

Theological and Political Influences on the Triumphal Arch Mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore

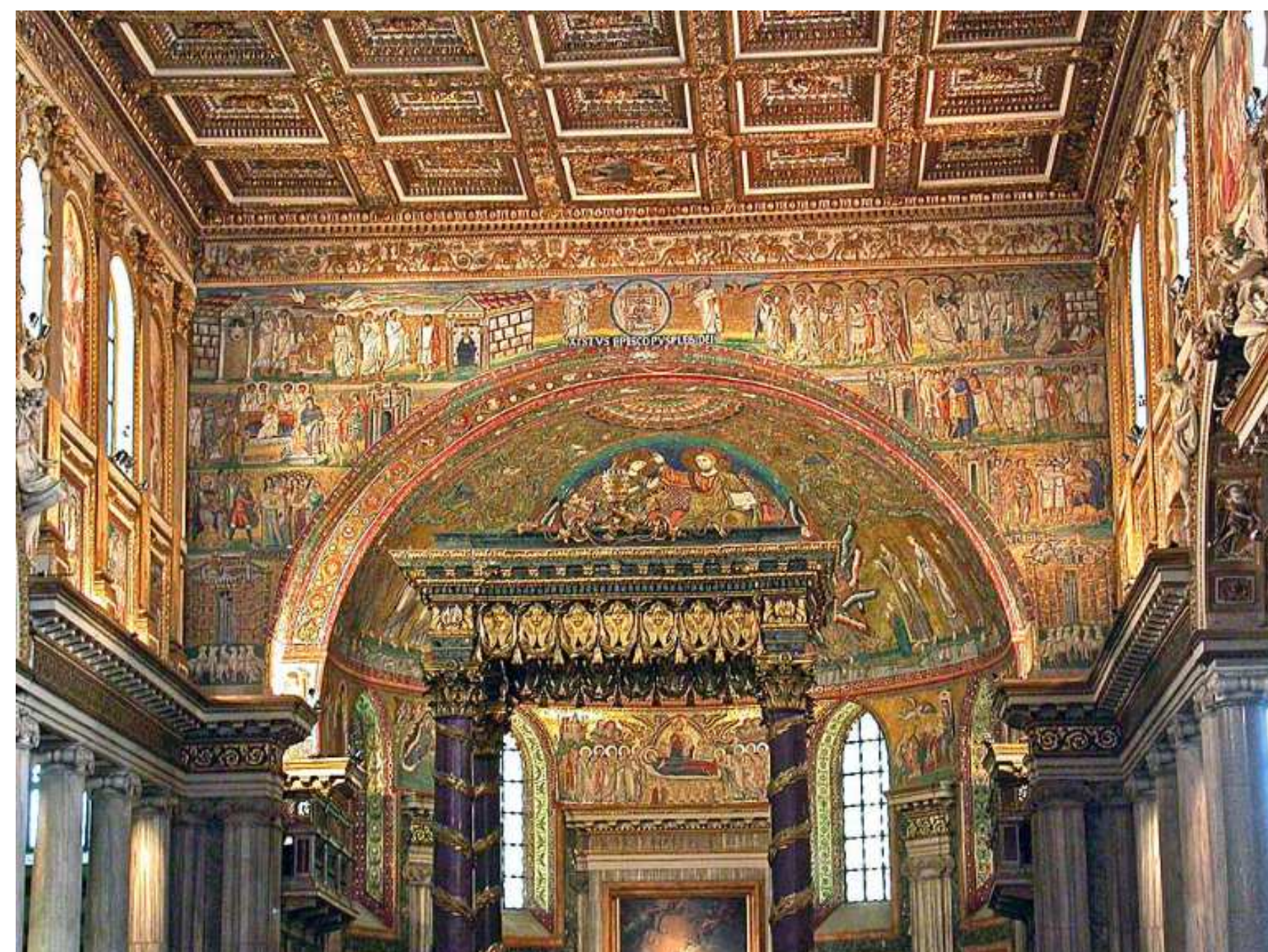
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OVERVIEW

- The artistic program of a sacred space can be used to teach and inspire believers as well as converts.
- Did theology, history, and politics also have potential influences on the content?



Triumphal Arch Mosaics, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, c. 432-440 CE



KEY FINDINGS

- This program communicated specific positions on key theological debates of the time: *Arianism* and *Nestorianism*.
- Featured persons/events not consistent with their biblical or historical contexts.
- Images not meant to be historically accurate.
- Their purpose was to convey a political message: the *primacy* of both the *Roman Church* and the *Bishop of Rome*.



IMPACT

- Interpretation of sacred art requires an interdisciplinary approach.
- Art may serve multiple purposes in a sacred context: decoration, inspiration, instruction, commentary on orthodoxy/heresy, and projection of political messages.



Acknowledgements