



EIVOR ANDERSEN OFTESTAD

**THE LATERAN
CHURCH IN ROME
AND THE
ARK OF THE
COVENANT**

HOUSING THE HOLY RELICS OF JERUSALEM

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**THE LATERAN CHURCH IN ROME
AND THE ARK OF THE COVENANT**

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THE LATERAN CHURCH IN ROME
AND THE ARK OF THE COVENANT
HOUSING THE HOLY RELICS OF
JERUSALEM

WITH AN EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF THE *DESCRIPTIO
LATERANENSIS ECCLESIAE* (BAV REG. LAT. 712)

EIVOR ANDERSEN OFTESTAD

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For Victoria, Birgitta, Maria and Theodor
with love

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List of Abbreviations

ACL	Rome, Archivio Capitolare Lateranense
AHP	<i>Archivum Historiae Pontificiae</i>
BHLM	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Manuscripta</i>
BM	Bibliothèque Municipale
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
<i>Descriptio</i>	<i>Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae</i>
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MGH Concilia	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Leges: Concilia
MGH FiGa	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Fontes Iuris Germanici
MGH Ldt	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Libelli de lite
MGH Leges	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Leges Nationum Germanicarum
MGH SS	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores (in Folio)
MGH SRG	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum
ÖNB	Vienna, Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 162 vols (Paris, 1857–1886)
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–1865)
<i>RHC.Hocc</i>	<i>Recueil des historiens des croisades. Historiens occidentaux</i> (Paris, 1844–1895)
RSVCE	Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition
SC	Sources chrétiennes

Author's Note

The Latin term *translatio templi* is central in this book. It could be translated 'transfer of the temple' or 'translation of the temple'. I have, however, chosen to use the Latin term wherever possible.

For names of churches I use the Italian name with the English name in brackets on first occurrence. For names of persons I use the English name when possible. These two principles result in some inconsistency: for example, St Peter (person)/ San Pietro (the church).

A large number of the manuscripts studied in this book originate from medieval Flanders, which included parts of what are today northern France and Belgium. I have used modern locations (northern France and Belgium) to designate the area of origin.

I refer to the *Descriptio* according to the Roman numbers organized by Cyrille Vogel (see Vogel, 'La *Descriptio Ecclesiae Lateranensis*', pp. 465–72, and discussion on Vogel in Appendix 2). Vogel studied and numbered all the different elements in the tradition of the *Descriptio*, and hence the numbers refer to textual elements, not to chapters or paragraphs. As it is the most accurate reference system to the *Descriptio*, my edition of *Descriptio* from Reg. lat. 712 (Appendix 3) has been labelled according to Vogel's numbers. In respect to textual elements in the tradition of the *Descriptio* which are not included in Reg. lat. 712 – for example, in the version composed by John the Deacon (see Chapter 7) – I refer to the edition of Valentini and Zuchetti, or in some instances to the edition of Philippe Lauer.

Several of the texts referred to in this study do not exist in any English translation. The ideal of the publication has been to translate all Latin quotations. However, I have not supplied a full English translation where the text paraphrases the salient points of the Latin.

Prologue

And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.¹

In May 1745, after his pastoral visit to San Giovanni in Laterano (St John Lateran) in Rome, Pope Benedict XIV ordered the removal of three objects that had been displayed for veneration in the church for centuries: the so-called Ark of the Covenant, the rod of Moses and the rod of Aaron.² The pope had observed the special objects on display in a chapel in the ambulatory alongside the table of the Last Supper. The Ark, a decorated wooden chest covered with a cloth of silk, was placed above a glass box through which the rods were visible.³ Votive lamps in front of the objects designated their sacredness.

When Pope Benedict XIV stood before the Ark, he was in the presence of an age-old tradition at the Lateran. The first mention of the Ark in the Lateran basilica occurred in a tract from around 1100, later known as the *Descriptio*

¹ Exodus 25:10–11. All Bible quotations in translation are from the King James Version (KJV).

² Acts of the visitation by Benedict XIV, Vatican City, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Visita Apostolica 98, no. 3 and 5, *Relatio* (1 May 1745), *Decreta* (2 May 1745). Referenced in Sible de Blaauw, 'The Solitary Celebration of the Supreme Pontiff: The Lateran Basilica as the New Temple in the Medieval Liturgy of Maundy Thursday', in *Omnes circumstantes: Contributions Towards a History of the Role of the People in the Liturgy*, ed. C. Caspers and M. Schneiders (Kampen, 1990), pp. 120–43, at p. 132, n. 49.

³ A description of the Ark appears in the records of the visitation by Pope Alexander VII in 1656. See S.C. Visita Apostolica 98, fasc. 1, fol. 32v, referred to in Jack Freiberg, *The Lateran in 1600: Christian Concord in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 284.

Lateranensis Ecclesiae (*Description of the Lateran Church* (hereafter *Descriptio*)).⁴ This text stated that the high altar of the basilica covered the Ark of the Covenant and included the rods of Aaron and Moses, the seven-branch candelabra, the tablet of the testament and a number of relics from the lives of Christ and the apostles. What had happened between this description of the hidden treasure in the twelfth century and the display in the ambulatory during Pope Benedict's visit in the eighteenth century?

In 1308 the high altar had been opened during a fire at the Lateran. The clerics strove to rescue the treasures inside the altar.⁵ According to the reports they found and saved an ampoule of Christ's blood, objects from his life and the Ark, apart from the old wooden altar which, according to tradition, originated from the first pope, St Peter.⁶ The recordings of the fire did not mention the rods of Aaron and Moses; however, they reappeared later. After the restoration of the basilica, the Ark was not replaced in the high altar but was placed together with the rods and the table of the Last Supper in the chapel of San Tommaso (St Thomas).⁷ A pilgrimage guide from the late fourteenth century mentions that the Jews also came to the chapel to see and venerate the Ark.⁸

⁴ Edited in: J. Mabillon and M. Germain, eds, *Museum Italicum, seu Collectio veterum scriptorum ex bibliothecis italicis*, 2 vols (Paris, 1689), II, pp. 560–76 (from an unknown manuscript); D. Giorgi, *De Liturgia Romani Pontificis in Solemni Celebratione Missarum*, 3 vols (Rome, 1744), III, pp. 542–55 (from Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 712); PL 78, cols 1379–1392 (a version of John the Deacon), and PL 194, cols 1543–1560 (the version of Mabillon and Germain); Philip Lauer, *Le Palais de Latran* (Paris, 1911), pp. 392–406 (based on the version of Mabillon and Germain, with indicated variations); 'Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae', in *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, ed. R. Valentini and G. Zucchetti, 4 vols (Rome, 1946), pp. 319–73. For analysis of the transmission of the text, see Cyrille Vogel, 'La Descriptio Ecclesiae Lateranensis du Diacre Jean', in *Mélanges en l'Honneur de Monseigneur Michel Andrieu* (Strasbourg, 1956), pp. 457–76; Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor. Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardo-antica e medievale. Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri*, 2 vols (Vatican City, 1994), I, pp. 205–6.

⁵ 'Lateranensis basilice combustio tempore Clementis V rythmo descripta', in Lauer, *Le Palais de Latran*, pp. 245–50; De Blaauw, 'The Solitary Celebration of the Supreme Pontiff', p. 129.

⁶ The Ark was therefore probably produced between the date of the *Descriptio* c. 1100 and the fire of 1308. De Blaauw, 'The Solitary Celebration of the Supreme Pontiff', p. 137, suggests that the Ark was a thirteenth-century fabrication.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 131. Towards the end of the sixteenth century Pope Clement VIII planned to install the table of the Last Supper in the high altar and the other objects in the crypt beneath it, Visitation acts of 1592, in *ibid.*, p. 131, n. 45. His plans were not realized, however.

⁸ Lauer, *Le Palais de Latran*, p. 408; De Blaauw, 'The Solitary Celebration of the Supreme Pontiff', p. 130, n. 42.

After the demolition of the chapel of San Tommaso in 1647, the table and the temple relics were transferred to the ambulatory of the apse in the same church. At the same time votive lamps had been installed in front of the Ark and treatises were composed to assert its authenticity and origin in Jerusalem.⁹ One of them was written by Famiano Nardini (d. 1661), an archaeologist and author of the seminal topographical work *Roma antica*. He concluded:

But after having diligently studied this Ark which resembles the one described in Exodus, I cannot imagine that it is a thing produced in Rome for some other use, nor do I dare to declare that it is a work made out of vain pretense.¹⁰

With these words Nardini joined the line of canons and historians of the Lateran who, for more than six hundred years, had defended the authenticity and associated importance of these objects.

According to the recorded acta from the papal visit in 1745, Pope Benedict XIV had examined the objects and reserved some of them to meet his judgement the next day. That night he probably pondered what to do with them. On the subsequent morning, he ordered that the table of the Last Supper should be kept for veneration: it can still be seen enshrined above the sacrament altar of Pope Clement VIII. The Ark and the rods of Moses and Aaron were to be removed and no longer shown.¹¹

No physical traces can be found of the Ark or the rods after the pope's visit in 1745. And the history of these peculiar objects is forgotten. However, ancient libraries and the archive of the Lateran still hold the written pieces of a puzzle telling the story of the Lateran Church and the Ark of the Covenant.

⁹ The lamps were installed by Cesare Rasponi (1615–1675), historian of the Basilica: *ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁰ 'Io nondimeno osservata bene quest'Arca alla descritta nell'Esodo somigliante, non so immaginarlamì cosa fabbricata in Roma ad altro uso, né ardisco pronunciarla opera vanamente fatta per finzione.' Famiano Nardini, *Roma antica*, ed. A. Nibby, 4 vols (Rome, 1818), I, p. 280.

¹¹ *Decreta* (2 May 1745) (see n. 2): 'In visitatione Sacrarum Reliquiarum hexterna die peracta ... Tabula coene Domini Nostri in suo loco solitaque veneratione permaneat; amoveantur vero ea, quae asseruntur Archa Foederis, virga Moysis et Baculus Aaronis, et amplius non ostendantur.' ('On a visitation to the sacred relics carried out a later day ... the Table of Our Lord's supper would remain alone in its place for veneration; indeed, those things would be removed which were claimed to be the Ark of the Covenant, the rod of Moses and the Staff of Aaron, and would no longer be displayed.')

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The right education of that part of the human race which consists of the people of God has, like that of a single man, advanced through certain epochs or, as it were, ages, so that it might rise upwards from temporal to eternal things, and from the visible to the invisible.¹

From the beginning of the twelfth century and for more than six hundred years, the canons of San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome claimed that the actual Ark of the Covenant, together with other paraphernalia from the temple of Jerusalem, was part of their treasures. The aim of this book is to analyse liturgical and historical sources from the twelfth century in order to understand the context and purpose of this claim. The most important source in this study is the tract later known as *Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae* (the *Descriptio*), probably composed around 1100.² The Ark of the Covenant is a central object in the *Descriptio*, and the claim of this study is that the Ark was presented as a proof that San Giovanni was ‘the temple of the New Covenant’ and the successor to the temple of Jerusalem.

The basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano is unique in western Christian history as it was the first church built by the emperor Constantine, who had converted to Christianity in the early fourth century.³ According to the legends, the basilica was dedicated to the Saviour himself and, after 600, the name Basilica Salvatoris

¹ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Lib. X, 14. See Augustine, *De civitate Dei: The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998), p. 412.

² See above, p. XIV, n. 4.

³ ‘Rome and Constantine’, in Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312–1308* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 3–31. The complex history of the basilica is discussed in Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor. Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardo-antica e medievale. Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri*, 2 vols (Vatican City, 1994), I, pp. 109–80; Philip Lauer, *Le Palais de Latran* (Paris, 1911), pp. 1–339; Richard Krautheimer, Spencer Corbett and Wolfgang Frankl, eds, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, 5 vols (Rome, 1937–1977), V, pp. 1–92; Peter Cornelius Claussen, *Die Kirchen der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter 1050–1300. Band 2: S. Giovanni in Laterano* (Stuttgart, 2008), pp. 23–353.

(Basilica of the Saviour) was in use. In the period studied in this book, the sources also use the title *Basilica Salvatoris et Johannis Baptistae et Evangelistae* (Basilica of the Saviour, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist).⁴ Unlike other major extramural basilicas of Rome, the church was not founded on any earthly remains of saints. Its supreme position therefore had to be legitimized in other ways. The claim of the Ark and the other objects from the Old Covenant represents one possible strategy of legitimization from the twelfth century. According to the prologue of the *Descriptio* the purpose was to reveal the treasures, the relics and the traditions, thereby making manifest the dignity of the basilica. Since the Lateran held dominion and primacy over all other churches of the world, its dignity was claimed as the supreme sanctuary, not only of Rome, but of all Christendom.⁵ The physical transfer of the Ark from Jerusalem could legitimize the claim that this basilica was the true heir of the temple.

The Legitimate Heir: Question and Sources

With the *Descriptio* as the point of departure, the important question of this study is: How did the text function in its contemporary context and how was the promotion of the Lateran Church as the new temple shaped and perceived?

Today the *Descriptio* exists in about twenty (twenty-one) exemplars in seventeen (eighteen) known medieval and early modern manuscripts preserved at the Lateran archive in Rome and in a handful of manuscript collections throughout Europe.⁶ Several of the exemplars are carefully examined by Philippe Lauer in his seminal work on the history of the Lateran, by Roberto Valentini and Giuseppe Zuchetti, and by Cyrille Vogel.⁷ The present study offers new perspectives on the *Descriptio* and the canons' argumentation, based on the context in which the texts were composed, circulated and interpreted. Attention will be drawn to two

⁴ From the very outset, the basilica was named 'Lateranum' as it had been built on the site of the *Domus Laterani*, which had become imperial property under Constantine. From the end of the fifth century, the most common name was 'Basilica Constantiniana'. On the titles of San Giovanni, see de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*, I, pp. 112, 161–2, 204; de Blaauw refers (p. 204) to a passage in a letter by Pope Anastasius IV of 30 December 1153, which reads 'sacrosancti patriarchii basilice Salvatoris domini, que Constantiniana vocatur, pariterque beati Iohannis baptiste et Iohannis evangeliste'. The first indication of the naming of the basilica after the two Johns is from 635–42: see G. B. de Rossi, ed., *La Roma sotterranea cristiana descritta e illustrata*, 2 vols (Rome, 1864), I, p. 143.

⁵ See below, p. 22, and *Descriptio*, II (Appendix 3, p. 217).

⁶ The enumeration of manuscripts depends on how to define the late version of Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, MS 6932. See Appendix 1 for a detailed introduction to the transmission of the manuscripts.

⁷ See Prologue, p. XIV n. 4.

important manuscript contexts, namely in Rome and in northern France and Belgium (one manuscript).

In the Roman context of the *Descriptio*, the investigation includes both manuscripts from the Lateran archive which contain the *Descriptio*, and liturgical sources. The most important manuscript is Rome, Archivio Capitolare Lateranense, MS A 70 (henceforth ACL A 70), a composite of different texts, written by different scribes (twelfth to fourteenth centuries). The codex includes a revision of the first version of the *Descriptio*, as well as a second and third version of the same tract.⁸ Regarding liturgical sources particular attention is paid to the ritual of Maundy Thursday as described in the *Ordo* of the Lateran canons by Prior Bernard (1139–1145),⁹ sources describing the dedication feast of St John Lateran, and the sermon on the image of the Saviour in San Lorenzo (St Lawrence) by Nikolaus Maniacutius (c. 1145).¹⁰

⁸ For a description, see Cyrille Vogel, 'La Descriptio Ecclesiae Lateranensis du Diacre Jean', in *Mélanges en l'Honneur de Monseigneur Michel Andrieu* (Strasbourg, 1956), pp. 461–2.

⁹ Bernard of Porto, *Bernhardi Cardinalis et Lateranensis Ecclesiae Prioris Ordo Officiorum Ecclesiae Lateranensis*, ed. L. Fischer (Munich, 1916), p. 1. The author introduces himself in the prologue as 'ego Bernardus Lateranensis ecclesie humilis prior' ('I, Bernard, humble prior of the Lateran church'). He was further identified by John the Deacon as 'dominus Bernardus, prior istius basilicae, qui postea factus est cardinalis Sancti Clementis, ac deinde episcopus Portuensis' (lord Bernard, prior of that basilica, who afterwards was made cardinal of Saint Clement, and then bishop of Porto); *Descriptio*, XXX (see also 'Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae', in *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, ed. R. Valentini and G. Zucchetti, 4 vols (Rome, 1946), III, pp. 319–73, at p. 349). The sole extant copy of the *Ordo* was made for use at the regular chapter of Salzburg (c. 1200): see Edward B. Garrison, 'Three Manuscripts for Lucchese Canons of S. Frediano in Rome', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1975), 1–52. Pierre-Marie Gy, 'L'influence des chanoines de Lucques sur la liturgie du Latran', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 58 (1984), 31–41, at 31, considers the dating certain.

¹⁰ 'Tractatus Nicolai Maniacutie de ymage Lateranensis palatii', in a twelfth- or thirteenth-century manuscript now preserved in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Fondo S. Maria Maggiore 2, fols 237v–244r (according to the printed numbering in the codex); Albertus Poncelet, *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum bibliothecarum Romanarum praeter quam Vaticanae* (Brussels, 1909), pp. 85–95; Nikolaus Maniacutius, *Historia Imaginis Salvatoris* (Rome, 1709). Parts of the sermon are published in Gerhard Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani. Studien zur Geschichte des römischen Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim, 1990), pp. 321–5, with bibliography on Maniacutius at p. 269, n. 205. On Maniacutius, see Marie-Thérèse Champagne, 'Both Text and Subtext: The Circulation and Preservation of Two Manuscripts of Nikolaus Maniacutius in Twelfth-Century Europe', *Textual Cultures* 6 (2011), 26–47; and Marie-Thérèse Champagne, 'Christian Hebraism in Twelfth-Century Rome: A Philologist's Correction of the Latin Bible through Dialogue with Jewish Scholars and Their Hebrew Texts', *Studies in Church History* 53 (2017), 71–87. On the sermon, see Gerhard Wolf, "'Laetare filia Sion. Ecce ego venio et habitabo in medio tui": Images of

In northern France and Belgium the *Descriptio* appeared within a monastic context. The most important manuscripts in this context are the Reg. lat. 712; Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, MS 9828; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS lat. 5129; Cambrai, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 802; and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS lat. 6186. In four of these codices the *Descriptio* was placed together with texts that concerned either Jerusalem or the interpretation of the First Crusade. These included descriptions of the First Crusade and descriptions of Jerusalem and the temple of the Lord (Templum Domini), not least from Robert the Monk's and Fulcher of Chartres' chronicles from the First Crusade.¹¹ Based on this observation, a main hypothesis of the present study is that the Lateran claim to the Ark of the Covenant and the other treasures from the temple was part of a theology shaped in the wake of the First Crusade. When the Christian Franks had conquered Jerusalem in 1099, the Muslim Dome of the Rock was soon converted into the Christian Templum Domini. A question that immediately arose was that of continuity between the temple of Solomon and the Templum Domini. The discussion of this question is part of the manuscript context of the *Descriptio*, and it is my assertion that the manuscript context supplies previous research with new information relevant both to the dating and to the interpretation of the *Descriptio*.

In a broader sense, the present investigation sheds new light on the impact of Jerusalem and the crusades on the West, and on the relationship between the old Israel and the medieval Latin Church, not least in terms of the papacy. The old Israel and the Old Testament temple cult were of fundamental significance for the legitimization of the Christian Church. This legitimization has always depended on the idea of continuity between Jewish worship and Christian worship; the continuity has, however, been described differently throughout history. To the medieval Church a transfer of both divine presence and sacerdotal authority from the Old to the New Covenant was crucial.

This study uses the notion of *translatio* (transfer) to interpret the twelfth-century idea that San Giovanni was the successor to the temple of Jerusalem. The notion of *translatio*, which will be discussed further below, can be used

Christ Transferred to Rome from Jerusalem', in *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art: Studies in Honor of Bezalel Narkiss on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. B. Kühnel (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 418–29.

¹¹ Robert the Monk, *The Historia Iherosolimitana of Robert the Monk*, ed. D. Kempf and M. G. Bull (Woodbridge, 2013); Robert the Monk, *Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade: Historia Iherosolimitana*, trans. C. Sweetenham (Aldershot, 2005); Fulcher of Chartres, *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia Hierosolymitana (1095–1127)*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913); Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem 1095–1127*, trans. F. R. Ryan, ed. H. S. Fink (Knoxville, TN, 1969).

to characterize a wide range of phenomena and has been one of several related approaches to establish continuity over time in Western history.¹² The study proposes that certain strategies that can be described as *translatio templi* ('transfer of the temple') appeared in the aftermath of the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099.

Dating and Interpretation of the Descriptio

The listing of manuscripts of the *Descriptio* is incomplete as a result of the loss and dispersal of medieval manuscripts. Through age and reuse, not least because of damage following the French Revolution, several exemplars of the text have probably been lost or remain undiscovered.¹³ Work on the *Descriptio* is thus limited by the exemplars known so far.¹⁴ An important question, however, is how these texts and manuscripts should be read. The previous dating and interpretation of the *Descriptio* have depended on the works of Valentini and Zuchetti (1946) and Cyrille Vogel (1956). They analysed the different versions of the text according to the classical text-critical approach, and Cyrille Vogel constructed a stemma and identified four redactions of the text, the first supposedly from 'sometime between 1073 and 1118' and the last from before 1311.¹⁵ According to this arrangement, the versions of the *Descriptio* preserved in the Lateran archive occur in different groupings even when they appear in the same codex. In his work, Vogel expresses no interest in the manuscripts as such.

When was the first version composed? Based on notes about papal burials, the possible dating of the first version must be limited to between 1073 and 1118. Based on John the Deacon's description of the tract in his address to Pope Alexander III (1159–1181), Vogel has argued for an early composition shortly after 1073. John was responsible for the third redaction of the text and whilst working on it, he records that he used an exemplar that was of 'old age' and 'almost destroyed'. According to Vogel these characteristics indicate that the text may be dated closer to 1073 than to 1118.¹⁶ This argument has been widely used and quoted by later

¹² See below, p. 11.

¹³ An indicative example is the first printed edition of the *Descriptio* by Mabillon and Germain in 1689. They reproduced an exemplar of John the Deacon's version. The manuscript is now unknown and probably lost.

¹⁴ In addition to the manuscripts known to Lauer and Vogel, I have worked on copies of the *Descriptio* in BNF lat. 6186; Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, MS 220; and ACL A 69.

¹⁵ Vogel, 'La *Descriptio Ecclesiae Lateranensis* du Diacre Jean', pp. 472–6. See also Appendix 2.

¹⁶ 'La première rédaction a donc été exécutée entre 1073 et 1118, vraisemblablement peu après 1073, car Jean Diacre, qui écrivait sous Alexander III (1159–1181) dit qu'il s'est servi d'un exemplaire de la *Descriptio* "*antiquitatis vetustate iam quasi abolitum*", ce qui

scholars.¹⁷ However, Vogel's argument is based neither on the text nor on the context, but on a prologue written at least two generations later, and on a statement that should probably be understood rhetorically rather than factually. An argument for the earliest dating – not after 1073 but after 1099 – will be proposed in Chapter 5, which discusses the relationship between the *Descriptio* and the *Historia Hierosolymitana* (*History of Jerusalem*) of Fulcher of Chartres.

Valentini and Zuchetti and Cyrille Vogel have strongly influenced the interpretation of the *Descriptio* by presenting and defining the text as a form of competitive opposition to the promotion of the basilica of San Pietro in Vaticano (St Peter's).¹⁸ From this perspective the *Descriptio* can be read as an attempt to legitimize the position of the Lateran Church within the 'sacred topography' of Rome.¹⁹

se comprend mieux si la date de la première rédaction est plus proche de 1073 que de 1118' (*ibid.*, p. 473). Valentini and Zuchetti suggested the same dating, albeit based on a similarly unsatisfactory argument: 'Questa prima redazione sembra debba porsi poco dopo il 1073, poichè l'ultimo pontefice di cui si ricordi la tomba è Alessandro II, morto appunto in quell'anno' ('*Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae*', ed. Valentini and Zuchetti, III, p. 319). Pope Gregory VII (d. 1085) was buried in the cathedral of Salerno, Pope Victor III (d. 1087) at Monte Cassino and Urban II (d. 1099) at St Peter's. The fact that the *Descriptio* does not mention their tombs thus has no significance.

¹⁷ Ingo Herklotz, 'Der mittelalterliche Fassadenportikus der Lateranbasilika und seine Mosaiken: Kunst und Propaganda am Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 25 (1989), 25–95, at 71; Sible de Blaauw, 'The Solitary Celebration of the Supreme Pontiff: The Lateran Basilica as the New Temple in the Medieval Liturgy of Maundy Thursday', in *Omnes circumstantes: Contributions Towards a History of the Role of the People in the Liturgy*, ed. C. Caspers and M. Schneiders (Kampen, 1990), pp. 120–43, at p. 126; de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*, I, p. 205; Herbert E. J. Cowdrey, 'Pope Urban II and the Idea of Crusade', *Studi Medievali* 36.2 (1995), 721–42, at 733; Erik Thunø, *Image and Relic: Mediating the Sacred in Early Medieval Rome* (Rome, 2002), p. 17; Umberto Longo, 'Da Gerusalemme a Roma: il papato e l'eredità tra XI e XII secolo', in *La presenza ebraica a Roma e nel Lazio. Dalle origini al ghetto*, ed. R. Padovano (Padua, 2009), pp. 143–85, at p. 155. Bruno Galland, *Les Authentiques de reliques du Sancta Sanctorum* (Vatican City, 2004), pp. 59–60, also refers to Valentini and Zuchetti's dating in his treatise on the relics of the *Sancta Sanctorum* – 'composé après 1073' – but it seems to me that Galland has not consulted the first redaction of the *Descriptio*. He bases his presentation of the *Descriptio* only on the third redaction of John the Deacon (1159–1181) and wrongly describes this as the oldest description of the relics, as if the older redactions were lost.

¹⁸ 'Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae', ed. Valentini and Zuchetti, p. 321; Vogel, 'La Descriptio Ecclesiae Lateranensis', pp. 457–8; Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 111–13. De Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*, I, pp. 205–7, interprets the *Descriptio* as a promotion of the Lateran as the new temple, although he situates it primarily in the context of the conflict with the Vatican.

¹⁹ Jochen Johrendt, *Die Diener des Apostelfürsten. Das Kapitel von St. Peter im Vatikan (11.–13. Jahrhundert)* (Berlin, 2011), p. 262.

And, as Valentini and Zuchetti and Vogel have shown, an obvious context can be established if one compares the *Descriptio* with a parallel text from San Pietro, the *Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae* (*Description of the Vatican Basilica*), composed by Canon Pietro Mallio at San Pietro in the middle of the twelfth century.²⁰ This text was a direct response to the Lateran's *Descriptio*, and the comparison of the two treatises has led to a reading of the description of the Lateran within the local Roman context of the rivalry between the two shrines. Both texts aim to attract pilgrims to the increasing collections of relics, and, understood in this context, they appear as the clearest evidence of a 'competition for holiness'. Traces of a conflict between the chapters of the Lateran and San Pietro may also be discerned in the polemical poems *Contra Lateranenses*, later transmitted with the description of San Pietro.²¹

However, this interpretation of the *Descriptio* does not take chronology into account. The description of San Pietro was a response to an updated version of the *Descriptio*, probably the version by John the Deacon (written during the papacy of Alexander III (1159–1181)).²² The conflict between the canons at the two main shrines of Rome is an interpretative perspective that belongs primarily to the later versions of the *Descriptio*, since it relates to the specific response of *Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae*. Besides, the conflict is only one part of the picture: an internal Roman context fails to encompass the wider significance of the temple objects in the text.

Why were the temple objects so important in promoting the Lateran? Sible de Blaauw attempts to resolve this difficult question in his article on the Maundy Thursday ritual at the Lateran. He presents a wide range of sources and interprets the various elements of the high altar and the papal ritual partly in terms of a typological imagery of the temple cult performed by the high priest of the Old Covenant on the Day of Atonement. De Blaauw also suggests that the claim for the presence of the Ark in the high altar was incidental and a product of 'linguistic and allegorical associations and confusions' that were readily at hand.²³ Likewise, he refers to another description of the altar, also from the end of the eleventh century, written by Bonizo of Sutri. Bonizo affirms a similarity between the Lateran high altar and the Jewish Ark but not an actual identity. De Blaauw

²⁰ 'Petri Mallii Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae aucta atque emendata a romano Presbitero', in *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, ed. Valentini and Zucchetti, III, pp. 375–442.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 379–80 (see also below, p. 183). See Vogel, 'La Descriptio Ecclesiae Lateranensis', pp. 465–72.

²² Valentini and Zuchetti suggest that the description of the Vatican basilica was a response to the version by John the Deacon (1159–1181) or to the prior version (1154–1159). See 'Petri Mallii Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae', p. 379.

²³ De Blaauw, 'The Solitary Celebration of the Supreme Pontiff', p. 135.

refers to Bonizo's text as a contemporary text which avoided 'lapsing into the confusion of the *Descriptio*'.²⁴

Based on these suggestions, de Blaauw understands the further tradition of the *Descriptio*, which intensified the emphasis on the authenticity of the temple objects, as an acceptance of the previous redactions of the tract. And he asserts that the insistence on the presence of the temple objects was an isolated view in the twelfth century. While building on de Blaauw's important works on the Lateran Church, this study will, nevertheless, argue that the identification of the Ark of the Covenant in the altar did *not* represent a lapse into confusion but was rather part of a strategy of interpretation generated by the historical situation and a specific ideological interpretation. This proposal is not based on any paradigm of authenticity versus falsification but on a perspective that interprets sacred objects within a contemporary liturgical context, which is where their meaning is produced.²⁵

Both Ingo Herklotz and H. E. J. Cowdrey have attempted to interpret the *Descriptio* in a wider context than mere internal Roman competition. In explaining why the temple relics were 'discovered' at this time, Herklotz points to the argument of succession from Jerusalem. In the tradition of medieval historiography, represented for example by the transmission of the late antique chronicle of Orosius (c. 385–420), Titus' destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in AD 70 was interpreted as the transition from Judaism to Christianity.²⁶ Herklotz concludes that, if medieval historiography understood the destruction of the old temple as a turning point from Judaism to Christianity, then the Church that was 'mother and mistress of all churches' ('mater et caput cunctarum ecclesiarum') would surely have the strongest claim to being the real successor to the most important Jewish sanctuary. This, he argues, was the underlying idea which later led to the 'discovery' of the Lateran relics. The historical context that provoked the discovery was, according to Herklotz, an anti-Roman attitude that since the second half of the eleventh century had led to new definitions of the hierarchy between the patriarchates.²⁷ Byzantine and Greek critics contested the primacy of Rome: Herklotz

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ 'In order for an object to be venerated as a relic, a new symbolic function had to be assigned – a function that had its origin in the fabric of the society in which it was to be venerated. Thus the symbolic value of a new or rediscovered relic was only a reflection of the values assigned by the society that honored it ... in its new location it became an important symbol only if that society made it one, and this symbolism was necessarily a product of that society' (Patrick Geary, *Furta sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Princeton, 1990), pp. 6–7). Thunø, *Image and Relic*, p. 15, applies this perspective to the Sancta Sanctorum objects.

²⁶ Orosius, *Histoires (contre les païens)*, ed. and trans. M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet, 3 vols (Paris, 2003); Herklotz, 'Der mittelalterliche Fassadenportikus der Lateranbasilika', p. 79.

²⁷ Herklotz, 'Der mittelalterliche Fassadenportikus der Lateranbasilika', p. 77.

refers to Nicetas Seides, a theologian at the imperial court of Constantinople at the beginning of the twelfth century, who in 1112 argued against Rome by pointing to the primacy of Jerusalem and claiming that Constantinople was the true successor.

In his article on Pope Urban II and the idea of crusade, Cowdrey also draws attention to the text from a perspective other than the usual one of Roman rivalry. He focuses on the relics described in the *Descriptio* and uses the text as a witness to the impact of Jerusalem on the Western Church *before* the First Crusade of 1096–1099: ‘For the relics and images of the Lateran as for the traditions that were associated with it, historians have an excellent, though somewhat neglected, source in the *Descriptio ecclesiae Lateranensis*.’²⁸ The relics brought to life the history and holy places of Jerusalem present in Rome and were meant to have an impact on the faithful. According to Cowdrey, they also served to focus the minds of the popes towards the East and thus contributed to the role of Jerusalem in the appeal for a crusade in 1095.²⁹ Cowdrey’s use of the *Descriptio* represents an interpretative approach to the text which is not substantiated by the parallel text from St Peter’s or any possible conflict between the two shrines. His approach relates to the wider context of pilgrimage and religious topography, which includes the earthly and heavenly city of Jerusalem and the historical event of the First Crusade. Cowdrey’s argument also relates to an interpretation of the papal reform movement in which the role of Jerusalem and an interest in the restoration of its holy places were strong. The reform programme was based on a particular understanding of history where a restored Jerusalem held a central place in the search for a new outpouring of God’s mercy, and it culminated in the First Crusade.³⁰ Cowdrey’s approach to the text is highly relevant to this study, but his results depend on Vogel’s dating to ‘probably soon after 1073’, which determines his use of the text: ‘It therefore provides evidence for the Lateran which Urban knew as cardinal and as pope, and also for widespread public interest in its traditions and its relics.’³¹ The dating suggested in this study (after 1099) questions Cowdrey’s use of the text.

²⁸ Cowdrey, ‘Pope Urban II and the Idea of Crusade’, p. 733.

²⁹ This argument is part of a debate as to whether a crusade to Jerusalem was an intended goal for Urban II before his appeal in 1095. ‘Urban’s mind and experience were surrounded by tangible evidences of Jerusalem which are likely to have assured for it a central place in the *schema* of his Crusading ideology. By 1095, Jerusalem had in all probability assumed in Urban’s own mind the significance that it was to retain for all the popes of the Crusading centuries’ (*ibid.*, p. 739).

³⁰ Cowdrey builds on Alfons Becker and his *schema* of Urban’s understanding of Christian history. See Alfons Becker, *Der Papst, die griechische Christenheit und der Kreuzzug*, Vol. 2: *Papst Urban II (1088–1099)* (Stuttgart, 1988); a summary of the *schema* is found on pp. 352–3.

³¹ Cowdrey, ‘Pope Urban II and the Idea of Crusade’, p. 134.

A NEW APPROACH

This study offers another basis for the investigation of *Descriptio* than Vogel's dating and identification of redactions. An important objection to Vogel's schematic overview is that it is limited by a modern approach that sought to reproduce the original redaction of the text. This approach extracts the different versions of the *Descriptio* from their contexts. In his article Vogel expresses no interest in the manuscripts as such, but only in those parts that contain the *Descriptio*. A new approach based on the manuscript's context and transmission enables perspectives overlooked by earlier scholars. When we take the provenance of the manuscripts into consideration, we can sort out distinct groups of traditions. One obvious group is the transmission of the *Descriptio* in the Lateran archive. Apart from this transmission, most of the manuscripts come from a small area in present-day northern France and Belgium. At least five of the manuscripts were connected to the abbey of St Amand, while the others originated from nearby monasteries. Compared to Vogel's redactions, an alternative array appears in four groups, one containing the versions from the archive (I), and three that render different versions transmitted in northern France/Belgium (II–IV).³²

When the claim of the temple objects in the *Descriptio* is analysed based on the manuscript context, it questions both an isolated Roman context of interpretation and the previous dating of the text. In the following chapters, I will argue that the preserved description of the Lateran has to be understood in relation to *Templum Domini* in Jerusalem and that it was, therefore, composed after 1099.

Theoretical Approach

MANUSCRIPTS AND METHOD

The reading of manuscripts is an entrance to the medieval mindset.³³ In this study the manuscript context is established as an important basis both for the dating of the *Descriptio* and for the interpretation of its significance. An important characteristic of the source material is that the theology is expressed as interwoven traditions, concepts and legends undergoing a constant transformation. This feature of the material comes to the fore through the dynamics of

³² See Appendix 2 for details.

³³ Important contributors to this emphasis on manuscripts include Sylvia Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and Its Medieval Readers* (Cambridge, 1993); John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the 'Libro de buen amor'* (Princeton, 1994); Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 2002).

the manuscripts themselves and provides a certain point of entry into the interpretation. To grasp the significance, one should look to the supposed purpose, to comparable texts in a relevant context and to the actual use of the text. All these perspectives are subject to changes during the 'lifetime' of the text. The *Descriptio* of the Lateran does not have a constant meaning, but rather a meaning that has changed according to different contexts during the manuscript transmission.³⁴

THE *TRANSLATIO* OF THE TEMPLE

In order to answer the question of how the Lateran Church came to be 'the temple of the New Covenant' in the twelfth century, this study proposes to use the idea of *translatio* (transfer) as an interpretative grip. The notion of *translatio*, which has been discussed by Aleida Assmann and other scholars, could characterize a wide range of phenomena.³⁵ One phenomenon was the 'transfer of empire', *translatio imperii*, defined by medieval historiographers as the continuum of one single imperial authority throughout history, transferred from the East to the West. The 'transfer of knowledge', *translatio studii*, was another comparable concept. Hugh of Saint-Victor (1096–1141) regarded the ideas of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii* as two parallel movements, expressed in the *Eruditio Didascalica*, while his student, the Cistercian monk Otto of Freising, united them.³⁶ This study argues that what can be characterized as *translatio templi* legitimized sacerdotal authority and can be understood according to a similar logic as *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*. The term *translatio templi* was not used in medieval exegetical literature; hence it does not occur explicitly in the sources of this study. It is a modern construction which enables us to understand the claim of the Ark and the other temple objects in the description of the Lateran.

³⁴ On the mobility and dynamic character of a medieval text, see Damien Kempf, 'Der mittelalterliche Text zwischen Theorie und Praxis', in *Theorie in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. J. Hacke and M. Pohlig (Frankfurt-am-Main and New York, 2008), pp. 53–66. Kempf refers (p. 57) to Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris, 1972), p. 72.

³⁵ Aleida Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition. Kulturelle Strategien der Dauer* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 1999), p. 111. See also Herbert Grundmann, 'Sacerdotium – Regnum – Studium: zur Wertung der Wissenschaft im 13. Jahrhundert', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 34 (1952), 5–21; Werner Goetz, *Translatio imperii. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorien im Mittelalter und in der früheren Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 1958); Frans J. Worstbrock, 'Translatio artium: über die Herkunft und Entwicklung einer kulturhistorischen Theorie', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 47 (1965), 1–22; Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, trans. J. Taylor and L. K. Little (Chicago, 1968), pp. 162–210.

³⁶ Worstbrock, 'Translatio artium', p. 14.