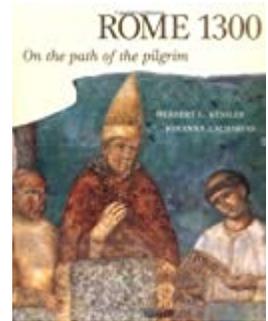


**Herbert L. Kessler, Johanna Zacharias.** *Rome 1300: On the Path of the Pilgrim.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000. ix +238 pp. \$35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-08153-4.



**Reviewed by** Duane J. Osheim (Department of History, University of Virginia)

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Kessler and Zacharias have composed a book that compares interestingly with Robert Brentano's Rome before Avignon. Both books were written by long-time visitors to Rome who wanted to convey some sense of the medieval city. Both books had to deal with difficult and sometimes contradictory materials. A lack of administrative and public documents limited Brentano's ingenious reconstruction of the social fabric of the city. Kessler and Zacharias, on the other hand, describe buildings, chapels and even roads no longer visible in the eternal city. Both books offer fascinating reconstructions; both are joys to read.

Kessler and Zacharias follow a hypothetical pilgrim moving through Rome during the first Jubilee year of 1300. As she visits the Lateran and then moves on toward Santa Maria Maggiore to St. Paul's Outside the Walls and ending at St. Peter in the Vatican, the authors describe what she could have seen and the historical context in which these works arose. Almost without exception, there is no mention of the later Renaissance, Baroque, or modern changes. The modern changes are described in the captions to the numerous, well-chosen illustrations. The narrative strategy generally works well, although understanding complex sites like the Lateran when there are in effect two narratives is more difficult. One track develops in the text while the captions to illustrations

represent a second, often including details that the pilgrim could not have known. The effect on the reader is sometimes dizzying.

In discussing each of the major precincts our pilgrim visits, the authors make clear the classical foundations on which the Christian monuments are built. They pause over key images, *sol invictus*, for example, that make clear the classical and Christian connections. At other points, Sta. Maria Maggiore or St. Paul's outside the Walls, for example, they make clear the early Christian interest in connecting Old and New Testament traditions. Although the book has no grand thesis, its effect is to remind the reader of just how visible the Classical and Jewish foundations of Christianity really were at the end of the Middle Ages.

Rome 1300 is lavishly illustrated. There are excellent photos of extant monuments, illuminations from various manuscripts, and drawings and washes composed during and after the Renaissance of now vanished art and architecture. The book has its faults. The greatest weakness of the book is the loose translation of texts. In most cases, *nova tecta* translated as "new temple" (p. 157) for example, does not really mislead; but *Kyrie eleison* translated as "Praise the Lord" (p. 96) completely misrepresents the profoundly penitential nature of our pilgrim's experience. In an odd way for a book about Rome in 1300, Me-

dieval Christianity is not fully considered. The authors present the physical surroundings of the pilgrim, but they are less successful in presenting the sights, sounds or religious emotions she might well have experienced.

But the authors might well respond that they had wanted to recreate for us a tourists itinerary—albeit a religious tourist. And they have largely succeeded. I first read Brentano's book while living in Rome. I would love

to reread Kessler and Zacharias when I return there.

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