 5).<sup>102</sup> In his article in the *Bullettino Nuovo* of 1914, Marucchi dated the fresco of the Dutch to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. However, Marucchi showed himself more reserved than his Dutch comrades in terming the fresco a discovery. Marucchi praised the Dutch for their contributions to Christian archaeology. Yet, as their fresco was situated at the entrance of the most visited place in the catacombs, he clearly preferred to refer to it as to a fresco which had never before been as privileged as to become the object of scholarly attention, rather than to call it a true discovery. Nonetheless, Sarton confidently affirmed how Marucchi's praise enlarged the honour which the "discovery" added to the Valkenburg catacombs.<sup>103</sup> Unlike the early Christian bones which the archaeological commission had dismissed, this archaeological discovery provided a relic free of scrutiny. In large lettering, the frontispiece photograph was boldly titled "*Salvatore Olandese*".<sup>104</sup>

Sarton continued his description of the Dutch copy of the Crypt of Saint Cecilia – "*subterranean Rome, where the shadows reveal the splendour of Christ*" – in oddly metaphysical terms.<sup>105</sup> As Sarton described the reproduction of this room, where the original fresco had been found, he sounded a remarkable lot as Philippe Gerbet had sounded when he described the chapel of the seminarists of Amiens. "*Notre crypte de Ste Cécile est ornée comme la crypte de Rome,*" Sarton wrote, "*une Ste Messe y est célébrée, on y assiste, on y communie, comme les premier chrétiens ont fait, on y parle de la douce sainte, [...] et tout le monde se croit transporté aux premiers siècles du Christianisme.*"<sup>106</sup> This lapse from the scientific zeal of the *Gedenkschrift* may have been due to the fact it was written by a local priest rather than by an enlightened university rector such as Fredrik Pijper (1859-1926) or Jos Schrijnen (1869-1938). Then again, the fresco was made into the frontispiece of the booklet and was discussed in both German and French, seemingly in order to allow for the

<sup>101</sup> Sarton, "La crypte de ste Cécile," 119.

<sup>102</sup> The presence of Marucchi at the opening of the first parts of the facsimile in 1910 was documented photographically in the *Gedenkschrift*. (Cuypers, "De reproductie van Romeinsche katakomben te Valkenburg," 80.)

<sup>103</sup> For Orazio Marucchi's words as cited in Sarton's article of the *Gedenkschrift*: Sarton, "La crypte de ste Cécile," 118-9. On Marucchi's importance in Christian archaeology and his role in the *Nuovo Bullettino*: Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 183-4.

<sup>104</sup> Sarton, "La crypte de ste Cécile," 120.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 117. (translation by the author)

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.



‘discovery’ to resonate beyond Dutch borders, like *Theudosie*’s arrival in Amiens had resonated throughout Europe in 1853.<sup>107</sup>

The comparability of the roles which the relics of *sainte Theudosie* and the *Salvatore Olandese* fresco fulfilled in Amiens and Valkenburg respectively, can be understood as an illustration of the continuity of the cult of the martyrs. Although an age of scientific gains lay between the creation of the *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra* by Pius IX in 1852 and the attempt at creating an outpost of archaeological learning in Valkenburg in 1916, much of the religious fervour of the countless translations of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was guarded and prolonged by archaeology. The writings of Philippe Gerbet and Ferdinand Sarton demonstrate how remarkably similar exhumed relics and scientifically described frescos could be imagined to be.

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<sup>107</sup> There are indeed traces of international attention to the Valkenburg project to be signalled. (see section 3.3 “Catacombs and bars of brick and concrete”)



Fig. 7. Catacomb-pavilion of the Papal States at the Paris world fair of 1867, project by Giovanni Battista de Rossi, photograph by Petit, From: Giovanna Capitelli, "L'archeologia cristiana al servizio di Pio IX," 556.

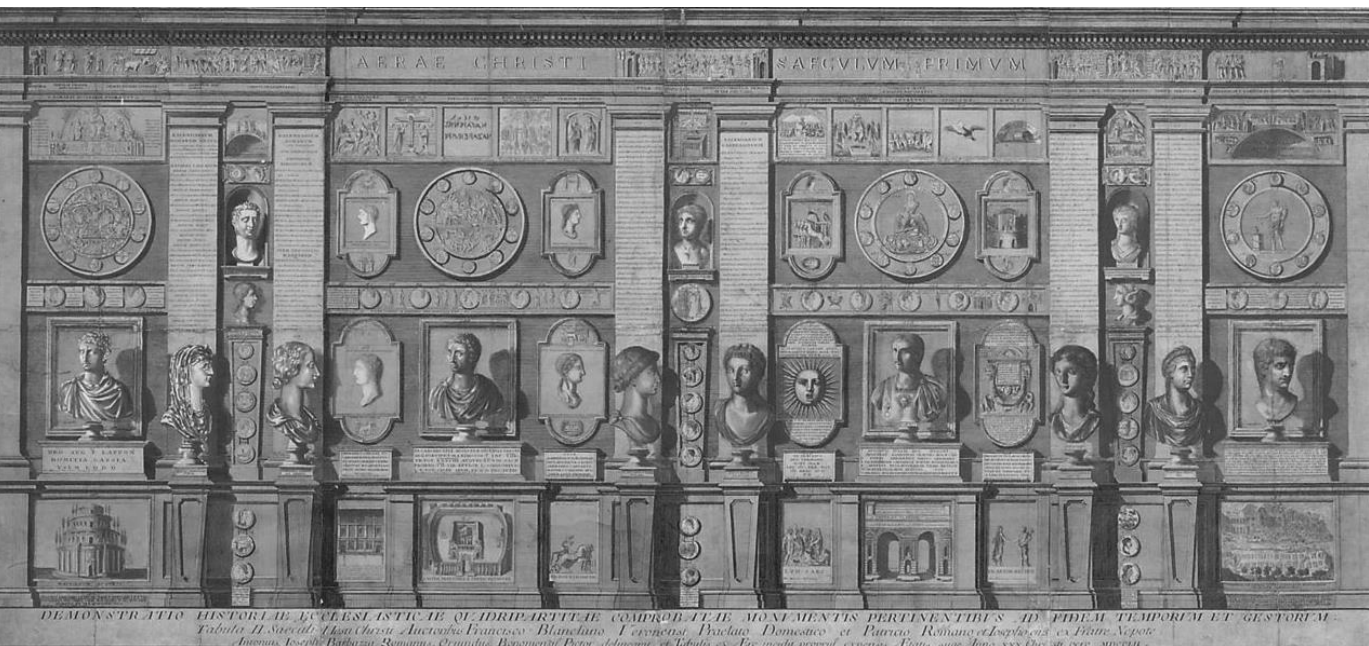


Fig. 8. Antonio Giuseppe Barbazza and Giuseppe Bianchini, *Demonstratio Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, IV, *Saeculo I Tabula II*, (70,5 x 152,5 cm).



Fig. 9. Final blessing of the pontifical troops at Saint Peter's Square on April 25 1870, Burzagli family archive.

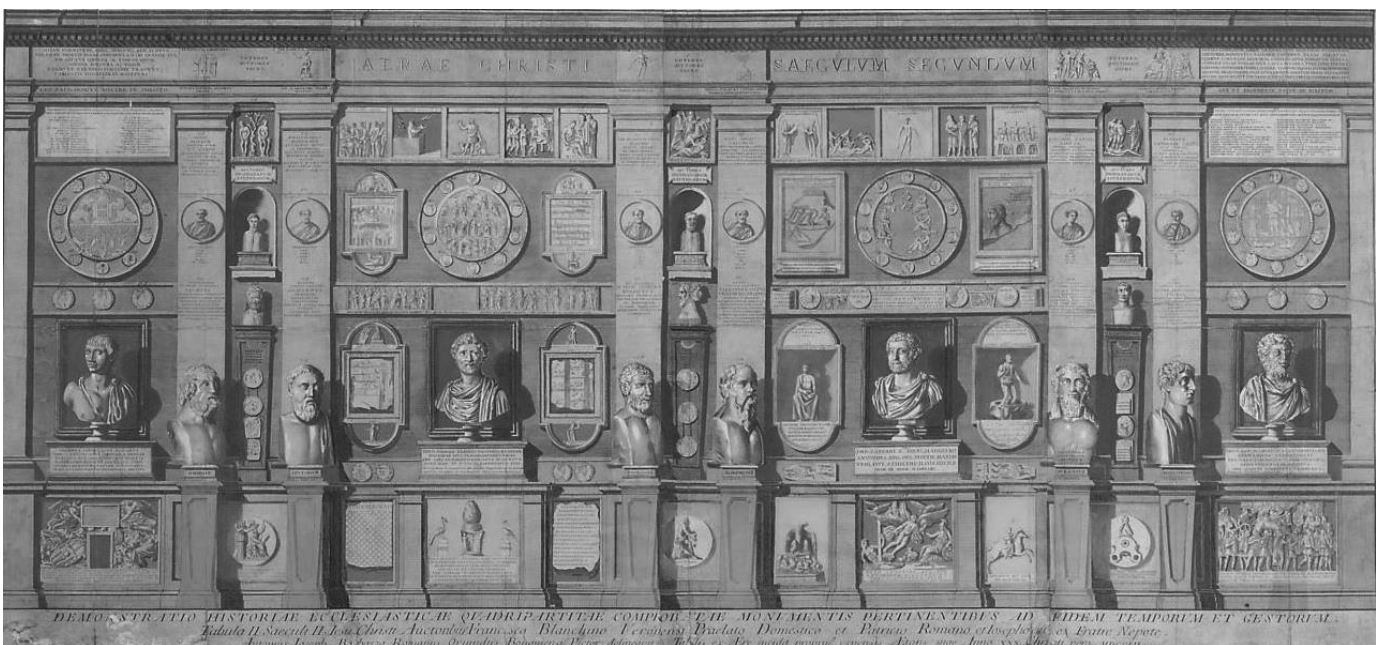


Fig. 10. Antonio Giuseppe Barbazza and Giuseppe Bianchini, *Demonstratio Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, IV, *Saeculo II Tabula II*, (70,5 x 152,5 cm).



### 1.3 Change in papal self-representation

#### The Holy See at the Paris world fair: martyr or prophet? (1867)

In spite of the great political problems which the *Risorgimento* caused Rome during the 1860s, the Papal States participated in the world fair of Paris in 1867. The Papal States had previously participated in the fairs of 1851 (London), 1855 (Paris), 1862 (London) and 1865 (Dublin), and like then, a multitude of economic, artistic and scientific initiatives represented the fading country on the fair grounds.<sup>108</sup> In 1867, however, the Holy See also sent something of its own for the first time in the history of its participations in world fairs.<sup>109</sup> In the illustrated catalogue which the French published, the author of the article on the Papal States imagined a massive block of catacomb, “*the dark city of the dead*”, to have been shipped in its entirety from the Roman Campania to the *Champ-de-Mars*. Its character set it apart from all the buildings around and nothing, he wrote, would make a more lasting impression on a visitor’s mind (see fig. 7).<sup>110</sup>

In the illustrated catalogue of the world fair, the brief article on the catacomb facsimile of the Holy See was not the only contribution which mentioned Rome. Inside the enormous hall of steel and glass in which the French welcomed their international guests in 1867, the Kingdom of Italy constructed a gallery of statues. The gallery, an “*elegant design of architect Cipolla, covered in arabesques and graceful ornament by the Roman painter Samodia*” was to convey the destiny of the Italians.<sup>111</sup> The independent critic Giuseppe de Luca formulated his understanding of the Italian destiny as represented by the gallery in an art historical perspective: “*The Italian age of artistry,*” he wrote, “*began when the Romans entered Greece. From then onwards, it can be said, art has been the destiny of Italian history. Even religion turned into art.*”<sup>112</sup> The author of the article on the gallery in the French catalogue permitted himself a fairly political statement as he wished the peninsula the “*united action and collective inspiration*”, which it would lack as long as “*Rome remains*

<sup>108</sup> Capitelli, “L’archeologia cristiana al servizio di Pio IX,” 559.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 560.

<sup>110</sup> Poitevin, Prosper, “Etats pontificaux. Les catacombes de Rome,” in *L’exposition universelle de 1867, illustrée*, I, (Paris: Ducuing, 1867) 235-7. (translation by the author) To a limited extent the author of the article on the papal pavilion showed himself knowledgeable about Christian archaeology. He cited the famous passage on the descent into the catacombs from Saint Jerome’s *Commentarium In Ezechielem*, while denying an important archaeological claim on the origins of the Christian cemeteries. As the author of the article in the exhibition catalogue refuted the catacombs could have been of Christian making in their origins, he touched a thorny matter. Giuseppe Marchi had proved how most of the subterranean corridors of the catacombs had been carved from economically useless material and could therefore not have been dug as mines for Roman building materials. This argument by Marchi greatly enlarged the apologetic potential of the catacombs. For a brief account of the argument of Marchi and its influence on the reception of the catacombs, see: Gaston, “British Travellers and Scholars in the Roman Catacombs 1450-1900,” 159.

<sup>111</sup> De Castellane, “L’Italie à l’Exposition universelle,” in *L’exposition universelle de 1867, illustrée*, I, (Paris: Ducuing, 1867) 264-8. (translation by the author)

<sup>112</sup> Giuseppe de Luca, *L’Italia nell’Esposizione universale del 1867 in Parigi*, (Napels: Tipografia dei Fratelli Testa, 1869), 137. (translation by the author)

*the sovereign city of Catholicism*". In the eternal city, he wrote, "*tradition is conserved immutably*".<sup>113</sup>

Scholar Giovanna Capitelli discussed the world fair catacomb of the Holy See in a similar way. She presented it in opposition to the Italian *quattrocento* gallery. Capitelli portrayed the pavilion as a representation of how Rome presented itself as "*martyr of modernity*" as she found a letter in which the papal commissioner viscount de Chousy alluded to this idea. The responsible Parisian correspondent de Chousy compared the idea of bringing a catacomb to Paris to the descent of a martyr into the arena of modern nations. In Paris, viscount de Chousy wrote, the Holy See would be surrounded by enemies while armed with "*its incomparable archaeology*".<sup>114</sup>

By the time of the world fair of 1867, Europe must have become familiar with such language of papal intransigence. During the pontificate of Pius IX, the laicising force of liberalism went hand in hand with unprecedented Catholic faithfulness to Rome. European Catholics invested their hopes in the pope in search of political assurance. Notwithstanding the consequential success of Pius IX in spiritual matters, the pope's reign in the worldly realm was often deemed unfortunate. *Kulturkampf* was launched in Germany in the 1870s and spread to neighbouring countries, while the Papal States got caught in the Italian *Risorgimento* during the 1850s and 1860s. Strongly against the will and every possible effort of the Holy See, Rome found itself occupied by Italian troops in 1870, at which point the Kingdom of Italy finally unified the Italian peninsula.<sup>115</sup>

During the 1860s, bafflingly militaristic language echoed from the Papal States throughout the international press. Catholic newspapers eagerly reported the heroism of the papal Zouaves, "*ready to have died on the very staircases of the Vatican, if need were, round the throne of Pius IX*".<sup>116</sup> In its opposition to the Italian unification, Rome was as radical in its world fair architecture as it was in practice. When France politically disillusioned Rome by denying it the extent of military support it had hoped for, the Holy See gathered a militia of individual volunteers to ward off the Italian occupation of the Papal States in 1859. The force of 'pontifical Zouaves', as the volunteers were called, eventually included men from over 25 different countries. Over two thousand Belgians alone travelled to Rome to join the

<sup>113</sup> De Castellane, "L'Italie à l'Exposition universelle," 264-8. (translation by the author)

<sup>114</sup> "*Ce serait cependant un beau spectacle de voir la Papauté dédaigneuse des ennemis qui l'environnent et qui l'attendent, descendre armée de toutes pièces dans cette grande arène pacifique escortée des beaux arts et des Sciences dont elle fut toujours la protectrice et la gardienne, parée de son archéologie sans égale parmi les peuples en montrant au monde par son industrie, qu'elle est aussi vivante dans le présent que glorieuse dans le passé.*" This is an excerpt from a letter of February 1866 which viscount de Chousy, the Paris-based correspondent of the 1867 World Exhibition project of the Papal States, sent to the responsible Roman ministry. Orthographically, I changed the excerpt as presented by Giovanna Capitelli to some extent. Yet, I never consulted the original letter of de Havelt. Possibly I have overcorrected the excerpt, whereas Capitelli faithfully reproduced errors of de Havelt. (Capitelli, "L'archeologia cristiana al servizio di Pio IX," 560.)

<sup>115</sup> Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People: a history of European Catholicism since 1750* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 129-39, 144-54.

<sup>116</sup> "Summary," *The Tablet*, November 23, 1867. <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/issue/23rd-november-1867>.

papal forces.<sup>117</sup> Although more ink and photographic paper than blood was spilled over the commitment of the Zouaves, they set an ultramontane example for the decades to come (see fig. 9).<sup>118</sup> No trope in the volunteers' letters was as common as their aspiration to martyrdom in emulation of the first Christians.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, the ecclesiastical militarism of the Zouaves tuned in to Christian archaeology during the 1860s. Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman's novel *Fabiola or the Church of the catacombs* (1854) (see section 1.4), for instance, lived on in some of the Zouave literature of the 1860s.<sup>120</sup> Simultaneously, the renewal of Christian archaeology by Pius IX's *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra* and the opening of the catacombs during the 1850s and 1860s surfaces even in general histories of Catholicism as a crucial factor in the attraction of pilgrims to Rome.<sup>121</sup>

The *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra* was led by Giovanni Battista de Rossi (1822-1894), the archaeologist who was also responsible for the pavilion at the Paris world fair of 1867. De Rossi had been involved in the project from the start. Originally, however, there had been plans which were quite different from the pavilion which was eventually realised. From the correspondence she studied, Giovanna Capitelli learnt how original plans were called off at a late stage of the preparations for the world fair, in favour of the catacomb which was eventually built. In a letter of October 1866, de Rossi wrote how he intended to develop an exhibition of copies of paintings, inscriptions and Christian artefacts from both the catacombs and the oldest churches of Rome, to present the development of the arts during the entire first millennium. One month later, a different letter first signalled Rome had abandoned its previous plans, as “*by order of his Holiness a model of a room from the catacombs*” was to replace the previously envisioned gallery. Capitelli learnt how, in fact, neither Pius IX's nor de Rossi's incentive had led to this change. A prominent French politician and former diplomat of France at the Holy See had been the first to convey “*the ardent wish to see a model of a catacomb in the Pontifical section*”.<sup>122</sup>

Unlike the Valkenburg facsimile, the catacomb-pavilion of the Holy See did not turn out as an actual archaeological copy. Rather, the pavilion generically invoked an atmosphere of gloom while inside, copies of epigrams and frescos from several disjunct locations were repositioned in a realistic relation to one another. Most of the exhibits were copies from the

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Buerman, “1863 Rome,” in *Belgen in oorlog: onbekende beelden sterke verhalen*, ed. Bruno De Wever, 14-7. (Ghent: Hannibal, 2012), 14.

<sup>118</sup> In reporting the victory of pontifical Zouaves at Mentana, *The Tablet* for instance wrote: “*Surrender under any circumstances was not spoken of. It was a word erased from the vocabulary while a single Garibaldian remained on the Pontifical territory, and had the French delayed their arrival, Europe would have heard of a wholesale martyrdom, but not of a capitulation.*” (“Summary,” *The Tablet*)

<sup>119</sup> Thomas Buerman, “1863 Rome,” 16.

<sup>120</sup> Buerman signalled how the Belgian canon Servaes Daems cited *Fabiola* in his novel *Voor Twee Vaders*, which spurred the “*brave children of Belgium*” to “*gather around the rock of Peter*” in 1868: Thomas Buerman, “The Ideal Roman Catholic in Belgian Zouave Stories,” in *Paths to Gender: European Historical Perspectives on Women and Men*, ed. Carla Salvaterra (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2009), 242, 248-9.

<sup>121</sup> Atkin and Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People: a history of European Catholicism since 1750*, 132.

<sup>122</sup> Capitelli, “L'archeologia cristiana al servizio di Pio IX,” 559-60. (translation by the author)

crypt of Lucina in the catacomb of Callixtus, yet the pavilion also included some elements from the catacombs of Domitilla and Priscilla.<sup>123</sup> Architecturally, an ambulatory corridor surrounded a single cubiculum. The corridor exhibited sepulchral *loculi*, certain inscriptions and some frescos. The centrally positioned, domed chapel contained three martyr's tombs and a multitude of frescos on the tombs, the chapel walls and ceiling.<sup>124</sup>

De Rossi's *Aperçu général sur les catacombes de Rome et description du modèle d'une catacombe exposé à Paris*, a lengthy guide to the pavilion, did not articulate a particular programme which may have been instilled in the exhibition by the selection of exhibits. Giovanna Capitelli did not mention such intentions in her article on the pavilion either. Although sixty pages long, the *Aperçu* reads as a mute text. De Rossi concentrated his text on absolutely factual matters and almost neglected the martyr's tombs. Not a single metaphysical statement or romantic outburst can be found in the booklet. It seems as though the pavilion is comparable to the much later Valkenburg catacomb in the sense that the logic of the papal facsimile may precisely have been the fundamental duality of the sublime appeal of the building and the rational text which accompanied it. The way the interest of religion appears to have been silenced in Rossi's guide to the pavilion is what made the papal contribution to the world fair a good representation of the ambitions of the proponents of Christian archaeology in Rome. On the world fair as in Rome, de Rossi's archaeological practice reconciled religion and the rationalist world by infusing the sublime appeal of the catacombs with positive knowledge, precisely to the taste of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. Christian archaeology as a matured scholarly practice was exhibited, just as much as the gruesome character of the catacombs was on show. This became most evident in the conclusion of the first part of de Rossi's text, where he apologised for not being able to ground his assertions in their complete context in the mere sixty pages of the guide. He then referred to his magnum opus *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*.<sup>125</sup>

Only one historical analogy was part of de Rossi's *Aperçu*. The guide repeated an analogy of which Jamie Beth Erenstoft signalled the presence in de Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* itself. In Paris, the archaeologist presented his papal benefactor as "*the Damasus of our century*", just as he had called him "*another Damasus*" in *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*.<sup>126</sup> The name of the early Christian bishop Damasus of Rome (366-384) was omnipresent in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Christian archaeology. Remembered as "*the impresario of the late antique cult of the martyrs*", he commissioned dozens of epigrams, carved in exquisite lettering from marble slabs to announce the tombs of certain martyrs in the catacombs.<sup>127</sup> Contemporary scholarship emphasises the epigrams directed attention to the martyred bishops and clerics among the early Christian dead, while they simultaneously diverted attention from those martyrs whose cults were politically less favourable to papal

<sup>123</sup> On the three original catacombs see for instance: de Rossi, *Aperçu général sur les catacombes de Rome et description du modèle d'une catacombe exposé à Paris en 1867*, 48.

<sup>124</sup> *Elenco generale ragionato di tutti gli oggetti spediti dal Governo pontificio alla Esposizione universale di Parigi nell'anno 1867*, (Rome: Tipografia della Reverenda Camera Apostolica, 1867), 1-2.

<sup>125</sup> de Rossi, *Aperçu général sur les catacombes de Rome et description du modèle d'une catacombe exposé à Paris en 1867*, 28, 39.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>127</sup> Marianne Sághy, "Scinditur in partes populus: Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome," *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 3 (2000): 273.

authority.<sup>128</sup> In an ultimate act of popularisation, Pius IX visited the notorious *Crypt of the Popes* in the Callixtus catacomb only two days after its discovery by de Rossi. There, a Damasian epigram praised the “*throng of prelates [...] who carry off the triumph of their foes*”.<sup>129</sup> In the year of his death, Pius himself commissioned a large commemorative plaque, which was placed at the entrance of the Callixtus cemetery. It reminded all of the efforts of “*the new Damasus, who restored the monuments of triumph, buried by the debris of a thousand years*”.<sup>130</sup> Damasus’ name tied Pius IX to the catacombs and Damasus’ poetry connected Pius IX to the martyred clerics, linking the *Risorgimento* and his papacy to the Roman persecutions of the Christians of the first centuries.

Based on the world fair catalogue and Giovanna Capitelli’s article, it can be assumed the catacomb-pavilion of 1867 was intended as a political stance. In the catalogue of the Parisian fair and in the correspondence of the organising members which Capitelli studied, political interpretations of both the catacomb and the Italian gallery surfaced. De Rossi’s guide to the pavilion did not articulate any political intention, yet his designation of Pius IX as “*the Damasus of our century*” justifies Giovanna Capitelli’s understanding of the pavilion as an image of the persecuted condition of the Papal States and of Pius IX as “*martyr of modernity*”. Capitelli, however, also signalled how the intentions of de Rossi and the Holy See had initially been remarkably remote from the pavilion which was eventually realised. Per letter de Rossi reported to the French how he had first worked on a gallery of exhibits from both the catacombs and the oldest churches of Rome. He would present the development of the arts as guided by Christianity over the course of a millennium. What can be retained from this initial ambition, is that the contribution of the Holy See must initially have been intended as a cultural as much as a political statement.

Of de Rossi’s initial art historical ambitions only a single art historical remark made the eventual guide to the catacomb-pavilion. But it was a crucial one. In his *Aperçue*, de Rossi explained why he had opted specifically to have a sepulchral room from the early second century reconstructed on the world fair. He wrote it allowed him to show how adjustments to the same room, executed by the Christians of the next century revealed an artistic evolution. Those artistic differences, he wrote, “*give an idea of the first steps of the Christian arts towards the forms which [...] would later be called Byzantine*”.<sup>131</sup> The second part of the present dissertation explains how de Rossi committed several pages of his *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* explicitly to the deconstruction of art historical argumentation which used the omnipresence of classical forms in the catacombs to justify the Christian validity of the Renaissance (see section 2.3 “The Opheus-Christ in de Rossi’s *Roma Sotterranea*”). The historian who de Rossi addressed in *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* had denied the arts in the catacombs had initiated an abandonment of classical concerns. De Rossi’s opponent had designated the Byzantines as the first to manifest such an abandonment.

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<sup>128</sup> With the exception of Saint Agnes, lay Christians, women or soldiers were never given an epigram by Damasus. If the epigrams did not sing the praises of martyred clerics, they involved pairs or groups who represented a community united in peril. (Ibid., 286.)

<sup>129</sup> Erenstoft, “Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology,” 15, 171. For a translation of the epigram, see: DUNN Geoffrey, *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity*, Routledge, London, 2016.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 171-2.

<sup>131</sup> de Rossi, *Aperçu général sur les catacombes de Rome et description du modèle d'une catacombe exposé à Paris en 1867*, 51.



If de Rossi's facsimile catacomb condensed his entire archaeological endeavour into a simple image and a gateway into his *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*, this brief statement about the Byzantines makes that true for his art historical ideas as well. As mentioned at the start of this subsection, critic Giuseppe de Luca insisted on understanding the *quattrocento* gallery of the Italians as a cultural promise. De Rossi had initially wished to dedicate the papal contribution to the world fair in its entirety to a presentation of the 'Christian' development of the arts. Although this ambition was aborted at a late stage of its development, the facsimile and the *Aperçue* collaborated to bringing the core of the same message. A cultural argument was inherent in the catacomb-pavilion. The cultural promise of the pavilion of the Papal States could, in that sense, not have been more opposed to the gallery of the Kingdom of Italy. Whereas Giuseppe de Luca asserted how in Italy even religion turned into art, de Rossi outlined how in the catacombs of Pius IX, art had turned into religion.

### **The *Museo Ecclesiastico* (1703-10) and the *Demonstratio* prints (1754)**

By the end of the Napoleonic wars, the emphasis of theology was shifted away from a Kantian insistence upon the demonstrability of truth towards a triad of faith, spirituality and mysticism as the key to appreciating the divine.<sup>132</sup> During his office, Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the first new dogma since the Counter-Reformation. He published the controversial *Syllabus of errors* and he convoked the first Vatican council, where papal infallibility was dogmatically defined. The *Syllabus* most famously concluded the Church could not come to terms with progress, liberalism or modern civilization, whereby it sweepingly denounced modernity itself.<sup>133</sup> On the one hand Pius IX stimulated the development of scientific Christian archaeology. On the other hand, the radically new dogmas of the Immaculate Conception of 1854 and of Papal Infallibility of 1870 respectively fed into the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century crisis of reason and consolidated the unprecedented ultramontaniam of the European Catholics.<sup>134</sup> That way, Jamie Beth Erenstoft argued, Catholicism was stretched in two directions.<sup>135</sup>

Whereas Church historians situate the longevity of Pius IX's pontificate in the way it confirmed the break of Catholicism and modernity, the ecclesiastical context of the older projects which this subsection briefly introduces to allow for a better understanding of the catacomb-pavilion, was radically different.<sup>136</sup> During the much earlier pontificate of Clement XI (1700-1721), the Vatican presented itself as an important patron to the modern sciences in the early stages of the age of enlightenment. Like the earlier popes, Clement XI

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<sup>132</sup> Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People: a history of European Catholicism since 1750*, 106-7.

<sup>133</sup> Darrell Jodock, *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18.

<sup>134</sup> For this comparison of Pius' spiritual and archaeological policy in context: Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 114-6. For the concept of a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century crisis of reason, I draw on: John Wyom Burrow, *The crisis of reason: European thought, 1848-1914*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

<sup>135</sup> Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 115.

<sup>136</sup> For an example of such a characterisation of the longevity of the papacy of Pius IX, see: Jodock, *Catholicism Contending with Modernity*, 18.

used the tools of historiography to create institutional legitimacy for the papacy.<sup>137</sup> Yet, Rome was facing a crisis of political authority on a European scale due to its unsuccessful involvement in the War of Spanish Succession. To cope with the crisis, pope Clement XI envisioned a new strategy of self-representation for the Papal States.<sup>138</sup> Clement XI commissioned the Veronese scholar Francesco Bianchini (1662-1729) to design the *Museo Ecclesiastico*, a gallery of antiquities which was to epitomise the new representational programme of the Church. Significantly, the gallery would physically connect the Vatican archives to the Vatican library.<sup>139</sup> Francesco Bianchini worked for several years on the designs and the preparation of the museum. Although never realised, the *Museo Ecclesiastico* lived on in the work of Francesco Bianchini's cousin Giuseppe Bianchini. He developed part of the concept of the *Museo Ecclesiastico* in large engravings, which were published in his Church historical volumes *Demonstratio Historiae Ecclesiasticae quadripartitae comprobatae monumentis pertinentibus ad fidem temporum et gestorum*, in 1754 (see fig. 8 and fig. 10).<sup>140</sup> This subsection confronts the papal catacomb-pavilion of the Parisian world fair of 1867 with the well-studied designs of both Francesco and Giuseppe Bianchini in order better to situate the implications of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century pavilion.

Although galleries of antiquities had become a common asset at European courts by the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, certain innovations set Francesco Bianchini's designs apart from every contemporary courtly gallery. For one, the *Museo Ecclesiastico* was the first museographical project ever to attempt to spatialise history by means of historical artefacts. Moreover, his *Museo Ecclesiastico* was unique for it included early Christian archaeological findings in a classical collection.<sup>141</sup> Partly for those reasons, German scholar Brigitte Sölch has extensively studied the project of Clement XI and Bianchini recently. The rough plans of Francesco Bianchini's *Museo Ecclesiastico* which were passed down, show an enfilade of rooms in which three distinct themes were evoked. A first room represented Christianity midst the many cults of antiquity. The second room evoked the dual Roman heritage - both pagan and Christian - of the first centuries of our calendar. The third room, lastly, visualised ecclesiastical geography and the missionary destiny of the Church.<sup>142</sup>

Unlike Francesco Bianchini, who had worked in the direct service of Clement XI, Giuseppe Bianchini was never commissioned to make his designs. From 1740 until 1756 he advertised the possibility of the visualisation of his Church historical work in an actual museum in the Vatican. The designs he published in his *Demonstratio* in 1754, after he had them developed into large prints by the engraver Anton Barbazza, were part of his plea for the realisation of this museum.<sup>143</sup> In both the second room of the *Museo Ecclesiastico* and the prints of Giuseppe's *Demonstratio*, the first two centuries were visualised by a succession of busts of the Roman emperors, classical philosophers and emperors' wives. In the work of both the Bianchini, the busts partitioned the exhibition walls into equal bays. Midst the busts, instruments of pagan worship were juxtaposed to images of Church fathers, biblical scenes

<sup>137</sup> Brigitte Sölch, *Francesco Bianchini (1662-1729): und die Anfänge öffentlicher Museen in Rom*, (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag München, 2007), 11-12.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

and findings from the catacombs such as frescos, medals, amulets and inscriptions. In each bay of both Francesco's sketchy design and Giuseppe's detailed engravings, early Christian and classical objects were set side.<sup>144</sup>

To situate her reading of both the *Museo Ecclesiastico* and Giuseppe Bianchini's prints of *Demonstratio Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Sölch introduced an example of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century reception of Giuseppe's printed gallery. In *Giornale de letterati di Roma*, reviewer Gaetano Cenni was lured into what Sölch called "*normative, apologetic narratives*" on how the splendour and the festivals, games, pleasures, and general appearance of pagan Rome were opposed to the humble and withdrawn life of the first believers in his review of the prints in 1753. Sölch admitted that, with goodwill, a hierarchy could be recognised in the way the early Christian objects were presented higher on the walls of Giuseppe's prints than the imperial busts. Yet Sölch objected this could not have been the essence of what the gallery was designed to convey. If such an apologetic concept had been envisioned, she argued, the busts of the emperors would have been given a role which would have contradicted the agenda of the museum. Both the early Christian and the pagan objects were presented in the early-modern type of the gallery of antiquities. In such a gallery, Sölch wrote, the classical busts were the backbone and the essential aesthetic vehicle.<sup>145</sup> Sölch validly buttressed this assertion by demonstrating how even Gaetano Cenni regarded Bianchini's prints in that way, as a passionate interest in the stylistic and artistic value of the pagan antiquities surfaced in Cenni's language. The busts in particular were admired for their aesthetic value. The "*most beautiful busts of the emperors*" were repeatedly lauded by Cenni in euphoric language for their beauty, natural quality and expressive character.<sup>146</sup>

In her defence of a more complex reading of the Bianchini designs than Gaetano Cenni's, Sölch added that certain pagan exhibits which were represented in Giuseppe Bianchini's prints had great personal value to the Bianchini. As these objects had been of importance in the scientific work of his uncle Francesco, Giuseppe Bianchini would not have included them merely to have them taunted.<sup>147</sup> Sölch added the Bianchini deployed an outdated architectural style, thereby consciously presenting the exhibits in historicising scenography. Sölch reasoned the 16<sup>th</sup>-century style of the designs set the stage for a specifically Tridentine reading of the exhibits. As such the *Museo Ecclesiastico* embodied not only a recombination of pagan and early Christian objects but also a historical reference because of the

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>147</sup> Sölch pointed out the presence of the *Globus Farnese* and the *Fragmentum Planisphaerii* in one of the plates of Giuseppe's *Demonstratio*. Besides their prominence in the prints, Sölch emphasised their personal importance to the Bianchini. The *Fragmentum Planisphaerii* is an astrological Greek fragment that represents the heavens in concentric circles. It was of great scientific importance at the beginning of the eighteenth century, especially to the astronomical researches of Giuseppe Bianchini. When it was discovered in excavations in 1705 it was transferred to the Vatican and compared by Francesco Bianchini to the *Globus Farnese*. The results of his investigation were published with corresponding illustrations in Giuseppe's first volume of the *Demonstratio Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. Nevertheless, Gaetano Cenni essentialised the role of their presence to that of a mere expression of false doctrine in opposition to the early Christian truths. (Ibid., 213-4.)

historicising style of the design itself. The designs visualised the continuity of the Tridentine identity of Catholicism.<sup>148</sup>

Adding perhaps the most important aspect to her contextualisation of the *Museo Ecclesiastico* and *Demonstratio Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Sölch discussed the designs of the Bianchini in regard to the programmatic collecting policy which Clement XI initiated. The pope systematically purchased collections of classical artefacts of Roman families, by means of which he pursued the image of a culturally triumphant papacy. Simultaneously, he enforced a legal embargo on the export of antiquities from Rome – one of the more forceful measures of his pontificate. Francesco Bianchini's unrealised *Museo Ecclesiastico* was the only exception to Clement's disinvestment in Christian antiquity. Precisely therefore, Sölch argued, the *Museo Ecclesiastico* is the key to understanding the cultural goals of the Church of Clement XI. In his early 18<sup>th</sup>-century Catholicism, Christianity was promoted within the civilising whole of religion, classical cultural aspirations and the sciences, for the Bianchini designs presented both classical and early Christian objects in the enlightened concept of a museum.<sup>149</sup>

The *Museo Ecclesiastico* of Clement XI premised the systematic development of the Vatican museums. Yet, by the time the *Museo Pio-Clementino* was realised during the final decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the path of apologetic Church history had entirely been abandoned in favour of an exclusively classical project.<sup>150</sup> Napoleon's subsequent plundering of the collections in 1797 led Pius VII (1801-1805) to launch vast new excavations at Ostia in an attempt to refill the papal collections of classical antiquities.<sup>151</sup> Later, Gregory XVI (1831-1846) further delayed a renewal of Vatican attention to Christian archaeology. He founded several new museums to house and display Etruscan and Egyptian artefacts.<sup>152</sup> Up until the election of Pius IX, the Church remained maximally involved in the upkeep, display, and excavation of classical sites in and around Rome. Pius IX, however, devoted the energies of his papacy mainly to the scientific and religious exploration of the catacombs. He created the *Museo Pio Cristiano*, a museum of early Christian antiquity and he had dozens of the most ancient churches of the city restored, excavated and purged of baroque finishings.<sup>153</sup> Whereas Clement XI protected classical antiquity on the broadest scale, Pius IX was the first modern pontiff to do the same for the early Christian remains in Rome.

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<sup>148</sup> Sölch associated Francesco Bianchini's use of both certain dramatic elements and his way of establishing chronology in the early Christian centuries by means of the lives of the emperors, with the martyrdom cycles of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century painter Niccolò Circignani and publications such as *Ecclesia Militantis Triumphi* by Giovanni Battista de'Cavallieri (1521-1601). Sölch interpreted the presence of the figure of the hanging Marsyas as a reference to Antonio Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea* frontispiece. She also tracked the design of the bays of the walls to examples of the Pantheon, the Jesuit Gesù church, Palladio's Teatro Olimpico and Bramante's design for St Peter's basilica. (See: Ibid., 134-47.)

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>151</sup> Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 59-62, 160.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 199-200.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 200. For the exceptions to Pius' focus on Christian archaeology: Ibid., 153-9.

In spite of the polarising statement of Gaetano Cenni about the classical and early Christian objects in the work of Giuseppe Bianchini, the *Demonstratio* prints of Giuseppe nor the *Museo Ecclesiastico* designs actually thematised an opposition of the classical and early Christian heritage of Rome. Rather, Sölch argued, they must have been intended to represent the union of the dual heritage in the modern Church of Clement XI. They included early Christian objects to visualise the origins of Church history, while they fused Christian apologetics and the humanist archaeological orientation that gave the work of the Bianchini its exceptional character.<sup>154</sup>

The blatant opposition of Pius IX's "block of catacomb" and the *quattrocento* gallery of the Kingdom of Italy at the Paris world fair of 1867 appears as an absolute counterpoint to the Bianchini designs. What the Church had united for centuries appears to have been separated at this point. This moment may have exemplified how during the pontificate of Pius IX the role of Christian archaeology in the Church had indeed changed. Caution in jumping to this interpretation is due. After all, this opposition was beyond the power of either of the two involved parties. The Roman catacomb and the Italian gallery were designed and realised independently of one another, so if Rome promoted its early Christian heritage while Italy advertised Florentine culture, the apparent opposition does not directly imply mutual cultural exclusiveness. Yet, the catacomb-pavilion replaced a gallery which would have rendered how the arts had evolved under the guidance of Christianity during the first millennium. If - as the *Aperçue* suggested in regard to the catacomb-pavilion - de Rossi's project was to visualise what his magnum opus *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* taught, there was a manifestly counter-cultural ambition inherent in the world fair contribution of the Holy See. Implicitly, de Rossi's gallery would have outlined why the union of the Christian and the classical heritage of Rome - such as the one envisioned in the designs of the Bianchini - was invalid. As mentioned, this remained the very message of the central room of the pavilion and the only art historical remark in the *Aperçue*. Even in the eventually realised catacomb-pavilion, the Catholic Church communicated to the nations of the modern world how authentic Christianity had originally led to the abandonment of the artistic concerns of the classical pagans. In the light of the designs of the Bianchini it ought to be clear how revolutionary the catacomb-pavilion therefore really was.

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<sup>154</sup> Sölch, *Francesco Bianchini (1662-1729): und die Anfänge öffentlicher Museen in Rom*, 202.

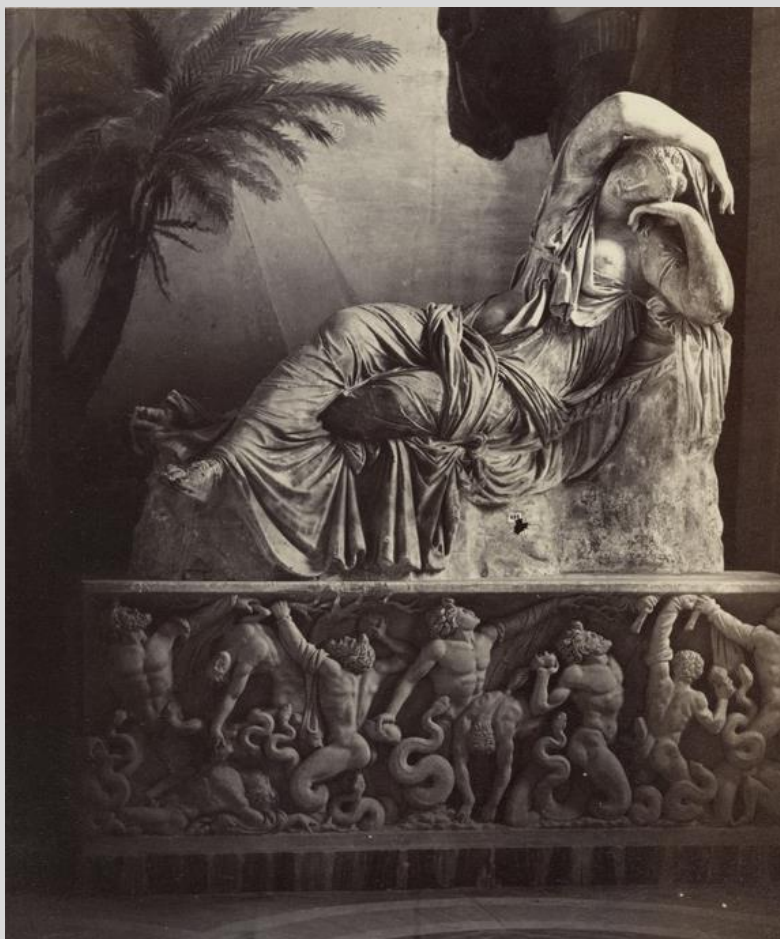


Fig. 11. Robert Macpherson, *Cleopatra-Ariadne of the Gallery of Statues at the Museo Pio-Clementino*, 1863. Gallery of Statues, *Museo Pio-Clementino*, 1863.

This photograph was made by the Scottish photographer Robert Macpherson in 1863. He was the first photographer to be allowed to make images inside the Vatican museums. The palm tree in the background of the photograph was part of the original decorations of the *Museo Pio-Clementino* of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. When the *Museo Pio-Clementino* was created and decorated, the sculpture was believed to represent Cleopatra. The mural therefore situated the sculpture in Egypt. (Daniela Gallo, "A pagan display? The Gallery of Statues and the Vestibolo Rotondo of the Museo Pio Clementino," 26, 35.) At the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the sculpture was re-identified as the mythological Ariadne, the woman who liberated Theseus from the Knossos labyrinth, subsequently to be abandoned by her lover. (Robert Macpherson, *Vatican sculptures, selected, and arranged in the order in which they are found in the galleries, briefly explained*, (Glasgow: William Mackenzie, 1863), 104-7.)

For a brief account on the palm leaf as a symbol of triumph and martyrdom, and its role as such in the identification of martyr's tombs in the catacombs, see: Reusens, *Éléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 97.

*A change, she perceived, had taken place, which at first she could not exactly define; but when she had passed through the gate the number of empty pedestals and niches reminded her, that the villa had entirely lost one of its most characteristic ornaments, - the number of beautiful statues which stood gracefully against the clipped evergreen hedges, and gave it the name, now become quite an empty one, of Ad Statuas.*

*She could contain herself no longer, and, turning to Chromatius, she said:*

*"Why, what on earth have you been doing, Chromatius to send away all your statues, and destroy the peculiar feature of your handsome villa? What induced you to do this?"*

*"... Of what use were those figures to any one?"*

*"If you thought so," replied she, "others might not. But tell me, what have you done with them all?"*

*"Why, to tell you the truth, I have had them brought under the hammer."*

*"What! and never let me know anything about it? You know there were several pieces I would most gladly have purchased."*

*Chromatius laughed outright, and said, with that familiar tone, which acquaintance with Fabiola from a child authorised him always to assume with her:*

*"Dear me! how your young imagination runs away, far too fast for my poor old tongue to keep pace with; I meant not the auctioneer's hammer, but the sledge-hammer. The gods and goddesses have been all smashed, pulverised!" [...]*

*Fabiola was utterly amazed, as she exclaimed, "What an utter barbarian you have become, my wise old judge! What shadow of reason can you give to justify so outrageous a proceeding?"*

*"Why, you see, as I have grown older, I have grown wiser! and I have come to the conclusion that Mr. Jupiter and Mrs. Juno are no more gods than you or I; so I summarily got rid of them."*

*"[...] But why not retain them as mere works of art?"*

*"Because they had been set up here, not in that capacity, but as divinities. [...]"*

*"And pray, my most righteous old friend, is it not an imposture to continue calling your villa Ad Statuas, after not a single statue is left standing in it?"*

*"Certainly," replied Chromatius, amused at her sharpness, "and you will see that I have planted palm-trees all about; and, as soon as they show their heads above the evergreens, the villa will take the title of Ad Palmas."*

*"That will be a pretty name," said Fabiola, who little thought of the higher sense of appropriateness which it would contain. She, of course, was not aware, that the villa was now a training-school [...] for the great combat of faith, martyrdom to death. They who had entered in, and they who would go out, might equally say they were on their way to pluck the conqueror's palm, to be borne by them before God's judgment-seat, in token of their victory over the world. Many were the palm-branches shortly to be gathered in that early Christian retreat.*

## 1.4 Epilogue: Desecrating Renaissance

In the first part of this dissertation it was illustrated how the use of the Christian catacombs of Rome shifted to more scientific practices in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, by comparing the roles which the relics of *sainte Theudosie* and the *Salvatore Olandese* fresco played in the *Livre de sainte Theudosie* and the Valkenburg *Gedenkschrift* respectively, the section also argued the goals of the exploitation of the catacombs remained rooted in religion. Although Valkenburg was intended to become an exclusively scientific and even eucumenical hub of Christian archaeology in the north of Europe, the simple *Salvatore Olandese* fresco provided the occasion for Ferdinand Sarton to write of the Dutch copy of the Caecilia crypt like Philippe Gerbet had written of the facsimile of the seminarists of Amiens. The scientific character of the adoption of the fresco as a discovery by the archaeological commission of Valkenburg permitted religious analogies to become part of the *Gedenkschrift*. Adopting and copying the fresco worked precisely like translations of relics from the catacombs had always worked and archaeology allowed the Catholics to vindicate the cult of their martyrs beyond the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In spite of the apparent scientific revolution which transformed Christian archaeology from the 1850s onwards, the Valkenburg *Gedenkschrift* suggests the essential dynamics of scholarship and devotion remained unchanged.

A name which links the procession of *sainte Theudosie* of Amiens to the much more recent Valkenburg catacombs, is that of the English cardinal Nicholas Wiseman (1802-1865). When *Theudosie* arrived in Amiens, the British Catholic hierarchy had recently been reinstated, making Nicholas Wiseman one of the most prominent European Catholics of the time. In Amiens, Wiseman had the honour of giving the first sermon when the procession of the relics had entered the cathedral. The spatial and historical analogies which are abundant in Philippe Gerbet's *Livre de sainte Theudosie*, were also the clue of Wiseman's sermon. The cardinal preached both how the thirty bishops who were present at the celebrations in Amiens were reconnected to the prelates of the original Church and how Christianity as proclaimed in "*subterranean chapels*" remained unchanged in the "*majestic temple*" of Amiens.<sup>155</sup> The name of the cardinal reappeared in the *Gedenkschrift* of the Valkenburg catacombs, in the article which the cleric Xavier Smits contributed about the frescos of the catacombs. In this iconographic contribution to the *Gedenkschrift*, Smits expressed his doubt about the path of realism which Christian archaeology had come to follow by 1916. In order to characterise the poetic spirit of overt devotion, which Smits deemed to be more fruitful than the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century infatuation with pure science, he reminisced about the writing of the British cardinal and mentioned Wiseman's novel *Fabiola or the Church of the catacombs*.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie*, 169-70.

<sup>156</sup> "What a pity it is," Smits wrote "that the realistic and so widespread representations [...] are in conflict with the glorious poetry of the first Christians, so well understood in Cardinal Wiseman's *Fabiola*." (Smits, "De Muurschilderingen der katakomben," 62.) (translation by the author)



Wiseman's *Fabiola or the Church of the catacombs* was an apologetic novel, first published in 1854. Reprinted countless times and translated into ten languages, *Fabiola* essentially reacted against Charles Kingsley's novel *Hypatia, or New Foes with an Old Face* (1853). The latter had discredited the newly legalised British Catholic hierarchy by portraying the corruption of the first Christians of Alexandria.<sup>157</sup> With *Fabiola*, Wiseman inaugurated the *Catholic Popular Library* series, to which he later invited John Henry Newman (1801-1890) to contribute his *Callista, a Sketch of the Third Century* (1856).<sup>158</sup> The scholar Vincent Viaene related *Fabiola* to Chateaubriand's much older novel *Les Martyrs* (1809) and like Jamie Beth Erenstoft, Viaene presented the novel as an illustration of the popularity of early Christianity in the common imagination at the time.<sup>159</sup>

Wiseman's own affinity for the catacombs was grounded in the experiences of the long period during which he lived in Rome. From 1818 onwards, he studied at the English college. There, Wiseman befriended the archaeologist Giuseppe Marchi (1795-1860) and made visits to the catacombs a mandatory part of the curricula at the institution when he became its rector himself.<sup>160</sup> Wiseman's *Fabiola* was a lengthy and reverent picture of Christian life in 4<sup>th</sup>-century Rome. Its genre was hybrid, as Wiseman balanced the book between a fictional tale set in early Christian Rome and an introduction to Christian archaeology. In Wiseman's introduction to the edition of 1854, the cardinal asserted it would have been easy to give the publication a wholly scientific élan. He, however, stated he had the ambition to surpass merely scientific accounts and mentioned to have frequented archaeological literature for impressions rather than facts.<sup>161</sup> Therein must have laid part of *Fabiola's* appeal to Xavier Smits. The novel contained several illustrations from contemporary archaeological publications on the catacombs and its subtitle alluded to the work of the British protestant scholar Charles Maitland.<sup>162</sup> The chapters of *Fabiola* alternate between Wiseman's fiction and accounts of the state of affairs in 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholarly archaeology. Wiseman's eleventh chapter, for instance, discussed two long-standing historical errors.<sup>163</sup> Further on in the novel, he abandoned his story again, in order to provide an entirely archaeological account of how Italian archaeologist Giuseppe Marchi had proved the catacombs to have been of Christian rather than Roman making.<sup>164</sup> It had been a longstanding issue whether the tunnels of the catacombs were originally dug as a Christian cemetery or rather as mines of Roman building materials. Halfway, the cardinal also praised

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<sup>157</sup> Jefferson Gatrall, *The Real and the Sacred: Picturing Jesus in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 146.

<sup>158</sup> Charlotte E. Crawford, "Newman's 'Callista' and the Catholic Popular Library," *The Modern Language Review* 45, no. 2 (April 1950), 219-21.

<sup>159</sup> Viaene, "Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century," 305.

<sup>160</sup> Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 71-3, 91-4.

<sup>161</sup> Nicholas Patrick Wiseman, *Fabiola or the Church of the catacombs* (London: Burns & Oates, 1854), viii.

<sup>162</sup> For a discussion of how Wiseman's novel was related to contemporary archaeological publications: Gaston, "British Travellers and Scholars in the Roman Catacombs 1450-1900," 160.

<sup>163</sup> Wiseman, *Fabiola or the Church of the catacombs*, 68-74.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-9, 149-56.

Pius IX and the French emperor Napoleon III for their contributions to the restoration and the fame of the catacombs.<sup>165</sup>

The *Livre de sainte Theudosie* and the *Gedenkschrift* of Valkenburg have been used in the present dissertation to offer a perspective on the interaction of Catholic devotion and Christian archaeology. Because of the way *Fabiola* alternates between archaeology and early Christian fiction, the novel has the potential to illustrate this as well. This epilogue does, however, not have the intention to revisit that aspect. Rather, it is concerned with how the *Livre*, Smits' article in the *Gedenkschrift* and *Fabiola* share their way of portraying classical or Renaissance culture. This epilogue works as a prelude to the second part of this dissertation, wherein actual archaeological publications are compared for their differing views on the aesthetic legacy of the arts of the catacombs.

In the *Livre*, the *Gedenkschrift* and *Fabiola*, classical art and Renaissance were contrasted sharply with Christian material and artistic culture. In the *Livre*, Philippe Gerbet's poem *La cathédrale* very briefly opposed the Platonic "eternal essence" of the Gothic cathedral of Amiens to the preoccupations of classical sculptors and architects with supposedly superficial matters.<sup>166</sup> More elaborately and on different grounds, Xavier Smits articulated his disdain of Renaissance in his article on catacomb frescos. He wrote the inferior artistic spirit at the heart of Renaissance is recognisable in the material inferiority of the works of Renaissance masters such as of Fra Angelico, Raphael and Michelangelo. According to Smits, the "glorious paintings" of the Renaissance masters "were soon cracked and are covered by a web of dust-filled lines, while the more solid layers of chalk from the first centuries of our era remained unspoilt." Smits' first Christians had always safeguarded the durability of their work by painting on several primers, which had each been mixed with skill. It was the right amount of pozzolana - abundant in the Roman soil - that had made them, according to Smits, "as hard as our best concrete, which has a lot in common with pozzolana itself". Such virtue he deemed lost on the modern masters. "All-devastating time

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 155-6. About Napoleon III, Wiseman wrote he had sent artists to the catacombs. He must have referred to Louis Perret's *Catacombes de Rome*. By judging the value of this work in the way he did, Wiseman proved himself in tune to the opinion on the publication commonly held in Christian archaeological circles. Belgian archaeologist Edmond Reusens (1831-1903), for instance, reviewed Perret's volumes very similarly twelve years later. (Edmond Reusens, *Les catacombes de Rome: description, origine et histoire*, (Antwerp: Typographie J. E. Buschmann, 1866), 38.) About the role of Napoleon III in both the translation of *sainte Theudosie* and Perret's *Catacombes de Rome*, see section 2.1 'Paris and Rome negotiating the Orpheus-Christ'. Although the remark of Nicholas Wiseman can be interpreted as a suggestion that Napoleon III was a structural supporter of Christian archaeology, I remain unaware of scholarship on the matter. Philippe Boutry, for instance, did not refer to him in his research on the translations of relics from the catacombs of Rome to France.

<sup>166</sup> "Sur l'Ogive aux docteurs je laisse leur doctrine; / J'aime mieux, pour trouver sa plus haute origine, / Hasarder un regard vers ce monde inconnu / Où Platon découvrait, dans l'essence éternelle, / L'archétype des faits que l'oeil de Praxitèle / Sur la pierre abaissé, n'a jamais entrevu." (Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie*, 153.) See also: *L'architecture antique, ouvrière élégante, / Mais de la force aveugle esclave obéissante, / N'ose jamais lutter contre les lois du corps: / Sous son bras peu hardi la pierre se repose; / Jamais il ne la lance, et toujours il la pose / A la place où le poids se soutient sans efforts.* (Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie*, 152.)

*has thus preserved the oldest murals of the Catacombs; time has spared them for science; it has bowed to Christian art, the daughter of the gospels, who will live on with the gospels until the end of time.*"<sup>167</sup>

In a novelised way, Wiseman structurally conveyed the same ideas. Wiseman used historical analogies but defined them in particularly material terms. Abandoning the position of the narrator of *Fabiola*, Wiseman stated how it was part of the project of his book "to put [the reader] in possession of the state of material and social Rome at the period of our narrative". A comparison of those material conditions to the state of 19<sup>th</sup>-century culture followed that statement: "should [the reader] be tempted to think that we describe things as over splendid and refined for an age of decline in arts and good taste, we beg to remind him, that the year we are supposed to visit Rome is not as remote from the better periods of Roman art, for example, that of the Antonines, as our age is from that of Cellini, Raffaele, or Donatello".<sup>168</sup> The material descriptions which Wiseman framed by means of this apology, were concentrated in his chapters *The Christian house* and *The pagan household*.

The chapters *The Christian house* and *The pagan household* implicitly complemented Wiseman's material analogy of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the idea of the opposition of Christian and classical material culture. *The Christian house* set the tone. While a fictional mother and her 14-year-old son revealed their reciprocal excitement about the possibility of the son's future martyrdom, their house was described in great detail.<sup>169</sup> Wiseman situated the house directly opposite to the "magnificent and solid structure" of the "splendid" and "adorned" Augustinian *Septa Julia*. The façade of the Christian dwelling he characterised as though of "blank and dead appearance". Its outer walls he called "plain, without architectural ornament".<sup>170</sup> As heirs to a patrician Roman family, the Christian mother and son had been respectful of most of their material heritage. Yet, the personal appearance of the mother of the household broke the diluting spell of the wealthy decorations which remained part of the interior of the house. Because of her presence, Wiseman wrote, "we see [...] that we are in no enchanted hall, but in an inhabited house. [...] The simplicity of her appearance strangely contrasts with the richness of all around her [...] and not a jewel or precious ornament, of which the Roman ladies were so lavish, is to be seen upon her person".<sup>171</sup>

Wiseman's chapter *The pagan household* described the dwelling of Fabiola, the pagan protagonist of the novel. Fabiola, daughter to a retired prefect, was obviously intended to allegorise 19<sup>th</sup>-century bourgeois society. Throughout the novel, the Fabiola character repeatedly denounced all religion on the grounds of reason and her knowledge of philosophy, while her retired father spent most of his time in bathhouses, which Wiseman

<sup>167</sup> Smits, "De Muurschilderingen der katakomben," 63-4. (translation by the author)

<sup>168</sup> Wiseman, *Fabiola or the Church of the catacombs*, 18.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 4.

compared to clubs, reading-rooms, gambling houses and tennis courts.<sup>172</sup> As the Christian family had been respectful of its ancestral heritage – with the explicit exception of all signs of pagan religion – the pagan household in the novel had its similarities to the Christian one. A contrast was, nevertheless, evoked via the opposed appearances of philosopher Fabiola and the pious mother of the Christian house. Wiseman described the marble staircase which led to Fabiola's apartment. The rooms where she prepared herself “*to appear with becoming splendour*” were filled with mirrors and trinkets and contained “*whatever is most exquisite and curious, in native and foreign art*”.<sup>173</sup> Wiseman made sure to be understood correctly: “*It is by no means our intention, nor our gift, to describe persons or features; we wish more to deal with minds*”.<sup>174</sup> Further on in the novel one of his more saintly characters was made to assert the following: “*You know Fabiola, and you love her. What a noble soul, and what a splendid intellect she possesses! What great qualities and high accomplishments, if they only reflected the light of truth!*”<sup>175</sup>

More than a decade earlier, Wiseman raised his voice more explicitly about architectural matters, as he expressed his reservations about the claims of the proponents of the Neo-Gothic arts. Long before he published *Fabiola*, he had written an article in the Catholic periodical *Dublin Review* in reaction to architect Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin's (1812-1852) tendency to present Gothic architecture as the true form of Catholic building.<sup>176</sup> Wiseman countered the English champion of the Gothic revival by arguing such pretences entailed the same errors of which Pugin himself deemed the Renaissance to be guilty. In both a scholarly fashion and in harsh language, Wiseman dismissed Pugin's “*monstrous abortions*” and “*degenerate imitations*” of an originally “*noble and beautiful style*”.<sup>177</sup> He argued that a love of authentic historical architecture ought not to lead to a radical dismissal of the architectural culture which had led an architect to that study in the first place. Among other examples, Wiseman outlined how he believed the generic plan of the Roman basilica had been enhanced by the architectural type of the catacomb chapel. In that way he illustrated how an awareness of origins and “*purest forms*” ought to guide architects in “*basing a new system upon what they possessed*”, rather than in the overthrow of every other system. If Pugin continued to dismiss everything but the Gothic, Wiseman wrote, his practice “*would well deserve to be styled Gothic*”.<sup>178</sup>

The opposition of the *Christian house* and the *Pagan household* raises the impression cardinal Wiseman might have been an adept of the Gothic revival, yet the apparent contradictions in Wiseman's oeuvre illustrate how Christian apologetics are of all times. Just

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 16, 21.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 15-7.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>176</sup> Although the article in the *Dublin Review* did not mention an author, it was Wiseman who wrote it: Margaret Belcher, *The Collected Letters of A. W. N. Pugin 1830 to 1842* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 76.

<sup>177</sup> Nicholas Patrick Wiseman, “Pugin on Modern and Ancient Ecclesiastical Architecture,” *Dublin Review* 3, (July-October 1837): 367, 382.

<sup>178</sup> Wiseman, “Pugin on Modern and Ancient Ecclesiastical Architecture,” 360-84.

as Gaetano Cenni simplified the complex reality of the prints from Giuseppe Bianchini's 18<sup>th</sup>-century *Demonstratio* with Christian triumphalist language, so are the preceding fragments from the *Livre*, the *Gedenkschrift* and *Fabiola* not all that significant by themselves either. The present first part of this dissertation, however, also discussed the catacomb-pavilion of Pius IX and Giovanni Battista de Rossi, which was realised on the fairgrounds of Paris in 1867. Just like the *Museo Ecclesiastico* of Clement XI, the forerunner of Giuseppe Bianchini's *Demonstratio* prints, this pavilion represented the Catholic identity of Rome. The striking confrontation of a seemingly early Christian Holy See and the *Quattrocento* Kingdom of Italy is beyond doubt a caricature of reality. Yet, Jamie Beth Erenstoft signalled the same separation of the dual heritage of Rome to have taken hold of the entire discipline of archaeology in this period.<sup>179</sup>

One has but to open the publications of the students of de Rossi to read how Christian scholarship, militant Catholicism and a disdain of classical culture did indeed coincide in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Christian archaeology. De Rossi's student Mariano Armellini (1852-1896), for instance, introduced his monumental volume on the premodern history of the churches of Rome by anachronistically characterising the Renaissance as the "*pagan risorgimento of the 16<sup>th</sup> century*".<sup>180</sup> Armellini cofounded the *Collegium Cultorum Martyrum* with de Rossi and Orazio Marucchi (1852-1931), the latter being the official of the *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra* who travelled to the Netherlands to open the Valkenburg catacomb. Marucchi did not fear to articulate his disgust of the "*paganism of Renaissance*" either.<sup>181</sup> He elevated the art of introducing archaeological publications by dedicating his work to the defence of Christ, his Church and the glory of his martyrs against the rationalism and Protestantism of an age "*as avid for facts as it is indifferent to metaphysics*".<sup>182</sup> Yet it is, of course, primarily the position of de Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* which matters in regard to the catacomb-pavilion. This important publication is contextualised by the second part of this dissertation (See section 2.3 "The catacombs as the cradle of Christian beauty"). De Rossi's archaeological research was both based on and lent itself to work of others who understood Christianity as the cause of the progressive abandonment of classical aesthetics throughout the first millennium. Moreover, the exhibition inside the pavilion itself signalled the abandonment of the classical ideal to have started in the art of the first Christians. As de Rossi initially intended to bring a representation of the 'Christian' development of the arts to the world fair, visualising a similar abandonment would probably have been part of its programme. If understood as an image of de Rossi's archaeological work, the catacomb-pavilion which the Holy See exported to represent itself in Paris in 1867 indeed signals the role of Christian archaeology to the Church had fundamentally changed during the Italian *Risorgimento* and the pontificate of Pius IX.

<sup>179</sup> Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," vii.

<sup>180</sup> Mariano Armellini, *Le chiese di Roma dalle loro origini sino al secolo XVI*, (Rome: Tipografia Editrice Romana, 1887), i. (translation by the author)

<sup>181</sup> Orazio Marucchi, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, II, (Paris: Desclée, Lefebvre & Cie, 1902), 12. (translation by the author)

<sup>182</sup> Orazio Marucchi, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, (Paris: Desclée, Lefebvre & Cie, 1899), xi. (translation by the author)

*“La Mignon de Goethe, cette pâle et poétique figure de l’Italie errante et persécutée, ne sait chanter qu’un amour profane: “Kennst du das Land wo Citronen blümen. Connais-tu le pays où les citronniers fleurissent?” La Vierge chrétienne entonne des chants plus doux; elle chante ce ciel tout parsemé de constellations qu’on appelle les Catacombes. Touchante image de l’art chrétien qui, pour se régénérer, doit redescendre au tombeau pour en sortir glorieux.”*

Foucher de Careil in: *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, II, 169.

## 2 THE ORPHEUS-CHRIST METONYMY (1837-1922)

### *Christian archaeology as aesthetic theory*

2.1	Introduction .....	72
	Ultramontane echoes in Louvain .....	72
	Dissonance among the Belgians (1863-71/86) .....	75
	Paris and Rome negotiating the Orpheus-Christ metonymy (1837-67) .....	77
2.2	The catacombs as a wedge between form and meaning .....	81
	Cartuyvels and Foucher de Careil at the <i>Assemblée générale</i> (1863) .....	81
	The Orpheus-Christ in Raoul-Rochette's <i>Tableau</i> (1837) .....	85
2.3	The catacombs as the cradle of Christian beauty .....	90
	Reusens' <i>Eléments</i> at the university of Louvain (1871-86) .....	90
	The Orpheus-Christ in de Rossi's <i>Roma Sotterranea Cristiana</i> (1864-67) .....	94
2.4	Epilogue: Gaudí's Orpheus-Christ aquarelle .....	100

## 2.1 Introduction

### Ultramontane Echoes in Louvain

The very first issue of the *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* was published in Rome in 1863. Therein, the papal archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi declared Christian archaeology “an antidote of divine providence to the many errors of the world, in preparation of new triumphs for truth and faith”.<sup>183</sup> As he called upon the Catholic world to provide contributions to his Roman science, the Belgian Catholics appear to have answered his call immediately. During their *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* of that same year, they agreed on the urgency of creating a chair of Christian archaeology at the university of Louvain.

The *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* of 1863 was the first of several similar conferences. These conferences, convoked in Malines by the Belgian cardinal Engelbertus Sterckx (1792-1867) in 1863, 1864 and 1867, were formative to coordinated political Catholicism in Belgium and are mentioned invariably in accounts of Belgian political history. The conferences aimed to outline strategies for rechristening Belgian society anywhere liberalism and laity had taken hold of it.<sup>184</sup> Subdivided into several group, it was in the section devoted to the arts and archaeology that the Belgian Catholics decided on creating a chair of Christian archaeology.<sup>185</sup>

Unanimously, the *Assemblée* of 1863 confirmed the need for the generalisation of Christian archaeology among artists, churchmen and the population in general and the creation of a chair at the Louvain faculty of theology was believed to be the best possible means to reach that goal.<sup>186</sup> The *Assemblée* hoped to set an international example by demanding all seminary students to be schooled in Christian archaeology.<sup>187</sup> A good decade after the chair had been instated, students of both architectural engineering and theology found themselves side by side in the course of Christian archaeology at the university of Louvain, taught by

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<sup>183</sup> Giovanni Battista de Rossi, “Prefazione,” *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* 1, (1863): n.p. (translation by the author) The Roman *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra* promoted the publication of the *Bullettino di archeologia Cristiana*, the quarterly journal which was edited by Giovanni Battista de Rossi from 1863 until 1894. On this journal, see: Erenstoft, “Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology,” 183-4.

<sup>184</sup> The importance of the *Assemblée* to Catholic politics is discussed in a general history of the country in: Gita Deneckere, et. al. *Nieuwe geschiedenis van België I 1830-1905*. (Tielt: Lannoo, 2005), 309-27.

<sup>185</sup> *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, I, xiv.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>187</sup> Seminary professor Edouard de Bleser and father Brouwers objected this resolution was largely hollow, as most of the Belgian seminaries had already instated their course on the matter. (*Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, II, 171.)



theologian Edmond Reusens (1831-1903).<sup>188</sup> In 1878 the course was inserted in the curricula of the students of architectural engineering, when before it had only been compulsory to the students of the Louvain faculty of theology. In the education of the architectural engineers, Reusens' *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne* complemented a more general historical course taught by Joris Helleputte, the founder of the architectural curriculum in Louvain. Helleputte's *Histoire raisonnée* is thought to have treated historical architecture in its formal and structural characteristics, whereas Reusens' classes specifically engaged religious architecture from a semantic perspective.<sup>189</sup>

In spite of the prodigious timing of the creation of this chair in regard to de Rossi's call in the *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* it would be a mistake to present the creation of the chair as a direct result of the international topicality of the discipline of Christian archaeology. The transcript of the *Assemblée générale* of 1863 did not mention de Rossi, nor did it refer to his *Bullettino* or the *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra*. Often, the chair was solely imagined as an academic pendant to the Belgian *Ecoles de Saint-Luc*, a network of Catholic schools of crafts and architecture with a specifically Neo-Gothic orientation. Alternatively the chair of Louvain has been discussed as a focal point of ecclesiastical monument conservation for an episcopate eager to preserve and to broadcast its medieval heritage.<sup>190</sup> An understanding of the chair which takes into account the international topicality of the discipline was first provided, I believe, by Ellen Van Impe in her study of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Belgian architectural historiography.<sup>191</sup> Van Impe signalled how the very first archaeological publication produced by the original occupant of the chair tellingly informed its Belgian readership of the state of the discipline of Christian archaeology in its most Roman sense.<sup>192</sup> The Louvain-taught theologian Edmond Reusens was the first to occupy the chair.<sup>193</sup> Reusens' first archaeological publication outlined the contemporary state of

<sup>188</sup> For an account of how the course of Christian archaeology fit into the education of the architectural engineers of Louvain, see: Ellen Van Impe, "Architectural Historiography in Belgium 1830-1914" (PhD diss., Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2008) 88-9, 91-2.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 91-2. See also: Ellen Van Impe, "De Belgische architectuurgeschiedschrijving en de Christelijke archeologie (1864-1914): Edmond Reusens en "l'architecture proprement dite," *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Oudheidkunde en Kunstgeschiedenis* 75, (2006): 140.

<sup>190</sup> In the study *De Sint-Lucasscholen en de neogotiek* on the *Ecoles de Saint-Luc* for instance, these two perspectives were offered on the role of the chair: Jan De Maeyer, *De Sint-Lucasscholen en de neogotiek: 1862-1914*, (Louvain: Universitaire pers Leuven, 1988), 81-3.

<sup>191</sup> For van Impe's earliest suggestion of the importance of the international scene of Christian archaeology, see: Van Impe, "De Belgische architectuurgeschiedschrijving en de Christelijke archeologie (1864-1914): Edmond Reusens en "l'architecture proprement dite," 143-44. See also, Van Impe, "Architectural Historiography in Belgium 1830-1914," 97-102.

<sup>192</sup> Van Impe, "De Belgische architectuurgeschiedschrijving en de Christelijke archeologie (1864-1914): Edmond Reusens en "l'architecture proprement dite," 143-4.

<sup>193</sup> Reusens was ordained to the priesthood in 1854 after his studies at the seminary of Malines. Reusens finished a doctorate on the doctrine of Louvain theologian Adrian VI (1522-1523) by 1862. During his doctorate, Reusens worked in the university library, to assume the post of head librarian in 1859. From 1862 onwards, he collaborated with rector Xavier De Ram on the Church historical publications of the latter. (Reusens doctorate was already related to the work of Louvain rector Xavier de Ram, see: Michiel Verweij, *De paus uit de Lage Landen, Adrianus VI 1459-1523, Catalogus bij de tentoonstelling ter gelegenheid van het 550<sup>de</sup> geboortjaar van Adriaan van*

scholarship and contained, for instance, a critical anthology of both the major publications from the previous centuries and the most recent work in Christian archaeology.

Besides Edmond Reusens' first archaeological article, there are other examples in his oeuvre which evidence ultramontanist. During his earliest years at the Louvain faculty of theology Reusens authored *Iconographie des bienheureux martyrs de Gorcum*, contributing to a larger hagiographic project of Louvain rector Xavier de Ram.<sup>194</sup> Just as Pius IX financed and visited early Christian excavations and restorations in Rome, he canonised several groups of modern martyrs. The canonisation of a large group of Japanese missionaries might be the most remarkable example. On the occasion in 1862, crowds of faithful and more than three hundred bishops convened in Rome for days of continuous celebrations.<sup>195</sup> Against the will of the Dutch episcopate Pius also canonised the martyrs of Gorcum in 1867. These nineteen, mainly Franciscan, 16<sup>th</sup>-century Catholics from the Low Countries were hanged during the Dutch rebellion against Catholic Spain. The recently reinstated Dutch Catholic hierarchy had feared the canonisation of this group would cause the Dutch Protestants to seek retribution but uproar was never caused.<sup>196</sup> Four of these martyrs had been schooled in theology at the old university of Louvain. In the same year, Pius IX, for instance, also visited the excavations at the S. Clemente basilica in Rome to kiss newly discovered bones from martyr's tombs and to invoke their intercession: "*Here lie the remains of bands of martyrs. Their number we know not. At present, our need of their protection could not have been greater. Let us pray!*"<sup>197</sup> A remark by Louvain rector Xavier De Ram evidenced how the canonisation of the Louvain martyrs as well as the scholarly research which it entailed, also looped right back to Pius IX himself. Rector de Ram described Pius IX as "*the august martyr of ingratitude and slander, who recently decided to have the canonisation of the martyrs of Gorcum celebrated*".<sup>198</sup>

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*Utrecht*, (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 2009), 324.) Reusens also started teaching an initial course at the faculty of theology. In the wake of the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* of 1863, he was assigned to the new chair of Christian archaeology. (Jacques Lavalleye, "Edmond Reusens," *Biographie Nationale* 31, (1961): 621-5.)

<sup>194</sup> Edmond Reusens, *Iconographie des bienheureux martyrs de Gorcum ornée de six beaux portraits*, (Louvain: Peeters, 1867).

<sup>195</sup> Jules Paul Tardivel, *Vie du pape Pie IX. Ses oeuvres et ses douleurs*. (Quebec: J. N. Duquet, 1878), 51-2.

<sup>196</sup> Annemarie Kasteel, "The Holy See and the Dutch Catholic Church: a comparative approach" *U.S. Catholic Historian* 17, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 99-104.

<sup>197</sup> Jean-Joseph Hugué, *L'esprit de Pie IX ou les plus beaux traits de la vie de ce grand pape*, (Paris: Félix Girard, 1868), 270. (translation by the author) On the archaeological aspects of the excavations at S. Clemente, see: Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 166-7. The words which Pius exclaimed on the occasion resembled certain Damascian lines. "*Nomina nec numerum potuit retinere vetustas*", is a famous line from the 52<sup>th</sup> Damascian epigram. (For this epigram, see: SAGHY Marianne, "Pope Damasus and the beginnings of Roman hagiography", in: *Promoting the saints: cults and their contexts from late antiquity until the early modern period: essays in honor of Gábor Klaniczay for his 60th birthday*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2011, p. 4.)

<sup>198</sup> "Notes historiques et iconographiques sur les martyrs de Gorcum qui ont fait leurs études à l'université de Louvain. par P. F. X. De Ram" *Revue catholique, recueil religieux, philosophique, scientifique, historique et littéraire* 23, no. 2 (1865): 282. (translation by the author)

Similar ultramontanist stretches throughout Reusens' works. In that sense, his *Eléments de paléographie* of 1899 concludes a series initiated by *Les catacombes de Rome* of 1866 and *Iconographie des bienheureux martyrs de Gorcum* of 1867.<sup>199</sup> Although it was one of Reusens' latest works, the frontispiece of this course in ancient writing which he started teaching because of his experience in Church historical work, is connected to Reusens' debut in Christian archaeology to a remarkable degree. The frontispiece of *Eléments de paléographie* juxtaposed photographic reproductions of an excerpt from the Damasian epigram which was discovered by de Rossi inside the "Crypt of the Popes" (see also sections 1.2 and 1.3 on the *Salvatore Olandese* and the Paris fair) to an excerpt of Vergil's *Georgica*. The subterranean chapel used to house the relics of several martyred popes and was visited by Pius IX, the other *Damasus*, only two days after its discovery by de Rossi in 1854. In the newspaper *Giornale di Roma* it was broadcasted how Pius was moved to tears while aiding de Rossi to reassemble shattered inscriptions, revealing the names of his martyred predecessors.<sup>200</sup> This speaks to the fame of the epigram reproduced as part of the frontispiece of Reusens' *Eléments de paléographie*. In translation the Damasian poem of the frontispiece reads of the "thrown" group of prelates, of "the saints' bodies [...] who carry off the trophy from their foes".<sup>201</sup> Vergil's *Georgica*, conveys a very different sentiment of "sown" and subsequently flourishing corn, gay fields and vast agricultural returns.<sup>202</sup> However different, the juxtaposition of these excerpts evidently alluded to the *sanguis martyrum semen christianorum* trope. I argue the frontispiece of this late linguistic work suggests the Belgian professor of Christian archaeology took the catacombs to heart.

### Dissonance among the Belgians (1863-71/86)

The need for the creation of a chair of Christian archaeology at the faculty of theology of the university of Louvain was anything but the only topic which was discussed in the section on the arts and archaeology of the *Assemblée générale* of 1863. Before practical issues such as the creation of the chair were even mentioned, the participants in the section spent hours debating more fundamental matters. After a lengthy and heated discussion, a vote was cast in order to distil a set of resolutions from the debate about the goals which ought to be pursued in the Catholic arts. The first *Assemblée* has been presented as a milestone to the Gothic revival in Belgium. The actual resolutions, however, were formulated with more nuance. The resolutions confirmed the possible value of a historically broad perspective in

<sup>199</sup> For context on *Eléments de paléographie*, see: Lavalleye, "Edmond Reusens," 621-5.

<sup>200</sup> On the crypt of the popes and its discovery, see: Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 15, 171.

<sup>201</sup> Edmond Reusens, *Eléments de paléographie*, (Louvain, published by the author, 1899), frontispiece. The epigram was also rendered in: Reusens, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 38. For the source of the translation, see: Marianne Sághy, "Codex to Catacomb: Uses and Functions of the Bishops' List in Fourth-Century Rome," in *The Charm of a List: From the Sumerians to Computerised Data Processing*, ed. Lucie Dolezalova (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) 60.

<sup>202</sup> Robert Hoblyn, *A translation of the first book of the Georgics of Virgil, in blank verse; with notes, critical and explanatory*, (London: W. Phillips, 1825), 90-7.

search for renewal in the arts and a series of examples specified how even the formal language of the Renaissance was not in principle to be excluded from the repertoire of contemporary artists.<sup>203</sup> Although the *Assemblée* showed itself open to the Renaissance and its classical aesthetics, its openness was accompanied by a remarkable disclaimer. “*We must absolutely reject those productions [...] where formal perfection is nothing but an appeal to the most vile passions*”, the resolutions read.<sup>204</sup> Although the historical context of one style or another did not turn out to be a real concern to the voting Belgians, the aspirations inherent in classical beauty were to be weighed with care. The aspect of the classical arts which specifically provoked suspicion, was the aspiration to formal perfection. The *Assemblée* outlined a distinction between formal perfection which simply appeals to human reason on the one hand, and formal perfection that sets out to provoke carnal passions on the other hand. Whereas it tolerated the former, it denounced the latter.

The value of broad historical knowledge was recognised and the formal concerns of classical beauty were theoretically endorsed as far as they appealed to reason rather than the flesh. To those concepts, the resolutions on aesthetics of the *Assemblée* added a crucial idea. “*Christian beauty*” was said to be superior to classical beauty because of its appeal to more elevated cognitive realms. Most fascinating, in the end, is the way in which it was defined. “*Just as there are truths accessible only to reason, there is in the arts a human ideal, which can be attained without the help of faith. [...] we must reach higher, we who have received the light and who know the supreme and supernatural beauty of Christianity.*”<sup>205</sup> After having lamented the superficiality of contemporary artistic production, the resolutions stated the core of their plea: “*The splendor of Christian beauty, on the contrary, transcends the imperfections of form*”.<sup>206</sup>

In contrast to the broad consent on which the resolution for the creation of the chair of Christian archaeology could count, these resolutions on the matters of art and beauty were the fruit of a lengthy and heated discussion. As opposing perceptions collided, the debate on aesthetics was vivid. Proponents of different ideas defended their positions either historically or theoretically, with consistent eloquence and in some cases even a degree of poetry. Four prominent speakers each advocated the direction in which they believed the Catholic arts ought to head. The architect Jean Bethune (1821-1894) and the British art historian James Weale (1832-1917) initially defined classical and Christian beauty. They theoretically advocated why the former ought to be excluded completely from the arts. In response, the cleric Charles Cartuyvels (1835-1907) and the French count Foucher de Careil attempted to salvage something of the freedom of the arts. Crucially, it were Cartuyvels and Foucher de Careil rather than Bethune and Weale who grounded their arguments in the historical

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<sup>203</sup> As examples, the resolutions explicitised how artists ought to be allowed to study the murals of the catacombs, ancient mosaics, the Italian frescos of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Renaissance (as epitomised by Raphael's *Dispute du Saint Sacrement*) as well as the contemporary Nazarene school of the German painter Overbeck. See: *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, I, 149.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. (translation by the author)

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 150. (translation by the author)

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 151. (translation by the author)

example of the early Christian arts. The arguments of Charles Cartuyvels and count Foucher de Careil boiled down to a defence based on the fact the first Christians had used classical forms in their catacombs.

The present part of this dissertation offers an in-depth reading of both the transcript of the artistic section of the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* of 1863 and Edmond Reusens' course *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*. Together they constitute a small body of dissonant theoretical arguments in which the catacombs played a part. In contrast with the arguments of Cartuyvels and Foucher de Careil, the catacombs were reconciled with the ideas of Bethune and Weale in Edmond Reusens' *Eléments*. Reusens' long volumes of *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, however, outlined an archaeological history of the Christian arts, in which the catacombs constituted the origin of the Christian aesthetics of purity and sobriety, which had been defended by Bethune and Weale at the *Assemblée générale*.

### Paris and Rome negotiating the Orpheus-Christ metonymy (1837-67)

One small but remarkable account in the transcript of the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique*, provides a way to introduce the second vehicle in the present part of this dissertation. At the end of the transcript of the Belgian *Assemblée générale*, one of the secretaries provided summaries of the arguments of all the different speakers who had contributed to the section on the arts and archaeology. Interestingly, the summary of Foucher de Careil's defence of classical aesthetics corresponds only to a very limited extent to the count's words themselves. Out of the blue, the summary mentioned the mythological Orpheus deity, as if Foucher de Careil had implicitly referred to him. "[D]epuis les peintures des catacombes", the summary of Foucher de Careil's words stated, "où on voit Notre-Seigneur sous les traits d'Orphée entraînant par les charmes de son art tous les êtres de la nature, jusqu'aux temps modernes, l'art, illuminé par les rayons divins du Christianisme, n'a jamais cessé de produire des chefs-d'oeuvre, portant chacun le cachet de leur époque; il ne recule pas, il progresse sans cesse".<sup>207</sup> By mentioning "Our Lord as Orpheus" rather than the words of Foucher de Careil himself, the author of the summaries proved himself highly knowledgeable of Christian archaeology. Indeed, author Edouard de Bleser (1824-1868) was appointed professor of Christian archaeology at the seminary of Malines the very next year.<sup>208</sup>

The "Orpheus-Christ", as the motif to which the summary of Foucher de Careil's plea referred was called by de Rossi, is an early Christian figure which used the mythological Tracian poet Orpheus to depict Christ. No other motif is more rare among the frescos of the

<sup>207</sup> Edouard de Bleser in: *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, II, 199.

<sup>208</sup> Canon Edouard de Bleser worked as secretary to the conference of 1863. In cooperation with James Weale and others, he later prepared the exhibition of Christian art which accompanied the *Assemblée* of 1864 in Malines. Thereafter, he was appointed professor of Christian archaeology at the seminary of Malines. In 1866, he published *Rome et ses monuments: guide du voyageur catholique dans la capitale du monde chrétien*. For this travel guide to Rome he repeatedly received international honours. (G. Van Doorslaer, "Philippe-Jacques-Edouard de Bleser," *Biographie Nationale* 29 appendix I, (1956): 299-301.)

catacombs and it is one of the most controversial subjects in Christian archaeology. It has been used to conceptualise the encounter of classical culture and Christian doctrine. In contrast to the omnipresence of merely decorative classical elements in the catacombs, some rare frescos of the pagan Orpheus have positively fulfilled a devotional role in the Christian catacombs. That devotional use of the Orpheus motif, painted, for instance, on an altar in the Christian catacombs, is precisely what made it a problem to those who envisioned the arts of the catacombs as a static example of authentic Christian iconography or art. As will be discussed, the Orpheus-Christ first entered aesthetic theory early on in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The theologically hybrid depiction has even been of importance to theology and 19<sup>th</sup>-century *religionwissenschaft*, when theories of interreligious heredity were construed based on doctrinal similarities of Christianity and the pre-Christian cult of Orphism.<sup>209</sup> The Orpheus-Christ appeared in the work of nearly all of the authors who have been mentioned so far. Other than the remark of Edouard de Bleser on the argument of Foucher de Careil, the Orpheus-Christ was also discussed by Philippe Gerbet in his *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, in cardinal Nicholas Wiseman's *Fabiola*, in Louis Perret's *Catacombes de Rome*, in both Edmond Reusens' and Orazio Marucchi's *Eléments* and in Xavier Smits' contribution to the *Gedenkschrift* of the Valkenburg catacombs.<sup>210</sup>

As it epitomised the reception of classical culture in early Christianity, it is possible to fathom something of the intellectual preoccupations of Christian archaeology simply by tracking how this one iconographic subject was handled over the centuries. The present part of this dissertation uses the metonymical Orpheus-Christ as a tool to read two of the most renowned 19<sup>th</sup>-century publications on the catacombs. Reading those works for their position on the Orpheus-Christ, reveals how the Belgian dissonance on the aesthetic implications of the arts of the catacombs was no isolated matter. It exposes how, in fact, the shift of the role of the catacombs from the arguments of Cartuyvels and Foucher de Careil on the one hand, to the theory of Edmond Reusens' *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne* on the other hand, echoed a general controversy. The accounts on the Orpheus-Christ in question, are those of Désiré Raoul-Rochette's (1790-1854) *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* of 1837 and Giovanni Battista de Rossi's three volume set of *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* (1864-1877). Raoul-Rochette inherited the chair of archaeology of the *Bibliothèque Royale* in Paris from the more renowned Quatremaire de Quincy, whereas de Rossi, was of course the *protégé* of Pius IX.

In a way which was very similar to the summary of Foucher de Careil's argument by the Belgian canon Edouard de Bleser, Désiré Raoul-Rochette defended the Christian potential

<sup>209</sup> For the broad discussion of the archaeological problem of late antique use of Orpheus in Christian apologetics and iconography, see: Miguel Herrero de Jauregui, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*, (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010).

<sup>210</sup> Wiseman, *Fabiola or the Church of the catacombs*, 158-9. See also: Marucchi, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, (Paris: Desclée, Lefebvre & Cie, 1899), 268-9. See also: Gerbet, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, I, 315. See also: Perret, *Catacombes de Rome*, V, (Paris: Gide et J. Baudry, 1855), VI, 30. See also: Reusens, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 89-90.

of Renaissance by means of the Orpheus-Christ in his *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* in 1837. In the name of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, Raoul-Rochette also authored an article – himself he called it a manifest – involving the catacombs to ward off the threat which the Gothic revival in ecclesiastical architecture posed for the principles of the *Académie*. De Rossi, in turn, explicitly attacked Raoul-Rochette for his supposed abuse of the Orpheus-Christ, adding, what he argued to be the correct way to frame it. In doing so, de Rossi indirectly reasserted the earliest modern theory of medieval aesthetics. The confrontation of Désiré Raoul-Rochette's *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* and Giovanni Battista de Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* shows how high the stakes in Christian archaeology for the contemporary arts really were. As mentioned, the dissonant theoretical use of the catacombs in the Belgian examples of the *Assemblée générale* and professor Edmond Reusens' course *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, appear to echo the ideas of Raoul-Rochette and de Rossi respectively. Because of that parallel, the arguments of the *Assemblée générale* have been presented in the first section of this part of the dissertation together with Raoul-Rochette's assertions about the Orpheus-Christ. Reusens' *Eléments* and de Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea* constitute the second section. Each section bridges the apparent chasm of more or less abstract and seemingly isolated archaeological theory on the one hand, and more direct, practical relevance in the arts on the other hand. After all, the introduction of the catacombs by Cartuyvels and Foucher de Careil influenced the resolutions of the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* of 1863, whereas Reusens' archaeological history of the Christian arts was taught to the theologians and architectural engineers of the university of Louvain for decades.

Apart from the Orpheus-Christ, some final remarks on the French scene are due. French Christian archaeology can certainly not be reduced to Raoul-Rochette or the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*. To mention just one relevant subject, archaeologist Louis Perret was commissioned by the government of the later Napoleon III (1848/1852-1870) to travel to Italy in order to document the catacombs of Rome, only a few years after Raoul-Rochette had authored the *Beaux-Arts* 'manifest' of 1846. From 1851 onwards Perret published the six lavishly illustrated volumes of his *Catacombes de Rome* (1851-1855) under the direction of *académicien* Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and the *Inspecteur général des Monuments historiques* Prosper Mérimée (see frontispiece, fig. 23 and 28).<sup>211</sup> Raoul-Rochette's appropriation of the catacombs can be understood in the light of his larger classical practice and the continued classical ambitions of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, yet the precise ideological motive for the French government to commission Perret's work remains unclear and undiscussed in other scholarship.

Leiden university rector Fredrik Pijper (1859-1926) wrote the most elaborate review of Louis Perret's *Catacombes de Rome* of which I am aware, in his anthology of Christian archaeological scholarship of the previous centuries in the Valkenburg *Gedenkschrift* of 1916. Although highly critical of the archaeological value of *Catacombes de Rome*, Pijper

<sup>211</sup> Ingres and Mérimée are mentioned – among others – as directors of the publication on the frontispieces of the volumes of *Catacombes de Rome*. See: Louis Perret, *Catacombes de Rome*, I-VI, (Paris: Gide et J. Baudry, 1851-55).

wrote Louis Perret had been the first archaeologist in history to present the early Christian remains in the catacombs as genuine works of art rather than merely as archaeological material. According to Pijper, Perret also situated the origin of a Christian pursuit of artistic purity in the catacombs. The involvement of the French in Christian archaeology was clearly not limited to Raoul-Rochette's perception on the matter. Certainly the regime of Napoleon III had a vested interest in it in some way. Pijper claimed the French state spent over 240,000 francs publishing the volumes of Perret.<sup>212</sup> Earlier, a French army had restored Pius IX (1848-1878) as ruler of Rome in 1849 at very great human cost, after the Roman revolution of 1848 had established a republic in the city. This military alignment might have entailed a cultural alignment. On the one hand Napoleon III can still be found in adoration of *sainte Theudosie* in the cathedral of Amiens. He was depicted in awe of the saint, as benefactor in the stained glass of the chapel which architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc restored to display her relics (see fig. 3). Napoleon III and empress Eugenie are depicted side by side to Pius IX and bishop de Salinis of Amiens, underneath the windows which present the history of the celebrated martyr of the catacombs.<sup>213</sup> On the other hand, Philippe Boutry remarked in his research on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century *corpi santi* of France that Perret entered the catacombs against papal interdiction.<sup>214</sup>

In conclusion, an epilogue presents an aquarelle by the famous Catalan architects Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) and Josep Maria Jujol (1879-1949). In 1922, the architects artistically reproduced one of the rare Orpheus-Christ frescos of the catacombs. As far as I have been able to find out, this aquarelle has never before been associated with the catacombs or with Christian archaeology. The epilogue situates the aquarelle both among earlier archaeological reproductions of the same ancient fresco and in some of its particularly Catalan and personal context.

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<sup>212</sup> Pijper, "De voornaamste werken over de katakomben te Rome," 39-40.

<sup>213</sup> Amédée Boinet, *La Cathédrale d'Amiens*, (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1951), 72.

<sup>214</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des Catacombes. Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1800-1881)," 920. Boutry did not cite his source on the matter of Louis Perret entering the catacombs in spite of papal interdiction. On the restoration of Pius IX by the French, see : Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 113-4.



## 2.2 The catacombs as a wedge between form and meaning

### Cartuyvels and Foucher de Careil at the *Assemblée générale* (1863)

Architect Jean Bethune (1821-1894) opened the debate of the section on the arts and archaeology of the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* of 1863.<sup>215</sup> He famously founded the *Saint-Luc* art school of Ghent and was deemed the foremost representative of the Neo-Gothic arts in Belgium. Bethune basically advocated a broad Gothic revival for the arts. Opening the session with a rhetorical caricature of European art history, he mapped the history of religion onto the arts. As he rhetorically commenced his history with Genetis, Bethune narrated his way from the first men to the Greeks and the Romans, whom he reproached to have extended to extreme limits their “*cult of disordered passions*”. Without denying the actual beauty of the classical arts, he characterised their beauty as a sensible, sensual, harmonious and formally rich beauty: “*Living flesh*,” Bethune spoke, “*admired, divinised, adored, but nothing more than flesh*.”<sup>216</sup>

The essence of Bethune’s historical plea - and by extension the clue of the entire further debate - consisted of what he opposed to classical beauty. The turning point in Bethune’s spiritual art history was Christ’s revelation, which, he wrote, reoriented all relations of man, God and nature. As he reshaped the imagination of artists as well, Christ supposedly delivered the arts from banality. “[L]’*imagination des artistes, humble, chaste et pieuse, découvrira des expressions nouvelles pour rappeler toute une série de vertus sublimes que*

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<sup>215</sup> Architect Jean Bethune is considered the foremost representative of the Catholic Gothic revival for the Belgian context. For an account of Bethune’s general role in the Belgian Neo-Gothic scene: De Maeyer, *De Sint-Lucasscholen en de neogotiek: 1862-1914*, 7-8. Bethune had a remarkably ultramontane profile, for he had led the organisation of the *Denier de Saint Pierre* in the city of Ghent. (The *Denier de Saint Pierre* is also known as *Peter’s Pence*. This collection supported the Papal States in the financial needs caused by the Italian *Risorgimento*.) As a member of the aristocracy and as a nephew to the bishop of Bruges Jean-Baptiste Malou (1809-1864), he had connections in precisely the right circles when he returned from travels to England in the 1840s. (Ellen Van Impe mentioned the relationship of bishop Malou and Bethune. (See: Van Impe, “Architectural Historiography in Belgium 1830-1914,” 86.)) For a biography of bishop Malou, see LAMY Th. - J., “Jean-Baptiste Malou”, in: *Biographie Nationale, Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, vol. 13, Brussels, 1894-1895, pp. 253-258.) On his travels of 1842, 1843 and 1850 he is said to have established personal friendships with the future cardinal of Westminster Nicholas Wiseman and the architect Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852). Bethune later became a friend of the Dutch critic Alberdingk Thijm and had connections with Pierre Cuypers, the architect who would later direct the works on the 20<sup>th</sup>-century catacombs of Valkenburg. Upon his return from England, Bethune devoted his life to the “renewal of the Christian arts”, importing from England the ambition to reunite the arts in a joint craft of building and evangelising. His workshop became one of the foremost employers of graduated students of the *Ecole de Saint-Luc*, which was founded with the joint consent and support of the bishops of Belgium in 1866. From 1873 onwards, Bethune presided over the *Gilde de Saint-Thomas et de Saint-Luc*, a Catholic archaeological organisation founded after the *Assemblée* of 1863. (Jacques Lavalleye, “Jean-Baptiste Bethune,” *Biographie Nationale* 37 appendix IX, (1971): 56-60.)

<sup>216</sup> Bethune in: *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, II, 149-51. (translation by the author)

*l'art antique n'avait pas même pu soupçonner.*" "Christian beauty", as Bethune termed it, was a modest and majestic beauty of saintly innocence. Rather than aesthetics of the "admiration" and "deification" of what is worldly, he envisioned aesthetics of "purification" and "mortification". The latter would suppress the flesh, yet permit the soul to shine.<sup>217</sup>

A Christological comparison allowed Bethune to detail and to buttress his conception of Christian beauty. He evoked a Christian passion of bruising, flagellation and exsanguination, followed by glorious ascension. This part of his argument permitted him to surmount the apparent contradiction between the renouncement of formal concerns and perfect beauty. In its natural and torn form, Bethune continued, the body of Christ is glorified "*in all the splendour of infinite perfection*" on the throne of God, evidencing the possibility of perfection as a consequence of mortification. He then characterised the long millennium which preceded the 13<sup>th</sup> century as an ascent towards artistic realisation of "Christian beauty", the beauty he compared to the mutilated Christ, perfect in his bodily imperfection, on the throne of God. The interruption of the medieval advent towards ever more mature Christian beauty, Bethune blamed on the "*fatal alliance*" of Protestantism and the renaissance of taste for the classical forms of the pagans.<sup>218</sup>

Bethune's words were applauded by James Weale (1832-1917), the second speaker in the section on the arts and archaeology. The Englishman lived in Bruges from 1855 until 1878 and manifested himself as an art historian.<sup>219</sup> In the company of the later cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, Weale and some other young English converts first came to Bruges in May of 1849. They had been invited to the inaugural celebrations of bishop J. B. Malou of Bruges, an old friend from Wiseman's time as rector of the English college in Rome (section 1.4). Weale returned twice and permanently settled in Belgium in 1858.<sup>220</sup> Like Bethune, Weale

<sup>217</sup> Bethune in: Ibid. (translation by the author) For these two definitions, Bethune referred to: Jean Sagnet, *Essai sur l'art chrétien, son principe, ses développements, sa renaissance*, (Périgueux: C. Lenteigne, 1853), 37.

<sup>218</sup> Bethune in: *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, II, 149-52. (translation by the author)

<sup>219</sup> Lori Van Biervliet, *Leven en werk van W. H. James Weale – een Engels kunsthistoricus in Vlaanderen in de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, (Brussels: Koninklijke academie voor wetenschappen, letteren en schone kunsten van België, 1991), 7.

<sup>220</sup> Wiseman and Malou were old friends who had first met in Rome at the time when Malou was enrolled at the Collegium Romanum from 1832 until 1835. (Wiseman himself served as rector of the English College from 1828 to 1840. See: Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 90-1.) Weale's first visit to Bruges set Weale on an archaeological mission of his own. Weale returned during the fall of the same year to produce a series of brass-rubbings of the tombstones in the churches of the Flemish city. Two years later, in 1851, Weale returned again. This time, he was accompanied by a nephew of cardinal Wiseman. While copying tombstones in the cathedral of Ghent, Weale and Wiseman's nephew attested to having travelled large parts of Western Europe. They claimed, at that point, to have collected a total of 1800 brass-rubbings. In 1858, on the *Congrès artistique et archéologique* of Ghent, Weale stated his ambition to make an inventory of all medieval tombstones of both England and the European mainland. (Van Biervliet, *Leven en werk van W. H. James Weale – een Engels kunsthistoricus in Vlaanderen in de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, 66.) At this conference, Weale sealed a friendship with painter and archaeologist Jules Helbig (1821-1906). The latter collaborated with Edmond Reusens on *Eléments*

referred to both “*the Christian aesthetics*” and their pagan counterpart.<sup>221</sup> Furthermore, when Bethune and himself were reproached regressiveness and stylistic purism, Weale reposted they both had advocated a fundamental aesthetic matter rather than the confinement of the arts to solemn reproduction of medieval examples.<sup>222</sup>

Building on the momentum which the scenical exaltation of Christian beauty by Jean Bethune had engendered, Weale took a radical stand. Much to the indignation of certain other participants in the section on the arts, Weale urged his fellow Catholics to strive for the destruction of all the creations of Renaissance. “*Selon moi,*” Weale argued, “*c’est un sophisme de dire qu’une chose ne peut pas être anéantie parce qu’elle est une oeuvre d’art. [...] la première chose à faire est de proposer de bons modèles; la seconde, c’est que chacun de nous fasse tout ce qui est en son pouvoir, pour faire détruire les objets d’art qui ne sont pas en parfait harmonie avec les principes chrétiens.*”<sup>223</sup> The outrage of the others made it to the transcript of the conference, suggesting Weale was actually serious in this iconoclast demarche.

The third orator at the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* who spoke on matters of aesthetics was the cleric Charles Cartuyvels (1835-1907). By the time of the first *Assemblée*, Cartuyvels had been a seminary professor of Christian archaeology for four years. The origins of that position lay in the time he spent in Rome in the 1850s. During his enrolment at the Belgian college of Rome, Cartuyvels wrote weekly “*Roman correspondences*” for the readership of his uncle’s newspaper *Gazette de Liège*. Cartuyvels’ biography states these articles became a venue for him to broadcast his taste for art and Christian archaeology. Having concluded his doctorate in 1858 and being ordained to the

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*d’archéologie chrétienne*. From this point onwards, his fame rose immensely. Weale would, however, not be the one to publish the inventory of tombstones of which he had dreamt. (Van Biervliet, *Leven en werk van W. H. James Weale – een Engels kunsthistoricus in Vlaanderen in de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, 46-7, 72.) In Bruges, James Weale established a friendship with Felix Bethune (1824-1909) – Jean Bethune’s brother, who was appointed professor of Christian archaeology at the seminary of Bruges in 1859. Weale himself is known to have written a *Manuel d’archéologie chrétienne* in 1865. Ellen Van Impe signalled how there is no knowledge of the content of this document whatsoever. (Van Impe, “De Belgische architectuurgeschiedschrijving en de Christelijke archeologie (1864-1914): Edmond Reusens en “l’architecture proprement dite,” 136.) The friendship of Weale and Bethune was an important premise to the exposition of Christian art which was organised at the *Assemblée générale* of Malines of 1864, as well as it was a lever to the creation of the *Société archéologique* of Bruges in 1865. (Van Biervliet, *Leven en werk van W. H. James Weale – een Engels kunsthistoricus in Vlaanderen in de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, 48.) Weale never realised the general inventory of tombstones for which he had come to Flanders initially. However, he did contribute to its realisation by W. F. Greeny, who published his *List and fac-similes of Monumental Brasses on the Continent of Europe* in 1884. (Van Biervliet, *Leven en werk van W. H. James Weale – een Engels kunsthistoricus in Vlaanderen in de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, 72.)

<sup>221</sup> Weale in: *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, II, xiv, 154. (translation by the author)

<sup>222</sup> Weale in: *Ibid.*, 163-4.

<sup>223</sup> Weale in: *Ibid.*, II, 144-55.

priesthood in 1859, he returned to Belgium, immediately to be assigned to the chair of Christian archaeology at the seminary of Liège.<sup>224</sup>

Although it had not been explicitised by Bethune and Weale themselves, Charles Cartuyvels seems to have anticipated how their arguments would essentially rely on the paradigm of 'truth'. Cartuyvels understood how, in order to counter Bethune and Weale, a wedge was to be driven between art and truth. Truth, he deemed part of each Christian work of art, regardless of style and the age it was made in. Art, however, ought to be seen as an accord of truth and beauty. "*En fait d'art*", he spoke, "*la perfection consiste à revêtir le vrai des formes de la beauté. Sans la beauté de la forme, l'art n'est pas complet.*"<sup>225</sup>

In addition to his theoretical argument, Cartuyvels also steered his address in a historical direction. To harness his opposing point of view, he invoked early Christianity. After having given the impression of having commenced a narrative about the 4<sup>th</sup>-century basilicas of Rome, he turned to the catacombs, "*of which the name alone, evokes all the splendors of religion*". The intercession of the first Christians permitted Cartuyvels to counter the historically and even christologically constructed claims of Bethune and Weale. Fundamentally, the artistic remains in the catacombs provided Cartuyvels the means to deny the intrinsic connection of artistic expression and religion.<sup>226</sup>

Charles Cartuyvels exalted the catacombs as a "*sublime reliquary of the arts*".<sup>227</sup> Seemingly emulating Philippe Gerbet's well-known *Chant des Catacombes* (see section 1.2 "Sainte Theodosie"), he invited his brothers on the *Assemblée* to descend into the catacombs and to see the light: "*descendez dans les catacombes, et vous verrez partout [...] les lignes, harmonieuses de l'art antique consacrées à l'expression de l'idée chrétienne et du sentiment chrétien. Descendez [...] et vous y verrez partout [...] des images sacrées, expression ravissante de la foi de ces premiers siècles.*"<sup>228</sup> The tombs of the martyrs, the altars of the saints, the funerary galleries and the vaults of the many sanctuaries which bore antique forms of Christian making were untainted by the suspicion which had befallen Renaissance. In Cartuyvels' argument, the first Christians evidenced the possibility of an alliance of the classical arts and the Christian mind. The arts of the catacombs he invoked as evidence of the possibility of the coexistence of classical beauty and Christian inspiration, or as Cartuyvels formulated it, of "*beauty of the ancient sort, renewed through grace*".<sup>229</sup>

Cartuyvels' plea about the catacombs was followed by a final denouncement of the claims of Bethune and Weale. Cartuyvels proposed his fellow Catholics to think of the *Assemblée* as an opportunity for renewal rather than regression and insisted on the autonomy of form

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<sup>224</sup> In 1865 Cartuyvels abandoned his teaching position at the seminary of Liège for a theological professorship at the university of Louvain.

<sup>225</sup> Cartuyvels in: *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, II, 157.

<sup>226</sup> Cartuyvels in: *Ibid.*, 156. (translation by the author)

<sup>227</sup> Cartuyvels in: *Ibid.* (translation by the author)

<sup>228</sup> Cartuyvels in: *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>229</sup> Cartuyvels in: *Ibid.*, 156-9. (translation by the author)

in any such a renewal. He also denied the existence of an absolute artistic ideal. The constant search for “*new forms of the immutable truth [of religion]*” he declared to be the fate of the Catholic arts. To the audible consternation of others, he added how even the classical arts ought to be permitted to enter the repertoire of contemporary Catholic artists, as they might well express “*the Christian spirit*” of their times.<sup>230</sup> Cartuyvels situated the true tradition of the Christian arts in the catacombs, in the sense the catacombs proved him how the Christian arts have, from the beginning onwards, shown the capacity to change and continuously reaccord to “*the needs of the soul*”. Art, he argued, is manifold, varies and progresses like humanity itself.<sup>231</sup>

As Weale’s words echoed those of Bethune, so did the next speaker extend Cartuyvels’ address. Of ‘count’ Foucher de Careil - the final relevant speaker of the *Assemblée générale* of Malines - it proved difficult to pinpoint the identity with certainty. It is, however, all the more worth mentioning his argument as the final facet of the discussion on aesthetics by the *Assemblée générale*.<sup>232</sup> Foucher de Careil may not have added many original ideas, he nevertheless spoke beautifully about the catacombs. He too, used them to fortify his love of classical beauty and Renaissance. “*If we want to discuss our origins, we have to descend into the catacombs*”, he asserted.<sup>233</sup> The catacombs proved to him, how classical forms were but a means which could be used to any end. As he contrasted the licentious Botticelli to the pious Giotto, the Frenchman poetically contrasted a “*wandering Italy*” to the “*starry heavens*” that are the catacombs of Rome. “*La Mignon de Goethe*,” Foucher de Careil concluded, “*cette pâle et poétique figure de l’Italie errante et persécutée, ne sait chanter qu’un amour profane: [...] La Vierge chrétienne entonne des chants plus doux; elle chante ce ciel tout parsemé de constellations qu’on appelle les Catacombes. Touchante image de l’art chrétien qui, pour se régénérer, doit redescendre au tombeau pour en sortir glorieux.*”<sup>234</sup>

### The Orpheus-Christ in Raoul-Rochette’s *Tableau* (1837)

In the name of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, the French archaeologist Désiré Raoul-Rochette (1790-1854) published an article on the construction of churches in the journal *Revue Archéologique* in 1846. The article reacted against the upcoming Gothic revival in ecclesiastical architecture. According to the author, the article was the result of a discussion

<sup>230</sup> Cartuyvels in: Ibid., 157-8. (translation by the author)

<sup>231</sup> Cartuyvels in: Ibid., 161. (translation by the author)

<sup>232</sup> At each instance, the transcript of the conference refers to his person as ‘count’ Foucher de Careil. He may well have been the French diplomat Louis-Alexandre Foucher de Careil (1821-1891). The fact this politician published on Goethe in 1865, while the participant on the *Assemblée* cited the German writer in his address in Malines, might indicate it was indeed him who participated. (Adolphe Bitard, *Dictionnaire de Biographie Contemporaine française et étrangère*, (Paris: A. Lévy et Cie, 1887), 115.) Some research would be required to achieve certainty on his identity and to explain his presence in the section on the arts and archaeology. It seems as though he has not been identified in other literature on the *Assemblée*, either. (De Maeyer, *De Sint-Lucasscholen en de neogotiek: 1862-1914*, 83.)

<sup>233</sup> Foucher de Careil in: *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique: Première session à Malines, 18-22 août 1863*, II, 169. (translation by the author)

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

which had taken place at the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*. Moreover, it was to be regarded as “a sort of manifest” for the institute’s position on the matter.<sup>235</sup> The article in the *Revue Archéologique* makes for a fine anthology of objections against Gothic architecture.<sup>236</sup> Essentially, though, it contested the status of “*art chrétien*” which the Gothic style was in a process of obtaining during the 1840s. The *Académie* situated the origins of the Gothic way of building in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, stated it had never entered the true centre of Catholicism that is Rome, finally to cling to the catacombs in its defence of Renaissance culture. According to the learned members of the *Académie*, Gothic architecture could impossibly be portrayed as the single truly Christian architecture, as it had not sprung from the catacombs, like Christianity itself.<sup>237</sup>

Désiré Raoul-Rochette was a thoroughbred classicist. Some have called him the foremost Parisian proponent of classical archaeology of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>238</sup> Raoul-Rochette was appointed to the post of conservator of the *Cabinet des Antiqués et Médailles de la Bibliothèque Royale* in 1819. The chair of archaeology of the *Bibliothèque Royale*, previously held by Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), was assigned to him in 1828. From Quatremère, he later also inherited the post of *Secrétaire Perpétuel* of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*.<sup>239</sup> Raoul-Rochette dreamt of covering the antique arts in a single history, yet never realised such a project.<sup>240</sup> In spite of – or perhaps precisely because

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<sup>235</sup> Désiré Raoul-Rochette, “Considérations sur la question de savoir s’il est convenable au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle de bâtir des églises en style gothique,” *Revue Archéologique* 3, no. 1 (1846): 179. In his biography of Raoul-Rochette, Georges Perrot both signalled the existence of the article and Raoul-Rochette’s apparent unwillingness to situate the discussion more precisely. Raoul-Rochette did indeed not refer to specific participants or the time and place where the discussion, which he claimed to render, might have taken place. (Georges Perrot, “Notice sur la vie et les travaux de Désiré Raoul-Rochette, lue dans la séance publique annuelle du 16 novembre 1906,” *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 50, no. 9 (1906): 675.

<sup>236</sup> Raoul-Rochette, “Considérations sur la question de savoir s’il est convenable au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle de bâtir des églises en style gothique,” 184. The article suggested Gothic architecture belonged to engineering (“*the domain of balancing*”) rather than to architecture and speculated about the cost of the upkeep, entailed by the “*frightening amount of steel rods*” involved. (Raoul-Rochette, “Considérations sur la question de savoir s’il est convenable au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle de bâtir des églises en style gothique,” 179.) Medieval sculpture it deemed “*outside of all the conditions of the arts*” and therefore unreconcilable with modern society. Those who praised such sculpture precisely for its lack of naturality, mistook the awe they felt for time and the antiquity of things, for an awe induced by inherently more Christian forms. As ‘truth’ was the modern precondition, nature was to remain the example for the arts.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-2.

<sup>238</sup> Perrot, “Notice sur la vie et les travaux de Désiré Raoul-Rochette, lue dans la séance publique annuelle du 16 novembre 1906,” 640.

<sup>239</sup> Eve Gran-Aymerich and Natacha Lubtchansky, “Désiré Raoul-Rochette,” Institut Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Art, accessed January 17, 2018, <https://www.inha.fr/fr/ressources/publications/publications-numeriques/dictionnaire-critique-des-historiens-de-l-art/raoul-rochette-desire.html>.

<sup>240</sup> Perrot, “Notice sur la vie et les travaux de Désiré Raoul-Rochette, lue dans la séance publique annuelle du 16 novembre 1906,” 640.

Felicity Bodenstein’s unpublished thesis discusses Raoul-Rochette’s larger historiographical ambitions: Felicity Bodenstein, “L’histoire du Cabinet des médailles et antiques de la Bibliothèque

of – his classicist project, Raoul-Rochette had published extensively on the catacombs of Rome by the time he authored the protest in the name of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* in 1846. His *Discours sur l'Origine, le Développement et le Caractère des Types Imitatifs qui Constituent l'Art du Christianisme* appeared in 1834, to be complemented by *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* three years later.

The present subsection focusses on *Tableau des catacombes de Rome*. In its introduction, Raoul-Rochette briefly immersed his readership in apologetic language. However, Raoul-Rochette soon exchanged this register for a more scholarly vocabulary, “*in order not to trouble the sleep of the dead, nor to offend the opinion of the living*”. He deemed the times of suffering for ideas, opinions and beliefs to be over and called it needless to focus on the martyrs.<sup>241</sup> The introduction revealed much of the real agenda of the author. He emphasised how any contemporary visitor would applaud the state of contemporary culture after a descent into the catacombs and an encounter with the crudity of the work of the first Christians. The same “*art grossier*” of the catacombs he later termed “*the initial drafts of the celestial types to which the art of Renaissance was able to give life*”.<sup>242</sup> Resolving that contradiction was part of what *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* set out to do.

After a long introductory chapter, *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* opened with considerations on the development of liturgical practices. In the next chapter, however, Raoul-Rochette soon returned to the problem which his introduction had outlined. Throughout his *Tableau*, Raoul-Rochette proved himself keen on reminding his readership of the similarity of the decorations in the Christian catacombs on the one hand, and the counterparts of those decorations in contemporary pagan tombs on the other hand.<sup>243</sup> As opposed to later art historians who rather tended to emphasise the rich ones among the dead who were buried in the Christian catacombs (see section 2.3 “Reusens’ *Eléments*”), Raoul-Rochette presented the first Christians as a uniformly poor class of the Roman population. In spite of the “*countless echoes of the antique*”, he called their work humble, crude, indigent and “*devoid of taste, invention and talent*”, stating the catacombs had nothing to teach the contemporary arts.<sup>244</sup>

*Tableau des catacombes de Rome* essentially domesticated the catacombs for classical purposes, by resolving the contradictory reality it outlined in its introduction. The omnipresence of classical decorations taught Raoul-Rochette how the catacombs ought to be understood for their spirit of joy, innocence and charity. Complementarily, Raoul-Rochette argued the absence of an iconography of passion and suffering in the work of a social group which fell victim to persecutions, only to be plausible in the light of Christian clemency, kindness and charity. On the grounds of the complete absence of the crucifix in

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nationale (1819-1924) - Un Cabinet pour l'érudition à l'âge des musées” Phd diss., Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2015), 529-45.

<sup>241</sup> Désiré Raoul-Rochette, *Tableau des catacombes de Rome*, (Paris: Bibliothèque universelle de la jeunesse, 1837), vi. (translation by the author)

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., iv, 102-3. (translation by the author)

<sup>243</sup> See for instance: Ibid., 96.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., iii, v. (translation by the author)

early catacomb-iconography, he asserted how not a single sign of resentment in regard to classical culture was to be found in the catacombs. Precisely that spirit, he argued, was transferred from the catacombs to the basilicas of Rome. As soon as Christianity rose from the obscurity of the catacombs, Raoul-Rochette wrote, the Christian arts surmounted their initial imperfections, which were merely to be understood as an effect of the poor social situation of the original Christians.<sup>245</sup>

Central to the argument of *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* was the Orpheus-Christ, the iconographic type which was introduced in the first section of the present part of this dissertation. Raoul-Rochette did certainly not make original arguments in regard to the Orpheus-Christ. Like most of the Christian archaeologists had done before him, Raoul-Rochette relied on the words of apologist Clement of Alexandria to illustrate how the pagan deity could have become a Christian symbol.<sup>246</sup> In addition to the words of Clement of Alexandria, he mentioned the very same ceiling fresco which 17<sup>th</sup>-century historians had already discussed to confirm the Orpheus of the catacombs was truly, from the start, used to represent Christ (See fig. 26 and section 2.3 “The Orpheus-Christ in de Rossi’s *Rom. Sot.*”). Much more than others, though, he worked to salvage it as a positively Christian motif. Uniquely, the Parisian archaeologist proved himself aware of how Orphism, the classical cult of Orpheus was contemporarily being researched as Christianity *avant la lettre* in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century cultural sciences. Orphism shared some tenets with Christianity and could, as such, be regarded as a root of the Christian religion in contemporary *religionwissenschaft*. Raoul-Rochette preliminarily dismissed this as “a godly fraud”.<sup>247</sup> In regard to the importance of the words of Clement of Alexandria to the Christian archaeologists, it is interesting to mention today’s scholarship on the matter holds it as more likely that Clement was actually reacting against the tendency of Christians to fuse or confuse tenets of Orphism and Christianity, rather than inspiring it through his evangelising texts, as the Christian archaeologists collectively defended.

Raoul-Rochette mobilised the presence of Orpheus in the frescos of the catacombs to confirm the soundness of his initial observation of the striking similarity of classical and early Christian sepulchral art. Ultimately, he mobilised the Orpheus-Christ as evidence of how the first Christians had never resented classical arts and aesthetics, even though he wrote how they fought the ideas, mores and beliefs of antique society.<sup>248</sup> The analogy of the antique and early Christian culture was epitomised by the role of the pagan deity in the iconographic repertoire of the first Christians. “*L’Orphée [...] se produit dans nos peintures des catacombes; cette réminiscence chrétienne d’un type profane sert à nous apprendre, par un exemple décisif, de quelle manière une foule de motifs et de symboles payens avaient pu*

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 182-6.

<sup>246</sup> Miguel Herrero de Jauregui, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*, (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 122.

<sup>247</sup> Raoul-Rochette, *Tableau des catacombes de Rome*, 132-3. (translation by the author)

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 97.



*s'introduire, à l'aide des modèles et des traditions de l'art antique, au sein du christianisme.*"<sup>249</sup>

When the unfortunate early Christian arts were liberated from their suffocating subterranean abodes, formal and artistic quality reappeared. Christian art, Raoul-Rochette argued, "*recovered from the weakness and imperfection of its first productions, as soon as it emerged from the darkness of the catacombs.*"<sup>250</sup> As such, Raoul-Rochette divorced the Middle Ages from the theological authority of the example of the first Christians and linked the cultural expressions of the first Christians directly to Renaissance. He domesticated the first Christians, seemingly for his classical project and that of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, while scapegoating the Byzantines for the earliest abandonment of the spirit of the antique arts.<sup>251</sup> Indeed, in the *Beaux-Arts* article of 1846, Raoul-Rochette mentioned how he personally could not agree more with the ideas he communicated in name of the *Académie*.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 186. (translation by the author)

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>252</sup> Raoul-Rochette, "Considérations sur la question de savoir s'il est convenable au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle de bâtir des églises en style gothique," 179.

## 2.3 The catacombs as the cradle of Christian beauty

### Reusens' *Eléments* at the university of Louvain (1871-86)

When the chair of Christian archaeology of the university of Louvain was assigned to Edmond Reusens in 1864, hand-outs initially provided study material to the theologians in his course in Louvain. Throughout the ensuing years, Reusens developed those hand-outs into a thorough publication.<sup>253</sup> The course, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, appeared in two volumes in 1871 and 1875. A decade later, Reusens published a second and augmented edition (1885-1886). Reusens' course aimed to distil "*the very principles of our sacred religion*" by means of the archaeological examination of the makings of the Christians of the past, from the catacombs of Rome, the "*cradle of Christianity*", to the masterpieces of the Middle Ages.<sup>254</sup>

Reusens introduced his course in a twofold way. He presented Christian archaeology as an auxiliary science to ecclesiastical historiography and exegetical praxis.<sup>255</sup> Yet, more importantly in the context of the present dissertation, Reusens also defined the purpose of his *Eléments* in aesthetic terms. By referring to *L'art devant le christianisme*, a text by the French cleric Joseph Félix, Reusens reminded his students of how the study of ancient artefacts ought to comprise the development of "*a taste and sense of the beauty of art which transcends vague emotions*". He understood a work of art as a recombination of the "*natural*" and the "*ideal*". To Reusens and Félix, different styles were expressions of the influence of different *ideals* on the same, unchanging *nature*. The *ideal* in case of Reusens' Christian arts, was, of course, Christianity itself. In the introductory paragraph which Reusens constructed around his reference to Joseph Félix' text, Reusens situated one of the basic goals of his course in a quest for an understanding of the aesthetic implications of the Christian religion.<sup>256</sup>

As mentioned, Reusens' *Eléments* was republished during the 1880s. The most striking difference between the first and the second edition of the course, was that a second author made contributions to Reusens' text throughout the two volumes. Appendices were added

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<sup>253</sup> Ellen Van Impe provided more details on the publication history. See: Van Impe, "Architectural Historiography in Belgium 1830-1914," 136-8.

<sup>254</sup> Both quotations are from the words which Reusens spoke on the occasion of a celebration in his honour, organised by his students in 1872. Quoted from: Ellen Van Impe, "De Belgische architectuurgeschiedschrijving en de Christelijke archeologie (1864-1914): Edmond Reusens en "l'architecture proprement dite," 154. (translation by the author)

<sup>255</sup> Reusens warned against any attempt of interpreting "*les Livres saints*" without a thorough understanding of Christian antiquity. (Reusens, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 4-5.)

<sup>256</sup> For Reusens' paragraph on the role of beauty in his course: Ibid., 3-4. (translation by the author) In *L'art devant le christianisme*, the notion of "Christian beauty" is explicitly used in contrast to "pagan beauty", like in the speeches of Jean Bethune and James Weale at the Malines *Assemblée générale* of 1863. (Joseph Félix, *L'art devant le christianisme: Conférences de Notre-Dame*, (Paris: Joseph Albanel, 1867), 154, 263, 267.)

by Jules Helbig (1821-1906) to nearly all the chapters of the second edition.<sup>257</sup> To characterise the contributions of Helbig to the second edition of *Eléments*, Ellen Van Impe singled out reviews from the periodical *Revue de l'art chrétien*. Several reviews distinguished the approaches of both authors from one another. Whereas Reusens dealt exhaustively with “the scientific side of the matter”, Helbig expressed himself “like an artist” in a “less didactic and more exciting style”.<sup>258</sup> A later review emphasised how Helbig clarified the “large historical lines” as well as the “aesthetic value of their development”. Whereas Reusens’ archaeology was focussed on the facts, Helbig’s considerations brought the interest of aesthetics to the fore.<sup>259</sup> For the most part, Reusens’ archaeology is indeed to be read between the lines in any attempt of distilling something other than factual knowledge from it. In her doctorate, Ellen Van Impe mobilised those reviews to drive something of a wedge between Reusens and Helbig. By means of several well selected excerpts, Van Impe singled out rationality as a paradigmatic notion in Reusens’ conception of historical transitions. Although Van Impe ultimately confirmed Reusens must have agreed with Helbig somehow, she defined an incongruence of their understanding of the arts, making their arguments incomparable to some extent. Van Impe contrasted Reusens’ quest for the “immutable core of Christianity” to Helbig’s love of the Gothic. Helbig mapped the history of spirituality onto the history of the arts – much like Bethune had done on the *Assemblée* of 1863 – to portray the Gothic as though intrinsically more Christian than the arts from the less Christian ages which preceded it. In contrast, Van Impe argued, Reusens’ text never made a similar connection of religion and aesthetics. Reusens, saw values and morals as the immutable core, Van Impe wrote, whereas he understood the degree of rationality in the arts as a parameter and the agent of change.<sup>260</sup>

As Reusens relied to some extent on the writings of the Neo-Gothic architect and theorist Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, it is not wildly surprising to retrieve ‘rationality’ as a critical paradigm or an agent of artistic or architectural change in Reusens’ history. The importance which Reusens himself attributed to aesthetics in his introduction to *Eléments*, suggests there might be more to it, though. Reusens relied on the writings of Viollet-le-Duc for his second

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<sup>257</sup> Jules Helbig provided an appendix to all the chapters except for the first one on classical architecture. Helbig was a Liège-based painter and *savant* with connections to James Weale and Jean Bethune in the *Saint-Luc* milieu. He collaborated with them on the occasion of the organisation of the exhibition of Christian art for the second of the *Assemblées générales* in Malines in 1864. He contributed to the founding of the *Gilde de Saint-Thomas et de Saint-Luc* and became vice-president of this society at one point. Helbig created the *Société d'Art et d'Histoire du diocèse de Liège* and from 1881 onwards he directed the *Revue de l'Art chrétien*. Helbig was also one of the founders of the *Ecole de Saint-Luc* of Liège. Among his most appreciated historical works are his researches on Mosan art. As a painter, Helbig decorated numerous Belgian churches and collaborated with Jean Bethune on the restoration of the Aachener Dom. (Jacques Lavalleye, “Jules Helbig,” *Biographie Nationale* 37, (1971): 429-31.)

<sup>258</sup> Van Impe, “Architectural Historiography in Belgium 1830-1914,” 137-8.

<sup>259</sup> From a later review, Van Impe also quoted: “[*Les pages de Helbig*] empêcheront aussi l’élève de s’imprégner exclusivement des notions, froides en elles-mêmes, de l’archéologie pure, et lui épargneront le danger de ne pas éprouver l’émotion généreuse qui naît de la contemplation artistique du beau, à travers le développement de la civilisation chrétienne.” (Ibid., 138.)

<sup>260</sup> Van Impe, “Architectural Historiography in Belgium 1830-1914,” 342-4.

volume of *Eléments*. For the first volume, however, he relied to a comparable extent on the work of Giovanni Battista de Rossi. In the light of an excerpt presented subsequently, it is possible to name ‘Christian beauty’ just as well as ‘rationality’. Reusens not only conceptualised it in his introduction as the “*ideal*” that influences the constant “*nature*”, he also explicitised the connection of religion and aesthetics in his text when he signalled the earliest signs of the tendencies which he deemed to be intrinsic to the Renaissance.

Reusens presented an example of a 14<sup>th</sup>-century bishop who had himself depicted in stained glass as an early case in which vanity superseded the “*ideal*” of the Christian arts.<sup>261</sup> In Reusens’ history, this depiction of the bishop prefigured man’s tendency to occupy the place which had been reserved to the transcendent in the medieval arts. By quoting an excerpt of Edmond Lévy’s *Histoire de la peinture sur verre* (1860), Reusens connected the 14<sup>th</sup>-century window to the rise of humanism and the emerging artistic tendency to pursue different aesthetics. “*En avançant dans les âges,*” Reusens cited, “*nous voyons un dessin plus correct, des formes plus savantes; mais hélas! Pourquoi le dire déjà? l’homme devient moins bon, il fait la part de Dieu plus petite, la sienne plus large; et il croit ainsi se grandir!*”<sup>262</sup> Edmond Lévy’s *Histoire de la peinture sur verre* is itself interesting. Approved by the Belgian cardinal Engelbertus Sterckx and supported by king Leopold I, the author himself demonstrated the will to ground his study in catacomb archaeology. Lévy’s introduction summed up the most important Christian archaeologists and the way in which they had discussed glass in their publications. He mentioned, for instance, both Antonio Bosio and the newly established *Museo Pio Cristiano* of Pius IX. The introduction referred to Désiré Raoul-Rochette’s *Mémoire sur les antiquités chrétiennes* and discussed several prints from Louis Perret’s *Catacombes de Rome* which depicted glass findings from the catacombs.<sup>263</sup>

Helbig’s “*stories*”, as Ellen Van Impe called them, do indeed simplify the complex writing of Reusens’ *Eléments d’archéologie chrétienne*. In contrast to Van Impe, however, I will subsequently use Helbig’s appendices to get a hold on Reusens’ *Eléments*. On the grounds of Reusens’ endorsement of Helbig’s appendices, Reusens’ introductory paragraph on beauty and his reference to Edmond Lévy’s *Histoire de la peinture sur verre*, reading Reusens’ work through the appendices of Helbig is not as implausible as Van Impe presented it. I agree with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century reviews of Reusens’ *Eléments* from *Revue de l’art chrétien* that Helbig’s appendices expressed matters which remained implicit in the structure and writing of *Eléments* itself.

Although Reusens himself refrained almost entirely from both remarks on beauty and apologetic accounts, he cited a telling observation from Giovanni Battista de Rossi’s *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*. As Raoul-Rochette had done, this excerpt from de Rossi’s work

<sup>261</sup> Midst a lengthy passage on stained glass, Reusens discussed a 14<sup>th</sup>-century window of the cathedral of Evreux. The donator of the window, bishop Geoffroy de Faé (1334-1340) had himself portrayed in the glass while holding a model of the window he had donated to his church.

<sup>262</sup> Reusens, *Eléments d’archéologie chrétienne*, II, 98. For Reusens’ own source, see: Edmond Lévy, *Histoire de la peinture sur verre*, (Brussels: Tircher, 1860), 80.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, vi, xxxvi.

designated the similarity which the oldest sepulchral chambers of the catacombs bear to their pagan counterparts as a starting point. By evoking this similarity at the start, Reusens' initial narrative resembled that of Raoul-Rochette. By citing de Rossi on the matter, however, he presented it as a great contradiction. "*Les peintures et surtout l'ornementation*", Reusens cited "*ont une si grande ressemblance avec les décors des tombeaux païens, qu'on ne se croirait pas dans le cubiculum d'un cimetière sacré, moins encore dans une crypte historique d'illustres martyrs*".<sup>264</sup> By presenting the similarity of early Christian and classical remains as a paradox, Reusens set the stage for a history in which the arts influenced by Christianity, grew apart progressively from the example of the Romans. Unlike Raoul-Rochette, who presented the first Christians as a collectively poor social group with no way to afford more qualitative decorations in their catacombs, Reusens presented the first Christians as a socially mixed group, emphasising the oldest places were often the most expensively decorated ones.<sup>265</sup>

Jules Helbig clarified the matter. Despite the way he assured his readership there are no Christian forms of architecture to be found in the catacombs, he designated the catacombs as the cradle of an evolution. "*Malgré de nombreuses et inévitables reminiscences [à l'art païen], l'art se purifie dans les sombres réduits où, pendant trois siècles, il semble enseveli avec les martyrs*."<sup>266</sup> *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne* introduced the catacombs in a Bethunian aesthetic history by designating them as the origin of an evolution towards a different kind of beauty. "*Un art nouveau, un art qui n'a plus pour objet unique le service des passions, est né. L'artiste conçoit l'idéal de la beauté autrement que ne l'a fait jusqu'alors l'art classique*", Helbig wrote.<sup>267</sup> He defined the newborn aesthetic ideal as he mentioned the qualities he discerned in the Callixtus catacomb as the "*dignity associated with simplicity*" and "*the calm majesty appropriate to the Christian sanctuary [...] of which the effect is enhanced by constructive economy and the sober ornamentation of details*".<sup>268</sup>

In the ensuing chapters, Reusens and Helbig elaborated an archaeological history in which the acclaimed values of the arts of the catacombs culminated on the brink of the transition from the chapter on the Romanesque period to the chapter on the Gothic period. This gives a sense of the general significance of the two volumes of *Eléments*. Whereas the first volume outlined a culminating evolution of the arts, the second volume tracked their Gothic flourishing and subsequent decline into the tendencies of the Renaissance. By the end of Reusens' first volume, "*the most pure style and the most severe and sober ornamentation*" was attained according to Helbig.<sup>269</sup> One can cite Reusens' "*en avançant dans les âges*"-excerpt for a summary of the consecutive transitions in the second volume. "*At its beginnings so pure and great in its simplicity,*" Helbig rephrased, "*the pointed style soon suffered from the excessively logical spirit of its builders*".<sup>270</sup> From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards,

<sup>264</sup> Reusens, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 53.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>266</sup> Jules Helbig in: Reusens, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 133-4.

<sup>267</sup> Jules Helbig in: Ibid., 134.

<sup>268</sup> Jules Helbig in: Ibid., 132. (translation by the author)

<sup>269</sup> Jules Helbig in: Reusens, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, II, 523. (translation by the author)

<sup>270</sup> Jules Helbig in: Ibid., 603. (translation by the author)

Helbig wrote, this “*logical spirit*” drove artists in the arms of formal concerns, first perceivable in frail details and excessive decorations, later in the will to resuscitate classical culture.<sup>271</sup>

In his very last appendix, Helbig tapped back to the start of *Eléments*. “[L]’art qui, depuis les catacombes, n’avait cessé de chercher à élever les âmes aux hautes régions de l’idéal chrétien, aux mystiques beautés de la vie surnaturelle, - l’art [de la renaissance] devint le dangereux apôtre du sensualisme. Le triomphe de la renaissance est basé tout entier sur le culte de la nature, sur l’exaltation de la matière et le dogme de l’infaillibilité de la raison humaine.”<sup>272</sup> In his last appendix, however, Helbig did not leave any doubt about his view of the implications of the Renaissance to the history of the Christian arts: “*A proprement parler, l’avènement des principes de la renaissance marque le terme de l’archéologie chrétienne, puisqu’ils en sont la négation.*”<sup>273</sup>

### The Orpheus-Christ in de Rossi’s *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* (1864-67)

In *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*, Giovanni Battista de Rossi could hardly have been more explicit about his position in regard to the works which Désiré Raoul-Rochette had published on the catacombs in Paris in the 1830s. The papal archaeologist accused Raoul-Rochette of abusing subterranean Rome, simply to prove a conclusion, to “*premise a synthesis*”.<sup>274</sup> He explicitised Raoul-Rochette had been biased by his ambition to declare the first Christians respectful heirs of classical culture and added the theory of the Frenchman could hardly have been more remote from his own ideas.<sup>275</sup> He blamed the French scholar for having “*twisted the way the first faithful expressed their new evangelical doctrine in their works of art*” and warned against Raoul-Rochette and “*his school of followers*”. They “*tell into exaggerations and errors*”, as they went as far as presenting certain findings as Christian, when in fact they were not.<sup>276</sup>

De Rossi admitted how, indeed, the classical ways of the first Christians in the catacombs persisted until Constantine raised both the Christians and their arts from the catacombs. However, he warned against the blurring of distinctions. After having distanced himself explicitly from Raoul-Rochette’s conclusions, de Rossi set out to deconstruct his actual arguments in the most minute of ways. Essentially, he disqualified all the material on which Raoul-Rochette had founded his arguments, until only the Orpheus-Christ remained. Like in Raoul-Rochette’s *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* itself, the Orpheus-Christ motif was

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<sup>271</sup> Jules Helbig in: Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Jules Helbig in: Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Jules Helbig in: Ibid. 601.

<sup>274</sup> Giovanni Battista de Rossi, *La Roma sotterranea Cristiana*, II, (Rome: Litografia Pontificia, 1867), 357. (translation by the author)

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>276</sup> Giovanni Battista de Rossi, *La Roma sotterranea Cristiana*, I, (Rome: Litografia Pontificia, 1864), 66-7. (translation by the author)

therefore made central to de Rossi's argument about the reception of classical culture in the early Christian world.<sup>277</sup>

Raoul-Rochette had boasted about the omnipresence of Orpheus in the catacombs. De Rossi, however, dismissed all but two (see fig. 13 and 26) of the examples given by the Frenchman.<sup>278</sup> To those two old examples, originally discovered by Antonio Bosio in the Domitilla catacomb, de Rossi added a third one. Out of his hat, he pulled a freshly discovered Orpheus-Christ from his own excavations in the Callixtus catacomb (see fig. 27). Arguing his recent discovery was a younger depiction than the two previously known frescos, he inscribed the new Orpheus-Christ fresco in his larger argument. An apparent formal evolution allowed de Rossi to argue his own, younger Callistian Orpheus - "*evidently an [early Christian] attempt to reduce the classical type of Orpheus to a form directly alluding to a personification of Christ*" - embodied a transition from the original Orpheus to a more direct representation of Christ.<sup>279</sup> Both the overall rarity and the total absence of the motif in the frescos of later centuries, allowed de Rossi to speculate about a subsequent ban which must have befallen the use of Orpheus in Christian iconography.<sup>280</sup>

As all of the preceding was formulated by de Rossi as a direct reaction to the assertions of Raoul-Rochette, de Rossi, too, used the Orpheus-Christ to epitomise the reception of classical culture. Although de Rossi's argument came at the expense of Raoul-Rochette's fundamental defence of Renaissance, I do not know if de Rossi himself explicitised aesthetic or further historical implications in the long volumes of *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*. In the *Revue de l'art chrétien*, a journal later directed by Jules Helbig, de Rossi's demarche against Raoul-Rochette was, however, certainly repected as such. In the journal the German cleric Franz Xaver Kraus (1840-1901) justified his use of the term of "*pagan aesthetics*" by referring to de Rossi's assertions against the ideas of Raoul-Rochette (see section 3.3 "Catacombs and barns").<sup>281</sup> *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* was also closely related to de Rossi's *Aperçue* and his catacomb-pavilion at the Paris world fair of 1867. In his visitor's guide to the catacomb-pavilion, de Rossi did situate the origin of the characteristics of the

<sup>277</sup> Giovanni Battista de Rossi, *La Roma sotterranea Cristiana*, II, (Rome: Litografia Pontificia, 1867), 352.

<sup>278</sup> Raoul-Rochette, *Tableau des catacombes de Rome*, 130-37. For the disqualifications by de Rossi, see: de Rossi, *La Roma sotterranea Cristiana*, II, 355-7.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 356. (translation by the author) In both the frescos discovered by Bosio, a multitude of animals surrounded the deities. These groups of diverse animals were reduced to a mere two sheep in the fresco which de Rossi presented in his reaction to the ideas of Raoul-Rochette. One of the sheep lay calmly at the feet of Orpheus. The other animal stood attentively at his right flank. The animals in particular allowed de Rossi to argue the younger Callistian Orpheus, "*evidently an attempt to reduce the classical type of Orpheus to a form directly alluding to a personification of Christ, as envisioned in Christian symbolism*", embodied a transition from the original Orphean Christ to the "Good Shepherd", an omnipresent early Christian symbol in the catacombs. (see fig. 27). For a brief account on the shepherds in the catacombs, see for instance: Reusens, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 77-8.

<sup>280</sup> de Rossi, *La Roma sotterranea Cristiana*, II, 356-7.

<sup>281</sup> Franz Xaver Kraus. "Le crucifix blasphématoire du Palatin." *Revue de l'art chrétien* 14, (1870): 102.

art of the Byzantines in transitions in the catacombs (see section 1.3 “The Holy See at the Paris world fair”). This is certainly relevant, as Raoul-Rochette’s *Tableau* scapegoated precisely the Byzantines for the abandonment of classical culture.

De Rossi was not exploring entirely new terrain with his assertions against Raoul-Rochette. Implicitly, he tuned in to much older ideas and argumentation. In fact, de Rossi reaffirmed an argument first used in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century writings of Giulio Mancini (1559-1630), personal physician to pope Urban VIII. German scholar Gabrielle Bickendorf situated the earliest shift from a merely theological to a historical understanding of early Christian and medieval art in Giulio Mancini’s publications *Discorso* (1618) and *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (1621). To demonstrate this in her book *Die Historisierung der italienischen Kunstbetrachtung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Bickendorf compared Mancini’s ideas to those of cardinal Federico Borromeo (1564-1631) and Antonio Bosio (1576-1629). Bickendorf’s work is of particular interest here because she outlined the difference of these authors’ works by means of a comparison of their way of presenting one of the Orpheus-Christos of the Christian catacombs, which Bosio had originally discovered.<sup>282</sup>

Cardinal Federico Borromeo and Antonio Bosio shared the tendency to limit their interrogation of the frescos of the catacombs to symbolical and allegorical questions.<sup>283</sup> Giulio Mancini, too, showed interest in the concerns of symbolism. Nevertheless, Mancini deepened the understanding of Bosio’s findings and was the first to conceptualise the transition from classical to Christian art. Mancini developed the concept of that transition by means of the original presence and subsequent disappearance of pagan elements in early Christian devotional iconography. Specifically, Bickendorf pointed out how Bosio, Borromeo and Mancini discussed a particular room of the Domitilla catacomb. There, Orpheus was depicted within an obviously biblical decorative totality (see fig. 26).<sup>284</sup> On the walls of the room, moreover, Christological scenes were painted. The central place of Orpheus in the iconographic layout of this room was instrumental in Christening the other Orpheus of the catacombs as well. In this room, the Orpheus motif was undeniably a symbol of Christ.<sup>285</sup>

Whereas Bosio and Borromeo safeguarded a clear distinction of early Christianity and classical Roman culture by presenting Orpheus as a direct and unambiguous symbol of

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<sup>282</sup> He acquainted himself with Alfonso Chacon’s collection of copies of images of popes and saints, created along with his publication *Vitae et res gestae Pontificum Romanorum et S.R.E. Cardinalium ab initio nascentis ecclesiae usque ad Clementem IX* (1601). Mancini also familiarised himself with Giacomo Grimaldi’s *Instrumenta autentica translationum sanctorum corporum et sacrarum reliquiarum e veteri in novum templum sancti Petri*, a document created on the occasion of the demolition of the last remains of the ancient St Peter’s basilica, ordered by pope Paul V. Mancini also observed the development of Antonio Bosio’s campaign of explorations in the Roman catacombs. (Bickendorf, *Die Historisierung der italienischen Kunstbetrachtung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, 66-76.)

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 85-8.



Christ, Mancini proposed an alternative. Adding art history to theology, Mancini recognised the great similarity of early Christian and classical sepulchral rooms, allowing him to conceptualise a “*transition from a gentile to Christian character*” in the arts.<sup>286</sup> The gradual loss of formal quality in early Christian painting, he presented as a consequence of the Christian faith. Even though Mancini recognised the importance of the social *malaise* in which the early Christian painters must have found themselves, he designated the “*volontà degli uomini*”, the free will of early Christians, as the cause of the gradual decline of formal quality in frescos of the catacombs. This theory of the abandonment of formal concerns, grounded in the presence of the Orpheus-Christ, was foundational to Mancini’s understanding of medieval aesthetics. As such, Mancini was the first historian to criticise Giorgio Vasari’s historiographic model of the downfall of the arts because of the barbarian invasions of Rome.<sup>287</sup> Not unlike the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Reusens and Helbig, who in turn relied on de Rossi, Mancini believed medieval aesthetics to have sprung from Christianity itself. To Mancini, medieval aesthetics were intrinsically connected to Christianity, “*perchè quei santi Padri [...] havevan più per fine la devotione e pietà che l’ornato*” - “*because the venerable Fathers [...] envisioned devotion and piety rather than the ornate*”.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid., (translation by the author)

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 85-8. (translation by the author)



*Chez les premiers chrétiens Orphée adoucissant les bêtes féroces aux sons de sa lyre était le symbole du Sauveur domptant les passions des hommes et les attirant par le charme de sa doctrine. [...] Clément d'Alexandrie, après avoir raconté la légende d'Orphée et le pouvoir qu'on attribuait à ses chants, fait voir que la parole du Christ a bien plus de force et de vertu. "La puissance de mon chantre (le Christ), dit-il, ne se borne pas à de si vulgaires prodiges [...] il rappelle vers le ciel, notre véritable patrie, nos coeurs inclinés vers la terre."*

Reusens, *Eléments*, I., 1885, 89-90.

Fig. 12. Orpheus-Christ aquarelle by Antoni Gaudí and Josep Maria Jujol in the *Llibre d'or de l'Orfeo Català* (1922), watercolours on paper, 23 x 33 cm. Biblioteca de l'Orfeo Català.

Fig. 13. Orpheus-Christ fresco in an arcosolium in the Domitilla catacomb (erroneously called the Callixtus catacomb in this engraving). Antonio Bosio, *Roma sotterranea* (1632), 255.

Tauola Seconda del Cubicolo Quarto, & vltimo del Cimiterio di S. Calisto Papa, e d'altri Santi Martiri nelle Vie Appia, & Ardeatina.

AVLA SECVNDA CVBICVLI QVARTIET VITIMI COEMETERII SANCTI CALLISTI PAPAE ET ALIORVM SS. MARTYRV. VIA APPIA ET ARDEATINA



Queste sono le figure, che stanno nella facciata principale del Cubicolo incontro alla Porta, segnata C, insieme con quelle, che stanno nella facciata sotto l'Arco del Monumento arcuato, segnato D.

- I. Vn'Imagine, che mostra con la mano certi edificij, che paiono muri, ò torri d'vna Città; la quale si crede sia d'vn Profeta in atto di predire alcuna cosa à detta Città.
- II. La Regina de' Cieli, che tiene in braccio l'vnico suo Figliuolo; e crediamo, dalla similitudine dell'altre pitture, che vi fosse l'adoratione de' Magi; i quali non si veggono, per esser caduto in quella parte lo stucco, doue forse erano dipinti.
- III. Questa Imagine, se bene li manca parte della testa; contuttociò chiaramente dimostra esser Moisè, che con la verga fa scatorir'acqua dalla pietra.
- IV. Orfeo, che con la Lira rende mansueti i Leoni, Tori, Cameli, & altri animali; figura mistica di quello, che nella Volta di detto Cubicolo si troua figurato.



## 2.4 Epilogue: Gaudí's Orpheus-Christ aquarelle

In 1922, Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) and Josep Maria Jujol (1879-1949) must have paid a visit to one of the musical events of the *Orfeó Català*, for they left a touching sign of their awareness of Christian archaeology in the guestbook of this institution (see fig. 12). On one of the guestbook's pages they painted a beautifully coloured Orpheus-Christ, providing a subject to this epilogue. The *Orfeó Català* was a choral organisation, based in Barcelona, founded in the last decade of the 1800s. The first volume of the guestbook of the *Orfeó Català* was in use from 1896 until 1936 and was, for the most part, signed by poets and composers who contributed melodic scores and brief poetic felicitations. The one visual exception in this series of musical and literary compliments in this *Llibre d'or de l'Orfeó Català*, is the archaeological aquarelle of the famous architects Gaudí and Jujol.<sup>289</sup>

In the painting of the architects, orange, muted blue and rusty red colours shape a human figure holding a harp. The human figure is surrounded by a band of attentive and calm animals. Two dromedaries, two lions, cattle and some birds, one of which clearly resembles a peacock, turn towards the central human figure. A Catalan phrase in black ink was written in what, at first sight, simply resembles some cartouche. All was depicted within a hemicycle crowned by a Greek cross, itself surrounded by a circle of light. From the cross, red ribbons wave down, around the hemicycle. The presence of the harp in the hands of the depicted human figure makes it identifiable as the mythological Orpheus.

The aquarelle's allusion to the Orphean name of the institution to which it was dedicated is evident. Yet, this is only the most obvious semantic layer of the aquarelle. The architects depicted an Orpheus-Christ rather than simply an Orpheus. The phrase which can be read on the aquarelle "*Al Cel tots enserem d'Orfeonistes*" - "*In Heaven we will all be Orpheonists*" - does not simply refer to the *Orfeó Català*.<sup>290</sup> The aquarelle is a very precise allusion to the Christian catacombs of Rome and emulates one of the only two depictions of Orpheus which were known before de Rossi revealed his third one. The fresco adorned an altar in one of the oldest sepulchral chapels of the catacombs. As far as I have found myself able to investigate it, this aquarelle has, however, not yet been associated with the catacombs or with Christian archaeology. It seems as though the profundity of its semantic intention has generally been overlooked so far.<sup>291</sup>

<sup>289</sup> *Llibre d'or de l'Orfeó Català*, I, (Barcelona: Centre de Documentació de l'Orfeó Català, 2008), 27.

<sup>290</sup> (translation by the author)

<sup>291</sup> The most recent publication which treats the aquarelle which I was able to consult does not surpass the evident link between the depicted Orpheus and the name of the *Orfeó Català*. (Pere Simo Capella and Antoni Galmes. *The Arts and nature: biology and symbolism in Barcelona circa 1900* (Barcelona: Publicacions i Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2017), 131.) On 16 April 2015, the phrase "*Al cel tots enserem d'Orfeonistes*" was mentioned on the 4<sup>th</sup> liturgical congress of Montserrat, in the concluding intervention of cardinal Lluís Martínez Sistach. In disregard of what was depicted by the architects, the cardinal recalled the religious phrase to buttress an assertion of his own about Gaudí's awareness of liturgical matters. Cardinal Sistach argued Gaudí's architecture prefigured the liturgical innovations of the second Vatican Council of the 1960s. The cardinal may or may not have been aware of the archaeological reality of the aquarelle. To base such an argument on Gaudí's architecture itself may be sound. However, to argue the same based on the aquarelle would have entailed something of a contradiction had the cardinal been aware of

To situate the aquarelle in its iconographic context and to pinpoint the archaeological source which might have been used to reproduce the early Christian fresco, three relevant reproductions of the same ancient fresco are to be discussed. The earliest modern reproduction of the fresco is the one of Antonio Bosio's 17<sup>th</sup>-century *Roma Sotterranea* (see fig. 13).<sup>292</sup> Although Bosio's print was itself reproduced in the works of other authors, it long remained the only original reproduction of the fresco. In Bottari's *Sculture e pitture sagre estratte dai cimiteri di Roma* (1737), for instance, a reprint of Bosio's original reproduction was included.<sup>293</sup> The second original depiction of the fresco of which I am aware, is that of Louis Perret's *Catacombes de Rome* of 1851 (see fig. 28).<sup>294</sup> Next to these 17<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century prints, a coloured photographic reproduction of the catacomb fresco had been published in clerical archaeologist Joseph Wilpert's *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms* nearly twenty years before Gaudí and Jujol created their aquarelle (see fig. 29).<sup>295</sup>

There is an evident difference of Bosio's print and the reproductions by Perret and Wilpert to be pointed out in regard to the aquarelle. Wilpert's photograph evidences how the original *arcosolium* in which the fresco was painted, was shaped as a dented half oval rather than as a pristine hemicycle. Bosio idealised this shape, whereas Perret's print was true to the actual contour of the fresco, which can be seen in Wilpert's photograph. In addition to the many minute similarities of the aquarelle and the print of Bosio, the aquarelle and the old print share the idealised shape of the actual *arcosolium*. On the grounds of that similarity, it might be assumed the architects based their aquarelle on the print from Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea*.

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the origin and implications of the depicted scene. In the wake of the second Vatican Council, most traces of the cult of the early Christian martyrs were removed from the churches of Europe, as the Church no longer wished to embody the intransigence which was associated with the cult of the martyrs. By itself, the aquarelle might therefore contradict Gaudí would have been a precursor of the reforms of Vaticanum II. On the general removal of 19<sup>th</sup>-century catacomb relics from the European churches: Viaene, "Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century," 315. For cardinal Sistach's concluding address at the liturgical congress of Montserrat, see: "Intervenció conclusiva del Sr. Cardenal Arquebisbe de Barcelona, Dr. Lluís Martínez Sistach, en la sessió inaugural del IV Congrés Litúrgic de Montserrat Barcelona, aula magna del Seminari Conciliar de Barcelona, 6 d'abril de 2015," Església Arxidiocesana de Barcelona, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://www.esglesiabarcelona.cat/es/documents/intervencio-del-cardenal-en-el-iv-congres-liturgic-de-montserrat/>.

<sup>292</sup> Antonio Bosio, *Roma sotterranea*, (Rome: Appresso Guglielmo Facciotti, 1632), 255.

<sup>293</sup> Giovanni Gaetano Bottari, *Sculture e pitture sagre estratte dai cimiteri di Roma: pubblicate già dagli autori della Roma sotterranea ed ora nuovamente date in luce colle spiegazioni*, II, (Rome: Stamperia Vaticana, 1746), tav. LXXI.

<sup>294</sup> Perret depicted the Orpheus-Christ in the first volume of his publication. Perret, *Catacombes de Rome*, Vol. 1, pl XX. A perspective of the room in which the fresco was situated is also rendered in the first volume of *Catacombes de Rome*. On this print, the Orphean *arcosolium* is recognisable as well. (Perret, *Catacombes de Rome*, I, pl. XVIII.) For Perret's textual discussion of the fresco, see: Perret, *Catacombes de Rome*, VI, 29-30.

<sup>295</sup> Joseph Wilpert, *Die malereien der Katakomben Roms*, II, (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1903), pl. 229.

In addition to the formal comparison, it is relevant to mention the colours deployed by the architects. Although Bosio's prints do not bear colour, the colouring of the Catalan aquarelle approximates the red and rusty colours which characterise the catacomb frescos in general, as can be seen on Wilpert's coloured photograph, for instance. This colouring of the aquarelle hints at an archaeological awareness which surpassed what could have come from an isolated, accidental encounter with Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea* or a book which simply copied Bosio's print. An additional source must have made the architects aware of the colours which characterise the catacomb frescos. They might have been advised by someone or the colours on the aquarelle might be a lead to the precise source of the aquarelle, as some rare handcoloured copy of Bosio's prints might exist.

By the 1920s, Christian archaeology had had an institutional presence in Catalonia for some decades already. In 1902, the course *Nocions de arqueologia sagrada Catalana* was first published at the seminary of the bishopric of Vic.<sup>296</sup> Josep Gudiol y Cunill (1872-1931) was the author of this course. He was schooled at the seminary of Vic himself and worked from 1891 onwards in the Vic episcopal museum. Gudiol's bishop sent him to Rome to get acquainted with the archaeological scene that stemmed from the practice of Giovanni Battista de Rossi. After this excursion to Rome, Gudiol was named curator of the episcopal museum. In 1898, he founded a chair of Christian archaeology at the seminary of Vic, to which *Nocions de arqueologia sagrada Catalana* eventually provided the published course for the seminarians. Its ecclesiastical approbation was clear about its intentions, as it emphasised the course's utility in the defence of "*Catholic truth*", its ability to enrich "*the treasure of sacred teachings*" and its potential to make "*the men and institutions that are the honour of the Church shine once again with the light of doctrine*".<sup>297</sup> A brief evaluation of the authors to whom Gudiol y Cunill referred, confirms an orientation towards the Roman scene, which was dominated by de Rossi's students Marucchi, Stevenson and Armellini. The German, less militant and apologetic scene of Joseph Wilpert remained absent. Interestingly, Gudiol y Cunill also used Edmond Reusens' *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne* as a source.<sup>298</sup>

One year after Gudiol's chair of Christian archaeology had been founded at the seminary of Vic, an important creation followed, as Josep Torres i Bages (1846-1916) was named the new bishop of Vic.<sup>299</sup> He is often remembered for the important hand he had in linking Catalan regionalism to Catholicism.<sup>300</sup> In line of this political project of his, he presided over

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<sup>296</sup> Xavier Pedrals i Costa, "Mossen Joan Serra i Vilaró: Un erudite exceptional", in: *L'EROL: Analecta Sacra Tarraconensis* 67, no. 1, (1994): 105.

<sup>297</sup> Josep Gudiol y Cunill, *Nocions de arqueologia sagrada Catalana*, (Vic: imp. De la viuda de R. Anglada, 1902), Aprobacio Ecclesiastica. (translation by the author)

<sup>298</sup> For Gudiol y Cunill's reference to Reusens' *Eléments*, see: Gudiol y Cunill, *Nocions de arqueologia sagrada Catalana*, 458.

<sup>299</sup> Josep Trullén i Tomás, "Josep Gudiol i Cunill, museòleg," *Quaderns del MEV* 3, (2009): 48. Josep Gudiol y Cunill, *Nocions de arqueologia sagrada Catalana*, (Vic: imp. De la viuda de R. Anglada, 1902)

<sup>300</sup> Maria Barbara Marchi, "Cercle Artistic de Sant Lluç 1893-2009: Historia d'una Institucio Referent per a la cultura Barcelonina" (PhD diss., Universitat de Barcelona, 2011), 48-9.

the Catalan artistic group *Cercle Artistic de Sant Lluc*, entering the milieu of Antoni Gaudí, one of the prominent members of the *Cercle*.<sup>301</sup> The collections of early Christian, Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance art of the episcopal Museum of Vic were well known among the architects of Barcelona. Gaudí, too, is known to have visited the museum repeatedly.<sup>302</sup> Even though bishop Torres i Bages had no specific background in the arts, he is known to have fulfilled his presidency of the *Cercle* with great dedication.<sup>303</sup> He actively mobilised this artistic entity and turned it into a nucleus of ideological influence. The *Cercle's* overtly Catholic and regionalist orientation was partly due to the influence of the bishop. The group was also indebted to the man for practical support, as it for instance owed its rich and internationally oriented library to the bishop. In any search for the actual sources of the aquarelle of Gaudí and Jujol, the collection of this library might not be a bad place to start.<sup>304</sup>

Not only the *Cercle* but also the *Orfeo Català* tends to be mentioned for its importance to both the construction of Catalan regional identity and its link to Catholicism around the turn of the century. Founder and conductor Lluís Millet oriented the *Orfeo* towards Catalan folk and religious polyphony. In 1912, the popular journal *Mundial Magazine*, for instance, stated how both folk songs and religious music had lost their place in society but were simultaneously revived by the *Orfeo Català*.<sup>305</sup> Traces of the organisation's Catholic orientation are abundant in the *Revista musical catalana*, the journal which the *Orfeo* itself published from 1904 onwards. "You, Orpheonists" one reads in an address of the issue of February 1922, "[t]hink that singing, already the martyrs approached their atrocious fates; singing, the first Christians in the catacombs found fervor; [...]; singing the Church welcomes our mortal remains and the soul raises itself, singing, to the place of the highest harmonies".<sup>306</sup> This address from the *Revista musical catalana* of 1922 illustrates how the first Christians, the martyrs and their catacombs remained right around the corner, even in the 1920s. This excerpt from the *Revista* also evidences how the archaeological aquarelle of Gaudí and Jujol was a profound compliment which mobilised shared cultural knowledge. A few years later - in return it seems - the singers of the *Orfeo Català* contributed their voices to the ceremony of Gaudí's funeral. *Orfeo* conductor and founder Lluís Millet, the man who must have been the principle audience of the aquarelle in the *Llibre d'or de l'Orfeo Català* in the first place, carried Gaudí's coffin into the dust of the Sagrada Família construction site himself.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>302</sup> Trullén i Thomás, "Josep Gudiol i Cunill, museòleg," 46.

<sup>303</sup> Gijs Van Hensbergen, *Gaudí* (Leiden: Menken Kasander & Wigman Uitgevers, 2002), 129. Marchi, "Cercle Artistic de Sant Lluc 1893-2009: Historia d'una Institució Referent per a la cultura Barcelonina," 33.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 48-9.

<sup>305</sup> Carmen Karr, "El 'Orfeo Català'," *Mundial Magazine* 15, no. 2 (1912): 206.

<sup>306</sup> Frederic Lliurat, "Effàcia social," *Revista musical catalana* 19, no. 2 (February 1922): 44. (translation by the author)

<sup>307</sup> The diary *Llibre d'actes de l'Orfeo Català* mentioned the presence of the *Orfeo Català* in Sagrada Família on Gaudí's funeral of 16 June 1926. The same diary noted Gaudí's love for the institution was evidenced by his aquarelle, which it, however, simply described as "original".



Clearly, the Orpheus-Christ aquarelle was part of a specifically Catalan context. In the light of the excerpt from the *Revista musical catalana*, explaining the aptness of its presence in the *Llibre d'or de l'Orfeo Català* requires no elaborate argumentation. What remains remarkable, however, is the extent to which the architects Gaudí and Jujol proved themselves aware of Christian archaeology in this way. The present part of this dissertation exposed how theorists have argued over the appropriate form of ecclesiastical architecture by means of Christian archaeological evidence throughout the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century. Two positions clearly emerged. Some defended the Christian potential of classical aesthetics and artistic freedom on the grounds of the classical forms which were omnipresent in the arts of the original Christians. Others denied the Christian potential of the same forms and aesthetics, as they argued a historical perspective on the arts of the catacombs of Rome teaches the Christian religion itself had shown the first Christians the path of renouncement of the aesthetics of formal perfection, in favour of aesthetics of simplicity. From *Beaux-Arts* Paris to papal Rome on the brink of annexation by the Kingdom of Italy, the Orpheus-Christ was central in this controversy.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Christian archaeology was used both to confirm and to deny the Christian potential of classical culture. On the one hand, the publications of the French scholar Désiré Raoul-Rochette, the official position of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* of Paris and the arguments of the classicists who partook in the first *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* illustrate how the catacombs continued to connect classical aspirations and Christian apologetics. Charles Cartuyvels, count Foucher de Careil and Désiré Raoul-Rochette referred to the arts of the first Christians to defend the Christian potential of the artistic renewal which had been part of Renaissance. On the other hand, the Church itself – or Pius IX at least – seems to have endorsed a different position via the work of Giovanni Battista de Rossi. In an apparent parallel to the opposition of de Rossi's catacomb-pavilion to the *quattrocento* gallery of the Kingdom of Italy at the world fair of Paris of 1867 (see section 1.3 “The Holy See at the Paris world fair”), Désiré Raoul-Rochette's arguments were explicitly refuted in de Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* of 1867. The archaeological history which Edmond Reusens later taught to the architectural engineers of Louvain contained the same idea. It presented the history of the Christian arts as a history of progressive abandonment of the values of classical culture, initiated by the Christian artists of the catacombs of Rome. Much like the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century Giulio Mancini, who had been the first modern scholar to formulate an understanding of medieval art history, Reusens' *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne* portrayed the catacombs as the tomb of classical aesthetics and imagined them as the cradle of a Christian search for a different beauty.

The metonymical Orpheus-Christ, which allowed best to single out how theology and aesthetics became inseparable in Christian archaeology, was depicted by Gaudí and Jujol in the 1920s. In that light it is striking the semantics of the aquarelle have not been fathomed

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(Manuela Narvaez Ferri, “L'Orfeo Català : cant coral i catalanisme: 1891-1951” (PhD diss., Universitat de Barcelona, 2005), 714.)



before. The way in which a sign this significant, painted by architects as famous as Gaudí and Jujol, has not been understood or mobilised earlier, can only be indicative of how little awareness there is of the interaction of Christian archaeology and architecture for the decades which surround the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The aquarelle does not necessarily prove the architects were themselves aware of the aesthetic significance of Christian archaeology. Yet, as they evidently knew the Orpheus-Christ, it is not unlikely they also knew the intellectual context which the motif had been part of. Of the fading 19<sup>th</sup>-century memories, Gaudí and Jujol retained this motif. The real question which the aquarelle raises is what that might tell of contemporary architectural culture, for it must have gained new topicality in some way.

*“[[J]’ai surtout cherché l’expression du sentiment religieux dans la simplicité des formes, la simplicité du décor, la simplicité des matériaux mis en oeuvre et laissés apparents. Quant à l’époque qui m’a le plus tenté, c’est l’époque pré-romane, celle de l’architecture carolingienne, où avec des moyens humbles et pauvres, il y a eu des réalisations qui, pour moi, ont imprimé à nos premières recherches d’art religieux la beauté la plus française et la plus influencée par l’époque héroïque des Catacombes.”*

Henri Vidal in: Félix Ollivier, “Edifices religieux d’Henri Vidal pour la banlieu parisienne,” *l’Architecture* 51, no. 2 (1938): 59.

### 3 AN OBELISK AND CONCRETE (1884-1938) *early Christianity in architecture, beyond stylistic historicism*

3.1	Introduction .....	108
	Previous scholarship.....	108
	Vatican diplomacy, papal nobility, tobacco and municipal government .....	109
	Lessons from the Parisian press .....	115
3.2	Constructing papal nobility between Rome and Brasschaat .....	117
	Buti's Italian obelisk, the Licinian tomb and the Via Flavia crypt (1884) .....	117
	Truyman's town hall, Geefs' chapel and the <i>Old Antwerp</i> fair (1898-1904).....	128
3.3	Lessons from the Parisian press.....	135
	"Catacombs and barns of brick and concrete" – Sainte-Marie Perrin (1910) .....	135
	"Beauty influenced by the age of the Catacombs" – Henri Vidal in context (1938).....	138
3.4	Epilogue: <i>La coupure entre architectes et intellectuels</i> .....	147

### 3.1 Introduction

#### Previous scholarship

Most recently, medievalist John Osborne has given a lecture at the British school at Rome about the Canadian photographer Charles Smeaton (1837-1868), the first photographer to work inside the catacombs of Rome. In his lecture, Osborne explained how Smeaton and the British archaeologist John Henry Parker (1806-1884) had collaborated to publish great numbers of photographs from the technically challenging darkness of the catacombs. When Osborne concluded his account of the extraordinary collaboration of Smeaton and Parker he noted how changes which were executed in the churches of Rome during the 1860s made him believe the city had known something of an early Christian revival in the realm of architecture. Osborne added he was unaware of the existence of scholarship on the matter.<sup>308</sup> Jamie Beth Erenstoft's study on the ideological endorsement of early Christianity by Pius IX not only concerned Giovanni Battista de Rossi's work in the catacombs but also discussed precisely what Osborne has hinted at recently. Inscriptions which were installed in the many restorations commissioned by Pius IX, state the intention of the restorations had been to return the buildings to their state of simplicity. As the restorations emulated examples from churches from the 4<sup>th</sup> until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, they were certainly not strictly early Christian. Erenstoft suggested Pius IX mainly sought the removal of baroque embellishments to restore an imagined simplicity rather than one or other early Christian style. The pope invited pilgrims to what they might have imagined as the original simplicity of the Catholic Church at Rome, while he promoted the veneration of the oldest relics in these churches.<sup>309</sup>

To give one example, Erenstoft discussed the 6<sup>th</sup>-century *S. Lorenzo fuori le mura* basilica as the most mature one of Pius' renovations. The basilica underwent extensive excavations from 1855 until 1864 and was one of the last churches to be renovated during the reign of Pius IX. The long history of the building was largely erased, as modern modifications and ornate additions were all removed. The floor was paved after medieval fashion, square windows were turned back into round ones and the original *confessio* underneath the altar was restored. Most strikingly, the coffered ceiling of this basilica was removed to reveal the beams and the inside of the roof.<sup>310</sup>

Work comparable to that of Erenstoft has been done by the German art historian Anke Reiß. On a European scale, she tracked the influence of catacomb archaeology and the early Christian churches in architecture and the decorative arts. Reiß presented her subject as a full-bred form of 19<sup>th</sup>-century artistic historicism, as one movement among the other and

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<sup>308</sup> John Osborne, "Charles Smeaton, John Henry Parker and the earliest photography in the Roman catacombs," Lecture at the British School at Rome on February 8 2017, Youtube, accessed January 30, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5k1SCXF460>. See also: John Osborne and Andrea Terry, "Un canadien errant: Charles Smeaton and the earliest photographs of the Roman Catacombs," *Revue d'art canadienne* 32, no. 1-2 (2007): 94-106.

<sup>309</sup> Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 149-51.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-5.

more widespread 19<sup>th</sup>-century neo styles.<sup>311</sup> Reiß was criticised for this by the Dutch theologian Paul Post. He reacted early Christianity remained an art historical subject and a liturgical connection to the early Church rather than a subject which was appreciated for its artistic value. He reacted it did not become a source of direct artistic and stylistic inspiration until the 1930s.<sup>312</sup>

The present third part of this dissertation takes a different perspective and places two architectural contexts along the lines which were exposed in the previous theoretical part. Two very different cases, one more speculative than the other, echo the positions of the theorists of the previous part. Firstly, a section discusses a case of remarkable patronship from the Belgian municipality of Brasschaat near the city of Antwerp, where classical architectural forms appear to have been tied to a Catholic agenda via the archaeological past of the employed architects. As such this case reminds one of the theoretical strategies of the French *académicien* Désiré Raoul-Rochette and the speakers of the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* Charles Cartuyvels and count Foucher de Careil. Via certain sources from the French early 20<sup>th</sup>-century press, a second section demonstrates Christian archaeology played a clear theoretical part to the church builders of Paris during the formative decades of French modernism. With statements made by architects between 1910 and 1938, the second section shows Christian archaeology remained part of architectural theory both in the conservative milieu and on the progressive side of French ecclesiastical architecture.

### **Vatican diplomacy, papal nobility, tobacco and municipal government**

The first section of this third part of the dissertation revolves around three buildings which were realised in the Belgian municipality of Brasschaat around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An obelisk was imported from Italy to this rural place by the Roman architect, engineer and archaeologist Rodolfo Buti in 1884. Antwerp city architect and archaeologist Ferdinand Truyman (1858-1939) built a town hall in the municipality and the Antwerp *académie* professor Eugène Geefs (1854-1925) was responsible for the design of the chapel near the local hospital, in 1901 and 1904 respectively. Each one of these three architects had been involved in significant archaeological works either in Rome or in Antwerp before they were employed by the brothers Georges (1840-1891) and Armand Reusens (1837-1901) (see fig. 14). In order to allow for an understanding of the works of the architects Rodolfo Buti, Ferdinand Truyman and Eugène Geefs in Brasschaat, some background on their patrons is absolutely required and provided by the present introduction.

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<sup>311</sup> For Reiß' comparison to the Gothic revival, see: Anke Reiß, *Rezeption frühchristlicher Kunst im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Christlichen Archäologie und zum Historismus*, (Dettelbach: Röhl, 2008), 9.

<sup>312</sup> Paul Post mentioned the Dutch historian Frits Van Der Meer and the writings he published between 1930 and 1960 as an example where there had actually been artistic appreciation. Yet, arguably he refused to recognise the many 19<sup>th</sup>-century examples which Anke Reiß presented, as moments where there had been artistic or aesthetic interest in early Christianity. (Post, "Het ontstaan van de Romeinse Katakomben in Valkenburg," 129-31.)

Georges Reusens was a Belgian diplomat who started his career as an employee of the Belgian ministry of foreign affairs at the embassy at the Holy See. After having discussed the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* in the previous part, this section is linked to yet another event in Belgian political history via Georges Reusens. He worked as the second in rank at the embassy at the Holy See when the liberal Belgian government decided to terminate diplomatic relations with pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) in 1880. Firstly, this part of the introduction sheds some light on the political history that led to this event, for politics seem to have had their implications on the architectural patronship of the diplomat and his brother Armand Reusens in Brasschaat.

In November of 1878, diplomat Georges Reusens received one of the lengthiest letters which the Belgian minister of foreign affairs Walthère Frère-Orban ever sent to his embassy at the Holy See. At the time, Reusens fulfilled the role of *Chargé d'affaires* or acting ambassador in absence of his superior, emissary Auguste d'Anethan.<sup>313</sup> In the letter, liberal minister Frère-Orban expressed his concerns about the militant ultramontanism of the Belgian Catholics and summed up a series of examples of the resistance of ultramontane Catholics to the Belgian constitution. Examples stretched from writings of the notoriously ultramontane professors of the university of Louvain to excerpts from Catholic newspapers. Most were either explicitly or implicitly related to faithfulness of Catholics to the *Syllabus of Errors* of Pius IX.<sup>314</sup>

The letter of minister Frère-Orban to Reusens was an early element in a diplomatic process which was initiated in 1878, only to be concluded in 1880, when the liberal Belgian government Frère-Orban-Van Humbeeck deemed it no longer politically tenable to maintain its diplomatic relations with the Holy See, subsequently causing consternation in the Belgian Catholic population. The heated diplomatic events which preceded the breakdown of official relations during the two years that lay between 1878 and 1880, would later become known as the “*échange de vues*”. This was the diplomatic encounter of the liberal government Frère-Orban-Van Humbeeck, elected in Belgium in 1878, and Leo XIII, the pontiff who succeeded Pius IX in the same year.<sup>315</sup>

The Belgian *échange de vues* and the ensuing end of Vatican diplomacy are to be understood in the larger political context of the opposition of Catholicism and liberalism, which dominated much of the European political history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The pontificate

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<sup>313</sup> Auguste d'Anethan was a son of a previous Catholic prime minister of Belgium. For information on d'Anethan, see: Nicolaas Rasson, “De diplomatieke breuk tussen België en het Vaticaan, Het fiasco van de ‘échange de vues’ 1878-1880” (Master diss., Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2004), 34-5.

<sup>314</sup> Letter of Frère-Orban to Reusens, 12/11/1878. In: *La Belgique et le Vatican. Documents et travaux législatifs concernant la rupture des relations diplomatiques entre le gouvernement belge et le Saint-Siège*. I, (Brussels: Bruylant-Christophe et Cie, 1880) 23, 26. This source was published by the Belgian government because of the controversial character of the termination of diplomacy at the Holy See. The document revealed all diplomatic correspondence, in order for the government to be able to wash its hands of blame. This document was one of the major sources in the work of Nicolaas Rasson, who has studied the *échange de vues* relatively recently.

<sup>315</sup> Rasson, “De diplomatieke breuk tussen België en het Vaticaan, Het fiasco van de ‘échange de vues’ 1878-1880,” 6-9.

of Pius IX, which preceded that of Leo XIII, consecutively faced the Italian *Risorgimento* and *Kulturkampf* in the German Empire. In the wake of the unification of Germany under Prussian rule in 1871, the transnational appeal of the strengthening Catholic subculture – the pontificate of Pius IX was characterised by ultramontanism unseen in centuries – was a concern to the newly formed national German government.<sup>316</sup> During the 1870s, Catholics were put to the test by Bismarck's government, leaving many dioceses without bishops and countless parishes without priests as many of them were imprisoned.<sup>317</sup> *Kulturkampf* involved a diplomatic war of words with Rome, which culminated in the recall of the German diplomatic representation from the Holy See.<sup>318</sup> *Kulturkampf* did not remain a German phenomenon as Bismarck spread his politics to neighbouring liberal governments. The Netherlands, Luxemburg, Switzerland and Belgium all faced some distillate of the German *Kulturkampf* because of Bismarck's effort to surround his German Empire with sympathetic states.<sup>319</sup> When the Belgian liberals were elected in 1878, the influence which the Church exercised in primary education was regarded as an obstacle to progress and an obstruction to democratic gains. The *Schoolstrijd*, a political struggle over the influence of the Church in primary education, resulted in the abolition of catechetical teaching in municipal schools.<sup>320</sup> Much as it had been the case in *Kulturkampf* itself, its Belgian equivalent culminated in the withdrawal of diplomatic representation from the Holy See in 1880, which included diplomat Georges Reusens.

Besides the acute conflict over the Van Humbeeck law of 1879 - a law which prohibited catechetical teaching in state-organised primary education - it was the existence itself of diplomatic representation at the Holy See which bothered the Belgian liberals during the *échange de vues*. When papal Rome had fallen to the Kingdom of Italy in 1870, the Catholic governments which ruled Belgium from 1870 until 1878 installed and maintained a twofold diplomatic representation in Rome. To appease liberal and ultramontane Catholics alike, the Belgian Catholic governments of the early 1870s maintained both diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Italy and with Pius IX.<sup>321</sup> Yet, as Pius IX was in practice no longer a temporal ruler from 1870 onwards, liberals tended to present the diplomatic representation of Belgium at the Holy See as an illegitimate anachronism during the years of their opposition to the Catholic governments of the 1870s.<sup>322</sup>

On the occasion of the liberal victory in the elections of 1878, the twofold diplomatic representation of Belgium in Rome was expected to be annulled quickly. Against common expectations, liberal minister Frère-Orban initiated diplomatic negotiations with the Holy See. The recent death of Pius IX was an important premise to this move of the minister. The

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<sup>316</sup> Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People: a history of European Catholicism since 1750*, 129-30.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>320</sup> On the *Schoolstrijd*: Rasson, "De diplomatieke breuk tussen België en het Vaticaan, Het fiasco van de 'échange de vues' 1878-1880," 6.

See also: Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People: a history of European Catholicism since 1750*, 130-2, 148.

<sup>321</sup> Rasson, "De diplomatieke breuk tussen België en het Vaticaan, Het fiasco van de 'échange de vues' 1878-1880," 27-8.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

liberal Belgian government in fact explored the extent to which the new pope could be found to be prepared to cooperate after his predecessor had utterly denounced liberalism and modernity in the encyclical *Quanta Cura* and in the *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864.<sup>323</sup> In this *échange de vues*, as it was called, Leo XIII was essentially asked by Frère-Orban to appease the Belgian episcopate during the secularisation of primary education, which his government envisioned. In return, the liberal government proposed the Holy See to preserve its double diplomatic presence in Rome. Embassies of foreign states were vital to strengthen the continued claim of the Holy See on sovereignty over the Papal States. This explains why the Holy See could even consider to cooperate in the secularising politics of the Belgian liberals.<sup>324</sup> Eventually, the failure of this diplomatic attempt was due to the incomppliance of the Belgian bishops, rather than to resistance of the Holy See.<sup>325</sup>

In the course of this history, Georges Reusens repeatedly wrote his Belgian government in particularly emotive letters of the pains which any diplomatic change would cause Leo XIII. Reusens attempted to convince his minister to interpret certain papal silences as good intentions on the part of the Vatican. He argued those silences signalled a wind of change rather than fear of the threat which the newly elected liberal government posed to the generally favourable position of Catholicism in Belgium.<sup>326</sup> Nicolaas Rasson has relatively recently studied this episode of Belgian diplomacy and went as far as to characterise Reusens as the “*advocate of the good intentions of the Holy See*” as he learnt Reusens showed a far greater personal investment in safeguarding Vatican diplomacy than his actual superior at the embassy.<sup>327</sup> Minister Frère-Orban’s particularly elaborate letter of November 1878, Rasson explained as an attempt on the part of the minister to set these politics of his *Chargé d’affaires* straight. In the letter, Reusens was invited in rather harsh language to change his ways, as the new wind he promised was contradicted by certain acts of the Vatican.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>324</sup> Resistance to Italian sovereignty was not abandoned by the Vatican until the Lateran agreements were reached by Pius XI in 1929. (Ibid., 26.)

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>326</sup> Letter of Reusens to Frère-Orban, 13/09/1878. In: *La Belgique et le Vatican. Documents et travaux législatifs concernant la rupture des relations diplomatiques entre le gouvernement belge et le Saint-Siège*. I, 34.

<sup>327</sup> Rasson, “De diplomatieke breuk tussen België en het Vaticaan, Het fiasco van de ‘échange de vues’ 1878-1880,” 120. (translation by the author)

In the conclusion of his study, Rasson added he had learnt from the difference in the tone of the correspondence of Reusens and d’Anethan that Reusens was involved in a very personal, often emotive manner in the endeavour of safeguarding the future of the diplomatic contacts of Belgium and the Vatican. d’Anethan behaved as a rather cool and detached politician.

<sup>328</sup> In the interpretation of both this particular letter and the entire diplomatic history, I rely on the work of Nicolaas Rasson. For Rasson’s work on the letter, see: Ibid., 60. For the original letter, see: Letter of Frère-Orban to Reusens, 12/11/1878. In: *La Belgique et le Vatican. Documents et travaux législatifs concernant la rupture des relations diplomatiques entre le gouvernement belge et le Saint-Siège*. I, 34. The contradiction of Reusens’ promises to which Frère-Orban reacted, was a papal blessing which the ultramontane newspaper *Le Bien Public* had obtained from Vatican Secretary of State cardinal Lorenzo Nina in 1878. See: Rasson, “De diplomatieke breuk tussen België en het Vaticaan, Het fiasco van de ‘échange de vues’ 1878-1880,” 60.



Georges Reusens' background explains much of the personal commitment which Nicolaas Rasson read in the letters which Georges Reusens sent as Belgian diplomat at the Holy See.<sup>329</sup> Reusens' family rapidly gained great wealth through commerce in the port of Antwerp, later to advance itself socially by association with Rome.<sup>330</sup> During the 1860s, Georges Reusens' father acquired himself and his sons their titles of '*comtes romains*' or '*comtes pontificaux*'. The family was supported by cardinal Engelbertus Sterckx (1792-1867) in addressing Pius IX in request of membership of the international papal nobility.<sup>331</sup> In one of his letters to Pius IX, Georges Reusens' father confessed to his boundless commitment to his "*Holy and Exalted person*" as well as to the causes the pope defended "*to the admiration of the entire world*". Father Auguste Reusens mentioned his "*continued diligence in the defence of the interests of religion*", as well as his "*very lively desire to come to the aid of the needs of the treasury of the Papal States*" in its "*urgent need of funds due to the rapacity of immoral people*".<sup>332</sup>

The Reusens family turns out to have had several ties to the court of Pius IX. An obituary in the New York newspaper *The Highland Democrat* teaches how an individual named Guillaume Reusens (1837-1915), born in the municipality of Deurne like Georges Reusens' father, acted as tobacco purchasing agent to the Papal States "*during the last years of the temporal power of Pius IX*". The obituary in *The Highland Democrat* stated Guillaume Reusens arrived in the United States with highly unusual documents which guaranteed unlimited credit at the New York banks in 1860.<sup>333</sup> Likely, Guillaume Reusens either had some connection to the vast wealth to which Georges Reusens and his brother were heirs as well, or he was on a direct commercial mission for the Papal States. Regrettably, however, I

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<sup>329</sup> Although Nicolaas Rasson made a considerable effort to attribute context to all the individual actors involved in the *échange de vues*, he appears to have had the greatest difficulty to get a hold on any of Georges Reusens' personal background. In contrast to the extensive biographic account which Rasson was able to provide on Reusens' colleague Auguste d'Anethan, for instance, Rasson could only quote a newspaper article, signalling Reusens belonged to a prominent Catholic family with origins in Antwerp. (Rasson, "De diplomatieke breuk tussen België en het Vaticaan, Het fiasco van de 'échange de vues' 1878-1880," 35.) The single other recent publication which provides information on Georges Reusens is a study commissioned by the local government of Brasschaat, the place where Georges Reusens' brother Armand was mayor from 1872 until his death in 1901. For its passage on Georges Reusens, see: Frans Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens* (Brasschaat: Gemeentebestuur Brasschaat, 1991), 148-52.

<sup>330</sup> In the course of two generations, trade in the port of Antwerp in times of economic turbulence brought the Reusens family great wealth. Auguste Reusens, father to Georges Reusens, moreover, married into another rich mercantile family. Matthias Joostens, the head of this family and the grandfather to Armand and Georges on their mother's side, acquired enough wealth to inspire Hendrik Conscience's novel *Eene O te veel* (1872), a novel on a trade deal of unlikely fortune. (Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens*, 135.) Besides the capital of their father, the brothers Armand and Georges inherited much of the wealth of Matthias Joostens via their mother and an uncle of theirs. (Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens*, 136.)

<sup>331</sup> Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens*, 141.

<sup>332</sup> Letter of Auguste Reusens to Pius IX. In: Ibid. (translation by the author)

<sup>333</sup> "Guillaume Reusens Obituary," *The Highland Democrat*, January 9, 1915, <http://mcandrewsestate.org/gallery/main.php?cmd=imageview&var1=Documents%2FGuillaume+Reusens%2FReusens+Obituary+-+Highland+Democrat.jpg>.

remain unaware of the personal background of Edmond Reusens, the theologian who was granted the chair of Christian archaeology at the university of Louvain in 1864. Although he was born near Antwerp as well, it remains unclear whether he had ties to this prominent family or not.<sup>334</sup> Some connection in higher Catholic circles would certainly go a long way towards explaining his swift promotion at the university of Louvain and his almost immediate appointment as head librarian and professor at the faculty of theology.

The Belgian embassy at the Holy See was closed in 1880, a point at which Georges Reusens returned from Rome to the Belgian municipality of Brasschaat, where his father had bought land and where his brother Armand lived.<sup>335</sup> Ever since 1872, Armand Reusens was in charge of local government as mayor of the municipality of Brasschaat. His liberal predecessor lost the local elections of 1872, due to a small majority of votes for Reusens. Throughout the following years, opposition to mayor Armand Reusens vaporized.<sup>336</sup> In the year in which diplomat Georges Reusens first stood in as the leading emissary in Rome, both brothers curiously made the liberal newspapers of Antwerp. In the issue of *Le Précurseur* of 15 September 1878, Armand Reusens and the priest of Brasschaat were accused of mobilising Georges Reusens' role at the Holy See as a political tool in their local agenda. The priest was said to have called for the continued support of the faithful to their mayor in the upcoming elections, while invoking Georges Reusens' proximity to Leo XIII. The liberals turned Armand Reusens' local politics into a symbol of what they disapproved of on a national scale. The local example of these brothers was made into an epitome of the influence of the Church in national political affairs. Subsequently, the liberal newspaper used the role of the Church in Armand Reusens' local politics to demand the end of Belgian diplomacy at the Holy See.<sup>337</sup>

The article of *Le Précurseur* allows to conclude this introductory passage on the political ways and the social background of the Reusens family. In the imported obelisk as well as in the town hall and the chapel, the politics which *Le Précurseur* denounced in 1878 can be read. These three buildings will further on, however, mainly be discussed for the way they can be connected to archaeological projects of their architects. Each one of the buildings can

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<sup>334</sup> All the biographical information on Edmond Reusens of which I dispose is supplied by the *Biographie nationale*. It merely states Edmond Reusens was born in Wijnegem, a place near Antwerp, next to Deurne, where Georges Reusens' father Auguste Reusens was born. (Lavalleye, "Edmond Reusens," 621.) For Georges Reusens' genealogy, see: Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens*, 232-3.

<sup>335</sup> On the closing of the embassy, see: Rasson, "De diplomatieke breuk tussen België en het Vaticaan, Het fiasco van de 'échange de vues' 1878-1880," 116-8. On Georges Reusens' return to Belgium, see: Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens*, 148.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-8. In 1875, Reusens won every vote, presumably because the supporters of Reusens' liberal predecessor did not partake in the vote. Similarly, all elections between 1878 and 1887 passed without opposition. In 1890 the previous mayor attempted once more to seize his former position, yet all seats were won by Reusens' council of Catholics. From 1895 onwards, national law allowed municipalities to skip elections if no one opposed the current administration. In consequence, there were simply no elections in Brasschaat in 1895. Only after the elections of 1899 did the mayor have to tolerate one liberal in his council.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

be linked to a renowned archaeological discovery or reconstruction of its architect, either in Antwerp or in Rome. For that reason they are part of this dissertation. Yet, this introduction on the Reusens family first of all provided the background which is required to understand the buildings as tools in a political agenda. When Georges Reusens was forced to leave his embassy at the Holy See after having fought for its survival, these buildings perpetuated the brothers' status of papal nobility and buttressed it by thematising their relationship either textually or symbolically. In the obelisk, the town hall and the chapel, architecture perpetuated the words of the priest over which the journalists of *Le Précurseur* attempted to raise political controversy in 1878.

### Lessons from the Parisian press

After the lengthy introduction to the patronship of the Reusens brothers, the introduction to the final context which this dissertation enters into can remain much shorter. Having presented the papal catacomb-pavilion of the Parisian world fair in the first part and the ideas of *Beaux-Arts* theorist Désiré Raoul-Rochette in the second part, this third part also involves the French capital. Using the Catholic newspaper *La Croix* and the specialised journals *l'Architecture* and *l'Art Sacré*, the final section builds a case around a few instances at which Christian archaeology made the press in Paris. The articles basically reveal Christian archaeology was part of the debate on ecclesiastical architecture in Paris during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Although architects were present in the previous parts of this dissertation, they seem to have kept their distance to some degree. As restorer of the cathedral of Amiens, Viollet-le-Duc designed the definitive shrine of the relics of *sainte Theudosie*, while it were the seminarists of Amiens who built the facsimile catacomb in which the exhumation of the relics was re-enacted at the start of their procession of 1853. At an old age, Pierre Cuypers presided over the archaeological commission of Valkenburg and directed the works on the Dutch catacomb facsimile around 1910. Jean Bethune spoke at the artistic section of the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique*, which decided on the creation of the chair of Christian archaeology at the university of Louvain in 1863. By theologian Edmond Reusens, the architectural engineers of the university of Louvain were subsequently taught an art history rooted in catacomb archaeology. Antoni Gaudí and Josep Maria Jujol, lastly, came closest to demonstrating an actual endorsement of Christian archaeology when they painted their Orpheus-Christ in the *Llibre d'or de l'Orfeó Català* in 1922. All the involved architects must at least have been aware of the ecclesiastical importance of Christian archaeology. Making explicit use of the teaching of the discipline in regard to architecture appears, however, to have remained secluded to the work of theorists like Raoul-Rochette or Jules Helbig. What sets the final section of this dissertation apart from the previous ones, is that it presents how the French architects Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin (1835-1917) and Henri Vidal (1895-1955) actually used Christian archaeology themselves, as they explicitised their understanding of respectively the architectural cultural in which they found themselves and the churches they built.

In 1910, Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin reacted against certain tendencies of his colleagues in the Catholic newspaper *La Croix*. He blamed them for reducing their understanding of good church design to a choice for material simplicity, which then already appears to have implied the use of concrete. Sainte-Marie Perrin opposed his colleagues by reluctantly entering into an argument rooted in catacomb archaeology. His reluctance and defensive position suggest the proponents of architectural simplicity had Christian archaeology on their side. A statement by Henri Vidal from 1938 indicates this may indeed have been the case. Vidal was quoted in the journals *l'Architecture* and *l'Art Sacré* after he had stated simplicity of form, decoration, materiality and construction to be both the legacy of the catacombs of Rome and the gateway to religious experience in his architecture.

### 3.2 Constructing papal nobility between Rome and Brasschaat

#### Buti's Italian obelisk, the Licinian tomb and the Via Flavia Crypt (1884)

As explained in the introduction to this part, diplomat Georges Reusens was made to return from Rome to Brasschaat after a diplomatic crisis between Belgium and the Holy See had led to the closing of his Roman embassy. Via diplomatic communication, the minister of foreign affairs of the liberal Belgian government and the newly elected pope Leo XIII explored the potential use of which they could have had for one another from 1878 until 1880. Thereafter, the diplomatic dance of this *échange de vues* crashed and the Vatican embassy of Belgium was shut down from 1880 until 1884.

When diplomat Reusens returned from Rome in 1880, spectacular changes were initiated in his family estate in Brasschaat. A purchasing campaign, nearly doubling the size of his estate, was commenced in 1881 and concluded by a most monumental gesture in 1884.<sup>338</sup> A large obelisk (see fig. 17) was then erected in the centre of the newly purchased terrain. The inscriptions on the tripartite obelisk which still occupies the centre of the forested grounds provide some of the necessary clues on its intentions and origins. The inscriptions in the massive stones which compose the obelisk mention the object was designed by the Roman architect "*R. Buti*". They also tell the origins of the obelisk lie in the Italian mine of Baveno, a place at the Italian Lago Maggiore, at the foothills of the Alps. In 1884, the monument was erected to commemorate the role which Georges Reusens had fulfilled in Rome.<sup>339</sup> Crucially, the inscriptions connected the brothers Armand and Georges to one another, as well as they tied Brasschaat to the Holy See. The monument embodied the association of "*the emissary of the king of the Belgians at the Holy See*" and "*the prefect of the municipality of Brasschaat*", as the inscriptions present the obelisk as a gift of the former brother to the latter.<sup>340</sup>

The obelisk - a traditional folly in romantic garden design as well as a symbol of papal urbanism - might have been intended as a way of refreshing the Belgian public memory about the consternation which had existed when the Belgian diplomatic delegation at the Holy See was pulled back in 1880. In June and July of the year to which the inscriptions date the obelisk, the Catholics banned the liberal party from government for decades with

<sup>338</sup> Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens*, 82-5.

<sup>339</sup> One of the inscriptions on the obelisk reads: *N. Della Casa Marmorarius Bavaniensis*: In the Italian town of Baveno, on the shores of Lago Maggiore, the engineer Nicola Della Casa ran a successful granit mine. The inscription therefore seems to leave little doubt on the physical origin of the stones. (Giorgio Margarini and Carlo Alessandro Pisoni, *Il granito di Baveno. Un pioniere: Nicola Della Casa* (Verbania-Intra: Alberti Editore, 1995).)

<sup>340</sup> In full, the inscriptions on the obelisk read: *Georgius Reusens Comes Erexat Anno MDCCCLXXXIII / Obeliscum Italia Advectum Georgius Reusens / Comes Belgarum Regis Negotiis Apud Sanctam Sedem Tractandis Praepositus Genti Suae D.D. / Leopoldo II regnante / Armando Reusens Comiti Praefecto municipii Brasschaetensis / N. Della Casa Marmorarius Bavaniensis / R. Buti Eques Architectus Romanus*

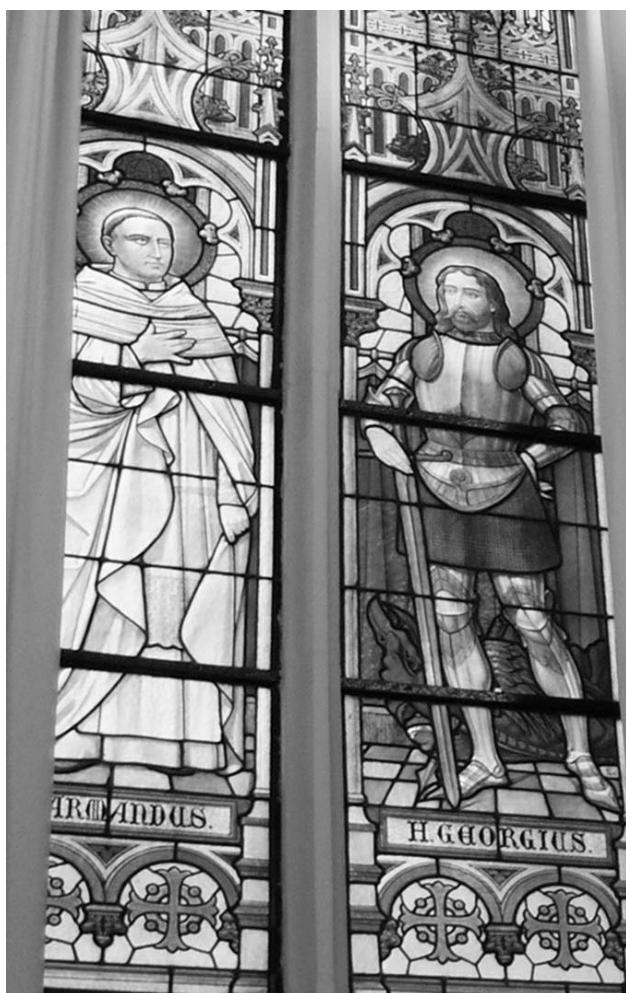


Fig. 14. 'St. Armandus' and 'St. Georgius' in the Reusens hospital chapel of Brasschaat. Louis de Contini.

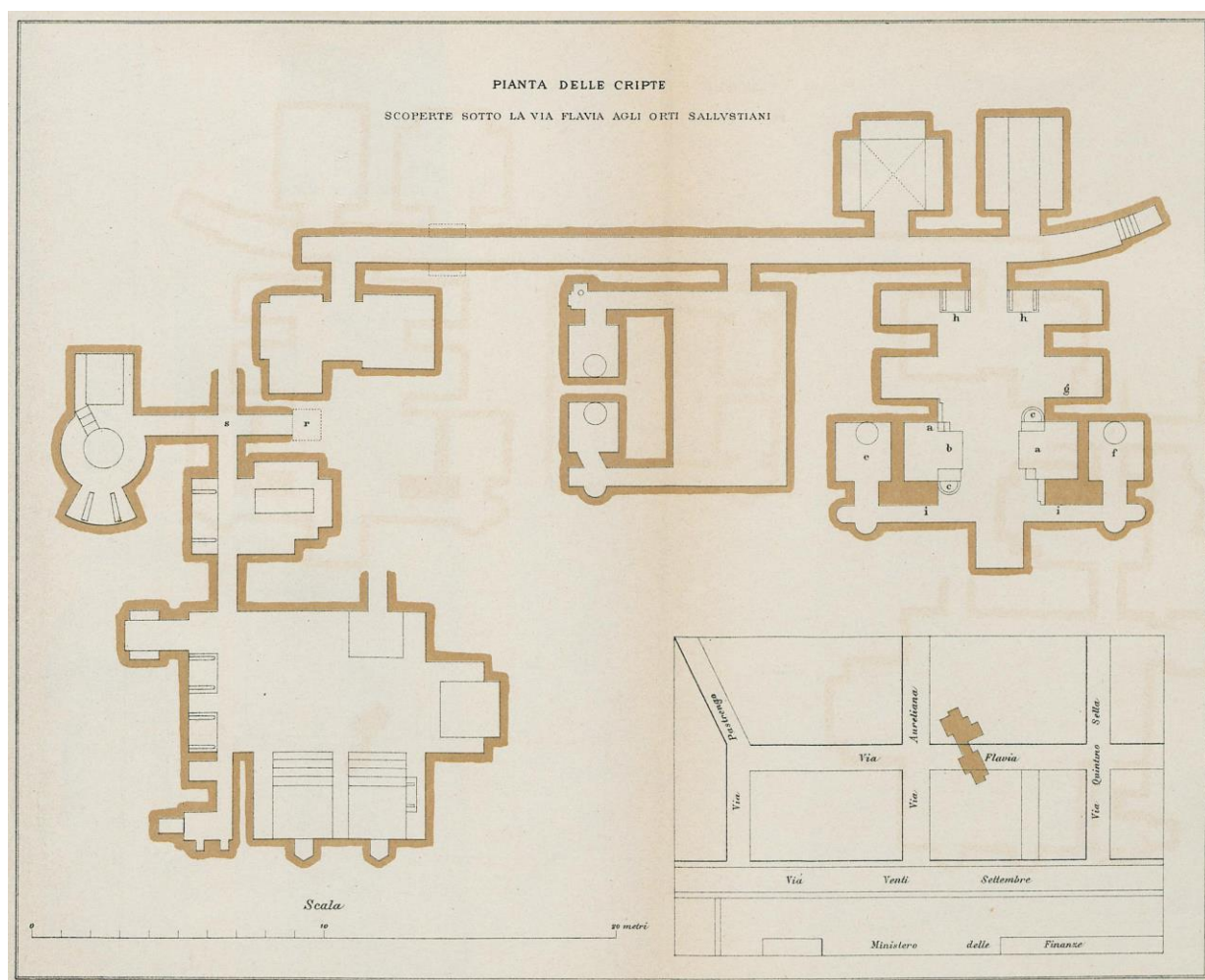






Fig. 16. *Bransschaat – Entrée du Château, Brasschaethof – Ingang*. From: Frans Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens* (Brasschaat: Gemeentebestuur Brasschaat, 1991), 94.

This photograph is not dated. The photograph is, however, certainly not older than 1900. The garden wall which can be seen in the background behind the children was constructed in 1900 (Ibid., 306-7.)





Fig. 17. The obelisk of the Reusens brothers, designed by the Roman architect Rodolfo Buti and transported from Baveno to Brasschaat in 1884.

sweeping electoral victories.<sup>341</sup> The abolition of the controversial laicising laws on primary education, which had been passed during the previous legislature, was one of the two foremost political goals of the Catholic opposition to the Frère-Orban government. The other national goal was even more closely related to Georges Reusens' past. On the one hand the laicising measures in education were to be undone. On the other hand the political symbol of Vatican diplomacy was to be reinstated.<sup>342</sup> Even if the transportation of the obelisk from Italy to Belgium was not at all politically inspired, its subsequent path from the port of Antwerp to the estate of the evicted diplomat will have stirred some minds in 1884.<sup>343</sup>

It is mainly the architect, who is mentioned by the inscriptions on the base of the obelisk in Brasschaat, who makes the monument of interest to the present study. The inscription "*R. Buti Eques Architectus Romanus*" probably designated the Roman engineer Rodolfo Buti. The most reassuring confirmation of this hypothesis I retrieved in the writings of archaeologist Rodolfo Lanciani (1845-1929). Lanciani was one of the foremost archaeologists in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Rome. At one point in his book *Pagan and Christian Rome*, he mentioned "*my friend, Cav. Rodolfo Buti*" in regard to a discovery of the latter.<sup>344</sup> The knightly title which Buti was given both by the inscription on the base of the obelisk and by Lanciani, makes it likely that both designated the same Roman architect. Although there are some indications Buti corresponded with Lanciani on a frequent basis on archaeological matters, his name will remain obscure without some archival work.<sup>345</sup> Nevertheless, at least two of his excavations of the early 1880s may have acquired Buti some fame among the archaeologists of Rome. The first of these subsequently discussed excavations can be connected to Rodolfo Lanciani as well.

In 1884 and 1885, the three subterranean chambers which constitute what is now called the 'Licinian tomb', were discovered just inside of the Aurelian wall near the Porta Salaria in Rome. At the time, the capital of the newly formed Italian state was being transformed from a sacred into a secular city. Old streets were repaired and new ones were created. The sewer systems were renovated and the embankment of the Tiber was transformed. The construction of government offices, businesses and dwellings for citizenry caused upheaval

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<sup>341</sup> Emiel Lamberts and Jacques Lory, *1884: Un Tournant Politique en Belgique – De Machtswisseling van 1884 in België* (Brussels: Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, 1984), 2.

<sup>342</sup> Lamberts and Lory, *1884: Un Tournant Politique en Belgique – De Machtswisseling van 1884 in België*, 76-7.

<sup>343</sup> I am not aware of any source on the arrival of the obelisk other than its inscription. It is yet to be determined whether the object arrived before or after the summer elections of 1884.

<sup>344</sup> In full, the account on Buti in Lanciani's *Pagan and Christian Rome* reads: "*An appealing discovery has just been made at the Vigna Chiari, on the exact spot of Nero's suicide, by my friend, Cav. Rodolfo Buti. He found the tomb of Claudia Ecloge, the old woman who was so devoted to her nursling. The epitaph is a plain marble slab containing only a name. But this simple inscription, read amid the ruins of Phaon's villa, with every detail of the scene of the suicide before one's eyes, makes more impression on the feelings than would a great monument to her memory. As she could not be buried within or near the family vault of the Domitii on the Pincian, she selected the spot where Nero's remains had been cremated.*" (Rodolfo Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome* (New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1893), 190.)

<sup>345</sup> Lanciani has described Buti as a diligent student of classical topography and referred to his personal correspondence with the architect to make an argument on the topography around Sta. Maria Maggiore at one point. See: Giovanni Giasotti, *La Basilica Di S. Maria Maggiore a Roma*, (Rome: Tipografia Editrice Romana, 1915), 30.

in the entire city. While ancient Rome vanished, countless archaeological treasures, however, came to light. The Licinian tomb surfaced in this context.<sup>346</sup> It became famous, immediately after its discovery, for the pristine sarcophagi, the altars and portrait heads which it contained. Rodolfo Lanciani was the first of several prominent archaeologists to make reports on its excavation. He visited the excavation several times and described the chambers as “*the richest and most important of those [tombs] found in Rome in my lifetime*”.<sup>347</sup> The occasion even moved him to lyrical musings as he attested to the eminence of the excavation. “*When I first descended into it, in November 1884, and found myself surrounded by those great historical names of murdered men and women*”, he wrote, “*I felt more than ever the vast difference between reading Roman history in books, and studying it from its monuments, in the presence of its leading actors.*”<sup>348</sup> The Romans named on the altars of the chambers belonged to one of the most prominent aristocratic families in the early Roman empire. Among them was Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, son-in-law to emperor Claudius and a descendant of the original Pompey the Great.<sup>349</sup> Among the findings were altars, coins and a multitude of lavishly sculpted sarcophagi. The second of the three chambers alone contained ten unnamed marble sarcophagi of the greatest artistic importance.<sup>350</sup> Sixteen sculpted portraits were found, among which a now famous portrait of Pompeius Magnus the elder.<sup>351</sup>

The excavation is known to have started in the final months of 1884. An Italian bank had initiated a construction project on the Via Salaria, when the Licinian tomb was discovered during the work on its foundations. At that point, the bank commissioned Rodolfo Buti in October 1884 to direct the excavation of the discovery. When Lanciani first visited the site, the excavations under the direction of Buti had been going on for a month.<sup>352</sup> Buti’s name was connected to the excavations by a recent article of 2003 but remains shrouded in obscurity, as also the author of this recent article only connected Buti to the excerpts from Rodolfo Lanciani’s *Pagan and Christian Rome*.<sup>353</sup> The Licinian tomb may have put Rodolfo Buti on the map in Rome but it is chronologically more likely it was a different project of Buti’s that caught the attention of one of the Reusens brothers. The Licinian tomb teaches, however, Rodolfo Buti may have had a certain degree of experience in archaeology at that point. After all, he was contacted to direct the excavation of the tomb after it had become evident to the Italian bank that its discovery was worth excavating.

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<sup>346</sup> Katherine M. Bentz, “Rediscovering the Licinian Tomb,” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 55/56 (1997/1998): 63.

<sup>347</sup> Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, 276.

See also: Frances Van Keuren, et. al., “Unpublished Documents Shed New Light on the Licinian Tomb, Discovered in 1884-1885,” *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 48, (2003): 53, 57.

<sup>348</sup> Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, 278. See also: Van Keuren, et. al., “Unpublished Documents Shed New Light on the Licinian Tomb, Discovered in 1884-1885,” 53, 57.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>350</sup> Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, 279.

<sup>351</sup> Van Keuren, et. al., “Unpublished Documents Shed New Light on the Licinian Tomb, Discovered in 1884-1885,” 54.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*

That same year, Rodolfo Buti attracted an equally interesting kind of attention in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Rome. On 11 January 1885, his work was briefly made a subject on the *Conferenza dei Cultori di Archeologia Cristiana*, organised in celebration of the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of pope Damasus. At this conference, Giovanni Battista de Rossi presided over a group of scholars, of whom Mariano Armellini and Orazio Marucchi were mentioned earlier in this dissertation. On the occasion, Enrico Stevenson (1854-1898) - like Mariano Armellini and Orazio Marucchi a student of de Rossi's - discussed another one of Rodolfo Buti's works.<sup>354</sup> Buti had initiated the construction of foundations for buildings on the Via Venti Settembre and the Via Flavia, not far from the site where he would later direct the excavation of the Licinian tomb. The site in question used to lie on the edge of the ancient Sallustian Gardens and is now situated across the Italian Ministry of Finance. During Buti's work on foundations on this site, an underground chamber had surfaced at a depth of ten meters underneath the level of the street. The chamber was carved from solid rock and was accessible by a narrow corridor, which led to a series of similar rooms. Obstructed for the most part, actual exploration had been made impossible because of existing, surrounding foundations of recent buildings. Later, while digging yet another well for the construction of foundations on this site, more of the network of rooms and underground corridors was revealed. Inside this crypt, walls were plastered, yet no specific iconographic elements were discovered, making it impossible to identify the original purpose of the crypt. Semi-circular vaults and certain furnishings such as chairs and lamp holders had been shaped from the rock in most chambers. Seats, slightly ornate tables and column-shaped posts which still held lamps at the time of discovery, were all drawn and described by Buti. In the article which Buti published on this discovery in 1885 (see fig. 15), he himself called it a "*vast subterranean place*", which he deemed to have belonged to the "*initiations of some mystic cult*". Again, however, modern constructions surrounding the site made it impossible to explore the corridors of the potentially larger network.<sup>355</sup>

On the *Conferenza dei Cultori di Archeologia Cristiana* in January of 1885, Enrico Stevenson denied Buti's discovery had been a Christian cemetery. This must have been believed when the place was first discovered. If not, there would have been no reason for anyone to deny it explicitly at a conference of Christian archaeology. Enrico Stevenson proposed it might rather have been a Mithraic sanctuary.<sup>356</sup> Buti suggested the same in the article he published later that year. The most recent reference to the discovery which I was able to retrieve is part of a summary of all the Christian excavations which were conducted in Rome between 1878 and 1921. The author of this recent summary stated many scholars had indeed perceived Buti's discovery as an early Christian catacomb until Enrico Stevenson

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<sup>354</sup> On Stevenson, see: Erenstoft, "Controlling the sacred past: Rome, Pius IX, and Christian Archaeology," 200-202. On the conference at which Stevenson spoke about Buti's discovery, see: Giovanni Battista de Rossi, *Resoconto delle conferenze dei cultori di Archeologia Cristiana : in Roma dal 1875 al 1887* (Rome: Tipografia della tace di F. Cuggiani, 1888), 310-1.

<sup>355</sup> Rodolfo Buti, "Di alcuni sotterranei scoperti negli orti sallustiani," *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 13 (1885): 130-6. (translation by the author)

<sup>356</sup> de Rossi, *Resoconto delle conferenze dei cultori di Archeologia Cristiana : in Roma dal 1875 al 1887*, 310-1.

denied it in January of 1885. Until today, the nature of the discovery remains unconfirmed.<sup>357</sup>

The choice for Rodolfo Buti as the architect of the obelisk of the evicted Belgian diplomat may very well have been incidental and unrelated to his archaeological work whatsoever. Although he discovered something which was believed to have been a Christian catacomb in 1884, nothing signals his discovery was actually connected to his being commissioned to design the obelisk that same year. By contextualising the other buildings which were realised in Brasschaat, however, I will try to argue Buti's discovery might, nevertheless, have been related to his employment. In any case it would have suited Armand and Georges Reusens, the '*comtes pontificaux*' of Pius IX's making, to have their obelisk designed by an architect who had discovered an early Christian catacomb. The Via Flavia crypt could have Christened the pagan form through the employment of architect Rodolfo Buti, in the way the pagan nature of obelisks used to be exorcised from them through rites and symbolism in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Rome.<sup>358</sup> Whether or not Buti's discovery later turned out actually to be a Christian catacomb, is of little importance.

Preliminary indications which might strengthen the hypothesis the discovery of the Via Flavia crypt was related to Buti's employment are to be found on the estate and in an old photograph. To the estate where the brothers erected their Italian obelisk in 1884, one of the brothers imported soil from Jerusalem.<sup>359</sup> Moreover, as one of the photographs included in the present document illustrates, the gates which led to the estate of the Reusens brothers were crowned with golden stars, moving at least one girl to show signs of piety (fig. 16). Seemingly, the symbolism of the gates set the gardens that hold the obelisk apart as a sacred place. The gates must have been consciously designed, for a peculiar symbol tied them to their patrons. In the ironwork of the gates, a mirrored letter 'R' – for 'Reusens' – was forged around an 'A' – likely the initial of 'Armand' – supporting the stars that crowned the gate. The same symbol was engraved in sandstone above the windows of the foremost gatekeeper's house of the Reusens estate (see fig. 31).<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Massimiliano Ghilardi, "Gli scavi della Roma Sotterranea Cristiana," in *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae / Supplementum II.1: Gli Scavi di Roma 1878-1921*, ed. Filippo Coarelli, (Rome: Edizioni Quasar di Severino Tognon, 2004), 119.

<sup>358</sup> Anthony Grafton, "Obelisks and Empires of the Mind," in *The American Scholar* 17, no. 1 (2002): 123-4.

<sup>359</sup> A small commemorative monument - really nothing more than a block of stone - can be found in front of the estate house. Both the text which was carved into it and the modern lettering of the inscriptions, suggest it was not originally placed there during the lifetime of the brothers themselves. It reads: "*Count Reusens planted this oak in soil from Jerusalem, brought to this place around 1900*"

<sup>360</sup> Of the two original garden gates only one can still be found on an edge of the Reusens estate in Brasschaat, albeit not on the original location.

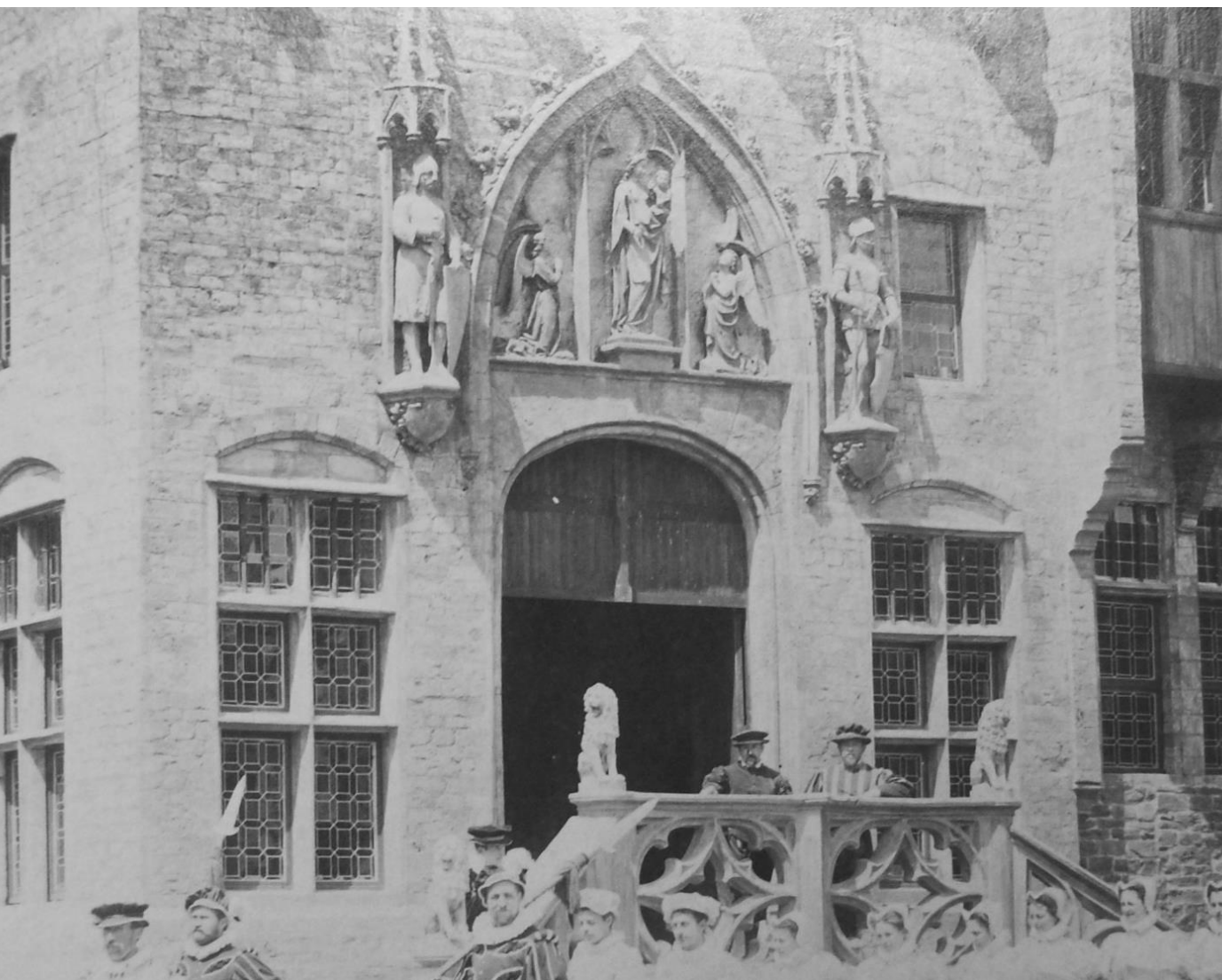


Fig. 18. Detail of a photograph of the facsimile town hall of the *Old Antwerp* fair of 1894.  
Architect Ferdinand Truyman prepared the permanent reconstruction of this building.





Fig. 19. Portal of the Brasschaat town hall by Ferdinand Truymman (1898-1901), Brasschaat Bredabaan 182, 2016.

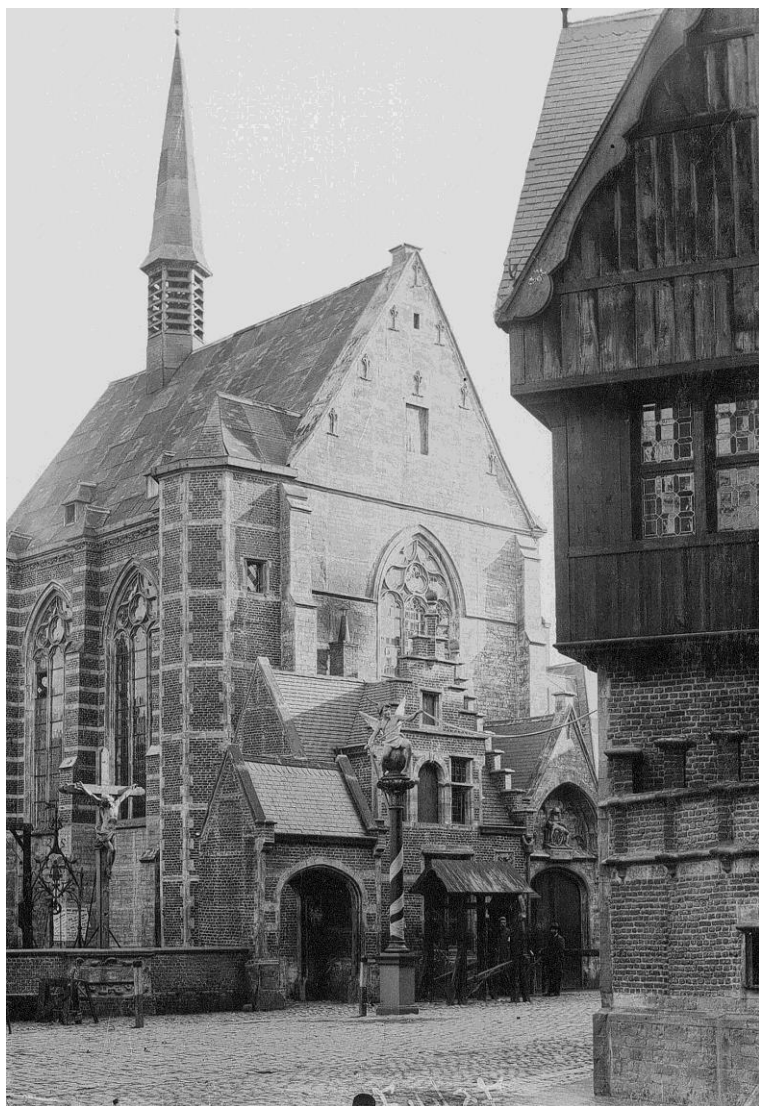


Fig. 20. Facsimile chapel by architect Eugène Geefs at the *Old Antwerp* fair of 1994, Photograph by Edmond Jaminé.





Fig. 21. Façade of the Reusens hospital chapel by Eugène Geefs - 1904, Brasschaat, Augusteinslei 76, 2016.

### Truyma's town hall, Geefs' chapel and the *Old Antwerp* fair (1898-1904)

A decade after the city of Antwerp had held its first world fair in 1885, a second fair was held in Antwerp in 1894. The most popular attraction is known to have been the *Vieil-Anvers* or *Old Antwerp* site. Among the many industrial, commercial and colonial exhibits, this *Old Antwerp* site presented the city's 16<sup>th</sup>-century past. Extras dressed up in costumes, jousts were organised and parades were held to help visitors live a nostalgic dream of bygone times.<sup>361</sup> Historically themed areas on world fairs had something of a tradition by the 1890s already. On the scale of a single street, the first exhibition of this kind had been put together at the Parisian fair of 1867, where also the catacomb-pavilion stood.<sup>362</sup> Yet, the *Old Antwerp* site differed from the bulk of similar 19<sup>th</sup>-century historical fantasies in the sense the town was composed of fragments of the historical city of Antwerp which had been lost in the course of time. The buildings on the site were fragments of Antwerp, which rose from historical documents that had been preserved in the city archives. The site was a reconstruction rather than a copy or an absolute fantasy. *Old Antwerp* celebrated history, yet it also celebrated the archives on which all its reconstructions were based.<sup>363</sup> This phenomenon has been explained in the light of industrialising public works, which at the time had recently erased most of the historical core of the city.<sup>364</sup> Given the destructions which industry and commerce had caused in Antwerp, *Old Antwerp* has been discussed as a site of memory and oblivion, as a sentimental compensation for modernity, as a funeral for the past and as a signal of the transition of world views around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>365</sup>

The site was spatially organised around two central monuments. Both the reconstruction of Antwerp's medieval town hall (see fig. 18) and a tall Gothic chapel of a supposed poorhouse (see fig. 20), towered over the main square of the site. The town hall – originally replaced in the 1560s – became a symbol of the entire event as its main façade was minted on commemorative medals.<sup>366</sup> Although never executed, designs were prepared by architect Ferdinand Truyma (1858-1939) to reconstruct the medieval town hall permanently in the

<sup>361</sup> Pieter Uyttenhove, "De ruïne en het feest: de moderniteit van Oud Antwerpen en Oud België," in *De panoramische droom: Antwerpen en de werelddtentoonstellingen 1885-1894-1930*, ed. Patricia De Somer, et. al. (Antwerp: Bouwcentrum, 1993), 249.

<sup>362</sup> Itohan Osayimwese, *Colonialism and modern architecture in Germany* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), 32.

<sup>363</sup> Uyttenhove, "De ruïne en het feest: de moderniteit van Oud Antwerpen en Oud België," in *De panoramische droom: Antwerpen en de werelddtentoonstellingen 1885-1894-1930*, 256. When the *Old Belgium* site of the world exhibition of Brussels attempted to repeat the success of *Old Antwerp* in 1930, surviving rather than lost historical buildings were copied. In Brussels, historical documents were disregarded in favour of consultable historical relics. Existing buildings were examined to be reproduced directly on fairgrounds.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 256-7.

<sup>366</sup> "Gedenkpenning aan 'Oud-Antwerpen' op de Werelddtentoonstelling te Antwerpen, 1894." *STAM Gent*, accessed January 1, 2018, [http://stamgent.be/fr\\_be/collection/oeuvres-dart/N\\_00625](http://stamgent.be/fr_be/collection/oeuvres-dart/N_00625).

actual market square of the city of Antwerp in 1895.<sup>367</sup> Closer to the entrance of the *Old Antwerp* site, the poorhouse and the Gothic chapel were reconstructed by architect Eugène Geefs (1854-1925).<sup>368</sup> Both Ferdinand Truymen and Eugène Geefs were later employed in Brasschaat to realise a town hall and a hospital chapel in 1901 and 1904 respectively (see fig. 19 and 21).<sup>369</sup>

Ferdinand Truymen worked for the city of Antwerp. In the service of the city he realised some important public projects, among which the *Loodswezen* and the restoration of the Antwerp *Steen* are the well-known ones. In spite of the important architectural projects to which he contributed, he is mainly remembered for the archaeological role he fulfilled in Antwerp. In a retrospective publication on the public works of the city, Truymen's importance was situated in the "*large body of very precise and valuable drawings of countless historical buildings*" which he executed for the city, rather than in his architectural contributions.<sup>370</sup> Truymen's employment in Brasschaat may not be as remarkable as the employment of the Roman architect Rodolfo Buti, yet Truymen was a full employee of the city of Antwerp. On the other hand, municipal governments tended to minimise their architectural expenses by applying to the architectural service of their province. Almost all town halls in the province of Antwerp which were constructed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century were designed by architects in provincial service.<sup>371</sup> In contrast to most other municipalities, the council presided over by mayor Reusens expressly chose an archaeologist in service of the city of Antwerp as the architect of its new town hall.

On the façade of the reconstructed medieval town hall of the world fair, statues of two armed soldiers under Gothic canopies flanked the portal. Each soldier guarded an angel in

<sup>367</sup> Truymen mentioned this project in the letter he wrote to the city council of Antwerp on 26 June 1919. In the letter he applied for a promotion. Truymen mentioned councillor Frans Van Kuyck had requested him to prepare the permanent reconstruction of the medieval town hall. (Antwerp, Stadsarchief Antwerpen, *Openbare personeelsdossiers*, 284#1439: Ferdinand Truymen, Letter of application to the position of city architect in chief from Ferdinand Truymen to the Antwerp city council, (June 26 1919).)

<sup>368</sup> Geefs had a central role in the *Oud Antwerpen* project in close cooperation with city councillor Frans Van Kuyck (1852-1914). See: Uyttenhove, "De ruïne en het feest: de moderniteit van Oud Antwerpen en Oud België," 249.

<sup>369</sup> In the letter of 26 June 1919, which Truymen sent to the city council of Antwerp to apply for a promotion, Truymen also boasted about both his design and execution of the town hall of Brasschaat. (Antwerp, Stadsarchief Antwerpen, *Openbare personeelsdossiers*, 284#1439: Ferdinand Truymen, Letter of application to the position of city architect in chief from Ferdinand Truymen to the Antwerp city council, (June 26 1919)) See also: Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens*, 256-7.

<sup>370</sup> "We owe masses of valuable and very precisely executed drawings of old buildings, works of art and historical matters of interest to his talented draftsmanship." (Dienst voor de werken der stad Antwerpen. *Een eeuw openbare werken te Antwerpen 1863-1963. Gedenkboek en catalogus* (Antwerpen: Stad Antwerpen, 1964), 63-4.) (translation by the author) Some of Truymen's drawings have been published in the 1888 popular history book *Anvers à travers les âges* of city archivist Pierre Génard. (Pierre Génard, *Anvers à travers les âges*, I, (Brussels: Christophe Bruylant, 1888), 4, 6, 12-16, 19, 20-21, 52-53.)

<sup>371</sup> Stefaan Grieten, et. al. *Sterk gebouwd en makkelijk in onderhoud, Ambt en bouwpraktijk van de provinciale architecten in de provincie Antwerpen (1834-1970)* (Bruges: Van De Wiele Uitgeverij, 2006) 69-74.

adoration of Virgin and Child, clearly allegorising the foundations of medieval temporal power.<sup>372</sup> Linking this allegory to mayor Armand Reusens' new town hall would certainly have been apt. The soldiers of the tympan might remind one of the political status he and his brother had. If Truyma's eclectic columns flanked the modern portal as the sculpted protectors of faith had flanked their medieval portal, then the capitals of Truyma's columns contribute to the analogy of the old and the new town hall. The fleurons which one finds in an ordinary capital were replaced by stars in Truyma's design (see fig. *Peut-être le résultat pourrait t'intéresser.*, making the portal not unlike the gates to the garden behind which Rodolfo Buti's Italian obelisk was erected.

The employment of *prix de Rome* laureate and Antwerp *académie* professor Eugène Geefs is less remarkable in itself. He was no city archaeologist or Roman architect. Nevertheless, his employment contributes to the argument of this section as well. As textual sources on the buildings are lacking, it is difficult to make real claims about a possible connection of Rodolfo Buti's archaeological work and his employment for the design of Georges Reusens' obelisk. Similarly it is difficult to confirm the connection of Truyma's reconstruction of the medieval town hall of Antwerp and his later design of a town hall for mayor Armand Reusens. However, the way Truyma and Geefs were both employed to realise the types of building which they had previously worked on for the Antwerp fairgrounds may signal intentionality.

In Brasschaat, Eugène Geefs realised a chapel which is a near copy of his earlier reconstruction on the Antwerp fairgrounds. Geefs' chapel was not transformed stylistically. The originally Gothic chapel of Antwerp remained a Gothic chapel in Brasschaat. All other buildings realised by the Reusens brothers except for the chapel were devoid of Gothic forms. Not only the obelisk and the town hall but also two gate keepers' houses from the 1880s, a second monument which Armand erected for his brother in 1891 and the transformations of the estate house in 1897 bore Renaissance influences.<sup>373</sup> It was only when mayor Armand Reusens had died in 1901, that his will demanded his nephew and heir to commission the construction of the chapel next to the hospital of Brasschaat. The stylistic difference might have been caused by the different patron. However, the will also ordered the construction of a school, which still bears the Reusens coat of arms and which was shaped in the local Renaissance style which characterises all the other buildings. As the only actual sanctuary the brothers built, perhaps the chapel exemplified the stylistic consciousness for which the 19<sup>th</sup>-century architects are most renowned. It may signal how the design of a church was regarded differently than other assignments.

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<sup>372</sup> The details of the medieval façade appear in Gilles Mostaert the Elder's *Passion play* painting of 1561. The painting depicts the Antwerp market square. The reconstruction of the world's fair was true to Mostaert's representation of the building to the extent of some far-reaching details such as the shape of a large iron lantern on a corner of the building. Nevertheless, it also differed from it, for instance in case of the configuration of the portal and its tympan. The doors of both the reconstruction at the world's fair and the town hall of Brasschaat were spanned by a flattened arch. Mostaert's painting shows a round arch. For a reproduction of the painting, see: Génard, *Anvers à travers les âges*, II, 153.

<sup>373</sup> Of all these buildings the architect remains unknown. The dates of their construction has been engraved on all their façades, except for the estate house, which was transformed in 1897.

In the will which commissioned the chapel and the school, Armand Reusens stated it had been his brother, who had died in Naples ten years earlier, who had wanted the works to be fulfilled.<sup>374</sup> The tall choir windows of the chapel, which was realised by architect Eugène Geefs by 1904, contain stained glass and evoke the principal members of the Reusens family. Father Auguste Reusens is represented as the church father St Augustine, whereas the heir and patron of the chapel is present as the young martyr St Werner of Oberwesel. The brothers Armand and Georges are standing side as a saintly monk and St George.<sup>375</sup> Much like the mayor's last will itself, a large inscription in marble in the interior of the chapel repeated the idea of the noble and mutual patronship of the brothers a final time:

*“In Memoriam / Armandi et Georgii Reusens / Comitum / Ex Votis Eorumque Sumptibus/ Aedificatum”*<sup>376</sup>

*“In memory of the counts Armand and Georges Reusens, by whose will and expenses this place was built”*

As the discussed realisations of the Reusens brothers can be linked to medieval or supposedly early Christian places via their architects, it appears as though the buildings of Brasschaat prolong one of the two lines which run through this dissertation. If the employment of Rodolfo Buti by the evicted diplomat Georges Reusens was related to the catacomb which he excavated in 1884, the classical obelisk of Brasschaat may be seen to embody the Christian potential of classical forms which the 19<sup>th</sup>-century apologists of Renaissance continued to ground in the catacombs. Raoul-Rochette, for instance, was the one to call the arts of the catacombs “*the initial drafts of the celestial types to which the art of Renaissance was able to give life*” (see section 2.2 “The catacombs as a wedge between form and meaning”). There is reason to believe this may have been the case, as later, Truymans and Geefs were, after all, both employed in Brasschaat to design the type of building which they had reconstructed on the *Old Antwerp* fair. In turn, Truymans appears to have built Cartuyvels’ “*new forms of the immutable truth*” (see also 2.2 “The catacombs as a wedge”)

<sup>374</sup> On Armand Reusens’ last will and his role in the hospital, see: Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens*, 173.

<sup>375</sup> In the central bay of the chapel choir, Christ and Mary are depicted. Left of the central bay, Armand and Georges Reusens are represented by “St. Armandus” and St. Georges. On the right side of the central bay, St. Augustine and St. Werner must represent the brothers’ father and their heir. Armand Reusens’ main heir Albert-Octave ‘t Serclaes de Wommersom de Moerbeke (1876-1930), was nicknamed “Werner” after his father. (Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens*, 331-9.) Werner was raised by his uncle Armand Reusens in Brasschaat. Interestingly, Werner’s grand-father had been the first president of the *Société archéologique* of Bruges, which was created by James Weale and Félix Bethune. (Van Biervliet, *Leven en werk van W. H. James Weale – een Engels kunsthistoricus in Vlaanderen in de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, 118-9.) The glass is signed with the name L. de Contini. I suppose it was produced and designed by Louis de Contini. For context on de Contini: Philip-Gerard Aalbersberg, *Louis De Contini : glazenier geboren 1854* (Ciboure: Fédération Documentation Historique France, 2003)

<sup>376</sup> The entire inscription in marble which adorns a wall of the chapel reads: “D.O.M / In Memoriam / Armandi et Georgii Reusens / Comitum / Ex Votis Eorumque Sumptibus/ Aedificatum / MDCCCCIV / R.I.P.” (translation by the author)

if any connection to the pious portal of the medieval town hall of Antwerp was intended. Pius IX's '*comtes pontificaux*' Armand and Georges Reusens appear to have substantiated their status by mobilising both the classical and the Christian heritage of Antwerp and Rome. In any case, though, this is a good example of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century architectural culture we lost touch with.

### 3.3 Lessons from the Parisian press

#### “Catacombs and barns of brick and concrete” – Sainte-Marie Perrin (1910)

In the Parisian press of the late 1800s, one can easily track some of the subjects which have been discussed in this dissertation so far. In a single issue of the journal *Revue de l'art chrétien*, for instance, can be found both an account on Giovanni Battista de Rossi's arguments against the assertions of Raoul-Rochette (see section 2.2 and 2.3) and a reference to the translation of the relics of *sainte Theudosie* of 1853 (see section 1.2). This, however, ought not to surprise, as the *Revue de l'art chrétien* was originally directed by the diocesan historian of Amiens as a “monthly collection of religious archaeology”.<sup>377</sup> Later, this journal would be directed by Jules Helbig, the Belgian painter who wrote the appendices of professor Edmond Reusens' second edition of *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne* in the 1880s (see sections 2.3).<sup>378</sup> The translation of the relics of *sainte Theudosie*, subject of the first part of this dissertation, was mentioned in a review which lauded Philippe Gerbet's emotive writing, whereas de Rossi's demarche against Désiré Raoul-Rochette surfaced in an archaeological article by the German cleric Franz Xaver Kraus.<sup>379</sup> The German eagerly used the archaeological Orpheus-Christ controversy to substantiate his own opposition of “the profane and pagan arts” and the “Christian spirit”. “[O]ne understands the aptness of these denominations”, he added while recounting how de Rossi had reduced the assertions of Raoul-Rochette “to their actual value”.<sup>380</sup>

In the French Catholic press, the attention for Christian archaeology and the catacombs continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The catacombs were remarkably present, not just in specialised journals like *Revue de l'art chrétien* but also in a popular Catholic newspaper like *La Croix*, founded by an Assumptionist congregation in Paris in 1883.<sup>381</sup> In 1907, for instance, this newspaper announced the particular interest of a class called *Subterranean Rome and the Christian arts*, which would be taught at the *Institut Catholique* of Paris. This class was announced as part of the course *Subterranean Rome and apologetics*. Its teacher, the journalist of *La Croix* emphasised, “insists on the artistic spontaneity of the first Christians; they were not influenced by the pagans, their work was personal rather than an imitation of the pagan products. He demonstrates what the emerging art of the catacombs actually was.”<sup>382</sup> In 1910, *La Croix* also reported the popularity of the facsimile catacombs

<sup>377</sup> *Revue de l'art chrétien* 14, (1870): frontispiece. (translation by the author)

<sup>378</sup> On Helbig's role in the *Revue de l'art chrétien*: Lavalleye, “Jules Helbig,” *Biographie Nationale* 37, (1971): 429-31.

<sup>379</sup> “Monseigneur Gerbet, sa Vie, ses Oeuvres et l'Ecole menaisienne, par m. l'abbé de Ladoue. 3 volumes,” *Revue de l'art chrétien* 14, (1870): 90-1. In this review Gerbet was lauded for his emotive writing in *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne* and his services to the festivities which were organised on the occasion of the arrival of *sainte Theudosie* in Amiens.

<sup>380</sup> Xaver Franz Kraus, “Le crucifix blasphématoire du Palatin,” *Revue de l'art chrétien* 14, (1870): 102. (translation by the author)

<sup>381</sup> Yves Poncelet, *Pierre l'Ermite (1863-1959): Prêtre, journaliste à La Croix et romancier – Présence catholique à la culture de masse*, (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2011), 65.

<sup>382</sup> “La Rome souterraine et l'art chrétien,” *La Croix*, March 11, 1907. (translation by the author)

of Valkenburg, of which the first parts had by then already been opened to the public (see section 1.2 “The *Salvatore Olandese*”).<sup>383</sup>

Also in 1910, an article in *La Croix* was dedicated to ecclesiastical architecture. This text is the actual subject of the present subsection. The article *Après la séparation: sur les constructions des églises*, was written by architect Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin (1835-1917).<sup>384</sup> Marie-Louis-Jean Perrin, as his true name sounded, was taught in Lyon and was later enrolled in the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* of Paris from 1859 until 1863. He witnessed the brief period in which Viollet-le-Duc occupied the chair of the history of art and aesthetics at the *Beaux-Arts* in 1863. Sainte-Marie Perrin was a student at the *Beaux-Arts* bastion of neo-classical eclecticism at the time when such a professorship turned out to be too controversial to last. As an ardent Catholic, Sainte-Marie Perrin devoted his life to ecclesiastical architecture. Throughout his career, he realised a series of materially, ornamentally and stylistically rich, eclectic churches.<sup>385</sup>

In his article in *La Croix*, Sainte-Marie Perrin explicitly tuned in to a debate which had been organised at the distinctly ultramontane *Conférence Olivaint* of 1910. The argument of the conference had first found its way to an issue of the journal *Notes d'art et d'archéologie* in March 1910, later to be reacted to by Sainte-Marie Perrin in May of the same year.<sup>386</sup> At the *Conférence Olivaint*, it had been debated whether or not the French churches ought to be adapted as a consequence of a relatively recent shift in the French political reality. In 1905, the separation of Church and State had been effectuated in the country, causing the *Olivaint* participants to debate whether it would be wise to strip the French churches of their magnificence as a protective measure in the new political context. Sainte-Marie Perrin himself, however, did in fact not react to political conditions at all. Even though the title of his article suggested otherwise, he essentially addressed tendencies which had arisen among his fellow architects.<sup>387</sup>

It was specifically the position of the French politician Emile Ollivier (1825-1913) which caught the attention of Sainte-Marie Perrin. Politician Emile Ollivier, who had been French prime minister when France declared war on Bismarck in 1870, consciously situated his argument in the age-old discussion about whether splendour befits the church building. In complete agreement with Ollivier, Sainte-Marie Perrin made a case for an ecclesiastical architecture of splendour and magnificence in his article in *La Croix* of 1910. The aging politician Ollivier had, however, phrased his defence in a manner which Sainte-Marie Perrin could not simply endorse and which must have led him to intervene. “*Sans doute*,” the politician had argued at the conference, “*le moindre balbutiement dans une catacombe, ou*

<sup>383</sup> “Lettre de l’Hollande - Les catacombes de Valkenburg.” *La Croix*, October 2-3, 1910.

<sup>384</sup> Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin, “Après la séparation. Sur les constructions des églises,” *La Croix*, Paris, May 15, 1910.

<sup>385</sup> Séverine Penlou, “Le décor sculpté des églises de Sainte-Marie Perrin (1835-1917) : l'exemple de l'église de Chaponost,” *Livraisons d'histoire de l'architecture* 12, (Fall 2006): 87-99.

<sup>386</sup> All I know of the initial article which was issued in *Notes d'art et d'archéologie* in March 1910 is based on Sainte-Marie Perrin’s account of this article in *La Croix*.

<sup>387</sup> Sainte-Marie Perrin, “Après la séparation.”



*dans une grange, parvient aussi bien que le chœur des anges et la symphonie des mondes jusqu'à Celui qui entend tout. Mais n'est-il pas naturel que le fidèle veuille donner son culte la magnificence [?]*" Ollivier's plea mockingly echoed the apparently archaeological arguments of his opponents, yet by implicitly recognising the comparability of the Christian catacombs and the barn, the most banal of buildings, he undermined his own plea in the eyes of those who were knowledgeable of the role of Christian archaeology in architectural discourse. As Ollivier did not refute the idea the catacombs were devoid of magnificence, Ollivier implicitly capitulated to those who used Christian archaeology to make their argument for churches of poverty. In a nutshell, Ollivier's defence could imply the ideal church was simply a barn after all.<sup>388</sup>

Sainte-Marie Perrin used Emile Ollivier's words as a springboard. The old architect essentially addressed a tendency he discerned in the practice of his fellow architects. He warned against the reduction of the understanding of good church design to material questions and feared his colleagues were losing touch with good design over their fascination with material poverty, epitomised by their collective interest in concrete. To obtain a church with spiritual potential, Sainte-Marie Perrin wrote, qualitative and inspired design rather than material poverty is of the essence. "*Que cette ligne soit tracée par le marbre ou la brique, par la pierre ou le ciment, voire le ciment armé dont on parle trop,*" he wrote, "*elle sera avant tout d'essence spirituelle, et alors, mais alors seulement, elle sera bonne.*"<sup>389</sup>

In 1910 already, Sainte-Marie Perrin sensed the importance to which material rather than stylistic questions would rise in ecclesiastical architecture. The crux in this regard is the twofold argumentation he wielded against it. Firstly, he argued from his own experience as a builder that concrete had never actually been a cheap material. In practice, he wrote, each time he had planned to use it, he had subsequently been forced to abandon his ambitions for financial reasons. Secondly, he tapped his argument back to the words of politician Emile Ollivier. After having refuted concrete was actually cheap, he questioned whether the first Christians had ever evidenced a quest for simplicity in the arts of their catacombs. Although he had first denied the authority of archaeology over design, Sainte-Marie Perrin essentially reiterated the argument which the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* had used to ward off the idea the Gothic style was aptly called *l'art chrétien* nearly sixty years earlier (see section 2.2 "The catacombs as wedge"). Having questioned the economy of concrete, he believed to be making an equally strong point by questioning the archaeological claim the first Christians had ever been keen on keeping the art in their catacombs humble: "*Aux catacombes, la modicité des ressources, la crainte des regards hostiles devaient être envisagées, mais à voir les précieux restes des chapelles de la Rome souterraine, ces considérations, pour n'être point négligées sans doute, ne paraissent pas dominantes.*"<sup>390</sup>

The old prime minister Emile Ollivier had warned against those who wished "*cultic pageantry*" to be diminished in order to make the persistence of the Church tolerable

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<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

through the simplicity they advocated. Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin, in turn, advised his fellow architects not to devise an architecture of death – he meant of concrete – for a religion which was believed by its adversaries to have died already. The Parisian architectural production of the following decades evidences just how much most of Sainte-Marie Perrin's peers must have disagreed.<sup>391</sup>

### “Beauty influenced by the age of the Catacombs” – Henri Vidal in context (1938)

Of the churches which were built in Paris in the ensuing decades, Auguste Perret's (1874-1954) Notre-Dame du Raincy (1922) may be the most renowned in architectural circles. However, the one which received the most attention in the general press might, however, have been the *Sainte-Odile* church, situated on the western border of the inner city of Paris. “[B]uilt entirely by the power of the press”, the *Sainte-Odile* church, realised in 1938, was the most mediatized project in a much larger citywide church-construction campaign.<sup>392</sup> Cardinal Jean Verdier, the contemporary archbishop of Paris launched a campaign, soon nicknamed the *Chantiers du cardinal*, to compensate for the rapid and godless expansion of the city. In this campaign, launched in 1931, dozens of churches – one of which was the *Sainte-Odile* church – were built in the rapidly growing suburbs of the capital of France during the 1930s.<sup>393</sup>

After its realisation, cardinal Jean Verdier called the church of *Sainte-Odile* an exemplary project for the renewal of ecclesiastical architecture.<sup>394</sup> In contrast with the other realisations of the *Chantiers du cardinal*, the cardinal, however, never financed the construction of this church. Around 1934, the cardinal demanded Edmond Loutil (1863-1959), at the time the parish priest of Saint-François-de-Sales in the 17<sup>th</sup> district, to collect the funds for the church himself. Because of the financial problems in which the archdiocese of Paris found itself due to the many constructions it had initiated, the cardinal only provided the plot for this church. Everything else was to be taken care of by father Loutil himself. Cardinal Verdier knew very well whom he was asking this exceptional effort, for even without initial funds, the *Sainte-Odile* church became one of the grandest realisations of the *Chantiers du cardinal* campaign.<sup>395</sup> Edmond Loutil was one of the most prominent journalists of the *La Croix* newspaper. Under his pseudonym Pierre l'Ermite, he contributed over 3000 chronicles to

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid. (translation by the author)

<sup>392</sup> Poncet, *Pierre l'Ermite (1863-1959): Prêtre, journaliste à La Croix et romancier – Présence catholique à la culture de masse*, 474. The citation was originally part of: Edmond Loutil, “La lumière dans la nuit”, *La Croix*, October 16-17, 1938.

<sup>393</sup> Blaise Wilfert, “Les Chantiers du Cardinal, une oeuvre attendue,” in *Eglises Parisiennes du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Architecture et décor*, ed. Simon Texier (Paris: Action artistique de la ville de Paris, 1996), 26.

<sup>394</sup> Edmond Pauty, “L'église de Sainte-Odile à Paris,” *L'Architecture* 51, no. 2 (February 1938): 40. For different work by Jacques Barge: Edmond Pauty, “Le Centre Social de Châteauroux et son expression architecturale,” *L'Architecture* 51, no. 11 (November 1938): 377-86.

<sup>395</sup> Poncet, *Pierre l'Ermite (1863-1959): Prêtre, journaliste à La Croix et romancier – Présence catholique à la culture de masse*, 458.

the newspaper. He also published 29 popular novels.<sup>396</sup> All funds for the church were raised by Loutil via the stream of contributions which he provided to *La Croix* during the entire period his *Sainte-Odile* church was under construction.<sup>397</sup> Over the course of several years, Loutil narrated the progress of the works on *Sainte-Odile* in *La Croix* for the sake of the influx of funds and reported stories of hungering parishioners who saved on heating their dwellings to deliver him their savings.<sup>398</sup>

A good decade before cardinal Verdier ordered Loutil to build the church, in 1920 already, Loutil had urged artists and his fellow clerics to welcome the beauty of modern art in their churches. Loutil had asked them to recognise the actual issue in ecclesiastical architecture was bigger than any acute need for new churches. As he wrote of the devotional importance of beauty, Loutil asked his colleagues in apparently contradictory terms to embrace the “*modern beauty*” of the new materials of the “*modern palette*” of the arts, in order to allow an escape from the pressing burden of “*prose and progress*”. Delivering the faithful from the “*commercial*”, “*card-board*”, “*pink sentimentality*”, which had become “*a true religious inhibition to certain contemporary spirits*”, would, according to Loutil, allow for mental purification.<sup>399</sup> Apparently, to Loutil, the *modern palette* of Paris of the 1920s comprised the promise of liberation from the strain of progress and modernity. The *Sainte-Odile* church, realised by 1938, seems to resolve the apparent contradiction inherent in Loutil’s plea for the endorsement of the modern arts as an antidote to modernity. His dark church was built of concrete, clad in brick on the outside and left bare on the inside. Slender cylindrical pillars of polished stone and a vast enamel altarpiece by Robert Barriot (1898-1970) surround the main altar.<sup>400</sup> Sculptor Anne-Marie Roux-Colas (1898-1993) decorated the portal and made a sculpture of Saint Odile, both in an abstracted modernist style.<sup>401</sup> The choir of the church is separated from the nave by two brick ambons, around each of which a staircase of massive and jointless concrete leads to the crypt. Like a medieval artisan, ceramist Robert Barriot lived in the spire of the church while he worked on his altarpiece in this crypt for fifteen years. The main altar itself is a work of art by Auguste Labouret. A mosaik of large and crudely shaped chunks of glass in yellow and green colours depict a 5<sup>th</sup>-century Christian symbol. The glass depicts two peacocks in a vineyard, drinking from a cup, which is marked by the chi-rho monogram.<sup>402</sup>

Of any fundamental connection of Loutil and Christian archaeology, there is no trace. In his many moving articles he referred only once to the catacombs. “*On nous demande, parfois, une preuve palpable de l’immortalité. Où en trouver une plus tangible que celle-là [?]*”, he wrote of the catacombs.<sup>403</sup> To supply the designs for his church in the mediatized context of the *Chantiers du cardinal*, he, however, employed Jacques Barge, an architect

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>397</sup> For a complete account of Edmond Loutil’s fundraising campaign: Ibid., 463-75.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., 464, 473.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 447-8. (translation by the author)

<sup>400</sup> On Robert Barriot, see: Ibid., 483.

<sup>401</sup> On Anne-Marie Roux-Colas in service of Loutil, see: Ibid., 462, 475, 481.

<sup>402</sup> For a 5<sup>th</sup>-century example of an altar with similar decorations, see: Reusens, *Éléments d’archéologie chrétienne*, I, 183.

<sup>403</sup> Edmond Loutil, “Le ‘Saint inconnu’,” *La Croix*, November 4, 1923.

with some practical experience in French Christian archaeology. Barge realised Loutil's church in brick and concrete, while simultaneously collaborating with prominent archaeologist François Deshoulières on research concerning the original burial place of the French early Christian saints Ludre and Leocade.<sup>404</sup> During the 1920s, architect Barge also repeatedly collaborated with *chartiste* Jean Hubert (1902-1994).<sup>405</sup> Hubert was the one to host the 5<sup>th</sup> international congress of Christian archaeology in Aix-en-Provence in 1954, later to assume the chair of archaeology at the *Ecole des chartes* in 1955.<sup>406</sup> Before all else, Hubert became renowned for the book *l'Art pré-roman*, which he published in 1938.<sup>407</sup> Hubert successfully positioned himself as the foremost specialist in pre-Romanesque art, a term used to designate the works of architecture which lay between early Christian times and the turn of the first millennium.<sup>408</sup>

This detour via Edmond Loutil, Jacques Barge and Jean Hubert gives away something of the cultural milieu of the *Chantiers du cardinal* of the 1930s, where concrete, religion and Christian archaeology could apparently inform one another. What men like Loutil, Barge and Hubert could obviously have brought to the table separately was, however, expressed at once by the *Chantiers* architect Henri Vidal (1895-1955) in 1938. He realised numerous churches and chapels in the *Chantiers du cardinal* while Edmond Loutil and Jacques Barge

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<sup>404</sup> For the results of this collaboration of Barge and Deshoulières, see: François Deshoulières, "Le mystère de l'église Saint-Etienne de Déols (Indre)," *Bulletin Monumental* 96, no. 1 (1937): 45-53. The tombs of Léocade and Ludre were originally excavated by the parish priest of Déols in 1862. A sarcophagus was discovered and ascribed to Léocade. Giovanni Battista de Rossi was then informed of its discovery and asked to date it. (*Congrès Archéologique de France (XLe session) séances générales tenues à Châteauroux en 1873 par la société française d'archéologie pour la conservation et la description des monuments*. Société Française d'archéologie, (Paris: Derache, 1874), 340-1.) In 1860s hagiography, Léocade is called the first Christian proconsul of Gaul. (Ambroise De Bergerac, *Histoire de Saint Léocade et Saint Lusor ou Ludre*, (Paris: Poussielgue et fils, 1866).)

<sup>405</sup> The earliest of their collaborations was Hubert's graduation project. Barge supplied plans to the archaeological work of Hubert. (Jean Hubert, "L'abbatiale Notre-Dame de Déols," *Bulletin Monumental* 86, (1927): 5.) For a second collaboration: Jacques Barge and Jean Hubert, "Le prieuré de Ruffec en Berry," *Bulletin Monumental* 88, Paris: (1929): 205-41.

<sup>406</sup> The *Ecole nationale des chartes*, the school where Hubert was educated and where he would later occupy a chair of archaeology, is known to have evolved to a militant Catholicism around the 1850s. During the interbellum, the school still had the name of being a "medieval keep" (Olivier Dumoulin, "Histoire et historiens de droite, 1815-1990," in *L'histoire des droites en France*, vol. 2, *Cultures*, ed. Jean-François Sirinelli, "L'Irrédentisme chartiste". Paris: Gallimard, 1992. Google Books.) For an account on Hubert's role at the fifth congress of Christian archaeology, see: "Voeux présentés par Melle Mohrmann, MM. Courcelle, Hubert, Marrou, Simon," in *Actes du Ve congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne*, (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia Cristiana, 1957), 41. At the 5th international congress of Christian archaeology, Hubert was the one to inform the participants of the state of affairs in French Christian archaeology: Jean Hubert, "L'archéologie chrétienne en France depuis 1939," in *Actes du Ve congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne*, (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia Cristiana, 1957), 97-108. For a biography of Jean Hubert, see: Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, "Jean Hubert (1902-1994)," *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des chartes* 153, no. 2 (1995): 583-8.

<sup>407</sup> Jean Hubert, *L'art Pré-Roman* (Paris: Les éditions d'art et d'histoire, 1938).

<sup>408</sup> Erlande-Brandenburg, "Jean Hubert (1902-1994)," 586.

collaborated on the *Sainte-Odile* church.<sup>409</sup> Like Jacques Barge, Vidal proved himself a modern architect. Like Edmond Loutil, he knew of the catacombs and showed himself sensitive to the devotional importance of beauty and like Jean Hubert he evidenced an interest in pre-Romanesque architecture. His historical understanding of beauty surfaced amidst a dispute in architectural criticism, wherein Vidal's own words evidence how Christian archaeology and modern architecture could find one another in the theoretical understanding of beauty of a church builder in Paris in the interbellum.

A critical dispute centred on the production of *Chantiers* architect Henri Vidal in the architectural press in 1938. In the journal *l'Art Sacré*, Dominican editor Pie-Raymond Régamey (1900-1996) explicitly reacted to an article which the architect Félix Ollivier (1863-1947) had published about the projects of Henri Vidal in the journal *l'Architecture* some months earlier. In the older article, architect Félix Ollivier had praised Vidal for the regionalist traits apparent in his chapels.<sup>410</sup> To the annoyance of Pie-Raymond Régamey, Ollivier presented Vidal's architecture as "*the true image of our sweet France*" (see images 24 and 25). Ollivier had contrasted Vidal's style with generic concrete construction, "*the universal formula of column and beam [...] equally dispersed on the banks of the river Yang Tsé Kiang as in Michigan or on the East-River*".<sup>411</sup> In his reaction, Régamey suggested Ollivier used the wrong critical terms to understand Vidal's ambitions. Essentially, the Dominican of *l'Art Sacré* reminded his readership of how architecture eludes categories such as regional and generic, or modern and un-modern. What ought to be recognised, according to Régamey, was how pure modernism and the occasionally medievalising forms in chapels such as those of Vidal, shared a more essential common denominator. Before anything else, Régamey valued the "*blessed poverty*" of Vidal's chapels, "*not spoiled by murals but adorned with streaks of concrete*".<sup>412</sup> In the margins of his response to Félix Ollivier, Régamey also argued modernism ought not to be portrayed as un-French either. He added Vidal and Auguste Perret, the greatest French proponent of the architecture which Ollivier had condemned, had planned on collaborating on the design of a church for the *Chantiers du Cardinal*, announced earlier that same year in *l'Art Sacré*.<sup>413</sup>

Régamey wrote one might prefer rigorously spontaneous, modern architectural forms over the formally medievalising ways of Vidal. Yet, he emphasised it ought to be clear how

<sup>409</sup> Jean-Claude Vigato, *L'architecture régionaliste: France, 1890-1950* (Paris: Editions Norma, 1994), 244.

<sup>410</sup> On Félix Ollivier: Vigato, *L'architecture régionaliste: France, 1890-1950*, 28, 41, 187.

<sup>411</sup> Félix Ollivier, "Edifices religieux d'Henri Vidal pour la banlieue parisienne," *l'Architecture* 51, no. 2 (1938): 64. (translation by the author)

<sup>412</sup> Pie-Raymond Régamey, "Chapelles recentes d'Henri Vidal," *l'Art Sacré* 33, (September 1938): 267. (translation by the author)

<sup>413</sup> For the announcement to which Régamey referred, see: "Un Chantier du Cardinal confié à Auguste Perret," *l'Art Sacré* 31, no. 7 (July 1938): 193-6. Although *l'Art Sacré* promised Perret would design a church in the 19<sup>th</sup> district of Paris, there is no trace of any such design in Perret's oeuvre. (I consulted Roberto Gargiani, *Auguste Perret, 1874-1954: teoria e opere* (Milan: Electa, 1993). and Maurice Culot and Joze Abram, *Les frères Perret, l'oeuvre complete : les archives d'Auguste Perret (1874-1954) et Gustave Perret (1876-1952) architectes-entrepreneurs* (Paris: Editions Norma, 2000). These two books, nor the actual announcement in *l'Art Sacré* itself mention the intentions of Perret to collaborate with Vidal.



Fig. 22. Concrete pier of the *Saint-Pierre de Chaillot* church, engraved with evangelical verses by muralist Nicholas Untersteller in 1938, Paris.

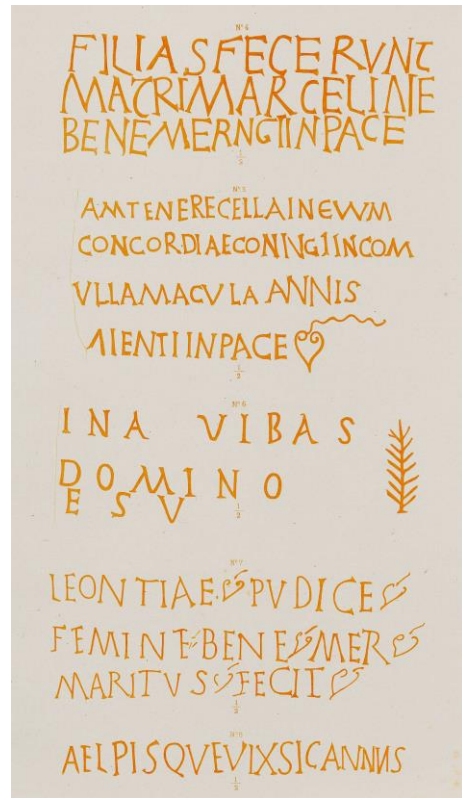


Fig. 23. Inscriptions from the catacombs of Rome, as rendered by Louis Perret in 1855. *Catacombes de Rome*. V, Plate XIV. (62 x 45cm)

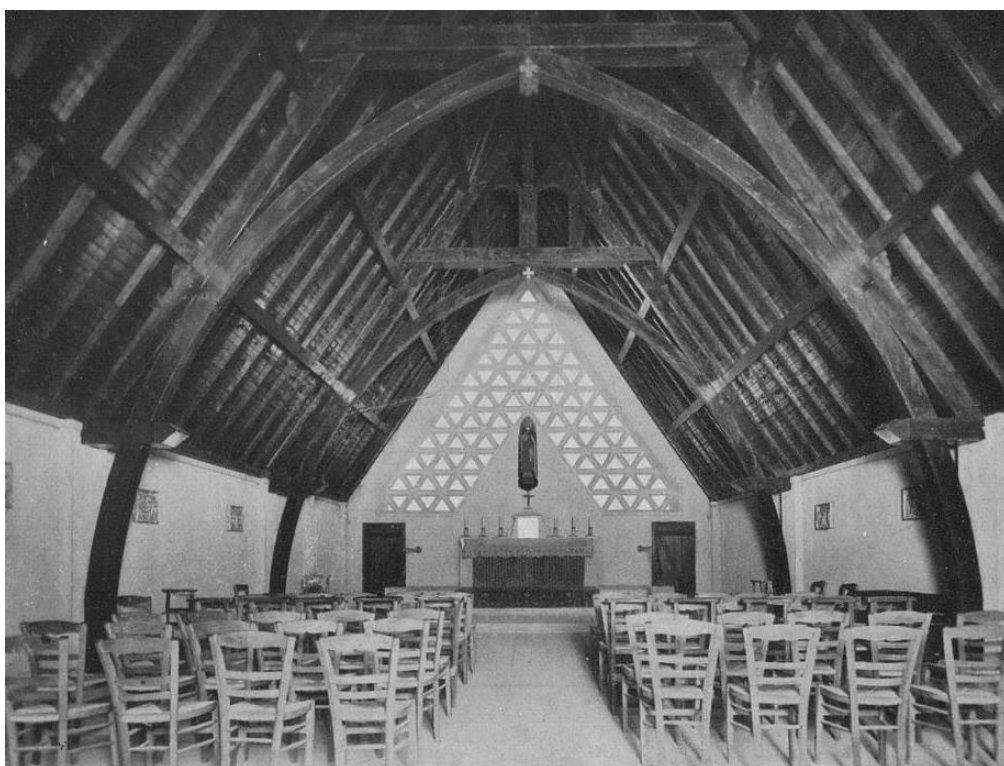
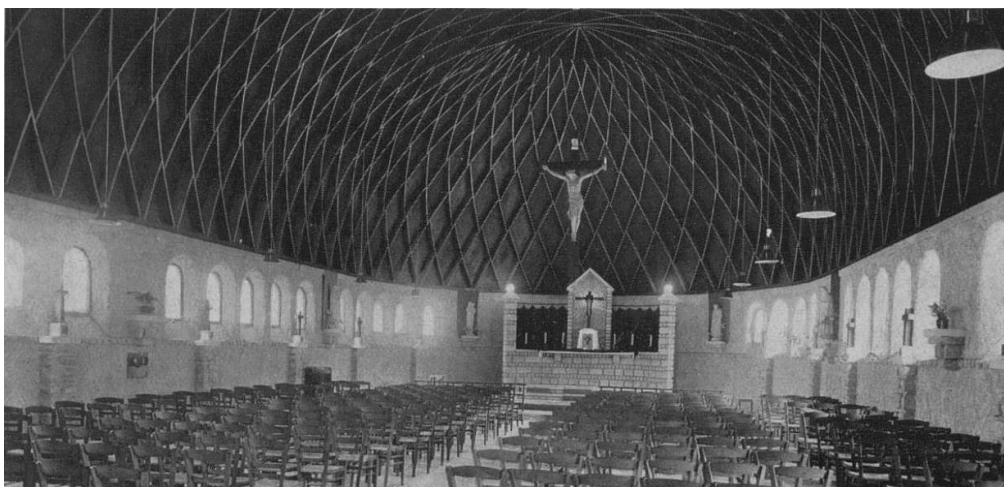


Fig. 24 and 25. Henri Vidal, Saint-Paul de Vitry and Sainte-Jeanne-de-France, 1938. Photograph published in *l'Architecture* by Félix Ollivier.

Vidal's chapels materialised the same essential ambitions. As Régamey put it: "*first of all, they present the immense interest of being poor.*"<sup>414</sup> In order to prove his point and to demonstrate Vidal had indeed envisioned the poverty which he praised so highly, Régamey reminded the readership of *l'Art Sacré* of the statement which Félix Ollivier had originally obtained in an interview with Henri Vidal and which was part of the initial article which Ollivier had published in the *l'Architecture* journal. What Vidal said to Ollivier is worth quoting in its entirety: "*[J]'ai surtout cherché l'expression du sentiment religieux dans la simplicité des formes, la simplicité du décor, la simplicité des matériaux mis en oeuvre et laissés apparents. Quant à l'époque qui m'a le plus tenté, c'est l'époque pré-romane, celle de l'architecture carolingienne, où avec des moyens humbles et pauvres, il y a eu des réalisations qui, pour moi, ont imprimé à nos premières recherches d'art religieux la beauté la plus française et la plus influencée par l'époque héroïque des Catacombes.*"<sup>415</sup>

As Vidal stated the ambition to actualise the aesthetic lessons of the catacombs through the realisation of chapels which referred to pre-Gothic times, where simplicity and material truth facilitated religious experience, he expressed himself in a way which would have suited the ideal student of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century course like Edmond Reusens' *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne* (see section 2.2 "The catacombs as cradle"). The way his words united France and the catacombs also reminds of the procession of the relics of *Theudosie* from the seminarists' facsimile to the cathedral of Amiens. Although Vidal's ideas are remarkable in themselves, the real surprise is what his chapels look like. To span his naves Vidal often used heavy timber in a historicising manner (see fig. 25). Just as often, though, he supported the roofs of his chapels with a novelty like the *charpente en lamelles* technique (see fig. 24). In 1928, the magazine *La Technique des Travaux* dedicated a special issue to this "*totally new, promising concept*". The system of German origin was developed by Fritz Zollinger and patented as the *Zollinger-Bauweise* in 1910. Its structural wooden frame of unconcealed light-weight prefabricated elements, permitted easy assemblage and allowed the realisation of large spans without secondary supports.<sup>416</sup> Vidal used historicising woodwork, as well as he embraced innovative technical solutions to realise the beauty which he deemed appropriate to the legacy of the Christian catacombs of Rome.

In the light of both the account on the Parisian architectural culture of the early 1900s by Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin – discussed in the previous subsection – and the architectural production of the *Chantiers du cardinal* in general, I am inclined to think Henri Vidal cannot possibly have been the only architect in the French capital of the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to hold a similar archaeological and devotional view of beauty. Confirmations of this supposition are abundant in the architecture and decorations of the Parisian churches of this period themselves. The *Saint-Pierre de Chaillot* church (1934-1938), for instance, appears as one of the right places to start any real research into the part of Christian archaeology in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Parisian architecture. Built entirely of concrete, the church

<sup>414</sup> Régamey, "Chapelles recentes d'Henri Vidal," 268. (translation by the author)

<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 267. See also: Ollivier, "Edifices religieux d'Henri Vidal pour la banlieu parisienne," 59.

<sup>416</sup> Johan Lagae, "Reinventing 'primitiveness', Henri Lacoste and the Belgian Congo Pavilion at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris," in *Primitive: original matters in architecture*, ed. Jo Odgers, et. al. (London: Routledge, 2006), 102-3.



associated with the papal nunciature was later aptly described as a place of intense darkness, where “*prayer is supported by the living shadows of mystery*” and where gloom envelops the crudely painted murals depicting the baptism of the first Christians in the catacombs, the earliest successors of Peter and the martyr’s deaths of their followers.<sup>417</sup> For the practical purpose of storing coffins, thirty sepulchral niches in the crypt of the building were designed in emulation of those of the catacombs, critic Anthony Goissaud wrote.<sup>418</sup>

*Saint-Pierre de Chaillot* was designed by architect Emile Bois but its exceptional decorations by muralist and *prix de Rome* laureate Nicolas Untersteller (1900-1967) have diverted much of the attention which the building received in the architectural press of the 1930s. In *l’Architecture*, the building was described by the same critic Félix Ollivier who lauded Henri Vidal for the architectural conservatism he supposedly demonstrated in his chapel designs. An intrigued Ollivier reported in detail how muralist Untersteller had engraved the designs of his murals by means of a pneumatic hammer. Partly, Untersteller refilled his hammered engravings with a coloured paste. Ollivier noted how he believed Untersteller had found a way to make murals enhance rather than deny the presence of concrete. He wrote how Untersteller’s monumental work enriched the concrete of the church, giving warmth to the appearance of the material itself, not covering but intensifying the impact of the construction.

Concerning the murals of Nicolas Untersteller in *Saint-Pierre de Chaillot*, Félix Ollivier mentioned their “*sober tones of red, yellow ochre and muted green*” in his article in *l’Architecture*. By emphasising the colours in which Untersteller had depicted his early Christian scenes, Ollivier might have touched an unadvertised dimension of Untersteller’s work.<sup>419</sup> In his nuanced material history *Concrete and Culture*, Adrian Forty noticed “*twentieth-century religion’s love affair with concrete*”, suggesting the imagined poverty of the material lay at its core.<sup>420</sup> Forty, however, admitted not to have been able to retrieve any clerical perspective on the role of the material in ecclesiastical architecture.<sup>421</sup> To fill in the hiatus which Forty himself regretted, Xavier Smits’ comparison of concrete and catacomb frescos comes to mind. As Smits exalted the frescos of the first Christians as gospels of concrete in the *Gedenkschrift* of Valkenburg (see section 1.4), Nicolas Untersteller’s evangelical carvings in concrete (see fig. 22) may well have reminded certain beholders of the frescos of the catacombs. After all, “*sober tones of red, yellow ochres and muted dark greens*” are precisely the colours which one finds in the early Christian frescos of subterranean Rome. (see fig. 4, 12 and 29). In regard to the by then century-old stances of Désiré Raoul-Rochette there is some irony to the fact Nicolas Untersteller became both a

<sup>417</sup> André Deveche, *L’église Saint-Pierre de Chaillot de Paris* (Paris: La Tourelle, 1977), n. p.

<sup>418</sup> Antony Goissaud, “La Nouvelle Eglise Saint-Pierre de Chaillot à Paris,” *La Construction Moderne* 50, (September 1935): 998-1010. (translation by the author)

<sup>419</sup> Félix Ollivier, “La nouvelle église Saint-Pierre de Chaillot,” *L’Architecture* 51, no. 11 (November 1938): 362, 368. (translation by the author)

<sup>420</sup> Adrian Forty, *Concrete and Culture. A material History*, (London: Reaktion Books LTD, 2012), 192.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

member of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* in 1946 and director of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in 1948.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Eugène VOLTZ, "Eloge de Nicolas Untersteller," published in the 1971 issue of *Mémoires de l'Académie nationale de Metz, 1967-1969*, I-Revues, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://documents.irevues.inist.fr/handle/2042/34164?show=full>.

### 3.4 Epilogue: *La coupure entre architectes et intellectuels*

To conclude this part with a final leap, nearly two decades and a world war after the realisation of Henri Vidal's chapels in the *Chantiers du cardinal*, Le Corbusier finished his canonical *Notre-Dame du Haut* chapel in Ronchamp. To the displeasure of Corbu, his chapel was abhorred by many and lauded by some for its *baroqueness*. Maarten Delbeke has recently outlined how the baroque had, by then, become a trope in architectural criticism. It required the Dominicans Pie-Raymond Régamey and Augustin Maurice Cocagnac – Régamey's successor as editor-in-chief of *l'Art Sacré* – to evaluate *Notre-Dame du Haut* on the terms of its architect, Delbeke noted in the context of a broad assessment of the place of the baroque in contemporary criticism.<sup>423</sup>

The editors of *l'Art Sacré* questioned whether baroque models could be squared with true religiosity and sacrality. Cocagnac was a persistent supporter of Le Corbusier and *l'Art Sacré* had had a decisive influence in securing Corbu the Ronchamp commission in the first place. It required the Dominicans to evaluate this famous chapel on the terms of its architect, as it seems to have been the case for Henri Vidal in 1938. Following the inauguration of *Notre-Dame du Haut* in 1955, *l'Art Sacré* devoted an entire issue to the chapel, warding off those who mistook Corbu's forms for baroque. *l'Art Sacré* situated the merit of Corbu's work in its capacity to incite calm rather than illusion and excitement, even though the chapel involved more engineering than in any of his supposedly machine-like pre-war works.<sup>424</sup>

Maarten Delbeke reasoned how in the 1960s, when the chasm between architectural and intellectual culture, which was defined by architectural historian Jean-Louis Cohen, was at its height, *l'Art Sacré* was outflanked by the broad architectural endorsement of the aesthetics of simplicity. Advocated for decades by progressive Catholics, the message of the Dominicans became obsolete in architectural culture, while the interest of the baroque only grew in intellectual circles.<sup>425</sup> Architectural historian Jean-Louis Cohen situated the cause of this disengagement of architectural and intellectual culture in the post-war accommodation of modernism in the state-led building enterprise. Cohen argued this allowed an increased assimilation of engineering and architectural practice. The later reintellectualisation of the discipline of architecture coincided with the first crisis of modern architecture and the renewal of architectural Italophilia.<sup>426</sup> In conceptualising the rupture of architecture from intellectual culture, Cohen, however, admittedly paid limited attention to the lively discussion on sacred architecture, Delbeke signalled.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Maarten Delbeke, "Pierre Charpentrat and Baroque Functionalism," in *The Baroque in Architectural Culture 1880-1980*, ed. Andrew Leach, et. al. (London: Routledge Publishing, 2015), 161-2.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>426</sup> Jean-Louis Cohen, *La coupure entre architectes et intellectuels ou les enseignements de l'Italophilie* (Brussels: Mardaga, 2015), 189.

<sup>427</sup> Delbeke, "Pierre Charpentrat and Baroque Functionalism," 167.

When recontextualised, the reality of the schism of architectural and intellectual culture, of which Cohen situated the height in the 1950s and 1960s, can present itself as a conciliation of architects and progressive mystics such as the Dominicans of *I'Art Sacré*. Via the *La Croix* newspaper, the previous section showed Régamey's position already had its adepts among Parisian church builders in 1910, a point at which the debate still seems to have been informed by the varied lessons of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Christian archaeology. The statements of Emile Ollivier and Sainte-Marie Perrin suggest the strand of ideas which runs through this dissertation from Giovanni Battista de Rossi's work in the service of Pius IX to Henri Vidal's chapels in Paris, progressively gained terrain on the ideas which Raoul-Rochette propagated in defence of both his own classicist project and the cultural preferences of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*. Even though it might only seem as though the ideas of Raoul-Rochette, Cartuyvels and Foucher de Careil were materialised in works like Rodolfo Buti's obelisk and Ferdinand Truymen's town hall in Brasschaat, it was certainly that kind of architectural culture the 20<sup>th</sup> century broke away from. The apparent accord of *I'Art Sacré* and the architectural modernists of Paris over the mystical capacity of modern architecture – like Gaudí's Orpheus-Christos and the apparent presence of awareness of Christian archaeology in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Parisian sacred building – suggests there are origins to the aesthetic tendencies in architectural modernism which architectural historians have collectively remained blind to.



## CONCLUSION

The first part of this dissertation juxtaposed three reconstructions of fragments of the catacombs of Rome. The different facsimiles were realised in Amiens, Paris and Valkenburg for devotional, representative and scholarly reasons, in 1853, 1867 and around 1910 respectively. Discussed by means of the texts which originally accompanied them, these facsimiles offered a way into some of the complexities of Christian archaeology. These cases were used as ways both to look further into the past from a 19<sup>th</sup>-century perspective and to discuss peculiar dynamics inherent in Christian archaeology. By means of the facsimiles, the texts which accompanied them and the existing scholarship on their contexts, the first part discussed how the facsimiles can signal continuities in the role of Christian archaeology in Catholic devotion on the one hand, whereas it may also have obtained an entirely unprecedented importance in papal self-representation during the pontificate of Pius IX.

The first facsimile was built in the choir of the chapel of the seminarists of Amiens to simulate the exhumation of the catacomb relics of martyr *sainte Theudosie* at the start of their procession towards Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's (1814-1879) definitive shrine in the cathedral of Amiens in October 1853. In Church history the translation of the relics of *sainte Theudosie* to Amiens is deemed the apogee of an era in which hundreds of similar *corpi santi* were moved from the catacombs of Rome to places all over the world and to France in particular. The relics were tools of restoration and expressions of the ultramontanism which had been a consequence of the French Revolution. The second catacomb reconstruction was the contribution which the Holy See itself made to the exhibition of the Papal States at the world fair of Paris of 1867. In the facsimile, papal archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi (1822-1894) designed a small exhibition. As 'bishop-poet' Philippe Gerbet (1798-1864) bundled all the texts which had appeared in regard to the translation of the catacomb relics to Amiens in the *Livre de sainte Theudosie*, so the catacomb pavilion of de Rossi's was accompanied by a guide the archaeologist had written. Thirdly, also the facsimile realised (1909-1916) in Valkenburg by a commission of Dutch archaeologists was included in the first part. Financed by a family of industrialists and presided over by the architect Pierre Cuypers (1827-1921), the Dutch commission attempted to found a scholarly centre for Christian archaeology in the north of Europe. Besides the library, the museum and the journal which they initiated, the extensive and precise facsimile of the highlights of the catacombs of Rome which they tunnelled from Dutch soil was also to be part of the scientific centre, which, in fact, never took off. Of the journal only the first commemorative issue ever appeared. This *Gedenkschrift* with contributions by most of the members of the Valkenburg commission of archaeologists was used in this dissertation as an equivalent to Gerbet's *Livre de sainte Theudosie* and de Rossi's guide.

The cases of Amiens and Valkenburg were discussed in close regard to one another in search of an understanding of how scholarship and devotion interacted in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Christian archaeology. Much like in the early modern history of the exploitation of the catacombs of

Rome, initial religious enthusiasm was safeguarded by more archaeological practices at later times. If the festivities orchestrated on the occasion of the arrival of the relics of *Theudosie* in Amiens were criticised as a pinnacle of Catholic credulity because of the lack of indications of her actual martyrdom, then the project in Valkenburg was very much the opposite. In the partly oecumenical Valkenburg endeavour, religion was nominally banned in favour of exclusively scientific practices. In that sense Valkenburg, too, could be considered the high mass of an era of around six decades. Blessed by Pius X (1903-1914) as a didactic project and thoroughly supported by the Roman *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra*, the Valkenburg archaeological commission tuned in to the scientifically reformed exploitation of the catacombs which was induced under the rule of Pius IX (1846-1878) at the start of the 1850s.

In the *Livre de sainte Theudosie*, Philippe Gerbet literarily projected the catacombs as well as early Christianity onto 19<sup>th</sup>-century reality. He transferred his idealisations of early Christianity from the relics themselves onto the priests who partook in their veneration. The memories he had from the many visits to the catacomb of Rome during the 1840s, he used to project similar analogies in a spatial way. From the catacomb which the seminarists emulated in the choir of their chapel, Gerbet literarily transferred the idea of the Roman catacombs onto Amiens' cathedral. Notwithstanding the nominally different ambitions of the Valkenburg archaeologists, the *Gedenkschrift*, which the Valkenburg commission of archaeologists published in 1916, evidenced how at the core of the project, the ambitions had actually changed very little in regard to the 1850s. Although the archaeologists discarded the actual martyr's relic which they were gifted after their expedition to Rome, they replaced it by their *Salvatore Olandese*, a relatively insignificant 6<sup>th</sup>-century depiction of the face of Christ. Immune to the scrutiny many had directed against the translation of *Theudosie*, the discovery of the fresco was shown off in the Dutch *Gedenkschrift* as the faithful of Amiens had paraded their relics of *sainte Theudosie*. Nuanced to some extent by archaeologist Orazio Marucchi (1852-1931) in his *Nuovo bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, the Dutch patron of the Valkenburg catacomb facsimile had supposedly been the first to notice the fresco during his investigation of the most notorious of places in the Callixtus cemetery. An exclusively archaeological article on the fresco, written in German by the later Nijmegen university rector Jos Schrijnen (1869-1938), was adjoined by an account in French by local cleric Ferdinand Sarton. He used the minute 6<sup>th</sup>-century fresco in precisely the same way Philippe Gerbet had used his relics half a century earlier to connect Amiens to the catacombs.

In the catacomb-pavilion of the Paris world fair of 1867, the reformed exploitation of the catacombs of Rome showed itself from a different angle. This case exemplified the representative role Christian archaeology obtained during the papacy of Pius IX. For its representative character it was compared to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Bianchini designs. The *Museo Ecclesiastico* (1703-1710) and the *Demonstratio Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (1752-1754) prints, designed by Francesco (1662-1729) and Giuseppe Bianchini (1704-1764) respectively, were included in this dissertation in order to allow for a historical perspective on the role of Christian archaeology in papal self-representation. Studied elaborately by Brigitte Sölch, the works of the Bianchini did not thematise the opposition of classical and

Christian culture but demonstrated their union in the Church of pope Clement XI (1700-1721). At the Paris world fair an opposite position was endorsed by Pius IX, through the work of archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi. Whereas the Kingdom of Italy realised a gallery of classical art and architecture, which appropriated the Renaissance as the culture ideal of its *Risorgimento*, the besieged Pius IX mobilised the early Christian catacombs to strengthen the cultural position of Rome. Although there is the pitfall of mistaking apologetics for actual change, there really was a profound difference between the 18<sup>th</sup>-century *Museo Ecclesiastico* as commissioned by Clement XI and the catacomb-pavilion as commissioned by Pius IX. De Rossi had initially planned to export a gallery on the development of the 'Christian' arts to the Paris fair. Although this plan was cancelled at a late stage, the single art historical remark that was retained in the guide to the catacomb-pavilion was a crucial one. As it was the case in his magnum opus *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* (1864-1877), the guide pointed out that the central room in the catacomb-pavilion demonstrated the first Christians had initiated the abandonment of classical concerns in the arts, ushering in an artistic revolution. By situating the origins of this abandonment in the impulse of the first Christians, de Rossi implicitly linked it to Christianity itself and provided archaeological grounds to the idea that authentic Christianity intrinsically entails fundamentally other aesthetic ideals than those inherent in the classical arts.

The first part of this dissertation concluded on the one hand that devotion and scholarship informed one another in Christian archaeology as they had done in earlier centuries. On the other hand, the cultural position of the discipline in Catholicism had clearly shifted for ideological reasons by the 1860s. By reminding the world of the persecution of the early Christian martyrs, the catacomb-pavilion presented the historical grounds for the Church's contemporary intransigence in the face of the *Risorgimento* on the Italian peninsula. Simultaneously, the archaeological ideas in de Rossi's work also vindicated cultural opposition to the world on aesthetic grounds. The catacomb facsimile in Paris implicitly defined the invalidity of the Catholic union of classicism and Christianity, which the Church had propagated for centuries. In the epilogue to the first part, excerpts from the *Livre de sainte Theodosie* and the Valkenburg *Gedenkschrift*, which took a much more explicit but less representative stand against classical culture, were presented along with certain chapters from the British cardinal Nicholas Wiseman (1802-1865) novel *Fabiola or the Church of the catacombs* of 1854. In the light of the earlier excerpts in the epilogue, a reaction of Wiseman's to the British architect Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin's (1812-1852) tendency to exclude everything but the historic Gothic style from the Catholic arts, warned against an overstatement of the significance of the apologetics in his novel. Nonetheless, some brief excerpts from the publications of de Rossi's students Mariano Armellini (1852-1896) and Orazio Marucchi (1852-1931) illustrated how the counter-cultural legacy of the pontificate of Pius IX and de Rossi's practice lived on, even if some of its political momentum might have been lost by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The second part of this dissertation used a set of theoretical sources to map how Christian archaeology functioned as aesthetic theory during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Subjects from the Belgian context were confronted with international publications. Two distinct positions surfaced. Some used the remains of the first Christians to advocate the Christian potential



of free artistry and classical forms, while others portrayed the catacombs as the cradle of a Christian search for entirely different aesthetics. The latter group of archaeologists advocated that serious and detailed historical research in the catacombs could prove Christianity itself had initiated an abandonment of classical concerns.

The second part was introduced via the creation of the chair of Christian archaeology at the university of Louvain. The young theologian Edmond Reusens (1831-1903) was appointed professor of Christian archaeology after debates on art and archaeology at the *Assemblée générale des catholiques en Belgique* of 1863 had led the Belgian Church to found his chair. Although the transcript of the *Assemblée* of 1863 provided no reason to assume the chair was a directly ultramontane phenomenon, the first publications of its occupant certainly were. From his earliest archaeological article until the second edition of the palaeographic course he eventually started teaching, published in 1863 and 1899 respectively, the Belgian professor of Christian archaeology remained in touch with Giovanni Battista de Rossi's practice. Reusens' course of Christian archaeology was first created for Louvain students of theology, to include also the students of architectural engineering from 1878 onwards.

There was a great difference between the theoretical part played by the catacombs in the transcript of the *Assemblée* of Belgian Catholics and the role the catacombs were given in Reusens' course *Éléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, even though the former led to the creation of the latter. At the *Assemblée générale*, the first speakers were the Belgian architect Jean Bethune (1821-1894) and the British art historian James Weale (1832-1917). They proved themselves fierce advocates of the Gothic revival. Bethune, the founder of the *Saint-Luc* school in Ghent, made his case by outlining his conception of the difference between classical and Christian aesthetics. The Belgian cleric Charles Cartuyvels (1835-1907) and the French count Foucher de Careil strongly opposed the position of Bethune and Weale by reminding the Belgian Catholics of the omnipresence of classical forms inside the catacombs of Rome. Edmond Reusens' course *Éléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, however, situated the origins of the abandonment of classical aesthetics in the catacombs of Rome. His history of medieval art started in the catacombs of Rome. Besides the Belgian sources, also de Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* and the French scholar Désirée Raoul-Rochette's (1790-1854) *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* (1837) were included in the second part. The same dissonance was retrieved in these works. Raoul-Rochette's *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* explicitly absolved the Renaissance of the suspicion of paganism by means of the catacombs. When he later published an article in the name of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, he also invoked the classical forms in the catacombs in order to contest the status of "*art chrétien*", which the Gothic style was in a process of obtaining during the 1840s. For this he was rebuked by de Rossi in *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* in 1867.

In the arguments of Cartuyvels and Foucher de Careil as well as in Edmond Reusens' course, the aesthetic implications of the catacombs were grounded in relatively abstract assertions. In the works of Raoul-Rochette and de Rossi, however, the controversy became very precise. The arguments of the *Beaux-Arts* theorist and the papal archaeologist were essentially based on their interpretation of one early Christian motif. In the Orpheus-Christ fresco, one of the most rarely discovered images of the catacombs, pagan iconography was undeniably used for Christian devotional purposes. In the rare Orpheus-Christ frescos, the pagan Orpheus

was used to represent Christ. In Raoul-Rochette's *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* this was presented as proof of how, to the earliest Christians, the new religion had not had formal implications. As the earliest Christians had clearly not objected to including Orpheus as a mere shell in their own religious iconography, this supplied an argument for the Christian potential of classical forms to Raoul-Rochette. In Raoul-Rochette's *Tableau des catacombes de Rome* the Orpheus-Christ essentially divorced aesthetics and religion. In de Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana* an entirely different perspective on the Orpheus-Christ was offered. Just as Giulio Mancini (1559-1630) had grounded the first modern theory of medieval art in his understanding of the Orpheus-Christ of the catacombs, so did Giovanni Battista de Rossi use this motif to take the argument of Désiré Raoul-Rochette apart. De Rossi objected the arts of the catacombs ought to be perceived in a historical rather than static way. The Orpheus-Christ was only part of the iconographic apparatus of the very oldest parts of the catacombs. Based on its early existence and subsequent disappearance from Christian iconography, de Rossi revoked Raoul-Rochette's idea the Christians had been faithful heirs to the classical world.

The epilogue to the second part presented the Orpheus-Christ which the architects Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) and Josep Maria Jujol (1879-1949) painted in the guestbook of the *Orfeó Catalá*. The aquarelle was contextualised in some of its Catalan context. Local realities such as the militant Catholic orientation of the *Orfeó Catalá* and the existence of something of an institutional presence of Christian archaeology in Catalonia might partly explain the emergence of the Orpheus-Christ in the oeuvre of the architects. Yet it is best contextualised by the aesthetic controversy which the motif entailed and which can really be considered the heart of this dissertation. The epilogue essentially raised the question why the controversial and metonymical motif would reappear in the specific architectural culture of the early 1920s in Barcelona. The motif epitomised how aesthetics and theology were either divorced from or bound to one another by Christian archaeology and apparently obtained renewed topicality in the architectural culture which surrounded modernists like Gaudí.

Whereas earlier scholarship has investigated the imitation of early Christian remains in the discipline of architecture as a form of historicism comparable to the other 19<sup>th</sup>-century neo-styles, this dissertation has presented examples of a more theoretical reception of Christian archaeology in architecture. In line with the two opposed cultural or aesthetic positions which were exposed in the second part of this study, the third part discussed both a case wherein archaeology appears to have Christened classical aspirations and a milieu where the discipline served the opposite purpose.

First was presented how the patrons Georges (1840-1891) and Armand Reusens (1837-1901) commissioned the architects Rodolfo Buti, Ferdinand Truymen (1858-1939) and Eugène Geefs (1854-1925) to realise three remarkable buildings in the Belgian municipality of Brasschaat. With the support of the Belgian cardinal Sterckx, the Reusens brothers obtained their status of '*comtes pontificaux*' from Pius IX in the 1860s. Both brothers entered politics, albeit on different scales. Whereas Armand Reusens dominated municipal politics in Brasschaat, Georges Reusens entered the Belgian embassy at the Holy See. While Georges Reusens committed himself personally to prolonging the diplomatic conversation

of liberal Belgium and Leo XIII as long as he could during the political process known as the *échange de vues* of Belgium and Leo's Holy See, mayor Armand Reusens used his brother's position to strengthen his own. The liberal newspaper *Le Précurseur* went as far as to make the local politics of Armand Reusens in Brasschaat into an epitome of what the liberals believed to be the unconstitutional temporal influence of the Holy See in 1878.

After the Belgian embassy was closed in 1880, the estate of the brothers was transformed to welcome an obelisk which was imported from Italy. When Georges' embassy was closed by the liberal government of Belgium, the embassy was made into a national cause by the Belgian Catholics. By the time of the next elections, inscriptions on the tripartite obelisk which was imported from Italy to Brasschaat perpetuated what Georges Reusens had done in Rome. The inscriptions on the obelisk thematised the relationship of the brothers, while Rodolfo Buti, the architect mentioned on its base, had recently attracted remarkable forms of archaeological attention in Rome. Buti had been commissioned to excavate the tomb of an imperial family during the last months of 1884. Earlier that year, however, he had bumped into what was believed to be an early Christian catacomb until its Christian origins were denied by archaeologist Enrico Stevenson (1854-1898) at the *Conferenza dei Cultori di Archeologia Cristiana* in January 1885.

The best indication to the possibility Buti's discovery of the catacomb in Rome might have been related to him being commissioned to design the obelisk of Brasschaat, is the duo of architects which was later commissioned to design mayor Armand Reusens' new town hall and the hospital chapel he commanded in his last will. The architects Ferdinand Truymen and Eugène Geefs had both been involved in the archaeological reconstruction of destroyed medieval buildings at the *Old Antwerp* site of the Antwerp world fair of 1894. Truymen and Geefs had worked on reconstructions of the medieval town hall of the city of Antwerp and a medieval hospital chapel respectively. Whereas the remarkably Catholic tympan of the portal of the medieval town hall disappeared, the general shape of the portal was retained in the town hall which Truymen built in Brasschaat in 1901. Whereas sculptures of soldiers allegorising medieval temporal power flanked the portal of Truymen's reconstruction, Truymen's new portal was flanked by eclectic columns with star-shaped fleurons. In contrast to the town hall, Eugène Geefs' chapel of 1904 was hardly transformed and retained the Gothic design of the original world fair reconstruction of 1894. Inscriptions on the obelisk and in a marble plaque in the chapel thematised the relationship of the brothers and echoed the political construct over which the liberal press of Antwerp had attempted to raise controversy in 1878. If the archaeological associations are justified – which Geefs' chapel suggests – then the local political programme of the '*comtes pontificaux*' Armand and Georges Reusens was perpetuated by architecture wherein classical aspirations were tied to a Christian agenda by means of archaeology.

A second case was assembled out of three telling articles from the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Parisian press. They signalled Christian archaeology remained part of the theoretical conception of aesthetic ideals in the renewal of ecclesiastical architecture in Paris at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The articles in question appeared in the Catholic newspaper *La Croix* and the specialised journals *l'Architecture* and *l'Art Sacré*. The two opposed positions on the significance of the catacombs to architecture, which the previous part exposed, surfaced in

the ideas of actual practising architects. The first article was a contribution on ecclesiastical architecture in general, which the architect Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin (1835-1917) provided to the Catholic newspaper *La Croix* in 1910. In 1938, the two subsequent articles from *l'Architecture* and *l'Art Sacré* both discussed the series of chapels which the architect Henri Vidal (1895-1955) had realised in Paris during the 1930s.

In his article in *La Croix*, architect Sainte-Marie Perrin reacted against a speech which had been given by politician Emile Ollivier (1825-1913) at the ultramontane *Ollivaint* conference in Paris. The recent French separation of Church and State had led the members of the conference to discuss Church architecture. It was advocated more humble churches might save the Catholics from further retributions by the French State. To the taste of architect and *Beaux-Arts* alumnus Sainte-Marie Perrin, Emile Ollivier had defended the necessity of architectural magnificence at this conference. The politician had, however, squared the catacombs of Rome with a humble material state. Apparently, Sainte-Marie Perrin refused to let that stand. Directing his reaction in *La Croix* to his fellow church builders rather than to the political scene of the conference, Sainte-Marie Perrin warned his colleagues about their tendency to reduce the requirements for good church architecture to a choice for simplicity. Sainte-Marie Perrin feared his colleagues' faith in the spiritual potential of material poverty affected the quality of their designs. Twelve years before the world heard of Auguste Perret's paradigmatic *Notre-Dame de l'Assomption* in Le Raincy, the debate in Parisian ecclesiastical architecture seems to have centred on concrete already. Sainte-Marie Perrin, after all, deemed it necessary to remind his colleagues of the fact that concrete was not actually an economical material at the time. He argued it could therefore not be a sincere realisation of their dream of simplicity and material poverty. For the other element of his twofold reaction to contemporary French architectural culture he finally tapped back to the *Ollivaint* speech of Emile Ollivier. With a degree of reluctance he first stated his disbelief in the authority of archaeology over architecture, then to question whether simplicity is truly what characterised the Christian remains in the catacombs.

In the articles from the journals *l'Architecture* and *l'Art Sacré* of nearly thirty years later, something of what Parisian architectural culture had evolved to, was revealed in the way the critics Félix Ollivier (1863-1947) and Pie-Raymond Régamey (1900-1996) discussed the large production of chapels by Henri Vidal. This architect had realised a series of sanctuaries in the grand church construction campaign of the Paris archbishop cardinal Jean Verdier. Régamey, the Dominican editor of *l'Art Sacré*, reproached critic Félix Ollivier for having cornered Henri Vidal's chapels in what he believed to be inapt terms. Ollivier had lauded them for their regionalist tendencies, after which Régamey reminded his audience this was the wrong category to apply in regard to Vidal's work. To make his case, he simply emphasised what Vidal had confessed to Félix Ollivier in the first place. In 1938, Henri Vidal expressed precisely what Sainte-Marie Perrin had warned against decades earlier. The surprise being that Vidal's churches are fairly close to genuine modernism, he stated the simplicity of his architecture was the key to its spirituality and embodied the legacy of French rationalism as well as the aesthetic legacy of the catacombs of Rome. To demonstrate how Henri Vidal's conception of ecclesiastical architecture was likely well-embedded in the

milieu in which it was uttered, two other Parisian churches which were finished in 1938 were briefly discussed.

The first part illustrated the devotional and representational role of Christian archaeology in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Catholicism. The second part exposed how Christian archaeology functioned as aesthetic theory in the same period. Even though architecture was never far off in the first two parts, it was the third part which finally provided examples of how Christian archaeology fulfilled actual roles in architecture. Christian archaeology has provided this dissertation with the means to bridge periods of architectural history. The heart of the history which is outlined in this work is probably what connects the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century theory of Giulio Mancini, the procession of the relics of *sainte Theudosie*, the catacomb-pavilion of Pius IX and de Rossi, Edmond Reusens' course *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, Henri Vidal's modern chapels and possibly also Gaudi's mysterious Orpheus-Christ. Contrary to that line of subjects, this dissertation also connected the 18<sup>th</sup>-century museographical designs of the Bianchini cousins, the writings of Désiré Raoul-Rochette including the 'manifest' of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* of 1846, the arguments of Charles Cartuyvels and Foucher de Careil, the obelisk and the town hall of the Reusens patrons and finally the theoretical position of Louis Sainte-Marie Perrin.

The important lessons are probably to be learnt in the greatest apparent paradox in this dissertation. That is to say that without Christian archaeology it would be hard to grasp how an 1850s relic's procession in particular or the cultural policy of the papacy of Pius IX in general could be related to the ideas of a modernist church builder like Henri Vidal. To return to the question of aesthetics and primitives from which the introduction of this dissertation departed, the 'schismatic' Christian archaeologists connected the idea of 'Christian beauty' to art history through the catacombs. Through aesthetics, a theorist like Edmond Reusens fused architectural form and meaning. The ideal promoted by Mancini, de Rossi, Reusens, Helbig, and Vidal through the 'primitive' of the catacombs was the supposedly authentic Christian spirit that had guided the first Christians in their renouncement of one sort of beauty in favour of another, more transcendental and more humble aesthetic.

The theoretical foundations which allowed the Gothic revival to gain terrain as the appropriate style for ecclesiastical architecture during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, appear to have paved the road of concrete into the interiors of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century churches of Paris. As the epilogue on Cohen's *La coupure entre architectes et intellectuels* suggested, architectural historians have, however, been at odds with such histories. Perhaps we have simply been misled solely to consider modernity as the source of what the 20<sup>th</sup> century called modern architecture. Architecture's acclaimed purification may very well have always been inseparable from a mystification of its aesthetics. The modernist paradigm of *truth* may after all have been as mystical as it was rational.



## LIST OF IMAGES

Frontispiece. *Inscription du musée chrétien du Vatican – bustes de Saint Pierre et de Saint Paul*. 62 x 45 cm. From: Louis Perret. *Catacombes de Rome*. V, Paris: Gide et J. Baudry, 1855. Plate XI.

Frontispiece. Photograph by the author, Still from the short film *1907: la visite de Picasso au Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro* by Pierre Goismier as exhibited at exhibition *Picasso Primitif* at the Musée du quai Branly of Paris in June 2017.

Fig. 1. *Frontispiece exhibiting tombstone 'AURELIAE THEUDOSIAE'*. From: Philippe Olympe Gerbet, *Le livre de sainte Theudosie* (Amiens: Caron, 1854), frontispiece.

Fig. 2. *Chapelle du séminaire*. From: Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Album de Sainte Theudosie*, (Paris: Auguste Vaton Editeur, 1854).

Fig. 3. *Chapelle de Sainte Theudosie Restaurée*. From: Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Album de Sainte Theudosie*, (Paris: Auguste Vaton Editeur, 1854).

Fig. 4. *Salvatore Olandese*. From: *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift samengesteld door de archaeologische commissie van advies der katacomben-stichting*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), frontispiece.

Fig. 5. *Opening of the first section of the Valkenburg catacombs by prof. O. Marucchi*. July 12 1910. From: *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift samengesteld door de archaeologische commissie van advies der katacomben-stichting*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 80.

Fig. 6. *Basilica in the Coemeterium Majus at Valkenburg*. From: *De katacomben Rome Valkenburg: gedenkschrift samengesteld door de archaeologische commissie van advies der katacomben-stichting*, (Bussem: Paul Brand, 1916), 152.

Fig. 7. Catacomb-pavilion of the Papal States at the Paris world fair of 1867, project by Giovanni Battista de Rossi, photograph by Petit, From: Capitelli, Giovanna. "L'archeologia cristiana al servizio di Pio IX: 'la catacomba in fac-simile' di Giovanni Battista de Rossi all'Esposizione Universale di Parigi del 1867." In *Martiri, santi, patroni: per una archeologia della devozione*, edited by Adele Coscarella, Paola De Santis, 556. Arcavata di Rende: Università della Calabria, 2012.

Fig. 8. Antonio Giuseppe Barbazza and Giuseppe Bianchini, *Demonstratio Historiae Ecclesiasticae Vol. 4 Tabula II Saeculo I*. engraving (70,5 x 152,5 cm) From: Cristie's, (Sale SALE 7611: Furniture, Sculpture and Carpets London. September

11 2008). <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/a-set-of-four-italian-hand-coloured-engravings-5110986-details.aspx>.

Fig. 9. *Blessing of the papal troops on Saint Peter's Square on April 25 1870*, Burzagli family archive, Wikipedia.  
[https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File: Pio\\_IX\\_Saint\\_Peter\\_Square\\_1870.jpg](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File: Pio_IX_Saint_Peter_Square_1870.jpg).

Fig. 10. Antonio Giuseppe Barbazza and Giuseppe Bianchini, *Demonstratio Historiae Ecclesiasticae Vol. 4 Tabula II Saeculo II*, engraving (70,5 x 152,5 cm) From: Christie's, (Sale SALE 7611: Furniture, Sculpture and Carpets London. September 11 2008). <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/a-set-of-four-italian-hand-coloured-engravings-5110986-details.aspx>.

Fig. 11. Robert Macpherson, *Cleopatra-Ariadne of the Gallery of Statues at the Museo Pio-Clementino*, 1863. Gallery of Statues, *Museo Pio-Clementino*, 1863. From: Mary Bergstein, "The mystification of antiquity under Pius IX: the photography of sculpture in Rome, 1846-1878." in *Sculpture and photography: envisioning the third dimension*, ed. Geraldine A. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.), 44.

Fig. 12. Antoni Gaudí and Josep Maria Jujol. *Al Cel tots enserem d'Orfeonistes*. 1922, watercolours on paper, 23 x 33 cm. From: *Libre d'or de l'Orfeo Català*. Barcelona: Biblioteca de l'Orfeo Català, 1896-1936. plate 27.  
<http://mdc.cbuc.cat/cdm/compoundobject/collection/DocOCPM/id/1442/rec/1/lang/es>.

Fig. 13. *Tavola Seconda Cubicolo Quarto et Ultimo del Cimiterio di S. Calisto Papa, e d'altri Santi Martiri nelle Vie Appia e Ardeatina*. From: Antonio Bosio. *Roma sotterranea*. Rome: Appresso Guglielmo Facciotti, 1632. 255.

Fig. 14. Photograph by the author, St. Armandus and St. Georgius in the Reusens hospital chapel of Brasschaat by Louis de Contini. Brasschaat Augusteinslei 76.

Fig. 15. Rodolfo Buti, *Pianta delle cripte scoperte sotto la Via Flavia agli Orti Sallustiani*, From: "Di alcuni sotterranei scoperti negli orti sallustiani," *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 13 (1885), plate 19-20.

Fig. 16. *Brasschaat – Entrée du Château, Brasschaethof – Ingang*. From: Frans Bellens, *Brasschaat een park en een kasteel: de gemeente ten tijde van burgemeester Reusens* (Brasschaat: Gemeentebestuur Brasschaat, 1991), 94.

Fig. 17. Photograph by the author, Obelisk by architect Rodolfo Buti, Gemeentepark Brasschaat, 2016.

Fig. 18. Detail of a photograph of the facsimile town hall of the *Old Antwerp* fair of 1894. From: *Oud Antwerpen – Vieil Anvers*, album of photographs consulted in the provincial architectural archive of Antwerpen (APA), n. p.



- Fig. 19. Photograph by the author, Portal of the Brasschaat town hall by Ferdinand Truyma (1898-1901), Brasschaat Bredabaan 182, 2016.
- Fig. 20. Edmond Jaminé, *Tentoonstelling Oud Antwerpen - Kapelstraat kapel St-Niklaas*, photograph, Brussels: Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium. <http://balat.kikirpa.be/object/30001883>.
- Fig. 21. Photograph by the author, Façade of the Reusens hospital chapel by Eugène Geefs (1901-1904), Brasschaat, Augusteinslei 76, 2016.
- Fig. 22. Photograph by the author, *Concrete peer of the 'Saint-Pierre de Chaillot' church as engraved by Nicholas Untersteller*, Paris, Avenue Marceau 31, 2017.
- Fig. 23. *Inscriptions de la galerie du Vatican*. 62 x 45 cm. From: Louis Perret. *Catacombes de Rome*. V, Paris: Gide et J. Baudry, 1855. Plate XIV.
- Fig. 24. Henri Vidal, *Chapelle Saint-Paul de Vitry*, 1938. From: Félix Ollivier. "Edifices religieux d'Henri Vidal pour la banlieu parisienne", *l'Architecture* 51, no. 2 (1938): 56. Bibliothèque de la Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine.
- Fig. 25. Henri Vidal, *Chapelle Sainte-Jeanne-de-France*, 1938. From: Félix Ollivier. "Edifices religieux d'Henri Vidal pour la banlieu parisienne", *l'Architecture* 51, no. 2 (1938): 63. Bibliothèque de la Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine.
- Fig. 26. *Tavola Prima del Cubicolo Terzo del Cimiterio di S. Calisto Papa, e d'altri Santi Martiri nelle Vie Appia, & Ardeatina*. From: Antonio Bosio. *Roma sotterranea*. Rome: Appresso Guglielmo Facciotti, 1632. 239.
- Fig. 27. *Orpheus and the Good Shepherd*. From: Giovanni Battista de Rossi. *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*. II, 1867, plate. XVIII.
- Fig. 28. *Orphée jouant du luth*. 62 x 45 cm. From: Louis Perret. *Catacombes de Rome*. I, Paris: Gide et J. Baudry, 1855. Plate XX.
- Fig. 29. *Prohezie des Michaelas. Quellwunder. Orpheus. In Domitilla, Zweite Haelfte 4. jht*. From: Joseph Wilpert. *Die malereien der Katakomben Roms*. II, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1903. plate 229.
- Fig. 30. Photograph by the author, Detail of the portal of the Brasschaat town hall by Ferdinand Truyma (1898-1901), Brasschaat Bredabaan 182, 2016.
- Fig. 31. Photograph by the author, Detail of the façade of the foremost gatekeeper's house of the Reusens estate by an unknown architect. Showing the 'RaR' symbol. Bredabaan 131, Brasschaat, 2016.



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## APPENDIX

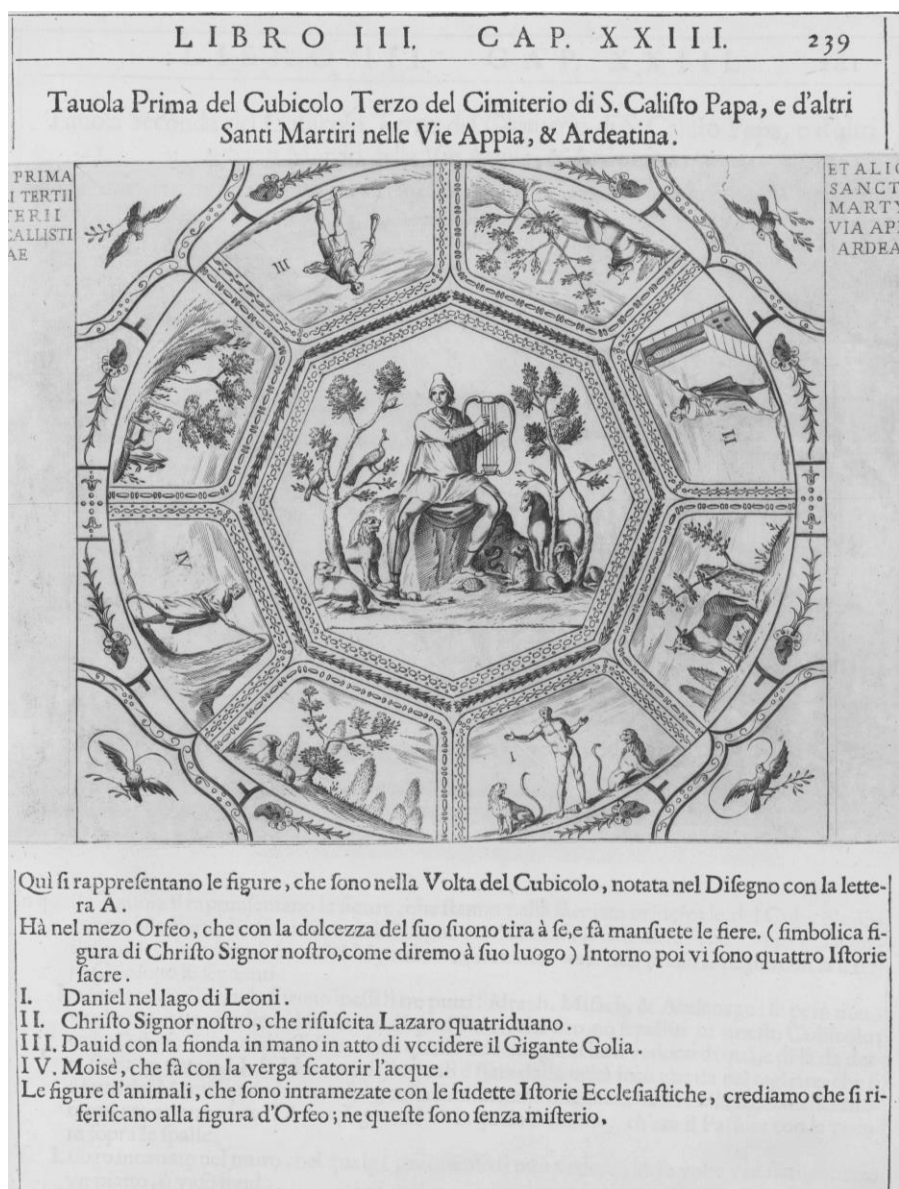


Fig. 26. Orpheus-Christ surrounded by biblical imagery on a ceiling in the Domitilla catacomb (erroneously called the Callixtus catacomb in this engraving). Antonio Bosio. *Roma sotterranea* (1632), 239.

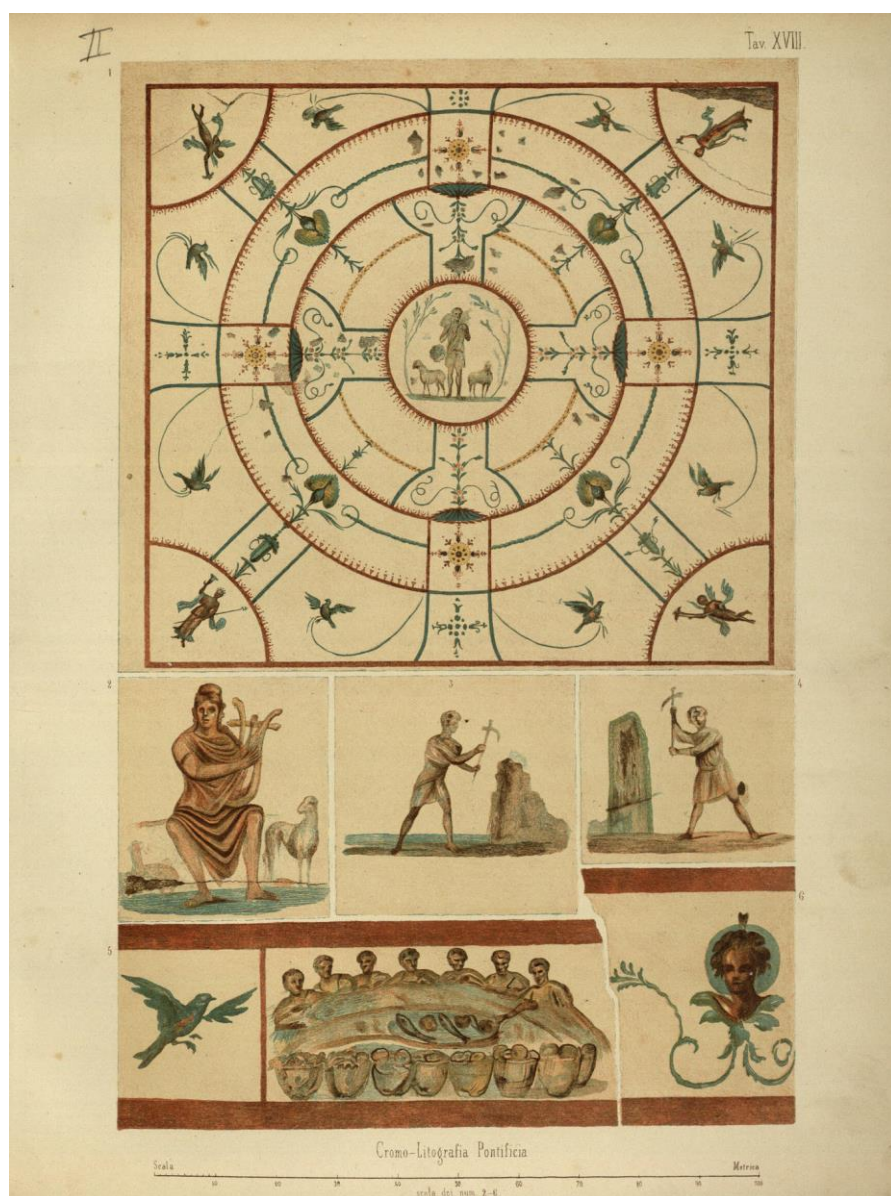


Fig. 27. de Rossi's newly discovered Orpheus-Christ fresco from the Callixtus catacomb, juxtaposed to a ceiling fresco showing a centrally depicted Good Shepherd motif. de Rossi. *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*. II, 1867, plate. XVIII.



Fig. 28. Opheus-Christ of the Domitilla catacomb in a correctly shaped arcosolium. Louis Perret. *Catacombes de Rome*. I, 1855. plate XX.

Fig. 29. Orpheus-Christ arcosolium of the Domitilla catacomb, depicted in context. Wilpert. *Die malereien der Katakomben Roms*. II, 1903. plate 229.





Fig. 30. Capital of one of the two columns which flank the portal of the Brasschaat town hall by architect Ferdinand Truyman (1898-1901)



Fig. 31. One of the windows of the foremost of the two gatekeeper's houses of the Reusens estate in Brasschaat, showing the RaR symbol. Architect unknown. Constructed in 1883.

