JAHRBUCH
FÜR
ANTIKE UND CHRISTENTUM
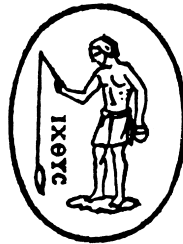
ALL ROADS LEAD TO CONFLICT?

Christian migration to Rome circa 200

Migrants imported Christianity to Rome in the first century AD and migration shaped Roman Christianity ever since. Settling at the capital, migrants were often also ambassadors of new doctrines or introduced new liturgical forms from elsewhere in the empire. While some novel elements were successfully integrated into the already existing local tradition(s), others presented profound challenges. In this respect, the end of the second and beginning of the third century was a particularly vibrant period. Several significant clashes between newly arrived and the »well-established« are recorded. These conflicts offer genuine though biased accounts of migration of Christians to Rome and the challenges and opportunities this presented to the young but growing Christian community in the city. Based on four case studies, this contribution seeks to chart migration, profile Christian migrants, outline (typical) patterns of movement and re-examine the conflict potential of such movements.

Migrants imported Christianity to Rome and migration shaped Roman Christianity from its first detectable presence in the city during the first century AD[1]. Rome, the »cosmopolis«[2], was the largest city of the ancient Mediterranean world. The opportunities it offered, its intellectual and religious diversity, spectacles, and splendour, attracted all sorts of people from across the empire including many Christians. Some migrants only settled in Rome for a short period, while others made the city their home. In both cases Christian migrants were often ambassadors of new doctrines or introduced new liturgical forms. Stayers gradually became, over generations, locals. Some of the doctrines or new liturgical forms they imported were also slowly considered local expressions of faith. The diversity of these expressions were – due to the lack of a central authority – hardly normative, uniform, or exclusive, but rather reflected the manifold and factional character of Christianity in Rome in this period. Indeed, immigration to the city helped breathe new life into existing factional divisions and contributed to the ethnic diversity of the Christian community in Rome, regardless of their doctrinal orientation. This phenomenon can be traced as early as the second century when, for instance, Marcion of Sinope († ca. 160) settled in the capital, prompting widespread debate[3]. Almost at the same time, another influential teacher

---

[1] G. LA PIANA, The Roman church at the end of the second century. The episcopate of Victor, the latinization of the Roman church, the Easter controversy, consolidation of power and doctrinal development, the catacomb of Callistus: HarvTheolRev 18 (1925) 207 determined the presence of »various races and the various provinces of the empire« among the Christian population of Rome as key factor for understanding the development of Christianity there and its subsequent »romanisation«. See also M. VINCENT: M. M. Mitchell et al. (ed.) The Cam-

bridge Hist. of Christianity (Cambridge 2006) 397/ 412.

[2] Cf. the essays in C. EDWARDS / G. WOOLF, Rome the Cosmopolis (Cambridge 2003).

[3] For the social historical background of Marcion see LAMPE 2003, 241/56; S. MOLL, The arch-heretic Marcion (Tübingen 2010) 25/46. P. FOSTER, Marcion. His life, works, beliefs, and impact: ExpT 121 (2010) re-evaluates previous attempts and offers a critical chronology to his life; W. A. LÖHR, Problems of profiling Marcion: Snyder 2020, 109/33, particu-

from Alexandria, Valentinus († after 160), likewise sparked controversy within the city's Christian communities with his teachings[4]. While Valentinus remained in Rome only temporarily – he left the capital after ca. 15 years for Cyprus –, the sources remain unclear whether Marcion departed from Rome after breaking with the church[5].

Importantly, Marcion and Valentinus were only a prelude to a series of clashes between migrants and Rome's established Christians, which marked the period between the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries[6]. This investigation examines the impact and influence of the migration of Christians to the *urbs* in the period, paying particular attention to the tenures of bishops Victor (?189/?199), Zephyrinus (?199/?217) and Callixtus I (?217/?222). This ca. thirty-year period witnessed conflicts between the slowly emerging mainstream Roman church, itself hardly a monolith[7] comprised as it was by an mix of locals, migrants, and the descendants of migrants, and four groups with traceable connections to other parts of the empire: the Quartodecimans, the »New Prophets« also known as the »Montanists«, the »Monarchians«, and the Theodotians. Using these groups as case studies, this contribution will consider the patterns of movement that linked Rome to the Mediterranean world and investigate how these movements influenced Roman ecclesiastical attitudes, which

larly 109/20 is instructive for the critical reconstruction of Marcion's biography.

[4] Cf. e.g. C. Markschies, Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins (Tübingen 1992) 293/336; I. Dunderberg, Valentinian teachers in Rome: J. Zangenberg / M. Labahn (ed.), Christians as a religious minority in a multicultural city. Modes of interaction and identity formation in early Imperial Rome (London 2001); E. Thomassen, The spiritual seed. The church of the »Valentinians« (Leiden 2006) 417/29. – Apart from these two prominent players, a good number of heterodox Christian teachers with possible migration background were active in Rome during the second half of the second century. Cf. i.a. A. Marjanen (ed.), A companion to second-century Christian ›heretics‹ (Leiden 2005); Snyder 2020.

[5] Epiph. haer. 31,7,1/2 (CGS 25, 395,16/396,6) for Valentinus and 41,1,3/8 (CGS 31, 94,6/95,6) for Marcion. Cf. also Tert. praescr. 30,1/4 (CCL 1, 210,1/12).

[6] Lampe 2003, 397/408; A. Brent, Hippolytus and the Roman church in the third century. Communities in tension before the emergence of a monarch-bishop (Leiden 1995); Handl 2016 and id., forthcoming a.

[7] The established terminology is inadequate to describe the communities of Christians at Rome (and elsewhere) in this early period. The terms »orthodox« or »proto-orthodox« are anachronistic, suggesting that it was an inevitable step towards »correct opinions« in a teleologic development. The lat-ter, moreover, cannot be applied because generations of Roman bishops promoted various forms of what is lumped together in the term »monarchianism«, which is, from the same anachronistic perspective anything but »orthodox« or »that [which] became the dominant form of Christianity in later centuries«. B. D. Ehrman, The New Testament. A historical introduction to the early Christian writings (Oxford 1997) 6f. It should also be noted that the word »heresy« was not necessarily pejorative in the second and third centuries. Rather, it simply meant »faction« or »sect«. The sources use them (predominantly) in this sense, as we shall see this essay. Instructive is N. Brox, Art. Häresie: RAC 13 (1986) 256/75. The suggestion to describe it as »Mehrheitskirche« (majority church) has also some shortcomings mainly due to the fact that before Callixtus there is no evidence, which would support the view that the bishop's community represented the majority of Christians at Rome. Instructive to the terminology is J. Lieu, Modelling the second century as the age of the laboratory: J. C. Paget / J. Lieu (ed.), Christianity in the second century. Themes and developments (Cambridge 2017) 294/308. Yet, it seems likely – although there is no definitive evidence – that the community led by Callixtus and his predecessors formed the largest structurally linked Christian group within the landscape of Roman Christianities, even if they did not necessarily represent the majority of all Christians, »orthodox« or »heterodox« alike. The group lead by the bishop is referred here as the »mainstream church«, though the adequateness of this term is up to debate.

was characterised by the occasionally fraught relationship between native Romans and newcomers to the city.

1. Some methodological remarks

Before we can proceed to the discussion of the evidence, some preliminary remarks about methodology are necessary. Although a »tsunami« of scholarly literature relating to migration in general and migration to Rome in particular has been produced in the past two decades[8], the movements of Christians to Rome, especially in the first centuries of the common era, has remained largely uncharted territory[9]. In contrast to earlier research, recent scholarship acknowledges the significance of migration and mobility and describes the ancient world as highly mobile[10]. Nevertheless, Romans never thought in terms of modern notions of migration. Roman imperial policy did not make any long-term, consistent attempts to control movement with the partial exception of modifications to ideas of citizenship and expulsions, which were in the most cases symbolic rather than effective[11]. The lack of a coherent conceptualization of migration in the ancient world has implications for the terminology used to describe movement, which is inconsistent[12]. The authors of relevant texts for reconstructing Christian migration to Rome like Irenaeus, Tertullian, the Author of the *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, and Eusebius, so far their identity can be reconstructed, were rarely residents of Rome, and probably the majority was not even Roman citizen before the *Constitutio Antoniniana* extended citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Empire in 212. Prior that, one can only speculate about the migrants' (and the authors' of the sources) status[13]. What does seem certain is that the authors did not embodied or represent the capital's local elite, neither in attitude, nor in perspective.

Unfortunately and as we shall see, the origins of most migrants in this essay cannot be reconstructed with certainty. Sometimes, onomastic and if available, socio-historical evidence can be used to hypothesize the origins of distinct individuals. But even if all the cases discussed here could be substantiated with certainty, the small sample size would be insufficient to draw representative statistical conclusions regarding the relationship between migrants and the overall population of Rome. Nevertheless, the examples considered below highlight general trends in the history of early Christianity in the city, especially the important role played by migration and its relationship to religious factionalism.

---

[8] An excellent annotated overview can be found in S. Hin, Art. Ancient demography: Oxford bibliographies in Classics (2015) until 2015. For additional bibliography on migration to Rome see Noy 2000; Tacoma 2016.

[9] Cf. R. von Bendemann, Frühes Christentum und Migrationssoziologie. Ausgewählte methodische Fragen und Probleme: id. / M. Tiwald (ed.), Migrationsprozesse im ältesten Christentum (Stuttgart 2018) 11.

[10] W. Kaiser / C. Moatti, Gens de passage en Méditerranée de l'Antiquité à l'époque moderne.

Procédures de contrôle et d'identification (Paris 2007); Tacoma 2016, 1/5. G. Woolf, Movers and stayers: de Ligt/Tacoma 2016, 438/61, however, takes a more cautious position and urges for the »need to consider in what ways people moved and how different kinds of mobility varied within our long historical period, and between antiquity and other ages, earlier and later.«

[11] Tacoma 2016, 92/105.

[12] Noy 2000, 1/3.

[13] Noy 2000, 4; Tacoma 2016, 76/85. Cf. infra, section »2.6 Other intellectuals«.

2. Christian groups and individuals in Rome

2.1 The Quartodecimans

The first group for which we have evidence is the Quartodecimans, or »Fourteeners«. They are named after their practice of observing the Passover on the same day as the Jewish Pesach, on the 14th of Nisan, no matter which day of the week it fell upon[14]. The Quartodecimans were likely not newcomers in Rome at the end of the second century. A letter of Irenaeus quoted by Eusebius, reveals that they might have been active in the city as early as in the times of Sixtus I (?115/?125)[15]. Whether the mainstream church of Rome celebrated the Passover on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox from the beginnings, or the Sunday observance might represent a modified form of the (older) Quartodeciman practice developed over time, cannot be answered with certainty in light of the patchy nature of the Roman evidence[16].

In any case, the differing date of the Easter celebration became an issue (for the first time?), when Polycarp of Smyrna (†155), a prominent Easter representative of the Quartodeciman practice visited Rome probably in 154/55. His host Anicetus (?155/ ?166), the overseer of the mainstream church of Rome noted the obviously differing practices and »disagreed a little about some other things as well«[17]. Yet, both, according to Irenaeus, »immediately made peace«[18], though neither Anicetus nor his predecessors

> »observe it [the Quartodeciman practice] themselves, nor did they enjoin it on those who followed them, and though they did not keep it they were nonetheless at peace with those from the communities in which it was observed when they came to them, although to observe it was more objectionable to those who did not«[19].

Three aspects of this statement are interesting. Firstly, it is remarkable that Anicetus and his predecessors did not permit the Quartodeciman observance among those »who followed them«. This in turn demonstrates that there were Christian groups in Rome which »did not follow« Anicetus. In other words, there were Christian communities in the city, which recognised Anicetus and his predecessors as overseers, but also

---

[14] Cf. e.g. A. STEWART-SYKES, The lamb's high feast. Melito, Peri Pascha, and the Quartodeciman paschal liturgy at Sardis (Leiden 1998) 11/25; P. F. BRADSHAW / M. E. JOHNSON, The origins of feasts, fasts, and seasons in early Christianity (London 2011) 48/55; HEID 2019 with references to previous scholarship.

[15] Eus. h. e. 5,24,14 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 494,26/496,4).

[16] Cf. W. PETERSEN, Eusebius and the paschal controversy: H. W. Attridge (ed.), Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism (Leiden 1992) 313f; BRADSHAW/ JOHNSON 2011 cit. (n. 14) 39/47; HANDL 2016, 30₉₇; BEHR 2019, 82/92, at 87, concludes: »Undoubtedly a Sunday celebration of Pascha developed at some point in some place, but there is no trace of when or where this occurred, whereas there is evidence, however sparse, of the Quartodeciman practice.«

[17] Eus. h. e. 5,24,16 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 496,7/9): καὶ τοῦ μακαρίου Πολυκάρπου ἐπιδημήσαντος τῇ Ῥώμῃ ἐπὶ Ἀνικήτου καὶ περὶ ἄλλων τινῶν μικρὰ σχόντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους. The English translations to the Eastern controversy, unless noted differently, are taken from BEHR 2019, here 80.

[18] Eus. h. e. 5,24,16 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 496,9): εὐθὺς εἰρήνευσαν.

[19] Eus. h. e. 5,24,14 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 496,1/4): οὔτε αὐτοὶ ἐτήρησαν οὔτε τοῖς μετ' αὐτῶν ἐπέτρεπον, καὶ οὐδὲν ἔλαττον αὐτοὶ μὴ τηροῦντες εἰρήνευον τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν παροικιῶν ἐν αἷς ἐτηρεῖτο, ἐρχομένοις πρὸς αὐτούς· καίτοι μᾶλλον ἐναντίον ἦν τὸ τηρεῖν τοῖς μὴ τηροῦσιν.

other groups which did not (fully) accept his authority and thus appear to have been more or less hierarchically and structurally autonomous. Secondly, it is noteworthy that Anicetus made a significant effort to keep the peace »with those from the communities (ἀπὸ τῶν παροικιῶν)« observing Easter on the 14th of Nisan. Although it is arguable whether »community« is the best possible translation here for παροικία[20], the term suggests nevertheless the structural autonomy of the Quartodecimans from the mainstream church[21]. This differentiation is particularly well expressed in the remark that the peace is maintained »when they came to them«[22]. In other words, Anicetus and the mainstream church used to keep peace even with those Quartodecimans, who came from their παροικία to the Sunday-observers residing in Rome. This passage suggests not only that the Quartodecimans arrived at Rome from somewhere else, but also that this immigration was still ongoing in the time of Anicetus (and possibly also in the time when Irenaeus visited Rome around 177)[23]. Polycarp and Anicetus apparently reached an agreement similar to the ecumenic model of »unity in reconciled diversity«[24], and »under these circumstances they communed with each other«[25].

Three decades later, bishop Victor ended this peaceful modus vivendi. Unfortunately, Eusebius' heavily redacted and patchy account neither provides any information to the circumstances, which fuelled the escalation between the two parties, nor does it permit a precise reconstruction of the events. It seems, however, that a combination of three elements might have resulted in a highly explosive situation: The increasing self- and tradition-consciousness of the mainstream church and their leaders; the existence of a structurally distinct Quartodeciman community with only loose ties to the mainstream church and comprised of many non-native Romans; and the striking difference between the practice of the Quartodecimans and those who observed Easter on Sunday. Ironically, there is a good chance that the sign of peace – the exchange of the Eucharistic gifts – triggered the conflict: The differing day of the Easter celebrations made the exchange of the Eucharistic quite challenging and as a result, the difference in customs became impossible to ignore. Moreover, it is also quite likely that the conflict was primarily an inner-Roman conflict, or, as I argued elsewhere, that it had two distinct phases. The first, or »local« phase is characterised by the conflict between Victor and the mainstream church on the one hand and the Quartodecimans on the other hand. The escalation of this local conflict resulted in the second, or »international« phase, when Polycrates of Ephesus and other bishops joined the controversy[26]. In any case, it appears that Victor, who otherwise hardly can

---

[20] See the elaborate discussion in HEID 2019, 118/21.

[21] Likewise BEHR 2019, 81.

[22] Eus. h. e. 5,24,14 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 496,2/3): καὶ οὐδὲν ἔλαττον αὐτοὶ μὴ τηροῦντες εἰρήνευον τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν παροικιῶν ἐν αἷς ἐτηρεῖτο, ἐρχομένοις πρὸς αὐτούς.

[23] Eus. h. e. 5,4,2 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 434,1/6).

[24] Cf. H. MEYER, Unity in reconciled diversity: G. Wainwright / P. McPartlan (ed.), The Oxford handbook of ecumenical studies (Oxford 2021) 559/74.

[25] Eus. h. e. 5,24,17 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 496,15f): καὶ τούτων οὕτως ἐχόντων, ἐκοινώνησαν ἑαυτοῖς. In this

particular context, παροικία refers likely to the local Roman branch of the Quartodecimans rather than to their communities in Asia minor. At least, it is hardly practicable to send the Eucharist over thousands of kilometres to express ecclesial unity.

[26] HANDL 2016, 25/42 with citations to the relevant literature. Cf. also BEHR 2019, 77/82. Recently, HEID 2019 fundamentally questioned the existence of a(n independent) Quartodeciman community at Rome. Although this study delivers a thorough analysis of the extant literary sources concerning the paschal controversy, some further aspects of this question are in my opinion worth considering before draw-

be accused of being quarrelsome or particularly keen to fight »heretics«[27], probably cancelled the Eucharistic communion with the Roman branch of the Quartodecimans. Particularly the second, »international« phase of the controversy indicates that closer ties between the Quartodecimans immigrants in Rome and their homeland in Asia Minor still existed[28]. Unfortunately, neither Eusebius, nor Irenaeus, nor any other extant witness, provides further insights to the reasons, motivation, or numbers of the Quartodeciman migrants arriving and living in Rome. The sporadic evidence suggests however, that generations of Quartodecimans maintained a community formed – at least partly – by immigrants. Even though it was structurally only loosely linked to the mainstream church, both peacefully co-existed in Eucharistic communion for decades[29].

It is challenging to identify the leader of the local Quartodeciman group. Some evidence seems to suggest that he is identical with presbyter Blastus mentioned by Eusebius in another context[30]. The sources do not provide further information to his person, yet his Greek name, which is recorded 27 times on Roman inscriptions of the second and third centuries points in the milieu of forced migrants[31].

2.2 The New Prophets

While adherents of the prophets Montanus, Maximilla and Priscilla described themselves as »New Prophets«, second and early third century sources refer them as »the sect of those named after the Phrygians«[32]. The *Refutatio omnium haeresium* (henceforth *Refutatio*), an early third century heresiography traditionally but almost certainly

---

ing final conclusions, especially the underestimated mobility in antiquity, as mentioned above. Cf. supra, n. 10 and see further G. WOOLF, Female mobility in the Roman west: E. Hemelrijk / G. Woolf (ed.), Women and the Roman city in the Latin west (Leiden 2013) 351/68; TACOMA 2016, 1/74 offers a useful introduction to the issue. See also the papers of the anthologies DE LIGT/TACOMA 2016; E. LO CASCIO / L. E. TACOMA / M. J. GROEN-VALLINGA, The impact of mobility and migration in the Roman empire, Workshop Rome 2015 (Leiden 2017). New approaches to this topic include analyses of epigraphic evidence of foreigners (NOY 2000), and innovative bioarchaeological and biochemical methods, which have been applied to selected graveyards. See, for instance, K. KILLGROVE, Migration and mobility in imperial Rome (Chapel Hill 2010). Taken together, these studies confirm that a considerable number of foreigners lived in the »cosmopolis«. Concerning the integration and segregation of foreigners, see also C. RICCI, Orbis in urbe. Fenomeni migratori nella Roma imperiale (Roma 2005) and L. E. TACOMA, Migrants quarters at Rome?: G. de Kleijn / S. Benoist (ed.), Integration in Rome and in the Roman world (Leiden 2014) for a different perspective.

[27] In contrast to LAMPE 2003, 397/408 who asserts that Victor was the first »monarchic« bishop of Rome, HANDL 2016, 52/4 pointed out a fundamental methodological problem and argued extensively that the exclusion of heterodox groups and teachers by the bishop is not only a reduction of the episcopal power to disciplinary issues but also can hardly be considered as unmistakable indicator of »monarchic« episcopal power.

[28] Given the extensive trade links between Rome and Asia Minor is such a consideration hardly speculative. Cf. NOY 2000, 227/9; B. LEVICK, The Roman economy. Trade in Asia Minor and the Niche market: GreeceRome 51 (2004).

[29] Eus. h. e. 5,24,17 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 496,15/9).

[30] Eus. h. e. 5,15; 5,20 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 458, 22/7; 480,16/482,1).

[31] Ten instances refer to slaves and freedman, fifteen are uncertain. The fact, however, that fourthly persons certainly originate in the milieu of slaves and freedman, but only one certain individuum was freeborn, leaves little room for alternative interpretations. Cf. H. SOLIN, Die griechischen Personennamen in Rom. Ein Namenbuch 2[2] (Berlin 2003) 1039f.

[32] E.g. Eus. h. e. 5,16,1 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 458,28).

incorrectly attributed to Hippolytus (Romanus)[33], is also embedded in this tradition, when it describes this charismatic-pneumatic prophetic movement as »ethnically Phrygian«[34]. It is doubtful whether the »Phrygians« were still an ethnically homogenous group at the beginning of the third century as the *Refutatio* suggests. However, it implies in line with the epigraphic[35] evidence, that Phrygian migrants imported the New Prophecy to Rome. In fact, the group might have been present in the city as early as during the episcopate of Soter (?166/?175), but certainly by the tenure of Eleutherus (?175/?189)[36]. Bishop Victor and the mainstream church was tolerant in the beginning and recognised the *ecclesiis Asiae et Phrygiae* by issuing »letters of peace«[37]. While the precise meaning of the term *ecclesiis Asiae et Phrygiae* remains controversial, its interpretation as reference to actual churches located in Asia Minor appears unlikely[38]. Rather, the term suggests that Tertullian, like the Author of the *Refutatio,* whose perspective in this context presumably represents that of the mainstream church of Rome, considered the community (or communities) of the New Prophets in Rome as churches »originating« from Asia and Phrygia. In other words, the New Prophets were perceived as alien, that is, as a non-local or non-Roman church/community. This implies, first, that a substantial number of their members likely immigrated to Rome within relatively recent memory. And second, that they co-existed more or less in complete structural and probably even in physical separation to the mainstream church before bishop Victor welcomed them in the Eucharistic community.

The New Prophets did not enjoy full recognition for long. According to Tertullian, a confessor named Praxeas »compelled« Victor to revoke the previously issued »letters of peace« and to break communion with them[39]. Their formal exclusion did not ruin the New Prophets, however. In fact, a generation later two separate groups of New Prophets appear to have operated in Rome. Aeschines was the head of the movement, which combined New Prophecy with elements of »Monarchianism«. The »orthodox« Montanism was represented by a man named Proclus[40]. While Aeschines is otherwise

---

[33] The *Refutatio omnium haeresium* is traditionally attributed to the »anti-pope«, martyr, and author of numerous works Hippolytus Romanus (†235). Recent scholarship, however, considers it increasingly as the work of an anonymous intellectual and leader of a small house-community living and working in Rome. Cf. M. Simonetti, Per un profilo dell'autore dell'Elenchos: VetChr 46 (2009); C. Scholten, Autor, Anliegen und Publikum der Refutatio: G. Aragione / E. Norelli (ed.), Des évêques, des écoles et des hérétiques, Colloque Genève 2008 (Prahins 2011); Handl, forthcoming a.

[34] Hippol. ref. 8,19,1 (GCS Hippol. 3, 238,4/5): Ἕτεροι δέ, καὶ αὐτοὶ αἱρετικώτεροι τὴν φύσιν, Φρύγες τὸ γένος, προληφθέντες ὑπὸ γυναίων ἠπάτηνται …, »Other people, more heretical by nature and ethnically Phrygian, were taken in by hussies and deceived.«

[35] The epigraphic evidence for Phrygians in Rome, Christians and non-Christians alike, is listed in Noy 2000, 230.

[36] Tabbernee 2007, 37; Handl 2016, 42/6.

[37] Tert. adv. Prax. 1,5 (CCL 2, 1159,26/9): *nam idem tunc episcopum Romanum, agnoscentem iam prophetias Montani, Priscae, Maximillae, et ex ea agnitione pacem ecclesiis Asiae et Phrygiae inferentem.*

[38] Tabbernee 2007, 39f demonstrated convincingly that when Victor recognised the New Prophets by the »letters of peace«, the »churches *in* Asia and Phrygia, by this time, had already declared *against* the New Prophecy« (emphasis in the original). This makes highly unlikely that Victor's efforts concerned their communities in Asia Minor.

[39] Tert. adv. Prax. 1. 5 (CCL 2, 1159,29/32): … *falsa de ipsis prophetis et ecclesiis eorum adseverando et praecessorum eius auctoritates defendendo coegit et litteras pacis revocare iam emissas et a proposito recipiendorum charismatum concessare.*

[40] Eus. h. e. 3,31,4 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 364,21) for Proclus and PsTert. haer. 7,2 (CCL 2, 1409,13/24) for Aeschines.

completely unknown, the latter was involved in a discussion with a Christian intellectual named Gaius. The few fragments survived from Gaius' work »Dialogue against Proclus« suggests that Proclus was himself a migrant who had moved to Rome from Asia Minor. In one of his arguments, for instance, he related to the authority of the Apostle Philip buried in Hierapolis[41], rather than to the local »big-shots« Peter and Paul. Moreover, beside his obviously Greek name, two further migrants named Proclus are known from inscriptions: one from Syria, and the freedman M. Aurelius Proclus from Nicomedia[42]. In contrast, Gaius' Latin name, his arguments based on the Apostolate of Peter and Paul, as well as his presbyterial office implies that he was probably born and grown up in Rome or in Italy[43].

2.3 The »Monarchians«

Two radically different stories circulate about the arrival of »Monarchianism« in Rome[44]. One account is offered by Tertullian, who identifies Praxeas as the first ambassador of patripassian doctrine, a variation of modalism, in Rome. Despite some uncertainties around his identity[45], it seems, Praxeas originated in Asia. Once in Rome, Praxeas not only managed to gain the trust of bishop Victor but also to convince him and the council of presbyters to take action against the local New Prophets[46]. His confident intervention was likely rooted in the widespread hostility towards the New Prophets in Asia Minor[47]. It is somewhat controversial whether Praxeas left Rome and moved to Carthage, or if he became a permanent resident of the capital[48], although Tertullian's linking the events in Carthage with the Roman prelude supports the first hypothesis. Why he left Rome is not recorded, yet there is no sign of tension or conflict between the mainstream church and Praxeas, who appears to have maintained a close relationship with Victor[49].

The *Refutatio* tells a completely different story. It claims that a man named Epigonus from Smyrna spent some time in Rome and propagated Noëtian teachings there[50]. His pupil was an otherwise unknown Cleomenes. The latter not only managed to establish a school propagating modalistic ideas, but also enjoyed the support of bishop Zephyrinus. It is not impossible that the genealogy Noëtus – Epigonus – Cleomenes has been doctored, because Epigonus means »descendant«, which describes quite precisely his role. But that is not the only uncertainty. It is also unclear whether Epigonus made himself home in the capital, or resided only temporary there.

---

[41] Eus. h. e. 3,31,4 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 264,20/266,5).
[42] IGUrbRom 1317. 418.
[43] To the person of Gaius see E. Prinzivalli, Gaio e gli Alogi: StudStorRel 5 (1981) 53/68.
[44] Handl, forthcoming b offers a new perspective on the debate and suggests that Tertullian's account is more reliable for the reconstruction.
[45] For various attempts to reconstruct of Praxeas' identity see Handl 2016, 42/4 with further literature.
[46] Tert. adv. Prax. 1,5 (CCL 2, 1159,26/32).
[47] Cf. Tabbernee 2007, 3/27. 36/8.

[48] E. Evans (ed.), Tertulliani Adversus Praxean liber (London 1948) 184f pointed out that Tertullian never explicitly stated Praxeas' relocation to Africa. He merely noted that Praxeas' patripassian teachings reached Carthage. Tert. adv. Prax. 1,5 (CCL 2, 1159,26/32): *fruticaverant avenae Praxeanae hic quoque superseminatae.*
[49] Remarkably, there is no evidence that the Roman church ever took action against Praxeas or tried to restrain his teaching activities in any way. Handl 2016, 46 and especially id., forthcoming b.
[50] Hippol. ref. 9,7,1 (GCS Hippol. 3, 240,16/22).

The verb ἐπιδημέω permits both interpretations. In any case, Epigonus' migration fits perfectly the typical pattern of Christian migration to Rome[51]. If this account was doctored, it was doctored well[52].

The *Refutatio* mentions a further »Monarchian« intellectual active in Rome: Sabellius, a prominent promoter of patripassian teachings might have acted as Cleomenes' successor, but unlike his predecessor, and he was excluded from the mainstream church by bishop Callixtus[53]. While his name has a strong local resonance, later sources made him to a Libyan probably due to the strong present of »Sabellinians«, that is, patripassionalists in North Africa in the third and fourth centuries[54].

2.4 The Theodotians

The story of the Theodotians begins with its founder, Theodotus, who moved to Rome at some point during the last quarter of the second century. While both the *Refutatio* and Pseudo-Tertullian identify him by referencing his place of origin, Byzantium, the anonymous author of the anti-Artemon treatise quoted by Eusebius refers to his profession as tanner[55]. Unfortunately, all three accounts keep silent about the Theodotus' life before the beginnings of his teaching activities in Rome. But not only his motivation[56] to move to the capital remains obscure. It is also uncertain whether he imported his ideas from his hometown or developed them in interaction with the vivid intellectual life of Rome. There is a chance that both interpretations preserve some element of truth. He might have learned the logic of Aristotle and the geometry of Euclid in Byzantium and later, once he had arrived in Rome, combined these with the ideas of Galen, who resided and taught in the capital until his death in 199[57]. Over the years, Theodotus managed to establish an educated circle of supporters. Since the sources remains silent about the members of this group, it is impossible to say anything to their background.

---

[51] Cf. infra, section 2.

[52] To the reliability of the Callixtus vita in the *Refutatio* see in general HANDL, forthcoming a and to this episode in special id., forthcoming b.

[53] Hippol. ref. 9,7,1 (GCS Hippol. 3, 240,16/22). Cf. M. SIMONETTI, Sabellio e il sabellianismo: StudStoricRel 4 (1980); W. A. BIENERT, Wer war Sabellius?: StudPatr 40 (2006).

[54] For the »local flavour« see G. D. FARNEY, Romans and Italians: J. McInerney (ed.), A companion to ethnicity in the ancient Mediterranean (Chichester 2014) 449/50; R. M. SOLDEVILA, Art. Sabellus: A prosopography to Martial's epigrams (2019). Basil the Great referred first to Sabellius' Libyan origins: Basil. ep. 125,1 (Courtonne 31,26).

[55] Hippol. ref. 9,7,1 (GCS Hippol. 3, 240,16/22); PsTert. haer. 8,2 (CCL 2, 1410,5/11); Eus. h. e. 5,28,6 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 500,26/502,7).

[56] H. G. SNYDER, Shoemakers and syllogisms. Theodotus »the Cobbler« and his school: id. 2020, 185 suggest that the near destruction of Byzantium in

194 (or rather, in 195/96, cf. infra, n. 88) by Septimius Severus during the war against Pescennius Niger and the following deprivation of the city and its citizens might prompted Theodotus to move to Rome. This suggestion is particularly intriguing because it would provide very concrete motivation that is otherwise completely absent in the evidence. It would, however, also imply that Theodotus managed to establish himself economically and as a teacher (both from scratch); that he found a community-school and became prominent enough get on the radar of the mainstream church; that he then come into conflict with it; and finally, that he was excluded by Victor – all in a time frame of four/five or maximum six years. Such short time span is not impossible, but perhaps not the most likely of all possibilities either.

[57] R. WALZER, Galen on Jews and Christians (London 1949) 75/86; W. A. LÖHR, Theodotus der Lederarbeiter und Theodotus der Bankier. Ein Beitrag zur römischen Theologiegeschichte des zweiten und dritten Jahrhunderts: ZNW 87 (1996) 103f.

Similarly, the sources do not reveal how and why the Theodotus' circle came in conflict with the mainstream church. One learns only that bishop Victor excluded them[58]. Despite the exclusion and the active heresiographical defamation in the *Refutatio* and by Pseudo-Tertullian, the Theodotian school apparently continued to flourish. The second generation of leaders made considerable efforts to consolidate and reorient the community. Apart from the famous Natalius affair, we hardly know anything more than their names, Asclepiodotus and Theodotus, and the latter's profession, moneychanger[59]. It is likely that both leaders were first-generation migrants to Rome. Beside their distinctive Greek names, inscriptions during the Principate reveal that seven individuals named Asclepiodotus are known to have been slaves or freedman and further four inscriptions explicitly refer to immigration: two individuals from Nicodemia in Asia Minor, one from Scythia and another, a Christian of unknown origin[60]. Likewise, six people named Theodotus were recorded as slaves and two migrants departing from Zeugma at the Euphrates, and his predecessor from Byzantium[61]. What is more, Theodotus' involvement in the business of money-changing, which was generally considered as immoral and thus as taboo for members of the aristocracy, may suggest a non-elite social milieu, particularly of slaves and freedmen[62].

The only one known attempt of consolidation undertaken by the second generation Theodotians was the establishment of church-like structures for their school-community. They hired the confessor Natalius, appointed him to their bishop and according to Eusebius, they offered him a decent monthly salary of 150 *denarii*[63]. As a confessor, he was a well-integrated and honourable member of the mainstream church, or at least, he was before he accepted the appointment. His quite distinctive Latin name suggests that he might originate from Rome or Italy[64].

The sources name two further persons belonging to the second (or possibly even third?) generation Theodotians. Apart from their obviously Greek names, nothing known about Hermophilus and Apolloniades[65]. In this respect, there is hardly any difference with another intellectual called Artemon. Although the anonymous anti-Artemon source of Eusebius refers to him and to his adoptianistic teachings, it neither does reveal anything about his person nor his origins[66].

[58] Cf. HANDL 2016, 22/5.

[59] Eus. h. e. 5,28,9 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 504,17/21).

[60] IGUrbRom 377. 378; H. SOLIN, Graffiti del Palatino (Helsinki 1966) nr. 249; S. PANCIERA, Iscrizioni sepolcrali latine di Roma. Inediti e revisioni: Miscellanea greca e romana 18 (1994) nr. 87.

[61] IUR VI, 17373.

[62] Cf. S. MRATSCHEK-HALFMANN, Divites et praepotentes. Reichtum und soziale Stellung in der Literatur der Prinzipatszeit (Stuttgart 1993) 105f for *senatores* and 177f for *equites*.

[63] Eus. h. e. 5,28,10 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 504,21/23) and see A. HANDL, From slave to bishop. Callixtus' early

ecclesial career and mechanisms of clerical promotion: ZsAntChrist 25 (2021) 59f for the background and dynamics around his appointment.

[64] W. SCHULZE, Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen² (Berlin 1966) 53; H. SOLIN / O. SALOMIES, Repertorium nominum gentilium et cognominum Latinorum (Hildesheim 1988) 125, with additional references.

[65] Eus. h. e. 5,28,17 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 506,4/8).

[66] Eus. h. e. 5,28,1 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 500,3/6) and see M. WILLING, Eusebius von Cäsarea als Häreseograph (Berlin 2008) 283f.

2.5 Florinus

Although the early life of presbyter Florinus remains obscure, Irenaeus recalls seeing him at Smyrna as an influential member of the imperial court who tried to impress Polycarp with his wealth and position[67]. Some 30 years later, Florinus dwelled in Rome and served as presbyter[68]. When and why he moved to Rome and whether he was still member of the imperial court at this later date, is unknown. His position as a presbyter in the mainstream church of Rome suggests, however, that he was not a recent newcomer to the capital. Apparently, he spent his old age composing of theological treatises with a Valentinian edge. Although he was Victor's presbyter and thus a member of the presbyters' college, his actions remained unnoticed or perhaps ignored by the church representatives. This attitude changed when Irenaeus urged the church of Rome to take action against this »heretical« wolf in an »orthodox« lamb's clothing[69].

It is difficult to determine whether Florinus was a migrant or not: On the one hand, he first appears in our sources in Smyrna[70]. On the other, the possibility cannot be ruled out that he was born or grew up in Rome (or in Italy?) and that he only later travelled to Smyrna in official imperial business. His name, which is genuinely Roman, points in this direction. Moreover, it is likely that he did not import Valentinian teachings from Asia, but rather developed them in Rome, where Valentinus worked for ca. 15 years and where several schools operated that were more or less affiliated with his teachings[71]. As a presbyter, however, Florinus was a well-integrated and respected member of the mainstream church before his exclusion.

2.6 Other intellectuals

Eusebius gives an account about the Christian intellectual Rhodon, who lived in Rome during the tenure of Bishops Eleutherus and Victor. Although the biographical information is minimal, one learns that Rhodon was a native of Asia Minor who travelled to Rome to study in the school of another Christian intellectual, Tatian. His extant work concentrates mainly on combatting the Marcionites of his days, which strongly suggests that his intellectual formation took place in Rome[72].

Another identifiable individual is the Author of the *Refutatio*. Despite his voluminous work, very little is known about him[73]. Since the evidence is fragmentary and inconsistent, it is challenging to draw solid conclusions about his origins. On the one

---

[67] Eus. h. e. 5,20,1/6 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 482,20/484, 25). For the Florinus affair see HANDL 2016, 13/21, for his background M. FLEXSENHAR III, Christians in Caesar's household (University Park 2019) 137/40.
[68] Eus. h. e. 5,15 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 458,22/7).
[69] Iren. frg. 28 HARVEY, and see HANDL 2016, 16/21.
[70] Eus. h. e. 5,20,5 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 482,21). Irenaeus only claims that he saw Florinus in Asia, when he tried to gain attention of Polycarp. Since Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna, it is highly likely that Florinus spent time there.

[71] Cf. MARKSCHIES 1992 cit. (n. 4) 302/33 and I. DUNDERBERG, Beyond gnosticism. Myth, lifestyle, and society in the school of Valentinus (New York 2008) for the »Valentinian schools«.
[72] Eus. h. e. 5, 13,1/8 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 454,15/458,11) and see K. GRESCHAT, »Woher hast du den Beweis für deine Lehre?« Der altkirchliche Lehrer Rhodon und seine Auseinandersetzung mit den römischen Marcioniten: StudPatr 34 (2001); LAMPE 2003, 285/91.
[73] See SIMONETTI 2009 cit. (n. 33); SCHOLTEN 2011 cit. (n. 33); HANDL, forthcoming a.

fig. 1. Groups.

Name	Origins
Quartodecimans	Asia Minor
New Prophets / Montanists	Phrygia (Asia Minor)
»Monarchians«	Asia Minor
Theodotians	Asia Minor / Rome

fig. 2. Individuals (*Indirect evidence based on reconstruction).

Name	Origin	Role/Profession	Group
Blastus	Asia Minor*	leader?	Quartodeciman
Proclus	Asia Minor*	leader	»Orthodox« Montanist, 2nd generation
Aeschines	Unknown	leader	Monarchian Montanist, 2nd generation
Gaius (Cajus)	Rome*	presbyter?	Mainstream church
Praxeas	Asia	confessor	Monarchian, 1st generation
Epigonus	Smyrna	deacon	Monarchian, 1st generation
Cleomenes	Unknown	leader	Monarchian, 2nd generation
Theodotus the tanner	Byzantium	leader, tanner	Theodotian, 1st generation
Theodotus the money changer	Asia*	leader, money-changer	Theodotian, 2nd generation
Asclepiodotus	Unknown	leader	Theodotian, 2nd generation
Apollonides	Unknown	intellectual	Theodotian, 2nd generation
Hermophilus	Unknown	intellectual	Theodotian, 2nd generation
Natalius	Rome*	confessor	Mainstream / Theodotian, 2nd generation
Artemon	Unknown	leader	Adoptianist (Theodotian?, 2nd / 3rd generation?)
Florinus	Rome*	presbyter	Mainstream / Valentinian
Rhodon	Asia	intellectual	Mainstream?
Author of *Refutatio*	Asia Minor*	intellectual, presbyter?	Mainstream
Sabellius	Libya?/Rome*	leader	Monarchian, 3nd generation

hand, he composed his works in Greek. On the other hand, he uses Latin loan-words and he is well informed about Roman legislation and customs. Moreover, his admiration of bishop Victor suggests that he might already have served him, probably as presbyter. Therefore, he may have come to Rome at a young age or perhaps he was a first or even a second generation immigrant[74].

3. Migration patterns

Although the extant sources hardly permit more than glimpses into the movement of Christians and their conflicts due to the movement, some characteristics patterns, often not that different from modern-day migration, can be observed.

To begin with, migration and migrants were not only central to the development of Christianity in Rome from the beginning, but also as late as the end of second century. Two out of the four groups which clashed with the mainstream church of Rome originated in various parts of Asia Minor and a significant number of their members arrived at Rome in this period (see fig. 1): The Quartodecimans' homeland was the province of Asia and New Prophets emerged in Phrygia. Although the founders of the Theodotians arrived from Byzantion and modalistic ideas were developed in Smyrna (or somewhere in Asia), there is no evidence which would suggest that both groups would particularly have attracted migrants from those regions. The movement of persons shows also heterogeneous patterns. The overwhelming majority of individuals whose biographical information can be reconstructed appears to have originated from outside of Rome (see fig. 2). Some, like Apollonides, Hermophilus, Cleomenes, and Artemon, bear Greek names, although this fact is not sufficient to consider them as migrants. In contrast, four persons, Florinus, Natalius, Gaius and Sabellius, out of the thirteen individuals with reasonably certain origins could possibly be considered as natives to Rome (or Italy). Despite the usual silence about the place of origins for people moved to Rome[75], in four cases we can be more or less certain. Rhodon and Praxeas arrived from Asia to Rome, Epigonus from Symrna and Theodotus the tanner from Byzantion in the province Bithynia et Pontus. In contrast, the biographical context of six individuals, Aeschines, Asclepiodotus, Blastus, Proclus, Theodotus the moneychanger, and the Author of the *Refutatio* can only be tentatively reconstructed based on onomastic criteria and some social historical considerations. Despite the limitations of this material, it seems likely that they were emigrants from the eastern part of the Empire as well. The possibility however, that some of them, like the Author of the *Refutatio*, could have been first-generation immigrant rather than foreign-born, cannot be ruled out. The same applies to their opponents, to the defenders of local traditions and representatives of the mainstream church of Rome. Onomastic observations for Zephyrinus and Callixtus also suggest that they may have originated from outside Rome, yet the sources are simply too patchy to draw compelling conclusions[76].

---

[74] HANDL, forthcoming a.
[75] NOY 2000, 56.
[76] Despite of the *Liber pontificalis*, which is in this respect completely unreliable, there is hardly any evidence for the origins of bishops of Rome in the course of the second century. To the reliability and agenda of the pre-constantinian lives see A. HANDL, Globale Strategie oder Belange lokaler Verwaltung?

Regardless of all limitations of this evidence, a trend cannot be overlooked: The majority of the known protagonist, »orthodox« and heterodox alike, were not natives of Rome, but were migrants or at least had a background in migration.

The determination of migrant's origins is likewise challenging. Again, the limited figures of the sample are hardly suitable for statistical analysis, yet a trend is nevertheless striking: All groups and those individuals whose background can be reconstructed arrived from Asia Minor. The tentatively reconstructed migration patterns of uncertain persons also point in the same direction. This trend is anything but surprising. Long before the first Christians arrived it the capital, strong ties connected Asia Minor and Rome. Its strategic geographic location – a link between East and West – fostered trade, cultural exchange, circulation of goods, ideas, and people[77]. Epigraphic evidence attests above average number of migrants in Rome from these provinces across all classes, almost exclusively all civilian[78]. In addition, since the missionary journeys of Paul, cities of Asia Minor such as Ephesus, Smyrna, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and so on, developed into important and influential centres of Christianity. The presence of Christians was not only significant among the populations of those cities, but apparently also among those left their homes for Rome. Even though these factors provide a plausible explanation for the high visibility of Christian migrants from Asia Minor in the extant sources, they hardly help explain the virtually complete absence of Christians from other parts of the empire. This is all the more remarkable, because the previously mentioned factors are also applicable to populations in Syria, Egypt, and to a lesser extent, to North Africa. Christianity was traditionally present in these regions from a very early period and migrants to Rome from these regions are also well documented in inscriptions. Yet, Christian migrants from Syria, Egypt and North Africa are absent in the evidence, unless one accepts the rather dubious Libyan origins of Sabellius. All this, however, does not necessary imply that there were significantly fewer (or no) Christian immigrants from Syria or Egypt[79]. Given the nature of the sources – predominantly heresiological works focusing on combatting dissidents and »heretic« ideas – it is more likely that the lack of conflict rather than the actual absence of such populations produced this asymmetric picture. In other words, Christian migrants from Syria and Egypt may not have posed a significant enough challenge to the mainstream church and its representatives that their presence in the city was deemed noteworthy in heresiological context.

Anmerkungen zu den bischöflichen Dekreten im vorkonstantinischen Abschnitt des Liber Pontificalis: K. Herbers / M. Simperl (ed.), Das Buch der Päpste. Der Liber Pontificalis. Ein Schlüsseldokument europäischer Geschichte (Freiburg 2020) 78/94. Regardless the trustworthiness of Roman episcopal lists in general, the fact alone is telling that the first genuine Latin name appears, with Victor at the end of second century. In contrast, both of his successors Zephyrinus and Callixtus bear Greek names, though particularly in Callixtus's case it is rather possible that he was born in Rome and was not imported from the East. In any case, his name was popular among slaves. Cf. HANDL, forthcoming a. Even less is known about Zephyrinus. His remarkably infrequently used name (eight individuals altogether, five name variants, four freedmen), however, sticks out of the evidence. Cf. SOLIN 2003 cit. (n. 31) 1, 417.

[77] Cf. supra, n. 27, and see especially C. MAREK, Geschichte Kleinasiens in der Antike (München 2010) 497/617 for social, ethnic, economic, and cultural context.

[78] NOY 2000, 229/34.

[79] NOY 2000, 58f.

Despite the labels given to the various competing Christian groups – both by ancient sources and modern authors – they were not in all likelihood large, homogenous, and cohesive communities of believers. Nor is there evidence to suggest that (Christian) migrants arrived in larger groups from Asia Minor in this period or that their large numbers triggered something like a »migration crisis«. Rather, individuals, families, or other small, displaced groups better fit the impression conveyed by the sources, namely the gradual expansion of those groups over time. Factionalism within some groups – this can be observed over generations of the Theodotians and New Prophets – also points in this direction. The continuous stream of migration, even if in comparably small numbers, produced cultural/religious interaction that both complemented and challenged the mainstream church, and influenced the composition and evolution of these smaller heterodox groups.

Gender representation amongst the migrants is also asymmetric. In fact, not a single female name is recorded, nor is there any suggestion in the sources that widespread forced or voluntary movement of Christian women to Rome existed in the period surveyed in this essay. Although it might be well expected that women would be underrepresented in the surviving ancient sources, the complete lack of female migrants is nonetheless striking. It is probably needless to say that these gender figures are hardly representative of actual migration patterns[80]. Traditionally, the lack of female migrants has been understood at face value: migration was dominated by men, both pagan and Christian. This observation was based largely on late 19th century migration patterns[81]. Recent scholarship, however, has increasingly challenged this model. Thanks to a better understanding of the »urban graveyard effect«, as well as new methodological approaches to epigraphic evidence and family migration, scholars now argue that, similar to contemporary migration[82], the proportion of male and female migrants to ancient Rome were more balanced[83]. Again, like the over-representation of migrants from Asia Minor, the polemic nature of the extant sources might provide a plausible explanation to the gender imbalance, too.

Two other aspects of movement, status and the permanency of residence are also difficult to reconstruct with any degree of accuracy. Apart from Callixtus, the sources are notoriously silent about the status of migrants and in the most cases, any reconstruction is all but hopeless[84]. It is also almost impossible to determine whether the migrants reached Rome became permanent residents or left again after a temporary stay. The fact that the Romans did not conceptualise[85] the difference between permanent and temporary residency, makes any attempt to a guesswork. What is more, the

[80] Cf. Noy 2000, 60/3; Woolf 2013 cit. (n. 26); Tacoma 2016, 118f.

[81] Cf. the influential study of G. La Piana, Foreign groups in Rome during the first centuries of the Empire: HarvTheolRev 20 (1927) 204/7, particularly n. 34.

[82] For the most recent summary see the World Migration Report 2020 (Geneva 2019) 22. Although the summarised gender proportion is almost completely balanced (52 per cent male and 48 per cent female), there are significant differences between regions. Cf. ibid. 53/122.

[83] For the »urban graveyard effect« see note 24 and for new methodological approaches H. Eckardt / J. L. Barta, Roman diasporas. Archaeological approaches to mobility and diversity in the Roman Empire (Portsmouth 2010); S. Hin, Revisiting urban graveyard theory. Migrant flows in Hellenistic and Roman Athens: de Ligt/Tacoma 2016, 234/63 and for conceptualisation Tacoma 2016, 106/40.

[84] Tacoma 2016, 76/85.

[85] For instance Sen. ad Helv. 6,2f and cf. Noy 2000, 3. 90f; Tacoma 2016, 30/5.

surviving sources usually only provide a snapshot of the lives of individuals, not full and detailed biographies[86]. Two instances, however, suggest that migration patterns were complex, with some migrants coming to Rome for the long term, while others stayed only temporarily in the capital before moving elsewhere. Praxeas, if he indeed left Rome for Carthage as is usually believed, and Florinus, might serve as representatives for these multifaceted migrant patterns. Based on the epigraphic evidence, it is nonetheless not unreasonable to conjecture that the journey ended, regardless of intentions, in Rome for many, yet the extant evidence hardly permit to draw any conclusions to the matter.

Whether voluntary or forced, the motivations that prompted men and women to leave their homes for Rome were likely diverse. Declining local economic conditions, catastrophes of all sorts including political instability, civil war, and harvest failures, cultural, religious, or family related alienation, may all have acted as »push« factors, encouraging some to leave home. »Pull« factors, such as the search for new educational, economic, or intellectual opportunities, and the attractiveness of the »cosmopolis« must also have encouraged movement to the capital[87]. But the nature of the sources, only a handful of which provide anecdotal information about the motives of migrants, means that these must remain educated guesses. Real or imagined economic advantages or the crisis accompanying the siege of Byzantium between 193 and 195/96 by Septimius Severus during his conflict with Pescennius Niger might have played a role for both Theodotus to move to Rome, for instance[88]. If not fleeing from a crisis, then it still remains unclear whether the economic or intellectual opportunity was the primary motivating factor. In any case, his professional activities probably provided him solid foundations for intellectual endeavours. In contrast, there is a good chance that Rhodon indeed moved to Rome to benefit from the educational chances the capital offered.

Remarkably, not even the most polemical sources like the *Refutatio* or Tertullian suggest a causal relationship between migration and the motivation to spread teachings in other parts of the world. Although Tertullian explicitly states for instance that Praxeas »was the first to introduce this perversity in Rome from Asia«[89], this does not imply that Praxeas' primary motivation to move to Rome was to import these ideas. Moreover, drawing far-reaching conclusions from the material is risky because the ex-

---

[86] A good example is Epigonus. Regardless whether his person was invented or not, only two key moments of his life were relevant from the heresiological perspective: his displacement to Rome and the foundation of a school-community. Hippol. ref. 9,7,1 (GCS Hippol. 3, 240,17/9). To the reliability of the *Refutatio* to the spread of Monarchianism in Rome see Handl, forthcoming a.

[87] Noy 2000, 87/90. Tacoma 2016, 35/48 differentiated between ten major types of migration by combining various pull and push factors.

[88] Dio Cass. 75,12 reports a two year long siege of the town before its fall at some point between the end of 195 and beginning of 196. Concerning the employment opportunities, Tacoma 2016, 176/84

expressed some doubts due to the uninterrupted flow of forced migrants to the capital. Both professions, tanner and money-changer, are, however, well attested in the sources. For the tanners (*corarii*) see Iuvenal. 14,200/5; Martial. 6,93 or CIL VI, 1117. 1118 and cf. S. E. Bond, Trade and taboo. Disreputable professions in the Roman Mediterranean (Ann Arbor 2016) 97/125 especially 114/20. J. Andreau, La vie financière dans le monde romain. Les métiers de manieurs d'argent (IVe s. av. J.-C./IIIe s. ap. J.-C.) (Rome 1987) 177/219 offers a comprehensive list for the moneychanger (*nummularii*).

[89] Tert. adv. Prax. 1,5 (CCL 2, 1159,20f): *Nam iste primus ex Asia hoc genus perversitatis intulit Romam.*

tant accounts, mainly heresiologies, focus predominantly on the intellectual activities of heterodox teachers and their teachings, which as a result make this artificially appear to be a motivation for migration. This, however, does not exclude the possibility that spreading ideas could not have played a significant role in one or other individual case.

Apart from one single exception in the *Refutatio*, the extant sources do not show ethnic sensitivity when it comes to migrants. They neither do associate particular ethnicities with migrants, nor do they display obvious or oblique hostility to migrants *qua* migrants[90]. Similarly, they do not exploit supposedly stereotypic behaviour or thoughts, nor had any negative (or positive) connotation for the person or group. The *Refutatio*'s emblematic note about the »ethnically Phrygian«[91] New Prophets appears to challenge this observation. The evidence, however, is not that clear-cut as it seems to be on the first sight. On the one hand, the Author successfully links popular discriminative prejudices against the Phrygians[92] to the New Prophets and thus use them to discredit his opponents. On the other hand, the Author did not invent the notion that the New Prophets were »ethnically Phrygian«. Rather, he merely re-contextualised an already broadly spread (mis)conception of the heresiological tradition, namely, that all »Montanists« are ethnically Phrygians[93]. As this reference to ethnicity remains singular also within the *Refutatio*, the Author hardly can be considered an ancient xenophobic. Rather, he acts like a typical well-educated intellectual who understands to combine popular prejudices and heresiologic traditions in order to forge a powerful rhetorical weapon.

Similar mechanisms are at play when authors use the place of origin as a suffix to the name. For instance, the Author of the *Refutatio* attached »Byzantine« to the name of Theodotus to differentiate him from his successor[94]. Other sources like Eusebius distinguish him and his successor by referring to his profession rather that to his origin.

---

[90] D. E. WILHITE, Tertullian the African. An anthropological reading of Tertullian's context and identities (Berlin 2007) 133/45 argued that Tertullian had a sense for ethnic issues and that he distinguished between Roman, African and Christian ethnicities. Moreover, his writings implicitly refer to Christianity as *tertium genus*, yet he understands it as religion rather than ethnicity. Tert. nat. 1,8,1 (CCL 1, 26,1): *plane, tertium genus dicimur*; scorp. 10,10 (ibid. 2, 1089,15): *in circo, ubi facile conclamant, usque. quo genus tertium*. Cf. E. S. GRUEN, Christians as a »third race«. Is ethnicity at issue?: Paget/Lieu 2017 cit. (n. 7) 246/9.

[91] Hippol. ref. 8,19,1 (GCS Hippol. 3, 238,4f): Ἕτεροι δέ, καὶ αὐτοὶ αἱρετικώτεροι τὴν φύσιν, Φρύγες τὸ γένος, προληφθέντες ὑπὸ γυναίων ἠπάτηνται …, »Other people, more heretical by nature and ethnically Phrygian, were taken in by hussies and deceived.«

[92] In the Athenian drama, for instance, Phrygians were often characterised as notorious cowards. Eur. Orest. 1369/526 and see K. DEVRIES, The nearly Other. The Attic vision of Phrygians and Lydians:

B. Cohen (ed.), Not the classical ideal. Athens and the construction of the Other in Greek art (Leiden 2000) 341f. A popular proverb associated them with servility: *Phrygem plagis fieri solere meliorem*, »A Phrygian is usually made better by beating« (Cic. Flacc. 65). Cf. J. B. RIVES, Phrygian tales: GreekRomByzStud 45 (2010) 238f. Finally, but for here most importantly, they were considered as not particularly smart, or frankly, stupid, like the mythic king of the Phrygians, Minas.

[93] The early third century *Adversus omnes haeresis*, likely written in Rome, is embedded in the same tradition. PsTert. haer. 7,2 (CCL 2, 1409,14). The late second century sources of Eusebius are hereto no exception. Cf. e.g. supra, n. 32 and TABBERNEE 2007, 222f.

[94] Hippol. ref. 7,35,1 and 8,36,1 (GCS Hippol. 3, 222,1; 222,15). SNYDER 2020 cit. (n. 56) 185 suggests that associating »Byzantine« with Theodotus after the town's fall to the hands of Septimius Severus »may have carried with the implicit charge of rebellion.« This is certainly a possibility, but by no means definitive.

This interchangeability of identifiers demonstrates that they were introduced as a practical necessity rather than to offer an ethnic explanation based on stereotypes. Other instances simply contextualise or serve rhetoric purposes. Tertullian noted merely the origins of Praxeas to provide information about his idea's origins. In contrast, the Author of the *Refutatio* mentioned explicitly Smyrna as departure point of Epigonus in order to establish a clear link between Noëtus of Smyrna and the school of Cleomenes in Rome in line with his heresiological method of *successio haereticorum*[95]. In both cases, the origins are recorded to support a good (rhetoric) argument, but do not make any attempts to exploit possible prejudices associated with the places referred to. Although the majority of the sources have their *Sitz im Leben* in fight against heretics, their condemnations are based on doctrinal errors or ethical »misconducts« but never on place of origin. Even Tertullian, who for instance downplay the sufferings of Praxeas by a sarcastic remark of a »short discomfort of imprisonment«[96], does not polemicize about the confessor's origins or ethnicity. The same applies to the Quartodecimans in the *Refutatio*. On the one hand, these are characterised as negative as no other group apart from the »Callixtians«, the Author restrained from exploiting popular stereotypes[97] to defame them on the other hand.

The initial assumption that migrants imported their traditions and doctrines from their homeland, cultivated, and if necessary, defended them in their new home, seems to be confirmed by the recorded conflicts between newcomers and locals. What is more, it seems this observation applies to aversions and prejudices as well. For instance, Praxeas' »private action« against the New Prophets resulting in the recall of the »letters of peace« was likely rooted in the early opposition to the movement in Phrygia and other parts of Asia Minor[98]. Evidently, Praxeas simply »imported« this attitude when he moved to Rome. Although the sources are dominated by »scandalous« clashes between more or less (self-)segregated groups of newcomers on the one hand and the mainstream church and its allegedly monolithic traditions on the other, a handful of instances suggest, however, far more complex processes. Rhodon from Asia Minor, for example, received his education in the school of Tatian in Rome, which largely shaped his intellectual perspective. As it seems, Rhodon was attracted by the educational opportunities Rome offered and embraced local theological traditions, ideas, and attitudes, even if he later turned against them. In this respect, the journey of Theodotus the Byzantine was probably even more complex, although it cannot be inferred with certainty whether he imported his adoptianistic ideas from his home or developed them in Rome. There is, however, a good chance that he combined his ideas with scientific text-criticism he encountered in philosophical schools in Rome, among

---

[95] In contrast, in many other cases, like Kerdon, Apelles, or the Quatodecimans, neither origins, nor geographic focus of the group's activities were provided, which makes here the heresiographic intentions all the more obvious. Hippol. ref. 7,37,1/2; 7,38,1/5; 8,18,1/2 (GCS Hippol. 3, 223,12/6; 224,1/ 225,2; 237,15/238,3). Cf. K. Koschorke, Hippolyts Ketzerbekämpfung und Polemik gegen die Gnostiker. Eine tendenzkritische Untersuchung seiner »Refutatio omnium haeresium« (Wiesbaden 1975) 56/60.

[96] Tert. adv. Prax. 1,4 (CCL 2, 1159,22–23): ⟨homo⟩ *et alias inquietus, insuper de iactatione martyrii inflatus ob solum et simplex et breve carceris taedium.*

[97] La Piana 1927 cit. (n. 81) 228/31 collected a good number of popular stereotypes and prejudices preserved in works of classical authors.

[98] Tabbernee 2007, 3/21 and 36/8.

them prominently and most likely the school of Galen[99]. The intellectual exchange must have been stimulating; the Theodotians rapidly developed a quite impressive tradition-awareness and self-confidence. Their second-generation leader Theodotus the moneychanger claimed already to be the only true representative of »orthodox« teachings and the only legitimate successor of bishop Victor[100]. In contrast, Florinus' story shows a completely different pattern. Despite his temporary residence in Smyrna and his attempt to gain the attention of Polycarp, his thinking was mainly influenced by Valentinus or the »Valentinians« he encountered in Rome. These individual examples show not only several distinct patterns of movement and transfer of culture, ideas, and traditions, but also elements of various processes of acculturation. Rhodon's intellectual journey might be described as enculturation; the Theodotians' development shows various stages of acculturation like adaption, integration and marginalisation with an attempt to accommodation[101].

4. Epilogue

The dichotomy between the few[102] but in the sources all the more dominant clashes and the in evidence invisible but peacefully coexisting majority of migrants[103], as well as the previously discussed individual cases raise the question about the dynamics of

---

[99] Cf. supra, n. 10.

[100] Eus. h. e. 5,28,3 (GCS Eus. 2,1, 500,12/7).

[101] D. SAM / J. W. BERRY, Acculturation and adaptation: J. W. Berry / M. H. Segall / Ç. Kağıtçıbaşı (ed.), Handbook of cross-cultural psychology[2] (Boston 1998) 291/326.

[102] Given the time span of ca. thirty years between the election of Victor around 189 and the death of Callixtus around 222, the five recorded clashes are statistically speaking not particularly frequent.

[103] The evidence, as it is handed down to us, might at first glance appear to provide historical confirmation for the modern populist vilification of migration, especially the imagined danger posed by migrants who sought to »infiltrate«, undermine, and finally dominate local populations and traditions. One could, for instance, point to the apparent correlation between migration to Rome in the second and third centuries and social/religious conflict, with the »troublemakers« drawn principally from male migrants who came to the city from »the East«. Such a reading would further suggest that migrants not only challenged, but actually »threatened« the culture and traditions of local Christians, and only the direct, forceful intervention by the mainstream church prevented a »cultural catastrophe« and the »extinction« of the »orthodox« Latin church. But this would be a radical distortion of the history of migration in antiquity that does not stand up to historical scrutiny. Similar misunderstandings (or conscious misrepresentation) of the facts can be de-

tected in contemporary anti-migration rhetoric. As an example *par excellence* can serve the so called »Soros Migration Plan« or simply »Soros Plot«, a fictional conspiracy theory named after the Hungarian born American billionaire George (György) Soros, which was invented and subsequently widely propagated by the Orbán government in Hungary to demonize (illegal) migration in the wake of the so called »European migrant crisis« in 2015. For the analysis of this plot see B. DIVINSKÝ, Soros' Migration Plan. A myth or reality?: Slovenský národopis 65 (2017) 427/39; for its utilization in propaganda see P. PLENTA, Conspiracy theories as a political instrument. Utilization of anti-Soros narratives in Central Europe: Contemporary politics 26 (2020) 512/30. Returning to the ancient evidence, it is important to recognize that the equation of migrants with danger and disorder is deeply misleading. First of all, it fails to recognise the biased nature of the sources, most of which were composed in a polemical context and thus represent only one side of a given conflict. Furthermore, the many sources deal with heresies, and as such, are primarily interested in defining borders of acceptable belief on the one hand, and to condemn everything else on the other hand. What is more, the sources omit accounts of peaceful coexistence and/or examples of the integration of newcomers and the larger Christian community in Rome, which must account for the vast majority of interactions between migrants and locals. The surviving sources represent only the tip of an ice-

migration and acculturation processes. This question is all the more interesting because in a society in which ethnicity did not function as a primary identity-marker – Christians were obviously not an exception – demarcations must be made in other ways and alternative indicators must have been used to define belonging and to create and protect the limits of the community[104]. Within the Christian communities, the slowly developing concept of »orthodoxy« and »heresy« served as an increasingly important identity-marker[105]. But this was only one of several markers of identity, and moreover, as we have seen, there were also many examples of more or less formalised coexistence between the »orthodox« and various groups of »heretics«[106]. The exact nature of the relationship between these groups, and the degree to which they shared structures of organization and authority are, however, largely elusive. What were the practical implications, for example, of the issue or recall of »letters of peace« or the exchange of Eucharistic gifts for the structural, organisational, and hierarchic unity of Roman Christian communities at the end of the second century? Did these symbolic acts imply the acceptance of a single (?) episcopal authority and if so, to what extent? Moreover, which kind of episcopal authority is implicated here in the first place? These questions are difficult to answer, in large part because Roman Christianity was not monolithic or unchanging in this period, as the development of the Roman episcopal authority illustrates[107]. The gradual growth of the power of the bishop coincides with increasing conflicts over religious practice and belief, which in turn suggest that as the mainstream church gained authority, it became increasingly intolerant of non-mainstream-conform expressions of faith. This changing attitude must also have had implications for the general reactions towards newcomers and for the first- and second-generation migrants who had already settled and established a more or less stable relationship with the mainstream church. The gradual formation of a local »Roman« Christian identity alongside the slowly emerging centralised hierarchy[108] seems to increase pressure on migrants and migrant communities to (re)define their relationship with the mainstream church on a structural, theological, and probably also on the social level. The sources discussed here are almost the only examples of those

---

berg, which is by no means representative of Christian migration in general or for drawing universally valid conclusions regarding the conflicts caused by migration to Rome in particular. Ironically, a considerable number of the allegedly »orthodox« and/ or »local« members of the mainstream church were migrants as well, or at least had migration background, as generations of Roman bishops impressively demonstrates.

[104] Tacoma 2016, 204/40 discuss extensively various implications of acculturation processes and analysing the importance of factors like ethnicity, religion, language, occupation, associations and alike for the integration or segregation of migrants in Rome. D. Boyarin, Border lines. The partition of Judaeo-Christianity (Philadelphia 2004) demonstrated that Jewish and Christian theology pursued doctrinal purity on the one hand and social coherence on the other hand in order to create and pro-

tect the boundaries between Christian and Jewish communities.

[105] The issue was explored from various perspectives in the anthology E. Iricinschi / H. M. Zellentin (ed.), Heresy and identity in Late Antiquity (Tübingen 2008). See also M. Kahlos / F. Zanella, Art. Rechtgläubigkeit: RAC 28 (2017) 760/5.

[106] Similar P. Trebilco, Studying »fractionation« in earliest Christianity in Rome and Ephesus: C. Breytenbach / J. Frey (ed.), Reflections on the early Christian history of religion (Leiden 2013) 293/333.

[107] Handl 2016; id., forthcoming a.

[108] C. Markschies, Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen. Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der antiken christlichen Theologie (Tübingen 2007) 336/83 discusses various models of Christian identity in correlation of doctrinal diversity and institutional plurality.

cases where the »(re)negotiation« encountered difficulties, suffered setbacks, or failed entirely.

The examples considered in this essay raise yet another question: what migration model(s) and which cultural metaphors (melting pot, salad bowl, etc.) are best suited to describe the dynamics of cultural and social interaction reflected in the evidence of Christian migration to Rome? This is one of several promising avenues worth exploring for a better understanding how migration shaped Christianity in Rome, to which extent are migration profile(s) of Christians similar or different to the so far reconstructed patterns of migration streams to Rome, and whether, and if yes than how those »Christian patterns« alter the already established models.

Leuven   András Handl

Bibliography

J. Behr, John the theologian and his paschal gospel. A prologue to theology (Oxford 2019).

L. de Ligt / L. E. Tacoma (ed.), Migration and mobility in the early Roman empire = Studies in Global Social History 23 (Leiden 2016).

A. Handl, Viktor I. (189?/199?) von Rom und die Entstehung des »monarchischen« Episkopats in Rom: SacrErud 55 (2016) 7/56.

A. Handl, Calixtus I, der Bischof von Rom und der Konflikt um seine Person in der Refutatio omnium haeresium (Leiden, forthcoming a).

A. Handl, Praxeas und die Ausbreitung des sogenannten »Monarchianismus« in Rom zwischen Migration, innerchristlichen Konflikten und der Entstehung einer »Orthodoxie«. Eine Neubewertung: Why we sing. Music, word, and liturgy in early Christianity. Essays in honor of Anders Ekenberg's 75th birthday (Leiden, forthcoming b).

S. Heid, Gab es in Rom eine Gemeinde der Quartodezimaner?: RömQS 111 (2019) 5/26.

P. Lampe, From Paul to Valentinus. Christians at Rome in the first two centuries (Minneapolis 2003).

D. Noy, Foreigners at Rome. Citizens and strangers (London 2000).

H. G. Snyder (ed.), Christian teachers in second-century Rome. Schools and students in the ancient city = VigChr Suppl. 159 (Leiden 2020).

W. Tabbernee, Fake prophecy and polluted sacraments. Ecclesiastical and Imperial reactions to Montanism = ebd. 84 (Leiden 2007).

L. E. Tacoma, Moving Romans. Migration to Rome in the Principate (Oxford 2016).