

## MONUMENTA

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### *Brebbia, chiesa dei Ss. Pietro e Paolo*\*

I. The church of Brebbia,<sup>1</sup> although among the more interesting of the Varesotto, has never been studied from an archaeological standpoint.

II. According to the legend of the saints Giulio and Giuliano; the church of Brebbia was founded by the two confessors in the IV century, and was the scene of one of the miracles performed by them.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 999 the church was already a pieve and under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Milan.<sup>3</sup> The church is called a pieve in other documents of 1024<sup>4</sup> and 1030.<sup>5</sup> *Extant* documents of 1153<sup>6</sup> refer to a controversy between the prevosto of Brebbia and the abbot of S. Celso at Milan.<sup>7</sup> It is clear that at this time the pieve of Brebbia enjoyed considerable importance, and was officiated by a chapter of

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<sup>1</sup> Como

<sup>2</sup> Aliud quoque miraculum in loco, qui dicitur Beblas, contigit. Dum labori insisterent [upon the basilica founded by SS. Giulio and Giuliano], unus virorum incaute manum praevidens ferramento, quod vulgus dextrale appellat, pollicem amputavit, unde tantus emanans profluxit cruor, ut vir ille deciderit in dementia. Quod idem ejusdem plebis socii S. Julio studuerunt indicare. Sanctus autem Julius ad eum illico veniens, eumdem inquisivit pollicem, dicens: «Afferre digitum huc ad me», qui cum allatus fuisset, accipiens eum in locum posuit, et facto Crucis signo, restituta est, sicut antea fuerat, integra manus. Accipiensque vir Dei ferramentum dedit in manus ejus dicens, «Labora et confortare in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti» (Vita SS. Julii et Juliani, ed. Acta Sanctorum, 31 Januarii, III, 718).

<sup>3</sup> Giulini, I, 692.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 141.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 390.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, IV 452.

canons. In 1250 the prevosto appears contesting certain rights with the decumani of the cathedral of Milan. The dignity of the church at the end of the XIII century is apparent from the catalogue of Gottofredo, who assigns to Brebbia forty-six dependent churches and fifty-five altars.<sup>8</sup> Manuscript authorities preserved in the Archivio of the parish state that in its time of prosperity the pieve had no less than eighteen canons, besides a cimiliarca and a mazzoconico. The pieve was suppressed by s. Carlo, who transported six canons to the church of S. Tommaso at Milan, and transferred the dignity of pieve and the remainder of the canons to Besozzo.<sup>9</sup> In 1886 the barocco stucco was stripped off the interior, and the structure restored in a peculiarly barbaric manner.

III. The edifice consists of a nave (Plate 30, Fig. 6) three bays long, two side aisles, non-projecting transepts and an apse. The apse is covered with a half dome (Plate 30, Fig. 6), the transepts are barrel-vaulted, the crossing has a rib vault (Plate 30, Fig. 6), and the nave and side aisles have groin vaults with transverse ribs (Plate 30, Fig. 6). Such, however, were not the original dispositions. The absence of responds proves that originally the side aisles were not vaulted. Similarly the vaulting capitals of the nave (Plate 30, Fig. 6) are all new and of a pseudo-Romanesque style (that is, they date from 1886), with the exception of those of the second piers from the west, which are ancient, but which appear to have been taken from some other part of the edifice, and placed in their present position during the restoration. The nave vaults, as well as the side-aisle vaults, are, therefore, not original, and it is altogether probable that these portions of the edifice were anciently roofed in wood. The vaults added in the barocco period caused the ruin of the building. Even to-day the nave vaults show indubitable signs of having settled,

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 719.

<sup>9</sup> Giusano [sic, Giussani], I, 333.



Plate 30, fig. 6.  
Brebbia, Ss. Pietro e Paolo.  
Interno della navata centrale  
in una immagine scattata da  
A.K. Porter (1913)

their surface being twisted and distorted; they are, in fact, held upright only by tie-rods (Plate 33, Fig. 6). The ruin threatening the edifice doubtless provoked the restoration of 1886, and at this time the barocco vaults were remade in a pseudo-Romanesque style. The vaults of the eastern portion of the edifice, on the other hand, appear to be original. The diagonals of the very slightly domed rib vault of the crossing are circular in section and much depressed in elevation (Plate 30, Fig. 6).

The piers of the crossing (Plate 30, Fig. 6) have a section consisting of four shafts supported by rectangular spurs. The system consists of a shaft and two rectangular members. The rectangular piers of the nave and the nave system appear to be all the results of the XIX century restoration.

The walls are constructed of ashlar masonry, of good but not superlative quality. It is evident that the upper portions of the church have been rebuilt, not only in the nave but in the transepts and apse as well. The windows, which are splayed, originally served without glass, and in some cases are elaborately moulded. There is no clearstory.

IV. The capitals, of a broad-leaved type, show very strong French Gothic influence in the use of crockets and naturalistic leaves and in their general refinement of design. The Attic bases are without griffes. The archivolt is in two unmoulded orders. Two shafts adorn the apse, but the arched corbel-tables which they must have supported have disappeared. The Pilaster strips of the flanks and octagonal shafts of the nave similarly end unmeaningly.

The main Portal is situated in the south side of the church, and is in five orders. In the lunette is scratched the outline of a fish with an anchor in its mouth. In the apse and on the south wall are notable frescos of the XV century and various later epochs.

V. The capitals seem contemporary with those of the jubé at Vezzolano (Plate 237, Fig. 1) - 1189. The monument may therefore be assigned to c. 1190.