Being Pagan, Being Christian in **Late Antiquity** and **Early Middle Ages**

Edited by

Katja Ritari, Jan R. Stenger and William Van Andringa

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

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For Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'identity is a kind of virtual focus to which we must refer in order to explain a certain number of things, but without it ever having any real existence' (Lévi-Strauss 1983, 156). Indeed, when applied to a group, Joël Candau notes, the term 'identity' is inappropriate because it can never designate a sameness: two people are never identical to each other (Candau 1998). Therefore it is certainly open to question whether we can speak of 'pagans' and 'Christians' in their generality, unless we adopt the religious framework of the ancient Church Fathers, which is precisely based on binary thinking. The term 'identity' is then used in a rather loose sense, close to the notion of likeness. In this case, then, cultural or collective identity is necessarily a representation constructed by the narrator on the basis of shared codes of meaning, shared heritages. Does collective identity exist, in the end, only in narrative processes? In texts? Can collective identity

be a state? A concrete state visible in a specific materiality that archaeology would capture? A group may share a memorial core, a cultural foundation or substratum, or what Ernest Gellner calls a 'fixed cognitive capital' that gives the group in question an identity (Gellner 1986, 38). This assertion, though accepted by many, is open to criticism. For it seems inaccurate to use the expressions 'cultural identity' and 'collective identity' to refer to a supposed state of the whole group when only a part of its members share the state in question and this common set of features, norms and beliefs is subject to the passing of time and incessant change.

In short, there can undoubtedly be *this* pagan or *this* Christian, *these* pagans or *these* Christians, but not *the* pagans or *the* Christians – just as in Evans-Pritchard (1940) there is *this* Nuer, *these* Nuer, but not *the* Nuer. Therefore, if one makes identity a fact or a reality, does one not hypostasise the collective – in this case, a pagan and Christian collective that is characterised first of all by a great variety of situations and can never be determined by a binary opposition, as the Fathers of the Church, imperial decrees, legal texts and pagan literature seek to do? Pagans and Christians of Late Antiquity exist only in the variety of behaviours and situations that the archaeological and literary records presented in this book document.

Indeed, identities are not constructed on the basis of a stable and objectively definable set of cultural traits but are produced and modified within the framework of relationships, reactions and social interactions from which emerge feelings of belonging and identity or ethnic worldviews, sometimes transient, sometimes visible, sometimes not. Should we look for distinctive signs, precise markers affirming a pagan or Christian identity? Yet this is to fall into the trap of rhetorical and narrative constructions that define and demarcate states. The religious landscape clearly differed between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. The late Roman empire, its successor states, and other emerging nations in Europe exhibited great regional variation with regard to religion, and often religious affiliations were anything but stable over time.

Éric Rebillard ([Chapter 2](#)) thus wonders about the existence of a material culture that made it possible to define a Christian or a pagan. Considering this from our contemporary world, we necessarily look for distinctive signs of religious states; but these are ultimately difficult to identify. Certain testimonies, few in number, such as sarcoph-

agi with biblical scenes or a few inscriptions clearly link individuals to their religion. Further, the presence of church buildings (especially from the 5th century onwards) makes it possible to identify Christian communities in the empire. However, these materialities do not create a collective identity; they are rather part of situations where one expresses one's attachment to one's religion or to a precise religious function, the existence of a community outside of any collective behaviour. It is therefore difficult to make the link between material culture and religious identity, as Rebillard argues.

The burials studied by Frédérique Blaizot (Chapter 3) are revealing of the variability of practices and their inconstant relationship with the religious norm. Thus, Christian graves are almost invisible in the 4th century and beyond. From the 5th century onwards, the graves *are* Christian simply because the society is Christian. But in no way do they define a Christian identity, except by their clustering around churches. In truth, in the 4th century, if there were no distinctive signs to identify pagan or Christian tombs, one might wonder whether the grouping of graves, within the same cemetery or in a specific necropolis, was not enough to create the recognition of a religious group which was only meaningful locally. The topography had to make sense. The problem is that topographical markers can only rarely identify the settlement of a religious group. As for funerary customs, they are part of rites of passage that have, for a long time, respected local custom, which it is customary to do, rather than dogmatic rules laid down by the Church: this is shown by the disparities encountered in urban and rural necropolises within the same city, studied by Blaizot.

This principle of topography is also valid for the sanctuaries, as William Van Andringa demonstrates (Chapter 4). In Gaul, the great civic sanctuaries were no longer rebuilt after the crisis of the 3rd century. It was therefore the entire religious (and therefore civic) system that was modified from that time onwards. People no longer gathered periodically for local festivals financed by the *euergetes* and according to the city's calendar. Even if some major festivals may have survived (as in Carthage, according to Augustine), Van Andringa speaks of religion in pieces and of tailor-made religion, of cults organised in the context of small groups, in the home or within neighbourhood groupings. It is easy to see how, in such a landscape, one could recognise *this* pagan (a notable who insisted on respecting his ancestral cults)

or *these* pagans (the group gathered around the altar) but hardly any pagans as opposed to Christians.

We must therefore refrain from dividing the world into pagans and Christians, as Ine Jacobs makes clear at the outset and with good reason (Chapter 5). Jacobs focuses her attention on a pagan-mythological statuary group of Sagalassos (south-western Turkey) exhibited in the main street in the middle of the 6th century. Where in the last decades scholars have directed their attention to secular explanations, Jacobs shows that understanding the statues' positive power for self-identified Christians could help explain their omnipresence in the cityscape.

The archaeological data studied show that archaeological and literary sources do not necessarily combine but are expressed in different fields. The Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages studied by archaeology belong to the world of the concrete: the archaeological remains testify to what people did, how they adapted to specific historical and political situations that precipitated ancient societies into what we conventionally call the Middle Ages.

The texts studied in the rest of the volume therefore place us in a different field, that of the history of ideas, the ideas of being pagan and Christian in changing times and places. Being a Christian in late antique Gaul could mean different things than in early medieval Ireland, for example. In the literary traditions, these identities and ideas of Christianity or pre-Christian religions are constructed, negotiated and demarcated in various ways. Pagan and Christian self-definitions were far from fixed and stable, as the contributions on a wide range of texts from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages show. It emerges that religious identity was often regarded as problematic and was thematised especially when it came under challenge. What from a modern perspective seems straightforward, namely the distinction between Christian and non-Christian, dissolved into a multitude of self-definitions and attributions that were adapted to specific situations and served specific ends.

The complex nature of identities is exemplified by Christian communities that splintered into mutually hostile factions over theological arguments or different reactions to challenges from the imperial power. Elizabeth DePalma Digeser (Chapter 6) highlights these internal schisms within the Christian communities in her study of the Carthaginian and Alexandrian cases. She compares aspects of the Donatist and Arian controversies in Late Antiquity with a modern counterpart, the

treatment of Gertrude Van Tijn and Hannah Arendt after the Second World War. These case studies suggest that communities whose members perform multiple identities before persecution may split into hostile camps in the aftermath, if one side perceives the other as somehow compromised, as collaborating or corrupt. DePalma Digeser's study furthermore illustrates Éric Rebillard's (2012) argument in his book *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity* that people in Late Antiquity had multiple identities and that they did not in all situations rank their religious identity as primary.

One way of constructing identities is drawing lines between an in-group, 'us', and an out-group, 'them' – in this case Christians and pagans. Often pagans were denoted as barbarians, as the opposite of the civilised Christians, but in some cases the pagans could be presented in an idealised fashion as having wisdom of their own. Antti Lampinen (Chapter 7) explores the late antique and early medieval interactions between antiquarian literary (and para-literary) references to 'barbarian sages' and Christian identities. He examines the various outcomes, effects and ironies that writers could seek to achieve by operating with received group labels denoting wise men among barbarian peoples. Covering a wide range of diverse texts, the chapter also discusses the connections of these partly antiquarian ciphers of religious identity to the rhetorical and technical writing of the imperial era. Finally, it considers to what extent they shaped the form in which the figure of the 'barbarian sage' was transmitted to the Christian Middle Ages.

Humans are also bodily beings, and this material dimension of human existence bears relevance to the construction of identities as well. In early Christianity, there was a clear dualistic division between the mind and the body, and the ideal was the ascetical subjugation of the body to the will, thus striving towards the prelapsarian state of man. In the view of the ascetic Dorotheus of Gaza (6th century), Christian identity is beset by the experience of loss, because since Adam's fall, human existence has been riddled with unnatural passions which prevent the return to and reunion with God. The only way to regain one's own nature, that is, original identity, is habituation to a truly Christian, i.e. ascetic, life. Jan R. Stenger (Chapter 8) examines Dorotheus' rhetoric of healing against the backdrop of Stoic philosophy and ancient medical theorisation in order to show that he sets out a detailed programme for rebuilding Christian identity. Stenger argues that the med-

ical conceptualisation helps Dorotheus to shape the embodied ascetic self.

Ritual practices are a central aspect of religious life, and one that has often been taken to distinguish between pagans and Christians. Popular local practices like feasting at the graves of the saints have often been seen by late antique learned churchmen and modern scholars alike as remnants of paganism among the unlearned folk. Maijastina Kahlos (Chapter 9) questions this division in the light of the diversity of the late antique religious world. The emergence and spread of Christianity needs to be understood within the wider context of late antique religious landscape. The narrative of Christian triumph has led to the rituals and traditions of the folk religion being labelled as 'pagan survivals', but Kahlos questions this timeless primitivism and asks how the people involved in these practices themselves understood their nature and their religious identities. She seeks to analyse local religious worlds as presented by Christian authors, including Augustine of Hippo and Caesarius of Arles, in their different socio-political contexts. Kahlos furthermore highlights the importance of looking at the discourses within which the terminology referring to practices as superstitious or pagan arose and was used.

Identities are also tied to localities, and an important part of the process of conversion was the Christianisation of places. This involved not only the conversion of ritual sites and holy places or the abandonment of old sites and the founding of new ones, but also the mental work of transforming the past of localities and forming a new understanding of their location in relation to the important places of the Christian world. The places and their past were interconnected, and Christianising them was part of the process of identity construction involved in the process of religious change. Peter Brown has used the term 'micro-Christendoms', whereby universal Christianity was reconciled with the very localised world of the Early Middle Ages (Brown 2003, 15). The idea of Rome as the central place of the Church could be replicated on a local scale through transfer of relics, architecture and ecclesiastical customs, thus creating 'little Romes' on local soil.

Ireland was one of the first areas outside of the Roman empire to receive Christianity, and given its position as a remote island at the edge of the known world, Christianisation also meant tying together the past and present of the island with the Christian understanding of world history and the geography of the holy places. Elva Johnston

(Chapter 10) discusses the problems of distinguishing between pagans and Christians and the shaping of emerging Christian identities in late antique Ireland. When becoming Christians, the Irish did not abandon their old cultural traditions; rather, there was a dynamic process and accommodation between the old and the new. For the early medieval Irish Christians, the pagan past and their pagan ancestors were not something to be totally abandoned but something that could live on in their constructed literary traditions. Christianisation also involved the transformation of landscape and space to become Christian through the foundation of churches and Christian holy places. This process could include continuation and accommodation, as in the cases of holy wells being dedicated to Christian saints, but it also breaks with the past, as with the introduction of new ecclesiastical architecture with rectangular shapes that are strikingly different from the circular internal spaces of the round-houses and pre-Christian ritual sites.

Christianisation also meant changing one's perspective regarding one's location not only in space but also in time. Katja Ritari (Chapter 11) considers early medieval views on what it meant to be an Irish Christian and how early medieval Irish authors understood Ireland's location in time and space in regard to the providential history of God. By adopting a Christian worldview, one also relocated oneself and one's community in a teleological and eschatological perspective in relation to God's true reality awaiting in the afterlife. Some Irish Christians saw the conversion of Ireland as the fulfilment of the biblical promise that when Christianity has reached the ends of earth, the end will come, thereby locating the Christianity of their island at the outermost edges both in time and space. While geographically Ireland may have been peripheral, at least the learned elite of early medieval Ireland who authored our surviving sources had an international outlook and saw themselves as one of the Christian nations on the path to heaven. In their view, holiness could just as well be attained in Ireland as in Rome, and through their learning they were spiritually connected with the rest of Christendom.

With the coming of Christianity, Rome itself was also transformed and the pagan past had to be consolidated with the Christian present. Rosamond McKitterick (Chapter 12) discusses the city's dynamic relation to Late Antiquity revealed in the *Liber Pontificalis*. This narrative of the transformation of Rome from a pagan to a Christian city can be read as an attempt to frame a new identity for the Christians within

the narrative of the city's transformation. In this narrative, a common bond uniting Christians in Rome is formed around the figure of the bishop and common rituals enacted in an altered landscape of basilicas, thus building the foundations for a collective identity for the local Christian community.

Identities can be shifting and multifaceted. As outsiders we can assign collective identities to groups of people, but if we were able to ask those people themselves, they might see their identities differently. Hervé Inglebert questions in his Epilogue how we should think about ancient social membership and reminds us that there was no such term as 'collective identity' in ancient languages. One solution would be a lexical approach starting from the terms used to define different religious groups and the vocabulary of collective identification. Another approach would be to focus on acts denoting allegiance to some religious tradition instead of words. A third way would be the new hermeneutical model brought to the fore by Éric Rebillard focusing on individual multiple identities. Inglebert, however, contends that the notion of collective identities should not be abandoned and suggests a hermeneutical model based on (1) personal identity, (2) collective affiliations and (3) identification with the group. He analyses the diversity of discourses (lay, cleric, monastic and imperial) within the orthodox Christian community of Late Antiquity about what was correct and what was unacceptable practice. The analysis shows that these discourses served different functions, while only imperial power was in a position to create legal religious 'group identities' based on official definition. The social reality, however, was structured by a mix of these discourses, depending on local conditions, milieus and situations. These shifting frontiers of Christianity precluded a common definition of what was pagan, because 'being pagan' was mostly a Christian rhetorical argument of self-definition.

The contributions in this book are the result of the two-day symposium organised at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies on 3 and 4 November 2016. The idea of the symposium emerged from the enormous surge in studies on the construction and representation of identities, adopting theories and approaches from a wide range of disciplines within humanities over the past decades. In particular, scholars working on historical periods of transition have addressed this topic and focused on the ways in which collective and individual identities were negotiated amid processes of change. One prime

example is the period from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, in which Christianity spread from the Mediterranean to other regions of Europe and profoundly transformed the religious landscape. Although the definition and construction of Christian identities, as well as their interaction with other religious self-definitions, have attracted much interest, the scholarly discussion has often suffered from artificial boundaries – those between classical and medieval studies and those between archaeological, literary and historical approaches. This symposium was intended to overcome these boundaries by investigating religious identities and their interplay with other identities from the 4th to the 10th century CE, in order to understand more accurately both the recurring patterns and the changes in the emergence, negotiation and representation of images of selves and others over this period.

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The Concrete of Being Pagan or Christian: Archaeological Facts

CHAPTER 2

Christianness and Material Culture, 250–400 CE[1]

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Abstract

This chapter rejects the traditional approach of 'Christian archaeology' and its attempt at identifying a Christian material signature. Instead, it asks whether and how artefacts are used in everyday life to express religious identity. This approach is inspired by the work of Rogers Brubaker on ethnicity in the city of Cluj (Romania). A critical review of personal objects from Roman Britain bearing Christian symbols shows that it is difficult to find objects that would unequivocally attest to the belief of their owners. The identification of Christian burials in Roman Britain and elsewhere has also proven to be a vain project in the absence of an inscription mentioning the religious affiliation of the deceased. Thus, the use of a material signature as a prediction tool for determining the religion of individuals cannot but fail or result in circular reasoning. It is more relevant and rewarding to question the experiential salience of religious identity. A review of material evidence, or rather its absence, for Donatism in Roman Africa suggests that religious identity was not experientially salient in a context, such as the places of cult, where

the specific affiliation was clear to all participants. In other contexts, such as the highly competitive context of Dura Europos, displaying religious affiliation was important, even within a specific place of cult. The conclusion is not only that a clearly demarcated Christian material culture is difficult to discern, but that this lack of distinction is to be expected, as there were very few contexts in which Christians in Late Antiquity would experience their religious identity as experientially salient enough to make a point of marking it.

Keywords: religious identity, religious material signature, Roman Britain, Roman Africa, Dura Europos

Introduction

Christian archaeology's primary goal – the identification of Christian artefacts or more generally of a Christian material signature – has been critiqued many times (see Bowes 2008 for a review of the field). This contribution seeks to go a step further. It builds on the approach developed by sociologist Rogers Brubaker in his study of ethnic groups in contemporary Eastern Europe.[2] Rather than questioning whether an artefact can be identified as Christian, Brubaker invites us to ask whether and how artefacts are used in everyday life to express religious identity. This new line of questioning will help in an understanding of how and when Christianness matters in the everyday life of Christians in Late Antiquity.

Intermittency and the Experience of Religious Identity

In a 2006 ethnographic monograph on the city of Cluj in western Romania, an area of mixed Hungarian and Romanian populations, Rogers Brubaker and his students compare the rhetorical basis of violence among ethnic groups and ethnicity as experienced in everyday life (Brubaker et al. 2006). Their goal is not to oppose 'elite' discourses to 'popular' practices but to balance the impression of a centrality of ethnicity in political discourse with the 'experiential centrality' (or not) of ethnicity in everyday life (Brubaker et al. 2006, 167). They are interested in what they call 'the intermittency of ethnicity,' seeking how and when ethnicity is relevant, looking for 'sites where ethnicity might – but need not – be at work' (Brubaker et al. 2006, 168). As they warn,

'in order to understand how ethnicity matters … it is important to bear in mind how little it matters to much of everyday experience' (206). However, they are very careful to point out that the fundamental intermittency and the episodic character of ethnicity must not be analysed as measures of its importance or even of its significance. What matters to them in the end is 'the disjuncture between the thematization of ethnicity and nationhood in the political realm and their experience and enactment in everyday life' (363).

The way they analyse the 'Hungarian world' in Cluj helps to clarify this last point (Brubaker et al. 2006, 265–300). What they call the 'Hungarian world,' nested within the wider Romanian world, is a group of institutions such as schools, churches and newspapers that help in producing and reproducing Hungarians. The separate state-run Hungarian school system, for example, is crucial for the transmission of the language and the culture. However, they show that taking Hungarian language education for granted does not imply direct ethnic socialisation: on the contrary, it possesses the power to render ethnicity invisible. Within the Hungarian world, one sends one's children to a Hungarian school as 'a matter of course, not a self-conscious choice' (Brubaker et al. 2006, 297). Thanks to these institutions, ordinary Hungarians do not need to be committed to reproducing the Hungarian world. They conclude, in other words, 'that much nominally interethnic interaction is not experientially interethnic' (363).

Highlighting the disjuncture between the thematisation of ethnicity and its enactment in everyday life is of immediate relevance to the study of early Christianity. Because of the nature of the evidence – for the most part, texts written by the clergy – scholars have tended to frame their questions in Christian terms, and unsurprisingly they have come up with Christian answers. Material culture and archaeology can provide a body of evidence more closely related to the everyday experience of individuals than most texts do. In what follows, a few case studies illustrate how Brubaker's approach allows us to propose a careful analysis of how and when Christianness matters in Late Antiquity.

Personal Objects

The first case study considers the use of personal objects as markers of identity by Christians. The working hypothesis in this case is that by wearing ornaments with Christian symbols Christians would display

their religious identity to the people, Christians or not, whom they encountered in their daily interactions.

For the pre-Constantinian period, literary evidence does not attest to the use of external markers by Christians to display their religious allegiance (Rebillard 2012, 13–14). No pagan author attacks Christians for displaying their religion with symbols or signs on personal objects that they could wear (Benko 1980). When Tertullian mentions a gesture that could identify Christians to outsiders – making the sign of the cross on the forehead – he lists all sorts of contexts in which this can happen (Tertullian, *De Corona*, 3.4) but does not allude to any personal object with a Christian symbol.

The fear of being recognised as a Christian in this period has often been invoked as an explanation for this lack of external markers. Though most historians now agree that persecutions had a low impact on the everyday life of Christians (Rebillard 2012, 42), an argument based on the absence of objects is as difficult as any argument from silence. How different is the situation when we turn to the post-Constantinian period, for which we have objects bearing Christian symbols?

In her catalogue of small finds that have been considered as evidence for Christianity in Roman Britain, Frances Mawer accepts as Christian only 70 out of a total of 260 objects (Mawer 1995, 136; see table 5(a)).[3] Objects that are classified as personal ornaments – including belt fittings (buckles, buckle plates and strap ends), rings and gemstones, brooches, and pins – represent the highest percentage of her accepted objects. A closer look at some of these objects, however, shows that additional caution might be required.

Mawer catalogues 16 belt fittings, most of which are decorated with peacocks or the tree of life and accepts all of them as objects that attest to the Christian allegiance of their owners (Mawer 1995, 59–65). She seems to exclude the possibility that the belts could be of official military issue, as has been considered, but she leaves the door open for a civil service issue. She points out, moreover, that the symbols of the peacock and tree of life are not otherwise used as 'imperial' symbols (Mawer 1995, 60). Indeed, as we will see, a lot of objects claimed to be Christian could be considered imperial rather than religious. In the present case, since many belts of this type do not bear symbols or images that can be considered as Christian, the choice of the peacock or of the tree of life is likely intended to denote Christian identity (see also Petts 2003, 112–13). However, given that we do not know their

exact system of production and distribution, we can accept that such belt fittings say something about the allegiance of their commissioner, but we should be wary of assuming that they necessarily say something about that of the individuals who wore them. This first case shows how difficult it is to find objects that would unequivocally attest to the belief of their owners.

When it comes to rings and gemstones, Mawer rejects 19 of the 45 claimed to be Christian and accepts 11 as Christian, to which she adds another 11 as possibly Christian (Mawer 1995, 136, table 5(a)). Many of the rings, however, may be signs not of religious but of imperial allegiance, or they may otherwise have an official function. Indeed, the Chi-Rho symbol, for instance, quickly became part of the imperial imagery and a number of these seal rings, especially when they bear no sign of customisation, could have belonged to government officials. As David Petts writes: 'The use of the *chi-rho* on many objects in Britain may tell us as much about the use of imperial imagery as religious symbolism' (2003, 108). He gives the example of nine pewter ingots that bear the name of one Syagrius and either a simple Chi-Rho or a Chi-Rho with the phrase *spes in Deo* (Petts 2003, 108–09). Both Petts and Mawer point out that the symbols and phrases may just indicate that these ingots were produced under imperial control. Thus, they are inclined to abstain from any conclusion about the religious allegiance of Syagrius on the sole basis of the ingots (Petts 2003, 109; Mawer 1995, 96–97).

Not all examples of objects with Christian symbols and phrases are so clear-cut and belong unequivocally to the category of objects with an official function. However, this is an important warning that the presence of a Christian symbol on an object does not make it a marker of Christian identity and that, even when it is an attestation of the faith of its owner, it is not necessarily an affirmation of religious identity. Seal rings with a Chi-Rho, for instance, could belong to members of the clergy and thus display the function rather than the religious identity of their owners.

Very few of the objects in the category of personal ornament were, therefore, used by Christians to display their religious allegiance, even less their religious identity, and this in the post-Constantinian period. Thus, we should be wary, when we do not find such objects for the pre-Constantinian period, of deducing anything about Christians' motivations for not displaying their religious identity on personal objects.

This first discussion also invites us not to take for granted that Christians sought to display their religious identity on personal objects and, therefore, in their everyday interactions with other people.

Burial and Religious Identity

The second case study is that of death and burial. Given the importance attached to death and the afterlife in Christian teachings, it is often assumed that Christians would want to identify themselves as Christian in death and burial (see Volp 2002). Thus, many scholars focus on places of burial that they pre-emptively define as exclusively Christian. This has been, for instance, the traditional approach to the Roman catacombs.[4]

Another example of such an approach is Ann Marie Yasin's study of early Christian commemorative practices (Yasin 2009). She tries to establish that a dramatic change occurred in the ways Christians bury and commemorate their dead, describing it as a shift from household monuments, or family tombs, to collective burial within churches. However, burials that conform to this new model are only a tiny minority of all burials of Christians. As Yasin herself is well aware, most tombs within churches belong to members of the clergy and to a few privileged individuals. Although little archaeological evidence is available for the tombs of 'ordinary' Christians, there is no doubt that most Christians continued to bury and commemorate their dead in 'household monuments'. The argument is strikingly circular. It focuses on places selected for their religious associations and then it draws conclusions about their role in defining religious identity.

Identifying Christian Cemeteries in Roman Britain

Since it is typically difficult to identify Christian burials in the absence of an inscription or explicit representation that affirms the religious affiliation of the deceased, another strategy followed by scholars is to define a set of criteria for the identification of a Christian burial.

Because continuity of Christian tradition is lacking in Great Britain between the Roman and the post-Roman periods, unusual sophistication has been deployed there to identify Christian cemeteries from the Roman period. There are two sides to the issue of the identification of Christian cemeteries. Charles Thomas adopts a rather cautious

approach and maps only two Christian cemeteries (Thomas 1981). Similarly, Robert Philpott dismisses the possibility of distinguishing between pagan and Christian burials (Philpott 1991). On the other side, Dorothy Watts proposes a list of 13 Christian cemeteries (Watts 1991).[5] In addition to the presence of neonatal burials, which she considers 'a reliable guide to the identification of Christian cemeteries' (Watts 1991, 51), she ranks the traditional criteria (orientation, supine and extended position, absence of grave goods, etc.) and applies them to about 30 cemeteries (79, figure 1).

There are many problems with such an approach.[6] The most obvious is that several criteria are weighted based on the teachings of Christ and the early Church. For instance, Watts concludes from a handful of texts supposedly reflecting Christ's care for the young that 'it can, therefore, readily be accepted that Christian concern for the living infant … would extend, at death, to the careful interment of his body' (Watts 1991, 49). There is no need to discuss at length the weakness of such an assumption. It supposes some straightforward and direct link between the sayings of Jesus, the teachings of the early Church and the behaviour of Christians.

Even Watts' appraisal of the presence of two concurrent patterns of burial practices in the same locality is tainted by the assumption that there was 'a tradition of separate Christian cemeteries' (Watts 1991, 64). This tradition is not as well established as was once thought (Rebillard 2003, 2009). In any case, the criterion is applicable to only four sites in Great Britain, and there is no archaeological evidence that the adoption of a different burial pattern is due to a different religious affiliation.

More generally, any attempt to identify the signature of a religion in material culture presupposes that it can then be used as a prediction tool. It means that traits that have been identified as characteristic of a few members of a group are deemed to be valid indicators for the identification of other members of the same group in a different context. This is an obvious case of the tendency to 'groupism' denounced by Rogers Brubaker about approaches that see ethnic or religious groups 'as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed' (Brubaker 2004, 8). It also leads to 'conceptualiz[ing] individuals' religions as little versions of some institutional model,' instead of making room for what Meredith B. McGuire calls 'lived religion' (McGuire 2008, 185).

Changes in Commemorative Practices in North Africa

The main issue, however, is the assumption that religious identity is salient when it comes to choosing a place of burial. The next case study shows that few individuals identify themselves by their religious affiliation in the context of their burial, and that even when they do so, they share the rituals of the neighbouring tombs whether or not these belong to co-religionists. Looking at material installations for the cult of the dead in North Africa, I found evidence that between the 2nd and the 5th century, material installations for the sacrifice to the dead disappeared, to be replaced by installations for the banquet of the living.

In a necropolis located to the west of the ancient city of Tipasa (Algeria), some areas have been in use continuously from the 2nd to the 5th century and thus provide us with a rare situation in which we can see a change in the material installations for the cult of the dead (Bouchenaki 1975). I focus on ensemble II and its five enclosures. The earliest enclosure (area 2) comprised some 30 cupula tombs of the common North African type (see Stirling 2007), generally equipped with an offering table and, in most cases, a libation conduit. These tombs have been dated to the 2nd and early 3rd centuries (Bouchenaki 1975, 80–95). Unfortunately, the area around the tombs and the surface of the offering tables are not documented in the publication, but we can probably assume that the tables were used to burn offerings to the dead.[7] A masonry base (80 × 80 cm) built between tombs 4 and 5 has been interpreted as an intermediary type between the offering table attached to the tomb and the 4th and 5th-century mensa tomb that I describe next (Bouchenaki 1975, 84, 95). Accordingly, the table could have been used for offerings to the dead, but also for the banquet of the living, the guests being seated on the cupula tombs that are around it. However, the structure is too badly preserved and too poorly documented for any conclusive interpretation.

In area 3, we find both the cupula tombs and the so-called mensa tombs. A very common type of mensa tomb is represented by tomb 2 (Bouchenaki 1975, 105–06). On top of the tomb itself is a rectangular masonry base of 3.13 × 2.50 m, with a semi-circular depression in the centre of one side. The mensa tomb therefore comprised both the reclining couches and the table itself. More impressive is the installation associated with tomb 11 (113–18). The monument occupies some 65 square metres. A U-shaped masonry base of 6.6 × 6 m with a rec-

tangular depression on the east side opens up on a rectangular room (5.5 × 3.4 m); along its northern side there is a bench and there is a well on the southern side. The mensa is 80 cm high.

Even if absolute dating is not available, the mensa tombs are clearly more recent than the cupula tombs of the enclosure (Bouchenaki 1975, 119). There are many more mensa tombs in the necropolis, all dated to the 4th and 5th centuries (170–71). While in area 1 of ensemble I there is a Christian mensa (40–45), there is no evidence that the mensae in other areas are Christian as well.

The change evinced at Tipasa in the western necropolis from offering tables to dinner tables cannot be confirmed directly at any other site. On the other hand, no archaeological data invalidates the hypothesis of a more general shift (see Rebillard 2015b for a review of evidence). Moreover, there is some indirect evidence that such a shift took place. First, Lea Stirling has firmly established that the cupula tomb disappeared after the 3rd century (Stirling 2007). The cupula tomb flourished during the 2nd and 3rd centuries as its shape was particularly well suited to marking and covering bodies laid out either for cremation in situ or for burial. There are some later examples, but they are much rarer. Second, the use of the term *mensa* on epitaphs to designate the tomb itself dates to the end of the 3rd century in Mauretania, where Paul-Albert Février was able to study a series of well-dated inscriptions (Février 1964). Finally, there is an undeniable multiplication of mensae in later, Christian contexts in Africa and elsewhere in the Mediterranean world (Duval 1995, 199–200).

It is important to realise that the shift of emphasis from a sacrifice to the dead to the meal of the living is not limited to Christian evidence. It is not an index of the Christianisation of the traditional commemoration ritual. Therefore, it begs the question of a change in ritual that is not the result of religious change and shows that these rituals for commemorating the dead are shared by neighbours independent of their religious affiliation.

The Experiential Salience of Religious Identity

The last case study – material evidence, or rather its absence, for Donatism in North Africa – will allow us to test the notion of the experiential salience of religious identity. The conflict between the two competing churches in 4th- and 5th-century North Africa, the Cae-

cilianists, also known as Catholics, and the Donatists, is well known (Miles 2016; Shaw 2011). In order to map the distribution of the two churches, scholars have tried to determine criteria that would allow the identification of their respective buildings. Thus, Frend compares the locations of bishoprics attested at the Conference of 411 with the results of excavations. He depends heavily on André Berthier's archaeological investigations in central Numidia (Berthier 1943; Frend 1952). Frend accepts without much discussion Berthier's conclusions on the Donatist character of most of the excavated churches, whether based on the presence of *Deo Laudes* in related inscriptions or on that of installations for the cult of martyrs and relics. The weaknesses of these conclusions have been pointed out many times and there is no point in ridiculing the confidence of Berthier in 1943 and Frend in 1952 in their ability to identify Donatist basilicas in Numidia, the traditional stronghold of the Donatists.

A survey by Anne Michel (2005) lists 22 churches of the ecclesiastical province of Numidia that can be securely dated to the time of Augustine, and only two of them are *possibly* Donatist. The first is located at Ksar el Kelb (Vegesala; BAtlas[8] 34 F2). At the end of the south aisle of the church there is a mensa with an inscription that reads: *Memoria domni Marchuli*. The identification of Marculus with the Donatist martyr who was executed in 347 is debated and in any case unverifiable (Gui et al. 1992, 291–94; Michel 2005, 104). The second is one of the 11 churches excavated at Thamugadi (Timgad; BAtlas 34 E2). Evidence for the identification of the basilica as the 'Donatist Cathedral' comes from an adjacent house where an inscription with the mention of a *sacerdos Dei Optatus* was found (Gui et al. 1992, 274–78). Some scholars want to recognise in this Optatus the famous Donatist bishop. Optatus, however, is a common name in North Africa and *sacerdos* can also be used of presbyters (Gui et al. 1992, 275–76; Michel 2005, 104).

The identification of these churches as Donatist rests, therefore, on very fragile foundations, especially as there is no archaeological evidence that would allow us to distinguish these churches from Catholic ones. According to Anne Michel, the layout of the basilicas, the liturgical settings (when documented) and even the installations for the cult of the martyrs do not present any significant difference that would allow the identification of the religious affiliation of the Christians using the different Numidian basilicas (Michel 2005, 103).

Thus, Catholics and Donatists did not use a material signature to distinguish themselves from each other. It should be noted that if basilicas, artefacts and inscriptions cannot be divided between Catholic and Donatist Christians, the issue is clearly not the amount of preserved or excavated evidence. The debate between Catholics and Donatists is mainly about issues of ecclesiastical authority and legitimacy. Indeed, we do not hear about any difference in the celebration of the cult that would generate distinctive liturgical settings. Bishops on both sides, however, constantly reminded their flocks of the importance of the sharp difference between 'us' and 'them' (Shaw 2011). Brubaker has shown that within institutions which produce and reproduce Hungarians, such as schools or churches, Hungarianness is less salient and visible. The absence of markers of identity in Donatist churches, or Catholic churches for that matter, could, then, suggest that religious identity was less experientially salient in a context where the specific affiliation was clear to all.

A counter-example, however, shows that this is not necessarily the case. When the famous house from Dura Europos, known as the first *domus ecclesiae*, was remodelled in the mid-third century to accommodate a meeting hall, it was adorned at the same time with an explicitly Christian iconography. Jás Elsner has pointed out that the Christian house should not be studied in isolation and that its iconography should be compared with those of the contemporary mithraeum and synagogue (Elsner 2001). Indeed, the three cultic places each developed a programme of initiate mythology that explicitly denigrated the other cults. Moreover, as Kim Bowes has emphasised, the three buildings are all on one street, and thus they reflect socio-religious competition in this garrison town (Bowes 2008, 582). In the case of Dura, therefore, the competition between cults produced a context in which even within a specific place of cult it was important to display one's religious affiliation.

Thus, the experiential salience of religious identity varies from one context to another and can help us better understand the context itself. We may wonder regarding the divide between Catholics and Donatists whether the experience of it in everyday life was as marked as the discourse of ecclesiastical authorities makes it, and if these same ecclesiastical authorities did not feel the need to display it within meeting places.

Conclusion

Not only is a clearly demarcated Christian material culture difficult to discern, but the case studies presented here suggest that this lack of distinction is to be expected, as there were very few contexts in which Christians in Late Antiquity would experience their religious identity as experientially salient enough to make a point of marking it. Examples from North Africa show that this is true in contexts in which Christians interact with non-Christians as well as in contexts in which they interact with Christians belonging to different affiliations. This means not that religious identity did not matter – there is plenty evidence to the contrary – but that it was not salient, i.e., experienced, in every context. Being Christian, therefore, is only intermittently relevant to the social experience of Christians. Material culture shows this better than most written evidence, which usually originates with bishops who are eager to enforce a much more hierarchical arrange-ment of identity sets in which the entirety of an individual's behaviour is determined and interpreted in terms of their religious affiliation.[9]

Notes

1 This chapter was submitted in November 2017 and builds on the author's earlier work. Copyright © Wiley 2015: 'Material Culture and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity' by Éric Rebillard. In *A Companion to the Archaeology of Religion in the Ancient World*, edited by Rubina Raja and Jörg Rüpke, 425–36. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Reproduced by permission of Wiley.

2 I present Brubaker's approach and its relevance more fully in Rebillard (2012).

3 In addition, she considers 60 objects as possibly Christian (136; table 5(a)).

4 On the historiography of the catacombs and the assumption of separate Chris-tian burial, see Rebillard (2016).

5 See Quensel-von-Kalben (2000) for a more sophisticated statistical model using the same set of criteria; there is no new argument or evidence in Sparey-Green (2003).

6 See Millett (1995) for an appraisal of a prior attempt by Watts (in Crummy, Crummy and Crossan 1993, 192–202) to establish a set of criteria.

7 See Ben Abed-Griesheimer (2004) for similar tombs with offering tables: the surface was burned, and ashes and charcoal have been found in the ground around them; more generally, Stirling (2004).

8 BAtlas = Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World.

9 See Handelman (1977, 192–93) on lateral and hierarchical arrangements and Rebillard (2012, 4–5) on how the distinction can be used for Late Antiquity.

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CHAPTER 3

Funerary Practices and the Construction of Religious and Social Identities in the South-East of Gaul from the 4th to the 10th Century

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Abstract

How might funerary archaeology contribute to the discussion about religious identities in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages? In answer to this question, I describe the different ways in which religious and social practices are expressed and evolve in a given context. In Roman Gaul, the large-scale switch to inhumation in the second half of the 3rd century may be linked to a change in perception of the idealised image of the deceased, and is not accompanied by any change in burial practices or in the organisation and dynamics of funerary areas. A century later, traditional funerary practices are widely represented in the archaeological series, but funerary areas are emerging whose organisation and dynamics differ from those of the early Roman empire. In larger cities, some are developing around a funeral basilica erected on

the mausoleum of a saint, and their graves clearly show changes from past practices. These new funerary expressions, which become exclusive in the second half of the 5th century, can be linked with the rise and the structuring of Christianity, along with social changes. During the Early Middle Ages, before the completion of the parish system in the 11th century, societies successively build their Christian identity. Using their burial customs and the organisation of their deceased, these societies display their socio-cultural norms, both inherited from and partly reshaped throughout their history. Our archaeological data show that in the funerary sphere, sense of religious identity is not expressed in the same way at the end of the 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th centuries, and that the real break between Antiquity and the Middle Ages relates mainly to the silencing of individual and familial memory in favour of the construction of a collective Christian memory.

Discerning Pagan and Christian Funerary Practices

Studying the question of paganism in Late Antiquity through archaeology means looking for continuity of customs elaborated in the frame of the Roman religion at a time when Christianity had become the official religion of the empire. From a historical point of view, it is the same method as for Christianisation: pagans must be the starting point, as they are the ones converted to Christianity (Inglebert 2015).

This approach consists, admittedly, of calling 'paganism' that which belongs to the official Roman religion before the 4th century. This is highly debatable from a historical point of view. If the term 'paganism' contrasts with 'Christianism', it embraces a wide diversity of beliefs and cults alongside the traditional ones. The same is true of Christianity, which gives birth to various religious theories and churches (Chuvin [1990] 2009; Gauthier 1997). Moreover, as the archaeological data on Roman sanctuaries show, Christianity is enshrined in a landscape of pagan worship practices which evolved during the 3rd century, and which were deeply altered in the 4th century (Kasprzyk et al. 2014). The major problem afflicting funerary archaeology is that one cannot begin to debate questions without referring to these two distorted

categories. This difficulty makes it necessary to explore the enigma by considering how funerary diversity and variability are expressed, and to reflect on what they really mean in terms of religious beliefs and practices. Hence, we must unwind the fine thread that links practices elaborated over ten centuries to develop the following series of questions: is there a Christian identity for funeral practices? When does it begin? And how it is expressed?

From the Roman conquest onwards, in the central-south-east quarter of Gaul, there is a 'smoothing' of funeral practices (Blaizot and Bonnet 2010). We enter a system of social cohesion marked by a ritualism organised around divine governing rules, where rites aim to provide a framework to ensure certainty, continuity and consistency. In the funeral context, this system is expressed through the observance of religious practices which reflect the pact with the gods, sealed by a tripartite shared meal. Cremation, initially present in Gaul alongside inhumation in most areas, becomes the dominant practice, probably because it allows the exhibition of the dead and the shared meal, emphasising the Romanised elites: the quantity of vessels demonstrates the extent of relationships of the deceased's family and their status (Blaizot 2009, 335–37).

In Late Antiquity, a noticeable change is the adoption of inhumation as an exclusive rite. This change occurs more gradually and earlier in urban contexts than in rural areas, where it happens more quickly and a little later (Blaizot 2009, 19–25, 2019). Its relation to Christianity is not proven: the switch to inhumation happened in the second half of the 3rd century, before the emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion. Contrary to common beliefs among archaeologists, no text makes a link between inhumation and resurrection of the flesh (Rebillard 2003). The matter of cremation or inhumation had been discussed since the end of the 2nd century. Various factors may explain this change: an attitude that began in Rome in the 2nd century, the decline of the magnificence of funeral ceremony from the second half of the 2nd century observed in towns (reduction of the pyre size, reduction in the number of vessels and in the amount of food; Blaizot 2009), and a new attention accorded to the corpse in the 3rd century (Rebillard 2003, 101).

Admittedly, the 4th century graves do not differ from previous ones in terms of their location. In the countryside, some burial areas are used from the early Roman times well into the Carolingian period.
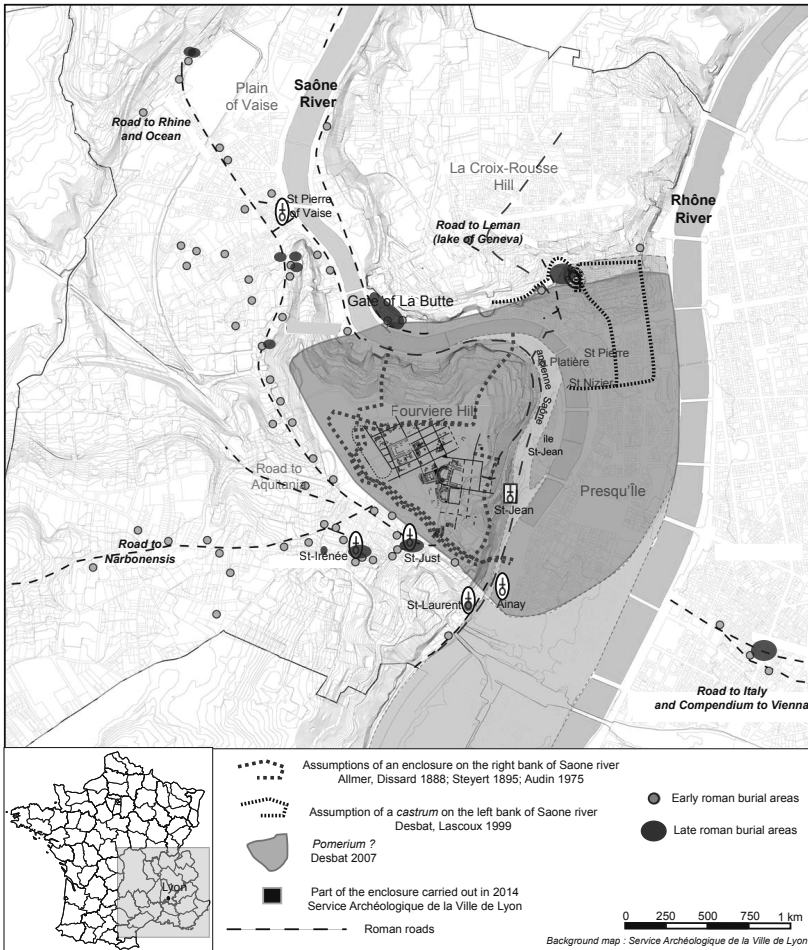
Figure 3.1: Map of Lyon from the Roman conquest until the 5th century CE. Background map: Service Archéologique de la Ville de Lyon. Image: F. Blaizot and Inrap.

In towns, late Roman burials take place in the areas occupied by early Roman graves, in the *suburbium* ([Figure 3.1](#)). In general terms, grave locations mostly follow the same pattern as before: small and short-lived groups installed on abandoned areas of settlements. The same is true in rural areas: graves are established in the landholdings or on previously abandoned areas of villas.

Nevertheless, in this century, we see a Christianisation of the peri-urban area. Funeral basilicas are placed in the *suburbium*; in Lyon, St Irenaeus and St Just, built in the last third of the 4th century, are surrounded by graves of the previous centuries, and St Just was erected upon two mausoleums built on ruined Roman bath houses. The emer-
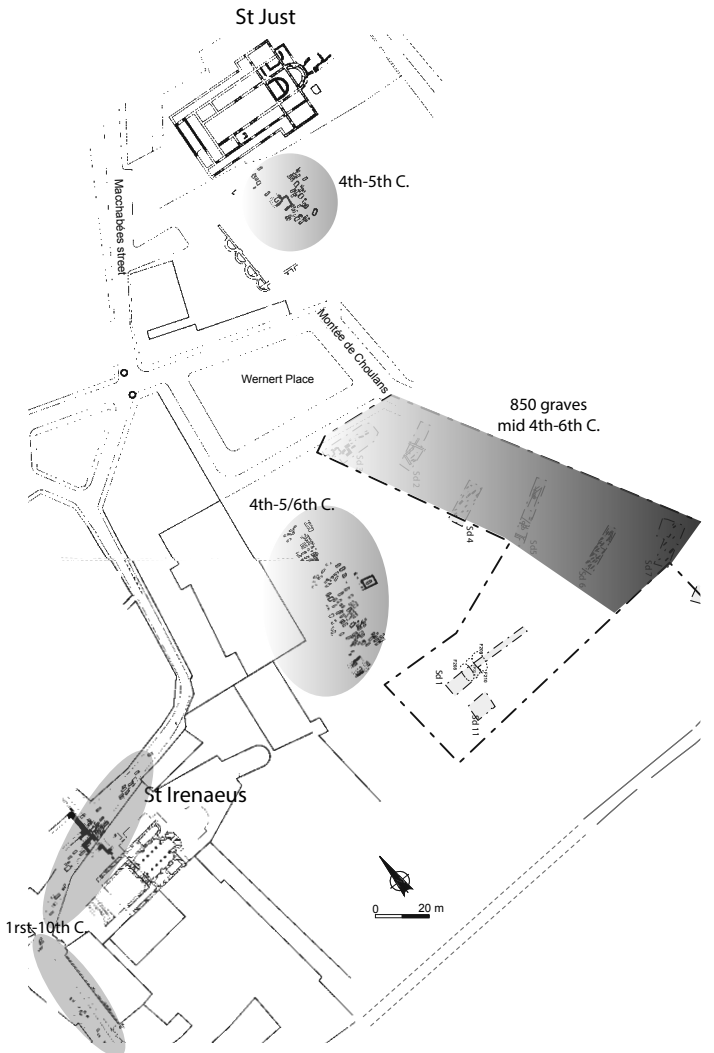
Figure 3.2: Archaeological research in the area of the Basilica St Just and St Irenaeus. Background map: Inrap.

gence of high-density burial areas constitutes a significant new fact in the suburban space. The phenomenon can be observed in Lyon in St Irenaeus and St Just, which have been the subject of several archaeological excavations since the end of the seventies ([Figure 3.2](#)). The latest excavation revealed around 800 graves dated from the second half of the 4th century until the end of the 6th century AD; these represent three quarters of the inhumations known in Lyon for the 5th and 6th centuries – before this, the funerary areas are mobile spaces with saltatory dynamics. In rural contexts, large funerary areas are rare during the 4th and 5th centuries; for those which continue through to the Carolingian period, the proportion of late antique graves remain low, with about only 30 graves per site (Blaizot 2019).

A similar pattern can be observed in the organisation and architecture of the graves. The ways of depositing the remains of the deceased are alike: as previously for cremated bones, the body is not in contact with soil but placed in a container (tiles, stones, wooden boarded coffers, coffers, or mixed, nailed wooden coffins, tree-trunk biers, lead coffins, earthenware jars for children …) or in a pit sealed by a saddle-shaped or a flat lid. The pit is generally constructed (walls and/or lid), and memorial monuments could be erected. The posture of the dead becomes standardised: the deceased lays on their back with the lower limbs extended and the forearms straight and close to the body, contrary to the early Roman empire, where the dead person is often lying on their stomach, or even on their side as in the late Iron Age (Blaizot 2009, 39).

Separation and Commemoration

With the practice of cremation, during the Roman period, the 'separation' stage is illustrated by the pyre from which the deceased shares the meal with the living and the gods. The tableware used by the living cannot be taken back to the home for new uses, as it is considered to be stained by death; for this reason, the services are deliberately broken and thrown on the pyre. Burial seems to be composed of two actions: pyre debris deposit is placed directly within a pit, which could be linked to the *humatio* rite, while the mechanisms of commemoration related to the ossuary seem to identify the latter as the grave (Blaizot 2009, 316–21). Vessels deposited in the grave are interpreted as future commemoration meals (Scheid 2005, 188). These forthcom-

ing commemoration meals are not shared with the living, which can explain why the early Roman graves do not contain the broken vessels that we identify as being those of the living. This explains also why the containers placed in the graves are often mutilated: possibly to avoid confusion between living and dead, and more specifically a reminder that such vessels are those of the dead, this practice would allow everyone to be kept in their own place.

The staging of the body and the funeral banquet are comparable in the two periods: the table is set, even if late Roman burial is far from the lavish feasting which formerly served the elites, illustrated by the quantity of items/artefacts collected in the cremation layers (Figure 3.3). The finds related to the funeral meal have similar characteristics during both periods. Vessels used by the living are broken, while those intended for the dead are left intact and most often rendered unusable, mutilated, for the living. The presence of vessels used by the living alongside those intended for the deceased and placed together within the same grave seems to reflect the meal shared by the dead, the living and the gods. Previously both, in the case of a cremation, these objects, contaminated by death, would have been abandoned on the pyre. We have seen that mutilated vessels placed with the ossuary in the early Roman times seem to refer to the commemoration or 'non-shared' meal. Hence, I wonder if the unbroken but often mutilated vessels in the late antique graves may relate to both ceremonies. This seems to coincide with the combination of the two stages of the rites (separation and commemoration) within a single structure, where previously separate features (one for each action, namely pyre for separation, then pyre debris deposit for *humatio* and ossuary for grave) were required in the context of cremation (Blaizot 2009). This may be illustrated, for example, where the portion of the dead is divided into two parts, one placed within the container (coffin or similar) and the other placed outside. In any case, the presence of meat, and the vessels of the living and of the dead, demonstrates that the sacrifice and the shared meal continue to be held into the first half of the 5th century, as illustrated by imported ceramics (finely dateable) in the southern part of Rhône-Alpes. In the second half of this century, tableware and animal bones have entirely disappeared from the graves.

The architecture of the graves located near funeral basilicas is the same as that of those in other burial areas. All the deceased are buried in a container generally placed into a pit closed by a lid. Stone or
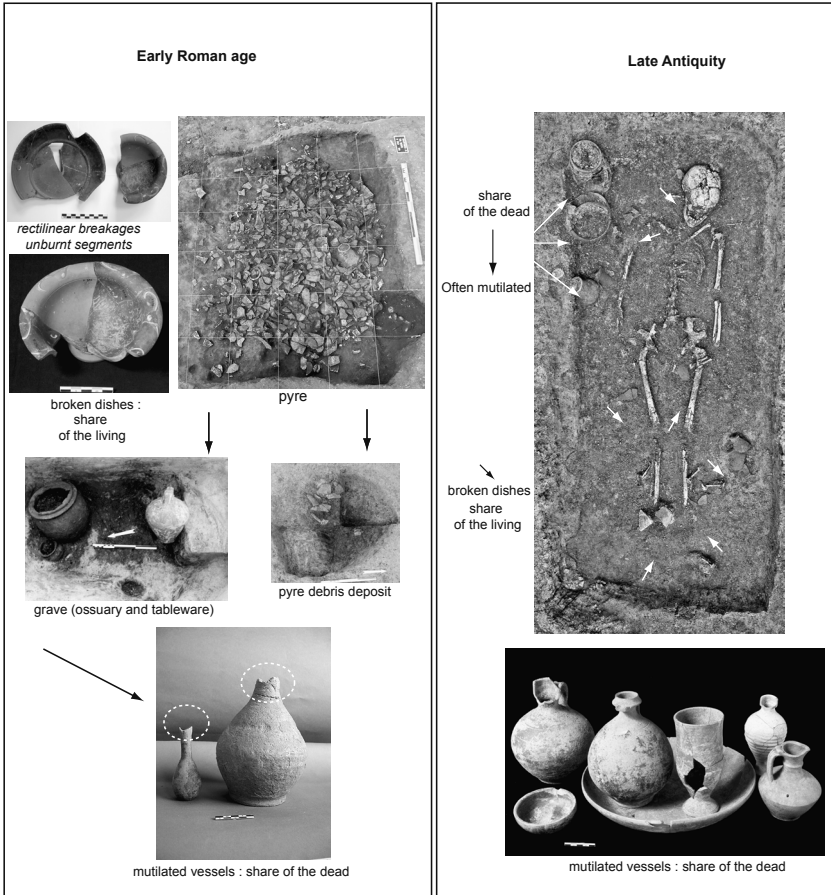
Figure 3.3: Layout and architecture of funerary structures and gestures in the early Roman empire and Late Antiquity. Drawings: F. Blaizot. Photography: Inrap.

lead sarcophagi show that the grave remains a place where the status of the deceased and their family is displayed, as in other funerary contexts. Stone or lead containers are generally placed close to the building, while wooden architectures are set at a certain distance from the monument, illustrating that the social ranking of the space surrounding religious buildings, well known in the Middle Ages, begins early. In contrast to the other funerary areas, graves situated on the periphery of these basilicas do not contain any attribute of funerary meals. This is

the case in Lyon, and in Nîmes (early 5th century), in Villeneuve-lès-Maguelonne (6th–7th centuries) and in Marseille (early 5th and 6th centuries), where the only objects left with the dead are glass vials or large ceramic balm jars (Barruol, Raynaud and Garnotel 1998; Moliner 2011, 138–39). This increase in perfume containers observed from the end of the 3rd century in Lyon (Marty and Capelli 2016) could be linked to the new preoccupations with the body transcribed in the texts.

However, the excavations carried out in Lyon have revealed broken vessels situated on sarcophagi lids or at either end above the pits (Reynaud 1998, 106, 169, 205, 221). Remains of fireplaces, and pits that contain animal bones and ceramic shards contemporary with the graves, are also found in Lyon, at St Just and in the later basilica of St Laurent-de-Choulans, built at the end of the 5th century. These practices are observed until the end of the 6th century at St-Laurent-de-Choulans. Between the 6th and 8th centuries, in the basilica of Seyssel, at Albigny-Condion (Haute-Savoie), fragments of pots and jars come from a part of the building that, because of the absence of graves, is considered to have had a cultural use (Bizot and Serralongue 1988, 40–41). Unfortunately, data concerning these elements are poor; ceramic shards collected in the archaeological layers or in the back-fills of burials are often neglected. More precisely, they are studied only chronologically and not from a taphonomic or functional point of view (vases with liquid foods, solid, perfume, new or uses, representativity …). They are therefore mentioned only as dating arguments, rarely described in any detail and only globally inventoried.

These remains could testify to funeral meals taken by the living, testimonies of which we have through other sources, in the Orient (Rebillard 2015). Hence, if funerary meals took place in Christian contexts, the deceased portion is missing. If these meals were taken on the day of the funeral, the absence of unbroken vessels and meat deposits in the grave which are the dead's part would mean that the latter has been excluded from the banquet, as was Ceres. These remains are the only indications of meals recorded in Christian contexts in the middle Rhone valley. It is, however, difficult to determine which meal is referred to: the funeral or the commemoration. Because none of these fragments are found within the grave, are the meals commemoration ones? These observations (systematic lack of vessels and animal bones in the pit; presence of these elements in the state of fragments in the
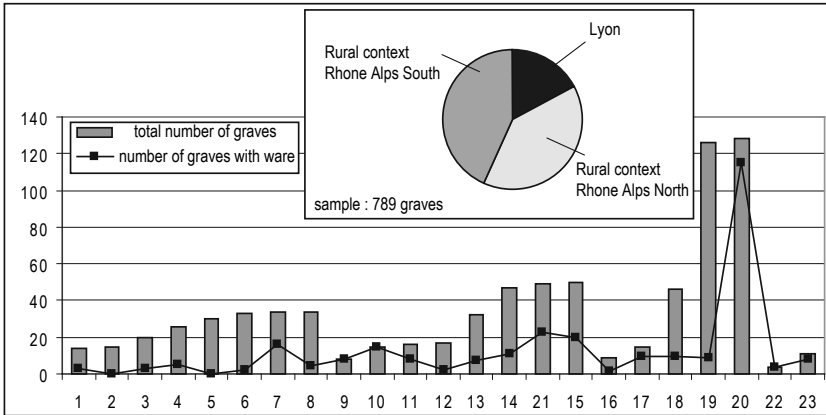
Figure 3.4: Representativity of graves with vessels: mid-3rd century to 5th century. X-axis: each number corresponds to a site; y: number of graves; straight line: number of graves with ware. Source: F. Blaizot and Inrap.

archaeological layers of the funerary area) are the only signs of change in proven Christian contexts. They can, however, be considered significant because they concern a wide range of graves at one time, and because these graves are located within the funeral basilica's boundaries. Therefore, the absence of the dead's part would show the abandonment of the sacrifice offered to the underworld gods.

Indeed, if we exclude the contexts of basilicas, all funerary areas, including rural and urban sites, provide a great diversity of layout of graves. Some sites which are contemporary and close to one another show completely different realities. Some graves contain only mutilated tableware without any broken pieces, or vice versa, others contain only one vessel, some contain more than five, while others are empty as in genuine Christian contexts. However, in contrast to what is seen on the pyres of the previous centuries, systematically provided with tableware and food, only 7% to 50% of the later graves per site contain such goods ([Figure 3.4](#)). On the other hand, similar proportions are observed for the furnishings set beside the ossuary in the early Roman graves; this observation focuses again on the question of what stage of the rite is represented when vessels are placed beside the corpse during the Late Empire.

Change in Rural and Urban Contexts

Nonetheless, a significant difference is recorded between rural contexts and the *suburbium* of Lyon, with a lower proportion of goods in the latter. The question of the apparent change which begins in the urban contexts is delicate. Are we faced with a change once again initiated in towns? And what is exactly changing?

The examination of facts over time shows that the number of graves with meal attributes increases in rural contexts but declines in urban contexts ([Figure 3.5a](#)).

The hypothesis of a decrease in the number of vessels over time has been tested: no significant result comes out at the level of the whole corpus ([Figure 3.5b](#)). However, the deposit of a single vessel is common, if not present in the majority of cases, in urban contexts from the 3rd century onwards, where the number of vessels never exceeds three.

In rural contexts, where the number of vessels may be higher, an increase in the number of graves with a single vessel appears only during the 4th century ([Figure 3.5c](#)).

The changes of pace shown when separating urban and rural contexts remind us of those illustrated in the previous century with the changeover from cremation to inhumation. Do these results show a resistance to change in rural areas? Or do they reflect a problem with our sample composition? The frequent lack of imported tableware in the late antique graves of the northern part of the region, including Lyon, means that it is difficult to follow the precise chronological evolution of deposits in a significant number of settlements, even if, as here, we have worked only with what can be considered well-dated contexts.

Several elements need to be taken into consideration:

1. The inaccuracy of our dating methods must be considered. The imported vessels are scarce or absent in the later graves of our geographic area. Therefore, the precise chronological evolution of deposits cannot be observed in a sufficiently representative number of sites.

2. We should also consider perishable containers which could alter our statistics. Such containers are frequently suggested by the presence of constricted chicken carcasses.

3. In the early Roman graves, vessel deposit is not systematic since it concerns only 6 to 60 per cent of the graves at each site. It is not
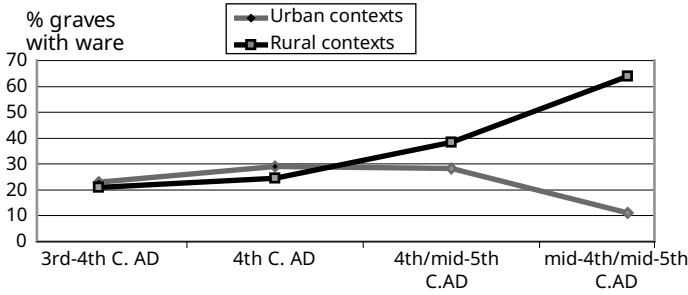
Figure 3.5a: Variation in the number of graves with vessels from the 3rd to the 5th centuries, according to their context: urban or rural. Source: F. Blaizot and Inrap.
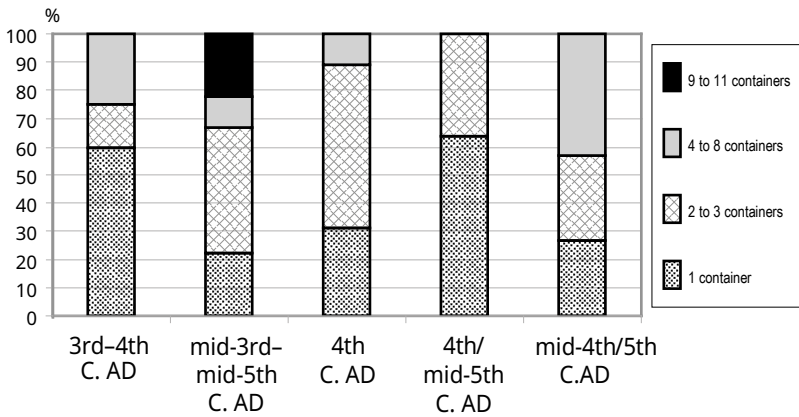
Figure 3.5b: Evolution of the number of vessels in graves from the 3rd century to the mid-5th century. Source: F. Blaizot and Inrap.
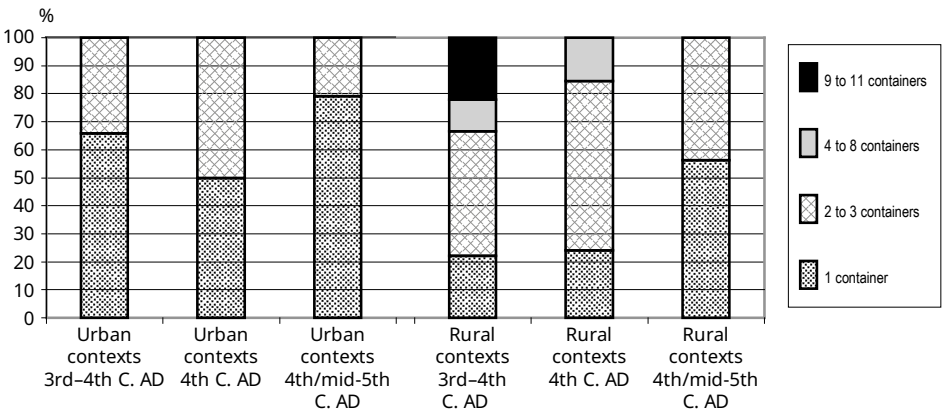
Figure 3.5c: Evolution of the number of vessels in the graves from the 3rd century to the mid-5th century, according to their context: urban or rural. Source: F. Blaizot and Inrap.
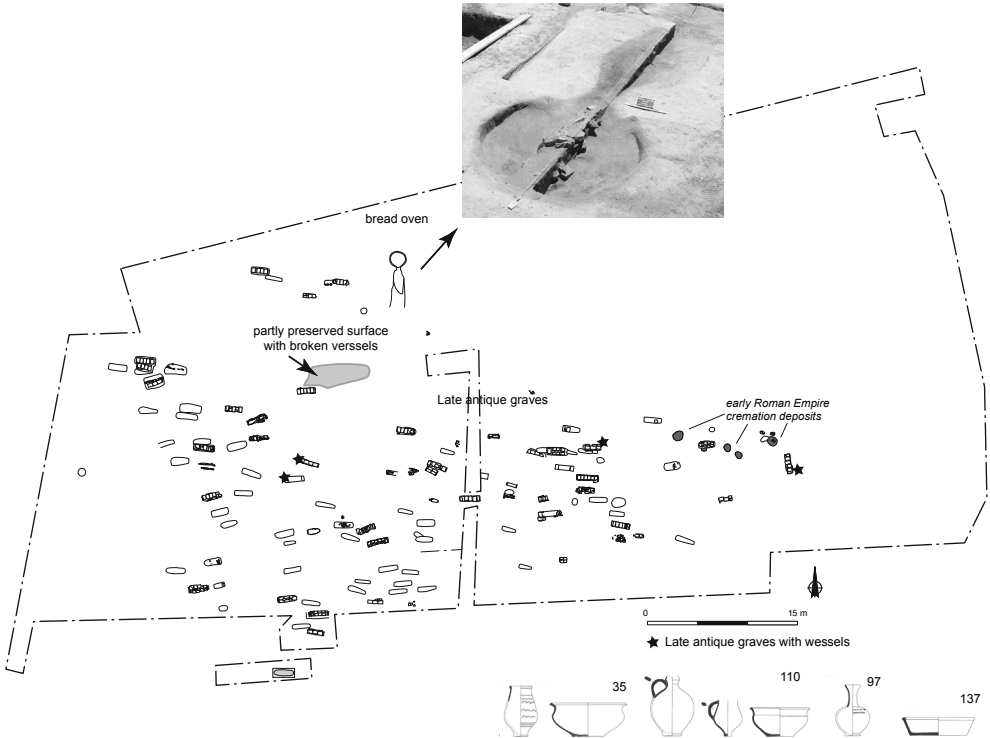
Figure 3.6: Map of the excavated part of the site of La Labre, at Châteauneuf-du-Rhône (Drôme): bread oven, partly preserved surface with broken vessels, late antique graves with vessels. CGI: P. Rigaud, F. Blaizot and Inrap.

credible to consider that the lack of goods in the early Roman graves mean that no funeral rites were performed. We should instead consider that the products of the funerary rituals, (dishes, food …) were not systematically placed within graves. This finding constitutes a major obstacle; the lack of goods in the later graves does not necessarily signify the abandoning of Roman beliefs and rites.

To understand these evolutions, the archaeological data must be handled carefully. The highlighted differences between rural and urban behaviours need to be more deeply explored through hypothesis, and the radical differences between contemporary neighbouring sites must be considered. Do these changes illustrate conversions to Christianity?

Or do they represent the continuation of increasing lack of interest in display during funerals that began at the previous centuries?

Overall, archaeological data are often ambiguous and contradictory. For example, on the settlement of La Labre at Châteauneuf-sur-Isère (Drôme), a bread oven and broken vessels found on a partly preserved surface may have been used only for the four burials which contain vessels (Blaizot, Ronco and Bonnet 2023; Figure 3.6). Or does this small number of graves with vessels mean only that the attributes of a traditional banquet have not been placed within the other graves? Another possibility would be that this bread oven could have been built and used only for commemoration meals from which the deceased was excluded.

Christian Burials in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages

To conclude about Late Antiquity, the absence of vessels and food in a grave which is not located in the close surroundings of basilicas is not necessarily synonymous with the abandonment of Roman beliefs and practices. On the other hand, a grave with some traditional attributes does not necessarily mean a pagan grave. The example of libation conducts in churches, especially in Africa but also in Gaul, as in the Lérins Monastery (Codou 2014, 307, figure 14), bears witness to this ambiguity. The same applies to any food deposit, as illustrated by the example of a chicken in the monastery of Luxeuil in the 6th century (Bully et al. 2014, 330). However, these pipes were not necessarily used for pouring beverages into the grave, as indicated by the physical-chemical analysis of the one excavated in the basilica 'Rue Malaval' in Marseille, which revealed the presence of fatty substances – maybe perfumed oils (Moliner 2011).

The analysis of early texts shows that there is no Christian burial cult during Late Antiquity (Rebillard 2003). The Church does not govern burial practices, which remain a family matter. Archaeology itself suggests that if the Christian grave is not characterised by the adoption of new practices, it could be illustrated by the abandonment of what, in the Roman grave, refers to the traditional religion, namely the tripartite shared meal during funerals. This shared meal, which involved Ceres, would have rapidly changed among the Christian circles in the towns, but to affirm that the banquet attributes of the Roman funerals or of the

commemoration feasts found in a grave mean that this is a pagan's grave would mean overlooking the weight of culture and of socio-familial practices. Practices may survive independently of one's discourse. It is appropriate to keep in mind the practice of celebrating the Eucharist in the presence of the corpse and sharing it with the deceased, a practice that an African canon condemned at the end of the 4th century; one can wonder about its relationship with the funerary meal of Roman tradition (an attempt at substitution? Rebillard 2003, 155). Whether a sign of paganism, an affirmation of cultural identity or purely a formal survival among Christians introducing and reinterpreting traditional practices, the presence of dishes and food is, after all, no simpler to interpret than their absence (Christians? Or pagans performing their funeral rites without depositing their attributes in the grave?).

In Gaul, the archaeological data at this stage of the research may indicate that commemorative rites are becoming increasingly important, to the detriment of separation rites. The antique iconography and texts make no mention of a possible meal taken on the day of a funeral, and the banquet scenes depicted on the early Christian sarcophagi or in the paintings never picture the dead (Jastrzebowska 1979), meaning that they unquestionably represent commemoration meals. Yet Christians and pagans have the same way of honouring their dead, by means of commemorative meals (Caseau 2015). At the end of the 4th century, commemoration banquets are condemned not because Christians take part in them but because they are offered to the dead as sacrifices. We may thus suppose a persistence of the traditional practices among Christians for some time, either unconsciously or simply at a formal level to illustrate a commemoration meal that was, as always, shared only among the living, in memory of the deceased. This meal may have been served near the grave, or more broadly within the funerary area, but it is different from that of the early Roman times because the family no longer feed the Manes of the dead beforehand. The absence of dishes or food deposits in the graves implanted near basilicas shows that the dead person is excluded from the banquet at all stages of the rite. It is particularly interesting to note that the African archaeological data show that the exclusion of the dead is marked by a change in the commemoration rites. This change is reflected by the abandoning of the cupula tomb, namely the sacrifice to the dead's Manes, in favour of a mensa which is intended for the sharing of a meal among the living (Rebillard 2015, and Chapter 2 in this book).

During the following centuries, burial areas are used over longer periods of time than before. There is a growing stabilisation in the location of burial areas, even when no sanctuary is built. In other words, burial areas, once made up of rather scattered and juxtaposed little family groups or corporations along roads or on the landholdings of a villa, become community areas, open to a wider range and greater number of people. Most of them, in rural and urban contexts, are in areas previously used for burial from the second half of the 3rd and in the 4th century. The restructuring of economy and settlements during the Merovingian period is probably involved in these changes. The rules according to which these funerary areas are structured remain largely unknown, for the 5th and 6th centuries. In some funerary areas graves are organised around the funeral monument of a particular individual, while others show a hierarchy between individuals transcribed by the location of their graves, regardless of the existence of a sanctuary (Bizot and Serralongue 1988; for the northernmost regions of Gaul, see Demolon 2006; Pilet 1994). In the south-eastern part of Gaul, the scarcity of grave goods in contrast with the northern and eastern parts does not allow us to take these questions further: the burial assemblages appear as a juxtaposition of silent graves.

Over time, the dead are more and more frequently grouped around a sanctuary, a funerary church and later a church for worship. Just as in the 4th century, these buildings may have been founded above a mausoleum within an earlier funerary area, or not. But burial areas of various sizes without churches continue to be used or are created. If many burial areas have been abandoned by the 9th century, the move of the dead towards the sacred is not completed before the 10th century. At this time the parish system is achieved, and only burial areas with a church are maintained.

Scattered and isolated graves in fields or at the boundaries of landholdings coexisting alongside a grouped burial area around a church have contributed to the debate about paganism. These graves, which we come across until the early 11th century, do not generally show marked differences, from a burial customs viewpoint, from those located close to a church or in a community burial area. This 'double system', which appears during the 7th century, seems to exist in the context of large, landed estates and should be read in relation to the status of the concerned establishments and people. Some of them, mainly dated from the 7th and 8th centuries, concern only a small number of

people, often with high-status attributes, who remain on a line of continuity from the Roman period, where the landowner and his family are buried on their own land (Blaizot 2017). Other burial areas contain individuals selected on the basis of gender and age (Figure 3.7). In these cases, the presence of groups of men, groups of women, or a large number of children and adolescents (5–14 years old) inconsistent with natural demography evokes data on slavery and skilled workers listed in the Carolingian establishments' census (Blaizot 2017). Some of them could be the graves of pagans, but there is nothing that can differentiate them from those located within collective burial areas, except maybe some unconventional positions that are encountered only in these contexts for these periods (prone position, lying on one side, sometimes interred in disused domestic structures such as grain storage pits or wells). Are these deviant cases sufficient to interpret these graves as those of non-Christians?

The analysis of burial modalities shows how the funeral sphere has contributed to the construction of a Christian identity and its incorporation within a social and politic system:

Until the 6th century, burials are no different from those of previous centuries (Figure 3.8), except for the decline of nailed coffins. The dead are still buried within containers deposited in pits that are not filled with earth. Tree-trunk caskets, wooden or tile coffers, or a combination of these materials are placed in pits whose sides are constructed or which are closed by a lid ('chamber tombs'). Except for the eastern regions of Gaul (characterised by Germanic cultures), graves contain no dishes or food. At this period, the grave is conceptualised as the last place where the individual appears and where their memory will be honoured, as in previous centuries. Emphasis is given to the identity of the deceased and their individual memory. The body, adorned with jewellery and clothing accessories (when possessed), is probably exposed (for viewing) in its container, placed in a built chamber. Wooden constructions or enclosures have been identified on some sites, as in the 4th century. As we saw previously, sites with good levels of preservation show material evidence of funeral meals until at least the mid-6th century. In the East, the placing of dishes and food in early Merovingian graves should not be interpreted as a continuation of the traditional Roman sacrificial meal but could be related to the rise and maintenance of aristocratic power (Halsall 1998). It is one form of reciprocal gift-giving, and a social display illustrated using still-func-
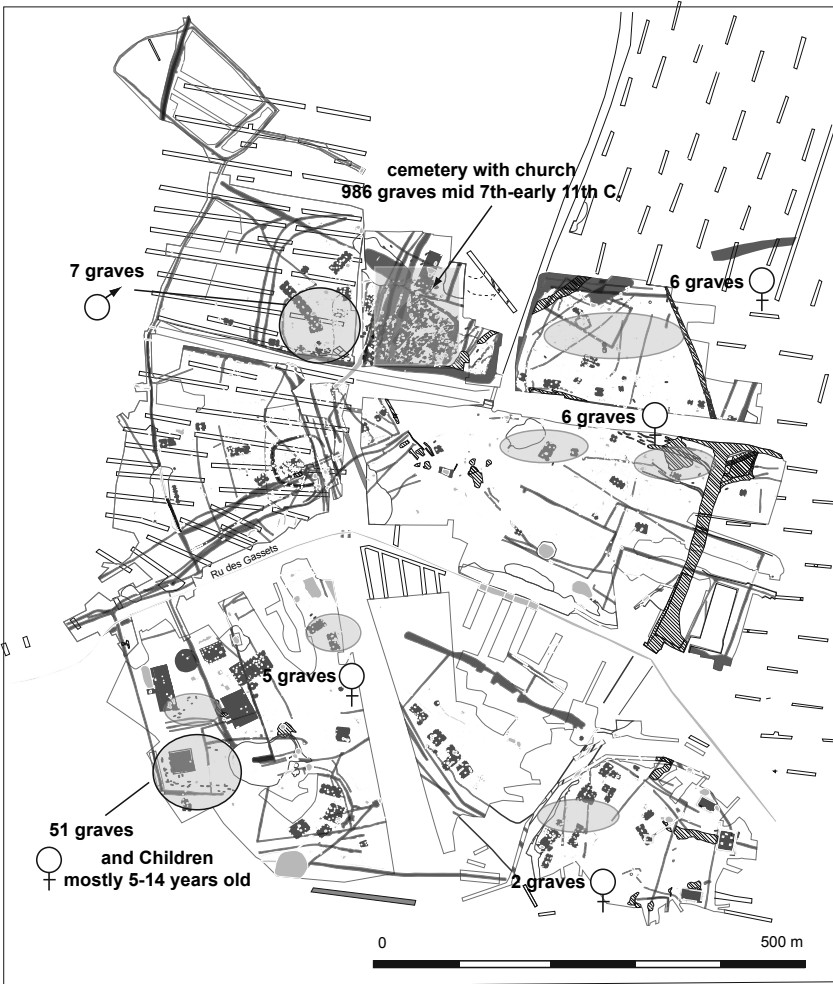
Figure 3.7: Map of the burials scattered at the boundaries of the land-holding of Les Ruelles à Serris (Seine-et-Marne): sex and age distribution. CGI: F. Blaizot, F. Gentili and Inrap.

tioning identity attributes parallel to the introduction of new elements such as ostentatious jewellery (Halsall 1998, 335–36).

- In the second half of the 6th and in the 7th century, the focus is on the social relationships of the deceased by means of a new prac-

tice (Figure 3.9). Successive deposits are made in the same grave pit, and the relation with the previous corpse is illustrated by the scene-making of the bones: the skull is placed on the lid of the last coffin, and long bones are gathered at one end of the container to be seen. It should be noted that this practice involves only adults and never concerns more than two or three people. Elite status is indicated by this practice and by the presence of some objects of quality (jewellery and clothing accessories). Despite successive deposits, the individuality of each person is respected; the dislocated bones of each individual are never mixed with those of another body. Each one is laid in their own container, onto which the next one is placed; bones can also be put between the new container and one of the pit's sides. In the case of an accidental discovery of bones while creating a new grave, they are grouped and reinterred in roughly the same place. In the northeast, funeral display is less ostentatious (less jewellery, less tableware, which tends to disappear), and at the end of the 7th century these practices are abandoned (Halsall 1998).

- During the 7th and 8th centuries, alongside individual tombs, one encounters graves that function in a similar way to later vaults (Figure 3.10). The localisation of these reutilised graves, generally grouped in a part of the burial area, seems to be a new and unique status indicator, for small groups of people. Personal markers and belongings are absent; the idea of individuality disappears in favour of collectivity. For each successive interment, the bones of the previous occupants are gathered and sorted regardless of the individual. This is usual too in the case of the partial destruction of a previous grave while digging a new one: the removed part of the earlier skeleton is reintegrated in the new pit, and the undisturbed bones are left. The bones of a large number of individuals (up to ten or more) may be thus relocated within the grave; as the number of individuals increases, a new sorting takes place among the bones in order to make room by retaining a *pars pro toto* of the dead. The rest of bones – the smaller ones – are discarded in the fill of the pit, or even onto the ground of the burial area.
- From the 9th century, we identify new graves where the corpse is placed directly on the bottom of the grave pit, covered by a lid, and containers are often bottomless (Figure 3.11). The exhibition of a body in the tomb seems to lose its importance, in favour,
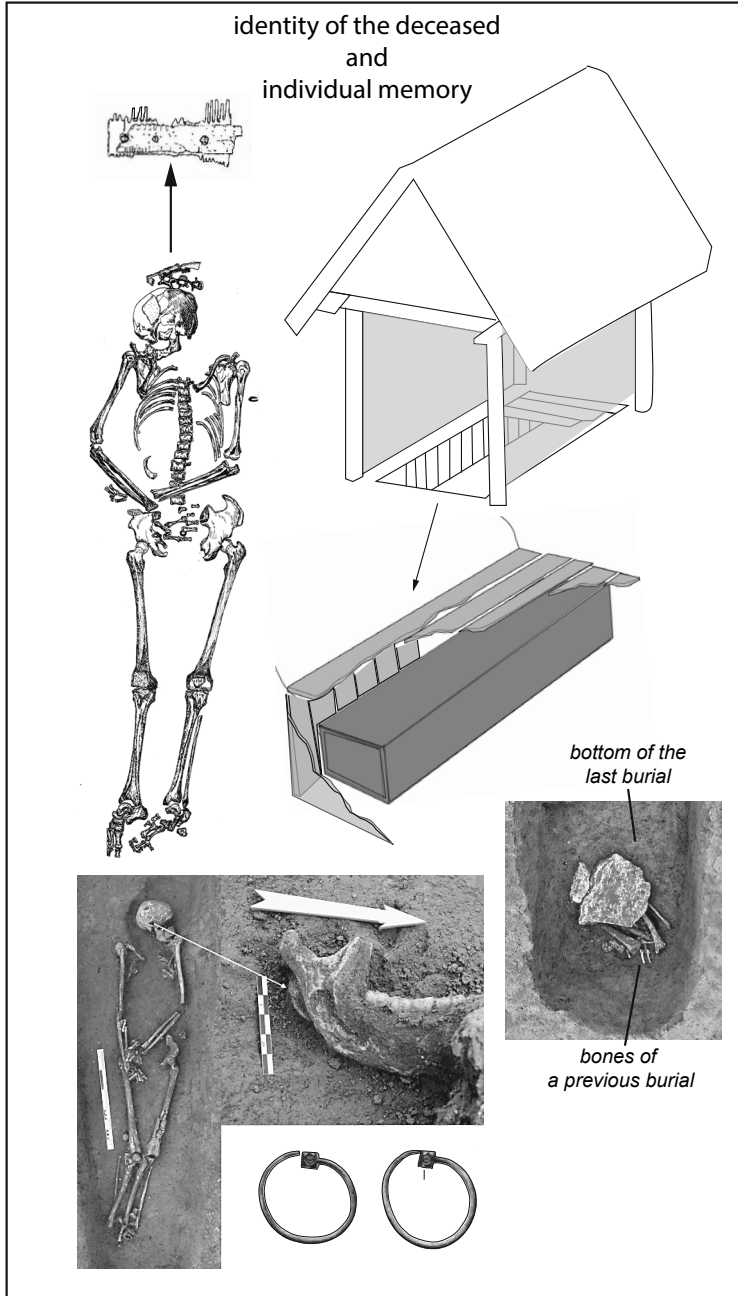
Figure 3.8: Layout and architecture of funerary structures and funerary gestures in the mid-5th and the 6th centuries. Drawings: F. Blaizot. Photography: Inrap.

the body is to be viewed in the grave

social relationships
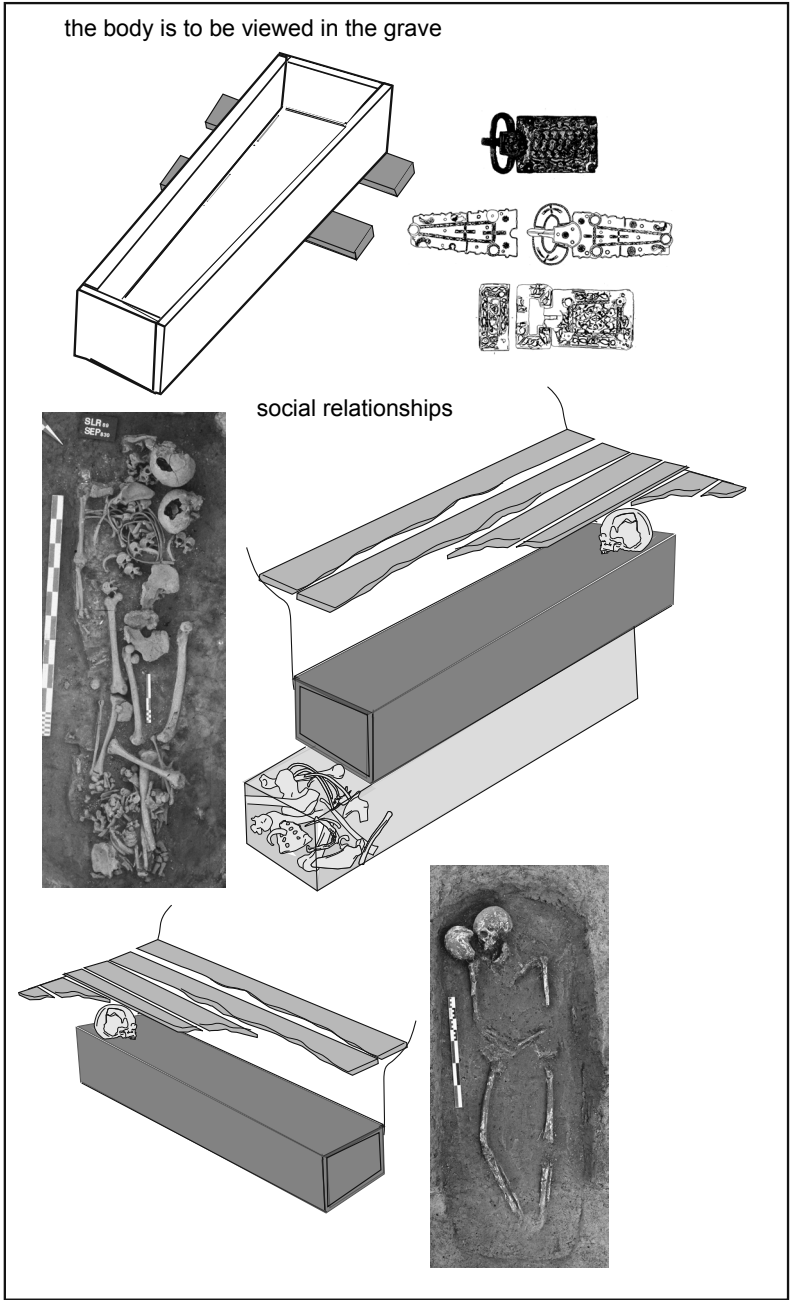
Figure 3.9: Layout and architecture of funerary structures and funerary gestures in the mid-6th century and the 7th century. Drawings: F. Blaizot. Photography: Inrap.
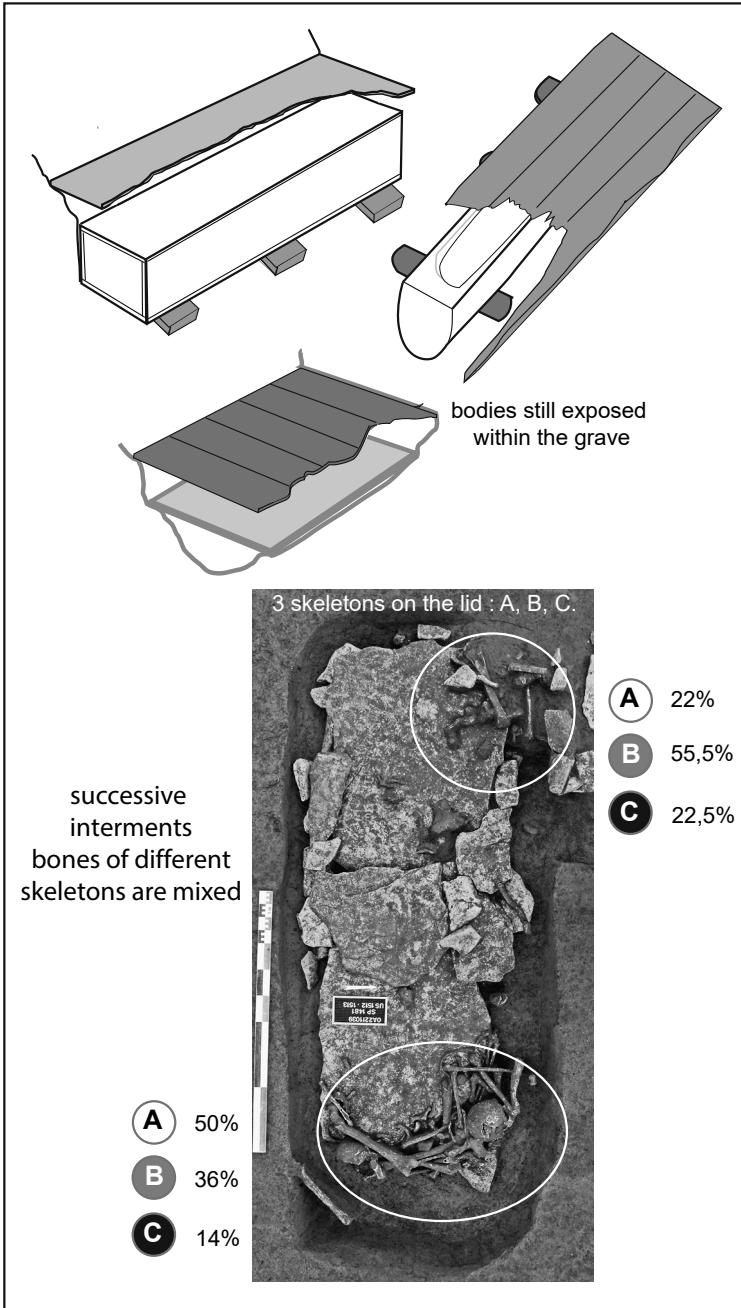
Figure 3.10: Layout and architecture of funerary structures and funerary gestures in the 8th century. Drawings: F. Blaizot. Photography: Inrap.

no constructed bottom

dispersed bones
=
collective memory
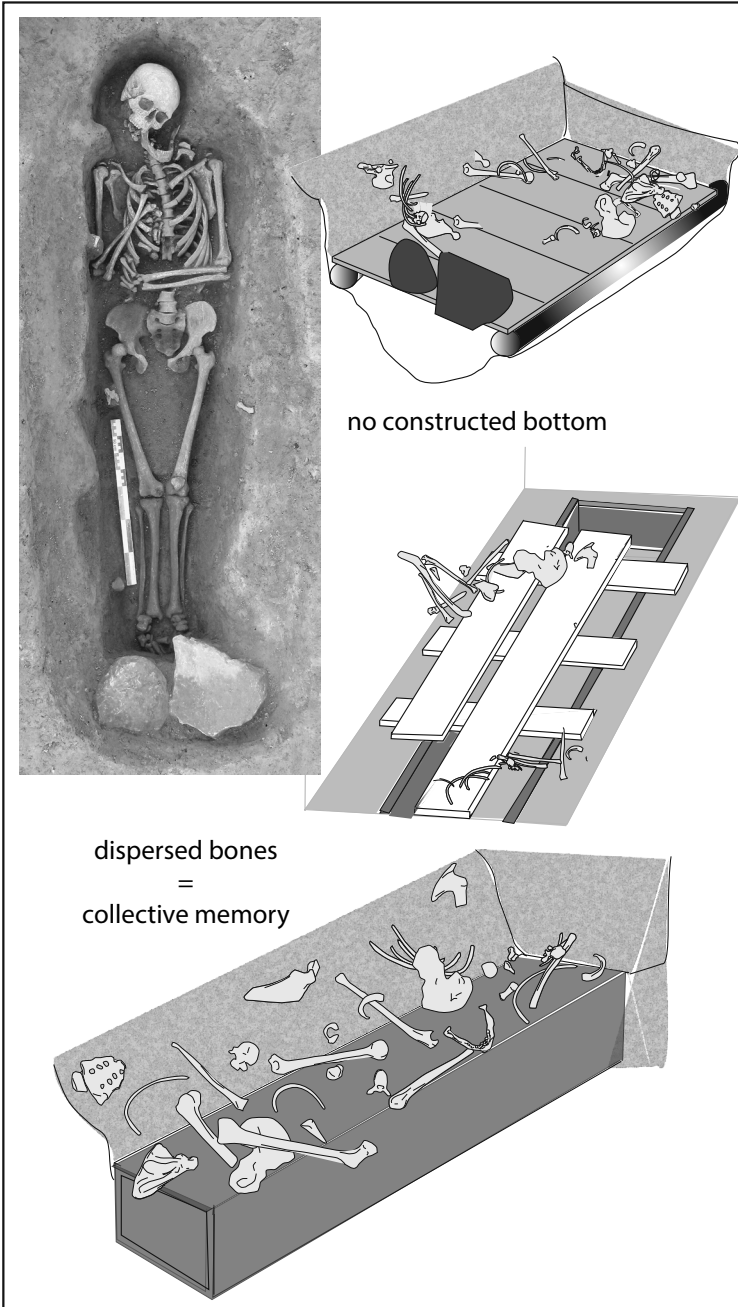
Figure 3.11: Layout and architecture of funerary structures and funerary gestures from the 9th to the beginning of the 11th century. Drawings: F. Blaizot. Photography: Inrap.

perhaps, of the accompanying act of procession to the grave, as attested in Carolingian texts (Treffort 1996). The multiple reutilisation of graves disappears. The bones of previous burials are collected and deposited in collective ossuaries or discarded on the ground of the cemetery. While iconographic evidence confirms their existence, the archaeological evidence from this period shows uniquely dispersed bones randomly relocated in later burial fills. The model 'simple grave-cut' and 'dispersed bones' will prevail during the following centuries.

Conclusions

In the 4th century, the graves of Christians are identified only by the context in which they are located (basilicas). However, as a church, as a building, is not necessary to the burial of early Christians, we may suppose that other areas could have hosted Christian burials. Burials excavated close to the basilica of Lyon show that, both physically and organisationally, the Christian grave is not defined by new traits but characterised only by the abandonment of those related to the traditional religion in the Roman grave, namely the sacrifice followed by a meal shared between the dead, the living and the gods on the day of the funeral. While Christians and pagans honour their dead in the same way, through commemoration meals, the funeral meal of the former expresses new social practices relating to partage (sharing and gifts) among people of the same faith. Frequently called to order by bishops, Christians develop an identity whose expressions are not defined, because they are only constructed, at first, in opposition to the heathen. Because of the polysemy of the objects (vessels, libation conducts), archaeological data need to be interpreted with caution. Changes are made up of continuities and discontinuities that affect the nature, the function and the expression of practices, as was previously the case at the time of the Roman conquest of Gaul (Blaizot and Bonnet 2010), and as research on the passage from the worship of the gods to the cult of the saint has highlighted (Inglebert 2015). In archaeology, it is sometimes difficult to know if we are facing different practices or different expressions of similar practices. We must be careful of confusions: a dangerous shift may occur from cultural to religious identity, while both of these aspects function well together. During the 3rd and the 4th centuries, grave objects could convey cultural identity, or they

could mean only that funeral honours were given to the dead, without any link between the items and the actual way of honouring them.

The question of non-Christian graves during the Early Middle Ages seems to be a dead end. Data inform us instead on how religious and social practices are expressed and evolve over time and show that the transition of the dead towards the sacred sphere is slow. Over the centuries, the grave is a place where several identities coexist and adapt to one another. Earthly claims do not prevent the construction of a Christian identity. Up until the 8th century, most funeral assemblages appear to be simply a juxtaposition of individuals; collectivity seems to be expressed only on a family level (kinship, relatives, ancestors). Burial is still the privileged place of funerary expression, a means of multiple communications, but Christian identity is not defined by the material traits assigned to the burial, apart from inscriptions, accessories or ornaments where the decoration testifies the relationship to Christian religion. A real change appears during the 9th century. The grouping together of individuals around a religious building accelerates. This is the beginning of the Christian cemetery. It is no longer individuals that are buried side by side but Christians that are brought together. Tombs are less and less long-lasting; remembrance fades towards prayers; more exactly, the exercise of remembrance no longer needs graves, which become ephemeral during the 10th century. If the grave during early Roman times, is the result of strict religious observances, the analysis of burial practices of the Early Middle Ages seems to show that the rites accompany the constitution of the grave, but it remains difficult to know exactly when, between the 9th century and the 11th century, this change occurred.

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CHAPTER 4

Material Culture and Religious Affiliation in 4th-Century Gaul

A Time of Invisibility

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Abstract

A still poorly understood, let alone explained, page of history is the evolution of pagan cult places in the Western Roman empire from the 3rd to the 5th century CE. Based on available sources, all, or nearly all, has already been said on the restoration of the imperial state and Roman city-states after the crisis of the 3rd century, the slow integration of Christian communities into the life of cities, and the continuity of paganism until its near destruction under Theodosius at the end of the 4th century. At the same time, the transformation of public religious systems organised by cities from the Augustan period onwards remains in large part unknown. The reason for this is first and foremost the disappearance of epigraphical sources after 250 CE, poorly replaced by the works of Christian or pagan writers, often rhetorical and polemical. This chapter evaluates the fundamental problem of

religious transformations in the 4th century, starting from the results of recent excavations, showing that a certain number of great civic sanctuaries, built and restored at great expense by local elites from the 1st to the beginning of the 3rd century, had already been abandoned and even dismantled in the second half of the 3rd century. This phase of abandonment, occurring before the conversion of Constantine and the rise of Christianity as the official religion, reveals an essential change in religious practices in the provinces and a transformation of religious identities, in the way of being pagan. Related to this is the transformation of the urban landscape in the provinces of Gaul, confirming that the celebration of public sacrifices and *ludi scaenici*, of big festivals, seems to have ceased in the 4th century, the fortification of towns taking priority over religious festivals. What was it, then, to be pagan or Christian in the 4th century in Gaul, when the big festivals had ceased, and when Christian communities were not yet constructing monumental meeting places or churches and cathedrals, a process only documented by archaeology from the very end of the 4th century and into the 5th century?

A Decline of Civic Religion

The interpretation of the life of sanctuaries in Late Antiquity is still often based on old archaeological records and is therefore incomplete and founded on an uncertain chronological framework. The activity of a shrine is usually described based on the fragile testimony of 4th-century coins found on sites, while the question of the circumstances of abandonment, violent or not, is invariably raised (Lavan and Mulryan 2011). A distorting effect is given by tables showing a linear evolution of the use of cult places from the 1st to the 4th century, without regarding criteria as fundamental as the reliability of archaeological data, the status of shrines (public or private) or the precise characterisation of religious activities. The considerable methodological progress made by archaeology in the last 30 years and the development of rescue archaeology in France and neighbouring countries provide the conditions for a careful examination of the evolution of cult places in Late Antiquity. It is now possible to work on the detailed phasing of sites

and the characterisation of material remains, as well as to consider the specific contexts of discovery of a variety of archaeological materials (pottery, coins, small finds, animal bones, plant remains etc.), enabling us to study religious practices and how they changed.

In Rennes/Condate, the capital of the Riedones, in the second half of the 3rd century, a town wall was built, enclosing a small portion of the urban area of the High Empire, in accordance with a general trend observed in Roman Gaul. The wall is built on a massive foundation made with blocks of granite and limestone removed and reused from destroyed buildings. And some of these blocks come from the great civic sanctuary dedicated to the main god of the Riedones, Mars Mullo, especially from the basilica of the temple where the statues of the *numina pagorum*, the patron gods of the territorial subdivisions, the *pagi*, would have stood (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).[1] The use of the great

Figure 4.1: Section of Rennes late antique city wall discovered in 1958. Columns are used to fill the internal part of the wall. Photograph: H. Couäsnon.
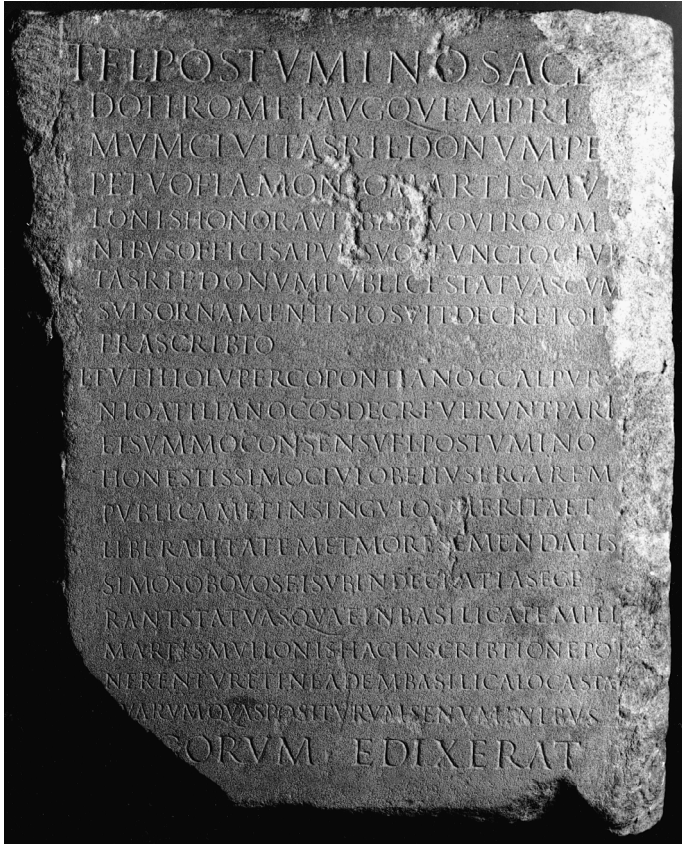
Figure 4.2: In Rennes the cult of Mars Mullo was organised as the main cult of the *civitas*, chaired by a flaminate. Source: *AE*, 1969–1970, 405a, Musée de Bretagne. Released under the license Creative Commons BY-SA.

civic sanctuary as a stone quarry is a significant act. Indeed, with the adoption of the centralised system of the city-state at the beginning of the imperial era, the cult of Mars Mullo was organised as the main cult of the *civitas*, chaired by a flaminate. A municipal decree in 135 CE (*AE*, 1969–1970, 405a) indicates that Mars Mullo had a temple (*templum*) associated with a basilica, a monumental hall, in which were displayed statues representing the divine powers of the *pagi* of the city-state. Such an organisation was the result of the religious integration of the territory of the city-state within the municipal system; it implicated the *pagani* in the public religion of the Riedones. In Trier, where the

same organisation is attested, we know that the main god of the Treveri was Lenus Mars and that at a fixed date, the tutelary deities of the *pagi* were in the same way associated with the public ceremonies organised in the great temple, endowed with a theatre and public baths ([Figure 4.3](#)).[2] Public sacrifices were therefore celebrated at Trier and Rennes, bringing together all sections of the city-state; sacrifices were given in honour of the great civic god and also the gods of the *pagi* under the chairship of the local priests, all members of the local assembly.

What happened, then, to these large public celebrations when, at the end of the 3rd century, the local authorities of Condate/Rennes decided to dismantle at least partially the great sanctuary of Mars Mullo? One might naturally think that the main altar was maintained, but to remove the statues of the *numina pagorum* and the *summi viri* would have had consequences for the organisation of the public cult and for local religious memory. Whatever the aspects of sacrifices cel-
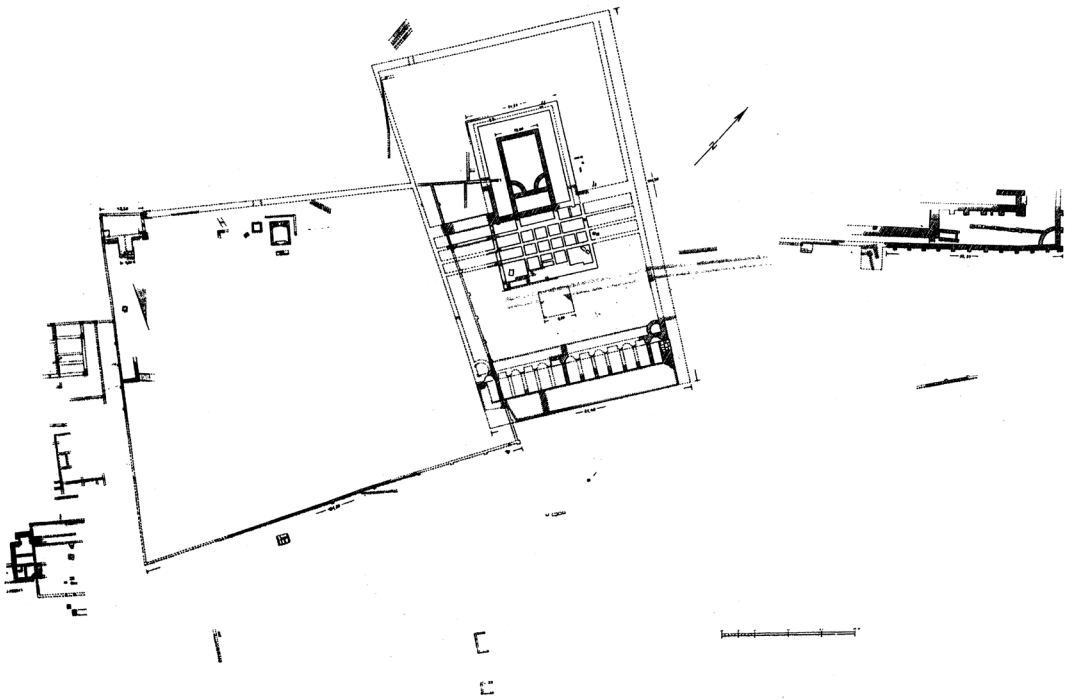
Figure 4.3: In Trier the main god of the Treveri was Lenus Mars, who was installed in a great temple, endowed with a theatre and public baths. Reproduced from Gose 1955.

ebrated in the ruins of the sanctuary, I doubt that the great festivals were still celebrated, bringing together the *pagani* of the city-state and feeding the local market with fresh sacrificial meat.

Close to the Riedones, among the Eburovices, it is possible to further interrogate this phenomenon thanks to a recent excavation made at Vieil-Évreux, the site of a great civic sanctuary located six kilometres from the capital Evreux/Mediolanum Aulercorum (Guyard et al. 2012; Guyard et al. 2014, 39–50). The monumentality and the richness of the religious complex indicate that it was used for public festivals and paid for by public funds and local elites. It is certainly where the patron deity of the Eburovices was installed. The main temple was completely rebuilt and embellished again in the early 3rd century, but it did not survive the events of the second half of the century. The stratigraphy shows that the temple was carefully dismantled in the last quarter of that century. The question remains of what happened to the bronze statues of the *numina pagorum* of the sanctuary of Condate/Rennes, since only the stone bases were reused within the city walls; we undoubtedly have the answer at Vieil-Évreux, where the destruction levels contain the metal *ornamenta* of the sanctuary: fragments of the statues of Jupiter, Apollo and Minerva, but also of liturgical furniture. The closure of the great temple of the Eburovices marked the end of the great public ceremonies held in honour of the patron god of the community. One may consider the possibility of the repatriation of the cult to the capital, but it is hard to believe when seeing the state of the public monuments in towns at that time. In any case, the programmed dismantlement of the great civic temple site indicates that the local authorities planned and supervised the process, and it is difficult not to think that this organised destruction of Vieil-Évreux had no connexion with the new construction project planned a few kilometres away: the new town wall.

The increasing amount of archaeological data reveal that this process of degradation or destruction was in fact more general that might be thought.[3] Among the Coriosolites, still in the west of Gaul, the great sanctuary of Le Haut-Bécherel near the capital, with a configuration similar to that of the temple of Mars Lenus in Trier, experienced a slight drop in usage in the middle of the 3rd century, with traces of the complete reuse of goods and construction materials (Figure 4.4). Among the Nervii, the great sanctuary of Blicquy, where we have recovered important infrastructure such as baths and a theatre, was abandoned

Figure 4.4: Among the Coriosolites, the great sanctuary of Le Haut-Bécherel was ravaged by a fire in the second half of the 3rd century. Photograph: A. Provost. All rights reserved.

in the 260s. The theatre, which was built on wooden structures and could accommodate 6,000 people, was abandoned at the same time. A nearby necropolis testifies, however, to a certain continuity of human occupation. This phenomenon seems to reflect a major change in common behaviour as well as in the internal organisation of the commu-

nity. In Reims/Durocortorum, capital of Gallia Belgica, the temple of Rue Belin was destroyed by fire around 250 only to welcome a secular occupation in the second half of the 3rd century. Two deep wells were then built reusing the blocks of the temple and the surrounding monuments. Later, during the construction of the town wall in the time of Constantine, civic authorities did not hesitate to dismantle the monumental altar of the Princes of Youth erected in the forum in the Augustan period (*AE* 1982, 715; *CIL* XIII, 3254), even if it was one of the first religious monuments of the *civitas* and one of the first expressions of municipal autonomy. Sometimes destruction came a little bit later, as for example in Allonnes, where the great sanctuary of the Cenomani was ravaged by a fire in the second quarter of the 4th century. However, if this event marked the definitive end of the sanctuary, it seems that the temple was already partially abandoned in the second half of the 3rd century. At this precise time the inhabitants of Le Mans/Vindinum, the *civitas* capital, stopped throwing personal offerings in the mud of the sacred pond located on the edge of the town. At Avenches/Aventicum, colony of the Helvetii since Vespasian, the urban community was installed at the same time as a religious district, which developed on the edge of the town. The site had hosted a variety of gods up until the 3rd century, including an important but anonymous one installed in the great temple of Cigognier. In front, a theatre welcomed performances (*ludi scaenici*) completing the worship of gods and the sacrifices that animated the public life of the colony. All this stopped in the second half of the 3rd century, when the theatre was transformed into a fortress surrounded by a wide defensive moat. Life there did not quite end, however, as is shown by the existence of shops and workshops in the neighbourhood.[4]

Can we qualify these phenomena? Epigraphy gives some information, despite the extreme dearth of inscriptions from 250 CE.[5] In Dalheim, a *vicus* of the colony of the Treverii, an inscription recently discovered tells us that the inhabitants of the *vicus* restored their public baths 'destroyed by the violence of barbarians' around 250 (Krier 2011). As it should be, a religious ceremony was celebrated, commemorated by an altar in honour of the Divine House and the goddess Fortuna, habitual patron of the baths – 'for the preservation of the Empire', says the inscription. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that it was a military person, Marinianius Marinus, centurion of the eighth Augustan legion, who 'took care' of the reconstruction. This mention of the intervention

of a representative of the Roman state is not trivial, at a time when the religious activity of the *vicus* was suffering a certain decline: temple D in the religious complex was abandoned shortly after the middle of the 3rd century. The text of Dalheim is exceptional because after 250, inscriptions become very rare. At Til-Châtel (*CIL* XIII, 5622), an altar was erected in 250 or 251 in the context of a local sanctuary. At Vieux/Aregenua (*CIL* XIII, 3163), capital of the Veliocasses, C. Victorius Felix erected, perhaps between 260 and 268, an altar to the god Mars at a temple in town for the salvation of his family, and in the finest tradition of the early empire. At precisely the same time, the old forum of the town shows signs of transformation, part of the public buildings becoming a kind of slaughterhouse and the richly adorned curia for the *senatus* even being abandoned. The rest of the inscriptions are all located on the Rhine border and related to a strong military presence, even when the municipal authorities are mentioned. In 276 at Mainz, a *decurio*, Marcellinius Placidinus, ordered a votive altar 'in h[onorem] d[omus] d[ivinae]' and for the goddess Luna in an unknown context (*CIL* XIII, 6733). In the same town, between 293 and 305, the *civitas* celebrated a sacrifice to the Capitoline triad and the immortal gods for imperial salvation, certainly in the context of the restoration of the empire, when the barbarians were pushed back beyond the Rhine (*CIL* XIII, 6727). The military aspect is in any case well marked on an altar at Bonn, erected in 295 by legionaries who restored the local temple of Mars in honour of the *domus divina* (*CIL* XIII, 8019). After this date, the gods of polytheism disappeared from provincial epigraphy, with the exceptions of the dedication of the mithraeum of Speyer (Noviomagus Nemetum) in 325, again in a military context, and two recently discovered inscriptions from the 4th century from another mithraeum in Angers/Iuliomagus (Molin, Brodeur and Mortreau 2015). The other texts, just as rare, appear in a Christian context in Lyon in 334 (St Irene's Church), at Valcabrère near Lugdunum Convenarum in 347 and at Autun in 378, and even the Manes are still mentioned on a funeral inscription from 352 in Zülpich in lower Germany. While few texts emerge from an epigraphical meltdown after 250, those that do seem to indicate that in the second half of the 3rd century the maintenance of traditional religion is essentially documented in official and military contexts. Archaeology confirms this, showing that the vast majority of the temples were not restored at the time.[6]

Is it, then, possible to establish an initial observation that changes the generally accepted idea for Gaul of a slow decline of pagan sanctuaries throughout the 4th century. It seems that most of the great civic sanctuaries stopped operating in the second half of the 3rd century, long before the conversion of Constantine and the rise of Christianity as the official religion. Certainly, the disaffection of sanctuaries should not necessarily be seen as an exceptional phenomenon. Pliny the Younger's account (*Ep.* X, 96) of the Christians of Bithynia in the time of Trajan is well known. Pliny complained that the development of the Christian community had led to the abandonment of the temples of traditional gods. Of course, catastrophism is part of the rhetoric employed to expose and stop the activism of the Christians in Bithynia. However, this example indicates that cults could be neglected, and then reactivated on the initiative of the provincial governor, a member of the elite or the patron of a college. At Bath, in the province of Brittany, an inscription, unfortunately not dated, tells us that a religious place dedicated to the *numen* of Augustus, ruined by sacrilegious hands, was restored by a military veteran (*RIB* 152). At Virunum, a mithraeum was rebuilt after being deserted for many years (*CIL* III, 4796). The mention of an interruption of sacrifice is rare. Most of the time, the inscriptions simply specify that the place of cult was restored, sometimes *a fundamento*, from the foundations, even if this reconstruction concerned only the decoration. In the context of the disappearance and reactivation of cults, Nock has highlighted this phenomena with the example of the spectacular piety of an Arcadian aristocrat who restored all the temples and cults of the area (Nock 1972, 16ff). The most famous example is of course the restoration of Roman cults by Augustus, which operates in the context of political restoration of the Republic. Even if one can question the idea of a true religious crisis, except perhaps in the decade preceding Actium, the political action of Augustus had an impact on the intensity of Roman cults. 'The Augustan revival itself is the product of an age increasingly favourable to belief: religion was in the air', says Nock (1972, 9). In other words, the action of Augustus in favour of religion is presented as a normal reaction of piety, which was intended to restore the cults left fallow or dormant.

Now if we go back to the second half of the 3rd century, we are forced to face the facts. The restoration of the Roman state that followed the crisis certainly led to a one-time religious restoration policy

which left evidence in Rome, Italy, in militarised areas like the Rhine-land border cities, and in towns favoured by the imperial power such as Trier or Autun/Augustodunum, if we are to follow the panegyric of Eumenius describing flamboyant urban landscape (*Latin Panegyrics*, V; Hostein 2012; Hostein and Kasprzyk 2012). John Scheid, in a book that founded the principles of the Roman civic religion, concluded that people had, in the 3rd century, lost faith (in the sense of 'trust') (Scheid 1985). 'A religion that is inextricably linked to political faith cannot avoid being deeply touched when state structures are disrupted or in the process of dissolution.' In other words, it seems that we have gone from a historical form of polytheism to a new one, not so strongly based on the organisation of the city-state. The gods changed and some cults became obsolete, never again to be restored. Public religion, formed in the imperial period on the great gods invested by municipalities and the imperial cult, which kept each man in his place, provided community markers, and defined municipal autonomy and memory, was dissolved during the restructuring of the Roman state. In one generation, the system of 'polis religion' collapsed, ultimately as fast as parochial civilisation, as is so well described by Y. Lambert in the years following the Second World War (Lambert 1985). Lambert explains that Limerzel, a village in Morbihan in the 1960s, made a fundamental break with respect to a state in which religion was obvious; he speaks of a slow rupture by successive fragments, which saw the old parish civilisation replaced by a new world. Similarly, the events of the 3rd century in Gaul resulted in a slow decline through repeated shifts in the civic compromise that was based on large public ceremonies, replaced by another historical form of polytheism which forced communities to reinvent their pagan religion.

Clearly, with the restoration of the Roman state from Diocletian onwards, civic religion was not on the agenda of most of the city-states of Gaul. The cities were able to recover from the crisis or temporary difficulties, but the priority of the municipal governments, whatever may be said, was not the restoration of shrines and public altars but the construction of fortifications, which are known to be exceptional monuments and very expensive compared with other monuments of urban ornament. It is no surprise to see the approval of Diocletian and Maximian of the decision of a governor to prioritise the construction of town walls before the financing of games (Justinian Code, XI, 42, 1); this also shows that imperial power now partly dictated the allocation

of expenditures of the municipalities. Ramparts before religious festivals! There was no hesitation to demolish the sanctuaries and retrieve the ornaments, which raises an institutional problem, since they constituted inalienable property.[7]

Urbs Nova: Advent of New Towns in the 4th Century

This brings us to observe another fundamental characteristic of the 4th century: the material invisibility of the two religions involved, Christianity and paganism, particularly in towns. Were sacrifices still celebrated in the public square? In most cases, suburban sanctuaries were abandoned, and the forum area was most of the time excluded from the walled city. However, the mithraea of and Angers continued to be busy ([Figure 4.5](#)). At Narbonne, at the Clos de la Lombarde, in the apse of an already abandoned bath, a cult place dedicated to Isis was attended by a small community.[8] In the same town, the great temple of the city that had clearly seized the imagination (Ausone, *Ordo urbium nobilium*, v. 120–23) ended up being dismantled at the end of the 4th century to fuel the construction of the new harbour. In Toulouse, at the same time, the marble and limestone of the capitol temple were systematically salvaged, but it is very probable that public ceremonies had ceased for some time already. These monuments were obviously maintained for a time thanks more to their memory status within the local community than to their true religious function. However, this situation is not incompatible with the Christian topography of the cities of the 4th century, on the contrary. Indeed, we must recognise that Christian communities of Gaul did not build monumental churches at that time, or at least monuments to mark the urban space: they wouldn't do so until the very end of the 4th century. This is the date that is given to a basilica discovered in the corner of the *castrum* of Bordeaux, near Saint-André Cathedral and to the baptistery of a Grenoble episcopal complex on land occupied by a public monument or an aristocratic house. At the same time, at the very end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century, the first cathedral of Geneva was erected above a small building identified as an oratory; this is also the date given to the basilica/baptistery discovered in the *castrum* of Mandeure ([Figure 4.6](#)).[9] There is only one conclusion to be drawn from all this: in the 4th century, religion had largely deserted the public arena
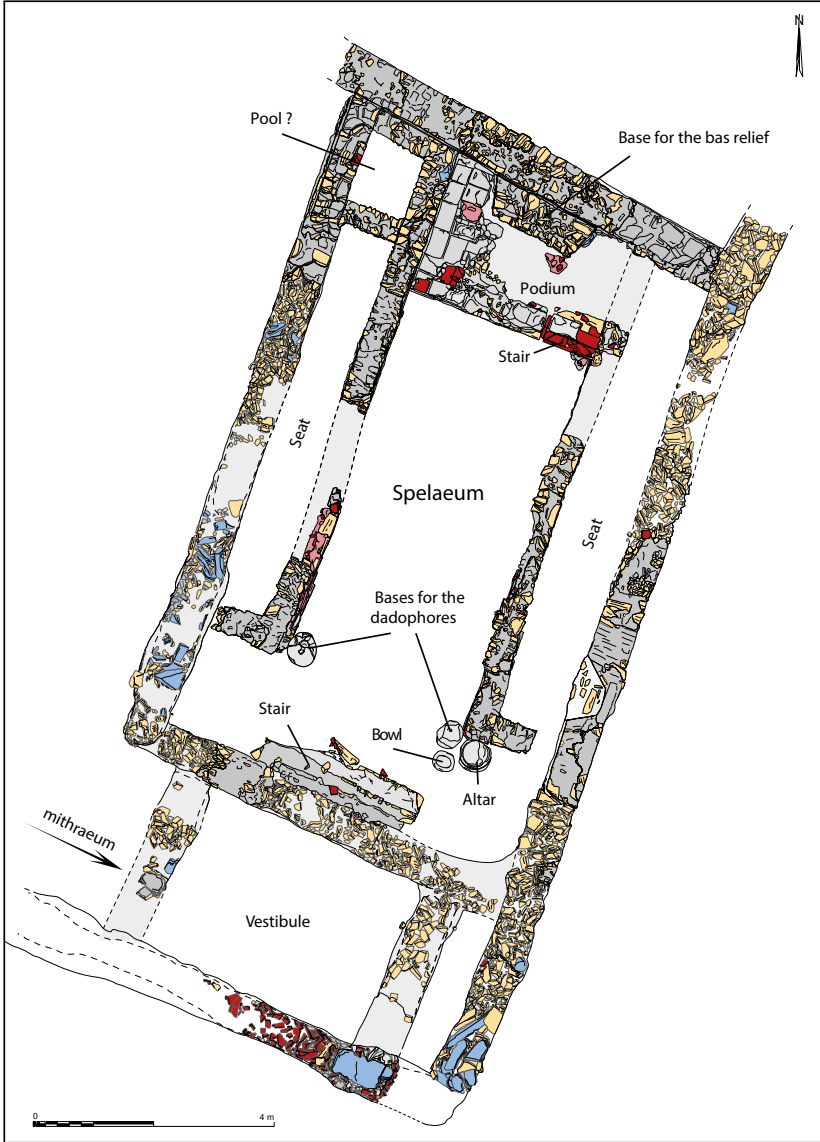
Plan du *mithraeum d'Angers - clinique Saint Louis*
illustration © Didier Pfost - INRAP, réalisation Maxime Mortreau - Inrap GO
état du bâtiment phase 5c : milieu à fin IVe s. (figures 190 et 191 du RFO de
fouilles)

Figure 4.5: Plan of Angers' mithraeum in the second half of the 4th century. Image: Didier Pfost and Maxime Mortreau. All rights reserved.
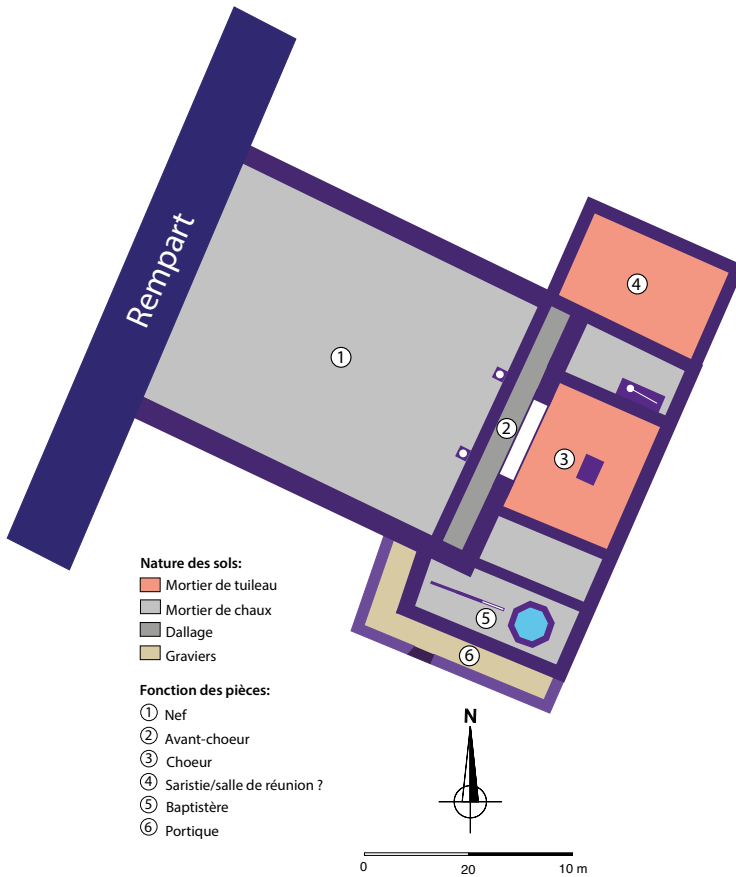
Figure 4.6: Plan of Mandeure church at the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century. Image: Cédric Cramatte. All rights reserved.

and the field of urban representation before the construction of the first Christian monuments at the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries.

This frankly unprecedented situation of a city that is not organised by religious topography raises questions about the role played by civic spaces in the 4th century. We know the importance of the forum in cities of the early Roman empire: structured in the beginning around a curia and an altar of Rome and Augustus, the public squares were gradually monumentalised to accommodate all spaces and monuments that served the *dignitas civitatis* and the exercising of municipal

autonomy guaranteed by imperial power (Van Andringa 2015). If one focuses on the archaeological evidence, it is difficult to speak of an immutable maintenance of the forum area, at least in forms similar to those we observe in the early Roman empire. First of all, there is a total absence of evidence concerning the restoration of forum areas in the 4th century: town walls, baths, but never the forum. On the contrary, the available evidence rather suggests a restructuring or partial abandonment. The destruction of the forum of Vannes/Darioritum is dated from the late 3rd century, and it seems that this destruction corresponded to the beginning of the town wall construction. In any case, the forum area was left out of the walled town. At Limoges, the last traces of activities in the southern gallery of the forum are dated from the last quarter of the 3rd century. In Auch/Augusta Auscorum the abandonment is set in the decades preceding 370, while the forum of Amiens /Samarobriva experienced new uses in the first half of the 4th century. We can add new evidence with the recently excavated forum of Vieux/Aregenua which witnessed renewal works in the early 3rd century before being appropriated for slaughter and butchery activities at the end of the century. At the same time, the forum of Bavay/Bagacum became a *castrum*, but this restructuring is partially explained by the transfer of the *civitas* capital. These observations do not question certain functions of the forum, which could have continued to be used as a public place or a market, especially when the area was incorporated inside the town wall like in Reims or Amiens. However, in most cases, the forum was ignored by the new urban plan, now centred on the walled area. In Périgueux/Vesuna, the fortification dated to the first half of the 4th century was attached to the perimeter wall of the amphitheatre, but carefully avoided the forum area and the largest urban temple, stripped of all its ornaments (Figures 4.7a and 4.7b).[10] The forum was also left away from the new walled towns of Paris and Rennes. In the latter, the blocks used for the foundation of the fortification dated to the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries and obviously came from the forum area.

In the very real programme of urban restoration that followed the Great Crisis, in addition to the non-reoccupation of the abandoned suburban areas, I will single out two major events, the first being the abandonment or dismantling of large civic temples, the second being the importance given to the city walls in the new urban setting at the expense of major civic monuments like the forum. These changes are

Figure 4.7a: City wall of Périgueux. Photograph: Père Igor. Released under the license Creative Commons BY-SA.

too important to speak of urban continuity before the advent of the Christian city in the 5th century; they show instead that cities are necessarily the image of a particular historical situation and that they are renewed accordingly. The city of the 4th century was no exception to the rule: it was certainly a new town, a new kind of town, even if it stayed at the centre of the city-state organisation until the setting up of the Merovingian royal administration (Liebeschutz 2006; Krause and Witschel 2006). An obvious fact is that there was no attempt to repopulate the cities affected by the crisis of the 3rd century. On the contrary, the abandoned residential areas became demolition salvage yards that were integrated into huge construction projects: the walls programmed to define smaller or shrunken towns.[11]

Built at different times according to local contexts between the second half of the 3rd century and the late 4th century, town walls became the representative monument of the urban fabric; the reasons for this were primarily military, after the raids and anarchic situations of the 3rd century, although as noted by Cassiodorus in the 5th century, in
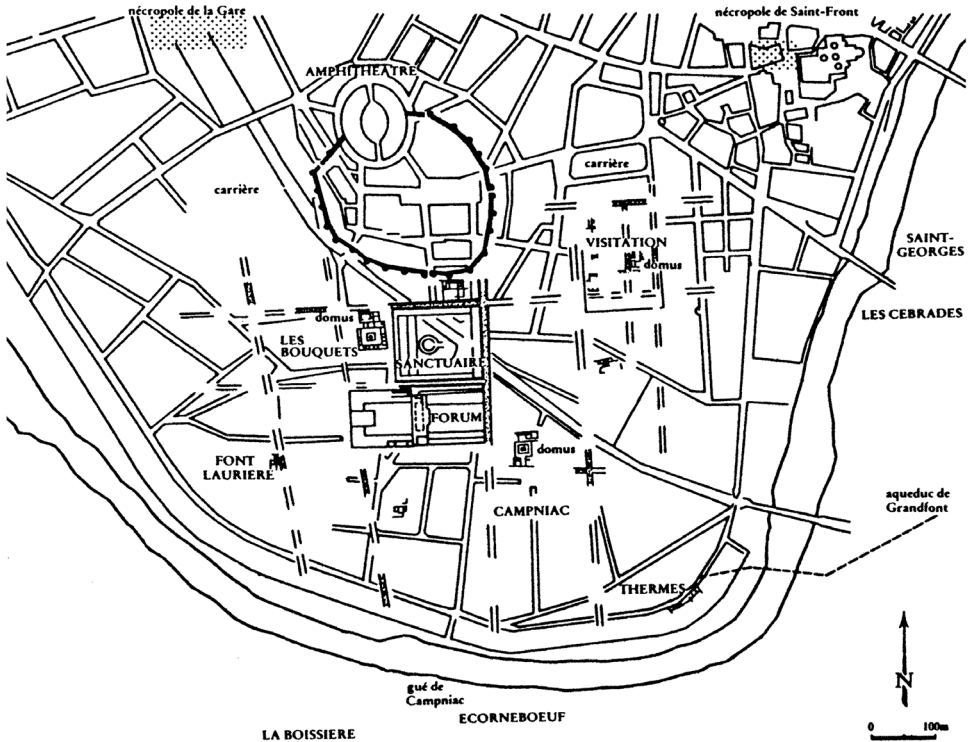
Figure 4.7b: Plan of Périgueux: 4th-century town wall and forum area. Source: Girardy-Caillat 1996, fig. 82.

times of peace the wall served also as ornament to the city (*Var.* 1, 28, 1.): 'and *ornatus pacis* … and *bellorum necessitas*'. That they were still defensive works is indicated by the association of the amphitheatre, turned already into a bastion in the 3rd century, with the Constantinian wall of Tours, a phenomenon that is also found in Périgueux.[12] But the real change lies in what can be called the urban system. The city of the early Roman empire was first the production of elites in the name of civic compromise, which made members of the local aristocracy custodians of local autonomy and therefore essential elements of the empire. If the elites continued to serve the empire in the 4th century, under renewed offices, adapted to the new political context, their maintenance or social mobility was no longer based on urban representation shaped by the exercise of magistracy, urban domiciliation or the organisation of religious festivals. Another aspect of this evolution

Figure 4.8: A town according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Picture from the 15th century copying a Carolingian manuscript. Image: The Bodleian Library, Oxford.

was the disappearance of big funerary monuments at the gates of the town that linked individuals and their social memory to their city. After the crisis of the 3rd century, city programming was suddenly reduced to the defence of the community embodied by the construction of a fortification, erected with *spolia* coming from an urban system which ceased to exist, enclosing a condensed space where people continued to live and work but where religion and elites had much less need for representation areas. And it is precisely in this new town, defined by a rampart which had absorbed the entire municipal memory, that the Christian city arose – but much later, not until the 5th century, and very gradually (Figure 4.8).

A Religion in Pieces

In this context, with the decline of public sacrifices and the advent of new towns, we must evaluate the place of the gods of polytheism in this new world that is the 4th century, in the transformed city-state of Late Antiquity where imperial power favours Christianity. The end of the gods has not yet come, as evidenced by anti-pagan laws issued to respond to the problems of the time (like private haruspicine) and

particularly adapted to a new and fragmented religious situation. Archaeological records are there to raise the question of the scope of these texts and their geographical base. Which sacrifices and practices were condemned by 4th century imperial legislation in the context of a marked depletion of pagan cults and conversion to Christianity? Similarly, the absence of maintenance in many shrines from the 3rd century onwards raises questions about the aspect of the religious landscape tackled by Martin of Tours (Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 12–15): is, then, the late paganism of Martin first the product of clerical representations at a time when the Christian authorities just took the offensive? (Mériaux 2010). After the death of Emperor Julian in 363 CE, all indications are that the Christians were kicking a man already down in their behaviour towards the pagans, at least when it comes to practices which were, in Gaul, no longer defined by public authorities and pagan sanctuaries.[13] It is, then, necessary to question how the gods were worshipped in the 4th century. While the great sanctuaries were abandoned, some other shrines were visited: even if the habitus had changed, attendance at places of cult continued, leading to a transformed or simplified liturgy. While these places were not embellished or restored – except in rare cases – they invariably recorded traces of occupation in the form of coins discovered mostly scattered in the fills of the destruction.[14]

The religious practices of the 4th century must still be defined with better precision, particularly through a detailed study of archaeological remains such as those at the sanctuary of Fontaine l'Étuvée at Orléans/Cenabum (Verneau 2014). This shrine experienced intense activity in the 1st and 2nd centuries: people assembled there on a regular basis, vows were fulfilled and pledged as indicated by the testimony of the numerous ex-votos left on the site, a spacious portico was added thanks to the generosity of Capillus; in the 4th century, archaeological evidence shows that few people came to the abandoned and partly demolished sanctuary for religious purposes (the tile roof of the gallery had collapsed), and that they left few coins or ritual traces (Figures 4.9a and 4.9b). In this case, the main factors are certainly the disappearance at this time of anatomical ex-votos and the organisation of practices in private ceremonies. From an archaeological point of view, the discreetness of the archaeological traces at cult places still visited in the 4th century is comparable to the extremely subtle traces recorded in domestic cult in imperial times.

Figure 4.9a: Inscription from the sanctuary of La Fontaine-l'Étuvée at Orléans. Photograph: Musée d'Orléans. All rights reserved.

This situation is not isolated. The evidence shows that a new way of being pagan was adapting to a fragmented religious landscape, and it confirms the sharp decline of the civic impregnation of religion while Christianity was slowly rising as a new reference system. After the crises of the 3rd century, the changes in the administration of the empire were the basis of a second pagan era, which could be termed an 'occasional paganism': pragmatic and functioning in closed social circles, it was opposed to the ancient form of paganism, which was based on the city-state and celebrated by large public sacrifices organised and financed by magistrates and priests. When the gods changed, they were also more vulnerable. The places of worship of the Gallic provinces recorded hardly any traces of occupation or visits from the reign of Theodosius onwards, the same time in which stones from the *Capitolium* of Narbonne were reused to build the new harbour of the town and when we see the very first remains of churches and baptisteries:[15] the oldest examples of well-dated churches such as those in Mandeure

Figure 4.9b: Plan of the recently excavated sanctuary of La Fontaine-l'Étuvée at Orléans. Source: F. Verneau.

or l'Isle-Jourdain emerged at the end of 4th or the beginning of the 5th century. The intransigence of anti-pagan laws and the sudden resonance given to Saint Martin's actions against pagan temples show that the imperial and ecclesiastical institutions then tightened their policy against paganism – a paganism that was no longer and had long since ceased to be irrigated by large community sacrifices.

Conclusion

What does archaeology allow us to say? We can say that from 250, the dominance of elites and civic concord are no longer expressed in community celebrations that bring the local population together in the great sanctuaries. After 280, the conditions of the traditional civic compromise are no longer met, the municipal temples are not restored by the elites, and some were even dismantled at the initiative of local authorities. Municipal memory framed by public festivals and the monumen-

Figure 4.10: Foundation of tower C, late antique city wall of Périgueux. Photograph: Ch. Durand, 1920.

tality of civic sanctuaries in the beginning of the imperial era seemed to be suddenly forgotten (Figure 4.10). Civic compromise, based on a close link in city-states between public sacrifices, benefaction and elite domination, suffered an irreversible shift that changed the history and the pagan gods themselves. The religion of the 4th century can be qualified as a religion in pieces, expressing the breakdown or the divisions of big religious structures, Christians and pagans. This situation of fragmentation explains why people progressively constructed, from the end of the 3rd century, a kind of tailor-made religion: here a group of people offered a few coins and celebrated in a private ceremony in the ruined sanctuary of La Fontaine l'Étuvée; there a member of Narbonne/Narbo Martius elite reused a 2nd-century altar dedicated to Isis to organise a private shrine in his domus; there again, a small group of Mithra worshippers gathered without interruption until the end of the 4th century in Angers/Iuliomagus. In the same way, the owner of the

big villa of Lullingstone in Britain built a private church, which consisted of a small rectangular space, enlivened only by a simple niche its eastern wall.[16] This idea of tailor-made religion certainly explains the material invisibility of religion in the 4th century. Religious duties were not conceived any more in the civic or public sphere, except maybe for the honours given to the emperors, which explains the maintenance of some *flaminates* and *sacerdotes* in the documentation (Elvira concile).[17] Religious duties were, then, conceived more as individual needs and explorations developed in small groups or communities, according to the local situation and local social pressures.[18] This very peculiar situation of the 4th century explains why some freshly converted Christian people were still convening pagan ceremonies, as indicated by a canon of the Council of Arles in 375 CE that denounces this kind of practice. Being semi-Christians or Incerti, these people were just expressing their personal religious experiences at a time when religion had lost its civic character.

Notes

1 Aubin et al. 2014, 219–48; Bousquet 1971; Pouille 2008. On the cult of Mars Mullo, Van Andringa 2017, 156–60, 238.
2 Scheid 1991; Van Andringa 2017, 160–62, 258ff; also Van Andringa 2013, 468ff.
3 See the examples in Van Andringa 2014. This process has been already discussed in L'Huillier and Bertrand 2006.
4 Corseul (Le Haut-Bécherel): Provost, Mutarelli and Maligorne 2010, 219–25; Blicquy: Gillet, Demarez and Henton 2009; Reims: Neiss et al. 2015; Allonnes: Brouquier-Reddé and Gruel 2004; Le Mans: Chevet et al. 2014; Avenches: Blanc and Castella 2011.
5 Raepsaet-Charlier 1993, who inventories no more than a dozen of dated inscriptions in Gaul and Germany after 250.
6 *Contra* Goodman 2011, 168, who mentions a series of sanctuaries built or embellished in the 4th century. Those are in fact very few: see for example the temple of Matagne-la-Grande, Cattelain, Paridaens 2009; Paridaens, Cattelain and Genvier 2014; also, the case of Liberchies: Vilvorder 2014.
7 The juridical status of cult places is discussed by Thomas 2002.
8 Sabrié 2015. On the mithraea, *CAG* 33/2, 334–37 (Bordeaux); Molin, Brodeur and Mortreau 2015 (Angers).
9 Prévot, Gaillard and Gauthier 2014, 62–67 (Bordeaux), 107–16 (Grenoble); Bonnet 2009; Blin and Cramatte 2014.
10 Bayard and Massy 1979 (Amiens); Galliou 2009, 345–54 (Vannes); Gardes et al. 2012 (Auch); Girardy 2013 (Périgueux); Jardel and Lelièvre 2014 (Vieux); Loustaud 2000, 364 (Limoges).

11 Garmy and Maurin 1996. The importance given to the town wall is confirmed by the Theodosian Code, XV, 1, 32 and 33; see Arce 2015, 319; Van Andringa 2020.

12 Girardy 2013 (Périgueux); Seigne and Galinié 2007 (Tours).

13 This situation is not very far from the one described for the eastern part of the empire; Julian, Epist. 78 (4), from 361, cf. Belayche 2005, 349.

14 We know that money played an important role in the ritual of the early empire, like the stips deposited or thrown into the sanctuary. Obviously, the coins found in the 4th-century sanctuaries show that the rituals of that era borrowed some of these habits, ending visits made to the sanctuary or the use of equipment managed by the shrine or used with the prayer in a kind of reformulated liturgy.

15 Agusta-Boularot et al. 2014 (Narbonne); Blin and Cramatte 2014 (Mandeure).

16 Bowes 2008, 131.

17 Vives et al. 1963, canons 2, 3 and 4.

18 Bowes 2008.

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CHAPTER 5

Statuary, the Secular and Remaining Powers in Late Antiquity

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on the survival and diverse usage of pagan-mythological statuary until the end of Antiquity. In order to explain its continued functioning in late antique centuries, I discuss two ways of viewing: the secular (whereby gods and divinities are seen as symbolic or emblematic for specific aspects of life, particularly elite life), and the religious (whereby gods and divinities retain power and agency). Whereas secular explanations have been given ample attention in recent decades, the power of statues in Late Antiquity, and especially their positive power in the eyes of people who self-identified as Christian, has been largely neglected. I argue that it is worthwhile exploring this route further to help explain why these statues remained so omnipresent in the cityscape.

Keywords: pagan-mythological statuary, magic, secular, Sagalassos, *paideia*, Constantinople, Palladion

Introduction

The fate of pagan and mythological statues in Late Antiquity has drawn a lot of scholarly attention in recent years. Careful research is attesting an ever greater number of statues that remained on display until very late in the period or even survived into the Middle Ages or later Byzantine periods. Moreover, it is becoming ever clearer that these statues were not simply left standing but were repaired, altered and moved around, sometimes multiple times and apparently until much later than we previously assumed.[1] As the numbers of actively preserved and manipulated statuary grows, and as the quality of our information on both the statues and their contexts of use increases, the need grows also to examine how and why they still functioned in an ever more Christian society. Currently, a few wide-ranging explanatory frameworks are used to understand this survival of pagan and mythological statuary. On the one hand, statues are believed to have been preserved, relocated and appreciated by ever decreasing numbers of late antique pagans because of residual power. Late antique Christians, on the other hand, supposedly either appreciated statues for their beauty and used them for various secular purposes or feared them because they were considered dangerous. Although these takes on statuary, much of which are still derived from literary sources, are not necessarily wrong, I argue that the gulf between pagan and Christian viewings was not as large as is generally portrayed. In particular, a lot of the surviving evidence and literary attestations of late antique usage of statues may be explained in a much more straightforward way by assuming that Christians also believed particular statues to possess benevolent potency. This argument has very recently been made for the statues remaining on display at Constantinople, based on the ample literary sources available for the capital (Chatterjee 2021, 8 and *passim*), but it is not considered for the archaeological remains of statuary found elsewhere.

In the following pages, I will review lines of thought on pagan-mythological statuary in Late Antiquity with particular attention to one assemblage of statuettes of pagan divinities, put on display alongside the main colonnaded street of Sagalassos (south-west Turkey) in the second quarter of the 6th century. After a short overview of the archaeological evidence, I set out to sketch in broad brush-strokes the content and impact of the explanatory framework of the secular. I will

assess how this can be used to understand the survival of pagan and mythological statuary in Late Antiquity in general and then explore if and how it can be applied to the statuary composition at Sagalassos. In the second part, I will present an alternative framework that I will refer to as 'multiple religious consciousness', whereby pagan and mythological objects retained advantageous religious potency to Christians. Again, I will discuss reactions to statuary that would support this notion and examine if, how and why such an explanation would be apt for the Sagalassos situation. The two frameworks explored below are, at least in my opinion, not contradictory, and one does not necessarily exclude the other.[2]

The Statuettes and Their Find Location

Sagalassos was a medium-sized Pisidian town with a total inhabited surface of about 40 hectares, located in the south-west Taurus Mountains of Turkey, at an altitude of between 1,400 and 1,700 m. Excavations, started in 1990, have uncovered large areas of the city centre, including two agorae, stretches of the main roads, numerous public buildings and churches. They have produced a particularly detailed picture of what was happening in the 6th century, which, as at many sites in Asia Minor, was the last phase of large-scale occupation. At the start of the century, the town was hit by an earthquake. An extensive renovation programme was initiated and apparently lasted until the mid-6th century. Even though renovations and repairs were often executed with reused materials, they ensured the continued use of public buildings such as the imperial bath complex, as well as public spaces, including the two agorae and the main north–south colonnaded street.[3]

During the excavation campaign of 2009, a set of under-life-sized statues was discovered on top of the pavement of this street, just to the south of the Lower Agora.[4] Their find context suggests that they had been put on display on top of statue brackets along the street only during the post-earthquake renovations, more precisely during the second quarter of the 6th century. They would remain there until Sagalassos was hit by yet another earthquake in the first quarter of the 7th century. Some of the statues apparently even survived this seismic event and only toppled over at an unknown later point in time. Consequently, this collection provides us with information on what pieces of

statuary were still available and considered suitable for reuse. As such, they can also inform us about the values and beliefs of the population of Sagalassos in the 6th century.

Although these statuettes all depict pagan divinities or personifications, there can be little doubt that the population using the street in the 6th century, and also that initiating its last refurbishment, self-identified as Christian. Churches had already been constructed in highly conspicuous locations in the first half of the 5th century, and by the time the street was renovated, there were at least seven. In the surroundings of the statuettes, Christianity was omnipresent in the form of crosses and prayers inscribed on columns, and some architectural fragments carried crosses in relief.[5] Christian iconography by that time also proliferated on locally produced tableware (Talloen and Poblome 2005, 70–78).

To judge from the find locations of the statuettes and the consoles, there were a minimum of three statuettes on display along the eastern border of the street: an Apollo, a Hygieia and a Hygieia with Hypnos. An unknown, even smaller statuette may have been mounted on top of a small console near the agora gate staircase. Along the western side of the street, a third statuette of Hygieia was mounted on top of a console near a crossroads, an Aphrodite was present about halfway, near a street fountain, a central figure of a group once representing the Three Graces more to the north, and possibly a much smaller statuette, depicting Aphrodite, on a smaller console near the agora gate staircase. None of the statues were complete at the time of excavation. The best preserved were the Hygieia with Hypnos, which was restored from four pieces, with the hands, lower legs and plinth missing, and the Apollo, of which 14 pieces were recovered, but the head, genitals, left hand and right forearm had disappeared. Conversely, of the lonely Grace and the Aphrodite, only the torsos were recovered.[6]

Most of these fragments were found where they fell, either directly on top of the street pavement or on top of a thin layer of soil above the pavement. By contrast, the torso of the Aphrodite, preserved from shoulders to navel, with the upper buttocks just visible, was discovered in more exceptional circumstances. It had been thrown into a disused street fountain, on top of an already present pile of rubbish assembled there since the fountain went out of use. Moreover, it had been covered by a large and heavy column base, which had been lifted from the street border just next to the fountain especially for this purpose. The

weight of the base indicates that several people were involved in this operation. The fact that they were able to use a column base for this purpose puts the date of the events after the early 7th-century earthquake, which caused the colonnade and columns to fall onto the street pavement. Consequently, it can also be deduced that the statue of Aphrodite remained on its position of display until the seismic event.

Statuary and the Secular

The most common way in which to frame the life story of this collection of statuettes would involve some reference to 'the secular'. This notion, developed in most detail by Robert Markus, is pervasive in the interpretation and characterisation of Late Antiquity in general.[7] Based on an analysis of Augustine's writings, Markus proposed to envision antique society as a cluster of ideas divided into three spheres: the 'profane', the 'sacred' and the 'secular'. The first indicates all that had to be rejected in the surrounding culture, practices and institutions and became more and more identifiable with 'pagan'. The second is more or less identified with the sphere of Christian religious belief, practices, institutions and cult. Situated in between is the 'secular' sphere, a collection of habits and contexts that were ambivalent, 'capable of being linked either with damnation or salvation, depending on the ultimate purposes to which it is harnessed' (Markus 1985, 85).[8] The 'secular' sphere enabled ancient customs, norms and political institutions as well as physical spaces, objects and iconography to be shared between non-Christians and Christians. In many instances, it avoided a radical departure from an entire culture based on pagan traditions.

Scholars have used the influence of 'the secular' as an explanation for the continuation of New Year celebrations and civic games (Markus 1990, 107–09). Texts featuring gods and mythological creatures could be used by Christians as well because they had been 'secularised', and became 'simple cultural inheritance' (Lepelley 2010, 489). The same 'secularised' subjects remained a source of inspiration far into the 6th century for silversmiths, mosaicists, painters and so on (Liebeschuetz 1995; Leader-Newby 2004), with (elite) Christian owners appreciating classical art as much as anyone else. For laypeople – including the authorities – the secularisation of institutions and objects, externalised as the removal of offensive ritual aspects and physical attributes, was sufficient to avoid a radical departure from their culture. It made it

possible to assimilate multiple classical elements into a Christian society, and to further profit from them in many ways. These opinions were shared by at least some of the high-ranking clergy, who came from the same social background and had shared the education and culture of their lay peers.[9] By contrast, within the Church more hardline factions existed as well. Men like Augustine (at least later in his life) and Ambrose in the West, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom in the East, opposed the compromising solutions that were promoted by the imperial authorities, supported by the elite and welcomed by the majority of the civic population. Their ideal version of Christianity left a lot less space for a secular sphere.

Only with time did the growing influence of this ascetic Christian tradition over activities within society, including charity, justice, building projects, urban calendars, politics and so on, supposedly lead to a growing desecularisation, with Christianity getting a grip on ever more aspects of everyday life or rejecting them altogether (Markus 1990, 16; Van Dam 2007, 361). Although the genesis of the secular sphere in the course of the 4th and early 5th centuries has been given more attention than its later evolution and possible demise, there can be little doubt that it slowly contracted. Markus stressed that the secular could only exist as long as a society was not religiously homogeneous. The location of laws related to the Church and ecclesiastical matters at the very beginning of the *Codex Justinianus* already suggests that Christianity had become a particularly important aspect in the self-definition of the Byzantine state. Nevertheless, the final triumph of the sacred over the secular may have followed only in the wake of factors such as plague, invasions and brigandage, which became predominant from the mid-6th century and which caused urban populations to turn to their bishops for both spiritual and factual help.[10] By the end of the 6th century, a wholly Christian society had come into being. There were no non-Christians left to share the sphere of the secular with.[11]

Two assumptions have occurred in modern scholarship building on Markus' ideas of the secular: first, the original ambivalence that was still present with Markus is often reduced to issues of aesthetics, cultural significance, self-representation, antiquarianism and so on.[12] In other words, a religious neutrality is assumed, and the texts and objects involved are separated from religious meaning.[13] Probably based on a modern perception of a secular world, in the modern mind they have

become powerless and passive reflectors of a changed late antique society, which may not have been what Markus originally intended when he discussed his views on the secular in Late Antiquity. Second, many scholars who use this notion implicitly or explicitly assume that it was mainly elite classes who were susceptible to it. By contrast, the majority of people who did not have the benefits of a classical education could not appreciate the subtleties of the pagan past and were much more inclined to associate its remnants with demons.[14] At best, it is acknowledged that we do not have much information on their attitudes.

How can the above be applied to the statuary record? Imperial promulgations of the late 4th and early 5th centuries demanded the destruction of some pagan statues, notably those that had received worship. This entailed cult statues in temples, other statues in temple domains that for some reason or other had become the object of veneration, and statues elsewhere in the cityscape that were treated in similar ways.[15] A famous example of such a statue is the Aphrodite on the agora of Gaza, which, according to Marc the Deacon, was offered incense by women until Bishop Porphyry had it destroyed at the end of the 4th century.[16] Bath buildings are another context that was explicitly referred to in imperial laws, as a location where such veneration took place.[17] In other words, as these statues were too much entrenched in the pagan sphere, the laws suggest that they were not deemed acceptable in the new worldview, at least not without drastic alterations.[18]

Conversely, other laws stressed the artfulness of statues and suggested they should be appreciated for their beauty.[19] Although this was acknowledged for temple statues as well,[20] it can be considered to have been very apt for statues that had not received veneration. These supposedly could remain under the radar more often and transition into the secular sphere without much fuss, where they were regarded as general cultural heritage, references to a rich past and elements of decoration and representation (Lepelley 2001).

Statues of mythological beings or personifications, such as Tritons, Gorgons, Muses, Eros, satyrs and so on, thus remained omnipresent in the cityscape. Nike/Victoria remained highly popular.[21] But pagan deities as well are known to have remained standing in theatres' facades, monumental fountains, bath buildings, and sometimes on streets and squares.[22] Their original cultic associations were replaced by other connotations.[23] Particular gods came to symbolise admirable qualities. Tyche the goddess came to symbolise the spirit of a city,[24] Apollo and

the Muses became references to a cultured life (cf. *infra*). Athena and Zeus could be reinterpreted as evocations of wisdom (Bassett 2004, 91), Dionysus became shorthand for hospitality and conviviality,[25] and so on. On a more general level, all these pagan-mythological statues could convey political messages or could be appreciated because they were fine works of art.[26] Elite Christians not only decorated their houses with pagan-mythological mosaics and textiles and ate from precious silverware displaying the adventures of mythological gods and heroes; they also displayed small-scale statues of Aphrodite, Apollo, *putti* and so on. Private collections of statuary have been retrieved from all around the Roman world.[27] The consensus here as well is that these collections were appreciated by members of the elite – pagans, Christians and Jews – for reasons including self-display, elements of status and prestige, and references to the education they had received.

Throughout Late Antiquity, there appear to have been multiple physical mechanisms in place to aid a statue's survival in the new realities of a Christian empire. Even statues that potentially would have been too 'pagan' to be preserved by means of physical alterations could undergo a status change. For instance, a statue of Rhea-Kybele could represent the Tyche of Constantinople (as city symbol) after her accompanying lions had been removed (Bardill 2012, 262; Bassett 2004, 73, 118). At Aphrodisias, a small Eros was removed from the statue of Claudia Antonia Tatiana, an honoured local, thereby deleting the most obvious reference to her role as priestess of Aphrodite (Erim 1967, figure 7; Smith 1998, 66–67).

A widespread solution, establishing a transition from the pagan into the secular sphere, was to change the physical environment of the statue. This was achieved mostly by taking the statue from its original surroundings, though in a few cases a selective altering of surroundings themselves may have done the trick. Thus the statue of Victory could remain in the Senate of Rome after the Altar of Victory had been dismantled (Lavan 2011, 446, with further references). Relocation of statues themselves had been a known practice for centuries but was intensified in Late Antiquity.[28] In Italy and North Africa, statuary relocations were eternalised in new inscriptions that do not mention the exact subject of the statues or their original locations.[29] It is conceivable that some of these relocated images came from temples, certainly after the issuing of the laws mentioned above, and that some of them depicted divinities.[30] The reasons for the transfer, when given, are

invariably *ad ornatum publicum*, *ad faciem publicam* or *pro beatitudine temporum* (Curran 1994; Machado 2006, 183; Ward-Perkins 1984, 32–33, 43–44). Consequently, it has been concluded that the statues were given a new meaning as decoration of the public realm, as cultural heritage with religious neutrality. An antiquarian interest in statues made it possible for Christian senators to restore a statue of Minerva in the Atrium Minervae in Rome to its former glory (Kalas 2015, 101; Machado 2009, esp. 331–33). Another typifying example comes from Aizanoi, a small town in north-west central Asia Minor. Around the year 400, a honorific base was moved to a new colonnaded street and combined there with a statue of a satyr with a panther skin around its shoulders (von Mosch 1995). The new combination appears to have been caused by a pun – the inscription mentions the name Claudius Pardalas, a name in which the Greek word 'pardalis' (panther) can be recognised. The relocation can therefore be considered an intellectual exercise that displayed the qualities of Aizanoi's population and was thus characteristic of the late antique secular sphere (von Mosch 1995, 751–53).

Although such notions explain why pagan and mythological statuary remained omnipresent in both public and private contexts, their popularity would not last. After the initial changes to the statuary record in the later 4th century, in which mainly venerated statues may have been targeted, further changes become noticeable by the later 5th and certainly in the early 6th century. Some of the magnificent collections built up at Constantinople during the 4th and early 5th century began falling apart under the reign of Justinian, but statues remained omnipresent in the cityscape.[31] Justinian himself may have imported statues of horses and, probably not coincidentally, eight marble Gorgon heads from the Artemis Temple at Ephesus (cf. *infra*; Bassett 2004, 127–29).[32] By the beginning of the 6th century, three imperial portraits ended up in a new foundation in the Stoa-Basilica at Ephesus (Alzinger 1972–1975, 260–63). Even if in private contexts at least some statues were preserved into the 7th century, including an Amor and Psyche group in the House of the Painted Inscription at Hierapolis,[33] other villa owners in Asia Minor and Greece were throwing out or burying their statuettes, their philosophers' portraits and their *tondi* by the second quarter of the 6th century (Jacobs 2016, 112, for examples). The replacement of more traditional themes by Christian iconography was apparently widespread around this time. In other media such as

pottery and silverware, Christian iconography began to supplant previously well-liked personified and semi-divine entities (Jacobs 2010, 287, with further literature). Dionysiac iconography was in decline from the later 5th century onwards, and once popular depictions of Nike diminished in the course of the 6th.[34] Such changes can be connected to the growing desecularisation described above, which supposedly decreased the relevance of this iconography and statues for contemporary society.

Before we turn to an evaluation of the statues on the colonnaded street at Sagalassos, it is worthwhile stressing again that modern scholarship considers statuary preservation and appreciation very much an elite business (Cameron 2011, 357–66; Kristensen and Stirling 2016a, 16). Members of the elite had enjoyed a classical education which properly equipped them to appreciate the expressive mythological meanings of statues, their value as markers of literary education, their cultural associations and even their aesthetic beauty. By contrast, the Christian masses supposedly saw statues as demonic, dangerous or despicable.[35] The contrast between elite and non-elite finds material expression in villa decoration, where pagan-mythological statuary with recorded find spots come from more secluded areas, including dining halls, inner courtyards, gardens and nymphaea (Stirling 2016, 270). These areas were accessible only to the owners of the villa and their social peers and were thus protected from the Christian masses (Stirling 2005, 139–48, 2016, 289). As Stirling recently pointed out, as opposed to the cross-marked and mutilated statues found in public contexts (cf. *infra*), none of the statues found in villas were altered in any way.

A Secular Display at Sagalassos?

The secular motivations for the reuse of statuary can be applied to the statuary display at Sagalassos as well. In their new surroundings, the statuettes could have testified to the wealthy and cultured past of the city and functioned as elements of prestige in one of its most visible zones. The north–south colonnaded street was not only the main axis connecting the two agorae but also the main approach to the town centre. As such, it can be expected to have been heavily travelled and to have formed the architectural background for formal ceremonies such as *adventu*s and other processions, both secular and Christian.[36]

Both literary and iconographic sources make it abundantly clear that such vital colonnaded traffic axes continued to inspire much admiration throughout Late Antiquity.[37] Although not all city quarters were in good condition, these high-profile zones were invariably well taken care of (Jacobs 2013, 572–73 with further references).[38] Their colonnades were rebuilt or repaired when necessary, they were provided with new mosaics, and in cities such as Ostia, Ephesus, Side and Sagalassos their attractive character was heightened by adding fountains behind or inside the colonnades. Finally, statuary accreted in colonnaded streets, often alongside the road in front of their colonnades.

The high traffic on the colonnaded street can therefore explain the location of the statuary display, but the late date remains remarkable. At Sagalassos, the only private elite house that has been excavated was subdivided in the first half of the 6th century, as the elite owners either sold or rented out their property to diverse entrepreneurs. The audience halls were stripped of their furniture and decoration; mosaics were cut through for the installation of water pipes or cooking installations; the lower rooms were turned into an inn with kitchen, dining room and stables. Of the original statuary decoration of the house, only a fraction survives, whereas the rest was probably burned in the lime-kiln established inside the former atrium.[39] Although there is no way of knowing if the statuettes of our street came from this mansion, it is fairly certain that they originally were on display in a similar private context, and such contexts were obviously changing drastically around this time, here as elsewhere (Jacobs and Stirling 2017, 214–16). The main reason this change makes it so difficult to combine a statuary composition such as that of Sagalassos with the secular framework is that it has always been assumed that 'the secular' was more appealing to elite individuals, as discussed above. In this reasoning, the fact that even members of the elite were getting rid of classical statuary was taken as a sign of the demise of the realm of the secular and the end of the statuary habit. However, recent excavations and re-examinations of older material are suggesting that pagan and mythological statues were actively employed for much longer in public contexts. At Sagalassos, not only was the colonnaded street given a new statuary ensemble in the second quarter of the 6th century but it is also very likely that at least the Antonine Nymphaeum bordering the north side of the Upper Agora was redecorated around the same time.[40] Likewise, the comprehensive excavations and re-evaluation of the Place of Palms at

Aphrodisias have clarified that the final large-scale interventions in the area happened only in the 6th century. At this time, a basin, decorated with slabs depicting scenes from an Amazonomachy, Centauromachy and Gigantomachy as well as standing putti, was added to the so-called Propylon of Diogenes.[41] Three slabs of the same original relief cycle were reused slightly earlier in the construction of a second fountain that has now been restudied and redated to the late 5th or early 6th century (Ögüs 2015). Yet, at some time in the 6th century, the philosopher portraits – a collection of *tondi* of renowned philosophers and heroes from the present and the past – were removed from the Atrium House and thrown into an inaccessible alley behind the main apse of the house (Smith 1990, 153–55). Attitudes towards statuary were obviously highly diverse, but it is becoming increasingly clear that this imagery remained part of public space where it would have been visible to all layers of society.

Finally, a word on the identity of the statuettes on display on the colonnaded street. Even though pagan divinities could be reinterpreted as symbols, it remains somewhat difficult to see what specific values a collection of an Aphrodite and Apollo next to three statues of Hygieia and a Grace would have signified. An alternative explanation is that the 6th-century population no longer saw these statues as originally intended but had reinterpreted them as a combination of Apollo and the Muses. Such a reinterpretation would explain the appearance of two, possibly three dressed female statuettes, formerly identified as 'Hygieia'. For this purpose, the snakes that originally accompanied and also identified the depictions would have been intentionally removed, like the lions were from the statue of Rhea-Kybele at Constantinople and the Eros from Tatiana's statue at Aphrodisias. In addition, a reinterpretation of diverse statues as Muses would also explain the presence of only one Grace and maybe even that of Aphrodite, both of which could have been dressed to cover their nakedness.

Apollo and the Muses certainly remained very popular in all media in Late Antiquity and were, as already stated, capable of being reinterpreted as symbols of intellect, culture, virtue and philosophical inquiry.[42] A group of Muses thus served as source of inspiration in the senate house of Constantinople (Bauer 1996, 164; Bassett 2004, 91). Before they were moved here, they may have been posted in the palace, where they would have reflected imperial virtues and moral authority (Bassett 2004, 74). Statues of Muses, often in combination with Apollo,

have been found in many cities of Asia Minor.[43] Some of these groups were obviously handled as late as the early 6th century, and they were all left on display until the end of Antiquity.[44]

A change in attitude towards at least some of these statues on the colonnaded street eventually does become visible, but only much later, in the 7th century. After a devastating earthquake in the early 7th century, the town centre shifted towards a new fortified hamlet constructed on a promontory to the south of the old centre, with additional small-scale communities or hamlets probably located in the central and southern parts of old Sagalassos. There is, however, plentiful evidence for the continued usage of the street. While rummaging around here, the Sagalassians must have come across the remains of the statuettes that had fallen down from their consoles. Judging from where the statues were found, the population of the 7th century overall was unbothered by them. However, the torso of Aphrodite apparently induced a stronger reaction; it had been thrown into the disused street fountain, into a pile of butchery refuse and ceramics, and buried under a heavy column base. This emotional reaction can only be explained if we acknowledge that this statuary fragment was considered a powerful (and dangerous) presence, which had to be controlled and prevented from ever seeing daylight again (Jacobs and Stirling 2017, 218).

Statuary and Multiple Religious Consciousness

In the Byzantine centuries, sources such as the *Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai* and the *Patria* of Constantinople give ample examples of potent statuary, capable of doing harm or of protecting their surroundings or the city as a whole.[45] They exerted their power independently of the Christian God and unconnected to his saints. In other words, they appear to have been remnants of an entirely parallel system of power, with roots in a distant pagan past. The question then is: what happened in the centuries in between? Were such statues first turned into cultural heritage and pieces of art to then be turned back into powerful presences after Antiquity? Or did they always retain the power to intervene in matters of this world? And, if so, how was this combined with the supposed exclusivity of Christianity?

Studies of modern-day religion are ready to accept that seemingly exclusive religious traditions continue to overlap. The saliency of a religion is apparently very context dependent. Edwards thus discusses how

the Japanese combine funerals with a Buddhist identity with births and marriages that are celebrated in a Shinto fashion (Edwards 2005, 110). If we go back in time, Christianity combined, for instance, with old Sámi beliefs and practices in Finland (Äikäs and Salmi 2013). Äikäs and Salmi dubbed it 'double consciousness': with the introduction of Christianity, instead of a pure replacement of old beliefs or forms of syncretism, the Sámi worshipped both old and new gods, because although the latter were good for many things, they did not fulfil all needs.[46] In Antiquity, before Christianity, people were also used to dividing their attention and devotion between two or more religions, depending on what worked best for them (Engels and Van Nuffelen 2014). Even with the introduction of Christianity, a division between powers apparently continued at least in the 4th century. According to Augustine some of his congregation claimed that 'God is good, great, invisible, eternal, incorruptible. He is to give us eternal life, and the incorruptibility that belongs to the life of resurrection … But secular and temporal interests are the province of demons, of the powers that rule this dark world.'[47] We therefore at least have to consider that for late antique populations, the supremacy and superiority of the One Christian God on all levels was not so clear and the option to trust in 'the guardians of earthly things' for specific situations remained a safe solution, especially if there was no equivalent Christian alternative (Brown 1995, 13).

The most prevalent view of late ancient Christianity is the monotheistic interpretation heralded by Augustine, whereby all powers are dubbed demonic (Brown 1995, 21–22). They are considered to be far inferior to the Christian god, as indicated by the many stories of saints vanquishing demons. Yet, the Christian masses held on to them. A century after Augustine, Caesarius of Arles (*Serm.* 52.5) referred to dual religious participation when he warned his congregation that they could not 'both drink from the cup of the Lord and that of demons'. Indeed, studies of Byzantine demonology in general have shown that in the popular mind, *daimones* remained omnipresent, but, contrary to what hagiographies would like us to believe, were not necessarily considered dangerous or evil by Christians (Brown 1970; Kalleres 2015; Magoulias 1967).[48]

When non-Christian powers are discussed by modern scholars of Late Antiquity, they receive an interpretation and appreciation that is very much determined by the lens designed by Augustine. Consequently, the omnipresent belief in non-Christian powers is gener-

ally still categorised as 'superstition', attempts to repel such powers as belonging to the domain of 'magic'. At best, non-Christian devices or iconography are considered to be apotropaic or prophylactic. Current anthropological approaches, however, consider such separation between magic and religion purely theoretical (Bell 1997). The notion of double or even multiple consciousness gives more independence to beliefs in supernatural powers and enables them to be researched alongside more Christian practices, not as inferior solutions or inextricably linked to Christianity but as proper alternatives required in specific situations.

Besides the more obvious application in material evidence to understand the usage of amulets and other instruments for day-to-day protection, a similar trust in the effectiveness of turning to other supernatural powers besides the Christian God may also explain the continued popularity of reliefs of Gorgons and even statues of particular deities such as Dionysus, Asclepius, Nike and so on.[49] Continuity of their images and statues need not to indicate continuing 'paganism', even though this is what Christian writers would have us think. The label 'paganism' is very unhelpful in this discussion, as it eliminates all nuance in religious belief. No one would disagree, for instance, that the emperor Valentinian was Christian. Nevertheless, his dedication of a bridge in Rome was accompanied by the dedication of statues of Victoria. The most illustrious pagan officials of the city performed the ceremonies (Lizzi Testa 2004, 409–11). The most common explanation would be that Valentinian was accommodating the powerful pagan segment of Rome's population for political reasons. Alternatively, he could have truly believed in the benefits of such practices, even as a Christian. When Symeon Stylites, in the mid-6th century, reproaches people he calls the pagans of Antioch who sacrifice 'in the name of the good fortune of the city' (van den Ven 1962–70), it is likely that he is referring to Christians who believed that their attention to an image of the city Tyche would be beneficial. As in the secular framework, divinities and personifications retain their specific field of responsibility, but instead of being merely a representative symbol or suitable scenery, through their presence they actively bring forth the quality in question. In other words, they remain powerful presences.[50]

Tyche is an interesting case in point. The Tyche at Antioch was, at least for some people, obviously much more than just the symbol of the spirit of the city (cf. *supra*). Other stories have survived of animated stat-

ues of Tyche that offered assistance. Thus, according to Theophylactus Simocatta (*Historiae* 8.13.10), several statues posted in the Tychaion of Alexandria approached a passer-by to warn him about the imminent assassination of the emperor Maurice in Constantinople. Although, as noted above, there is a 'secular' explanation for the popularity of Tyche in Late Antiquity, it is remarkable that Constantine erected a new temple for the Tyche of Rome in the capital and revamped the statue of Rhea-Kybele in the neighbouring temple (Bardill 2012, 262; Bassett 2004, 34). It is equally remarkable that centuries later it was still said that Constantine dedicated the city to Tyche (Malalas 321; *Chron. Pasch.* 277). Certainly in Constantine's case, a targeting and incorporation of multiple divine powers, the Christian God being an important one among them, can indeed be ascertained.[51] Constantine provided his new capital with the Church of Saint Irene and his mausoleum and possibly started the construction of Saint Sophia, but was equally responsible for the construction or restoration of the Capitol dedicated to Zeus, Hera and Athena (Jupiter, Juno and Minerva), the temple for Roman Tyche, and the neighbouring temple for Rhea-Kybele/Tyche. He furthermore allowed older temples to remain standing (Bardill 2012, 259–64; Bassett 2004, 24–26, 31, 34–35), and of course kept on associating himself with Sol Invictus (Bardill 2012, 84–89; Ousterhout 2014). Sarah Bassett suggests that by providing all these different options, at a considerable and safe physical distance from each other, Constantine was giving material expression to his Edict of Tolerance issued two decades earlier (Bassett 2004, 35). He was not necessarily just placating the largely pagan population of his empire though, but may have believed in the power of all these divinities, including in that of the Tyche of Rome and the Tyche of Constantinople as protectress of the city. Tyche's continuing power furthermore explains why the gilded statue of Constantine that was processed through the city on the anniversary of the city's inauguration still carried the Tyche of Constantinople in the 6th century (Bassett 2004, 224; Lavan 2011, 452; Malalas 322). If we are to believe Socrates (3.11), Constantine even offered sacrifices to a statue of Tyche posted in the Basilica, whereas Julian sacrificed to the statue in the Tychaion (Socrates 3.11 on Constantine and 3.2 on Julian; Bassett 2004, 156; Lavan 2011, 452). Despite this history of veneration, the later statue survived in its original location until the later 6th century.[52]

In addition to literary sources, some surviving statues also testify to the fact that they were regarded as powerful presences in Late Antiquity. Most pertinent for this discussion is the marking of statues with crosses. Troels Kristensen's corpus of cross-marked statuary now comprises 58 statues marked with crosses, more or less half of them on the head, mostly on the forehead, the other half on other parts of the body (Kristensen 2012, 2021). I have argued at length elsewhere that the carving of crosses on statues as well as on urban monuments can be understood only if their carrier was regarded as possessing power with the inherent possibility of being harnessed, sometimes more than once (Jacobs 2017). Paramount is the observation that the proliferation of crosses occurred only well after Christianity had become the most dominant religion. The application of crosses was apparently not foremost for the benefit of physical opponents of the new religion but was sending a message to other superhuman and/or supernatural powers. Whether the cross ensured a statue's integration into the Christian realm after application or served as a sealing mechanism protecting onlookers from a statue's powers, in both cases it can be assumed that the statue was a presence, not a symbol.

It is useful at this point to return to the practice of statuary relocation. Although, as described above, this has been considered an effective way to secularise statuary, it is not very difficult to find examples whereby the statue retained or even gained powers after relocation. For instance, although Constantine's imports into Constantinople have been considered an attempt to provide the city with a decoration appropriate for a capital, or even to break connections with their pagan past (see, for instance, Magdalino 2016, 138), Cyril Mango has pointed out that this is highly unlikely to have been the case (Mango 1963, 56). Keeping in mind that Constantine provided his capital with diverse options for worship as well, it would be logical that the imports of statuary under his reign were intended as an import of divine presence and power. The statues of Rhea-Kybele and Tyche already mentioned above are good examples. The first originally came from a sanctuary above Kyzikos; the second may have come from Rome (Bassett 2004, 72, 155). In addition, the most famous example of divine power imported into Constantinople is that of the Palladion, a statue of Pallas Athena with a very well-established reputation. It was said to have fallen from heaven at Troy, and it protected the city until it was taken away and travelled to Rome. From there it was transported to Con-

stantinople and was kept near the Column of Constantine, from where it could continue its protective function, this time for the New Rome (Bassett 2004, 69, 205–06).

In the Theodosian period, cult statues from famous temples of the empire were imported. Zosimus thus recounts how the statues of Athena (from Lindos on Rhodos) and Zeus (from Dodoan in Epiros) had been set up in front of the Senate building of Constantinople. They then miraculously survived the early 5th-century fire and collapse of the Senate without being harmed.[53] To Zosimus, the survival of both Zeus and Athena was a sign that they would take care of the city for all eternity.[54] Athena/Minerva indeed had a long history as protector of cities such as Athens and Rome (Bassett 2004, 206; Lavan 2011, 455–56). Zosimus claims that the miracle provided comfort to 'all cultured' people. It is unclear who he means exactly. The opinion expressed by Themistius, who talked about Zeus being a 'model of the wise and the powerful together with his pendant companion Athena', is generally considered to be representative of cultured Christians (Bassett 2004, 91). Hence, it is assumed that Zosimus was referring to pagans living in the city. However, there is no pagan–Christian dichotomy present in the expression 'all cultured' and it is wrong to interpret it this way. As I have been arguing here, cultured Christians could appreciate the beneficial powers of ancient divinities, just as cultured pagans had been looking at pagan gods in intellectual ways for centuries and continued to do so in Late Antiquity.[55]

As Lavan has pointed out, there were at least two and maybe three statues of Athena present in the city, all of them closely positioned near buildings of civic government – near the Senate in the Augusteion, near the Senate at the Forum of Constantine and possibly in the basilica courtyard, in front of the Tychaion (Lavan 2011, 456). That in the Forum of Constantine may even have been positioned on top of a high column, which, as already mentioned above would develop into a typical *topos* of idolatry (Bassett 2004, 190; Lavan 2011, 456). Nevertheless, she was preserved until the end of the Middle Byzantine period. Although a modern researcher could interpret them merely as symbols of wisdom, she may equally have been conceived to actively induce the correct and wise government of the capital. As already mentioned above, an image of Minerva was restored in the Atrium Minervae of Rome as well, by a Christian urban prefect. The new inscription still acknowledges it as a *simulacrum*, a term typically used for religious

statues (see above, p. 103). The common explanation is the secular one already mentioned above, but again, there is nothing that disputes that the presence of this religious statue of Minerva was conceived to induce correct rule, not just to symbolise it.

A Powerful Display at Sagalassos?

There is no evidence of cross-marked statues at Sagalassos, although the possibility of, for instance, painted crosses cannot be excluded. Crosses do appear, however, on the architecture that surrounds the statues, including on the columns of the colonnaded street, side by side with the pagan and mythological statuettes.[56] In general, it could be said that the two realms of power physically continued next to one another. Admittedly, it is impossible to pinpoint what specific power or powers the statues on the colonnaded street at Sagalassos were perceived to have. I can only make a few suggestions, all of which would allow for the statues to retain some sort of potency and power. Firstly, if we were to accept that the main reason for creating this collection was their potential to embody Apollo and the Muses, their presence could have not only testified to the intellectual virtues of the city and its citizens but actually intensified these qualities. Alternatively, the statuettes were not reinterpreted when they were put on top of their consoles. The presence of three Hygieias, personification of health, and Apollo, who also had healing and purification among his powers, would suggest a particular stress on health and healing. Interestingly, when the Antonine Nymphaeum of the Upper Agora of Sagalassos was given its final statuary decoration, this also revolved around curative powers: it included a statue of Askleipios, his mother Koronis, Hygieia and the plinth for a male statue, probably again an Apollo (Mägele 2005).[57]

The date of the ensemble in the nymphaeum cannot be ascertained, although, as I argue elsewhere, it is very likely that it can be attributed to the 6th century (Jacobs 2019, 31–32). The composition of the collection on the colonnaded street shares a similar date and could be assigned to the second quarter of the 6th century. Especially if we assume that these statues were still conceived of as powerful and influential, it is tempting to connect this preoccupation with health to the arrival of the bubonic plague. The additional naked female statues of Aphrodite and one Grace could be evocations of healthy bodies, unmarked by buboes. In the nymphaeum display, a naked male youth

was present, possibly for similar reasons, together with (rather apt in this line of interpretation!) a statue of Nemesis. Although this is all wildly conjectural and we are not used to thinking about statuary in the 6th century at all in this way, this explanation has as much internal logic as the more secular ones.

As already mentioned above, the torso of the Aphrodite that was found on a pile of refuse inside a street fountain, underneath a column base, is a rare indication that statues were met with fear and hostility at Sagalassos. The Aphrodite torso fulfils both prerequisites of ritual deposition as put forward by Silviu Anghel in his study of buried statues of deities: (1) it was buried and removed from the surface and (2) it was not simply thrown away or reused (Anghel 2011, 5).[58] Even though Anghel's corpus mostly predates the Sagalassos deposition by almost three centuries and is very different in composition and interpretation, it remains interesting to note that none of the statues discussed in this publication had been merely decorative in character during its life (Anghel 2011, 242–44). The particular treatment of the naked torso indicates that it was not merely considered morally offensive either. This would have led to it being discarded, as had already happened elsewhere to so many other naked statues, including Aphrodites. The sealing in the fountain basin suggests that someone believed the torso to possess dangerous qualities that needed to be neutralised. Multiple late antique literary sources suggest a connection between burial and the binding of the power of a deity or demon (Anghel 2011, 261–65).

Other statues at Sagalassos did not undergo such treatment. This can probably be partly explained by the fact that by the time the population came across the fragments of the Aphrodite statuette lying on the street pavement, many of the other naked statues that had still been on display at Sagalassos before the earthquake had either disappeared from view (covered by destruction debris) or were piled up to be burned in a lime-kiln (as has been argued for the statuary collection found in Frigidarium II of the Imperial Baths). However, it remains difficult to explain why the equally naked statuette of Apollo apparently was not targeted. Judging from its find position on top of a thin layer of soil accumulated on top of the street, it probably remained standing on its console for some time after the earthquake, but it would have been fairly easy to reach nonetheless. Maybe the specific identity of the Aphrodite torso sealed its fate, both at Sagalassos and at Carthage. Literary passages certainly confirm that statues of Aphrodite in particular

exerted power and therefore were regarded with fear.[59] Intriguingly, a rare example of mutilation at Sagalassos consists of a tiny naked female statuette torso, possibly identifiable as Aphrodite and certainly very similar in appearance, whose breasts appear to have been abraded.[60]

It would therefore seem that pagan and mythological statues could still be regarded as useful powerful components of the civic landscape of Sagalassos until the second quarter of the 6th century, whereas they had become potentially dangerous after the start of the 7th century. We have no idea when exactly this change in mentality took place or why it occurred. It can only be said that the character of the settlement changed rapidly from the mid-6th to the early 7th century. Life at Sagalassos became a lot more difficult within a short period of time.[61] When the city was finally struck by an earthquake around the early 7th century, large-scale occupation had already come to an end. The ensuing 7th-century occupation differed even more from that of previous centuries and people continued to live amid the ruins of the old city.[62] In the assumption that the statuettes had been placed on their consoles to protect the city from harm, they had surely failed miserably.

The Illusion of Consistency

It is possible to identify some general factors influencing the fate of pagan-mythological statues in Late Antiquity. These could have included the subject of the statue (e.g., personifications were apparently more easily acceptable than divinities), the manner of depiction (e.g., dressed versus naked statues), the region of display (the Near East overall looked less favourably on the statuary medium than, for instance, Asia Minor), the settlement of display (no cross-marked statuary was found at Sagalassos, though the phenomenon is known from elsewhere in the region; Tyche appears to have been treated much better at Constantinople than she was elsewhere), their context of display (the numbers of surviving statues in nymphaea facades is higher than anywhere else), the treatment they had received in previous centuries (venerated versus non-venerated statues), and so on.[63] Then there were of course also differences in statuary viewing between individuals (including the so-called opposition between educated elite versus Christian masses). Moreover, specific individuals may have perceived a statue in one way one minute and in another the next. When confronted with surviving statues today, it is never possible to ascertain all

influencing factors. Consequently, at times we are left with the impression that statues were dealt with in a fickle manner. It may be comforting that such (apparent) inconsistencies not only vex researchers today, but also made it hard for contemporaries to comprehend the actions of their fellow citizens.[64]

In order to explain the survival of pagan-mythological statuary in general, I have discussed two ways of viewing in Late Antiquity: the secular, whereby gods and divinities are seen as symbols for specific aspects of life, and the religious, whereby gods and divinities retain power and agency. Whereas secular explanations have been given ample attention in the last decades, the (positive) power of statues in Late Antiquity remains largely neglected. I hope to have demonstrated that it is worthwhile exploring this route further to explain why these statues remained so omnipresent in the cityscape.

In this last paragraph, I want to reiterate that the two explanations for survival, the secular and the religious, do not exclude each other. What was cultural heritage for one person may have been conceived of as powerful by another. Moreover, as said, even in the eyes of one and the same individual the status of a statue was probably changeable, depending on factors we can no longer grasp. When imperial laws mention that statues must be preserved for the sake of their art or inscriptions categorised a statuary transfer as beautifying public space, this does not automatically imply that these statues no longer had any power.[65] Political motives for the import of the Palladion into Constantinople could easily be combined with a desire to appropriate its comprehensively proven protective powers; relocated cult statues of famous sanctuaries may have expressed cultural continuity as well as imports of (subdued) divine power; antiquarian interests in an old *simulacrum* of Victoria may only have been strengthened by its power to elucidate correct rule; and so on.

Notes

1 See the regional overviews in Kristensen and Stirling (2016b).

2 My argument is very much indebted to the exploration of aesthetic and ritual viewing in Elsner (2007, especially 29–33).

3 For a more extended discussion of building activities in the 6th century, see Jacobs (2015, 163–71).

4 The statuettes, their origin, the find circumstances and a reconstruction of the original display are discussed in detail in Jacobs and Stirling (2017).

5 Jacobs and Waelkens (2014, 248). An overview of the 'rise of Christianity' has been recently provided by Talloen (2019), who, however, ignores the street assemblage.

6 For a complete description of the state of preservation, see Jacobs and Stirling (2017, 201–12).

7 Markus (1990, especially 1–17, 2006); Brown (1995, 11–15), for the flourishing of a public culture shared between Christians and non-Christians.

8 The three domains are discussed in Markus (1985, 2006, 11–13).

9 Rapp (2005, 172–207), on the social background of bishops in Late Antiquity. Brown (1992) for *paideia* in general.

10 For instance, Meier (2003) strongly focuses on such local and supra-local 'disasters' as immediate cause, but identifies the reign of Justinian as the most vital period.

11 Markus (2006, 77–86), for the radically Christian world of Gregory the Great, 87–88 for a comparison with the Eastern empire.

12 On antiquarianism see Bassett (2004, 101 for Kedrenos on the statues in the Zeuxippos baths, 115–16 for the Lausos collection); Machado (2009).

13 E.g., Machado (2009, 354) concludes that Christian intellectuals could endeavour to understand pagan rituals and myths while staying 'religiously neutral'. The statues discovered in the sanctuary of Magna Mater at Ostia have been suggested to possess 'a unique social and cultural significance for those who lived and worked in later Ostia' (Boin 2013, 267).

14 This opinion is expressed in Mango (1963); Saradi-Mendelovici (1990, 50, 55).

15 *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.18 (399) stressed that the status of every individual statue in a temple context needed to be investigated and 'idols' taken down. Likewise, *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.19.1 (408) = *Const. Sirmond.* 12 (407) states that images in temples and shrines that received worship had to be 'torn from their foundations'. *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.12.1 (392) refers to sacrifices taking place in front of images outside temple contexts. For discussions of the evidence, see Jacobs (2010, 286); Kristensen and Stirling (2016a, 16–17); Lavan (2011, 440, 443).

16 Marc the Deacon, *Vita Porphyrii* 59–62.

17 *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.20.3 (415) decrees that statues that received worship had to be removed from the baths and 'the favourite haunts of the public' in order to prevent further veneration. *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.12.1 (392) already referred to sacrifices taking place in front of images outside temple contexts. Stewart (2003, 192–93) points to religious veneration of non-cultic statues.

18 The edicts decree that such statues be taken down, taken from their foundations and so on. They do not stipulate that they should be destroyed, which was

a course of action advised for altars, in, for instance, *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.19.2 (408).

19 *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.8 (382), 16.10.15 (399).

20 *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.8 refers to statues in a temple of Edessa, south-eastern Turkey.

21 Machado (2009, 345, 352–53) for late antique dedications of statues of Victory from Rome. Lavan (2011, 445–50) cites multiple examples.

22 Jacobs (2010, appendix 1) for an overview of such ensembles in Asia Minor.

23 For a summary of reinterpretations of mythological beings and personifications, see Jacobs (2010, 287) with further references.

24 Bardill (2012, 262) for the Tyche of Constantinople. Lavan (2011, 450–53) discusses the fate of Tyche elsewhere.

25 Parrish (1995, esp. 332); Parrish (2004); and Stirling (2005, 87) discuss Dionysiac images in private houses.

26 E.g., Bassett (2004, 48, 66, 75–78); Bardill (2012, 268) for the statues on display in Constantinople.

27 Hannestad (2006, 197, and 2007, 292, 299) makes the connection between late statuary production and the many late antique villas in the Mediterranean. Hannestad (2006, 2007, 2014) gives an overview of late antique statues displayed in villas. Stirling (2005) is a fundamental work for late antique pagan and mythological small-scale statuary discovered in private houses all over the Mediterranean. Stirling (2007) compares evidence from Gaul and Spain; Stirling (2008, 132–36) focuses on domestic statuary found in Greece. Hannestad (2001) and Stirling (2016) compare the treatment undergone by statues in private collections with those in bath buildings.

28 An extensive bibliography exists on this topic. Key studies include Brandenburg (1989); Curran (1994); Lepelley (1994, 2001); Witschel (2007). When a statue was moved to a new location, the old base was often left behind, especially when its new location of display was far away and transporting the base would be an extremely difficult and cumbersome business – think, for instance, of all the statues imported into Constantinople – but also when its new location of display was within the same city. Consequently, such relocations not only had the potential to sever the bond with previous adoration, but they could also even lead to the identity of the statue being forgotten altogether (Ma 2012, with examples).

29 Exceptionally, statues of Juno Regina and Hercules that had been moved to the baths of Cherchel were relabelled once they arrived at their new location (Stirling 2012, 68, with further references).

30 Curran (1994, 49), for instance, mentions a further unspecified statue taken from the *Capitolium* in Verona and moved to the forum. A certain Septimius Theodulus, apparently a Christian, relocated depictions of pagan gods to the forum of Aquileia in Italy around 360 CE (Witschel 2007, 130). Bassett (2004, 90–91) notes that cult statues of temples were imported to Constantinople only from the Theodosian period onwards.

31 For a recent overview of statues throughout the centuries in Constantinople, see Chatterjee (2021).

32 For the transfer from Ephesus, see Bassett (2004, 126, cat. nos 98 and 100); Foss (1979, 87).

33 Zaccaria Ruggiu (2019, 102–03, 114); Canazza (2019, 567–68, with further references).

34 Roueché (2002, 541–45), for Nike; Talloen and Poblome (2005, 69–73), for the heyday and decline of Dionysiac images on tableware at Sagalassos.

35 The elite–masses dichotomy is present in Mango (1963, 56); it is repeated even more strongly in Kristensen and Stirling (2016a, 20) who refer to it as a possible 'culture clash between classes'.

36 Bauer (1996, 389–94); Halfmann (1986); Slootjes (2006, 106–10) for a reconstruction of the events and the itinerary followed during an *adventus*.

37 For an overview of the sources, see Jacobs (2013, 119–20).

38 Dey (2015) discusses the continued importance of colonnaded streets at length.

39 On the evaporation of the elite character of this residence, see Waelkens et al. (2011, 272–73). There was evidence for one life-sized female statue and a relief of Ganymede and a tondo (Mägele 2009, cat. nos 66, 68 and SA-2011-DA1-69-311), as well as for 13 statuettes with a height between 0.30 and 1 m (Mägele 2009, cat. nos 59–72).

40 For an extensive discussion, see (Jacobs 2019).

41 For a description of the reliefs, see Linant de Bellefonds (1996). For the new dating, see Wilson (2016, 130–34).

42 Bassett (2004, 74, 91, 150) with translations of Themistius, *Or.* 17: 308; *Or.* 18: 324.

43 Examples from Asia Minor can be found in Jacobs (2010, appendices); Jacobs and Stirling (2017, 212–14).

44 The group of Muses and the Apollo discovered in the Faustina Baths at Miletus were probably brought to the so-called Hall of the Muses in the second half of the 4th century. As late as the first half of the 6th century, the hall was being altered and repaired, while the statues remained in place (Schneider, 1999, 47–54). Their find locations again indicate that they remained on display until the entire building went out of use in the first quarter of the 7th century (Niewöhner 2013, 186–89).

45 Berger (2013): Cameron and Herrin (1984). See the overviews on powerful statuary in Chatterjee (2021); James (1996); Mango (1963).

46 The term was originally coined to define struggles with self-conception in colonial situations. Interestingly and perhaps unsurprisingly, especially for problems concerned with livelihood, the Sámi continued to address their old gods.

47 Augustine in *psalm.* 34.1.1., same notion present in *psalm.* 40.3. See the discussion in Brown (1995, 9–18).

48 By contrast, Saradi-Mendelovici (1990) contrasts the positive or ambivalent pagan opinions on statues with negative opinions held by Christians.

49 For Gorgons, see e.g., the eight marble Gorgon heads imported to Constantinople by Justinian; cf. *supra*. The most comprehensive overview of statues that retained power in Late Antiquity was composed by Luke Lavan in 2011. He examines the preservation of statues of Nike/Victory, Tyche, Athena/Minerva, civic heroes and emperors and often arrives at the conclusion that these statues were considered to possess powers that could be beneficial at least in certain situations. Nevertheless, the importance of these examples is somewhat cloaked since they are designated as 'talismans', after the late antique *tetelesmenon*, and mainly their importance for political purposes is stressed (on *tetelesmenon*, see

Faraone 1992, 4). Karivieri (2010, 403–05) deals with powerful statues but refers to them as 'magical', which brings us back into the sphere of magic, implicitly inferior to proper religion. Be that as it may, the statues discussed in these articles were definitely not part of 'secular' heritage, as each example had the power to influence its surroundings.

50 This does not mean that all objects or statues were constantly treated as powerful entities intervening or influencing everyday life. Rather, they had a potential power that may have been dormant most of the time, but could be activated at certain moments, when attention was drawn to them by specific events or specific personalities or when the power of statues was needed for particular purposes.

51 Bardill (2012, chapters 7 and 8), offers an extensive overview of Constantine's religious policy.

52 The *Patria* (2.131) claims that it was destroyed by Maurice.

53 Bassett (2004, 149 on Athena, 151–52 on Zeus; for a discussion, see 90).

54 Zosimus, 5.24.7–8: 'This inspired more cultured people to be optimistic for the city in the belief that these deities would always take care of it.'

55 In addition to Themistius, a 'rational' viewing of pagan divinities has been preserved in Libanius' *Orationes* (*Or.* XIV, 3–4, for Zeus, *Or.* XVIII, 159–62, for the Muses). For a broader discussion on intellectual viewings of statuary appearing alongside ritual viewings, see Elsner (2007, 30–33), who discusses the side-by-side appearance of the two ways of viewing during the Second Sophistic.

56 Kristensen (2012, cat. Nos A5–A6: two Severan portrait heads from the so-called Straβenbrunnen at Ephesus; B7–B8: headless satyr and a lion from the Faustina Baths at Miletus); see also Schneider (2009). Kristensen discusses the possible meanings of cross-carving.

57 Jacobs (2010, 274–75) for a further discussion of this statuary ensemble.

58 Depositions in a Christian context are extremely rare. Most known depositions are closely connected with traditional pagan cult. Anghel acknowledges only one 'Christian' example, which, interestingly, is also very late – postdating the Byzantine reconquest of Carthage in 533 – and, moreover, could also be identified as an Aphrodite, buried in 11 fragments underneath the mosaic floor of a basilica (Anghel 2011, 235). For the find situation see Alexander, Ben Abed-Ben Khader and Métraux (1996, 367, figures 17g–h); Kristensen (2013, 32).

59 Notably the passages in the Mishnah, Avodah Zarah 3.4 (2nd century) and Quodvultdeus, *Dimidium temporis* VI, 9–10 (AD 434), mentioned in Lepelley 1994, 5. See also the commentary in Stirling (2005, 157–58). For further comments on the offensiveness of Aphrodite, see Kristensen (2013, 222–28).

60 Find number SA-2010-CG-202-254. The statuette fragment was only 0.06 m high. It was found in an erosional-collapse layer above the street entering the Upper Agora.

61 For an overview, see Jacobs (2015, 171–75).

62 For a description of the fortified settlement and the effects it had on the street, see Jacobs (2015, 176–84).

63 Jacobs (2010, 286–89) discusses broader patterns in the decision-making process in more detail.

64 Saradi-Mendelovici (1990, 50) for examples.

65 For parallels from the Second Sophistic, see Elsner (2007, 30–33).

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Constructing Ideas of Being Pagan or Christian: Literary Sources between Paganism and Christianism

CHAPTER 6

The Effect of Persecution on Religious Communities[1]

An Experiment in Comparative History

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Abstract

Two early 4th-century Christian communities splintered into mutually hostile factions after the imperial government rescinded Diocletian's edicts against them. Although we often assume that a community that suffers together will bond more tightly together, this did not happen in Carthage, North Africa, which split over the so-called Donatist challenge. Nor did it happen in Alexandria, Egypt, which fractured over Arius' theology. While granting that persecution casts suspicion on people linked to the oppressors, we still assume that all early 4th-century Christian communities were uniformly estranged from imperial power. First, I argue that this assumption is unfounded: some people in Carthage and in Alexandria had demonstrably closer connections than others to the imperial court. These differences make sense if we accept recent arguments that Christians attained full legal status under the emperor Gallienus (260‒267). Next, I show that in both Carthage

and Alexandria, those with closer connections to the imperial court were the first to face charges of heresy or schism. In other words, some members of the broader Christian community perceived those with court connections as people whose allegiances were ambiguous at best and who were therefore not 'true' Christians. This situation proved particularly challenging for the emperor Constantine to manage, even though he proclaimed himself a member of the Christian community after 312.

The Elusive Concept of 'True Christian'

Two early 4th-century Christian communities splintered into mutually hostile factions after the imperial government rescinded Diocletian's edicts against them. Although we often assume that a community that suffers together will bond more tightly together, this did not happen in Carthage, North Africa, which split over the so-called Donatist challenge. Nor did it happen in Alexandria, Egypt, which fractured over Arius' theology. While granting that persecution casts suspicion on people linked to the oppressors, we still assume that all early 4th-century Christian communities were uniformly estranged from imperial power. First, I argue that this assumption is unfounded: some people in Carthage and in Alexandria had demonstrably closer connections than others to the imperial court. These differences make sense if we accept recent arguments that Christians attained full legal status under the emperor Gallienus (260–67) (Rebillard 2012; Eus. *HE* 7.13). Next, I show that in both Carthage and Alexandria, those with closer connections to the imperial court were the first to face charges of heresy or schism. In other words, some members of the broader Christian community perceived those with court connections as people whose allegiances were ambiguous at best and so not 'true' Christians. This situation proved particularly challenging for the emperor Constantine to manage, even though he proclaimed himself a member of the Christian community after 312.

My study of the Carthaginian and Alexandrian communities proceeds by analysing the various social affiliations of two key members, Caecilian, bishop of Carthage, and Arius, the Alexandrian priest and theologian, which I then compare – as far as is possible – with those

of other participants in those Christian communities. It draws on Eric Rebillard's *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity* (2012), which argues that people do not *always* rank their religious identity as primary and we should not expect them to do so. They may perform multiple identities, feeling also the tug of citizenship within a city and the broader polity (or the pull of kinship or a society of friends). Exploring the ramifications of these multiple attachments leads me to the work of the sociologist Marilynn Brewer. Her social identity complexity theory effectively situates people in their contexts by encouraging us to consider the manifold groups to which they might belong at the same time (Brewer and Pierce 2005, esp. 428; Roccas and Brewer 2002, esp. 99).[2] Brewer's work also shows that people's tolerance for people unlike them contracts under stress. Serious social tension can cause people to claim affiliation with only those people who share several different attributes. In other words, in our cases, people see as 'truly Christian' only those who share all of their important group affiliations.[3]

Despite the utility of Rebillard's and Brewer's research, however, I avoid using the language of 'identity' for these 4th-century people. The term has an unhelpfully wide range of usage (Brubaker and Cooper 2000), and Carthaginians and Alexandrians do not use this concept to talk about themselves or others. Instead they refer to 'true' Christians versus heretics and schismatics. They are thus not abstracting something essential about themselves, but using a language of group membership. The many efforts on both sides to encourage conversion to the 'right' way is more evidence that 4th-century Christians did not view their disagreements as involving any kind of essential identity. Although not all modern uses of the term 'identity' involve essentialism, I prefer the term 'affiliation', which allows me to talk about a person's connection with, link to, or relationship with different groups. Affiliation here connotes an engagement, not necessarily a friendly relationship. I also use the term 'Christian community' loosely to include anyone who would have called themselves 'Christian' no matter how they (or others) might have otherwise qualified it.

This study also employs a comparative historical framework organised around four paired case studies. First, I compare the situation involving Caecilian of Carthage with that of Gertrude Van Tijn, whose work organising Jewish refugees through Amsterdam's Jewish Council gradually involved deportations to concentration camps

in the Second World War. I argue that both people gradually found themselves in untenable situations with respect to their governments, towards which they had originally had strong affiliations. After persecution ended, whether in the 4th or the 20th century, some members of their respective religious communities saw them as collaborators and so vehemently objected to their holding any position of authority. In Carthage, the concept of 'true' Christian had contracted for the Donatist party, including only those who had been part of the resistance to the imperial government. Next, I compare the case of Arius of Alexandria with that of Hannah Arendt, the political philosopher who reported on Adolf Eichmann's trial in 1961. Trying to understand totalitarianism, Arendt wondered how Eichmann got Jews (like Van Tijn) to mediate between the Nazis and their victims. I argue that both Arius and Arendt faced condemnation from the survivors of persecution because, in exploring the motivations or intellectual grounding of their oppressors, they seemed to violate the boundaries of their own religious communities, becoming people whose affiliations were ambiguous and therefore suspect. In adopting a comparative approach, I am not suggesting that the experience of Jews or these particular figures during the Second World War is exactly analogous to that of Christians or these two 4th-century Africans. The Holocaust obviously bore few resemblances to Diocletian's persecution: German Nazis targeted Jews for ostensibly ethnic or 'racial' not overtly religious reasons (thus the language of identity as essential is relevant here); nationalism and Fascism are modern ideologies; and the efficacy of the Holocaust relied on a pervasive anti-Semitism, as well as a totalitarian network of railroads and telecommunications, not to mention modern weaponry and systems of execution.

Nevertheless, I use the modern cases for several reasons. First, they provoke questions about the situations in which these late ancient people found themselves. This approach is especially useful for problems in Antiquity which have fed generations of studies, but in a highly compartmentalised way, due to the conventions of modern academic disciplines. For example, the cases of both Van Tijn and Arendt involve social networks, but most scholars of early Christian schism and heresy still consider Donatism and Arianism within a legal or theological framework instead of a context including economic or educational relationships.[4] I also want to move outside the paradigm of traditional philology, which has long dominated the field of ancient history and

cautions us never to look beyond the world of the printed document. The modern cases encourage us to raise questions about the broader Carthaginian and Alexandrian contexts which in turn draw our attention to shadows haunting the whiteness of the page. Such 'arguments with silence' (Richlin 2014) may engage more historical imagination than some colleagues find acceptable, but they are no more fictional than a world we imagine delimited by words on a folio, papyrus roll or stone tablet. My third aim in adopting a comparative frame is to invoke a spirit of empathy for the experience of the early 4th-century Christian community as a whole. The fourth century is a polemical period, and we read about the sides that eventually lost, the so-called 'heretics' and 'schismatics', only through the accounts of the victors, the 'orthodox'. In setting their stories alongside a more recent human tragedy, the profoundness of which rightly continues to inform our contemporary ethical awareness, I hope to show how the backlash that was Diocletian's persecution warped the social interactions of entire communities in ways that would reverberate across the Mediterranean for centuries to come. Thus we may better understand the genesis of the two ancient quarrels that loom so large in our written sources. If this study also leads to some general conclusions about persecution's effect on survivors, so much the better.

Flexible Alliances

Gertrude Van Tijn was a Dutch-naturalised German who helped Dutch and German Jews emigrate before the Nazi conquest (Wasserstein 2014).[5] Gradually and inadvertently, she mediated the identification, incarceration and deportation of Jews to camps in northern Europe. Rebillard's multiple affiliations are clear: Van Tijn was a German citizen and a Jew, although not particularly observant. She had lived in London, learning English, and then the Netherlands, becoming a Dutch citizen with marriage. Family contacts with the Christian financial establishment led to employment under a prominent Dutch banker. Through his influence, the director of the American Joint Distribution committee, a New York-based relief group, asked her to coordinate food distribution to Jewish prisoners of war in Eastern Europe during the First World War. Her multilingualism and social work training made her the perfect liaison. In the early 1930s she became secretary for the Committee for Jewish Refugees, a group directed

by David Cohen, who directed Holland's Jewish Council under Nazi occupation. In 1942, Van Tijn became director of 'Help for the Departing', a department of Cohen's Jewish Council charged with equipping deportees.[6] Wasserstein highlights Van Tijn's ability to deploy her various networks and affiliations, first to secure real refugee status for people, next to coordinate deportations of Jews to so-called work camps and finally to defer deportation to the gas chambers for some while sending others instead.

Like Arendt, many people have tried to explain the behaviour of people like Van Tijn; their solutions have ranged from 'Jewish passivity' to 'Dutch conformism' (Croes and Tammes 2004; Hilberg 1985). Her own post-war account states that 'she had been fully aware of the Nazi program of mass murder' as early as 1941.[7] Van Tijn wrote this report to defend herself against former friends and co-workers who saw her as having collaborated with the Nazis and who actively – and successfully – campaigned against her post-war employment in refugee resettlement.[8] For them, her affiliations with the imperial Nazi state and lack of resistance meant they could not consider her either as part of the post-war Jewish or Dutch community. For his part, Cohen, Gertrude's supervisor, maintained that he had acted primarily in the Dutch national interest. Van Tijn's biographer, Wasserstein, says that Van Tijn strove for an ambiguous kind of 'virtue', as she repeatedly tried to find the 'best' solution among a limited range of hideous options. The work of Rebillard and Brewer suggests that Van Tijn's relationship with the Jewish community was only one affiliation among many others that she valued, including ties with Dutch and Christian financiers, mostly female social workers engaged in US–European refugee agencies and personal connections in Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands. We can also see after the war how little sympathy many Jewish survivors had for her tragic choices, as they ostracised her from the ranks of Jewish victims by delimiting her as a collaborator (that is, someone in league with the Germans who had abandoned the Jewish community) for her connections to the Jewish Council and thus to the Nazi regime.[9]

Van Tijn's story may seem far removed from Roman Carthage. Nevertheless, there are important similarities. First, before persecution, Christians in the Roman empire, like Jews in Europe (Human 1998, 17–18), had relatively recently achieved emancipation. Since 260 CE, emperors had recognised Christianity as a legal, property-holding association (Eus. *HE* 7.13).[10] In Carthage, financial, political and social

networks would therefore have connected the bishops, clergy and congregations with the rest of Carthaginian society and Roman administration. Thus, the case of the so-called Donatist controversy, like Van Tijn's, not only involves people with multiple affiliations; it also shows that after persecution, a stressful situation by any definition, highly exclusive groups may form, splitting the survivors. When this happens, what appears to be religious conflict may be a way of reacting against people perceived as affiliated too closely with a formerly persecuting imperial power.

At the cusp of the 4th century, the emperor Diocletian issued a series of edicts coercing religious conformity (see Eus. *HE* 8.1f). The first sought to exterminate followers of Mani.[11] The next, in 303, called for the destruction of churches and the burning of scripture, effectively forbidding 'collective practice' (Rebillard 2012; de Ste Croix 1954, 75–77). It stripped Christians 'of official position', status and legal standing, requiring ritual sacrifice before official business (Eus. *HE* 8.2.4; Eus. *Mart.* pr.1). Diocletian's three other imperial colleagues in the tetrarchy all appear to have promulgated this edict. The Western tetrarchs, Maximian and Constantius, refrained from further action. Nevertheless, the East saw three more edicts demanding the arrest of clergy and a general order to sacrifice (Frend [1952] 2000; Optatus 1997).[12] Christians who survived without physical harm either performed the ritual or kept their heads down, passing as ordinary Romans. Evidence suggests widespread compliance. After persecution ceased in 306 for the West, 311 for the Balkans and 313 for the East, groups of Christians in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean drew boundaries delineating themselves from others under their bishops' jurisdiction, with both sides claiming the mantle of true Christianity. In North Africa, one group of Christians believed that others had relinquished sacred texts to the Romans enforcing Diocletian's edicts. They called them *traditores*, literally people who 'handed over' scripture. These 'traitors' or collaborators became the spur against which the Donatist community constructed themselves as the only true Christians, in the process linking an anti-imperial stance with correct belief and practice.

The experience of people in north-west Africa during the persecution is not as well documented as we would like.[13] Nevertheless, there are examples of bishops holding on to scripture despite official demands to surrender it,[14] and some bishops continued to hold assemblies – also defying the first edict.[15] In other sources, some authorities

ignore the letter of the law, and some Christians keep their heads down (Lepelley 1979–1981; Rebillard 2012). Van Tijn's case shows that we should expect people to have had multiple allegiances that they might employ at different times, and that Christian leaders knew people willing to help them.

Sources suggest that suspicion toward people with perceived ties to the Roman authorities fractured Christian communities in Carthage and Numidia, especially regarding finances.[16] Gender and regional differences exacerbated the conflict (Duval 1982, 2.481–82; Marone 2011). Optatus' account blames the schism's origins on a woman (*Contra Parm.* 16), Lucilla, who, he says, kissed a martyr's relic during the liturgy. Caecilian, the archdeacon, 'criticized her, humiliating her', because the martyr's standing was 'not yet confirmed'.[17] Some time later, the emperors issued the first edict of persecution (Barnes 1973; Meinking 2013, 86–87; Rebillard 2012), although they had already been targeting Manichaeans for several years. Summoning the bishop, Mensurius (Shaw 2011), Roman officials accused him of sheltering a person who had written against the emperor (presumably in response to the edicts).[18] Before he left, Mensurius gave the congregation elders the church's gold, silver and scripture, lest they fall into the wrong hands (Shaw 2011, 818; Optatus, *Contra Parm.* 1.17.1). He never returned (Aug. *Brev.* 3.25).

Two years later, African Christians could openly conduct business again. Diocletian and Maximian had retired, leaving Constantius as senior Western emperor with direct control over Britain and Gaul. He had effectively ignored all four edicts targeting Christians,[19] and Maxentius made repeal official when he usurped power over Italy, Africa and Spain in 306 (Optatus, *Contra Parm.* 18; Barnes 2010; Rebillard 2012).[20] Now the Carthaginians could replace Mensurius. The initial candidates, Botrus and Celestius, wanted to exclude Numidian participation.[21] Optatus says that when the first aspirants failed, 'the whole populace', elected Caecilian, Mensurius' archdeacon. He was ordained, but the Numidians probably did not vote (Birley 1987): they were Caecilian's staunchest opponents (Frend [1952] 2000). After Caecilian's election, the elders kept the church treasure,[22] Lucilla refused her support, and together they questioned the investiture's validity (Optatus, *Contra Parm.* 18-19). They objected that the ordaining bishop, Felix, had given church property to Roman officials. Thus, a collaborator or *traditor* had appointed Caecilian. Felix was later cleared,[23] but the

elders, Lucilla and her supporters elected Maiorinus, Lucilla's 'domestic', as bishop (Optatus, *Contra Parm.* 19).[24] When Caecilian did not resign, the elders asked Numidian bishops for help, inviting them to a meeting at Carthage (probably in summer 306).[25] This assembly then formally installed Maiorinus in opposition to Caecilian (Barnes 1975, 18; Dearn 2004).

The conflict became more complex after 310 when the emperor Maxentius returned church property that the state had seized (Corcoran 1996, 144–45). Then Constantine, raised to power by the army after the death of his father Constantius, began funding churches in his territory after conquering Maxentius in 312 (Eus. *HE* 10.6.1‒5). The Numidians accused Mensurius, Caecilian, Felix and their supporters as *traditores* (Optatus, *Contra Parm.* 1.18 App. 1; Aug. *Contra Cresc.* 3.30). In continued opposition to Caecilian, their rival church installed Donatus as bishop, Maiorinus having died. And they asked the emperor to recognise them as the true church and implicitly the recipient of imperial funds, as money and patronage networks continue to exacerbate the conflict. In 313, Constantine referred the matter to Miltiades, bishop of Rome, then to the Western bishops convened at Arles. All ruled in Caecilians' favour, as we might expect bishops connected to the emperor to do. By 314, the 'Donatists', rejecting the validity of their opponents' baptisms, were re-baptising converts (Optatus, App. 4). The bishops of Rome and more recently of Carthage opposed re-baptism, but it was a north-west African practice aimed at reintegrating *lapsi* and bringing 'heretics' into communion. It became a Donatist trademark.[26]

There were more issues at play than the simple act of handing over scripture in the struggle between the two halves of the North African church: regional differences and local solidarity, the expanding power of the Carthaginian papacy, the role of patronage, money and influence, the authority of women, the question of proper ritual, the recognition of martyrs. Nevertheless, our sources focus on the charge of collaboration, *traditio*. To us, Van Tijn's collaboration may appear more heinous, in that she had handed over people, not texts. Nevertheless, for the Donatists, *traditio* was – as Brent Shaw (2011) observes – like Judas' sin, 'handing over the very Words of God … to secular authorities'. Even if – like Van Tijn – Caecilian did not intend to 'collaborate', that he was the most senior Carthaginian cleric to survive while others had perished suggested that he had some connection to imperial power. Moreover, once Maxentius restored church property

and Constantine's endowments began, Caecilian stood to benefit from imperial largesse – a possibility reified by bishops ruling on behalf of the emperor on two separate occasions. We assume that all Christians would perceive imperial patronage as an unmitigated good, but for the Donatists, like Van Tijn's critics, true members of their group were identifiably anti-imperial. Moreover Donatists shared other attributes, such as a respect for local traditions, including re-baptism, and perhaps a stronger voice for women, people of lower status and elders in the church. The Donatists thus became an Afro-Numidian community, and their opponents, recognised by two councils and the emperor, came to represent the imperial church. There may have been 'real ambiguities about who precisely had done what', as in the modern example, but these questions meant that the issue was constantly reinforced (Shaw 2011, 67). And those hearing about such acts felt a rage, a sense of opposition against the imagined perpetrators and a sense of solidarity one with another, thus fortifying the boundary between the two groups (Shaw 2011).

Van Tijn's case may not exactly replicate the Donatist schism, but it helps to raise questions about the information we have. For example, it forces us to explore more deeply the political and economic connections – the multiple affiliations – of the Carthaginian and Numidian clergy and other African elites (Brown 2012). Second, it underscores how difficult it would be for any community leader to have clean hands and survive a pogrom: a leader who had merely survived persecution might face a charge of collaboration from those whose networks allow them to look away from the grey zone which included all survivors. Finally, it shows how even a new regime, the post-war Dutch government or the newly Christian Constantine, may never gain the trust of those whose group has formed in opposition. Only *we* know the trajectory of imperial Christianity in the Roman empire; we must remember that the Donatists did not.

Condemnable Collaboration or an Attempt to Understand the Enemy?

The Donatist conflict of North Africa has long been the quintessential example of how persecution might lead to division in an ancient religious community. For the Egyptian church, the Meletian schism, not the Arian controversy, is the example usually considered in this context

(Barkman 2014). Nevertheless, I will argue that Arius' adversaries saw *him* as a collaborator, in this case playing a role similar to that of Hannah Arendt. There are good reasons to look for parallels between the modern post-war tensions and the Arian controversy. Arendt said that she prioritised her identity as a political philosopher over any affiliation with the 'Jewish People' (Ezra 2007). Those who saw her as a collaborator, however, thought her censure of the Jewish Councils came from her intimacy with Martin Heidegger, the philosopher and Nazi party member. I argue that, like Arendt, Arius was trying to understand and respond to the ideologies and arguments associated with the persecution (Frend 1987), many of which derived from the writings of the pagan philosopher Porphyry of Tyre (Digeser 2012). In response, Arius' bishop Alexander – and ultimately the Council of Nicaea in 325 – painted him not just as a 'heretic' but also as a Porphyrian and hence a collaborator. After briefly describing Arendt's experience, I will turn to the case of Arius.

As I said above, Arendt attended Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem in order to understand his role in the unfolding of Nazi power (Ezra 2007). Having already written on *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), she concluded that such regimes succeeded because ordinary people like Eichmann and some Jewish Council members had abandoned the effort to stop and think about their actions. After trying Eichmann in 1961, the Israelis executed him for crimes against humanity in June 1962. Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (in which, it must be said, only a few pages discussed the Jewish Councils) appeared in the *New Yorker* the following spring and then in a separate volume (Arendt 1963a–e).

The storm that Arendt's book raised in the community of survivors was a 'violent' (Howe 1968), 'bitter', 'public dispute' (Rabinbach 2004). Her critics accused her of being an arrogant intellectual looking down on ordinary Jews and Israelis (Syrkin 1963). They thought she had disavowed her Jewish identity when she said that she had 'never in her life "loved" any people or collective' but only individual people. Even though Arendt had escaped an internment camp, her analysis pushed against an evolving narrative of martyrdom, victimhood and resistance that her detractors had embraced.

As with Van Tijn, Arendt's experience seems far from the Great Persecution in general or Egypt in particular. Although no one, to my knowledge, has seen the 'Arian heresy' as a ripple effect of Diocletian's

persecution,[27] the parallel with Arendt suggests how this might be true. One clue to this possibility is that attacks on Alexandrian theology had helped arouse anti-Christian feeling before the persecution (Digeser 2012). This confrontation came through the writings of the Platonist philosopher Porphyry of Tyre (Digeser 2006). Porphyry made three claims relevant to the Arian controversy. The first was that Christian scripture, properly read according to its genre, did not establish that Jesus was God in human form. In Porphyry's view, Jesus was a spiritual guide, not God incarnate. The second claim was that Origen of Alexandria did not respect standard rules for allegorical exegesis. For example, he was wrong to read allegorically legal texts such as Leviticus. The third claim was that, despite these exegetical mistakes, Origen had discovered truth within scripture when he used methods appropriate for his sources. For Porphyry, the best example of Origen's insight was that he rejected the widely popular belief in bodily resurrection.

Before exploring Alexandria's scholarly communities, two further points are important. First, the persecution in Alexandria was harsher than in Carthage, with all four edicts implemented. The crisis continued until after the deaths of all the early 4th-century tetrarchs save Constantine and Licinius, who unseated and executed Maximin Daia, emperor of Oriens, in 313. Second, like Carthage, the early 4th-century Alexandrian see faced challenges to its authority. Peter, the head of the Alexandrian catechetical school, had become bishop of Alexandria in 300 (Barnard 1970). When persecution began, he fled Egypt, returning in 305 or 306, to deal with the Melitian schism. He paid for his homecoming with his life. After the brief tenure of Achilleas,[28] Alexander became bishop in 312. Alexandria also sustained regional churches. The bishop was first among equals, with priests supervising their own congregations. Starting with his appointment, Alexander was immersed in conflict. Philostorgius (*HE* 1.3) hints that Alexander and Arius had competed for the see, even before their doctrinal differences aired (Parvis 2006, 73). It is also possible that, as in Carthage, the conflict had a regional aspect. Arius was pastor in Alexandria's Baucalis region (Davis 2004; Lyman 2008), which had few inhabitants, many of whom were pastoralists (Haas 1997, 269–70, 272). After Arius' exile, many of his closest allies were Libyan, as was he (Barnes 2009).[29]

The see's close connection to Origen's theology surely complicated matters, as Porphyry had repudiated some of his methods while endorsing at least one of his controversial positions. Since Dionysius'

mid-3rd-century episcopacy, every Alexandrian bishop had been a moderate Origenist (Beeley 2012). Even Peter, appointed bishop at the cusp of persecution, embraced Origen's theological legacy, distancing himself only from the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls. Alexander too partly espoused an Origenist-inspired theology.[30] For Arius' theology in general, or his connection to Alexandrian Origenism in particular, however, the sources present significant problems (Löhr 2006a, b). Little survives from Arius' point of view apart from a confession of faith in a letter to Alexander from Palestine (*Urkunde* 6), another letter (*Urkunde* 1) and two fragments, preserved by Athanasius (*C. Ar.* 1.5; *Syn.* 15). Most historians assume that Arius was not trained as an Origenist (Barnard 1970; Edwards 2012, 489), although Christopher Beeley (2012) argues that his theology, even more than Alexander's, had strong Origenist underpinnings.[31] On the other hand, Arius maintained a unique definition of God the Father in a way alien to moderate Origenists such as Alexander or Eusebius of Caesarea.[32]

Countless studies have tried to precisely parse Arius' teaching to learn why Alexander and others opposed him so vehemently. Fortunately, understanding how Arius' opponents characterised him is more useful to us than specifying what he taught. Very early in the controversy, Alexander wrote a letter against Arius. We have long seen that this is not an accurate portrayal but a construction of a heresy. Particularly interesting is the portrait of Christ that Alexander attributes to Arius. An analysis of this letter shows that in Alexander's view, Arius' Son of God more closely resembled Porphyry's spiritual guide than Origen's Christ. For example, only in the view of Arius' theology that Alexander circulated is the Son considered to be a creature like any other human being, mutable and capable of vice (Beeley 2012), except that God foresaw his virtue. Only here is the tenet that the Son was created in time (Alex. *Phil.* 2, 2.3). Alexander also accuses Arius of basing his views on 'those passages in Scripture that speak of Jesus' human vulnerabilities and sufferings' (Alex. *Phil.* 1, 9). Finally, Alexander likens Arius to the Jews and Hellenes, all of whom deny Christ.[33] These charges bear little resemblance to what Arius actually taught, as far as we can tell (Beeley 2012), but they do recall Porphyry's critique against the Christian worship of Jesus. As Porphyry was infamous among Arius' supporters (Eusebius of Caesarea being a prominent example), Alexander's critique served as a dog whistle. This subtext encouraged Arius' supporters to connect the priest's speculations with

those of Christianity's archenemy. Arius was thus a collaborator with those associated with the persecution.

In this vein, a letter from Constantine 'to the bishops and people' is significant.[34] Writing immediately after the Council of Nicaea had rejected Arius' theology (Barnes 2009), Constantine stated that Arius should experience the same humiliation as those whom he had imitated, namely Porphyry. For the emperor, Porphyry was Piety's 'enemy' because he had written 'wicked treatises against religion'. But the philosopher had faced just punishment through well-deserved reproach and the burning of his books. Likewise, Constantine ruled, 'Arius and his followers should be called Porphyrians' and his writings should be burned, so that his corrupt teachings might be destroyed and all memory of him forgotten.[35] Historians usually explain Constantine's pairing of Arius and Porphyry as deriving from their similar punishments. But the emperor equates their *conduct*: what Arius did reminded him of what Porphyry had done. Moreover the emperor links Arius with the man whose ideas in some way supported the ideology of persecution. Indeed possession of either man's writings was a capital crime (Barnes 2009). This reference strengthens the argument that Alexander's construction of Arius painted him as a Porphyrian and thus as a traitor, as a collaborator with the imperial persecutors.

Consider the situation in Alexandria as Porphyry's writings circulated before the persecution: although Platonist and Christian communities had learned and taught side by side, their theology and metaphysics became intensely politicised and the two scholarly communities drew sharply apart (Digeser 2010). Moreover, among Christians, Origen's theology became extremely controversial because Porphyry had praised its strengths and targeted what he saw as its flaws. Suppose Arius – like Arendt with the Jewish Councils – was trying to understand why and how Origen in particular, or Alexandrian theology in general, had erred. The mere effort to assess the validity of Porphyry's critique may have sufficed for Alexander to question Arius' loyalty, *especially* when the bishop's authority was on the line.[36] Alternatively, if Arius was trying to imagine a Christology that stood up to Porphyry's philosophical challenges, then this link to the culture of the persecutors, like Arendt's relationship to Heidegger, was a moral failure and denial of his Christian community in Alexander's eyes. The efforts of Alexander and Constantine to tar Arius as a Porphyrian suggest that in some way the renegade priest had approached the enemy

persecutors' camp, violating the boundaries the bishop and emperor were now imposing around the Christian community.

Choosing Sides

Upon gaining control of North Africa after defeating Maxentius in October 312, Constantine found himself immediately injected into the controversy over the Carthaginian papacy when the Donatists appealed for his help.[37] It is impossible at this remove to discern the extent to which his decision to fund the churches now under his jurisdiction (Eus. *HE* 10.7) may have exacerbated the contest over the Carthaginian see. Nevertheless, Constantine could have ignored the problem, leaving the parties to try for consensus on their own. This was probably not an attractive option, however, if he wanted to revive and build upon the relationship that emperors had established with Christian bishops before Diocletian's edicts. For Aurelian (270–75) had already set a precedent that the emperor might adjudicate in questions of episcopal succession, resolving (ostensibly as *pontifex maximus*) the dispute over Paul of Samosata's disputed see in Antioch (Eus. *HE* 7.30).[38] Seeing Constantine as performing the *pontifex maximus*' role of adjudicating priesthoods lessens the possibility that he could have supported both sides financially, for this was – above all – a matter of the suitability of priests to perform their functions. He could have supported the Donatists over Caecilian's party, but if he did so, he would have ignored the party with the closer imperial ties – a move that makes little sense, especially after both the bishop of Rome and those assembled at Arles did his bidding and decided against the Donatists. However, the decision that he finally made to support Caecilian's faction would have exacerbated the Donatists' suspicions that the Caecilianists were in the emperor's pocket, along with the bishop of Rome and those who met at Arles.

When we turn to Alexandria, the attributes that distinguish those around Arius from his opponents are several. Arius and his followers valued a theology that stood up to Hellene Platonist scrutiny. They took seriously the issues raised by people linked to the imperial persecution. They valued Origen's philosophy, individual scholarship and free inquiry (which in itself was an Origenist attitude). On Alexander's side were people who associated Hellene philosophy with the persecution and who had an ambivalent relationship with Origen's teaching.

More importantly, perhaps, they valued episcopal authority over free inquiry – even to the extent of asserting and expanding the authority of the Alexandrian bishopric, both regionally and doctrinally. This attitude was part of a broader local trend. As Dionysius of Alexandria in the 3rd century had excommunicated Origen for being ordained without his permission (Digeser 2012), so Arius was ultimately excommunicated for defying his bishop's teaching.

When Alexander wrote to Constantine asking him to intervene in his dispute with Arius, 12 years after the Donatists' petition and the Arian conflict, again the emperor had a range of options. Unlike the Donatist dispute, this was not a matter of ritual purity, correct procedure or a contested office, so the emperor could have declined to intervene – indeed, this was his initial response (Eus. *VC* 2.64–72). Constantine could have sided with Arius – in fact, he would take this position some years after the Council of Nicaea; he seems to have found something about it compelling. The emperor could have supported both sides, or neither. And again, it is not clear in this case whether the distribution of funds to churches in territories Constantine had newly acquired may have played a role. Carlos Galvão-Sobrinho argues that Ossius of Cordoba pushed Constantine to take the bishop's side in the quarrel against the theologian/priest. As Constantine chose Alexander's side, however, it is important to note that this meant choosing the more restrictive group, the one that privileged the bishop's authority over the theologian's autonomy and the group more uncomfortable about Christian engagement with Hellene philosophy. Privileging this group did not bode well for the long-term possibilities of religious tolerance – as events after the emperor Julian's death (363) would bear out.

In sum, the evidence here supports Marilynn Brewer's finding that serious social tension can cause people to claim affiliation for only those people with whom they share several different attributes. In other words, people see as 'truly Christian' only those who share all of their important group affiliations. The development of these highly exclusive group affiliations may set the stage after persecution for charges of collaboration, corruption, and hence defilement and heresy toward people now seen as other. Although we still cannot explain why people respond this way, both the ancient and the modern cases suggest that the crucible of religious persecution may lead directly to conflict within the targeted group. For some of these communities, at least, their turn toward religious purity derives from what they see as

unmitigated corruption on the part of collaborators formerly among their number (Chayes 2015). When this corruption involves theological issues, the charge of heresy may not be far behind.

Notes

1 This chapter builds on the author's earlier work. Copyright © Taylor and Francis Group 2018: 'Collaboration and Identity in the Aftermath of Persecution: Religious Conflict and Its Legacy' by Elizabeth DePalma Digeser. In *Reconceiving Religious Conflict: New Views from the Formative Centuries of Christianity*, edited by Wendy Mayer and Chris L. de Wet, 261–81. London: Routledge. Reproduced by permission of Taylor and Francis Group, LLC, a division of Informa plc.

2 Many thanks to Greg Goalwin for these references, which help to develop the argument I first set out in 'Collaboration and Identity in the Aftermath of Persecution: Conflict and Its Legacy' (2018), for the volume on religious conflict edited by Wendy Mayer and Chris de Wet above.

3 '[A]nxious people have diminished cognitive resources … individuals under stress … tend to perceive their groups as largely overlapping and largely similar' (Roccas and Brewer 2002).

4 Elizabeth Clark's work on Origenism is a noteworthy exception (Clark 1992). More recently, scholars such as Cavan Concannon have developed sophisticated methodologies for this kind of analysis (Concannon 2013, 2014).

5 I am indebted to Wasserstein's timely book for all of my information on Gertrude Van Tijn. Where relevant, I have also referenced his sources.

6 Report by Gertrude Van Tijn, Oct. 1944, Leo Baeck Institute Archives, New York AR 3477/33.3/51, 48 (Wasserstein 2014).

7 Wasserstein (2014), noting the absence of any earlier hint of such knowledge, questions her veracity, suggesting that she backdated her knowledge in order to 'differentiate her position from Cohen's'. See also Herzog (2014).

8 Cf. A. de Leeuw to A. de Jong, 4 June 1945. Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem 24/182-163 in Wasserstein (2014).

9 And yet Primo Levi saw every Jew liberated from the camps as a collaborator. Claiming that privileged prisoners, a minority in the camps, were 'a … majority among survivors', Levi (1989, esp. 40) dared to consider the grey zone between victims and persecutors. I consider the implications of Levi's position more fully in 'Collaboration and Identity' (2018).

10 The edict of emperor Gallienus 'amounted to a full legalization of Christianity' (Rebillard 2012, 58).

11 Seston (1940, 345–54) sets the date at 297; Barnes (1976) (with whom I agree) thinks 302.

12 Tellingly, we do not hear about *lapsi* in Africa, which further suggests that Maximian did not enforce the later edict requiring sacrifice (Löhr 2002; Rebillard 2012, 58–59; de Ste Croix 1954, 89).

13 For what follows, see Barnes (2010); Rebillard (2012, 58–59). A few sources dating from near the conflict survived, some as part of a collection assembled probably in the 330s. Optatus published them by mid-century with his attack on the Donatists. See Barnes (1975) for Optatus' drawing 'on a single dossier composed late in the reign of Constantine'. Together with Optatus' *Contra Parmenianum Donatistam* in the appendix are *Gesta apud Zenophilum* (1), *Acta purgationis Felicis* (2), six letters of Constantine, a letter from the Council at Arles (314) and a warrant from the praetorian prefect giving the Donatists free transport from Trier to Africa (315). According to Barnes, the authenticity of these documents 'is now completely vindicated' (he cites Brown 1972, 237–338). For an assessment of the sources in Eusebius, see Carotenuto (2002), and for a caution against using the account of the Abitinian martyrs as anything but a product of the milieu after the 411 Council of Carthage, see Dearn (2004).

14 E.g., the *Acts of Felix of Thibuica*; cf. Lepelley (1979‑81, 1.335, 2.192–93).

15 E.g., the *Acts of Gallonius*; cf. Lepelley (1979‑81, 1.335–43, 2.58–60, 2.192–93).

16 For the best (and most recent at the time of writing) overview of the intricacies of the origins and dating them, see Shaw (2011). The schism began with Caecilian's election, this much is clear.

17 Is this an implicit conflict over the acceptability of martyrdom? Meinking (2013, 87): 'Christian communities themselves were divided by the imperial actions taken against them, leading to conflicts over the acceptability of martyrdom and the question over the readmission to the church of those who had renounced their faith or handed over scriptures.'

18 The identity of the 'tyrant' whom Optatus mentions has been hotly contested – and obviously it affects the dating of the conflict. The emperor Maximian is the most likely choice (Barnes 1975, 19; Shaw 2011, 812–13); but Frend and Clancy (1977) prefer a later date, identifying the 'tyrant' with Maxentius. Cf. Dearn (2004).

19 The attitude of Constantius I toward Manichaeism – or that of his son, Constantine, for that matter—is not a subject that contemporary scholarship has explored.

20 These dates conflict with Frend (1965a, 502–03, 1965b) but are upheld in de Ste Croix (2006) and Shaw (2011).

21 Carthage was in Proconsular Africa, but the see directed churches in the province of Numidia to the east. Since the time of Cyprian, the *provincia* of the bishop of Carthage had been 'unusually widespread, including the adjoining areas of Numidia and Mauretania'; Rives (1995, 290), citing Cyprian, *Epistula* 48.3.2.

22 As Shaw (2011, 818) emphasises, however, 'the main problem was not really with' Caecilian's ordination, but rather with 'the ensuing battle between Caecilian and the *seniores* over the latter's possession of the church's wealth that had been left in the hands of the Elders by Mensurius before his departure'. 'The Elders', Shaw continues, 'were more supportive of factions hostile to Caecilian than those in support of him, although they might well have had other grounds on which they did not wish to transfer the church's wealth into his hands.'

23 *Contra Parm.* App. 2: 'The Acquittal Proceedings of Felix Bishop of Abthugni'.

24 Bribed by her wealth, says Optatus.

25 The date for this appeal is contingent on the date for the conference at Cirta, which Shaw (2011, 816–18) dates to May 306: some of the bishops who went to the meeting at Cirta then attended the meeting at Carthage afterwards.

26 Pollmann (2014, 163 and n. 31): 'Already in AD 200, a provincial council in Carthage had denied the validity of baptism by heretics, following Tertullian's notion of baptism' (Tertullian, *De baptismo* 1–9). See also Wilhite (2007). The councils of 255 and 256 confirmed this outcome. More customarily applied to those who had sacrificed, re-baptism was advocated in the 3rd century by the theologian/scholar Tertullian and – for a time – by the Carthaginian bishop Cyprian, despite the opposition of the bishop of Rome (Brent 2010, 7). According to Pollmann, 'Stephen I was strictly against this North African decision and in 256 prohibited the repetition of the baptism'.

27 Galvão-Sobrinho (2013) sees nothing significant about the persecution or its trauma in exacerbating intragroup conflict and polarisation. He attributes this development to the nature of complicated theological speculation. Scholarship on the so-called Arian heresy is vast and overwhelmingly complicated. There is an enormous literature dedicated to piecing out how exactly it began, what precisely Arius taught, why he garnered the support that he did, and why his theology and the 'school' that it launched became so popular and long-lasting even after the emperor Constantine's efforts to settle the matter at the Council of Nicaea in 325. A sample of those most relevant to this study includes Barnard (1970); Barnes (2009); Böhm (1992); Grant (1975); Gregg and Groh (1981); Haas (1993); Heil (2002); Löhr (2006a, b); Lyman (2008); Martin (1989a, b); Williams (1986, 2001). If Arius' story is situated at all within the context of imperial politics, historians usually remark that it became a *cause célèbre* because it came to the emperor's attention just after his conquest of the Eastern empire from Licinius and in the midst of his efforts to unify his new domain. To my knowledge, the Alexandrian conflict has never seriously been considered within the ripple effects of the Great Persecution.

28 Much of the following discussion draws on Beeley (2012, 105–11).

29 E.g., Secundus of Ptolemaïs (Epiph. *Pan.* 69.1.2, 3.2; *Urkunde* 6 = *Dokument* 1.5; Beeley (2012, 332, n. 9).

30 Alexander, however, abandoned Origen's idea that the Son was generated by the Father's will; he changed the language of eternity with respect to the Son's generation (he was generated always [*aei*], not eternally [*aidios*]); and he mapped the ontology of being versus non-being onto this newly formed distinction between time and absolute eternity (Beeley 2012). The reaction of erstwhile Origenists outside of Alexandria, however, looks like furious back-pedalling. For example, writing a defence of Origen during the persecution, Eusebius and Pamphilus concluded that Origen had taught a too-exalted status for Christ. Pamphilus' *Apology* hints that other charges against Origen were that he divided the godhead by positing a Valentinian emission; he supported psilanthropism or adoptionism; he taught Docetism and an overly strong allegorisation; he taught two Christs; he denied literal Biblical history; he denied the resurrection of the dead; he denied the punishment of the wicked; he taught the pre-existence of the soul; and he taught the transmigration of souls. Beeley (2012, 54) observes, however, that the only tenet Origen actually held was the pre-existence of souls.

31 Cf. *Urkunde* 1.2; 1.5; 6.4.

32 Cf. *Thalia* frags 5–6, 12, 213, 7, 11, 4, 14–15, 9, 22, 10. For Arius, one of God the Father's unique qualities is precisely his 'singularity: God is supremely unique (*monōtatos*), yet the son does not share this quality' (Beeley 2012). This aspect of Arius' thinking is worth comparing with Porphyry's theology as Aaron Johnson (2013) understands it.

33 He links him with Paul of Samosata as well (*Phil.* 2, 9).

34 See Edwards (2013).

35 Socr. 1.9.30 (NPNF transl.) Τοὺς πονηροὺς καὶ ἀσεβεῖς μιμησάμενος Ἄρειος δίκαιός ἐστιν τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκείνοις ὑπέχειν ἀτιμίαν. Ὥσπερ τοίνυν Πορφύριος ὁ τῆς θεοσεβείας ἐχθρὸς συντάγματα ἄττα παράνομα κατὰ τῆς θρησκείας συστησάμενος ἄξιον εὕρατο μισθόν, καὶ τοιοῦτον, ὥστε ἐπονείδιστον μὲν αὐτὸν πρὸς τὸν ἑξῆς γενέσθαι χρόνον καὶ πλείστης ἀναπλησθῆναι κακοδοξίας, ἀφανισθῆναι δὲ τὰ ἀσεβῆ αὐτοῦ συγγράμματα, οὕτως καὶ νῦν ἔδοξεν Ἄρειόν τε καὶ τοὺς αὐτῷ ὁμογνώμονας Πορφυριανοὺς μὲν καλεῖσθαι, ἵν', ὧν τοὺς τρόπους μεμίμηνται, τούτων ἔχωσι καὶ τὴν προσηγορίαν, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις καὶ εἴ τι σύγγραμμα ὑπὸ Ἀρείου συντεταγμένον εὑρίσκοιτο, τοῦτο πυρὶ παραδίδοσθαι, ἵνα μὴ μόνον τὰ φαῦλα αὐτοῦ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἀφανισθείη, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ ὑπόμνημα αὐτοῦ ὅλως ὑπολείποιτο.

36 Here the argument in Galvão-Sobrinho (2013) applies: parsing theology was done, in part at least, as a way to augment episcopal power.

37 For the most current discussion of Constantine's involvement, see Ubiña (2013).

38 Millar (1977, 447–56) notes the prominence of petitions regarding temples, priesthoods and festivals among petitions to the emperor, addressed ostensibly because of his role as *pontifex maximus*. Nevertheless, Cameron (2016, 156–57) cautions against too strictly trying to classify an emperor's decisions as stemming from specific titles and roles.

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CHAPTER 7

'Barbarian Sages' between Christianity and Paganism in Ammianus Marcellinus and the *Cosmographia Aethici*

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Abstract

The chapter compares the representation of 'sages', 'philosophers' or 'wise men' in Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* from the late 4th century and in the *Cosmographia Aethici* of 'Pseudo-Jerome' from the 8th century, with a particular focus on the ways in which these two widely differing texts engage with the idea of 'pagan' or 'barbarian' wisdom traditions and their carriers. In so doing, the chapter compares the two authors' strategies and techniques in representing inherited, non-Greek (or non-Roman) wisdom among the peoples of the world. Despite the great differences between the two texts and the contexts of their creation, both surprising similarities and telling differences can

be found between them. Both texts love to refer to secret letters and hidden information; another similarity is the way both authors tried to avoid locking themselves into either a 'Christian' or a 'pagan' way of writing. The resulting complications are in both cases part of the author's reflection on the difficulty of extracting truth from testimonies with various degrees of authority and age.

Keywords: Ammianus Marcellinus, Aethicus Ister, wisdom traditions, representation of barbarians and foreigners, Late Antiquity, Early Middle Ages, Egypt, druids, Magi, Christianity and paganism, apocalypticism, classical reception

'Ethnographicising' Literary Operations between Christianity and Paganism

This chapter is structured around two case studies from the late antique and early medieval Latin literary tradition: those of the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus and the *Cosmographia Aethici* attributed to 'Hieronymus presbyter' (henceforth denoted as 'Pseudo-Jerome'). Widely separated in time, at the first glimpse these texts have only very little in common beyond the fact that both are written in a Latin that is untypical to say the least, and that both seem to take delight in digressions on ethnographical and technical topics. Yet at least one further similarity can be pointed out: both texts choose idiosyncratic ways of operating between the polarities of Christianity and paganism when describing the wisdom traditions of out-groups or 'ethnically presented' groups – what Arnaldo Momigliano calls 'alien wisdom' (Momigliano 1975). My aim in this chapter is to compare the strategies and literary conceits of these two non-contemporary authors as they engage with the traditional theme of 'barbarian sages' among the various peoples of the world, and how the intervening centuries perhaps altered their preconceptions. Their own literary and epistemological aims were, naturally, heavily invested in the ways in which they situated the figure of the barbarian sage along the axis of Christianity and paganism. Their projected religious identities, too, complicate the picture. Overall, however, the barbarian sages seem a promising and little-explored element, from which one can expect some telling slippages between religious and 'ethnic' regimes of knowledge.

Any comparison between the two texts needs to consider their fundamental differences. Ammianus' historiographical text is not

only unambiguous in its generic choices and aims but also includes a remarkable amount of autoptic or autoptically presented information. Indeed, Ammianus' personality can – to a certain extent – be decoded from his prose, warts and all. Ammianus narrated a broad swathe of Roman history, but we are particularly fortunate in that the preserved parts of his work deal with contemporary history in both the East and the West. Ammianus' point of view is that of a native Greek-speaking member of the curial class, possibly from Antioch, who after an active military career seems to have settled down to write a digression-strewn, literarily ambitious and heavily moralising text imbued with Tacitean, Livian, Herodotean and Sallustian gestures. He must have completed his work in or shortly before 391,[1] but the history runs only until 378. It is a rich and complex text, partly because Ammianus, in his later years, so confidently reinvented himself as a learned and classicising writer, yet without being averse to satire and humour. In terms of values, he staunchly put his trust in traditional elite values and the resilience of the empire.[2] His own self-definition, *miles quondam et Graecus*, is an expression that already communicates a lot to the reader yet leaves some important questions – such as religious affiliation – open (Ammianus Marcellinus, 31.16.9).

In comparison, the *Cosmographia Aethici* is a much more intractable text. What we know for sure is that it is a literary forgery in *prosimetrum* from no earlier than the first half of the 8th century (possibly dating from soon after 727, as it uses the Latin translation of Pseudo-Methodius' *Apocalypse*). The language and the contents of the *Cosmography* show some ties to southern English monastic centres and the Irish learned tradition, although the most recent scholar to have devoted much attention to *Cosmography*, Michael Herren, suggests that nonetheless it was completed in northern Italy or Merovingian Francia (Herren 2011a, lxii–lxxiii). Its genre has been variously characterised.[3] The aims of its writer can be only vaguely suggested, though some type of parodic or ludic register would probably have been in the foreground at some stage of the no doubt multi-layered formation process of the text.[4] The *Cosmography* claims to be an expurgated rendition by Jerome the church father of a cosmographical text written centuries earlier – indeed before Christ – by a widely travelled pagan sophist called Aethicus Ister. Aethicus is called a 'Scythian', though whether his Histria/Istria is the one along the Black Sea or the Adriatic one seems to fluctuate within the text.[5] The author manipulates the 'found text'

paradigm of his forgery with aplomb[6] and creates three distinct voices. His piously sermonising 'Jerome' often intersperses his opinions into the text and uses many of the favourite expressions of the *presbyter*, while Aethicus' own voice when quoted *verbatim* is alternatingly bombastic and voluminous, or cryptic and sombre.[7] Between these two, there are the more neutral sections representing the supposedly abbreviated narrative of the original. Autoptic authority-building is present, but at one remove: 'Jerome' often points out Aethicus' unique source value as a personal witness to many marvels.

Despite their differences, the two texts have also some similarities. One important shared aspect is that both writers choose to inhabit complex positions in between paganism and Christianity. Ammianus' religious outlook is famously difficult to triangulate, and guesses have ranged from a lukewarm and elusively post-Julianic pagan to an unconvinced or opportunistic Christian.[8] Generally, Ammianus has good words to say about almost all suitably old wisdom traditions – Christianity included. Yet, he also seems ready to warn about the tendency of any religion to get corrupted by its entrenched elites. Examples of both of these positions will be presented shortly. The religious layers and pseudo-authorial masks in the *Cosmographia Aethici*, on the other hand, are even trickier to disentangle. While the writer obviously was a Christian and knew the writings of Jerome himself well enough to allude to them in some places, his formulaic warnings against the spiritual dangers of reading pagan authors do not preclude him from including plentiful references to non-Christian wisdom traditions. In addition to this, the text creates the admirable but fallible figure of a 'Scythian' Aethicus, whose eventual search for worldly wisdom seems to be frustrated. Aethicus' own authority is frequently buttressed by even earlier pagan sages, although with the almost-constant supervision of 'Jerome', who emerges as a dyspeptic and somewhat paranoid figure.

Druids, Magi and the Egyptian Wisdom in Ammianus Marcellinus

Ammianus' famous Gallic excursus in Book 15 includes several very positively evaluated references to the learned classes among the Gauls, who in his own time cannot have had anything more than a literary kind of existence.[9] At the beginning of the ethnographicising sec-

tion, Ammianus himself initiates his discussion of Gaul in the most elevated way possible by allusively likening himself to Virgil setting out to describe Aeneas' Italian adventures. The Aeneas of Ammianus' latter-day narrative was of course Julian, who laid the groundwork for his imperial rule while serving as a caesar in Gaul – an area that would also have foregrounded associations with Julius Caesar and his rise. Virgil in the guise of Mantuanus is for Ammianus an unambiguously authoritative figure, but what is more to the point is that the whole beginning section of the excursus brings together several other explicitly or implicitly high-quality authorities.

> Now, since – as the lofty bard (*uates*) of Mantua said – 'a greater work I undertake' and a greater train of events arises before me, I think it is timely to describe the Gallic regions and the lay of the land … The ancient writers, in doubt as to the earliest origin of the Gauls, have left the record half-completed about the matter, but later Timagenes, a Greek both in accuracy as well as language, collected out of various books these facts that had been long forgotten … The Druids say that a part of the people was in fact indigenous but that others also poured in from the remote islands and the regions across the Rhine, driven from their homes by continual wars and by the inundation of the stormy sea.[10]

The excursus is very conventionally flagged as a geographic-ethnographic digression, and its data is constantly underpinned with respectable authority figures, both Gallic and external. Timagenes, the Greek historian whom Ammianus used as a source for much of his Gallic section, is praised for his compilatory work in dredging up nigh-forgotten factoids and saving them from being lost. Ammianus compliments him exactly because he imagines himself along the same continuum of Hellenic enquiry. Timagenes' account of the Gallic origins is given next, and although the extent of the fragment is very hazy, it probably includes the explanation which Ammianus attributes to the authority of the Druids.[11] Thus, a Greek explanation is linked with the one from local sages, and neither one is given particular primacy by Ammianus: they are left to complement each other in a rather Herodotean fashion. This, in many ways, is also how Ammianus envisioned the role and place of Gaul in the history of both the Roman empire and civilisational processes alike. The assimilation of Greek and native learning is taken further in a later passage:

> Throughout these areas, men gradually grew civilised and the study of the laudable arts flourished, initiated by the Bards, the Euhages, and the Druids. The Bards sang to the sweet strains of the lyre the valorous deeds of famous men composed in heroic verse, whereas the Euhages investigated and sought to explain the sublimities of nature. The Druids, being loftier than the rest in intellect, and bound together in fraternal organisations, as the authority of Pythagoras determined, were elevated by their investigation of obscure and profound subjects, and scorning all things human, pronounced the soul immortal.[12]

Ammianus' view of the three Gallic learned groups is much more positive than anything preceding it in the literary tradition. Unlike so many of his predecessors, he does not mention the Gallic human sacrifices, and as the passage above shows, the doctrine of rebirth of the soul, which had raised eyebrows among many previous Greek and Latin writers, appears to Ammianus a wholly Pythagorean and elevated notion.[13] The language of lifting up is present here (*celsiores*, *erecti sunt*, *despectantes*), as it is in a later passage about the Brahmins (see below). The *euhages* – a rendition of the group name *uates* known from earlier lists of Gallic learned men – is perhaps best explainable as a garbled form resulting from textual transmission, but one that does at least avoid confusing them with the *uates Mantuanus excelsus* (another figure characterised by his elevated attribute), who initiated the excursus.[14] It becomes clear from Ammianus' estimation of the value of Gallic wise men that the progressive Christianisation and pagan monotheism of the later empire had almost certainly had an influence upon his epistemic field to begin with, even if as a writer Ammianus sought to keep his personal religious stance safely inscrutable. Through the mention of Pythagoras, the Greek model is brought as close as possible to the native Gallic learning, as was also the case in the previous passage initiating the excursus. Ammianus' perennial fascination with secret knowledge is also present; this will emerge in a much-heightened guise in his later description of Egypt.

Ammianus' attitude can be briefly compared with Decimus Magnus Ausonius' roughly contemporary *Professores* and the few references to the Druids contained in this text. Ausonius could use his colleague Attius Patera's alleged 'Druidic' pedigree as a praiseworthy topic: he 'reportedly' hails from the 'lineage of the Druids at Baiocassum [Bayeux], and draws his lineage from the sacred temple of Belenus'.[15]

The whole family's naming conventions are explicitly linked with the Greek cult of Apollo. Ausonius' sceptical but respectful tone about Patera's Druidic forefathers makes it quite likely that he is reporting Patera's own claims: indeed, Patera may well have just jumbled together anything suitably 'ethnic' and ancient. Thus, we may be dealing with an act of memory creation whereby a member of the Gallo-Roman intellectual elite constructed an identity that would have linked classical and regional antiquities into an erudite family lineage.[16] These late Roman aristocrats could, perhaps, opt to foreground a province-based 'Gallic' identity, which enabled them to reclaim some of the more laudable parts of their conventionally imagined pre-Roman past. The Druids are included in Patera's ancestry precisely because they are 'barbarian wise men', yet their relationship with the Greek mythology is presented in a way that harmonises a previously antagonistic relationship.[17]

For Ammianus, Ausonius and some of their contemporaries, too, the Druids had receded into a wholly literary and antiquarian register, and their epistemic mooring points within the actual perceptions of Gaul were becoming tenuous and malleable. Their 'barbarian' status was as immaterial as their 'paganism' – indeed, the latter aspect is never commented upon, except implicitly through their location in the listings of 'wise barbarians', already in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* (1.15.70.1–3). It can be noted in passing that Ammianus stands out among our sources as the last author who presents the Gallic learned classes of Druids and Bards together as a pair, the way they had been presented at least since Caesar, and possibly since Posidonius in the early 1st century BCE.[18] Ammianus' way of presenting them foreshadows – and may even have directly influenced – the similarly formulated idea of a progressively civilised 'chosen people among barbarians', with their ancestral songs performed to the sounds of a cithara, expressed by Jordanes when he narrates an elaborate version of the antiquities and civilised pedigree of the Goths.[19]

For Ammianus, Gaul was wholly assimilable into Graeco-Roman history and civilisation, and his Druids enjoy a curiously timeless existence within the text. In the case of Egypt too – yet much more vividly expressed and contextualised still within his own lifetime – Ammianus finds old wisdom and learning alive. As with the investigations of the Gallic sages, the unlocking of the mysteries of the world is celebrated in his passage about Alexandria:

And although very many writers flourished in early times as well as these that I mentioned, nevertheless not even today is learning of various kinds silent in that same city; for the teachers of the arts show signs of life, and the geometrical measuring-rod brings to light whatever is concealed, the stream of music is not yet wholly dried up among them, harmony is not reduced to silence, the consideration of the motion of the universe and of the stars is still kept warm with some, few though they be, and there are others who are skilled in numbers; and a few besides are versed in the knowledge which reveals the course of the fates. Moreover, studies in the art of healing – so often required in this neither frugal nor sober life of ours – are so enriched from day to day that, although a physician's work itself indicates it, yet it is a commendation enough about his knowledge of the art if he has said that he was trained at Alexandria.[20]

The professions of the natural philosopher and the priest are, as Rike has noted, frequently assimilated within Ammianus' conception of wisdom (Rike 1987, 73). Overall, Ammianus emphasises the continuation and the primordial nature of Alexandrian scholarship; in this sense, broader ideas about 'Egyptian wisdom' had become directed, *pars pro toto*, at the metropolis of the region. Interestingly, Egypt's legendary reputation for fecundity and fertility may have directed the passage's language: several verbs are common to expressions of growth, the agricultural cycle and the natural world (*floruere*, *spirant*, *exaruit*, *recalet*, *augentur*). Yet Ammianus' tone also points to his recognition of a certain fragility within these ancient orders of knowledge in the face of the changes of his own time. Things are precarious: the land is fertile, but careful nurture is needed in these times.

Towards the end of the passage, after a moralising side remark about current lifestyles that necessitate the frequent intervention of doctors in people's lives, Ammianus notes the universal authority that Alexandria-educated physicians have – a theme which is widely attested in later imperial-era literature.[21] We can, for instance, compare this with the gushing appreciation of the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, the Greek original of which was possibly written in the late 4th or early 5th century by a merchant in the East Mediterranean.[22]

Almost alone in the whole world, [Alexandria] has an abundance of philosophical truth, and you find most kinds of philosophers there.

> This is also why Aesculapius wished to grant to the city's possession the knowledge of medicine – it is agreed all over the world that this city has the best medics [to send] to all peoples.[23]

Alexandria's reputation for magical and religious practices permeates much of the late antique writing, and it forms a continuation with already well-established ideas about Egypt being famed for the same things.[24] Ammianus' love of arcane things – especially secret writings – is also present in his next passage on Alexandria (22.16.20), which refers approvingly to the crucial but, by his time, conventional and even proverbial role of Egypt as the point from which religion spread out into the world. In fact, both Ammianus and the anonymous author of the Greek original for *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* indicate that Egypt, in religious terms, was for the late Roman empire what India is for the modern Western conception of 'world spirituality': 'There, for the first time, long before other men, they discovered the cradles, so to speak, of the various religions, and now carefully guard the first beginnings of worship, stored up in secret writings.'[25]

Again, if we compare Ammianus' image of Alexandria with the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, we see striking similarities which may perhaps be explained by the shared Eastern Mediterranean background of the two texts – the doxic knowledge of the time. It could even be imagined that the raison-d'être of the *Expositio* could be to present a sort of 'conversation manual' on mostly commercial topics to aid in talking with people from any province: this seems to be supported by the author's short preface, addressed to someone called 'my son', who is said to derive many benefits from having absorbed the details of the text (*Expos. mundi* 1–2 (D)). Unlike in Ammianus, the *Expositio* does not betray any impression of Egypt's proverbial wisdom traditions hanging by a thread. In it, Egypt's primary export are *sapientes* and doctrines (besides papyrus); its specialists – for there are no generalists in Egypt – are the best in their fields. From these two apparently unconnected but intriguingly similar sources, vestiges of a popular image of the 'wisdom traditions' of late imperial Egypt seem to emerge.

> In any case, Egypt is overflowing with wise men more than any other place in the world. In Alexandria, the metropolis of the country, you can find all kinds of philosophers and all doctrines. And so, when once there was a competition between Egyptians and Greeks about which of

them would receive the Musaeum, the Egyptians were found to be more eloquent and complete, and the Musaeum was assigned to them. And it is impossible to find in any matter whatsoever a sage like an Egyptian, and thus every philosopher or a scholar of literary studies who remained in that country were always the best. For there is no deception among them, but every single one knows with certainty whatever they are expounding – which is why no-one studies everything but each perfects their own study by being an adornment to their own field.[26]

The enthusiastic and – one might venture – even slightly fawning description of the skills and excellence of Egyptian philosophers and scholars sounds perhaps naïve in its advertisement-like pitch, but it resembles Ammianus' more measured references in treating wisdom and hidden knowledge as properties particular to Alexandrians. This harks back to earlier imperial-era thinking about population groups and their stable characteristics, which could be explained through climates, astral influences or combinations of all three. Claudius Ptolemy, in several passages of his *Tetrabiblos*, explains how the astrological influences over Egypt make its inhabitants particularly adept at 'all kinds of usages, customs, and rites in the service of all manner of gods'. They are also well versed in divine matters 'because their zenith is close to the zodiac and the planets revolving about it' and, in a somewhat self-advertising manner, supremely suited to mathematical and scientific pursuits (Ptol. *Tetr*. 2.2, 3).

The last group to whom Ammianus devotes an ethnographical description in his work are the Magi of Persia, who feature in several paragraphs within Ammianus' extensive Mesopotamian excursus. Their doctrines, glossed with the Greek term *hagistia*, are approvingly described through Plato's authority as the purest form of worship of the gods.[27] Thus, the Magian rituals become safely dissociated from the unambiguously negative associations that the term *magia* would have brought to mind among Ammianus' audiences (Den Boeft 1999, 184). This *scientia* is part of the distillation process of Brahminic wisdom to the west.

In these parts are the fertile lands of the Magi, about whose sects and pursuits – since we have chanced on this point – it will be in place to give a few words of explanation. According to Plato, the most eminent author of lofty ideas, magic, under the mystic name of *hagistia*, is the

purest worship of the gods. To the science of this, derived from the secret lore of the Chaldaeans, in ages long past, the Bactrian Zoroaster made many contributions, and after him the wise king Hystaspes, the father of Darius. When Zoroaster had boldly made his way into the unknown regions of Upper India, he reached a wooded wilderness, whose calm silence the lofty intellects of the Brahmins control. From their teaching, he learned as much as he could grasp of the laws regulating the movements of the earth and the stars, and of the pure sacrificial rites. Of what he had learned he communicated something to the understanding of the Magi, which they, along with the art of divining the future, hand on from generation to generation to later times.[28]

The origins of the Magian doctrines are in the immemorially old Chaldaean art, to which the two proverbially wise Easterners, Zoroaster and Hystaspes, added their own. Zoroaster, in particular, appears in Ammianus' telling as some sort of sacral Alexander figure (or perhaps a prefiguration of Apollonius of Tyana). He braves the Indian jungles in pursuit of the 'lofty intelligences' of the Brahmins – here, just like in the Druidic section, we can see the language of elevation being put into use. The purity of the rites and the genealogically unbroken connection of this primal wisdom is emphasised (23.6.33–34); the latter aspect is also present in less positive presentations of the Magian arts, such as in the Syriac *The Book of the Laws of the Countries*, attributed to the late-2nd-century monotheist Bardaişan of Edessa: 'Then I have told you of the Persians and the Magians, who not only marry their daughters and sisters in the climate of Persia, but in every place they came to, they have kept to the law of their fathers and observed the secret practices they transmitted to them.'[29]

In the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, the Magi show up very early indeed – even before the outset of the geographical progression from India towards the lands of the Romans. They are explicitly marked out for being a suitable starting point – apparently just as much from an epistemological as from a geographical point of view. The Magian art, for this anonymous contemporary of Ammianus, appeared the earliest pagan source of wisdom, but within the same paragraph he – or his later, undoubtedly Christian redactor into Latin – already gestures towards Judeo-Christian sources of authority:

> Where else should we begin but with the Magi? For our predecessors, trying to discuss these matters, were able to say something, [but only Moses, the prophet of the Jews who was full of divine spirit, wrote things that are certain. After him,] the sequences of provinces and times were described by Berossus, the philosopher of Chaldaeans, whose writings were followed by Manetho, the Egyptian prophet, and Apollonius, likewise a philosopher of Egyptians [as well as the sage Josephus, teacher of the Jews, who wrote about the war of the Jews when he was captured by the Romans]. After them, Menander of Ephesus and Herodotus and Thucydides wrote similar things but not better than the oldest ones.[30]

The disparate wisdom traditions of 'ethnic sages' is here, too, collated and confirmed by their juxtaposition with each other: the technique itself could be applied with equal efficiency irrespective of the writer's own religious stance. The possibly later additions to the text go on to single Moses out for compliments; it can be doubted whether this comment and the following one about Josephus are able to provide any hints about the religious identity of the writer. More probably, they pertain to his early redactors or translators (Grüll 2014, 638–39; Rougé 1966, 121–23; see also Lampinen 2021, 20–36). The list form, often interacting with the idea of 'pedigree of wisdom' and its ever-branching derivation among the peoples of the world, is among the most fundamental structures of the late antique understanding of 'alien wisdom', as many scholars have noted (Buell 2005, esp. 29–33, 76–80; see also Broze, Busine and Inowlocki 2006; Clark 1999; Stroumsa 1999). Also notable is the reverence that the oldest age of any given wisdom tradition was automatically thought to command (Pilhofer 1990).

To return to Ammianus: just as in the case of the Druids of Gaul, he also approves of the Magi's account of Persian religious customs (23.6.34). Moreover, he avoids any negative characterisation of their doctrines. Plato serves in the Persian excursus the same purpose for Ammianus as Timagenes and Virgil do in the Gallic digression. But, as perhaps befits such a proverbially influential group of sages situated among an out-group famous for its autocracy, Ammianus does not entirely avoid the more negative implications of their power. In paragraph 35, he notes that the numbers of Magi have grown along with their wealth and power, and that they are accountable only to themselves. Finally, he goes on to paraphrase the Herodotean story of the Magian takeover after Cambyses' death.

> From that time on for many ages down to the present, a large class of men of one and the same descent have devoted themselves to the service of the gods. The Magi also say (for it is right to believe them) that they guard on ever-burning braziers a fire sent down from heaven in their country, and that a small portion of it, as a good omen, used to be carried before the Asiatic kings. The number of Magi of this origin in old times was very small, and the Persian potentates made regular use of their services in the worship of their gods. And it was sin to approach an altar or touch a sacrificial victim before one of the Magi, with a set form of prayer, poured the preliminary libations. But they gradually increased in number and became a strong clan, with a name of their own; they possessed country residences, which were protected by no great walls, and they were allowed to live in accordance with their own laws, and through respect for religion were held in high esteem. From this seed of the Magi, as the ancient records relate, seven men after the death of Cambyses mounted the Persian throne, but (we are told), they were overthrown by the party of Darius, who made himself king by the neighing of a horse.[31]

As a writer, Ammianus tended to be very circumspect in ambiguating his attitude towards Christianity and its role within the Roman state. Thus, it could be ventured that his comments on the privileges and growing influence of the Magi, as well as their subsequent involvement in the politics of choosing the King of Kings, could be read beyond their ethnographical pose as a possible cautionary tale against a comparable development taking place within the Christian Roman empire. Despite the overall confidence of his relationship with the past and his implicit trust in the eternity of Rome, Ammianus remains throughout his historical work strongly aware and concerned about potential sources of Roman weaknesses and strengths. It could be that through his emphasis on the encroachment of the Magi's privileges, he hoped to caution against religious elites turning into a future source of Roman weakness. This would be broadly similar to how, in book 31, he earmarks the sizeable Gothic contingents in army units as a potential handicap or challenge to Roman military success (Amm. 31.16.8).

The Pagan Sages and 'Alien Wisdom' in the *Cosmographia Aethici*

The contents of Pseudo-Jerome's *Cosmographia* do not match its title particularly well. Only the sections 1–23 form a proper cosmography, with 'Jerome' introducing 'Aethicus the Istrian' and proceeding to discuss the structure of heaven, hell, earth and sky; the views of Aethicus, *vis-à-vis* other philosophers, on the parts of the cosmos are also explained.[32] Sections 22–23 form a transfer passage to the largest internal division, the 'travel novel' of Aethicus' first journey (24–104). This is interspersed with Jerome's repeated editorial warnings and procedural notes, excursus on the ship types of different nations, Jerome's rants about heresies, and metric sections quoted in Aethicus' own voice. Towards the end of the 'travel novel', Aethicus' praise of Mount Olympus morphs into an allegory about Alexander the Great, and an oracular exhortation for him to return to do battle with the Muslims who are ravaging Cyprus. Sections 105–11 describe a much shorter second journey, and the whole is concluded (112–13) with an excursus on winds and the supposed new type of alphabet which Aethicus is said to have devised.

In *Cosmography* 1, 'Jerome' introduces 'Aethicus', whom he has reportedly selected because he wrote about things which 'Moses and the Old Testament' did not mention and thus has some value in filling in gaps in the Christian knowledge:

> While investigating the pages of the philosophers in keen study, I assigned to myself a task proportionate to my enthusiasm to investigate learned writers, the deeper places to a significant degree, and cursorily <to explain> astronomical matters and the excelling heights, which no one yet is able to perceive. Those [writers] attempted to speak about such great matters, which we with trepidation and hesitation have begun to transcribe and select for use <and> boldly to discuss. I have reproduced here in selection the very difficult matters which the cosmographer Aethicus learned to pursue, and also the matters which Moses and the Old Testament omitted in their narrative. Hence, I implore my readers not to think me imprudent, when they discover that certain very great [achievements] owed to the daring of others are harmonised by my investigation.[33]

In section 17, the figure of the exotic philosopher king Hiarcas is rather cleverly taken from Jerome's own genuine letter (*Ep.* 53.1.4). Originally, he stems from Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* 3.16, where he is the ruler of the Brahmins. The Hiarcas of *Cosmography* is more hazily located, sitting by the southern desert edge of the ocean. The 'table of the sun', which Pseudo-Jerome takes to be an astral phenomenon, is in fact a misunderstanding of the Philostratean altar that is lit with the sun's rays (Herren 2011a, xxi and 69 *ad loc.*).

> Now in comparison to other philosophers, Aethicus the cosmographer wrote both clearly and elegantly. We too in some of our letters mentioned the philosophers and their laborious studies, [for example], Hiarcas sitting on a golden throne in the sand at the southern edge of Ocean arguing with his disciples about the table of the sun [and] the difference between stars and astral bodies. Of all these I admire Aethicus the cosmographer for his painstaking and invaluable skill. He criticised these and other philosophers for saying and repeating much and explaining very little or only a few things in aid of scientific learning. He rebuked the philosophers Cluontes and Argyppus, the Scythian astrologers, and the Mantuan. He criticises them for publishing a lot of things to no purpose.[34]

The ancient philosophers Cluontes and Argyppus demonstrate the way in which Pseudo-Jerome went on inventing names for his sages: the first takes his name from Cleanthes the Stoic, while the second is apparently a demoted silvery counterpart of Chrysippus, as the previous editor Otto Prinz suggested (Prinz 1993, 104 n. 90 *ad loc.*). These apparently Greek or Roman philosophers are mentioned in the company of 'Scythian astrologers', but whether these 'Scythians' are meant to represent the natives of Aethicus' own country is left open. If this is the case, Aethicus emerges as a sort of Anacharsis-like figure, who sets out to seek foreign wisdom after having become disillusioned with the learning of his compatriots.[35] In any case, all these philosophers seem to 'Jerome' less worthy than Aethicus; Virgil as Mantuanus is repeatedly censored for his pointless learning that just confuses the reader (e.g. in *Cosmography* 43).[36] On the other hand, the Cosmographer has also hidden in the text a reference to illuminated manuscripts of Virgil (*Cosm.* 66b; see Herren 2011a, xli–xlii). The paganism of all of these wise men, whether Greek or barbarian, is equally suspicious, though

this futility is mostly cast into relief through a comparison with Aethicus, the plucky wisdom-seeker who pesters all of the impostors into submission whenever he meets them. Despite his own 'riddles', Aethicus' sage pronouncements also seem to be projected forward in time as a comment against sophistry and the overly rhetorical expounding of far-fetched theories.[37]

> When the seasons were suitable, with utmost care he sailed the Ocean with his disciples [to] other parts of the world, to islands great and small from South to West – from Taprobane to Syrtinice and Calaopa as far as the Adriatic, and from there as far as [a point] beyond Cadiz and the Pillars of Hercules. He sojourned there for a year debating with the philosopher Aurelius and with Arbocrates, and they were unable to explain any of his riddles … He called Spain, though replete with agriculture and excellent wines as well as brute beasts and fat calves, rich in delights, thin in wisdom. He hastened on to Ireland and remained there for some time poring over their books, and he called them *ideomochi* or *idiotistae*, that is, 'unskilled workers' and 'ignorant teachers'. Regarding them as worthless, he says: 'to come to the end of the world and arrive in Ireland is a burdensome task but without profit.' He lashed out against their great uncouthness, but this did not advance towards a benefit. Ireland has unskilled cultivators and instructors, it has destitute inhabitants. Then he sailed to Thyle and the British Isles, which he called the Brutish isles; the people there were wholly unskilled, and coarseness abounded.[38]

A multitude of imaginatively named 'philosophers' populate the world through which Aethicus travels. The same can be said of heretics. The names of the regions, likewise, form an evocative interplay of classical places and wholly invented ones. Aethicus also gives proverbial-sounding judgements on the lands he visits: Spain is thin in wisdom despite its delightful produce, while Ireland seems to have been a huge disappointment. Britain appears merely 'Brutain' to him – a pun that is lifted straight from Isidore's *Etymologies*.[39] It is particularly these two ethnicised slurs which would make very little sense in their emphasised form if the writer had not had some connection to Irish and English learning. Such ethnicisingly cast judgements about wise and foolish peoples – often in list form – went on to form a very familiar part of medieval scholarly/miscellanistic writing.[40] Some such

listings come quite close to the chronological context of the Cosmographer, and no doubt reflect a tradition that had earlier antecedents.[41] Indeed, it could even be suggested that in the case of *Cosmography*, such judgements could have been influenced by the actual Jerome's commentaries on the Pauline epistles, referring to discussions of the typical vices of different provincial populations.[42] We already saw such elements of doxic knowledge in the case of Ammianus and his contemporaries.

Aethicus' respect for biblical learning is demonstrated in *Cosm.* 30 by the fact that he omitted things which are already in the Old Testament: he is explicitly said to have praised the Mosaic Law and preserved much from Josephus. Thus 'Jerome' implies that the expurgated *Cosmography* can be read as a supplement to Josephus; this resembles the way in which the author of *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* locates the epistemological contribution of his own text.[43] In these points, Aethicus becomes one among the number of 'righteous pagans'. Even his silences confirm this; he does not write about ungodly peoples, as doing so could lead to their practices gaining repute – a consideration that heresiographers sometimes expressed (Berzon 2016, 120).

> The same philosopher does not describe but omits the origins of other peoples which the sacred writing of the Old Testament makes known because he calls all the Scriptures the living fountain of the laws and liberal letters and the mother of histories. He showers much praise on the Torah of Moses, and retains much of Josephus and his history, and did not wish to describe anew or repeat those matters which he found in their books. He also says that he did not write about [these] nomadic and stupid peoples on the ground that their unworthy and foolish deeds and actions were discovered in the gods of the pagans and their abominations and idolatry, and many other things in the magical arts, and nor refined by true knowledge of God through the mouth of the prophets. Truly, Holy Scripture fittingly illuminates this section of his own writing.[44]

Jerome's approval and Aethicus' supposed authorial intention become entangled at this point, but 'Jerome' does not dwell on this, stamping instead the final seal of authority – that of the *scriptura sancta* – onto his own version of Aethicus' text. Yet he needs to continue monitoring the dosage of unconventional (i.e. fictive, or rather 'marked as

potentially fictive') material, as later demonstrated in *Cosm.* 43, where expurgation is noted to be necessary to prevent moral damage to the reader.

Alexander the Great is a major figure in the *Cosmography*, as he is in most of the Eastern chronography tradition; close parallels can be found in the Pseudo-Methodian *Apocalypse*, which clearly had an influence on the writer of the *Cosmography*, as well as in the Γ-redaction of the Pseudo-Callisthenian *Alexander Romance* – though Pseudo-Jerome accessed the Alexander material mostly through Julius Valerius' *Res gestae Alexandri Magni* (Herren 2011a, lxxvii). The figure of the conqueror-king is subtly altered, however, and crops up in somewhat surprising places. It is not wholly unexpected that Alexander gets intimately tied in to the vision of the Last Days in the Cosmographer's presentation, but he also becomes quite extensively Christianised. He seems indeed to be a figure much like Aethicus, a pagan living before the arrival of Christ who nonetheless respects the Jewish religion (cf. Jos. *Ant.* 11.306–46). He is also in some personal connection with the only God, becoming a sage-like figure who convinces even 'Jerome'. In *Cosmography* 41a–b, for instance, Alexander acts upon a debilitatingly frightful vision of the damage that the Impure Nations might unleash upon the world. He sacrifices to the Christian God on Mount 'Chelion' (probably from Helicon) and receives via divine grace a stratagem, by which he traps the Impure Nations behind a mountain wall up in the north.

> [Alexander] groaned and built altars on Mount Chelion, and sacrificed victims to God, and for a whole day and night he prayed asking for God's guidance and mercy, and he found a great stratagem. Through God's power a heavy earthquake occurred on that mountain … But we believe that the providence of God was shown to this great prince. And not without good reason can [Alexander] be called 'the Great', who found such useful stratagems for checking the rage of these wild peoples, whose release we believe will occur in the times of the Antichrist as a persecution of the nations and the punishment of sinners.[45]

In *Cosm.* 66a, 'Jerome' interjects again, digressing on the value and challenges of editing 'Aethicus', and highlights his own pains to make sure that such obscure and philosophical style does not cloud or confuse the reader's understanding. Sections like this are interspersed here

and there in order to flesh out the 'Istrian philosopher', whose own style mixes Greek and Latin quite ingeniously. It all seems like a satire targeting overwrought pseudo-intellectualist styles, which might lend support to the idea that the beginnings of the *Cosmography* were meant as a satire on learned Greek texts, perhaps known in Britain through Eastern teachers such as Theodore of Tarsus – or indeed as a spoof on the teachers themselves, with their Greek-inflected neologisms (Herren 2009, 27, 2011a, lxix–lxx; Rix 2015, 53; cf. Bremmer 2010, 42–45, 47, 53). 'Jerome' himself seems very cynical about the heuristic value of such affectations.

Yet, 'Jerome' also constantly praises 'Aethicus' for his unique information about 'pagans', even as he makes it clear that he is criticising and censoring other things (e.g. *Cosm.* 58). This device allows for the inclusion of novel and wonderful elements – indeed, arguably some of the most miraculous details in the entire Latin literature of the period – but grounds such ventures on the undeniable authority of Jerome, who is supposed to have already made the selection and done the fact-checking (with Bible firmly in mind). In 66b, 'Jerome' elaborates on the dangerous pagan authors: *Sammo* seems to refer to *Samius*, and thus Pythagoras, while *Leucius* could be either *Lucius* of Lucian of Samosata or perhaps the writer of novelistic apostle acts Leukios Kharinos, whom Augustine condemns as a Manichaean (Aug. *c. Fel.* 2.6; see Herren 2011a, 241 *ad loc.*). Cicero's two names have become interestingly severed from each other into *Tullius* and *Cicero* (as noted by Herren 2011a, 242 *ad loc.*). *Hebion* is undoubtedly based on Apion and explainable through the Cosmographer's occasional gestures towards Josephus. But there is a twist again: the pagan authors are accused of 'altering the letters of the alphabet' itself in their disputes, but this is also exactly what 'Jerome' reports that Aethicus himself did: these *characteres Aethiciani* and their names (which borrow elements from the tradition of *voces magicae*) are in many manuscripts given at the end of the text.

> And so with skilful investigation, our philosopher divided into chapters a narrative of those heathens and some of their strange and incredible doings in numerous statements, which we by degrees and with very painstaking caution affixed with two kinds of punctuation, cancellation marks and *obeli* (the pages of his books have not yet been fully annotated by us with our editorial pen), lest a blemish be obvious to readers

when his [pages] on the same matter are published on the authority of the philosopher; because if all his assertions in all the books [were retained], who would dare to accept or believe those matters which we have published according to our alterations, or here and there according to his own words, in our epitome? He was content to explain the literature of the gentiles in part in his exceptionally enigmatic style, in part he drew out [their meaning] in Greek syllables, but more and more he employed Latin prosody; but no one should dare to accept the very obscure statements in their entirety, but only in part … Indeed, I discovered in the Samian, the Mantuan, and Leucius many incredible and obscure matters, which, [as it is] in no wise received truth to everyone, I judge should not be accepted by prudent investigators. I say that Tully and Cicero, Plato and Hebion will be the ruin of many and a stumbling block to the faithful because of their harsh and bitter disputes, the quarrelsome nature of their writings, and their heathen fables … They altered of their own accord not only their various treatises but also even the very letters of the alphabet.[46]

Christianity is somehow thought also to condition Aethicus' actions in describing the world, although at the same time it is clear that he is living in the pre-Christian era, perhaps under Augustus. 'Jerome' reminds the reader that there was a reason why 'Aethicus' did not give an ethnography of Greece: there would have been many vices and sins in evidence among the Greeks of Aethicus' lifetime, since they had not yet been cured by the medicine of 'the Samaritan' (Christ) and had suffered much from the influence of dialecticians.

And so the same philosopher elegantly declaimed these things. He omitted and thus did not mention the people for the reason that they were filled with every kind of crime and shameful action: homicide, fornication, debauchery, and every sort of filth. They had not yet received the healing medicine, since the name of the Lord had not yet been preached there, and the Samaritan had not yet descended to cure by applying wine and oil to the wounds and sores from the dialecticians and the maledictions of foolish and ignorant men.[47]

Essentially, the Christian Church Fathers' editorial gaze extends into texts supposed to have been produced in the pre-Christian past: the moral failings of the admired Greeks of old were recognised already by

Aethicus, their contemporary. This is somewhat disingenuous, for the same sinful condition certainly has not prevented him from mentioning a huge number of peoples along the northern edges of the world; their gruesome practices have by this stage been much bemoaned yet meticulously detailed.[48] The tone, as in many places towards the end of the first travel narrative, is somewhat vague and allegorical; incidentally, among Aethicus' works invented by 'Jerome' is a text called *Aenigmata*, as well as *Sophogramii* and *Rus artium*.

The many tragic stories and myths located in Athens are all called up to confirm the view of 'Aethicus' that Athens is characterised by its historical evils. 'Aethicus' also proves to have been aptly named, since he gives the Greeks some credit only for their 'physical philosophy' – implying that he was not convinced by their ethics or moral philosophy.[49] He sounds again very much like Anacharsis the Scythian, criticising the Greeks as an outsider for their moral and cultural inconsistencies (cf. Herren 2011b, 47). The 'moralising Scythian' can also be turned into a commentary on the imperfection of even the most intellectual pre-Christian culture. Internally within the *Cosmography*, 'Aethicus' both self-advertises in his own voice and is also constantly recommended (at least in his bowdlerised form) by 'Jerome'. The Istrian philosopher does not come across at any stage as particularly wise or deep but is certainly cryptic, authoritative, argumentative and clever.

After a sojourn in Athens, called *philosophorum nutrix*,[50] where 'Aethicus' enjoys debating local philosophers in his already typical fashion, *Cosmography* 98 tells of the sophist arriving on Samos and becoming inspired by the memory of the Sibyl and Pythagoras there; he is said to have composed a hymn in their honour on the basis of the *sententiae* of their verses and expanding upon them.

> The Isle of Samos [belongs to] those (islands) in the Aegean Sea, where it is written that Juno was born. On it were born the Samian Sibyl and Samian Pythagoras, by whom philosophy was first discovered and disseminated; and the same Aethicus edited his pronouncements in a rhetorical, poetic and very obscure style; and very often he accepted him [sc., Pythagoras] exclusively to a very great extent, and [sometimes] he rejected [him] in some part. On this island he wrote a poem in praise of the Sibyl and Pythagoras, appropriating to himself the feeling of their verses [and] expanding upon it.[51]

'Jerome' does not appear to find much fault in this but on the contrary seems to cast the relationship of Aethicus, the editor of Pythagoras' obscure statements, and himself, the editor of Aethicus' similarly rhetorical and elaborate language, into a parallel of sorts. The passage may have a meaning beyond that of 'Aethicus' coming as close to the birth of philosophy as possible: him 'appropriating the feeling' of pagan verses and 'expanding upon it' (*adsumpta sibimet sententia uersuum suorum prolata*) can be interpreted as one possible guide to reading the *Cosmography* itself – namely, as an impressionistic take on how to read an ancient learned text in a Christian world.

Concluding Remarks

Parallels between the two authors examined in this chapter should not be over-emphasised: they are separated by several centuries, their authorial agendas are almost wholly dissimilar and they come from vastly different cultural contexts. And even where the two exhibit similarities, we must recognise that kinship is not causation. I have not sought to argue for any actual connection between the two texts, although it would be fascinating to try to find out if Ammianus' history was available in Northern Italian libraries at the time when Pseudo-Jerome was writing.[52] Both Ammianus and the author of *Cosmographia* have very unique ways of assessing and appreciating learnedness and communicating their views about the limits and transmission of human knowledge. Both writers also operate in highly individual ways in the religiously ambiguous authorial positions they have adopted within their texts: Ammianus through his choice of obfuscating his own religious stance and focusing on the past; the Cosmographer through the complex play of identities and layered ironies built into his text. If we think of writing about barbarian sages as a way of tracking the boundaries of the '*oikoumene* of morality' – or at least its epistemological shadow, the 'geography of knowledge' – it emerges as a literary device that could well be compared with heresiography and used for the same purposes in areas and times when heretics were not available.[53]

Ammianus holds very palpable and perhaps typically late antique ideas about the value of past traditions: often his evaluation highlights the principle of *presbyteron kreitton*, 'the older, the better' (on which see e.g. Pilhofer 1990). But this does not imply any epistemic insecurity; Ammianus' adopted authorial guise is in fact supremely confident. Just

as he at no point betrays any lack of trust in the ultimate survival of the Roman state and power, he likewise writes as a self-conscious product of centuries-long chains of utterance in each of the genres he touches, with no apparent worry over the durability of his old classics' value. He is even able to scoff at those Roman elites who instead of historiography read mostly biographies and Juvenal, who was experiencing something of a resurgence during his time.[54] Ammianus' world is epistemically unchanged and unchanging, but he himself is ready to engage creatively with its past. The figures of the Druids, Magi and Egyptian priests are all there to remind his audience that wisdom traditions are nothing new, that the real gold standard for judging the moral value of a philosophy or religion is its age, and that these terms apply to both Christian and non-Christian doctrines. These traditions can also be used to comment on each other. Ammianus showcases the theme of original, primordial wisdom throughout his treatment of out-groups of wise men; his take on them is generally very conventional but more reverential and positive than perhaps those of any non-sophist contemporary. But as for barbarian learning itself, though venerable old age could confer tremendous admirability on it, Ammianus frequently gestures towards Greek affirmation for 'alien wisdom' – whether by giving a Platonic gloss on Eastern wisdom or using Pythagoras to add lustre to the Druidic creed and organisation. His views about the wisdom of Egypt were clearly very conventional for his time and can be compared to other texts lacking a strong partisan stance, like *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*.

Pseudo-Jerome, on the other hand, is an edifying case of *nova ex veteribus* – using the received elements to play games of signification in the pursuit of something almost unprecedented; he is engaged in creating a plausible-sounding pastiche of 'what was it like to read pagan philosophers', but he sculpts it out of Isidorean, biblical and other materials.[55] He reaches over the temporal and cultural divide with the help of his literary conceit, whereby the reader was able to hear a Christian Church Father of the highest imaginable learning comment on the merits and factuality of a virtuous pagan's pursuit for wisdom. 'Jerome' is never far beyond the reader's attention and makes frequent sallies to worry about what he is doing in abbreviating a pagan work, or to rail about heresies, or to comment on his own editorial methods: an authorial display that must by the Cosmographer's time have felt enchantingly 'early Christian'. Aethicus' meetings and apparently

very significant debates with strange and foreign-sounding pagan philosophers and sage kings weave another and perhaps more fascinating pattern. In short, Pseudo-Jerome does what he claims Aethicus did on Samos: 'appropriating to himself the feeling of their verses [and] expanding upon it'.

In conjuring up the tone and feeling of late antique texts like the *Topographia Christiana* of Cosmas Indicopleustes (a copy of which was in fact present in the School of Theodore of Tarsus in Canterbury) (Bremmer 2010, 46–47) or other – sometimes earlier – geographical, antiquarian or ethnographicising narratives such as that of Solinus' *Collectanea*, the *Cosmographia* does a wonderful job. Its mixture of exotic-sounding population names, digressions on natural phenomena, running scriptural commentary on the received classical traditions, and euhemeristic treatment of classical myths and legendary figures is all part of the message. The confused and overlapping religious scene, with plenty of gentiles, righteous pagans, idolaters, euhemerised ancient heroes and Christian Church Fathers, contributes towards the general feeling of antiquity when reading the text.[56] Aethicus moves through interlinked and exotically named regions in pursuit of wisdom just like his earlier 'Scythian' forebear Anacharsis, confronts 'philosophers' in rhetorical sparring matches and engages with earlier figures of authority – both pagan and Christian. In some ways, the *Cosmographia* is trying to conjure up the very same world that Ammianus operated in, but from an early medieval point of view and with largely Isidoran components. Alternatively, one could perhaps also suggest that there is in fact very little heuristic value in thinking about the *Cosmography* as an 'early medieval' piece at all: such a forward-gazing nomenclature twists our expectations, when in fact we could just as well think about the work as 'Late late antique' or perhaps just 'post-Isidoran'.

Pseudo-Jerome (or the Cosmographer) is, culturally speaking, a conservative and typically Graecocentric anti-relativist. As noted above, he even may be echoing or emulating the deprecating comments directed at home-baked British and Irish learning in the School of Theodore at Canterbury – if that is indeed where he began his literary exercise (cf. Herren 2011a, lxix, lxxiv, lxxvi–lxxvii). In other words, the Graecocentricism of the text, whether sincere or not, may be either so conventional as to be second hand or part of the literary display. In terms of religion, the Cosmographer's view is simultaneously directed

at the 'great Rome' and the Christian worldview. Despite this, the ethnicising gestures and religious sentiments become strongly interlinked in the apocalyptic passages. Strikingly, not even the Arabs and Slavs are foregrounded as religious enemies, even though the rhetoric around them tends towards the apocalyptic. The true religious Other seems to reside with the Enclosed Nations of the North, who represent all that is repulsive, impious and depraved – thankfully confined to the furthest north by Alexander himself in accordance with the divine plan. Their presence in the text is that of a classical edge-of-the-world curiosity, invited and enabled by the biblical silences on the northern stretches of the world.

In spite of the sections where Alexander is invoked to 'return to Mount Zion' and the barbarian depredations are bemoaned, the *Cosmographia Aethici* is difficult to see as a product of an age of anxiety or epistemic insecurity. On the contrary, the Cosmographer acts with a clear sense of purpose and a certain subversiveness in a literary world where not even such eminent writers as Jerome or Augustine, nor apocalyptic texts, nor those of god-fearing pagans were beyond pastiche, irony and certainly some elaborate reordering. In a way, Pseudo-Jerome's reader becomes a bit like Alexander (or Aethicus) himself: seeing many things and wondrous peoples, trying stratagems against them, but in the end relying on superior sources of wisdom (Aristotle for one, Jerome for the other) to confirm their impressions on these matters. Ammianus, likewise, travelled the world as a soldier on active duty before settling down in Rome – all the book knowledge of the world at hand – in order to produce a work that frequently reflects on the multitude of ways in which different peoples relate to their wisdom traditions.

I have intended this chapter to serve as an exercise in 'reading Aethicus *after* Ammianus' rather than 'reading Aethicus *with* Ammianus'. I hope that this has enabled some new alignments and dynamics to be detected not only in *Cosmography* but also in Ammianus' *Res gestae*. Both texts have many references to secret letters and hidden information in a variety of contexts and for different moralising purposes. Both, moreover, seem to go to some lengths in trying to avoid locking themselves into either a 'Christian' or a 'pagan' way of writing: the resulting complications are – I would argue – in both cases part of the author's reflection on the difficulty of extracting truth from testimonies with various degrees of authority and age. And even though

both authors show tremendous self-confidence in the middle of their knowledge-ordering operations, the reader is in two very different ways invited to participate in the excavation process of our authors: they are asked to work for their truth.

Notes

1 Amm. Marc. 22.16 refers to Serapeum without mentioning its destruction in 391.

2 On Ammianus, especially his religious attitude, see e.g. Barnes (1998); Den Boeft (1999); Harrison (1999); Hunt (1985); Rike (1987). For a summary of the scholarly views on Ammianus, see Blockley (1996).

3 It has elements of a *Reiseroman* (Shanzer 2006; Herren 2009), aretalogy, novel (Herren 2011b), apocalypse (Berg 2013), encyclopaedic text, periplous, geography and history. See also Lampinen (2018) (where especially the Cosmographer's imitation of the 'feel' of ancient ethnographical register is examined); Tristram (1982); Wood (2000). Cf. Bremmer (2010, esp. 24) on a miscellanistic manuscript from roughly the same context and with similar topics.

4 Previously (e.g. Hillkowitz 1934; Löwe 1952) the target of satire was often thought to be ecclesiastical or theological, whereas recent interpretations prefer to see it as a parody of Cosmas Indicopleustes' flat-earth cosmology or Theodore of Tarsus' Graecocentricism (Herren 2009, 27, 2011a, lxix–lxx, lxii, on the author's travels and the layers of the *Cosmography*'s formation; Rix 2015, 53).

5 The figure of 'Aethicus Ister' himself, as suggested by Herren (2011a, liii), may well have been 'found' in Virgil the Grammarian, who wrote about a character called Estrius or Istrius, described as a historian and a moralist. It would be very much like the Cosmographer to pick the Greek word as the basis for forming his 'Aethicus'. *Aethicus* might also be understood rather as a title than as a name.

6 The inspiration may derive partly from the texts attributed to 'Dictys of Crete' and 'Dares Phrygius'.

7 Tristram (1982, 158) on the author's stylistic variations.

8 Summed up in Rike (1987, 1–2).

9 It is fairly certain that from Tacitus' time onwards the Druids in Gaul are an 'ethnicising' gesture, though the references continue sporadically until Ammianus: cf. Mela 3.18–19; Plin. *NH* 30.4(13); Luc. 1.444–51; Tac. *Hist.* 4.54; *Ann.* 14.30; SHA *Alex.* 60.6, *Aurel.* 44.4, *Car. Carin. Num.* 14.2–3.

10 Amm. Marc. (15.9.1–4) (ed. Seyfarth): Proinde quoniam – ut Mantuanus uates praedixit excelsus – 'maius opus moueo' maiorque mihi rerum nascitur ordo, Galliarum tractus et situm ostendere puto nunc tempestiuum … 2 Ambigentes super origine prima Gallorum scriptores ueteres notitiam reliquere negotii semiplenam, sed postea Timagenes et diligentia Graecus et lingua haec quae diu sunt ignorata collegit ex multiplicibus libris. … 4 Drasidae memorant re uera fuisse populi partem indigenam, sed alios quoque ab insulis extimis confluxisse et tractibus transrhenanis, crebritate bellorum et adluuione feruidi maris sedibus suis expulsos.

11 Timag. *BNJ* 88 F 2 *ap.* Amm. Marc. 15.9. *Brill's New Jacoby* identifies the fragment more narrowly as 15.9.2–8.

12 Amm. Marc. 15.9.8: Per haec loca hominibus paulatim excultis uiguere studia laudabilium doctrinarum, inchoata per bordos et euhagis et drasidas. Et bardi quidem fortia uirorum illustrium facta heroicis conposita uersibus cum dulcibus lyrae modulis cantitarunt, euhages uero scrutantes †seruiani† et sublimia naturae pandere conabantur. Inter eos drasidae ingeniis celsiores, ut auctoritas Pythagorae decreuit, sodaliciis adstricti consortiis, quaestionibus occultarum rerum altarumque erecti sunt et despectantes humana pronuntiarunt animas inmortales. The idea of heroic deed being sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments also appears in Timag. *BNJ* 88 F 10 *ap.* Quint. *Inst.* 1.10.10.

13 Compare this with Lucan's far less accommodating construction of an oppositional relationship between the Druidic teachings and what all the other peoples believe: 1.450–53.

14 Earlier listings or descriptions of Gallic sages: Caes. *BGall.* 6.14; Cic. *Div.* 1.90; Str. 4.4.4; Mela 3.19; Luc. 1.447–56; Diog. Laert. *VP* 1.1; Hipp. Rom. *Haer.* 1.25.1–2.

15 Auson. *Prof. Burd.* 4.7–15: tu Baiocassi stirpe Druidarum satus, si fama nos fallit fidem, Beleni sacratum ducis e templo genus et inde vobis nomina: tibi Paterae: sic ministros nuncupant Apollinares mystici. fratri patrique nomen a Phoebo datum natoque de Delphis tuo.

16 Prudentius, roughly coeval with Ausonius and Ammianus, saw it worthwhile to rebut and ridicule such family traditions, using as examples a *bardus pater* or an *auus augur* (*Apoth.* 294–301, ed. Bergman).

17 For the earlier oppositional arrangement of the ritual traditions, cf. Luc. 1.452–58.

18 On this latter, see Lampinen (2014, esp. 242–45); I would still prefer a Caesarian horizon.

19 Jord. *Get.* 42–43: iam humaniores et, ut superius diximus, prudentiores effecti … ante quos etiam cantu maiorum facta modulationibus citharisque canebant. On Jordanes' conception of civilisation and barbarism, see Gillett (2009).

20 Amm. Marc. 22.16.17–18: et quamquam ueteres cum his quorum memini floruere conplures, tamen ne nunc quidem in eadem urbe doctrinae uariae silent; nam et disciplinarum magistri quodam modo spirant et nudatur ibi geometrico radio quicquid reconditum latet, nondumque apud eos penitus exaruit musica, nec harmonica conticuit, et recalet apud quosdam adhuc licet raros consideratio mundani motus et siderum, doctique sunt numeros haut pauci, super his scientiam callent quae fatorum uias ostendit. medicinae autem, cuius in hac uita nostra nec parca nec sobria desiderantur adminicula crebra, ita studia augentur in dies ut, licet opus ipsum redoleat, pro omni tamen experimento sufficiat medico ad commendandam artis auctoritatem, si Alexandriae se dixerit eruditum.

21 Cf. Nutton (1972) on the theme especially in Ammianus.

22 Grüll (2015). The edition used is Rougé, 1966.

23 *Expos. mundi* 37: Et totius orbis paene de veritate philosophiae ipsa sola abundat, in qua invenitur plurima genera philosophorum. Itaque et Aesculapius

dare ei voluit medicinae peritiam et ut habeat: in toto mundo medicos optimos omnibus hominibus illa civitas constat.

24 Dickie (2001, 114, 203–04); Luck (1985, 18, 440). Cf. Haas (1997, 151 and 286) in connection with the *Expositio*.

25 Amm. Marc. 22.16.20: hic primum homines longe ante alios ad uaria religionum incunabula, ut dicitur, peruenerunt et initia prima sacrorum caute tuentur condita scriptis arcanis.

26 *Expos. mundi* 34: tamen uiros sapientes prae omnem mundum Aegyptus abundat. in metropoli enim eius Alexandria omnem gentem inuenies philosophorum et omnem doctrinam. itaque aliquando certamine facto Aegyptiorum et Graecorum, quis eorum Musium accipiat, argutiores et perfectiores inuenti Aegyptii et uicerunt, et Musium ad eos iudicatum est. et impossibile est in quacumque re inuenire uolueris sapientem quomodo Aegyptium; et ideo omnes philosophi et qui sapientiam litterarum scientes ibi semper morati sunt, meliores fuerunt: non enim est ad eos ulla impostura, sed singuli eorum quod pollicentur certe sciunt, propter quod non omnes omnium, sed quisque sua per suam disciplinam ornans perficit negotia.

27 On Neoplatonic philosophers considered as magicians, see Hadot (2015, 9–10, 21, 87 n. 94).

28 Amm. Marc. 23.6.32–33: In his tractibus Magorum agri sunt fertiles, super quorum secta studiisque, quoniam huc incidimus, pauca conueniet expediri. magiam opinionum insignium auctor amplissimus Plato machagistiam esse uerbo mystico docet, diuinorum incorruptissimum cultum, cuius scientiae saeculis priscis multa ex Chaldaeorum arcanis Bactrianus addidit Zoroastres, deinde Hystaspes rex prudentissimus Darei pater. qui cum superioris Indiae secreta fidentius penetraret, ad nemorosam quandam uenerat solitudinem, cuius tranquillis silentiis praecelsa Brachmanorum ingenia potiuntur, eorumque monitu rationes mundani motus et siderum purosque sacrorum ritus quantum colligere potuit eruditus, ex his, quae didicit, aliqua sensibus magorum infudit, quae illi cum disciplinis praesentiendi futura per suam quisque progeniem posteris aetatibus tradunt.

29 Bard. Ed. *LLR* 42 (Drijvers 1965); cf. Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 6.10.38: καὶ ὅτι οἱ Μαγουσαῖοι οὐκ ἐν Περσίδι μόνηι τὰς θυγατέρας γαμοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν παντὶ ἔθνει, ὅπου ἂν οἰκήσωσι, τοὺς τῶν προγόνων φυλάσσοντες νόμους καὶ τῶν μυστηρίων αὐτῶν τὰς τελετάς.

30 Preserved in the second, slightly later redaction of the *Expositio* text, known as *Descriptio* (Rougé 1966, 7): *Descr. mundi* 3: Vnde ergo nos oportet incipere nisi primum a magis? Nam priores nostri qui de his rebus scribere conati sunt, aliquanta dicere potuerunt, [solus autem Moyses, diuino spiritu plenus Iudaeorum propheta, quod est certum scripsit. Post hunc] de prouinciis et temporibus sequentia dixit Berosus, Chaldaeorum philosophus, cuius litteras secuti sunt Manethon, Aegyptius propheta, et Apollonius, similiter Aegyptiorum philosophus, [Josephus quoque, uir sapiens, Iudaeorum praeceptor, qui captus a Romanis scripsit iudaïcum bellum.] Post istos uero Menander Ephesius et Herodotus ac Thucydides similia conscripserunt, sed non ualde de antiquis.

31 Amm. Marc. 23.6.34–36: ex eo per saecula multa ad praesens una eademque prosapia multitudo creata deorum cultibus dedicatur. feruntque, si iustum est credi, etiam ignem caelitus lapsum apud se sempiternis foculis custodiri, cuius

portionem exiguam ut faustam praeisse quondam Asiaticis regibus dicunt. huius originis apud ueteres numerus erat exilis eiusque ministeriis Persicae potestates in faciendis rebus diuinis sollemniter utebantur. eratque piaculum aras adire uel hostiam contrectare antequam magus conceptis precationibus libamenta diffunderet praecursoria. uerum aucti paulatim in amplitudinem gentis solidae concesserunt et nomen uillasque inhabitantes nulla murorum firmitudine conmunitas et legibus suis uti permissi religionis respectu sunt honorati. ex hoc magorum semine septem post mortem Cambysis regnum inisse Persidos antiqui memorant libri docentes eos Darei factione oppressos, imperitandi initium equino hinnitu sortiti.

32 Lozovsky (2000, 32) notes that the first section of *Cosmography* participates wholly in the tradition of the *On the Nature of Things*-treatises (like those of Isidore, Bede, or Hrabanus Maurus).

33 *Cosm.* 1: Philosophorum scidolas sagace indagatione inuestigans, mihi laborem tantundem apposui achademicus tanto studio indagare, et altiora magnatimque ac cursim autem astrologia fastigiaque excellentia <explanare>, quae necdum cerni quis possit. Illi conati sunt tam magna dixisse, quae nos metuendo ac dubitando scribere uel legere in usum coepimus <et> temeranter adtrectare. Quae Aethicus iste chosmografus tam difficilia appetisse didicerit, quaeque et Moyses et uetus historia in enarrando distulerint hic secerpens protuli. Vnde legentibus obsecro ne me temerarium aestiment, cum tanta ob aliorum audacia mea indagatione concurrisse [quae] conpererint. All translations are those of Herren (2011a).

34 *Cosm.* 17 (ed. Herren): Iam inter reliquos philosophos Aethicus chosmografus et plane et pulchre scripsit. Nos itaque in aliquas epistolas mentionem philoso-phorum et eorum laborum studiorumque fecimus: Hiarcam sablo cathedram sedentem auream ad meridiem maris oceani disputantem cum discipulis de mensa solis, astrorum siderumque differentia. Inter hos omnes Aethicum chos-mografum miror tam inaestimabile arte curiosum. Et eorum aliorumque ille reprehendit multa dixisse et multiplicasse, et ad scientiam eruditionum minima uel pauca explicasse. Reprehendit Cluontem et Argypphum philosophos, Sci-tharum astrolocus, et Mantuanum. In uanum multa edidisse reprehendit.

35 Cf. Hdt. 4.46, 76–80. Apollonius of Tyana is another possible inspiration (Shanzer 2006, 78–81), though the knowledge of both him and Anacharsis in the West at the time is difficult to demonstrate conclusively.

36 *Cosm.* 43: Reliqua uero legere uel scribere ambiguum est, a nobis uel reliquis scriptoribus historiografis cura legentium magno studio indaganda, ne scisma indagationum inducat cicatricem errorum inter <fideles> philosophorum astutia. Quicumque aut quilibet sapiens Aethicum aut Mantuanum legerit ad plenum spiritalem <se> adlidat petram, et sapientiam huius mundi animarum stultitiam autumet.

37 Herren (2011a, xxiii, 71) suggests that Cosmas Indicopleustes' flat-earth cos-mography, in particular, is targeted. On extracts of Cosmas' *Topographia Chris-tiana* in 7th-century England, Bremmer (2010, 46–47).

38 *Cosm.* 24–26: 24 Alias mundi partes mare oceanum cum discipulis suis scrupolissimo labore nauigasse oportuna tempora in insolas tam in magnas quam et in modicas a meridie ad occidentem, a Taprobane ad Sirtinicem et Calaopa usque Adriakeon, abhinc usque ultra Gades et Hercoleas columnas.

Illinc enim per annum stationem fecisse et disputasse cum Aurilio philosopho et Arbocraten, et non ualuerunt aliqua enigmata ipsius deserere. … Hispaniam appellauit, agriculturam et confersa falerna, brutis animalibus et pingues uitulos, in diliciis uberes, sapientia tenues. 25 Hiberniam properauit et in eam aliquandiu commoratus est, eorum uolumina uoluens, appellauitque eos ideomochos uel ideothistas, id est inperitos uel incultos doctores. Pro nihilo eos ducens ait: 'Mundi finibus terminare et Hiberniam peruenire onerosus est labor, sed nulla facultas.' Horrorem nimium incutit, sed utilitatem ad non profecit. Inperitos habet cultores et instructores, habet distitutos habitatores. 26 Dein insolas Brittanicas et Tylen nauigauit, quas ille 'Brutanicas' appellauit: inperitissimam gentem, horrorem nimium.

39 Isid. *Etym.* 9.2.102, though also known to Nennius (which is the less plausible source). Bede, too, may have inspired the Cosmographer in other ethnicised constructions; Rix (2015, 99).

40 Medieval examples: Weeda (2014); see also Bremmer (2010, 39–41) for a slightly earlier context.

41 E.g. the 9th-century BL Cotton Calig. A. xv. fol. 126v. Cf. Harley 3271 fol. 6v. Victoria Aegiptiorum. Invidia Iudaeorum. Sapientia Graecorum. Crudelitas Pictorum. Fortitudo Romanorum. Largitas Longobardorum. Gulla Gallorum. Superbia vel Ferocitas Francorum. Ira Britanorum. Stultitia Saxonum vel Anglorum. Libido Hibernorum. Such lists were included in miscellanistic manuscripts, too: see the example discussed in Bremmer (2010, 39–41), with an attribution to Salvian (dicta Salviani) in Voss. lat. Q 69, 7 j (37v/5b–38r/2a).

42 Hieron. *Comm. in Ep. ad Tit.* 1.709 (*PL* 26, 574C); cf. Becker (1885), no. 32.485 among Jerome's works.

43 See above. On *Cosmography* as a *Supplementband* to Josephus and the Old Testament, see Herren (2011a, xvi).

44 *Cosm.* 30: Aliarum gentium originem obmissam, quae agiografia ueteris testamenti concelebrat, idem philosophus non scribit, quia omnes scripturas et legum et liberalium <litterarum> fontem uium et matrem historiarum appellat. Legem Moysi plurimum conlaudat; Iosephum affatim ac celebre eius historiam retinet, et ea quae in eorum codicibus inuenit denuo scribere et retexere noluit. Dicit enim ob hoc uagas et stultas gentes non scripsisse, quia indigna et uana eorum facta et gesta fuerunt in diis gentium et abominationibus, idolis simulacrorum, et alia multa magicis artibus inuenta, et non scientia Dei ore prophetico elimata. Pulchre enim huic loco scripturae suae historia sancta inlustrat.

45 *Cosm.* 41a–b: Ingemuitque aedificauitque aras in monte Chelion, immolatisque hostiis Deo, depraecatusque est tota die ac nocte, dei consilium et misericordiam quaerens, inuenitque artem magnam. Praecurrente potentiam Dei, adfuit terrae motus magnus in montana illa … Tamen Dei prouidentiam huic magno principe credimus fuisse ostensam. Et non inmerito magnus dici potest qui tam utilia argumenta agrestium hominum uesaniam retrudentam adinuenit, quorum solutionem temporibus Antechristi in persecutionem gentium uel ultionem peccatorum credimus adfuturam.

46 *Cosm.* 66a–b: Philosophus itaque ordinem illarum gentium diligente indagatione et nonnulla quaedam peregrina et incredibilia in multis assertionibus titulauit, quae nobis nimis laboriosa curiositate cursim ad duo puncta posuimus, caraxaturas et uirgulas (necdum plene suorum librorum scidolas prae-

notatas a nobis redarguendo stilo), ne neuum lectoribus pateatur, suas ibidem philosopho auctoritate prolata, quia, si omnes adsertiones eius in cunctis codicibus <retineretur>, quis audeat aut retenere aut credere ista quae a nobis in momento uel passim eius litteris in breuiarium diuulgauimus? Ille ex parte gentilium litteras explanare nimio enigmate contentus, ex parte Grecas syllabas elicuit, magis immo ac magis Latina prosodia posuit, nullusque tam obscura illius ualde audeat non a toto, sed a parte retenere … Equidem in Sammonem et Mantuanum Leuciumque multa incredibilia et ualde obscura inueni, quod nequaquam cuicumque ueritatem receptam, a prudentibus indagatoribus non retenendam decerno. Tullium et Ciceronem, Platonem et Hebionem duris et acrioribus disputationibus, contumiliis conpositionum, gentilium argumentis, fidelium obstaculis dico ruinam fore multorum … A semetipsis uariis non tam disputationibus quam etiam et ipsos apicum caracteres mutauerunt.

47 *Cosm.* 72b: Haec itaque pulchre idem sapiens praefatus est. Populum obmisit et ideo non detulit mentionem, quia omnia scelera et ignominia repletus erat: homicidia, fornications, luxoria et omnia spurcitia. Necdum curationum medicamenta receperat, quia nomen Domini non fuerat inibi praedicatum et Samaritanus nondum discenderat, ut plagis uel ulceribus, uino et oleo imposito, a dialecticis uel maledictis stultissimorum et insipientium hominum curaretur.

48 On the religiously inflected ethnographies of the north in the Middle Ages, cf. Molina Moreno (2001, 52–65); Rix (2015, *passim*).

49 *Cosm.* 79: Cum in taedio recolentes magno quanta ab aeuo mala ibidem perpessa sunt, uix se philosophus gesta audita a narrantibus publicis scriptoribus in uno uolumine contenere posse cuncta mala quae illuc perpessa sunt … Quam plurimas difficillimas quaestiones et nonnulla interpretare nequiuerunt aut nescientes aut nolentes. Sed ille reprehendit ignorantes, nisi tantomodo in fisica directa discernentes.

50 Just like Isid. *Etym.* 14.4.10.

51 *Cosm.* 98: Samo insola ex ipsis in mare Aegeo, ubi Iuno nata scribitur. Ex qua orta fuit Sibilla Samia et Pithagoras Samius, a quo philosophia primum inuenta uel dilatata est, eiusque adsertiones idem Aethicus rethorico more stiloque prosodico ualde obscure digessit, et ipsum solum tantociens ex maxima parte recepit et ex aliqua parte reppulit. Hac insola in laude carminis Sibilla et Phithagora edidit inquiens, adsumpta sibimet sententia uersuum suorum prolata.

52 The Bobbio catalogue in Becker (1885, 64–73 no. 32) has neither 'Ammianus' nor 'Marcellinus'. Fulda, where Ammianus' work was preserved (McKitterick 2004, 42), belonged to the network of monasteries with insular founders, and the existence of an Ammianus archetype in *scriptura Scottica* is well recognised (McKitterick 2004, 202). For a recent contribution, see Kelly and Stover (2016). For Bobbio as an attractive option for place of composition, see Herren (2011a, lxii–lxix, lxxi–lxxiii).

53 *Cosm.* 58c does refer to a schism originating from Istria—probably the 'Three Chapters Controversy'—and takes advantage of this in order to rattle off a nice list of heresiarchs (the made-up Arculius, Anfianus and Hircanus, as well as more historically based Macedonius: Isid. *Etym.* 8.5.55). Cf. Herren (2011a, 221–24 *ad loc.*). The role of heresiography as 'Christian ethnography' is one of the main points of Berzon (2016).

54 Amm. Marc. 28.4.14, in a withering ethnography of the Roman elite.

55 Isidore's own treatment of earlier material was very creative, too: Henderson (2007, 1–9 and *passim*).
56 See Lampinen (2018, 242). Cf. Naismith (2008, 78–79) on the religious position constructed within the texts of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus for his persona as 'Virgil'.

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CHAPTER 8

Paradise Lost/Regained

Healing the Monastic Self in the Coenobium of Dorotheus of Gaza

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Abstract

This chapter deals with the construction of Christian identity in the instructions given by Dorotheus (6th century CE) to his brothers in a monastery near Gaza. It focuses on the link between good or bad health and religious selfhood in Dorotheus' monastic anthropology. In Dorotheus' view, Christian identity is beset by the experience of loss because since Adam's fall, human existence has been riddled with unnatural passions which prevent reunion with God. The only way to regain one's own nature – that is, original identity – is habituation to a truly Christian, i.e. ascetic, life. The chapter examines Dorotheus' rhetoric of healing against the backdrop of Stoic philosophy and ancient medical theorisation in order to show that he sets out a detailed programme of rebuilding Christian identity. Its ultimate goal is to restore,

through ascetic exercises, both spiritual and physical, the integrity of the human being. It is argued that the medical conceptualisation helps Dorotheus to shape the embodied ascetic self.

Religious Identity and the Human Body in Late Antiquity

A person's identity is inconceivable without the physicality of the human body. What someone believes to be or is perceived by others to be crucially depends not only on the individual's character but also on the constitution, shape and features of their body, not least on its physical integrity. People who are suffering from unbearable pains or sickness over an extended period, like the Greek orators Aelius Aristides (117–c. 180) and Libanius (314–393), will inevitably define themselves through their condition and make affliction and the symptoms of their diseases a building block of their self-image.[1] Libanius' *Autobiography*, for example, as a retrospective record of his lifelong ailments after being struck by lightning, suggests a strong link between his physical impairments and the character of his self.[2] Tormenting migraine, as a consequence of this incident, and gout were a heavy burden throughout his life (Libanius, *Orationes* 1.140‑43, 243‑47). More famously, ancient legend imagined the epic poet Homer as a blind man, whose lack of eyesight constituted his identity as a prophetic bard. And Homer himself – whatever his historical identity – in the *Odyssey* made a scar which Odysseus had received in his youth the characteristic mark by which the disguised hero was recognised by his nurse Eurycleia (Homer, *Odyssey* 19.386‑490). Although from our modern perspective we tend to think of individual identity primarily in terms of personality and character traits, we should not be surprised to find personhood necessarily embedded in a physical body and, thus, determined by its condition.

The centrality of human bodies to the constitution, conceptualisation and construction of identities has, it is true, not gone unnoticed by scholars working in the fields of Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Middle Ages. It has long been noticed that corporeal matters, regimes of body movements, diet and attempts to shape the human body played a vital role in late antique Christian asceticism

and martyr cult but also in Neoplatonic conceptions of the larger-than-life philosopher.[3] Christian preachers warned their congregations of the devilish pleasures located in their bodies, and tried to ban sumptuous dress, expensive perfumes and luxurious dining, in order to redirect the believers' senses from earthly concerns to the heavenly realm. Peter Brown has shown that the Christian body was subjected to a rigid sexual ethic and that bodily discipline in ancient Christianity served to define both the human person and society (Brown 1988). At the same time, male and female ascetics, through extreme mortification of their bodies, heroic disregard for physical needs and unprecedented endurance of pain, aroused the admiration of countless theologians and laypeople, so that even Roman aristocrats played with the idea of following these saintly men and women to the inhospitable desert. Generally speaking, the human body in late antique thinking became a problematic, or at least an ambivalent, issue because theologians, but also philosophers, associated it with matter, corruption and desires – that is, hardly with what they aspired to achieve. Thinkers of both Christian religion and Neoplatonic denomination considered the material and corruptible body, as opposed to the immaterial soul, an obstacle to the return to one's true self and the ascent to the divine.[4] Following a dualistic model, the Neoplatonists expected that at death the soul would free itself from matter, which was considered evil. Such views suggested that personhood, or to put it differently, the idea of the self, its nature and its fate, was inextricably, and problematically, intertwined with the question of the physical body, to which the self was joined. The body was a site of social and symbolic meaning, which according to Christian ethics had to be reflected in specific 'technologies of the self', to borrow Michel Foucault's expression – above all in practices of sexual asceticism (see e.g. Foucault 1988).

What is rarely appreciated by modern scholars, however, is the intricate relationship between, on the one hand, good and ill health and, on the other, the conception of religious identity. One reason is that studies in Jewish, Christian, heretical and pagan identities have focused on the building of communities, the demarcation of boundaries, the flexibility of religious affiliations and conflicts between groups, while theological and philosophical theorisation of the self has rarely been brought together with these issues.[5] Therefore, the following discussion is intended to complement research on the construction, negotiation and representation of collective religious identities with an analy-

sis of the idea of the religious self as seen within a specific Christian community. It will investigate a major strand in late antique Christian thinking on human identity, exemplified by Dorotheus of Gaza's medical conceptualisation of personhood.

Such an approach is timely because recent research has increasingly become aware of the wide-ranging engagement of ancient Christianity with medical thinking and practice. It has been maintained for some time that an emphasis on healing, the medicine of soul and body, was a key aspect of early Christianity, and Christianity has been seen as 'a healing religion *par excellence*'.[6] Over a hundred years ago, Adolf von Harnack considered early Christianity 'a religion for the sick' and claimed that it assumed that no one was in normal health, but that men were always in a state of disability (Harnack 1904, 132). Monographs and articles have dealt with the image, prominent among the Church Fathers, of Christ as physician and have also illuminated the idea of the history of salvation as a healing process.[7] Further studies have advanced our understanding of early Christian approaches to healthcare and, more recently, shown that ideas of medico-philosophical therapy in preaching were drinking from the sources of Galen and his colleagues.[8] Perhaps most prominently, the imagery of disease and madness was one of the powerful missiles fired in apologetic battles at pagan enemies.[9] In this chapter I intend to make a contribution to this burgeoning field of research by bringing together the two elements of religious self-definition and medical thinking. More precisely, I shall argue that in Eastern monasticism the medical model of health and disease was employed to convey the idea of a precarious self and to implement a programme of techniques of the self with the aim of reconstructing Christian identity. An excellent starting point for such an analysis is provided by the life and works of the 6th-century abbot Dorotheus of Gaza.[10]

Dorotheus of Gaza and Medical Discourse

If any Christian author was in a position to infuse Christianity with medical learning, it was arguably Dorotheus. As a young man from a family of the upper class, he attended secular schools where he read classical literature and studied rhetoric, and, we can infer, also supplemented his learning with some studies in medical writings.[11] In this respect, Dorotheus followed a common trend of his days, as other

men of intellectual ambitions, such as Aeneas of Gaza and Gessius, also synthesised sophistic training with a theoretical interest in medicine.[12] When he later, as a novice, joined the monastery of Seridus in the vicinity of Gaza he was granted permission to keep some books from his personal library, among them a shelf of medical works (Barsanuphius and John, *Responsiones* 318, 319, 326, 327). These would prove extremely valuable when he was assigned the task of running the infirmary of the coenobitic community.[13] Thanks to the letters of the so-called 'Old Men', Barsanuphius (d. c. 545) and John, who were the spiritual authorities in Seridus' coenobium, we are fairly well informed about Dorotheus' interest in healthcare and his responsibilities in the monastic infirmary.[14] There he provided care and treatment to those afflicted by maladies and wounds, presumably not only brothers but also laypeople who sought help from the monks.[15] After he founded his own monastic settlement nearby, Dorotheus continued to show theoretical and practical interest in healing and healthcare; his own writings and also the anonymous *Life of Dositheus*, his favourite disciple, reflect the same pursuits, and by their abundant references to illness, wounds and healing they testify to Dorotheus' great expertise in the discipline.[16] As a matter of fact, medical treatment of Dositheus' body is the culmination of the *Life*, although sadly in his case Dorotheus' prescription of a diet failed and his protégé died from an incurable sickness – a poignant reminder of the limitations of human medical knowledge. No wonder, then, that the unnamed introductory letter to his discourses likens Dorotheus to an accomplished doctor bringing his expertise to bear on the relief of everyone who was suffering.[17]

That the paradigm of healing greatly informed the conception of Christian salvation in both Seridus' and Dorotheus' own coenobium has recently been recognised by Kyle Schenkewitz. He points out that Dorotheus' conception of the monastic life as the acquisition of virtue is expressed through the language of health and healing, and that in this context he attributed to the human body a positive role.[18] However, Schenkewitz's interest is mainly in situating Dorotheus' language of healing in the discourse of Gazan monasticism and in the central role of virtue in his spiritual teaching. Another fact relevant to our topic is that sickness, as both a concept and a medical fact, played a prominent role in the conceptualisation of the monastic life. As Andrew Crislip has argued, ascetic theory valued disease as a test sent by the devil and, therefore, a positive means of ascetic improvement.

Monks often refused treatment for their ailments because mortification of the physical body was paramount to asceticism.[19] Building on these findings, the following discussion will shed fresh light on Dorotheus' understanding of human, or rather ascetic, identity through, as it were, the lens of a physician.

To begin with, the transmitted 17 discourses and 16 letters are, as mentioned, interlaced with frequent references to medical theories, bodily ailments, pains and the preparation of drugs. In one of the discourses that he addressed to the brothers of his monastery, for example, Dorotheus adduces the application of a plaster to a wound and the following development of a scar to illustrate the sensitivity of the soul to emotional stimuli from outside. Just as a healed-up wound may easily bleed again if it is only lightly hit, remembrance of wrongs, even if it has been calmed down, might be inflamed again by a slight blow (*Doctrinae* 8.94). On another occasion, he mentions the futility of drugs once they are past their best-before date or if the doctor is lacking in expertise. In order to throw into high relief the specific nature of sins, as a contrast Dorotheus draws in bodily weaknesses, for which he identifies three causes, saying 'either the medicines are old and do not work, or the doctor is inexperienced and applies one drug after another, or the patient is undisciplined and does not keep to what the doctor orders'.[20] These medical analogies indicate that Dorotheus used health and disease in his teachings as useful analytical tools to diagnose the monks' psychic and emotional states.

As Dorotheus' discourses very frequently draw on everyday life and its practices, the examples of wounds, diseases and healing are taken from the monks' daily experience so that the teaching on the human soul and its qualities is easier to comprehend. Popular knowledge about health and disease was, however, not the only reservoir of medical discourse available to Dorotheus. Given that he was thoroughly familiar with scripture and had studied the writings of, among others, Evagrius Ponticus (c. 345–399), Basil of Caesarea (329/330–379), Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330–390) and John Chrysostom (c. 349–407), it is hardly surprising that he makes use of biblical imagery of healing and employs medical references that already occur in earlier Christian authors.[21] In his first programmatic lecture, on renunciation, Dorotheus in a brief outline of the history of salvation, discussing evil and sin, quotes from Jeremiah the saying 'we would heal Babylon, but she would not be healed' (Jeremiah 2:30). A couple of lines later, following

Gregory of Nazianzus, he explains that God sent his son to earth in order to remedy our sins, 'so that he healed like by like, soul by soul, flesh by flesh' (*Doctrinae* 1.3–4; see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 45.9 (PG 36.633)). Evidently, Dorotheus recognised, as had the authors of the biblical books and the Fathers, the potential of medical terminology and categories to illuminate abstract ideas, such as the passions and salvation, that were not easily accessible to the human mind.

It is apparent that Dorotheus' application of medical analogies and imagery was not based exclusively on reading. Being a shrewd practitioner himself, he sometimes deemed it appropriate to let his brothers glimpse his medical experience and profound knowledge. Familiarity with the Hippocratic humoral theory and that of human tempers may have been widespread at least among educated men. But occasionally, Dorotheus' discussion goes beyond common knowledge, for instance when, in a discourse on fasting, he not only expounds in detail the symptoms of gluttony and even differentiates between two types, using technical terminology, but cites 'secular authors' to back up his theory with scientific authorities (*Doctrinae* 15.161–62 (SC 92.450)):

Μαργαίνειν λέγεται παρὰ τοῖς ἔξω τὸ μαίνεσθαι, καὶ μάργος λέγεται ὁ μαινόμενος. Ὅταν μὲν οὖν γίνεται ἡ νόσος ἐκείνη καὶ ἡ μανία τινὶ περὶ τὸ πληροῦσθαι τὴν γαστέρα, τότε λέγεται γαστριμαργία παρὰ τὸ μαργαίνειν, ὅ ἐστι μαίνεσθαι, τὴν γαστέρα. Ὅταν δὲ γένηται περὶ μόνην τὴν ἡδονὴν τοῦ λαιμοῦ, καλεῖται λαιμαργία παρὰ τὸ μαργαίνειν τὸν λαιμόν. Ταῦτα οὖν χρὴ φεύγειν μετὰ πάσης νήψεως τὸν θέλοντα καθαρθῆναι ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἑαυτοῦ. Οὐκ εἰσὶ γὰρ κατὰ χρείαν τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλὰ κατὰ πάθος· καὶ ἐὰν ἀνάσχηται αὐτῶν, γίνονται αὐτῷ εἰς ἁμαρτίαν.

Margainein, according to the profane authors, means to rage furiously, and *margos* is the name given to the person who is mad. When this disease or mania of filling the belly comes upon a person, it is called *gastrimargia*, because of the stomach's raging, that is, being mad. When, however, it is for the pleasure of the palate alone, then it is called *laimargia*, because of the madness of the palate. These conditions must be avoided with greatest vigilance by the man who wants to be purified from his sins. They do not pertain to the needs of the body, but to passion; and if one tolerates them, they become sin.

What this passage suggests is that in his lectures on the ascetic core virtues Dorotheus, apart from imparting spiritual knowledge, aims to raise his brothers' awareness of the vices and virtues being situated in the human body, their embodiment. Instead of a neat separation of body and soul, there is an interconnectedness between the two, with passions being translated into practices of the body.[22] This idea is also resumed at the end of the discussion, when Dorotheus insists that the abstention from sin must be undertaken in the same way as the strict dietary regime.[23] Since desires and sins are encapsulated, and continuously reinforced, by bodily routines, the person who wants to become a virtuous Christian, needs not only to control their mind but also to extend this strict regime to the tongue, the eyes, the limbs and so forth. Dorotheus' numerous references to disease and healing indicate that in order to cultivate the ascetic lifestyle it is essential to consider humans as entities comprised of both body and soul. Without understanding of how the human body works one cannot hope to protect the soul's health.

We can also infer the extent to which the medical point of view informed Dorotheus' instruction in the monastery from a passage which programmatically sets out his idea of the monastic community. There he draws on the notion of the human organism, so frequently used by ancient philosophy and literature as a suitable image for the connectivity of interrelated elements, for instance in political states (see Lüdemann 2007, 168–82). Showing love and supporting one another, Dorotheus explains through an analogy, is like taking care of one's own limbs: if someone sustains a wound to one of their body parts, they will not despise it or cut off the infected part but clean and purge it and apply a dressing. As this person does everything to return to health, so the monastics are to consider and do everything they can in order to help themselves and their neighbours. The reason is that, according to the apostle, we all are as one body: if one part is suffering, all the other parts suffer likewise (cf. Romans 12:5 and I Corinthians 12:26). In similar vein, the coenobium is conceived as a human body, with the supervisors being the head and the other members matching the single body organs. As encapsulated in the traditional metaphor of the human organism, the interdependent limbs guarantee the proper functioning and health of the whole.[24]

Passions and the Monastic Life

It has already become clear from the examples quoted above that Dorotheus' discourses have a practical focus and deal mainly with Christian ethics, in particular with the eradication of passions and the cultivation of ascetic virtues. The topics on which he gave 'lectures' to the members of his community included humility, fear of God and the right way to travel the road of God.[25] In all his talks, Dorotheus emphasises the great harm done to the human soul by passions once they have evolved into firm dispositions. Negative emotions such as anger, envy and arrogance are according to him the most serious dangers to a virtuous Christian life. Humans are always engulfed by temptations and emotional stimuli that provoke passionate responses, so that the affected person is driven out of the desired state of mental tranquillity (see, for example, *Doctrinae* 10.106, 108, 112, 11.122; cf. Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky 2006, 142–43). What makes the passions so treacherous is their almost imperceptible and gradual invasion. They start as a small spine that pierces the soul but if they occur repeatedly, they take root there and become a disposition. So the first onset of a psychic affect, for instance the initial flare-up of anger, might not be taken seriously enough because it seems to abate very quickly. However, as Dorotheus explains, with time, as the stimuli and responses accumulate, the person develops a stable *hexis* for the particular passion, like irascibility, until it has become a fixed feature of the soul. It is a process of gradual habituation leading to a sinful disposition, which Dorotheus on one occasion illustrates with a kleptomaniac brother whom he tried to dissuade from his vice but who was totally dominated by his obsessive desire for others' possessions.[26] Someone with a disposition for anger, envy, greed and other passions, this episode shows, is enslaved to sin and needs the support of spiritual mentors to get away from it. With his notion of *hexis*, the firm psychic state or condition, Dorotheus stands evidently in the tradition of classical philosophical ethics, in particular of the Peripatetics, according to whom ethical virtue is a *hexis*, a tendency or disposition, induced by habits, to have appropriate feelings, or negatively, the defective states of character are *hexeis* – that is, the tendency to have inappropriate feelings.[27]

Life in the monastery is, therefore, a constant uphill struggle that requires hard work and unceasing vigilance. In his talk about vigilance Dorotheus explains that there are three possible states in a human

being: either one gives in to passions, or one restrains them, or one eradicates them. With the example of vainglory, which befalls the denizens of a coenobium as much as people in the secular world, he makes it clear that everyone, as a first step towards virtue, needs to examine themself and become clear where they stand in terms of these three states. In much detail, the talk discusses how a brother might deal with his love of reputation and with verbal abuse by others, and what the effects on the soul will look like. Having acknowledged one's own state of mind, it is necessary to strive, with God's help, for the complete uprooting of the passions, or in any event for curbing them lest they translate into sinful action (10.108–12).

The fight against the tyranny of sin can succeed only if the brothers make every effort to cultivate Christian virtues as powerful antidotes against the passions. Drawing on the Aristotelian theory of virtue as a middle between lack and excess, Dorotheus instructs his brothers that they must, like the saints before them, avoid negligence and instead train themselves night and day to acquire virtue so as not to deviate from the royal road leading to the saintly life (*Doctrinae* 10.106–07; cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 2.2, 1104a; 2.6–7, 1107a–b). Pride of place among the virtues that need to be trained is given in Dorotheus' monastery to obedience. Already Barsanuphius and John in Seridus' community had put a high premium on cutting off one's own will and observing strict obedience as a pathway to the truly ascetic life.[28] In this respect Dorotheus followed his masters as he, too, made humility and obedience the bedrock of his ascetic ideology (esp. *Doctrinae* 2). Only if the monk learns to banish his own will and always to follow the advice and precepts of the elders will he finally be able to shrug off his sinful thoughts and inclinations. This is neatly encapsulated, also with reference to illness, in the *Life of Dositheus*, when Dositheus, even in the grip of a fatal disease, refuses a treatment known to him because Abba Dorotheus had not thought of it (*Life of Dositheus* 9).

Although Dorotheus is not ashamed to employ the classical theory of virtue as a middle, his ethics is, of course, firmly embedded in the framework of Christian ethics.[29] This becomes particularly clear in his first discourse, on renunciation, which places his anthropology in the wider context of the history of salvation. Any Christian ethical thinker had to tackle the thorny question of how evil came into the world, since the ever-gracious God by no means created it alongside the good. To outline his view of the origin of vice and evil, Dorotheus reminds

his brothers of Adam's creation and fall, and the subsequent attempts of God to bring humankind back to the path of salvation (*Doctrinae* 1.1‑9; cf. Pauli 1998, 63–66; Schenkewitz 2016, 64–66). One striking feature of his account is the emphasis on nature: in paradise, he tells his brothers, man lived according to nature, in command of all his senses and in possession of every virtue. In other words, man in his original state demonstrated that he was created in the image of the creator. It was only when the first humans ignored God's order not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and subsequently were banned from paradise, that they lost the innocence and integrity given to them by God. The consequences were devastating, as Dorotheus makes clear (*Doctrinae* 1.1 (SC 92.146‑48)):

Ὅτε δὲ παρέβη τὴν ἐντολὴν καὶ ἔφαγεν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου οὗ ἐνετείλατο αὐτῷ ὁ Θεὸς μὴ φαγεῖν ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ, τότε ἐξεβλήθη τοῦ παραδείσου· ἐξέ‑ πεσε γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ ἦν ἐν τῷ παρὰ φύσιν, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἐν τῇ φιλοδοξίᾳ καὶ φιληδονίᾳ τοῦ βίου τούτου καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πάθεσι, κατακυριευόμενος ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν· κατεδούλωσε γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἑαυτὸν διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως.

When he disobeyed the command and ate of the tree that God com- manded him not to eat of, he was thrown out of paradise. He fell from a state *in accord with his nature* and was in a state *contrary to nature*, i.e. in sin, ambition, a love of the pleasures of this life and the other passions; and he was mastered by them and became a slave to them through his transgression.

However, all was not lost because God, in the greatness of his pity, gave the commandments as a means of return to the paradisiacal condition. At last, in his love for humankind God sent his only begotten Son to renew man in his nature and restore the depraved senses to what they had been in the beginning (1.4).

Considering the prominence of φύσις, 'nature', in Dorotheus' account, it is safe to say that he conceptualises human existence in the Garden of Eden and the following downfall in terms of identity.[30] From the beginning of his existence, man is defined by his being an image of God – that is, totally good, virtuous and equipped with unimpaired senses.[31] This is what makes man, gives him his dignity and distin- guishes his being from that of other living creatures. Sin, by contrast,

is a product of a depraved nature.[32] Elsewhere, Dorotheus expounds in more detail that man is created the image of God (κατ' εἰκόνα) insofar as his soul is incorruptible and self-determining, while he is made God's likeness (καθ' ὁμοίωσιν) insofar as he practises virtue.[33] Therefore, the life in sin is, as Dorotheus points out, contrary to nature and, thus, a violation of man's original identity. This discussion indicates that Dorotheus considers Christian identity primarily as moral nature or man's capacity to act morally.

Although man, through original sin, has not forfeited his being the image of the creator, he has lost his likeness to God in spirit because he has acted in contravention of his created nature. To put it differently, we may say that the sinful man is in a state of alienation, virtually having a 'dissociated self', as he has abandoned his true being. Everything that has happened since the ban from paradise is considered a step towards the return to the natural state of man as the *imago Dei* and unity with God (*Doctrinae* 1.9‒10). Consequently, the entire programme of acquisition of, and habituation in, ascetic virtues which unfolds in Dorotheus' lectures should be seen as an attempt to complete this return to human identity, with the eyes fixed on the saints and the Fathers, and under the guidance of the elders (see e.g. *Doctrinae* 1.10‒14, 16.171). The Christian ascetic is to reunite as far as possible his empirical existence in this world with his original nature. Two features of Dorotheus' conception of personhood merit attention. First, identity is a relational concept, insofar as man is defined through his likeness to God; this quality renders identity an obligation, an ideal to be aspired to, rather than a stable possession. Second, and following from this fact, human identity is inherently precarious and processual because it is, on the one hand, intertwined with the original sin and, on the other, a quality that constantly needs to be sought in a struggle against human weakness.

Healing the Monastic Self

This is the point where the discourse of healing comes into the game. We have already mentioned that in his opening discourse, Dorotheus adopts the traditional image of Christ as a healer.[34] As Gregory of Nazianzus, whom he quotes, said, the Saviour came to humankind in order to heal like by like, both the soul and the flesh. The reason that Dorotheus draws on references to healing in the Bible and the Fathers

is his conception of the passions. Passions, according to him, start as small, barely noticeable symptoms, then gain momentum, and finally come to be entrenched so firmly that the soul is thrown into fetters by them. In this regard, they closely resemble diseases. Dorotheus details this idea in *Discourse* 11, which he begins with an account of how he recently found a brother sick with a fever: at first it is just a minute, circumscribed irregularity which the affected person regards as nothing, but then it has room to grow strong, while the person ignores the physical signs, until the ailing body requires hard work and time to regain its health. The same applies to the soul once even a small sin has been committed. How much time and toil does it take, Dorotheus exclaims, to correct oneself!

Οὕτως ἐστὶ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ψυχῆς· μικρὸν ἁμαρτάνει τις, καὶ ποιεῖ πόσον χρόνον στάζων τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ, πρὶν διορθώσηται ἑαυτόν. Καὶ ἐπὶ μὲν τῆς σωματικῆς ἀσθενείας εὑρίσκομεν διαφόρους αἰτίας, ἢ ὅτι τὰ φάρμακα παλαιὰ ὄντα οὐκ ἐνεργοῦσιν, ἢ ὅτι ὁ ἰατρὸς ἄπειρός ἐστι καὶ ἄλλο ἀντ᾽ ἄλλου φάρμακον παρέχει, ἢ ὅτι ὁ ἄρρωστος ἀτακτεῖ καὶ οὐ φυλάττει ἃ ἐπιτάσσεται παρὰ τοῦ ἰατροῦ. Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς οὐχ οὕτως· οὐ γὰρ δυνάμεθα εἰπεῖν ὅτι ὁ ἰατρὸς ἄπειρος ὢν οὐκ ἔδωκεν ἁρμόδια τὰ φάρμακα. Ὁ Χριστὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ἰατρὸς τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν, καὶ πάντα γινώσκει καὶ ἁρμόδιον ἑκάστῳ πάθει παρέχει τὸ φάρμακον· οἷόν τι λέγω· Τῇ κενοδοξίᾳ τὰς περὶ ταπεινοφροσύνης ἐντολάς, τῇ φιληδονίᾳ τὰς περὶ ἐγκρατείας, τῇ φιλαργυρίᾳ τὰς περὶ ἐλεημοσύνης, καὶ ἅπαξ ἁπλῶς ἕκαστον πάθος ἔχει φάρμακον τὴν ἁρμόζουσαν αὐτῷ ἐντολήν· ὥστε ὁ ἰατρὸς οὐκ ἔστιν ἄπειρος.

So it is with the soul: someone commits a little sin and what a long time he goes on dripping blood before he corrects himself! For bodily weakness we find there are different causes: either the medicines are old and do not work, or the doctor is inexperienced and applies one drug after another, or the patient is undisciplined and does not keep to what the doctor orders. With the soul it is not so; for we cannot say that the doctor is inexperienced and has not given the appropriate medicine. Christ is the doctor of our souls; he knows everything and provides the fitting drug for every illness. For example: for vainglory, the commandments about humility; for love of pleasure, those about temperance; for avarice, those about almsgiving. In short, each disease has a fitting com-

mandment as remedy, so that the doctor is not inexperienced. (*Doctrinae* 11.113 (SC 92.356–58))

Here and elsewhere, Dorotheus spells out the idea that passions are diseases of the human soul. Just as according to the medical profession a disease is a disorder and an unnatural condition of the body, so negative emotions ruin the natural order and healthy condition of the soul (10.106). When we are tormented by psychic affects, our soul, like an affected body, feels pain inflicted by the passions, which are burning it up.[35] The interpretative framework for an accurate understanding of the nature of the passions is provided by the medical paradigm (*Doctrinae* 11.122 (SC 92.374)):

> Ὅτι ἡ μὲν ἀρετὴ φυσική ἐστι καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστιν. Ἀνεξάλειπτα γὰρ τὰ σπέρματα τῆς ἀρετῆς. Εἶπον οὖν ὅτι ὅσον ἐνεργοῦμεν τὰ καλά, ἐν ἕξει τῆς ἀρετῆς γινόμεθα, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστι τὴν ἰδίαν ἕξιν ἀναλαμβάνομεν, εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν ὑγείαν ἐπανερχόμεθα, ὥσπερ ἀπὸ ὀφθαλμίας ἐπὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον φῶς, ἢ ἀπὸ ἄλλης οἵας δήποτε ἀρρωστίας ἐπὶ τὴν ἰδίαν καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ὑγείαν. Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς κακίας, οὐχ οὕτως· ἀλλὰ ξένην τινὰ καὶ παρὰ φύσιν λαμβάνομεν ἕξιν διὰ τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ κακοῦ· οἱονεί, ἐν ἕξει λοιμώδους τινὸς ἀρρωστίας γινόμεθα, ἵνα μήτε δυνάμεθα ἔτι ὑγιᾶναι ἄνευ πολλῆς βοηθείας καὶ πολλῶν εὐχῶν καὶ πολλῶν δακρύων δυναμένων κινῆσαι ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς τοὺς οἰκτιρμοὺς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς σωματικοῖς εὑρίσκομεν.

> For virtue belongs to nature and is within us; the seeds of virtue are ineradicable. I said, therefore, that insofar as we carry out what is good, we acquire a habit of virtue – that is, we take up a state proper to us, we return to a state of health which belongs to us, as from an eye disease we return to our natural eyesight, or from any other state of weakness, we return to the natural state of health which belongs to us. In the case of vice, it is not so; by doing what is evil, we acquire a habit which is foreign to us and contrary to nature. We put ourselves, as it were, into a permanent state of pestilential sickness, so that we can no longer be healed without much help, many prayers and many tears, which have the power to attract Christ's compassion to us. We find the same sort of thing in bodily sickness.

The notions of health and disease here help Dorotheus to diagnose the symptoms of virtue and vice. As the expressions 'belongs to us', 'natural', and the opposites 'foreign' and 'contrary to nature' suggest, he regards the habituation of virtuous and sinful dispositions as a process of regaining one's original state or natural identity and, conversely, dissociating oneself from one's true being. Moreover, the references to the repeated enactment of evil (ἐνέργεια) and the medical analogies demonstrate that from Dorotheus' therapeutic viewpoint, moral identity cannot be located simply in the human soul but rather, through practices, extends through the human being as a continuum of body and soul. Elsewhere, Dorotheus suggests that ascetic virtue is engendered and cultivated by veritable physical labour, which again underlines the inextricability of *sōma* and *psyche*.[36] This view is based on the idea that it is through the body that the soul can escape the passions, because the body is a place where the soul can be nurtured and receives the solidarity of others in the struggle against the passions. When, by contrast, the soul departs from the body and is left alone with the passions, it is always consumed by them so that it can no longer think of God (*Doctrinae* 12.126; cf. Evagrius Ponticus, *Kephalaia Gnostica* 4.82 (PO 28.1, 172); see Schenkewitz 2016, 130).

His views on bodily labours as a catalyst for ascetic virtues, in particular humility, raise a more general question, namely that of how bodily practices and embodied habits can affect the soul. Here again it is illuminating to consider the medical background to Dorotheus' theory (see Champion 2019). Galen emphasised that the mortal part of the soul was the 'blend of the body'[37] and, following Plato, held the view that, alongside studies, practices of the body could engender psychic virtues and vices (Galen, *Quod animi mores* 71.11–73.20; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 87b3–6; see Sorabji 2000, 253–60). According to him, the consumption of food and wine, gymnastic exercises, training in music, and further practices were instrumental in removing vice and generating virtue. In similar vein, Dorotheus assumes that the soul is sympathetically affected in tandem with the body. He also seems to deliberately use medical terms, 'to be affected sympathetically' and 'to be in the same condition' (συμπάσχει καὶ συνδιατίθεται), to explain how physical labour operates in generating the psychic disposition of humility. It therefore seems plausible that he borrowed from medical theory in order to formulate his views on the fundamental mind–body unity as the foundation of his anthropology.[38]

The idea of *pathē* as diseases of the soul was widespread in ancient philosophy and had also been adopted by the Stoics, for instance by Chrysippus.[39] Furthermore, Christian authors, among them Clement of Alexandria and the Cappadocians, who were imbued with philosophical and medical learning, integrated this idea in their theory of the passions.[40] While Dorotheus could have learned the conception of passion as disease also from earlier Christian writers who drew on Stoic thinking, we can surmise that he likewise came across such ideas as a young student when he attended the classes of the grammarian and the sophist. However, the link between ethics and medicine in Dorotheus' anthropology is not limited to the medical conceptualisation of the passions. More than that, passions are likely to have a direct impact on the human body. In *Discourse* 1, Dorotheus directs his audience's attention to the distinction between passions and sins: passions are defined as emotional impulses like anger, vainglory, hatred and bad desire – in general, as we just have seen, as disorder of the soul. Sins, by contrast, are seen as the passions put into practice – that is, when a person acts and brings into corporeal reality the works that have been suggested by the passions.[41] Thus, Dorotheus argues that sins are the corporeal enactments (ἐνέργειαι) of the passions, the bodily manifestations, which, as mentioned above, through repetition generate a firm disposition in the soul (see above, p. 192). There is, then, a kind of soul–body continuum, with the body being used as an instrument to gratify the bad desires. This thinking also might have led Dorotheus to adopt the analogy of diseases, because in committing a sinful deed, a human being performs practices of the body that are clearly against nature, in the same way that an illness indicates a disorder of the natural state.

Against the backdrop of the medical understanding of the passions, it is only natural that Dorotheus conceives of the return to the paradisiacal state too in terms of the healing profession. As we can infer from the frequent references to doctors and medication, the monk on whom a wound is inflicted by the passions cannot be cured by himself alone but is in need of an expert in healing. The decisive factor in the healing process was that God sent his only begotten Son as a doctor. Christ became human and renewed us in our nature, freeing us from the tyranny of sin. Yet, being fully aware of our weakness and anticipating that even after baptism we are prone to sinful actions, God gave the commandments in order to purge us of sins and also of the passions.

Dorotheus makes clear that the application of the commandments as drugs also requires insight on the patient's part. God, he says, tells us why we despise and disobey his commandments and, thus, 'provides the medicine for this, so that we are able to obey and be saved'.[42]

The most powerful antidote against the passions, and that which is the bedrock of Dorotheus' asceticism, is the virtue of humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη). Since humanity has fallen because of arrogance and self-confidence, it is possible to be cured only through the opposite: strict humility (1.7). We can hardly fail to notice that Dorotheus owed the idea of healing through opposites to Hippocratic medicine, which had posited the principle *contraria contrariis curantur*.[43] Although the programme of a return to one's natural condition through the use of medicine is fundamental to Dorotheus' ethics in general, it is particularly aligned with his vision of the monastic life. A couple of paragraphs after his outline of the commandments' cure, he not only specifically addresses the passions and sins to be found among coenobitic monks but holds up as role models the saints Antony and Pachomius, as well as other Fathers who cut off their passions and purified their souls. Withdrawing from the world, they found the virtuous life in a monastic existence (1.11). Dorotheus then proceeds to expound in much detail how the archetypal anchorites made God's commandments the central pillar of their unique lifestyle and highlights the vital role played in the ascetic programme by self-mortification. The saintly men's life is again presented as a healing process, as they, through strict obedience to the commandments, purified the soul and also the mind, so that it regained the power of sight and returned to its natural condition (cf. *Doctrinae* 11.122). Finally, this model is applied to Dorotheus' own community, mainly in an illuminating allegorical interpretation of the monks' habit, which explains the symbolic meaning of its sleeves, belt and other features. The bottom line of his argument is that the healing process that culminates in tranquillity and a dispassionate condition can be achieved only through complete abnegation of one's own will, that is, through utter humility.[44]

To engender the ascetic virtues, Dorotheus devises a number of therapeutic strategies, spiritual exercises that were the mainstay of the monastic life in general.[45] Similarly to classical philosophers, he instructs his brothers in continuous techniques of the self, including meditation, examination of one's conscience and writing as a therapeutic strategy.[46] The aim was to heighten attention to the self and, thereby,

make progress in spiritual perfection, and attain peace of mind. At first glance, it seems that Dorotheus' medico-philosophical therapy of the soul assigns to suffering and malady a mainly negative value. Diseases of the soul appear as unnatural disorders that need to be remedied. And yet there are some aspects of illness and pain that do have their merits. The medical treatment of diseases of the soul, it is true, consists for the most part in spiritual exercises with the main goal of purification, which are fleshed out in the course of Dorotheus' talks. Daily scrutiny of the conscience, meditation on scripture, and the Sayings of the Fathers, as well as confession of one's failures before an elder, all contribute to making progress on the path to one's natural identity. But it is likewise true that there is a place for toil and suffering too. Time and again, the discourses stress that the return to virtue is, of course, not free but requires hard work and constant effort, even bodily labour.

Particularly illuminating is a passage from the lecture on humility in which Dorotheus discusses one of the Sayings of the Fathers (*Doctrinae* 2.38–39; see Apophthegmata Patrum, *Anon.* 323). As the Desert Father had claimed that the path to humility could be completed only through bodily toil, the lecture addresses the question of how physical labour can lead to, or even generate, humility. When the human soul contravened God's commandments, Dorotheus argues, it fell in love with corporeal matters and thus became one with the body and totally flesh. As a result, the miserable soul was suffering in tandem with the body. This can be seen in the fact that the soul of a healthy person is in a different condition to that of a sick person. Consequently, at the same time that the body is humiliated by physical labour, the soul is humiliated too.

It is, Dorotheus points out on another occasion, a painful struggle to uproot bad habits and purify oneself from the passions (12.131–32). More than that, he acknowledges that even pain and sickness can have positive effects. When he was suffering from rheumatism in his foot, he recognised that nothing in human life occurred without God because God knew best what was good and beneficial. Dorotheus' rheumatism made him wonder about its cause and thus made him cognisant of his own possible failures (12.124). What is more important than the diagnosis of the corporeal malady is the knowledge that it is good for the soul. In a similar vein, he cites St Paul and the Prophets to make the point that even evil happens according to God's plan. What Amos is saying is:

Ὀὐκ ἔστι κακία ἐν πόλει, ἣν Κύριος οὐκ ἐποίησεν· Κακίαν λέγει πάντα
τὰ κακωτικά, οἱονεὶ τὰ θλιβερὰ τὰ γινόμενα πρὸς παίδευσιν ἡμῶν διὰ
τὴν κακίαν ἡμῶν, ἅτινά ἐστι λιμός, λοιμός, ἀβροχία, νόσοι, πόλεμοι.
Ταῦτα οὐ γίνονται κατ᾽ εὐδοκίαν Θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συγχώρησιν, συγχω-
ροῦντος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπενεχθῆναι αὐτὰ ἡμῖν πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον.

'There is no evil in the city which the Lord did not make' [Amos 3:6]. He
speaks of evil here in the sense of everything noxious and the troubles
that are brought upon us for our correction because of the evil we do,
such evils as famine, plague, droughts, diseases and wars. All this hap-
pens to us not according to God's pleasure but by his permission; God
permits them to come upon us for our profit. (*Doctrinae* 14.155 (SC
92.434‑36))

Illness and pain, though not an end in themselves, serve a pedagogic
function because they urge us to remedy our souls, to seek the path
of virtue.[47] Diseases, as well as other evil experiences, occur by God's
permission for the sake of correction of the evil that human beings
do. Nonetheless, a sick person deserves our compassion, as Dorotheus
adds.[48] A similar point is made very vividly in the *Life of Dositheus*,
where the protagonist attains true ascetic status only in his terminal
illness, as though bodily suffering, together with strict obedience, were
the crown of Christian asceticism (*Life of Dositheus* 9‑11). Intriguingly,
pain and sickness appear as a part, almost the core, of ascetic identity.
This attitude towards illness is characteristic of the monastic move-
ment, in which disease was seen as a positive means of ascetic improve-
ment (Crislip 2005, 92–99; Ferngren 2009, 77). Basil of Caesarea, for
example, maintained that diseases served a vital function in Christians'
lives because they indicated that the sinful soul was in need of a cure.
When a person fell ill, this could be punishment for sin, but it could
also be a means of correction.[49] More generally and outside a monastic
context, Greek and Latin Church Fathers often valued sickness as a
pedagogic instrument used by God to prevent people from commit-
ting sin (see Amundsen 1996, 137–39; Ferngren 2006, 999–1000). The
ambivalence regarding ill health and suffering emerging from Doro-
theus' discourses highlights again that the identity of man as image
of God, the truly virtuous life, are not things that can simply be taken
for granted, nor is bodily health. In the same way that human bodies
are regularly afflicted by maladies and ailments, the soul is liable to

succumb to temptations and passions, so that its health necessitates incessant care.

Conclusion

Dorotheus' ascetic programme in the coenobium near Gaza is predicated on a theology of salvation history, which is determined by Adam's fall from his created state in the Garden of Eden. Dorotheus embraces the doctrine of human depravity current in ancient Christianity:[50] with Adam's transgression, man forfeited his nature, which is encapsulated in the idea of the *imago Dei*. The original sin caused a dissociation of the self, the loss of man's true identity, because ever since, humans have been inclined to give in to their passions and put them into sinful practice. By doing so, they act contrary to nature, since the God-given human nature is identical with virtue. Consequently, humans are required to reverse the trajectory of sin in order to rebuild their identity through reunion with God, virtually to regain the lost paradise. In his boundless grace, God gave the commandments and sent his Son, so that humankind is able to prevail over the passions and enter the royal road of the Fathers. Christian personhood is thus conceived as being from the outset precarious and beset by loss or dissociation. The monastic self, according to Dorotheus' spiritual instruction, is inherently problematic and, therefore, carries a moral imperative – namely, to put one's life in the service of uprooting the passions and nurturing virtues.

In agreement with both philosophical and earlier Christian thinking, the two-way process of loss and regain is articulated in terms of medical theory. Passions are conceived of as diseases of the soul, as disorders that result in mental pain but that are also manifest in the body. From this point of view, the return to unity with God is conceptualised as a healing process administered by Christ the physician and the commandments as unsurpassed treatment. Dorotheus advocates a holistic approach which is based on the idea of the person as a composite of soul and body. Since the soul becomes totally flesh when giving in to passions and sin, the curing of the suffering person by necessity must include both parts of the human being: bodily labour, even suffering, and care for the soul complement each other to make the therapy as effective as possible. The ultimate goal is to restore, through ascetic exercises, both spiritual and physical, the integrity of the human being,

i.e. the created, natural state of body and soul. In this context, while *pathē* of the soul are evils that we must wrestle with, sickness of the body is valued as a catalyst for the return to our primordial identity.

The theology of Christian, or more precisely ascetic, identity taught in Dorotheus' monastery is informed by various traditions, among which classical medical theory and the spiritual director's own medical experience are paramount. Notions of disease, healing and therapy provided him with a conceptual framework suited to his idea of processual monastic personhood. Dorotheus' medico-philosophical theory of the self was astutely grasped by one of his later admirers, who, in the prefatory letter to the collection, stated that Dorotheus, in the footsteps of the Fathers, employed the most powerful drug (φάρμακον), the abnegation of one's will, in order to enter the straight path upwards (*Epistula ad fratrem* 2).

Notes

1 See Perkins (1995, 173–89) on Aristides' presentation of his self in the *Sacred Tales*.
2 See Libanius, *Orationes* 1.9‑10. Cf. *Epistulae* 727. The accident occurred when he was twenty (in 334 CE).
3 For the Christian conceptualisation of the body, see Peter Brown's influential study (1988). For the body of the Neoplatonic philosopher, see the discussion of the 'anatomy of visible holiness' in Eunapius' *Lives of the Sophists and Philosophers* in Miller (2000, 247–49).
4 In early Christian thinking, however, matter and the material world were not inherently evil because they were part of God's creation. See Amundsen (1996, 134–35).
5 The section 'Identities' in Harvey and Hunter (2008, 167–279) is representative; it deals with Jews and Christians, pagans and Christians, 'Gnosticism', Manichaeism, Arius and Arianism, and Pelagius and Pelagians.
6 Nutton (1984, 5). See also Amundsen (1996, 127–57) on early Christian attitudes toward health, illness, suffering and medicine, and Dörnemann (2003).
7 Amundsen (1996, 133) and Dörnemann (2003, 58–65) on the theme of *Christus medicus*; Dysinger (2005) on medical imagery and the idea of psalmody as spiritual remedy in Evagrius Ponticus; Schenkewitz (2016) on the idea of salvation as healing in Gazan monasticism.
8 See Crislip (2005) and Ferngren (2009) on early Christian medicine; Mayer (2015) on John Chrysostom as medico-philosophical therapist.
9 See e.g. Theodoret's *Cure for Hellenic Sicknesses*, in particular his notion of therapy. Cf. Papadogiannakis (2012, 31–51).
10 Champion's (2022) important book on Dorotheus' ascetic education came out too late for me to fully engage with it.

11 Information on his biography is provided by his own works, the *Life of Dositheus* transmitted under his name, and the letters of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza. For what we know about Dorotheus' life, see Hevelone-Harper (2005, 61–78); Pauli (2000, 7–10). See also Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006) on Gazan monasticism, in particular 42–46 on Dorotheus. For Dorotheus' education in medicine, see Champion (2022, 48–50).

12 See Overwien (2018) on the so-called iatrosophists of Late Antiquity.

13 For early Christian hospitals and monastic infirmaries in particular, see Crislip (2005, 100–42), with the critical discussion in Ferngren (2009, 125–30).

14 In addition, the letters, too, apply medical discourse to the conception of Christian asceticism. See Schenkewitz (2016).

15 Dorotheus of Gaza, *Doctrinae* 11.121; *Life of Dositheus* 1. Dorotheus' writings, as well as the letters of Barsanuphius and John, are evidence that contact between the monks and laypeople of Gaza and the area was close and regular, so it is probable that the monks were not only approached by them in various other matters but also consulted about physical and mental suffering.

16 The *Life* is included in the 2001 critical edition of Dorotheus' works (*Sources chrétiennes* 92.122‑45), edited by Regnault and de Préville.

17 *Epistula ad fratrem* 6: earlier in the letter Dorotheus is said to have employed the abnegation of one's own will as the most effective medicine for erasing the passions (2). The letter seems to originate from the 7th or 8th century and to have been extended later. See Pauli's 2000 edition *Dorotheus von Gaza: Doctrinae diversae, die geistliche Lehre*, 26–31.

18 Schenkewitz (2016), building on earlier observations by Pauli (1998).

19 Crislip (2005, 92–99). See also Ferngren (2009, 148–51), who stresses that there was no unified Christian or ascetic response totally rejecting medical treatment.

20 *Doctrinae* 11.113 (SC 92.356): τὰ φάρμακα παλαιὰ ὄντα οὐκ ἐνεργοῦσιν, ἢ ὅτι ὁ ἰατρὸς ἄπειρός ἐστι καὶ ἄλλο ἀντ᾽ ἄλλου φάρμακον παρέχει, ἢ ὅτι ὁ ἄρρωστος ἀτακτεῖ καὶ οὐ φυλάττει ἃ ἐπιτάσσεται παρὰ τοῦ ἰατροῦ. My translations are based on Wheeler (1977).

21 For the sources of Dorotheus' spiritual instruction, see Pauli (2000, 35–43).

22 For Dorotheus' conception of the body–soul composite see Champion (2022, 52–55).

23 *Doctrinae* 15.164 (SC 92.454): Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν περὶ τῆς ἐγκρατείας τῆς γαστρός. Χρήζομεν δὲ ὁμοίως μὴ μόνον τὴν δίαιταν ἑαυτῶν φυλάττειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσης ἄλλης ἁμαρτίας ἀπέχεσθαι, ἵνα ὥσπερ νηστεύομεν τῇ κοιλίᾳ, οὕτως νηστεύομεν καὶ τῇ γλώσσῃ, ἀπεχόμενοι ἀπὸ καταλαλιᾶς, ἀπὸ ψεύδους, ἀπὸ ἀργολογίας, ἀπὸ λοιδορίας, ἀπὸ ὀργῆς, ἀπὸ πάσης ἁπλῶς ἁμαρτίας γινομένης διὰ τῆς γλώσσης …

24 *Doctrinae* 6.77. See also *Epistulae* 2.186, where Dorotheus advises the seniors of other monks that in correcting a brother's flaws they should cure him like a weak limb. See Champion (2022, 58–59).

25 See Stenger (2017) on the parallels between Dorotheus' community and the philosophical schools of Late Antiquity.

26 *Doctrinae* 11.121–22. For the role of habituation in the acquisition of a *hexis*, see also *Epistulae* 2.187. See Champion (2022, 173, 176–78).

27 Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 2.4, 1105b. See also Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 2.18.9.11–12 on *hexis* resulting from repeated practices.

28 See Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006, 44–45); Pauli (1998, 98–100). See also Perrone (2007) on obedience in Gazan monasticism.

29 For a discussion of Dorotheus' adoption of classical philosophy, see Stenger (2017).

30 For the role of nature in Dorotheus' thinking, see also *Doctrinae* 1.10, 10.106, 11.122.

31 *Doctrinae* 16.170-71. Dorotheus here follows Gregory of Nazianzus (*Orationes* 1).

32 See *Doctrinae* 12.134. The concept of sin as contrary to nature also appears in Barsanuphius and John, *Responsiones* 245.

33 *Doctrinae*. 12.134, following Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae in hexaemeron* 2.5 (SC 26bis). For this idea, see Volp (2006). He points out that, for example, Irenaeus of Lyon says that after the fall, man remains the image of God but loses the *homoiosis* (a closer kinship with God in spirit). Gregory of Nyssa and Ambrose distinguish between a true man, who is of divine origin and will be in heavenly Jerusalem, and the empirical man, who is capable of both evil and virtuous deeds. Ferngren (2009, 101–02) argues that the doctrine of *imago Dei* provided early Christians with a novel conception of personhood in which body and soul were integrated in a manner unknown to classical philosophical thinking.

34 *Doctrinae* 1.4. For the familiar theme of *Christus medicus*, see Dörnemann (2003, 58–65 and *passim*) and Ferngren (2009, 30).

35 *Doctrinae* 12.127. The term used in 12.131 and 132 for cutting off the passions, ἐκκόπτειν (see also 10.108, 11.115, 11.117), can also be found in medical texts, e.g. Galen, *De methodo medendi* 1.7, 2.3, 6.6 (10.59.1, 10.92.3, 10.450.9 Kühn); Soranus, *Gynaeciorum libri* 4.7.7 (GMC 4, 137.19).

36 *Doctrinae* 12.130–37. Brown (1988, 236) has highlighted Dorotheus' idea of 'the inextricable interdependence of body and soul' as a new emphasis on the importance of the body in the monastic tradition.

37 κρᾶσις τοῦ σώματος; Galen, *Quod animi mores* 32.1–13 (*scripta minora* 2, ed. Müller); 44.6-8.

38 On the unity of soul and body in Dorotheus, see also Pauli (1998, 78–79).

39 Chrysippus, discussed by Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 5.2 (5.432–45 Kühn, CMG 5.4.1.2, 294–304); Galen, *De propriorum animi cuiuslibet affectuum dignotione et curatione* 5 (5.24 Kühn, CMG 5.4.1.1, p. 17). The analogy is already suggested by Plato, *Timaeus* 86b–87b. Cf. Nussbaum (1994, esp. chapters 9–10). See also Ahonen (2014) on the theory of the passions and the therapy of the soul in Stoicism and Galen.

40 For Clement of Alexandria's notion of the passions, see e.g. *Stromateis* 2.7.34.2, *Protrepticus* 11.115.2. See Dörnemann (2003, 209–13 on Basil of Caesarea, and 233–39 on Gregory of Nazianzus); Ferngren (2009, 29–30) on the body–soul analogy and the conception of passions as diseases in classical philosophy and Christian authors.

41 *Doctrinae* 1.5. Dorotheus here makes reference to the Aristotelian distinction between potentiality and actuality (*energeia*).

42 *Doctrinae* 1.7 (SC 92.156): καὶ οὕτως παρέχει ἡμῖν καὶ ταύτης τὴν ἰατρείαν, ἵνα δυνηθῶμεν ὑπακοῦσαι καὶ σωθῆναι. In *Epistulae* 2.187, addressed to super-

visors of monasteries and their disciples, Dorotheus insists that unpleasant experiences such as verbal abuse and humiliation are medical drugs (φάρμακα ἰατρικά), sent according to God's providence as a cure for the self-importance of the soul.

43 See, for example, Hippocrates, *De morbo sacro* 18.3 (ed. Jouanna), and Galen, *Ad Glauconem de methodo medendi* 1.10 (11.32 Kühn).

44 The brief autobiographical narrative of his own spiritual healing in the monastery of Seridus, recounted in *Doctrinae* 5.67, makes clear that it is a thoroughly transformative experience, a complete renewal: Καὶ γίνεται εὐθέως εἰς τὴν καρδίαν μου φῶς, χαρά, παράκλησις, γλυκύτης, καὶ εὑρίσκομαι ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου. (SC 92.262–64)

45 For the importance of spiritual exercises in Gazan monasticism, see Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006, 157–82).

46 See Hadot (1995, 135–40), who notes the parallels between spiritual exercises in Christian monasticism and in Stoic philosophy.

47 See also *Epistulae* 10.195. In *Doctrinae* 13.144, even temptation is said to be a cure because we are purified by the struggle against it.

48 *Doctrinae* 14.155. Dorotheus here stresses that negative accidents such as war, famine and illness occur not according to God's will and pleasure but by His permission. Cf. Barsanuphius and John, *Responsiones* 466.

49 Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 55. See Dörnemann (2003, 195–219), with further references.

50 See e.g. Mann (2014) on Augustine's conception of the original sin. According to Augustine, original sin is a condition including dispossession from a naturally perfect environment and the susceptibility to physical pain and bodily disorders. In the Fall, the alienation of the human person from God was evident in the disjunction between body and soul, and concomitantly, the disintegration of the body.

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CHAPTER 9

In Search of Local People and Rituals in Late Antiquity[1]

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Abstract

In Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, ecclesiastical leaders often defined as pagan, superstitious and even magical those rituals and beliefs that they disliked. Augustine of Hippo, for instance, depicted a number of practices as pagan elements that recent converts could not abandon and therefore carried with them into the Church after Constantine's conversion. Augustine and other church leaders were influential in setting out the course of interpreting local popular forms of religiosity as magic ('magical survivals') or leftovers of paganism ('pagan survivals'). In this chapter, I illustrate local and popular forms of late antique religiosity with a few examples taken from the writings of Zeno of Verona, Maximus of Turin and Augustine of Hippo as well as later Latin writers such as Caesarius of Arles and Martin of Braga. I wish to break away from traditional dichotomies such as pagan/Christian, religion/magic and religion/superstition and to observe religious practices in the late antique and early medieval world on their own

terms. We may call that religious world the third paganism, popular Christianity or whatever, but choosing the term is not relevant here. Instead of taking local forms of religiosity simply as 'magical survivals', 'pagan survivals' or 'Christian superstition', we should analyse local religious worlds in their different socio-political contexts.

Keywords: Late Antiquity, local religion, late Roman West, local Christianity, paganism, popular religion

Introduction

> In the peace which came after such numerous and violent persecutions, crowds of pagans who wished to assume the Christian religion were kept back. Because they, having been accustomed to celebrate the feasts connected with their worship of idols in revelling and drunkenness [*in abundantia epularum et ebrietate*], could not easily refrain from pleasures so pernicious but also ancient [*ab his perniciosissimis sed tamen vetustissimis voluptatibus*], it had seemed good to our predecessors to make for the time a concession to this infirmity and permit them to celebrate, instead of the festivals which they renounced, other feasts in honour of the holy martyrs. These feasts in honour of martyrs were then observed, not as before with the same sacrilege, but with similar overindulgence [*non simili sacrilegio quamvis simili luxu*].[2]

In this way Augustine discusses the popular feasting in honour of Leontius, a local saint, in his famous letter to Alypius, the bishop of Thagaste, in 395. He insists that these celebrations should be abolished, stating that excessive banqueting in honour of martyrs is a pagan custom. The masses of recent converts, Augustine argues, had introduced them in the aftermath of the conversion of the emperor Constantine. In their weakness, these converts, formerly pagans, had not been capable of abandoning the excessive banqueting and drunkenness which had traditionally characterised their feast days. Augustine depicts these habits as harmful and age-old, as well as characteristically pagan. It was in these circumstances that ecclesiastical leaders ended up making concessions to the recent converts, allowing them to incorporate their previous practices into the martyr cult so that they could continue their celebrations but not their sacrilege. This was meant to ease their way into Christianity, Augustine maintains. However, now that

circumstances had changed and people had become established Christians, they should be expected to adopt the rules of sobriety and give up excesses.[3]

As Augustine's interpretation of the popular celebrations in honour of a local saint shows, defining and redefining the concept of being Christian was an issue of authority.[4] With his episcopal – as well as intellectual – authority, he redefined what appropriate conduct was for Christians. What he was inclined to despise, he interpreted as a pagan ritual that had *recently* been introduced into church life.[5]

Consequently, Augustine also reinterpreted the past. To convince his parishioners, he maintained that banquets in honour of martyrs were an innovation from the Christian point of view. Accordingly, as Peter Brown writes, Augustine presented a pure and true Christianity as a historical fact dating back to pre-Constantinian times.[6] Ecclesiastical leaders used their authority to define even what being pagan was and had been and to what extent pagan elements survived in the religious practices of the church.[7] In addition to Augustine, other bishops were also inclined to define as pagan, superstitious and magical those practices and beliefs that they personally detested and disapproved of. For instance, Maximus of Turin labelled as pagan any custom that did not meet his Christian standards.[8]

From Bishops' Complaints to Local Religiosity

This narrative by Augustine and the approaches of the other late antique church leaders to local popular religious practices have been influential. For a long time, modern research took their views as a given and categorised the local popular forms of religiosity simply as pagan survivals or magicised distortions of Christianity.[9] In the narrative of the Christian triumph, local religiosity despised by the ecclesiastical elite has often been portrayed as 'bits of the past smuggled into, and leaving a stain on', Christianity (as is appositely described by Maxwell 2012, 852). Researchers still often speak of pagan survivals or leftovers, which as a heritage of the old religions were transferred into popular Christianity. For example, Garth Fowden remarks on the romantic school of scholars who thought that 'ancient polytheism "survived" under a decent yet not suffocating veiling of Christianity' (Fowden 2001, 90, referring to Herzfeld 1982, 116–17; see also Gregory 1986; McKenna 1938; Meslin 1969).

What is actually understood by 'pagan survivals'? Were they a stubborn resistance to Christianity?[10] How self-conscious was this resistance? In emic terms, how did people understand their own religious allegiances? In etic terms, what do modern scholars think they were?[11] People loyal to the old gods? And finally, according to whom? Our literary sources are the writings of the ecclesiastical elite. Or are 'pagan survivals' understood – following Augustine and others – as some unwelcome side effects of the rapid Christianisation of the masses? Were they a component coming from outside that polluted – or, to speak more neutrally, influenced or changed – Christianity?

The term 'pagan survivals' has been criticised. Clifford Ando remarks that it 'deflects modern surprise at how little Christian authorities demanded in their litmus-tests'. According to David Frankfurter, 'pagan survival' brings an association of timeless primitivity. Behind such a notion, there has often been an imperialist or missionary agenda (Ando 1996, 207; Frankfurter 2005, 267).[12] To these criticisms, I would add the overall vagueness of the term. We really cannot make distinctions between 'pagan' and 'Christian' survivals, or whatever the practices and beliefs are. The term does not do justice to the diversity of the late antique religious world.[13] The idea of 'survival' implies the narrative of a triumphant Christianity construed by church leaders. We cannot really know the extent, number or level of weakenings and dominations.

The religious changes and diversity can be outlined in many ways, not just as the dichotomy between the alleged pagans and the alleged Christians, or as Christianisation. As many scholars have remarked in recent decades, for centuries the Mediterranean world had been diffused with different cults, practices, religious ideas and beliefs that constantly cross-pollinated one another. The emergence and spread of Christian groups belonged to this religious evolution of Antiquity. Furthermore, people in the Roman empire, especially those in the East with a Hellenistic background, had developed forms of common religious *koine*.

In this chapter, I will illustrate the local and popular forms of late antique religiosity with a few examples taken from the writings of Augustine of Hippo, Zeno of Verona and Maximus of Turin as well as some later Latin writers such as Martin of Braga and Caesarius of Arles. I wish to break away from dichotomies such as pagan/Christian, religion/magic and religion/superstition and to observe religious

practices in the late antique and early medieval world on their own terms. We may call that religious world the third paganism, popular Christianity or whatever, but choosing the term is not relevant here. Instead of taking local forms of religiosity simply as 'magical survivals', 'pagan survivals' or 'Christian superstition', we will analyse local religious worlds in their different socio-political contexts.

Late antique bishops wrote their condemnations of popular practices as ideologues of separation.[14] Their attempts to wipe out 'popular', 'superstitious', 'pagan' and otherwise distorted practices were destined to be useless – there was always some local variation to be censured and despised. This is why imposing classifications from outside (popular, elite, pagan, Christian, religion, superstition, magic) as etic (scholarly) definitions would be deceptive and confusing. Instead, it is important to look at the ancient contexts and discourses within which emic (ancient) terms arose and find out how and why they were used.[15] I have decided to use the neutral term 'local religion' to describe practices and beliefs that church leaders often – but not always – objected to (Frankfurter 2005, 257).

In their sermons, influential bishops such as Augustine of Hippo, Maximus of Turin and Caesarius of Arles complained of people who adhered to idolatrous practices and even enticed their Christian neighbours to attend pagan festivities. Whether these people regarded themselves as pagans or Christians, in the eyes of church leaders they appeared as pagans. Here the pagan label also functioned as a method of chastisement for people in the bishops' audiences. For example, Augustine argues with his listeners about participation in urban celebrations. He reports that some of his parishioners defended this practice, insisting that they were good Christians: the sign of the cross that they have received on their foreheads as catechumens protects them from the pollution of idolatry.[16] In another case, Augustine mentions Christians who think that they can visit idols and consult magi and soothsayers, but still consider themselves good Christians, claiming: 'I have not abandoned the church for I am *catholicus*' (Aug. in *Psalm.* 88.2.14). We can presume that even though these remarks are Augustine's rhetorical constructions, they have some vague point of reference in North African social life.

I follow the local religion model enhanced by David Frankfurter as well as Jörg Rüpke, Hubert Cancik and others for observing the late antique religious world. Building his notions on the habitus or 'habit-

memory' developed by Pierre Bourdieu and Paul Connerton, Frankfurter argues that instead of 'an ignorant bondage to archaic ideas or resistance to notions of purity and authority, we find local communities' active engagement with new, hegemonic religious forms and ideas and their attendant notions of authority, power, and text' (Frankfurter 2005, 267). Cancik and Rüpke set out the research on the interplay between universal and local religious traditions in the Roman empire, surveying the many different ways in which people, practices and traditions were in contact with and influenced each other (Cancik and Rüpke 2008; see also Erker 2008). Furthermore, Stanley Stowers distinguishes between the religion of everyday social exchange and that of literate specialists (Stowers 2011, 41–51). As Ramsay MacMullen remarks in his *The Second Church: Popular Christianity, AD 200–400*, we should not take the model of religion that Augustine and his ilk taught to stand for all religiosity in Late Antiquity (MacMullen 2009, 98). Moreover, Georgia Frank and Jaclyn Maxwell draw our attention to the tensions and differences between the Christianity of overachievers such as John Chrysostom and the lay Christianity of ordinary people in town and country (Frank 2007; Maxwell 2012, 852).

Maximus of Turin and the Polluting Practices

One of the complaining 4th-century bishops was Maximus of Turin (d. c. 420). He was concerned about what he called idolatry and in several sermons told the landlords among his listeners to put an end to idolatrous practices on their estates (*Sermo.* 42.1, 106.2, 107.1, 108). To enforce his message, Maximus appealed to pollution, which, he says, idolatry causes to the whole community. Not only those who perform the rites (*exercentes*) but also those who live nearby (*habitantes*) and those who watch (*intuentes*) are defiled. Likewise, the master becomes polluted when his tenants make sacrifices (*Immolante enim rustico inquinatur domnedius*), Maximus insists (*Sermo.* 107.2).[17] In another sermon, Maximus also urges Christian landowners to wipe out idolatry on their properties. Many are sanctified by the holiness of one member of the community but likewise many are polluted by the sacrilege of one.[18] In several sermons, Maximus takes great pains to wake up the Christian landowners in his congregation and make them concerned about the traditional local rituals performed on their properties.[19] His complaints reflect a conflict of interests between local

landlords and bishops at the regional level. Many landowners probably saw traditional religious practices as a convenient way of maintaining tranquillity, order and economic dependencies on their estates. Private religiosity and episcopal authority were often in tension and rivalry with one another in the countryside – not only between pagan land-owners and Christian bishops but even between Christian landlords and bishops. From time to time they had shared interests, and this is what Maximus and other bishops repeatedly tried to argue to land-lords.[20]

What were people doing, according to Maximus? For example, in two sermons, he mocks the *vociferatio populi*, the custom of shouting and otherwise making much noise during the eclipse of the moon.[21] When Maximus was wondering about the custom, he was given the explanation that shouting 'was helping the moon in its labour and that the clamour was aiding its eclipse'. His reaction is derision and disap-proval. He laughs at the *vanitas* that seemingly devout Christians (*quasi devoti Christiani*) thought they could help God in controlling the heav-enly body, as if God were weak and unable to protect the heavenly lights that he himself had created. Maximus nonetheless condemns the *sacrilegium* that is in this way committed against the creator.[22] In the reading of the ecclesiastical elite, the custom of the people is explained as ridiculous and absurd, and even an insult against the creator God.[23] A similar attitude can be observed in the sermons of Caesarius of Arles, who regrets the clamour, blowing of trumpets and ringing of bells dur-ing the eclipse of the moon. These practices are not only sacrilegious (*sacrilegis clamoribus*), but also vain and ridiculous (*vana paganorum persuasione*; *ridiculo … tinnitu*). With the superiority of the literate elite, Caesarius derides the *stulti homines* who think that they can help the moon in its labours and gives the scientific explanation of his time on the moon's fiery globe, which at certain times is covered by the air or is dimmed by the heat of the sun.[24] (For further discussion on Cae-sarius of Arles, see below.)

A few days later Maximus returns to the topic and again attacks 'those who believed that the moon can be moved from the heaven with magicians' charms'. He also ironically compares the foolishness of people, the diminution of their soul, with the diminution of moon-light. They should reject 'their pagan error' (*errore gentili*) and return as swiftly to wisdom as the moon returns to its fullness.[25] Here, in Maximus' interpretation, the custom of the people has already grown

into magic, *magorum carmina*. The moon is compared to the church that has been troubled by magicians' incantations (*magorum carmini-bus laborasse*) but eventually cannot be harmed: 'For incantations can have no power where the song of Christ is chanted'.[26] Maximus clearly sets up the incantations of the people as rivals for the mightier ones of his church. Here he is clearly following the established convention of ecclesiastical leaders of labelling rival ritual experts as practising sorcery.[27]

What disturbs Maximus most is the people's conduct, which he takes as revealing divided loyalties. In several instances, he demands that his listeners embrace Christianity only and abandon all other practices (e.g. Max. Taur. *Sermo.* 34.2, 35.1). Maximus and many other ecclesiastical leaders were at pains to argue to their congregations that one feasting is Christian while the other is 'pagan'; participating in both the Christian and the 'pagan' celebrations of the communities was condemnable. The apostle Paul's exclamation 'What portion does righteousness have with wickedness? Or what fellowship is there of light with darkness?' (2 Cor 6:14) was widely used by Christian leaders to draw strict boundaries between the Christian and the 'pagan' according to the lines defined and redefined in each circumstance.[28] Maximus also appeals to the Pauline proverb when complaining of 'many who, clinging themselves to the custom of the ancient superstition of vanity, observe the day of the Kalends as the highest festival' (*plerique qui trahentes consuetudinem de veteri superstition vanitatis Kalendarum diem pro summa festivitate procurent*) and telling them to choose the sacrament of the Lord's birthday (*dominici natalis … sacramentum*) and leave the drunkenness of Saturnalia and the excess of the Kalendae Ianuariae, the New Year (*ebrietatem … Saturnalium … lasciviam Kalendarum*).[29] In another sermon on the New Year celebration, Maximus makes 'no small complaint against a great number of you', who celebrate the 'heavenly banquet' (*caeleste convivium*) of the Lord's birthday and thereafter prepare 'a meal of superstition' (*superstitionis … prandium*). He reminds his listeners that anyone who wants to be a participant in the divine is not allowed to be a companion of idols.[30]

Bishops and Protesting Voices

Gaudentius, bishop of Brescia (d. 410), recurrently warns his congregation of the dangers of idolatry. In one of his tractates, he urges his audience to avoid being violated by the contagion of idolatry.[31] In another, he warns recently baptised Christians to keep away from all polluted food (*ab omni pollutione escarum*) that 'pagan superstition' has poisoned. This is a reference to the food and drink offered as sacrifice in traditional communal festivals. Gaudentius contrasts the mortifying food of demons (*a mortifero daemonum cibo*) with the meal of the spiritual Easter (*ad beatae huius ac spiritalis paschae epulas*).[32]

Zeno of Verona (fl. c. 360–380) also refers to traditional practices of peasants in the north Italian countryside and lays the blame on landowners who pretend to be unaware of the fuming shrines (*fumantia … fana*) on their properties. According to him, they know exactly every clod of earth, stone and twig even on their neighbours' domains.[33] Furthermore, Zeno complains about funerary banquets at the tombs of the ordinary deceased as well as at the memorial places of martyrs. What was especially reprehensible was the contamination of divine sacraments by mixing profane fables with them (*profanis fabulis … divina sacramenta contaminant*).[34] Zeno stresses that one should be attentive to the way one either consumes or offers sacrifice: it was as detestable to perform sacrificial rituals as to eat the offered food.[35]

Numerous 4th and 5th-century bishops criticised their parishioners for dancing and abundant eating and drinking at Christian tombs and *martyria*;[36] among others, Ambrose of Milan reproached his fellow Christians for heavy drinking at the martyrs' sepulchres. As Augustine tells us in his *Confessions*, Ambrose forbade Milanese Christians to offer food and wine at the tombs, justifying his prohibition with two arguments: first, there should be no opportunity for drunkenness, and second, the habit of offering food and wine at the tombs of the martyrs was too similar to the superstition of pagans, the traditional Roman celebration at the tombs in memory of the deceased, the feast of Parentalia (*illa quasi parentalia superstitioni gentilium essent simillima*).[37] Later, Augustine lamented about the *turbae imperitorum*, who were 'superstitious within the true religion' (*in ipsa vera religione superstitiosi*): they were worshippers of sepulchres and images, they drank abundantly upon the tombs, offered food to the deceased, had

themselves buried upon the graves, and regarded their gluttony and inebriation as religion.[38]

What about ordinary people? As far as we can tell from indirect evidence found in the complaints of the ecclesiastical leaders, people taking part in feasting at the tombs and *martyria* regarded their funerary customs and the martyr cult as properly Christian (e.g. Aug. *epist.* 29.8). In bishops' admonitions, we can observe echoes of the counter-arguments of these Christian people. Ambrose stated mockingly that some people considered their drunkenness a *sacrificium*.[39] Similarly, Augustine confronted the protests raised within his congregation as some sought justification for food and wine offerings at the tombs from a biblical passage. Augustine refuted this counter-argument, arguing that offerings to the dead were actually a custom of pagans (*consuetudinem hanc esse paganorum*).[40] Similarly, he confronts 'someone who' defends his visits to local ritual experts whom Augustine disapproves of: 'To me, I know, the *mathematicus* spoke the truth, and to me, I know, because the *sortilogus* spoke truth, and I received the remedy and I got well.'[41]

These protesting voices are certainly not without problems: they were preachers' rhetorical constructions in which the opposing views were depicted in a selective way, probably as caricatures, and could consequently be conveniently refuted. However, they may have had some vague point of comparison with late Roman social life.[42] A similar fictive protest appears in a sermon of Petrus Chrysologus, bishop of Ravenna, as someone in his audience is portrayed as explaining the festivities of Kalendae Ianuariae, the New Year, as harmless celebrations – 'vows of entertainment', not 'practices of sacrilegious rites' or 'a pagan transgression'.[43]

Caesarius of Arles and Non-Conforming Christians

Religious ambivalence and unacceptable conduct were exiled outside the Christian community, and non-conforming Christians were often portrayed as pagans (*gentiles*). In this manner, Caesarius of Arles compared the practices and behaviour of non-conforming Christians with the doings of pagans who had not yet received baptism (*quomodo pagani sine Deo et sine baptismi gratia faciunt*) and wondered why these miserable people took baptism and went to church (*ut quid*

miseri ad ecclesiam venerunt?) if they continued with their idolatrous practices. He reprimanded people for still making vows to trees, praying at the fountains and observing diabolical auguries. They were not only reluctant to demolish the shrines of pagans: they even dared to restore shrines that had already been razed.[44] Similarly to Maximus of Turin, Caesarius reminded the landowners in his audience that a landlord should have shrines on his land destroyed and sacred trees cut down; otherwise, he would be a participant in the sacrileges performed there (*Sermo.* 54.5).

Like many other church leaders, Caesarius was vexed by this doublemindedness of his parishioners. He complained of people who came to church as Christians, but upon leaving behaved as pagans by dancing, which originated from pagan ritual. After Christ's sacraments, they just returned to the devil's poisons.[45] He keeps on reminding his listeners that the sacrament of baptism excluded traditional rituals from their lives, sometimes enhanced with an appeal to the authority of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 10:20–21: 'You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the devil') (*Sermo.* 54.6).[46] He also threatens that no one should seek help from *praecantatores*, for if one performs this evil, one will immediately lose the sacrament of baptism and become *sacrilegus et paganus* (Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 54.1; also 19.4).

As in other bishops' sermons, we occasionally hear the fictive protesting voices of ordinary people in Caesarius' preaching. He mentions that someone might say: 'What should we do, for auguries and enchanters or diviners often tell us true things?' Appealing to biblical authority (Deut 13:3), Caesarius commands: 'Even if they tell you the truth, do not believe them'. Thus, Caesarius does not deny the abilities of competing ritual experts, for instance, to predict things. He admits that it is sometimes even possible to get some remedy from illness through these sacrileges (*per illa sacrilegia aliqua remedia in infirmitate recipere*; Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 54.3; also 54.5). When complaining about those who have no problems eating food sacrificed to demons, Caesarius mentions that some used to say: 'I sign myself [with the cross] and then eat'. However, for the bishop, this will not do.[47]

Sacred trees and fountains recur frequently in Caesarius' admonitions.[48] Furthermore, he warns repeatedly about various sorts of ritual experts, such as *haruspices*, *divini*, *caraii/caragi/caragii*, *sortilege* and *praecantatores*.[49] Even amulets were sometimes made and distributed by some Christian clerics, Caesarius regrets.[50] All of this observation

of omens and consultation of various diviners, all of these practices, were the pomp and work of the devil.[51] Part of the devil's pomp condemned by Caesarius was the processions with dancing, drinking, and masquerading during the Kalendae Ianuariae. Caesarius mentions that people mask themselves as elks or other wild animals as well as domestic animals; some wear the heads of animals, 'with joy and exultation', as if they thus transform themselves into beasts and no longer look like humans. Caesarius states that in this way these people prove that they have a bestial mind rather than form.[52] Moreover, he is appalled at men, especially soldiers, dressing themselves in women's clothes.[53] Other bishops also complain about people masking themselves as animals and cross-dressing. There are also mentions of people acting as Saturn, Jupiter, Hercules, Diana and Vulcan.[54]

Among the reprehensible practices of New Year's Eve, Caesarius depicts the convention of country folk covering the dinner table with the widest possible diversity of food and drink for the whole night in order to guarantee their availability for the following year.[55]

Martin of Braga and the Correction of Rustics

Martin of Braga (c. 520–579) was one of the bishops who denounced the custom of taking auspices from the abundance of the dinner table on the night before Kalendae Ianuariae.[56] In *De correctione rusticorum*, he regards the celebration of the New Year as an error (*ille error*) and the attendees as ignorant rustics (*ignorantibus et rusticis*). The most stupid error (*de illo stultissimo errore*) is the observation of the days of moths and mice (*dies tinearum et murium*) in which, Martin claims, a Christian worships moths and mice instead of God. Country folk seem to believe that they will be spared from the harm of moths and mice by dedicating special days to them. Again, with the superiority of the elite, Martin states that bread and clothes are best protected simply by keeping them in boxes and baskets. All these days of pagans are elaborate inventions of demons (*Observationes istae omnes paganorum sunt per adinventiones daemonum exquisitae*).[57]

Martin mentions that these superstitions were practised either in secret or in public but that nonetheless, people never ceased to perform sacrifices to demons. 'How come people are still not always satisfied, safe, and happy?' Martin mocks, adding that these vain sacrifices

do not protect them from locusts, mice and other tribulations that the angered God sends them.[58]

Martin of Braga is keen to show that the rites of country folk are foolish and futile. As a representative of the ecclesiastical elite, he has the more efficient religion to offer. He nonetheless shares a worldview in which divine anger has a fundamental part. Furthermore, Martin criticises the observation of specific days in the annual calendar as well as in the weekly course. He complains of the continued use of the names of the old gods for the days of the week. Disbelieving people (*dubii*) who do not embrace Christianity wholeheartedly (*non ex toto corde*) cling to the names of demons and keep on calling days after Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn (*appellent diem Martis et Mercurii et Iovis et Veneris et Saturni*; Martin. Brac. *corr.* 8; also 9). However, the issue here is not so much the observing of days in general or calling days by the names of gods; rather, it is the contest over which and whose days are observed. Martin is ultimately worried about people who do not dedicate Sunday as the Lord's day and stresses that there should be no working in field, meadow, vineyard or other places on the Lord's day.[59]

The same applies to Caesarius of Arles, who deplores the fact that stupid people believe that the days, Kalends days, the sun and the moon should be venerated. He especially complains about *Iovis quinta feria*, the fifth day dedicated to Jupiter (Thursday) on which some wretched women refuse to work with loom and spindle (*aliquae mulieres infelices, quae in honore Iovis quinta feria nec telam nec fusum facere vellent*). In another sermon, Caesarius mentions that on the *quinta feria* some men do not do their work and some women do not do their wool work (*quinta feria nec viri opera faciant, nec mulieres laneficium*), and this is because the devil has embraced them.[60]

In his *De correctione rusticorum*, Martin of Braga lists various despicable practices, among them the 'lighting of candles beside rocks and beside trees and beside fountains and at crossroads', which he labels as reverence to the devil (*cultura diaboli*). In addition, it is disgraceful to celebrate Vulcanalia and the first days of the months, and set out tables (*mensas ornare*), put up laurel wreaths (*lauros ponere*), watch the foot (*pedem observare*) – it is not clear what Martin means here –make a libation of fruit and wine on a log in the hearth (*fundere in foco super truncum frugem et vinum*), or throw bread into a fountain (*panem in fontem mittere*).[61] Women are said to call on Minerva when working at

their loom, and people celebrated their weddings on the day of Venus (Friday). All this is again reverence to the devil. Martin also connects the custom of taking auspices from the flight of birds, and sneezing, with the devil and reminds his parishioners that they should not reject the sign of the cross (*signum crucis*) that they have accepted in baptism. Other, rival signs therefore are labelled as the signs of the devil (*diaboli signa*).[62] Likewise, Martin condemns 'incantations invented by magicians and evil-doers' (*incantationes … a magis et maleficis adinventas*) and gives as the salutary opposite the incantation of the holy creed and the Lord's Prayer (*incantationem sancti symboli et orationis dominicae*).[63]

Ecclesiastical Councils

In addition to the mentions made by the late antique bishops discussed above, we have lists in imperial legislation, church council canons, heresiological treatises and bishops' sermons, all of them condemning pagan, heretic, magical or otherwise wicked practices. How should we understand these catalogues? How much can we rely on them as a source for practices that were still actively performed or groups still operating in society?

In recent research, heresiological literature has been analysed as a part of knowledge-ordering in the late Roman world and connected with ethnographic discourse and encyclopaedic literature.[64] As well as heresies, paganism also needed to be grasped and categorised. One purpose of the imperial legislation was to outline paganism as a legally understandable entity in the form of individual forbidden practices. For example, a law of 392 aimed to cover as many forms of pagan practice as possible – by night or day, in temples, houses or fields, burning incense, erecting cult images, and so forth. It was in these kinds of processes that the concept 'paganism' was construed.[65] The lists of forbidden practices, such as magical acts, made by ecclesiastical councils probably functioned in the same way. The prohibitions were part of disciplining lay Christians as well as the clergy, but also of making sense of the boundaries of Christian conduct.

Canons of church councils produced lists of forbidden rituals and practices, often judged as magical, in the 4th to the 7th century and onwards, thus defining proper Christianity by way of exclusion. The Council of Ancyra held in 314 prohibited Christians from practising

divination and following the customs of pagans, as well as bringing people into their houses to practise sorcery or for lustrations. Here, as in many other regulations, divination, magic and 'pagan' customs were paralleled.[66] The Council of Braga in 572 forbade people to bring diviners (*divini*) and especially *sortilegi* into their houses in order to cast out evil (*malum*), detect evil deeds (*maleficia*) or perform pagan purifications (*lustrationes paganorum*; Council of Braga 140, *Canones ex orientalium partum synodis*). Likewise, the Council of Trullo in 691 banned cloud-chasers, sorcerers, purveyors of amulets and diviners, who were to be cast out of the Church if they persisted in 'these deadly pagan practices' (Council of Trullo, *Canones ex orientalium partum synodis*; Stolte 2002, 114). Later medieval church councils and monastic writings again include lists of forbidden practices.[67] The conventional catalogues of prohibited practices have been debated in modern research.[68] Are these mentions evidence of continuing practices or are they mere topoi, prohibitions repeated over the centuries without any reference to social reality? If the conventional lists are 'only' topoi, they may still have had a purpose. Did these lists function as a kind of exorcism by means of which all unwelcome behaviour was cast out? The accusations of magic and divination were often also a ritualistic way to segregate the problematic elements of the community (Mathisen 1996, 310–11, 320, referring to Caesarius of Arles; see also Noethlichs 1998, 25; Van Dam 1985, 115–76). Or did ecclesiastical leaders reiterate the traditional list of proscribed practices because it was the convention to forbid anything they despised and saw as detrimental but were not able to outline? As Yitzhak Hen remarks, repetitive condemnations are evidence for norms, not facts (Hen 2008, 51, 2015, 186). They tell us about what was felt significant enough to be stressed and condemned.

Conclusion

In our search for local people and rituals in Late Antiquity, we arrive again at the problem of the reliability of our ecclesiastical sources. The representations of local practices depicted by ecclesiastical writers are hardly very accurate reports of how people were acting in their communities. In this, late antique bishops were not different from other elite writers in earlier and later historical periods, whether they were Greek, Roman and early medieval aristocrats, philosophers and historians, legislators, missionaries, or colonisers.

The dichotomy between popular and elite can be seen as part of the construction of a discourse of ritual censure in which a writer wants to articulate cultural difference and appear superior. A group or an individual may aim to become the elite precisely by making such a distinction. This applies to Late Antiquity as well as other periods: one finds the patronising rhetoric of dichotomy and denigration in the writings of the elite – which construed various boundaries to edit out elements deemed 'vulgar', 'barbarian', 'superstitious', 'old-womanish', 'magical', 'pagan', 'heretical' and so forth and thus invent notions of proper, sane, Greek, Roman, civic or orthodox religion. The ecclesiastical elite's ritual censure in the 4th and 5th centuries had its roots in not only the Jewish and early Christian discourses but also early Roman imperial ones. Christian writers even polarised the differences by highlighting them as a dichotomy between pure and demonic.

Is there any value in our late antique sources? What they do tell us about are attitudes, sometimes appreciation, usually wonder, condescension, contempt or fear. Occasionally, as a side effect, they unveil something about the life of local communities, creative adaptations, new and old beliefs intertwined, new and old rituals adapted, new and old divinities venerated. Two late antique aristocratic poets, Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola, are illustrative examples of how the learned elite often describe local forms of religiosity in a formulaic manner. Ausonius envisions an easy-going transition from paganism to Christianity in his own household, depicting it in poetic expressions as abandoning 'incense to be burnt', the 'slice of honey-cake', and 'hearths of green turf' and instead beginning his prayers 'to God and to the Son of God most high, that co-equal Majesty united in one fellowship with the Holy Spirit'.[69] Paulinus of Nola describes rituals in which animals are slaughtered in honour of his patron saint, Felix.[70] Both Ausonius and Paulinus give the impression that rituals were smoothly switched for Christian ones and then everybody's needs were fulfilled. Both poets observe the domestic and local religiosity of their dependants *von oben*. Their way of looking at local religiosity is highly literary – they formulate their views according to the sophisticated conventions rooted in 'classical' poetry, with reminiscences of Vergil, Horace and others, as well as biblical literature.[71] However, despite being formulaic and literary, they *may* reveal something about the flexibility of the local population to respond by adapting or conforming creatively to changed circumstances.

As I argued at the beginning of my chapter, we might call the multifaceted religious world of Late Antiquity the third paganism, popular Christianity, second church, contextualised Christianity, regional micro-Christianity or something else.[72] However, the choice of the term is not the point here. I am inclined to think that we need not use fixed categories, either contextualised Christianity or contextualised paganism.[73] I suggest that instead of categorising local religious phenomena simply on the axis of Christianity and paganism, we should analyse local religious worlds in their different socio-political contexts. Thus, we detect the local creative applications of local populations, and we perceive people who actively engage in making adaptations in their local communities according to their everyday needs, tensions and crises – with ruptures and adaptation, and with continuities.

Notes

1 This chapter builds on the author's earlier work: *Religious Dissent in Late Antiquity, 350–450* by Maijastina Kahlos. Oxford Studies in Late Antiquity. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.

2 Augustine, *Epist.* 29.9: Scilicet post persecutiones tam multas, tamque vehementes, cum facta pace, turbae gentilium in christianum nomen venire cupientes hoc impedirentur, quod dies festos cum idolis suis solerent in abundantia epularum et ebrietate consumere, nec facile ab his perniciosissimis et tam vetustissimis voluptatibus se possent abstinere, visum fuisse maioribus nostris, ut huic infirmitatis parti interim parceretur, diesque festos, post eos quos relinquebant, alios in honorem sanctorum martyrum vel non simili sacrilegio, quamvis simili luxu celebrarentur. In the English translation, for the sake of clarity, I have cut Augustine's long sentences into shorter ones. For Alypius, Augustine's friend and episcopal colleague, see O'Donnell (2005, 104–06).

3 Augustine, *Epist.* 29.9: Iam Christi nomine colligatis, et tantae auctoritatis iugo subditis salutaria sobrietatis praecepta traderentur, quibus iam propter praecipientis honorem ac timorem resistere non valerent; quocirca iam tempus esse, ut qui non se audent negare christianos, secundum Christi voluntatem vivere incipiant, ut ea quae ut essent christiani concessa sunt, cum christiani sunt, respuantur.

4 On the issue of authority, see Brown (1995, 23–24, 1998, 662–63); Klutz (1998, 183–84); MacMullen (2009, 61–62, 161 n. 38).

5 In *Epist.* 22.4 to Aurelius, Augustine outlines the situation in a different way, arguing that while in some places these practices had never existed, in other places they were either of recent or long standing but had been abolished by bishops.

6 As Brown (1998, 662) states, 'a generation of articulate clergymen created the notion of Christianization with which we still live'.

7 'Pagans' and 'paganism' here refer to the concept construed and used by ancient Christian writers to discuss their religious others. Furthermore, the terms functioned as polemical tools in Christian literature – as a mirror in which a writer's theological views and moral conduct were reflected.

8 For Maximus of Turin and popular religion, see Devoti (1981, 165–66).

9 Quasten (1940, 253–66) portrays the 'missionary method' of the early church as a way of making an accommodation, retaining the commemoration of the departed and substituting the funeral mass for the pagan rite. Quasten further explains that the *refrigerium* or funeral repast is 'entirely contrary to the Christian outlook, because it represents the dead as still subject to the earthly necessities of food and drink'; Weltin (1987, 6) notes that 'humble converts to Christianity naturally carried over pagan elements into their new faith' with the attempt 'to transfer the potency of old idols to new Christian sacramentals like the sign of the cross, shrines, icons, and relics'; Ramsey (1989, 298) takes the rituals related to the eclipse of the moon mentioned by Maximus of Turin (*Sermo.* 30) as a pagan survival; see also my discussion below.

10 See O'Donnell (1979, 83): 'Christianity triumphed, but paganism survived.' See also Dagron (1978, 92–93); Frend (1952, 101); Kaegi (1966, 245–68).

11 The emic or subject-oriented approach refers to observations made from inside, the etic or observer-oriented approach to observations made from outside; Headland, Pike and Harris (1990). See also Stratton (2007, 14–16) on the emic and etic perspectives in the research of ancient 'magic'.

12 For criticism of the term 'pagan survivals', see also Meltzer (1999, 16–17); Meyer and Smith (1999, 7).

13 As Frankfurter (2005, 270) aptly points outs, the late antique religious world was far more complex than merely 'the figures of Christ and the saints, evil demons, and shadowy old gods', and individuals at all social levels encountered a diverse range of spirits – all this variety notwithstanding the church leaders' aim of constructing a dualist view of the world.

14 Calling local practices 'popular' is by no means unproblematic. The contra-distinction may in several cases be misleading, since some practices were performed not only by 'ordinary people' but by the socioeconomic elite as well. The elite and the common folk often shared the same practices and similar beliefs regarding the sacred and the divine. Devoti (1981, 155) speaks of 'soluzioni religiose di comodo, fenomeni di doppia religione, latente e manifesta, rigurgiti improvvisi di comportamenti pagani, specie in momenti di maggiore crisi'. See the 'second church' in MacMullen (2009, 31), who estimates it as 95% of the whole Christian population. MacMullen (2009, 95) stresses that bishops and the masses pulled in opposite directions.

15 Stratton (2007, 14) raises this point in her admonition against making scholarly distinctions between religion and magic.

16 Aug. *Sermo.* 301A.8, www.augustinus.it/latino/index.htm. On the social life of North African pagans and Christians in Augustine's time, see Lepelley (1987 2002); MacMullen (2009, 51–67).

17 For traditional practices in Maximus' sermons, see also Merkt (1997, 111, 139, 198). For the idea of pollution, see Kahlos (2013, 159–71).

18 Max. Tur. *Sermo.* 106. 2: sicut unius sanctitate sanctificantur multi, ita unius sacrilegio plurimi polluuntur. Maximus complained that landlords pretended to be unaware of what peasants were up to on their estates (nescio, non iussi; causa mea non est, non me tangit).

19 Moreover, in *Sermo.* 108, Maximus stressed that, even if it were the peasant, not the landlord, who participated in sacrilegious rituals, the horrendous pollution touched the landowner as well; see also *Sermo.* 91.2, in which Maximus reminds Christian landowners that they will become polluted when they accept services from idolatrous tenants' polluted hands (*dextera polluta*) and products that have been consecrated to demons (*primitias … daemonibus libatas*). See also Dölger (1950, 307–09); Lizzi (2009, 2010, 100).

20 For the patronage of the local landowning elite and the Christianisation of the rural population in the Western provinces, see Bowes (2007, 161–66); Kahlos (2018).

21 Max. Taur. *Sermo.* 30–31: de defectione lunae.

22 Max. Taur. *Sermo.* 30.2: Quod cum requirerem, quid sibi clamor hic velit, dixerunt mihi quod laboranti lunae vestra vociferatio subveniret, et defectum eius suis clamoribus adiuvaret. Risi equidem et miratus sum vanitatem, quod quasi devoti Christiani deo ferebatis auxilium—clamabatis enim, ne tacentibus vobis perderet elementum; tamquam infirmus enim et inbecillis, nisi vestris adiuvaretur vocibus, non possit luminaria defendere, quae creavit; 30.3.

23 The admonitions to keep the creator and the created (universe, elements, nature) separate and to worship the creator only were recurrent in the sermons and tractates of late antique bishops: Max. Taur. *Sermo.* 62.2; Aug. *Sermo.* 198 aug.25–31 = 26.25–31 Dolbeau; Martin of Braca, *De correctione rusticorum* 6–9.

24 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo.* 52.3: quem bucinae sonitu vel ridiculo concussis tintinabulis putant se superare posse tinnitu, aestimantes quod eam sibi vana paganorum persuasione sacrilegis clamoribus propitiam faciant; also 13.5: quando luna obscuratur, adhuc aliquos clamare cognosciti. See Klingshirn (1994a, 214–15).

25 Max. Taur. *Sermo.* 31.1 : Ante dies prosecuti sumus, fratres, adversus illos qui putarent lunam de caelo magorum carminibus posse deduci; et eorum retudimus vanitatem qui non minus defectum patiuntur animi quam luminis patitur illa defectum. Quos et hortati sumus, ut praetermisso errore gentili tam cito ad sapientiam redeant, quam cito ad plenitudinem suam illa convertitur.

26 Max. Taur. *Sermo.* 31.3: Sed sacris vocibus veneficorum carmen nocere non potuit. Nihil enim incantationes valent, ubi Christi canticum decantatur. Maximus offers biblical examples of Moses, who fought the famous sorcerers Jamnes and Mambres, and the apostles Paul and Peter, who encountered Simon Magus.

27 For the label of magic and rival ritual experts, see Kahlos (2015, 162–77).

28 Tertullian (*praescr.* 7.9: Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? Quid academiae et ecclesiae? Quid haereticis et christianis? *apol.* 46.18; *spect.* 28.1) already insisted that a Christian could not have anything in common with pagans, reinforcing his admonitions with quotations from scripture, e.g. Quid luci cum tenebris? Quid vitae et morti? [2 Cor 6:14]; Stanton (1973).

29 Max. Taur. *Sermo.* 98.1. Together the celebration of the Saturnalia and the New Year, the Kalendae Ianuariae, formed a long period of feasting at the turn of the year; in Late Antiquity, *natalis Christi* intensified the feasting. On the official

level, the senate and the army took their oath of allegiance to the emperor; he also received different kinds of offerings (*strenae*) as signs of loyalty from his subjects. Besides the *vota publica* on behalf of the state, there were private vows, gifts and interpretation of omens. During the Christianising empire, the solemn festivities of the Kalendae Ianuariae, such as the appointment of the consuls, vows and offering gifts to the emperor, continued, and it was one of the most popular feast days in both East and West, as the many complaints of Christian writers also indicate; Grig (2016); Meslin (1970, 23–46, 73–75).

30 Max. Taur. *Sermo.* 63.1: Est mihi adversus plerosque de vestris, fratres, quaerella non modica. De his loquor qui nobiscum natalem domini celebrantes gentilium se feriis dediderunt, et post illud caleste convivium superstitionis sibi prandium praepararunt … Atque ideo qui vult esse divinorum particeps, non debet esse socius idolorum. Again, the apostle Paul (2 Cor 6:16) is quoted as an authority.

31 Gaudentius of Brescia, *tract.* 9.2 : Unde cavendum nobis est, omni genere dilectissimi, ne aliquo rursus idolatriae violemur contagio et non solum repudiari, sed et damnari in perpetuum mereamur. Gaudentius was the bishop of Brescia from 387 to c. 410.

32 Gaudent. Brix. *tract.* 4.13: Vos igitur, neophyti, qui estis ad beatae huius ac spiritalis paschae epulas invitati, videte, quomodo ab omni pollutione escarum, quas superstitio gentilis infecerit, vestras animas conservetis. Nec sufficit, ut a mortifero daemonum cibo vitam suam custodiat Christianus. See Lizzi (2009, 403) on Gaudentius' warnings.

33 Zeno of Verona, *Sermo.* 1.25.10: Hic quaerite, Christiani, sacrificium vestrum an esse possit acceptum, qui vicinarum possessionum omnes glebulas, lapillos et surculos nostis, in praediis autem vestris fumantia undique sola fana non nostis, quae, si vera dicenda sunt, dissimulando subtiliter custoditis. Dölger (1950, 305) interprets Zeno's statement 'every clod of earth, stone, and twig' to refer to the vestiges of rural sacrifices.

34 Zeno Veron. *Sermo.* 1.25.11: … qui foetorosis prandia cadaveribus sacrificant mortuorum, qui amore luxuriandi atque bibendi in infamibus locis lagenis et calicibus subito sibi martyres pepererun.

35 Zeno Veron. *Sermo.* 1.25.12: Iam videat unusquisque, quemadmodum sacrificium aut sumat aut offerat; sicut enim indigne offerre sacrilegum est, ita indigne manducare mortiferum, in Levitico scriptura [Lev 7:19] dicente.

36 For discussions, see Kahlos (2009, 13–23); MacMullen (2009, 23–25, 55–58); Rebillard (2012, 70–71).

37 Aug. *conf.* 6.2.2.: praeceptum esse ista non fieri nec ab eis qui sobrie facerent, ne ulla occasio se ingurgitandi daretur ebriosis, et quia illa quasi parentalia superstitioni gentilium essent simillima. No less a person than Augustine's mother Monnica complied with the proscription, as Augustine reports in his *Confessions*. Gaudentius of Brescia (*tract.* 4.14) also condemned the feasting of Parentalia as the foremost error of idolatry. Ambrose, *Helia* 17.62: Et haec vota ad deum pervenire iudicant sicut illi qui calices ad sepulchra martyrum deferent atque illic in vesperam bibunt; aliter se exaudiri posse non credunt.

38 Aug. *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.34.75: Nolite consectari turbas imperitorum, qui vel in ipsa vera religione superstitiosi sunt vel ita libidinibus dediti, ut obliti sint quid promiserint Deo. Novi multos esse sepulcrorum et picturarum adoratores. Novi multos esse qui cum luxuriosissime super mortuos bibant et

epulas cadaveribus exhibentes super sepultos seipsos sepeliant et voracitates ebrietatesque suas deputent religioni. Being buried upon the graves refers to the increasingly popular custom of setting up sepulchres in the vicinity of powerful martyrs' tombs. Augustine (*Sermo.* 198 aug.16 = 26.16 Dolbeau) mentions that 'pagans' mocked Christians as well for being worshippers of columns and sometimes even images (adoratores columnarum et aliquando etiam picturarum).

39 Ambrose, *Helia* 17.62: Stultitia hominum, qui ebrietatem sacrificium putant.

40 Aug. *Sermo.* 361.6: Et quod obiciunt quidam de Scripturis: 'Frange panem tuum, et effunde vinum tuum super sepulcra iustorum, et ne tradas eum iniustis' [Tob 4:18]; non est quidem de hoc disserendum, sed tamen posse dico intellegere fideles quod dictum est. Nam quemadmodum ista fideles faciant religiose erga memorias suorum notum est fidelibus.

41 Aug. *Sermo.* 360B.22 = 61 Mainz = 25.22 Dolbeau: Exsistat aliquis qui dicat: Mihi, scio, verum dixit mathematicus, et mihi scio quia verum dixit sortilogus, et illud remedium habui, et valuit.

42 Even as straw men, the fictive voices of ordinary people had to sound to some extent credible to preachers' audiences; for a discussion, see Rebillard (2012, 6, 75).

43 Petrus Chrysologus, *Sermo.* 155.5: Sed dicit aliquis: non sunt haec sacrilegiorum studia, vota sunt haec iocorum; et hoc esse novitatis laetitiam, non vetustatis errorem; esse hoc anni principium, non gentilitatis offensam.

44 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 53.1: Audivimus aliquos ex vobis ad arbores vota reddere, ad fontes orare, auguria diabolica observare … Sunt enim, quod peius est, infelices et miseri, qui paganorum fana non solum destruere nolunt, sed etiam quae destructa fuerant aedificare nec metuunt nec erubescunt; also 54.1: illas sacrilegas paganorum consuetudines observare minime deberetis.

45 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 13.4; 19.4; 53.1; 53.2: post Christi sacramenta ad diabolica venena redeatis. Garnsey and Humfress (2001, 142).

46 Martin of Braga (*corr.* 14-15) also reminds his listeners that in baptism they had forsaken idolatry.

47 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 54.6: Et quia solent aliqui dicere: Ego me signo, et sic manduco, nullus hoc facere praesumat. Klingshirn (1994a, 214).

48 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 53.2: the sacrilegious trees should be cut down to the roots: arbores etiam sacrilegas usque ad radicem incidite.

49 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 52.1; 54.1; 54.3; The term *caraius* or *caragus* (also appears in the form of *caragius*) means an enchanter.

50 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 50.1. See Frankfurter (2002, 165) on the competition between holy men or saints' shrines and local ritual experts, which often reflects 'the intimacy between the experts and their communities'.

51 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 12.4: Nam et auguria observare, et praecantatores adhibere, et caragios, sortilogos, divinos inquirere, totum hoc ad pompam vel ad opera diaboli non est dubium pertinere; see also *Sermo.* 54.

52 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 192.2: qui cervulum facientes in ferarum se velint habitus commutare? Alii vestiuntur pellibus pecudum; alii adsumunt capita bestiarum, gaudentes et exultantes, si taliter se in ferinas species transformaverint, ut homines non esse videantur. Ex quo indicant ac probant, non tam se habitum beluinum habere quam sensum.

53 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 192.2: viri nati tunicis muliebribus vestiuntur, et turpissima demutatione puellaribus figuris virile robur effeminant, non erubescentes tunicis muliebribus inserere militares lacertos: barbatas facies praeferunt, et videri se feminas volunt.

54 Other writers: Max. Taur. *Sermo.* 16: pecudes portenta; Pacian of Barcelona, Paraenesis ad poenitentiam 1: Puto, nescierant Cervulum facere nisi illis reprehedendo monstrassem. Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 106, mentions that this Pacianus wrote a (no longer extant) tractate called *Cervus* against the habit of using masks in the celebrations. Ambrose of Milan (*Job* 2.1.5) deplored the habit of wearing elk masks at the New Year festivities. The vague mention in Petrus Chrysologus' *Sermo.* 155.6 of people who make themselves comparable to beasts, put themselves equal to draught animals, turn themselves to cattle and present themselves as demons might also refer to masquerading. Meslin (1970, 74–82).

55 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 192.3: Aliqui etiam rustici mensulas suas in ista nocte, quae praeteriit, plenas multis rebus, quae ad manducandum sunt necessariae, conponentes, tota nocte sic conpositas esse volunt, credentes quod hoc illis Kalendae Ianuariae praestare possint, ut per totum annum convivia illorum in talia abundantia perseverent.

56 Martin of Braga, *corr.* 11; 16: si in introitu anni satur est et laetus ex omnibus, ita illi et in toto anno contingat. Hier. *comm. Isa.* 65, v. 11 mentions people who decorate the table and drink a cup of wine with honey, taking auspices for the forthcoming fertility (*futuri fertilitatem auspicantes*). Boniface (epist. ad Zachariam, 314) mentions in 742 that people in the city of Rome continue to load tables with food day and night. Meslin (1969, 519) terms this habit the rite of *mensa fortuna*. For other reproofs, continuing for centuries, see Hen (2008, 49); Meslin (1970, 71).

57 Martin. Brac. *corr.* 11: Iam quid de illo stultissimo errore cum dolore dicendum est, quia dies tinearum et murium observant et, si dici fas est, homo Christianus pro deo mures et tineas veneratur? Quibus si per tutelam cupelli aut arculae non subducatur aut panis aut pannus, nullo modo pro feriis sibi exhibitis, quod invenerint, parcent. Sine causa autem sibi miser homo istas praefigurationes ipse facit, ut, quasi sicut in introitu anni satur est et laetus ex omnibus, ita illi et in toto anno contingat. For Martin of Braga, see Meslin (1969, 512–24); Vinzent (1998, 32–33).

58 Martin. Brac. *corr.* 11: Ecce istas superstitiones vanas aut occulte aut palam facitis, et numquam cessatis ab istis sacrificiis daemonum. Et quare vobis non praestant ut semper saturi sitis et securi et laeti? Quare, quando deus iratus fuerit, non vos defendunt sacrificia vana de locusta, de mure, et de multis aliis tribulationibus, quas vobis deus iratus immittit? Augustine also appeals to the fact that pagan rites are useless since they do not guarantee prosperity or safety: Aug. in *Psalm.* 62.7.

59 Martin. Brac. *corr.* 18. Martin stresses that it is disgraceful enough that pagans do not observe the Lord's day, and Christians should do better.

60 Caesar. Arel. *Sermo.* 13.5. Other writers on the names of weekdays: Gaudent. Brix. *tract.* 1.5; Brown (1993, 102); Klingshirn (1994b, 216).

61 Martin. Brac. *corr.* 16: Nam ad petras et ad arbores et ad fontes et per trivia cereolos incendere, quid est aliud nisi cultura diaboli?

62 Martin. Brac. *corr.* 16: Dimisistis signum crucis, quod in baptismum accepistis, et alia diaboli signa per avicellos et sternutos et per alia multa adtenditis.

63 Martin. Brac. *corr.* 16. The *auguria* and taking omens *per avium voces* is also condemned in Martin. Brac. *corr.* 12.

64 Berzon (2016, 1–26); Flower (2013). For knowledge-ordering in Antiquity, see König and Whitmarsh (2007).

65 *Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.12 (in 392). See also Humfress (2016).

66 Council of Ancyra can. 24 = cap. 71: *Canones ex orientalium partum synodis.* Barlow 1950; 140 = Hefele 1907, i.324. For these practices, five years of penance was ordered.

67 E.g. *Indiculus Superstitionum et Paganiarum*, 222–223. Lizzi (2010, 86). For a discussion of lists of forbidden practices, see Hen (2015).

68 See, e.g., the debates on sacred springs in Sauer (2011, 507–08) (continuing but altered practices) vs. Döring (2003, 13–14) (topoi, based on Caesarius of Arles).

69 Auson. *ephem.* 2.2. For the simplified image of Christianisation of Ausonius, see Bowes (2007, 143–44). Furthermore, Bowes (2007, 145, 152–53) criticises the previous scholarship for following Ausonius in viewing the Christianisation of the countryside with 'tacit swap-sale teleology'. See also Dölger (1950, 314).

70 Paulin. Nol. *carm.* 20, on the twelfth Natalicium of St Felix, 14 Jan., 406. For diverging interpretations of the poem, see Grottanelli (2005); Trout (1995).

71 Frankfurter (2011, 86–87), speaks of the 'caricatured "paganism"' depicted by Paulinus of Nola.

72 The 'third paganism' could be thought of as the continuation of Veyne's 'paganisme seconde' in Veyne (1986). Frankfurter (2005) speaks of 'contextualized Christianities'.

73 Frankfurter (2005, 268), himself refers to the variety of ways in which traditions are maintained or revitalized: some are recast in Christian terms while others are preserved within older systems of expression (for example, in local cults at springs where a local saint or deity could be venerated).

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Places of Being Pagan or Christian: Ireland and Rome

CHAPTER 10

Being Christian in Late Antique Ireland

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Abstract

Conversion to Christianity in late antique Ireland is frequently interpreted as the replacement of one set of practices, broadly and problematically defined as pagan, with new and transformative Christian ones. This assumes clear boundaries between being Christian and being pagan throughout the 4th and 6th centuries CE, the period during which Christianity and, eventually, its institutions became ever more important. However, a growing body of material evidence, alongside a reinterpretation of textual sources, illuminates blurred, shifting and deeply contingent boundaries. This aligns with what is known of Christian conversion elsewhere in Roman and post-Roman Late Antiquity. For example, burial practices, the use of epigraphy (ogam stones) and the demarcation of physical Christian spaces all highlight different aspects of complex and changing religious affiliations. Sometimes it is possible to pinpoint moments when the boundary between being Christian and being pagan shifted, as the example of the celebration of

the Feast of Tara by the Christian king Díarmait mac Cerbaill in 560 demonstrates. Throughout these formative centuries, Irish Christians and pagans lived side by side and shared the same environments. Ultimately, the much-analysed Christian culture of the 7th century grew out of these shared experiences.

Keywords: religious affiliations, early Ireland, burials, epigraphy, St Patrick

Framing the Debate

Understanding religious affiliation is notoriously complex, especially at the intersection of belief and practice. Where does one end and the other begin? How important are they in defining each other? What factors drive the relationships between rival forms of religious identification? Such questions are difficult to answer, either generally or specifically. For instance, how did late antique Christians interact with pagans? To what extent did these interactions vary due to diversity in local cultural norms (Brown 2003; Johnston 2018b)? Did these factors shape events in Ireland? And, of course, paganism was no more a monolithic entity than Christianity: both are fuzzy categories comprising a wide spectrum. One way to think about these related questions is through considering three snapshots and their significance. The first is from 3rd-century Carthage and is suggested by Éric Rebillard's influential study of North African burials in Late Antiquity (Rebillard 2009). In 212 CE, Tertullian addressed an open letter to Scapula, the proconsul of Africa, protesting pagan violation of Christian graves, presupposing a straightforward distinction between the two groups (*Ad Scapulam*, 1125–32. See Dunn 2002, 47–55; Rebillard 2009, 8–10). This can be compared with the 4th-century curse tablet from Romano-British Bath that makes a contrast between pagan (*gentilis*) and Christian (*christianus*), suggesting binary categories of religious affiliation (Burnham et al., 456–57). However, in his *De Idolatria*, Tertullian addresses the reality of an environment where Christian life was deeply embedded in a civic culture steeped in paganism. He objects to those Christians who feel free to sell incense for the temples even if they do not burn it for the idols themselves; he also objects to the participation of Christians in the civic life of Carthage, arguing that all festivals are idolatrous (Rebillard 2009, 169–71). Tertullian is disturbed at how easy it is to mistake a Christian for a pagan. Yet it is probable that

the Christians whom Tertullian criticised saw themselves not as pagan but as participants in a shared culture in which belief was only one of many facets. This is not to say that religious belief did not, at times, become a major focus of an individual's or a group's affiliation. For example, the trauma of the Great Persecution of Diocletian produced strong communal self-identifications and boundaries between 'us' and 'them', nourished by belief. These were expressed through Donatism in North Africa and less directly, although no less powerfully, in the Arian controversy (Digeser 2012).

The second snapshot is distant from 3rd-century Carthage, both in time and space. The origin story of the great collection of vernacular legal tracts known as the *Senchas Már* explores the foundations of early medieval Irish law, explicitly presenting it as an amalgamation of Christian belief and the best of native tradition (Carey 1994; McCone 1986). This story is embedded in a number of the tracts that make up the collection, the compilation of which has been placed in the second half of the 7th century (Breatnach 2011). A somewhat later introduction gives the fullest narrative (McCone 1986; Wadden 2016). It imagines St Patrick, a 5th-century Romano-British bishop who came to be celebrated as the 'apostle' of Ireland (Binchy 1962; Dumville 1993; O'Loughlin 1999, 1–47), overseeing a collection of laws built on a convergence of Christianity with custom (Carey 1994). St Patrick relies on native experts, all recent converts: he is joined by two other bishops, three kings, two poets and an authority on Irish law. The tale suggests that there is a difference between formal pagan beliefs and native practices. These practices were acknowledged to be of non-Christian derivation, but this did not make them inherently suspect. On a fundamental level, the text circumvents Tertullian's anxieties. The narrative does so in a way that deserves further comment. Most individuals in late antique Carthage or 7th-century Ireland are unlikely to have identified themselves singularly through the lens of religion. They were also members of families and social groups and lived in specific environmental and economic landscapes (Brubaker 2002; Rebillard and Rüpke 2015). The *Senchas Már* origin legend encodes this understanding on a social level by specifically naming culturally important groups, the aristocracy and the learned classes, in order to show them working hand in hand with the ecclesiastical elite.

However, the *Senchas Már*'s vision of an ecclesiastically directed acculturation, one which is presented as essentially harmonious despite

initial conflict, is not the only image that early Irish Christians had of their past. By the second half of the 7th century, the great church of Armagh had begun to solidify a position of pre-eminence among the Irish, founded on a canny appropriation of the Patrick legend alongside a highly successful drive for patronage, underpinned by extensive landholdings (Charles-Edwards 2000, 416–40; Ó Cróinín 2017, 172–85). Two hagiographers, Muirchú moccu Machthéni and Bishop Tírechán, composed highly embellished accounts of Patrick's career, telescoping the transformation of pagan to Christian into a single generation during the 5th century. However, Tírechán's *Collectanea*, in particular, displays anxieties about the persistence of pagans: they literally speak from the grave. His strategies for dealing with the talking dead are telling and constitute the final snapshot.

Tírechán's first description of a pagan burial sharply distinguishes it from Christian practice (*Collectanea* 12). In a short episode, the pagan king of Tara, Lóegaire mac Néill, tells Patrick that his father enjoined upon him to be buried in the traditional manner, armed with weapons and facing in the direction of the enemies of his family, the Leinstermen. Although fantastical, with no demonstrable basis in the material reality of early medieval Ireland, the anecdote is rich (O'Brien 2008, 2020). Here is the pagan past speaking, the ancestors themselves acting as an impediment to conversion. Yet, just as with Tertullian's writings, the idea that pagans and Christians might actually be similar runs through the *Collectanea*. The author shows that both groups practised extended inhumation burial. Tírechán tells how Patrick comes across a gigantic grave and, driven by curiosity, causes the corpse to rise to temporary life (*Collectanea* 40). The giant identifies himself as a swineherd, the grandson of Cass. He was killed violently by a warrior band. Patrick baptises the resurrected swineherd and saves his soul before he is returned to pious silence. This fascinating anecdote touches on issues such as the salvation of the pagan ancestors, a theme present in other accounts of conversion from outside Ireland (Meens 2014, 577–96). Tírechán's anecdote is also one of the earliest examples of the popular medieval literary trope of Patrick learning about the past from friendly pagans and fresh converts, acknowledging the value of non-Christian history (Nagy 1997).

Significantly, the swineherd's story is immediately followed by Patrick discovering two new graves (*Collectanea* 41). One is marked with a cross, but a post-mortem conversation reveals that the cross had been

accidently positioned over the wrong grave. Patrick corrects the error, removing the cross from the pagan burial and placing it over that of the Christian. His charioteer suggests that the saint could have sprinkled the water of baptism over the pagan grave ensuring salvation, but Patrick replies that it was not part of God's plan to save this particular man. Incidentally, the same basic tale, although not as well developed, is found in the work of the other Armagh hagiographer, Muirchú (*Vita Patricii* ii.2). The juxtaposition of the two episodes in the *Collectanea* is meaningful. It shows that Tírechán was concerned with the ultimate fate of the pagan ancestors but was unsure how to physically distinguish those who were saved from those who were damned. Indeed, Elizabeth O'Brien's pioneering research on Irish burials has shown that Tírechán's fears were well-founded. It is extraordinarily difficult to tell Christian and pagan burials apart at any point between the 4th and 8th centuries CE (O'Brien 1992, 2009, 2020). In fact, this problem is well represented in other regions of the late antique west, especially as the rite of extended inhumation was not Christian in origin (Blaizot 2007).

These snapshots serve to illuminate the difficulties, tensions and contradictions inherent in demarcating being pagan from being Christian, especially if one considers both textual and material evidence. Tertullian's *Ad Scapulam* may seem far removed from Tírechán's musings about a mistaken grave-marker, but they reveal a similar fear: that of appropriation, whether it be through pagan violation of Christian graves or through the misidentification of one for the other. This concern with the drawing of boundaries, physical as well as spiritual, is a powerful theme. Intriguingly, the sprinkling of baptismal water on a pagan grave as a form of Christianisation, although not realised, is suggested by Tírechán as one solution: it can turn a pagan burial into a Christian one, redrawing the spatial and temporal lines separating paganism from Christianity. The *Senchas Már*, on the other hand, presents a seemingly more positive model, one where continuities in practice were exempted from condemnation as pagan. Non-Christian origins did not imply that something was un-Christian or even relevant to religious affiliation. Strikingly, this model involved compromise, a blurring of boundaries and an understanding that 'them' might actually be part of 'us'. Nonetheless, revealing as these examples are, it is necessary to look before and beyond them to more fully explore the meanings of being Christian in late antique Ireland. They are reverse stepping stones, pointing back to the earlier processes that shaped the

gradual growth of Christianity. It is likely that Irish Christians were a minority well into the 6th century: their compromises with pagan neighbours helped establish the outlook of 7th-century writers, going some way to explaining their sense of the pagan in the present (Hughes 1966, 44–56; Johnston 2017a, 120–23). What were the affiliations of these early Christian communities? How did belief and practice intersect, and is this intersection echoed in a meaningful way in later writings?

Locating the Earliest Irish Christians

The difficulties inherent in this exploration must be emphasised. Contemporary written sources are sparse, especially from before the middle of the 6th century. While the classic ogam inscriptions, a corpus of more than 400 inscribed stones concentrated in south and southeast Ireland but also found in western Britain, offer some insight, it is one that is limited by content (Macalister 1945–1949; McManus 1991, 44–47). They mainly comprise names in primitive Irish, with a small minority including references to the profession of the individual commemorated by the monument (McManus 1991, 58). Difficulties of interpretation are exacerbated by the challenge of establishing an absolute chronology: origin dates for the ogam script range from the 2nd century CE to the 5th (McManus 1991, 78–100; Harvey 2017). Furthermore, although the earliest Irish Christians erected commemorative ogam stones (Swift 1997), it is doubtful that this is a Christian phenomenon per se, and it is likely that many of the extant stones are not expressions of religious affiliation (Johnston 2017b, 29–39). They seem to prioritise kindred relationships and, potentially, political aspirations (McManus 1991, 163–66; Swift 1997, 40–49). Indeed, ogam arguably speaks to another dynamic, the role of the Roman frontier in the formation of aspects of Irish elite culture. This eventually included Christianity but was by no means confined to it and, in fact, predated its 5th-century growth (Johnston 2017b, 23–46). But even these contexts have complications, as the Irish frontier features only sporadically in Roman textual sources, being most prominent in the 4th and 5th centuries, a period during which Irish barbarian raiders, known as Scotti, took advantage of Roman weaknesses in western Britain (Charles-Edwards 2000, 145–72; Johnston 2017a, 110–17). If anything, recent research breakthroughs have been in examinations of the arte-

factual legacies of connections between Ireland and the empire, particularly Roman Britain (Cahill Wilson 2014a). These challenge long-established theories about life in late Iron Age Ireland (Cahill Wilson 2014b). It is no longer possible to see late antique Ireland as entirely defined by the arrival of Christianity. Furthermore, conversion was not simply an act of exchanging sets of religious belief but took place within broader multivalent processes of acculturation (Hughes 1966, 10). Thus, in order to identify the earliest Irish Christians, scholars need to locate their pagan neighbours. Being Christian, and its implications for the mental and material worlds of the 5th and 6th centuries, cannot be appreciated in isolation.

Nonetheless, the evidential challenges outlined above have meant that historians tend to rely on a small number of key textual sources, dating from the 5th century, in order to situate the arrival and expansion of Christianity – the very sources that were so important for the hagiographical elaborations of the legend of St Patrick in the 7th century, already discussed. The most influential by far are the writings of Patrick, the *Epistola ad Milites Corotici* and *Confessio*. Both of these texts appear to have been composed when Patrick's mission in Ireland was well established but are also responses to crisis and critique (Ó Cróinín 2017, 45–50; O'Loughlin 1999, 14–47). Frustratingly, they present what are effectively one-sided conversations: the content of the criticisms directed at Patrick, as well as the nature of his audiences, can only be inferred from his own works, making these sources as circular as they are personal. Fortunately, there are broad contextual clues, including references to what appear to be continuities in civic life in Romanised Britain, the importance of monasticism in Gaul and practices of ransoming hostages from the Franks (*Epistola* 10; *Confessio* 1, 43; see also Dark 1993). Yet, these remain tantalisingly difficult to pin down, to such an extent that, although Patrick's 5th-century floruit is a cornerstone of Irish historiography, it remains unclear where he should be placed within that century (Dark 1993; Dumville 1993, 29–43; Charles-Edwards 2000, 214–33; Ó Cróinín 2017, 45–48).

This chronological imprecision is not a factor for the other major documents informing the narrative of the establishment of Ireland's early Christian communities. These constitute the brief contemporary comments of Prosper of Aquitaine, writing between the 430s and 450s (*Chronicle* 473; *Contra Collatorem* 271), alongside the probably less reliable *Vita Germani*, composed by Constantius of Lyon in the

470s or 480s (*Vita Germani*, 225–83). Prosper's statements are all that we know for certain about the appointment of Palladius, as the first bishop to the Irish believing in Christ, by Pope Celestine in 431, and subsequent claims for its success (Charles-Edwards 1993). In addition, Prosper touches on the mission of Germanus of Auxerre to combat Pelagianism in Britain, similarly at the Pope's behest, and suggests that Palladius was crucial to its inception. The *Vita Germani* expands on Germanus' activities in Britain but mentions neither Celestine nor Palladius, crediting the Gallic Church with the initiative (*Vita Germani*, 259, 269–71). The political biases of Prosper and Constantius have been usefully explored (Mathisen 1989, 115–43) and it seems likely that interest in Ireland fitted into papal policies to expand Christianity beyond the old frontiers of Roman power, hand in hand with fighting heresy (Charles-Edwards 1993; Wood 1984, 1987). There is a strong possibility that Palladius was appointed as an envoy to help manage the relationships between Irish secular authorities, Irish Christians and their Romano-British counterparts (Johnston 2018a). So, unlike the Patrick-related sources, those linked to the appointment of Palladius can be convincingly and closely contextualised. In a sense, these valuable documents offer mirrored challenges. Palladius can be politically situated but his experiences are largely lost because we have no other unambiguous contemporary records of his Irish episcopate; in contrast, Patrick's experiences are foregrounded in *Confessio* and *Epistola*, but the political landscape that he inhabited is obscured.

Nevertheless, as this brief discussion has shown, scholars can examine a reasonably extensive body of material, comprising archaeological, epigraphic and documentary evidence, dating to the period during which significant Irish pagan and Christian communities coexisted, from roughly the end of the 4th century to the mid-6th. However, much of its potential remains untapped by historians. Admittedly, there has been a considerable and often illuminating debate on the institutional growth of the Church (Etchingham 1999; Hughes 1966, 39–78; Ó Corráin 1981; Sharpe 1984), along with fruitful use of comparative frameworks (Flechner and Ní Mhaonaigh 2016; Ní Chatháin and Richter 1984). Yet insights into institutional developments have not been matched in other areas. Scholars have generally felt more comfortable discussing how the later Christian Irish felt about a vanished pagan past than thinking about the actual intersections of pagan and Christian communities (McCone 1990, 54–83). This tendency

has been amplified by a reductionist interpretation of pre-Christian experiences. It has long been the consensus that these are ultimately unknowable, particularly because there are few contemporary textual witnesses to Irish pagan beliefs. Even Patrick's discussion of them, a primary focus of his conversion efforts, is vague, allowing limited room for speculation (*Confessio* 38, 40, 58–59). In some respects, this reductionism has been a necessary corrective to a romanticisation of the pagan past and flawed efforts to reconstruct it from classical writings about the Celts or through analysing much later Irish vernacular literature (Jackson 1964; McCone 1990, 1–28). It can also be a trap: it should not be assumed that Irish pagans in Late Antiquity were defined solely by religious affiliation and that this is the only meaningful focus through which their lives can be examined. For instance, knowledge of the material culture of the 4th to the 6th centuries CE has expanded considerably (Cahill Wilson 2014b, 2017). It is possible to analyse the use of imported objects, including brooches, pins and consumables, by the Irish elite and explore what they reveal about the depth of contact with the Roman world, particularly Britain (Bateson 1973, 1976; Johnston 2017a). However, these explorations can rarely separate pagan from Christian, as obvious identifiers of religious affiliation are largely lacking before the 6th century and, as already mentioned, the burial evidence is not decisive. This is not altogether surprising, as a distinctively religious visual vocabulary began to complexify in the Christian heartlands only from the late 4th century. The simple cross became popular towards the end of that century; before this, the Chi-Rho had been the dominant symbol (Petts 2003, 104).

On balance, it is very likely that Irish pagans and Christians had a great deal in common, living in the same physical and economic environments, in much the same way as Tertullian's 3rd-century Carthaginians. These material realities underpin Patrick's comments on the personal, political and communal interactions of Irish pagans and Christians (Johnston 2018b, 14–15). He is acutely aware of a range of challenges. Patrick deploys at least two patterns, one emphasising accommodation to pre-existing social structures and the other more reflective of a distinct Christian identity being formed under conditions of stress. To take the former first: throughout the *Confessio*, in particular, it is clear that Patrick worked within contemporary power dynamics as much as possible; he does not directly challenge them and there is no sense that he seeks their replacement (*Confessio*, 86–89). In

a much-discussed passage Patrick describes the payments he makes to individuals who have local authority (*Confessio*, 86–87). This is not the place to speculate as to whether these were kings, judges or Druids (Ó Corráin 2013), but what it does show is a Christian leader working within pragmatic parameters that accept the dominance of non-Christians. Here, and elsewhere, Patrick operates through the time-honoured practices of gift-giving and enlisting the local elites for protection (*Confessio*, 76–77, 84–87). On the other hand, he strongly emphasises Christian particularism, defining it through a community of believers who are contrasted with pagans and apostates, Irish or otherwise. He foregrounds correct belief, aligning himself with Christian orthodoxy (*Confessio*, 54–55). However, his converts are frequently placed in positions of stress, often from parents but also, as the *Epistola* attests, due to the prevalence of raiding in the Irish Sea region (*Epistola*, 26–29). The familial conflicts, frequently described as intergenerational, acutely highlight the extent to which Christians and pagans lived within the same social spaces, making tensions inevitable. After all, defining oneself as Christian within these spaces could be problematic and disruptive of accepted norms. Patrick supports his converts through praising their special lifestyle choices, becoming monks, virgins and celibates. It is noteworthy, too, that although Patrick is understandably interested in elite conversion, he also emphasises that of women and shows awareness of the plight of Christian slaves, the latter a concern born out of deep personal experience (*Confessio*, 80–81).

Patrick's emphasis on celibacy as a way of being Christian raises the question of how these celibates distinguished themselves. Did they adopt particular forms of dress or hairstyle? This is a point that was important to Muirchú writing in the 7th century: he foregrounds the distinctiveness of clerical dress, although it must be remembered that this is retrospective (*Vita Patricii,* 76–77). The resistance to the celibate vocation among elements of the pagan population, at least as described by Patrick, suggests that it was a controversial choice in Irish society. Did it imply a distancing from local communities or, perhaps, the creation of rival sources of authority, in much the same way as Peter Brown suggests for the holy men of Syria and Egypt? (Brown 1971). The existence of self-aware and defined Christian communities is further attested in early penitential and penitential-style literature, although these are a product of later in the 6th century at the earliest (Meens 2014, 37–45). As Kathleen Hughes points out, they seem to express

some suspicion of the secular legal system and hint that the very high status ultimately given to clerics in that system had not yet been established consistently in customary practice (Hughes 1966, 39–56). This was in place by the second half of the 7th century, as the compilation of the *Senchas Már* shows. Another proviso is that the penitentials, by their very nature, focus on normative Christian behaviour and may highlight distinctions that were not present in all communities or as important as the penitentials imply. So, scholars are left to wonder how Patrick's Christians, and those of Palladius, marked themselves apart as special communities. Liturgical practice must have been part of this, although even here there are uncertainties around levels of participation, as well as the fact that the liturgy itself was in a state of flux (Bowes 2015; Petts 2003, 25). What can be said, more securely, is that Patrick shows an interest in credal teaching (*Confessio*, 54–55). Moreover, the communication between the papacy and Irish Christians, however indirect, that led to the appointment of Palladius as bishop implies an awareness of the importance of institutional stability, surely a major step in communal self-identification and organisation.

Creating Christian Spaces

There seems little doubt that the 6th century witnessed a decisive tipping point towards Christianity. Yet for something which seems so obvious and is implicit in the Christian literature produced from the second half of the 6th century, it can be difficult to trace, particularly before the Chronicle evidence becomes contemporary by the final quarter of the century (Evans 2010, 115–70; Hughes 1972, 99–159). This is especially so if the focus is on practicalities. These include the consolidation of Christianity in institutional form and its expansion across the island in the form of buildings, estates and graveyards. These attest to an era where being Christian in late antique Ireland was becoming normative. This did not mean that Christianity had not changed or adapted. Indeed, as already discussed, Patrick showed a keen understanding of the power structures of Irish society and worked within them. The celebration of Feis Temro (Feast of Tara) is an example of the persistence of group activities – ones that in hindsight came to be seen as incompatible with Christianity (Johnston 2018b, 20–21). The *feis*, an inauguration ceremony of pre-Christian origin, appears to have last been held in 560 by Díarmait mac Cerbaill, the Uí Néill overking.

It is recorded in the Annals of Ulster, and in a later interpolation the Clonmacnoise Chronicle texts note it as the last one ever to have been held (Binchy 1958). This same Díarmait, more than a century later, is praised by Adomnán, the abbot of Iona, as having been ordained by God (*Vita Columbae*. i.36). This is, more than likely, a manipulation of Díarmait's image by Adomnán. However, while Díarmait's Christianity is sometimes portrayed as contingent, there is no reason to think that the king did not self-identify as Christian (Byrne 1973, 96–97). His role as patron of Clonmacnoise was probably a decisive one. It is likely that Díarmait's religious affiliation was one among the many that he held; another was being king of Tara. He had intersecting loyalties. The survival of the Feast of Tara into the latter half of the 6th century emphasises the importance of customary activities. Are these activities in which the earliest Irish Christian communities participated?

In these contexts, it needs to be highlighted that one of the fundamental points of separation between pagans and Christians in late antique Ireland was the importance of a new category of religious persons to the latter, a category whose formation is emphasised by Patrick (*Epistola*, 26–29; *Confessio*, 78–83). It is unlikely that there was serious direct continuity between pre-Christian and Christian religious classes, apart from a few individuals. For example, examinations of the well-attested pagan priesthoods of the later Roman empire show that they differed in important ways from Christian ecclesiastical classes. They rarely employed permanent religious professionals, making them less expensive to maintain over time (Brown 2012). This is not to say that the Druids of late antique Ireland resembled classical priesthoods but to point out that the Christian model was not a normative one. However, by the 7th century the ecclesiastical elite was so well established in Ireland that it held a position of primary importance within the vernacular legal system and had become normative as a result. This contrasts with the remnants of the Druids, whose status was significantly lower, although the fact that they feature in the legal literature at all is suggestive of some form of survival (Slavin 2010).

However, scholars are not yet in a position to answer some basic questions about the size of 6th-century Irish ecclesiastical communities. There is as yet no equivalent to A.H.M. Jones's study of the social history of the later Roman empire which includes estimates of the number of clergy in different dioceses (Jones 1964, 713–15, 873–94). Clare Stancliffe has done the same thing for the diocese of Tours in

the 4th and 5th centuries and Ian Wood for the Merovingian period (Stancliffe 1979; Wood 2018). Projects estimating the extent of the built landscape of the early Irish Church are beginning to substantially fill the gap, but much remains to be answered (Ó Carragáin 2021). When did Irish churches begin to scale upwards, both physically and in terms of personnel, and how was this achieved? One model, of somewhat later date, is provided by the *Additamenta* in the Book of Armagh. They illuminate how that church built up its property dossier. Property changing hands was fundamental to the establishment of Christianity (Brown 2012, 291–300, 500–02; Jones 1964, 894–910). Regular donations were economically even more desirable than one-off grants, so the establishment of networks of patronage was absolutely crucial: they must have been a powerful push factor in the development of Irish ecclesiastical federations. These federations created definite Christian spaces. Furthermore, while the major evidence for increases in production associated with an ecclesiastical economy, such as water mills and weirs, comes from after 600, it must be partly rooted in 6th century property transactions (Brady 2006; Lucas 2005, 76–81). However, it is dangerous to extrapolate backwards from the dense network of churches that can be found in parts of Ireland from the 7th century. The evidence for this, particularly Tírechán's *Collectanea*, indicates that ecclesiastical rivalries were rampant and that the origins of different sites were contested (*Collectanea*, 140–41, 142–43, 160–61). Moreover, a wide distribution of Christian churches can be more indicative of geographical reach than of depth of belief.

Another potentially fruitful line of inquiry is to consider the actual physical spaces occupied by Christians. How did they differ from those of pagans? I have previously made a few preliminary points that are worth revisiting (Johnston 2018b). The first is that scholars have no certain idea of what structures the earliest Irish Christians employed. Extrapolation from elsewhere, however, especially late Roman Britain, provides likely scenarios, such as the use of the equivalent of house churches (Thomas 1985, 181–84). Christian spaces may not have differed much at all from secular buildings, perhaps distinguished only by the presence of an altar or liturgical vessels. The sacred space could well have been incorporated into a larger non-ecclesiastical building. As Christianity expanded, this model was replaced by one where the Church had the land on which to construct formal ecclesiastical structures. Unfortunately, because of the dominant use of organic materials

in their creation, especially before the 9th century, these do not survive to the present day (Ó Carragáin 2010, 17–19). But, as Tomás Ó Carragáin has shown, they were modelled according to conscious choices (Ó Carragáin 2010, 36–37).

Intriguingly, these conscious choices contrast with Roman developments, even though the latter are the direct inspiration for the form that Irish churches took. It has been demonstrated that on the continent and even in Britain, although the evidence is sparser for the latter, secular and ecclesiastical spaces overlapped, especially in the form of the basilica. Because of this, west–east orientation is not always a feature and it is sometimes difficult to identify churches because they are so similar to non-ecclesiastical buildings (Thomas 1985, 155–201). It was only later that a more distinctive palette emerged. To put it simply, late antique churches shared the same architectural vocabulary as Roman state buildings. This meant that the sense of social and political power associated with the secular basilica could be transferred to the churches. However, in Ireland this shared vocabulary did not exist. In a visually profound break, the simple rectilinear unicameral churches, orientated west–east, used by Irish Christians presented striking contrast, not continuity. The rectangular churches are completely different from the predominantly circular living spaces of round-houses and the circular or figure-of-eight structures found at pre-Christian cult centres such as Emain Macha (Wailes 1982). The architectural grammar, indeed the very vocabulary, is distinctively different. These churches may have been architecturally simple, but they made powerful statements (Johnston 2018b). This lies at the other end of the spectrum from the classic ogam inscriptions. Despite their clear debt to Roman epigraphy, the ogam stones situate themselves firmly within a native orthostatic idiom. They are a nativist appropriation. The churches, on the other hand, are not. This is not to say that practicalities did not shape their construction (Ó Carragáin 2010, 22). However, they functioned within environments defined as Christian.

Common Grounds? Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Ireland

By the 7th century a framework of Christian space was firmly established, but the memories of its construction still persisted. For the authors of the *Senchas Már*, Christianity had come to reinterpret and

recalibrate pre-Christian culture. This was not simply a matter of direct replacement, however. Being Christian in late antique Ireland evolved and changed. Small religious communities grew more substantial, and extensive property was accumulated. An internationally outward-looking Hiberno-Latin literature was the product of deep engagement with Christian scripture and literacy (Johnston 2013). But it is easy to forget that not everything was rooted in shifting religious affiliation. This was something of which early medieval writers were aware: they realised that customary practices, the rhythms through which individuals and communities communicated, were not necessarily or ideally factors in religious identification. After all, changes could be made to the meaning of a given practice rather than the practice itself being transformed. Tírechán, once again, provides an apposite example. Throughout his text Patrick traverses a landscape where wells are focal points for communal action and conversion (*Collectanea*, 134–35, 140–45, 148–55). In one case he comes across a well worshipped as a god. The saint blesses the well, removing its pagan associations. He then performs a baptism (*Collectanea*, 152–55). Thus, the well retains its special character but its significance is reinterpreted. Even more profoundly, writers such as Tírechán acknowledged that pagans and Christians had long coexisted and were frequently indistinguishable. They lived together in small rural communities, gathered at the same wells and were buried in the same familial plots. And in these shared spaces, for both the living and the dead, the pagans of late antique Ireland, their values and their customs, shaped emerging Christian identities.

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CHAPTER 11

Ireland at the Edge of Time and Space

Constructions of Christian Identity in Early Medieval Ireland

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Abstract

Conversion on a deeper level entails a change in identity, on both the communal and the individual level. It requires a reorientation of one's identity regarding one's place in the world in relation to the divinity (or divinities, depending on the religion in question). The Christianization of Ireland in the Early Middle Ages was a process spanning centuries, starting with St Patrick and other missionaries in the 4th century and continuing until the 6th and 7th centuries, when we have St Columbanus with a self-assured Christian identity writing letters to the pope, among others, and the followers of St Patrick, Muirchú and Tírechán turning St Patrick's life and deeds into hagiography. Adomnán, another 7th-century hagiographer, writes of the holiness of St Columba on the island of Iona in the Inner Hebrides with a view over the whole Chris-

tendom despite his remote geographical location. Christian identity should, furthermore, be otherworldly in character, as its orientation should always be towards the true home of Christians in heaven – as evidenced by these early medieval Irish authors writing about what it means to be a Christian in this world.

Keywords: religious identity, conversion, Early Middle Ages, Ireland, Christianity, Christianisation

Introduction

The conversion, or rather the Christianisation, of a country brings about the forging of a new religious identity. Christianity poses new questions about the identity of the people and entails the need to tie local historical traditions concerning the origins of the land and its inhabitants into the grand scheme of the biblical history of salvation. In Ireland, this forging of a new identity happened from the 5th century onwards. Unfortunately, most of our sources are no earlier than the 7th century, when monastic authors started writing down their traditions and narratives concerning their institutions' past. Therefore, our written sources give a limited view of the actual process of Christianisation, constructed from the point of view of a mostly Christian culture looking into its own past.

Identity construction can happen on two levels. First, there is the identity of an individual asking 'Who am I?' and 'What is my place in the society and in the world?' At this level, the introduction of Christianity restructures the worldview of the individual, creating a new type of orientation in relation to personal relationships with the supernatural, new rules of behaviour and new mental maps of the world, both natural and supernatural. Second, conversion also affects collective identities. In this case, I am talking of the national identity of the Irish as part of Christendom. Forming a collective identity means drawing a line between 'us' and 'them', here Christians and pagans, and building communal cohesion through a shared understanding of the group's past and present.

Medieval Christian identities were simultaneously local and 'global', since by becoming Christians people became members of the larger collective of Christendom while also retaining or constructing identities at a more local level. With the advent of Christianity came Christian learning as well, which necessitated locating Ireland in both space

and time within this larger framework of the world and its past. The aim of this chapter is to explore various early medieval narratives concerning the Irish people and their place in the world, and the ways in which these narratives played a part in the construction of an Irish Christian identity –on both individual and communal levels – in their authors' present. These narratives concerned not only the past and the present, however, but also the future: medieval authors saw history teleologically progressing towards the end and the judgement awaiting all. It is this eschatological aspect of Christianity and its relationship to constructions of Christian identities which I want to explore in this chapter. How did early medieval Irish learned authors see the Irish people as a Christian *gens* located in this world *vis-à-vis* God's eternity in the other world? What did becoming a Christian mean for them from this eschatological perspective? How did they locate Ireland in both space and time, and what did that mean for their Christian identity?

St Patrick and the Island at the Edge of Space and Time

Ireland was located at the edge of the known world; it was the last piece of land before the ocean.[1] Its location was also peripheral in time, since St Patrick, the 5th-century proselytiser of Ireland, saw his own work as the fulfilment of the biblical prophecy in Mt 24:14: 'This gospel of the kingdom will be announced all over the world, as testimony to all the nations, and then will come the end.'[2] Patrick saw his own work in Ireland within the framework of God's salvation history: the conversion of Ireland would mark that the end is near, since Patrick's mission brought the Gospel to the furthest reaches of land.[3] Patrick saw history in a teleological light: everything on this earth happens as decreed by God, and time is progressing towards its end, where eternity awaits. Earthly history should therefore be understood within this eschatological framework. This means that conversion happens not only on the earthly but also the eschatological plane: by becoming Christian, a person or a people joins those who are potentially saved at the final judgement.

St Patrick's extant writings, the *Confessio* and *Epistola ad milites Corotici*, are the earliest extensive written sources on the conversion of Ireland. Although Patrick was not an Irishman but a Briton first

brought to Ireland as a slave, I will briefly discuss his writings here, since many of their themes pertaining to Irish Christianity are echoed in the treatises of Irish authors of later centuries. In the *Confessio*, Patrick defends his work in Ireland against certain unspecified accusations. His main justification is the mission he has received from God: he presents himself as a humble servant of the divine. By appealing to a higher authority (i.e. God) than any earthly one, he can shield his mission against possible criticism by British bishops regarding his authority to engage in missionary work in Ireland.[4] Patrick's writings are not very useful from a historian's point of view for determining the exact place or time of his mission, but they can be used to study his worldview and his understanding of the work he was doing in Ireland.[5]

As a Roman Briton[6] first brought into Ireland as a slave and later returning as a missionary, Patrick defined his identity through the experience of being an outsider in a hostile country. At the beginning of his *Confessio*, he writes: 'God brought to bear upon us the wrath of His anger and scattered us among many peoples [*in gentibus multis*], even to the uttermost part of the earth, where now, in my lowliness, I dwell among strangers'.[7] When describing his youth as a captive in Ireland, he calls himself a *profuga*, 'a fugitive, wanderer or exile', someone living among alien people (i.e. an outsider).[8] When writing about his work among the Irish after his return there, Patrick states that he is toiling 'for the salvation of others'.[9] This is the rationale for his work: he is working not to achieve fame or status but to open up the possibility of salvation to the pagan and alien people living in Ireland. Patrick has a clear sense of destiny; he did not come to Ireland of his own choice but was sent there by God. He writes:

> Thank God always, God who showed me that I should believe Him endlessly to be trusted, and who so helped me that I, an ignorant man, in the last days should dare to undertake this work so holy and so wonderful, in such fashion that I might to some degree imitate those whom the Lord already long ago foretold would announce His Gospel in witness to all nations before the end of the world. And as we have seen it written, so we have seen it fulfilled; behold, we are the witnesses that the Gospel has been preached to the limit beyond which no one dwells.[10]

Here we see clearly that in Patrick's mind, Ireland was in a biblical sense one of the nations to which the Gospel would be preached before

the end comes.[11] He furthermore writes about his own role, quoting Acts 13:47: 'I have set you to be a light to the nations, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.'[12] Patrick therefore sees himself as an instrument of God through whom the work of God is consummated. Through his mission, the history of the Irish is set within the wider framework of salvation history and God's plan for the human race. The conversion of the Irish means that those who, in Patrick's words, previously only celebrated idols and unclean things are now made into people of the Lord and sons of God, the daughters and sons of their leaders becoming virgins of Christ and monks.[13] He furthermore writes about the Irish as the people God has found in the outermost parts of the earth.[14] The Irish people are here treated as a collective, a people at the furthest limits of habitable space and thus witnesses to the fulfilment of God's promise that the Gospel would reach the ends of the earth.

Patrick's *Epistola ad milites Corotici* is a public letter written to excommunicate the soldiers of a certain warlord named Coroticus, who had taken some of Patrick's newly converted Christians as slaves.[15] In the *Epistola*, Patrick writes that he does not count the soldiers of Coroticus as his compatriots, nor as compatriots of the Roman saints, but as being in fellowship with demons.[16] In this way, he makes a distinction between the citizens of God and those of the devil. The identity of a Christian is thus based on the knowledge of belonging to the same company as those who have already been saved (i.e. the saints), while the bloodthirsty marauders who 'live in death' are among the damned. Patrick sees his own role as that of a father who has 'begotten' the newly converted, innocent Christians taken as slaves by Coroticus' men.[17] By being converted to Christianity, Patrick's followers have gained a new life and joined the community of the saved. The men of Coroticus, however, are not pagans but Christians, since Patrick writes that one should not accept their alms or associate with them unless they free the captives and make peace with God by doing penance with tears (*Epistola* 7; see also *Epistola* 21). What differentiates them from Patrick's flock is thus not a lack of baptism but their lifestyle and disregard for God's laws. He writes of them as allies of the *Scottorum* – that is, the pagan Irish not yet converted to Christianity – and the apostate Picts in Scotland (*Epistola* 2 and 12). What unites these peoples is apparently their ultimate destiny in hell. Accordingly, the line drawn between the citizens of God and those of the devil is based not on their

baptismal status but on their eschatological fate (i.e. their status after the judgement).

Further on in the *Epistola*, Patrick repeats the apology for his work in Ireland by writing about his role as a servant in Christ, toiling among foreign people for the ineffable glory of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.[18] Noting that God made him into one of the hunters and fishers foretold to be coming in the last days, he again stresses the motif of being a stranger in a strange country and of getting his mission directly from the Lord Himself.[19] He even refers in a defensive tone to John 4:44, which points out that nobody is a prophet in their own country, thus underlining his role against the accusations coming from his homeland.[20]

Muirchú, Tírechán and the National Saint

The same motifs of a divine mission and teleological view of history can be found in the *Life of Patrick* written by Muirchú in the second half of the 7th century – that is, a couple of hundred years after Patrick's time. Muirchú's work belongs among the oldest surviving hagiographical works from Ireland, along with another work on Patrick by Tírechán, the *Life of Columba* by Adomnán, the *Life of Brigit* by Cogitosus and another work on Brigit known as the *Vita prima*.[21] In Muirchú's *Life*, we can see that the process of building the cult of Patrick as the national saint is already under way. Here Patrick is presented as the sole proselytiser of Ireland, as both the Moses and the apostle of the Irish.

As Moses, Patrick delivered the Irish from the bondage of paganism just as Moses released the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. This time, however, the physical Holy Land is replaced by the New Testament image of the heavenly kingdom to which the people are being led. Muirchú explicitly compares the two figures, stating that Patrick also had to march for 28 days through the desert when he escaped Ireland in his youth (*Vita Patricii* I 2) and that Patrick's guardian angel Victoricus hid in a burning bush on a roadside (*Vita Patricii* II 5). Furthermore, Patrick lived to the respectable age of 120, just like Moses (*Vita Patricii* II 7). Just as the Israelites were the chosen people of Moses, the Irish were destined to be the chosen people of Patrick, and he was sent to them as their prophet to free them from the ignorance of paganism.

In addition, Patrick had the function of the apostle of the Irish. He brought the Gospel to Ireland, thus opening up the possibility of salvation for the Irish.[22] In Muirchú's view, the Gospel spread both in space and time from the Holy Land of the apostolic times to the Ireland of Patrick, where he himself was an inheritor of it. The apostolic role of Patrick is clearly spelled out in the episode in which Patrick, towards the end of his life, encounters Victoricus in the burning bush. Another angel acts as Victoricus' mouthpiece, giving him the message that he should turn back on the road and return to Saul – where he was coming from – instead of continuing to his main church in Armagh (*Vita Patricii* II 5). As Patrick knew that his death was approaching, this meant that his passing away would happen not in his favourite church in Armagh but in Saul.[23] Patrick was handsomely compensated for this inconvenience, however, since the angel promised that his four requests would be granted by God. Patrick's first request concerned the pre-eminent role of Armagh within the Irish Church. The second request dealt with Patrick's authority to judge anyone who at the hour of death recites a hymn composed about Patrick. The third request specifically concerned the destiny of the descendants of a man called Díchu, who had been the first to receive Patrick in Ireland, thus securing mercy in the afterlife for his progeny. The fourth dealt with the judgement of all the Irish: 'all the Irish on the day of judgment shall be judged by you [i.e. Patrick], as is said to the apostles: "And you shall sit and judge the twelve tribes of Israel", so that you may judge those whose apostle you have been.'[24] The first request is the only one which concerns earthly matters, while the other three all deal with posthumous judgement. This underlines the importance of the eschatological perspective for Christianity: becoming a Christian is not only a matter of earthly alliances, but fundamentally it is about the posthumous destiny of the soul. The second request deals with personal judgement at the hour of death and the fourth with collective judgement at the end of time. In both cases, Patrick is the one doing the judging. By reciting the hymn in honour of Patrick, a personal relationship is established between the saint and the person commemorating him, while Patrick's work of converting the Irish means that they are singled out as his people. Patrick's role as the spiritual father of the Irish provides them with his protection, not only in this world but also in the world to come. The Irish are therefore united, as Patrick's progeny and the community of the Irish encompass all the Irish, including the living and the dead.

They are one Christian nation, whose destiny in the afterlife lies in the hands of their own apostle, Patrick, who will judge them. This soteriological argument reinforces Patrick's role among the Irish saints: as the apostle of the Irish, Patrick is the premier saint, the national saint, who has power over their destiny in the afterlife. Therefore, his veneration should hold a special place among the Irish, and from his apostolic role also logically follows the claim that Patrick's church in Armagh should have ecclesiastical superiority. Thus, the political propaganda in the *Life* is closely tied in with its spiritual message, and the two reinforce each other.[25]

The other 7th-century work on St Patrick written by Tírechán is much briefer and focuses on listing the churches founded by Patrick and the people he ordained for them. It is usually known under the name *Collectanea*, which underlines its nature as a collection of material pertaining to the churches founded by Patrick. Instead of using a biographical structure, the *Collectanea* follows the saint's itineraries around Ireland. In this way, it deals more with the laying of foundations for an organised Church in Ireland than with exciting narratives about Patrick's encounters with pagans, which form the core of Muirchú's work. The motivation for the writing of both works, however, has to do with presenting Patrick as the sole proselytiser of Ireland and, consequently, his successors as having authority over all the churches founded by him.[26] This aim can be clearly seen in episodes in which contesting claims for some churches are mentioned. One instance concerns a church that Patrick founded in a place called Mag Tóchui, which in Tírechán's time belonged to the community of Clonmacnoise, causing the men of that place to groan.[27] Tírechán goes on to mention that the community of Clonmacnoise had recently claimed several churches which originally belonged to Patrick but had apparently been deserted because of an epidemic.[28] Tírechán sets out his argument for Patrick's authority, stating:

> Moreover, my heart in me is filled with love for Patrick, for I see that deserters and arch-robbers and warlords of Ireland hate Patrick's monastic network [*paruchia*], for they have taken away from him what belonged to him and are therefore afraid, for if an heir of Patrick would investigate his *paruchia*, he could restore for him almost the whole island as his *paruchia*, because i. God gave him the whole island with its people through an angel of the Lord, ii. he taught them the law of the

Lord, iii. he baptised them with the baptism of God, iv. he made known the cross of Christ, v. and he announced [Christ's] resurrection. But they do not love his *familia*, because i. it is not permitted to take an oath against him, ii. over him, iii. or concerning him, iv. and it is not permitted cast lots against him, because all the primitive churches of Ireland are his, but he overrules whatever is sworn.[29]

Investigating the churches that belong to Patrick is exactly what Tírechán sets out do in his work: he traces the origins of various churches in different parts of Ireland to the Patrician mission, thus claiming that they belong under his jurisdiction. He furthermore claims here that an angel of the Lord gave the whole island to Patrick, and thus Patrick and his heirs in Armagh have authority over the people. According to Tírechán, the elements of Christianity that Patrick introduced to the Irish include the law, baptism, the cross and Christ's resurrection: baptism makes the people Christians; by following the law they live like Christians; the cross is the symbol of Christians; and knowledge about the resurrection forms the core of Christian teaching. Christ's death, symbolised by the cross, and his overcoming of death through the resurrection, are the good news brought by Christianity: through his death and resurrection, Christ opened the possibility of salvation to all baptised Christians who lead their lives according to the Christian laws.

In Tírechán's work, Patrick does not come to Ireland alone. Instead, he is accompanied by a number of ecclesiastical personnel of Gaulish origin.[30] Moreover, in the list of bishops and deacons ordained by Patrick, three of them are specified as being of Frankish origin.[31] The origins of Irish Christianity, therefore, lie in the hands of these outsiders, including the Briton Patrick himself. In a further episode, Tírechán relates that Patrick staffed a large church he had founded in Mag Glais with two of his monks, Conleng and Ercleng, who are identified as barbarians.[32] Their alien status is underlined by Bieler, who translates the term *barbarus* in the *Collectanea* as 'non-Roman' (*Collecteana* 20). Tírechán here seems to differentiate between those who are of native origin and those who are from outside the island, like the Gauls and the Franks.

In one episode, Patrick retreats to a mountain called Mons Aigli (i.e. Croagh Patrick) to fast for 40 days and nights, following the examples of Moses, Elias and Christ (*Collectanea* 38). Furthermore, he follows

God's command to the holy men of Ireland to climb this mountain to bless the Irish people (*Hiberniae populos*). While there, he is able to appreciate the fruits of his labour, and the holy men of Ireland come to visit their father (*ad patrem eorum uissitandum*), thus clearly expressing Patrick's dominion over them. From this high vantage point (falsely presented as the highest peak in Ireland), Patrick has command over his missionary field. All the Irish – including the saints – should venerate him as the father of their Christianity, according to Tírechán. Their identity as Christians is thus linked to their national saint, by means of whom the possibility of salvation was first offered to them.

The fate of the pre-Christian Irish is described in an anecdote in which Patrick resurrects from an enormous grave (about 36 metres in length) a huge man who had lived a hundred years earlier.[33] Weeping bitterly, the man gives thanks for being awakened even for a short while from his pains. Patrick offers him the option of believing in the God of heaven and receiving the baptism of the Lord, whereby he would not have to go back to the unhappy place where he had been. This takes place, and eventually the giant is laid again in the grave. This episode graphically illustrates that before the coming of Patrick the men of Ireland were doomed to hell, and only the baptism and belief in the Christian God brought by the saint freed them from this fate.

In another episode Patrick encounters King Loíguire, but the king is unable to accept the faith since his father had decreed that Loíguire should be buried on the ridges of Tara, like his forefathers, with his weapons facing his enemies.[34] Burial practice is here presented as dividing the pagans from Christians. By accepting the Christian faith and consequently being buried like a Christian, Loíguire would abandon his ancestors, siding with the Christians in the afterlife.

Columbanus, the Self-Confident Irishman on the Continent

Between Patrick and his hagiographers there exists a gap of a couple of hundred years with a very limited number of written sources. Saint Columbanus, the Irish monk who founded several monasteries on the continent and died there in 615, provides the foremost exception. He produced a voluminous body of writings, including sermons, letters, monastic rules, a penitential and religious poetry. Although most of Columbanus' career took place on the continent, he clearly wrote as

an Irishman, and thus we can use his writings to study the Christian identity of his age.[35] Of course, as a highly learned and widely travelled Irishman he is an exception, but nevertheless we can get a glimpse in his writings of how 6th-century Irish ecclesiastics perceived their identity as Christians.

Although Columbanus lived in a period which can still be considered fairly early in terms of Irish Christianity, he does not show any insecurity or feelings of inferiority with regard to his cultural background. In a letter to a French synod concerning the different methods of *paschal computus*, he writes:[36]

> but I admit the inmost conviction of my conscience, that I have more confidence in the tradition of my native land in accordance with the teaching and reckoning of eighty-four years and with Anatolius, who was commended by Bishop Eusebius, the author of the ecclesiastical history, and by Jerome, the holy writer of the catalogue, for the celebration of Easter, rather than to do so in accordance with Victorius, who writes recently and in a doubtful manner, and without defining anything where it was needed … But you yourselves choose whom you prefer to follow. Prove all things, and hold what is good. Far be it then that I should maintain the need to quarrel with you so that a conflict among us Christians should rejoice our enemies, meaning the Jews or heretics or Gentile heathen … for we are all joint members of one body, whether Franks or Britons or Irish or whatever be our race.[37]

Columbanus sees himself first of all as a Christian, a member of a united body consisting of different peoples and set apart from the non-Christians (i.e. Jews, heretics and pagans). Despite their differences in some practical matters, like the method of defining the date of Easter, all the Christian peoples (*gens*) are united as one body and separated from those who are outside of the Catholic Church.

Columbanus is so secure in his Christian identity that he does not shrink from advising and criticising even the pope himself. In his letter to Pope Boniface IV written in the context of the 'Three Chapters' schism, Columbanus defends his own credentials, saying:

> For all we Irish, inhabitants of the world's edge, are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who wrote the sacred canon by the Holy Ghost, and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic

> teaching; none has been a heretic, none Judaiser, none a schismatic; but the Catholic faith, as it was delivered by you first, who are the successors of the holy apostles, is maintained unbroken.[38]

From this letter it becomes clear that Columbanus considered the Irish to be part of a universal Christendom and the Catholic Church, not a separate 'Celtic' church, as has sometimes been suggested. A self-assured product of the Irish Church, he was not shy to raise his voice and instruct the ecclesiastical – and probably also secular – powers, especially considering the trouble he got into with some of the Frankish leaders, even though he came from a remote island at the world's edge.

In Letter II, Columbanus refers to himself as one who has 'entered these lands as a pilgrim' (*in has terras peregrinus processerim*). He thus positions himself as an outsider in relation to the representatives of the French Church, to whom the letter is addressed. Furthermore, being a pilgrim holds special significance for him, since the metaphor of pilgrimage for the lifelong quest for heaven is a recurring theme in his sermons.[39] In them, he calls for his audience, the monks of his monasteries, to adopt the attitude of a pilgrim, who keeps his eyes focused on the end of the journey – namely, the encounter with the sacred in the true home in heaven – without letting the sights on the way distract him. Therefore, pilgrims should always remember that as long as they are in this world, they are still on the way and in a foreign country, and everything they see here is just transitory.[40] While this idea of lifelong pilgrimage inspired Columbanus himself to leave his home and entrust his destiny in foreign lands to the hands of God, in his sermons he stresses the adoption of the attitude of a pilgrim rather than actually leaving one's monastery. Accordingly, the idea can be seen more in relation to an internal movement than to physically wandering around. Nevertheless, numerous Irish monks left their homes as a *peregrinus pro amore Dei*, like Columbanus himself, seeking to serve God outside of their home territories in Ireland, on islands in the sea or in foreign countries.[41] The idea of pilgrimage, for Columbanus, thus held an otherworldly connotation. When he refers to himself as a pilgrim, it not only means his being an outsider in another country but serves as a metaphor to comprise his whole life and his attitude towards worldly existence.

Adomnán and Columba on the Island of Iona

The same idea of life as a pilgrimage is present in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*, the late 7th-century *Life* of the founder of the monastery of Iona in Scotland, who died in 597. Columba is said to have left Ireland *pro Christo perigrinari uolens* (*VC* 2nd preface),[42] while a saintly youth named Fintan wishes to come to Columba *deserens perigrinaturus adiret* (*VC* i.2). Thus, being a pilgrim means dedicating one's life to seeking the heavenly kingdom. As a saint, Columba has fulfilled this quest in its most perfect form, showing himself ready for heavenly life while still on earth.[43] In this way, as well as through his vocation as an abbot, he leads by example, showing the way to heaven for others to follow.[44]

Columba's influence is by no means limited to his Hebridean home in Iona. According to his *Life*, he received a constant stream of visitors from Ireland and he himself travelled widely in Ireland, among the Picts in Scotland and among the Irish in the Scottish kingdom of Dál Riata. In spirit, his reach is even wider; for example, in a vision he witnesses an Italian city being consumed by fire (*VC* i.28). The *Life* was first and foremost written for a monastic audience in Iona and other Columban monasteries in Ireland, but it was clearly expected to also reach a greater audience, including Irish ecclesiastics outside of the Columban *familia* and perhaps even in Northumbria.[45] Adomnán sought to convince his audience that the significance of Columba's holiness was not limited to Iona alone but was more universal in nature, and that therefore he should also be venerated as a saint outside of the Columban *familia*. At the end of the *Life*, Adomnán directly makes the case that Columba's name should be venerated not only in Ireland and Britain but also in Spain, Gaul, Italy and even Rome itself (*VC* iii.23).

Columba's saintliness is based on his perfection as an ideal monk, and thus Adomnán's treatment of Christian identity is closely intertwined with monastic ideals. For him, the model Christian leads a monastic life by following in the footsteps of the prototypical monk, Columba. Adomnán's worldview is more universal than specifically Irish, as he held that monastic life could be led everywhere in Christendom and, accordingly, Columba should also be adopted as a model by people outside of his immediate environment. Although he lived on a remote island at the edge of the known world, Adomnán's learning was based on his broad knowledge of Christian literature. His other surviving work, *De Locis Sanctis*, a treatise concerning places in the Holy

Land, reveals a keen interest in and familiarity with the world outside
of the British Isles.[46] Geographically speaking, Iona was connected to
the wider world by the ocean, and the *Vita Columbae* mentions visitors
sailing to Iona from Ireland, Scotland and even Gaul, as well as monks
from Iona sailing in all directions, including the furthest reaches of the
known world in the north.[47] Adomnán locates Iona on the outermost
edge of the Britannic ocean, but despite its remoteness it is very much
part of the wider Christian world.[48] For him, Iona is hallowed ground
frequented by the visitations of angels and sanctified by the presence of
the holy man's grave.[49] Despite its location, it has produced a saint wor-
thy of veneration, even in Christian centres such as Rome. Therefore, it
is just as possible to lead a holy life and reach heaven in remote corners
of the earth such as Iona as in the more central regions.

In the first preface to the work, Adomnán apologises to his audi-
ence for the occurrence of Irish names in the Latin text, saying:

> Let them not despise the publication of deeds that are profitable and
> that have not been accomplished without the help of God, on account
> of some unfamiliar words of the Irish tongue, a poor language, designa-
> tions of men, or names of tribes and places – words which, I suppose,
> are held to be of no value, among other different tongues of foreign peo-
> ples.[50]

Here Adomnán is clearly expecting that his work will reach an audi-
ence that does not understand Irish. Furthermore, he writes here from
the superior perspective of a learned ecclesiastic, for whom Latin was
the language of writing and learning. While Irish was the local ver-
nacular of the Irish, a people with their own language just like other
foreign peoples, Latin was the universal language uniting all Christians
together. Again, Adomnán argues that the deeds of Columba – accom-
plished with the help of God – merit a wider audience, despite his per-
sonal provinciality.

In the second preface, Adomnán locates Columba temporarily in
the end time in a prophecy put into the mouth of a certain Mochta, a
British disciple of Saint Patrick: 'In the last years of the world will be
born a son whose name, Columba, will become famous through all the
provinces of the islands of the ocean, and will brightly illuminate the
last years of the world.'[51] Adomnán here presents Columba's work in
an eschatological and providential perspective: God has destined him

to bring light to the people living on the islands of the ocean (i.e. the outermost edges of the known world) in the end time. Furthermore, he argues that Columba's significance is not limited to his immediate surroundings but should spread more widely throughout the islands of the ocean. As Columba's successor, writing approximately a hundred years after the saint's death, Adomnán must locate his own time within the same eschatological context – the end time is near – and relevancy: by venerating Columba and following his example, one can follow his footsteps to heaven. The *Life* opens with this prophecy about Columba's role as a bringer of light, and it closes with the saint being taken to heaven and a plea for his fame to reach even Rome (*VC* iii.23). In between, Adomnán demonstrates Columba's holiness by relating his prophetical abilities (Book i), miracles of power (Book ii), and visions of heavenly light and angelic apparitions (Book iii). As a saint, Columba has reached the goal of Christian life right after his death, thereby leading the way for others to follow. In an episode concerning a penitent named Librán, the saint foretells that this follower will die in one of Columba's monasteries, thus playing his part in the Kingdom of God with the elect monks of Columba, awakening from the sleep of death to resurrection.[52] By means of penance and leading a life of obedience as a monk, Librán is thus able to secure himself a place among the elect in heaven, but unlike the saint, he has to slumber in the sleep of death in the grave before being resurrected with the monks among whom he is buried. Book iii of *Vita Columbae*, which is dedicated to visions of heavenly light and celestial beings, has several examples of souls being carried to heaven by angels at the moment of death. Among these are also members of the laity who have led virtuous lives, while the *Life* also features examples of wicked men being carried to hell by demons.[53] These souls seem to have been judged right at the moment of death so that their souls could be taken immediately to heaven or hell, while their bodies wait in their graves for resurrection.[54] Christian life was thus viewed in an eschatological light: all deeds performed on earth will be weighed and either rewarded or punished in the afterlife. Columba's saintly status means that he is already in heaven and can intercede from there on behalf of those venerating him, thus securing a special place for his elect monks. Adomnán argues that because Columba's significance as a saint exceeds any geographical boundaries, he merits veneration not only by the Irish but by Christians elsewhere. He can protect those who remember his name, both in this life through

his miracles and in the life to come.[55] Adomnán's identity as a Christian and a successor to Columba in the role of abbot of Iona is markedly international: despite his peripheral geographical location, he is well connected to the rest of Christendom, physically by the sea and spiritually through his learning. The Irish are among the Christian peoples called to the path to heaven, but the power of their saint, Columba, transcends Ireland and Scotland and he should be venerated more universally.

Irish Christians and the Path to Heaven

The earliest of the Irish authors considered in this chapter is Columbanus, who died in 615 and in whose writings a strong Irish Christian identity is already evident. It is apparent that Columbanus considered himself to be equally as Christian as any other member of the Christian Church. As a monastic leader, he felt that he had the right to take part in ecclesiastical politics and advise leaders of other churches. About half a decade later, the hagiographers of Patrick were arguing for a special place in the providential history of the Irish as followers of Patrick, their own apostle, since it was through his work that the Irish had become Christians. Furthermore, in these hagiographical works we can see the outsider, Patrick, adopted as an insider and as the father of all Irish Christians, while the pagan Irish are made into the outsiders, since they are not included in the community of the potentially saved. In his own writings, Patrick himself underlines his role as a foreigner in a foreign country, but this can also be read spiritually as reflecting the alienation that Christians should feel in this world, which is at a remove from their true home in heaven. In the early medieval Irish tradition, as exemplified by the writings of Columbanus and Adomnán, this topos should clearly be read spiritually in light of the lifelong pilgrimage of Christians to the heavenly kingdom. Becoming a Christian therefore entailed adopting this eschatological perspective, which is always directed towards the judgement and the rewards and punishments awaiting in the afterlife.

Notes

1 On the classical topos of the ocean and its islands, see Scully (2011, 3–15).

2 Patrick, *Confessio*, 40: Praedicabitur hoc euangelium regni in uniuerso mundo in testimonium omnibus gentibus et tunc ueniet finis. For other references to Ireland being located at the ends of the earth, see *Confessio*, 38, 51.

3 On Patrick's understanding of his mission and his location in space and time, see Charles-Edwards (2000, 214–16); O'Loughlin (2005, 63–78).

4 See, for example, Patrick, *Confessio* 9–15. On the accusations and Patrick's mission, see Charles-Edwards (2000, 216–29); Flechner (2011, 125–33); O'Loughlin (2005, 60–62).

5 On the problems of using Patrick's writings as historical sources, see Etchingham (2016, 187–96).

6 In *Confessio* 1, Patrick tells us that his father was a decurion, a local minor Roman official and a deacon, and his grandfather a presbyter.

7 *Confessio* 1: Dominus induxit super nos iram animationis suae et dispersit nos in gentibus multis etiam usque ad ultimum terrae, ubi nunc paruitas mea esse uidetur inter alienigenas.

8 *Confessio* 12. On the translation of this word, see O'Loughlin (2005, 147 n. 65). The same word is used in Patrick, *Epistola* 1.

9 *Confessio* 28: satagerem pro salute aliorum.

10 *Confessio* 34: Deo gratias semper agere, qui mihi ostendit ut indubitabilem eum sine fine crederem et qui me audierit ut ego inscius et in nouissimis diebus hoc opus tam pium et tam mirificum auderem adgredere, ita ut imitarem quippiam illos quos ante Dominus iam olim praedixerat praenuntiaturos euangelium suum in testimonium omnibus gentibus ante finem mundi, quod ita ergo uidimus itaque suppletum est: ecce testes sumus quia euangelium praedicatum est usque ubi nemo ultra est.

11 On Patrick's terminology for pagans and Christians, see Charles-Edwards (2016, 259–71).

12 *Confessio* 38: Posui te lumen in gentibus ut sis in salutem usque ad extremum terrae. Vulgate: Acts 13:47: posui te in lumen gentibus ut sis in salutem usque ad extremum terrae.

13 *Confessio* 41: Unde autem Hiberione qui numquam notitiam Dei habuerunt nisi idola et inmunda usque nunc semper coluerunt quomodo nuper facta est plebs Domini et filii Dei nuncupantur, filii Scottorum et filiae regulorum monachi et uirgines Christi esse uidentur?

14 *Confessio* 58: plebem suam quam adquisiuit in ultimis terrae.

15 On the letter and the identity of Coroticus, see Charles-Edwards (2000, 226–30); Dumville (1993, 107–15).

16 *Epistola* 2: non dico ciuibus meis neque ciuibus sanctorum Romanorum sed ciuibus daemoniorum.

17 *Epistola* 2: Sanguilentos sanguinare de sanguine innocentium Christianorum, quos ego in numero Deo genui atque in Christo confirmaui!

18 *Epistola* 10: seruus sum in Christo genti exterae ob gloriam ineffabilem perennis uitae quae est in Christo Iesu Domino nostro.

19 *Epistola* 12: unus essem de uenatoribus siue piscatoribus quos olim Deus in nouissimis diebus ante praenuntiauit.

20 *Epistola* 12: propheta in patria sua honorem non habet.

21 On these *Lives* and the tradition of writing hagiographies in Ireland, see Herbert (2001, 327–34); McCone (1984, 26–34).

22 On the sources and models for Muirchú's presentation of Patrick as an apostle, see O'Leary (1996, 287–301).

23 On differing traditions concerning Patrick's burial place, see Sharpe (1982, 40–43).

24 Muirchú, *Vita Patricii* II 6: Hibernenses omnes in die iudicii a te iudicentur, sicut dicitur ad apostolos: 'et uos sedentes iudicabitis duodecim tribus Israel', it eos quibus apostolus fuisti iudices.

25 On the political propaganda in the *Life of Patrick*, see Doherty (1991, 81–88). On Muirchú's understanding of the meaning of Irish conversion, see O'Loughlin (2000, 87–108, 2002, 124–45, 2005, 112–30).

26 On Tírechán's motives for writing, see Herbert (2001, 330–31); McCone (1984, 31–32); Swift (1994, 53–82).

27 Tírechán, *Collectanea* 47. See also *Collectanea* 22.

28 *Collectanea* 25: sed quaerit familia Clono, qui per uim tenent locos Patricii multos post mortalitates nouissimas.

29 *Collectanea* 18: Cor autem meum cogitat in me de Patricii dilectione, quia uideo dissertores et archiclocos et milites Hiberniae quod odio habent paruchiam Patricii, quia substraxerunt ab eo quod ipsius erat timentque quoniam, si quaereret heres Patricii paruchiam illius, potest pene totam insolam sibi reddere in paruchiam, quia Deus dedit illi i. totam insolam cum hominibus per anguelum Domini ii. et legem Domini docuit illis iii. et babtismo Dei babtitzauit illos iv. et crucem Christi indicauit v. et resurrectionem eius nuntiauit; sed familiam eius non dilegunt, quia i. non licet iurare contra eum ii. et super eum iii. et de eo iiii. et non lignum licet contra eum mitti, quia ipsius sunt omnes primitiuae aeclessiae Hiberniae, sed <supra> iuratur a se omne quod iuratur.

30 *Collectanea* 3: Venit uero Patricius cum Gallis ad insolas Maccu Chor et insola orientali, quae dicitur Insola Patricii, et secum fuit multitude episcoporum sanctorum et praespiterorum et diaconorum ac exorcistarum, hostiariorum lectorumque nec filiorum quos ordinauit.

31 *Collectanea* 7: De nominibus Francorum Patricii Episcopi tres. The Frankish followers of Patrick are mentioned also in *Collectanea* 29, where they are specified as consisting of 15 brothers and one sister.

32 *Collectanea* 20: Venierunt ad campum Glais et in illo posuit celolam magnam, quae sic uocatur Cellula Magna, et in illa reliquit duos barbarus Conleng et Ercleng monachos sibi.

33 *Collectanea* 40. See also the next episode *Collectanea* 41 for another example of the destiny of pagans. In this episode, Patrick and his charioteer pass a cross next to two new graves. When Patrick asks who is buried under the cross, a man replies from the grave, telling that he is a pagan and somebody had accidentally put the cross on his grave rather than the next one. Patrick moves the cross to its rightful place. When they continue their journey, his charioteer asks why Patrick did not offer baptism to the pagan in the grave, but the saint does not reply. The hagiographer then ventures to explain that perhaps God did not wish the man to be saved.

34 *Collectanea* 12. Muirchú tells a quite different version of the encounter between Patrick and Loíguire. In his *Life*, this lengthy episode forms the culmination of the whole work.

35 On the career of Columbanus, see Bullough (1997, 1–28).

36 On the letters of Columbanus, see Wright (1997, 29–92).

37 Columbanus, Letter II: sed Confiteor conscientiae meae secreta, quod plus credo traditioni patriae meae iuxta doctrinam et calculum octoginta quattuor annorum et Anatolium ab Eusebio ecclesiasticae historiae auctore episcopo et sancto catalogi scriptore Hieronymo laudatum Pascha celebrare, quam iuxta Victorium nuper dubie scibentem et, ubi necessare erat, nihil defienentem … Vos vero eligite ipsi quem sequi malitis, et cui melius credatis iuxta illud apostoli, Omnia probate, quod bonum est tenete. Absit ergo ut ego contra vos contendem congrediendum, ut gaudeant inimici nostri de nostra christianorum contention, Iudaei scilicet aut heretici sive pagani gentiles … unius enim sumus corporis commembra, sive Galli, sive Britanni, sive Iberi, sive quaeque gentes.

38 Columbanus, Letter V: Nos enim sanctorum Petri et Pauli et omnium discipulorum divinum canonem spiritu sancto scribentium discipuli sumus, toti Iberi, ultimi habitatores mundi, nihil extra evangelicam et apostolicam doctrinam recipients; nullus hereticus, nullus Iudaeus, nullus schismaticus fuit; sed fides catholica, sicut a vobis primum, sanctorum videlicet apostolorum successoribus, tradita est, inconcussa tenetur

39 On this theme in the sermons of Columbanus, see Ritari (2016, 47–90). On the sermons of Columbanus, see Stancliffe (1997, 93–202).

40 See especially Columbanus, Sermons IV, V, VIII. On the feeling of alienation and the life of pilgrimage in Christianity, see Claussen (1991, 33–75); Ladner (1967, 233–59).

41 On Irish ideas concerning *peregrinatio* in early medieval Irish Christianity, see Charles-Edwards (1976, 43–59); Hughes (1960, 143–51); Ritari (2016).

42 In *VC* i.7, there is a reference to the same event, which states that the saint sailed away from Ireland to be a pilgrim (uir beatus de Scotia perigrinaturus primitus enauigauit). In *VC* i.13, a man comes as an exile to the saint, who is on pilgrimage in Britain (ad sanctum in Britanniam perigrinantem).

43 *VC* 2nd preface: quamuis in terra positus caelestibus se aptum moribus ostendebat.

44 On Adomnán's vision of the role of the abbot and the goals of monastic life, see Ritari (2011, 129–46).

45 On the writing and purpose of the *Life*, see Herbert ([1988] 1996, 47–56); Nilsson (2007); Picard (1982, 160–77).

46 On this work and Adomnán's learning, see O'Loughlin (2007).

47 See, for example, (visitors from Gaul) *VC* i.28; (to and from Ireland) i.30, ii.14, 36, iii.7; (to and from Scotland) i.33–34, 41, ii.11, 26–27, 32, iii.14; (to the north) ii.42. On the idea of the ocean in *VC*, see Scully (2007, 209–30).

48 *VC* iii.23 : in hac parua et extrema ociani britannici commoratus insula. On Adomnán's mental maps, see O'Loughlin (1996, 98–122, 2007, 143–76).

49 See *VC* iii.23: 'And even after the departure of this most gentle soul from the tabernacle of the body, this same heavenly brightness, as well as the frequent visits of holy angels, does not cease, down to the present day, to appear at the place in which his holy bones repose.' For discussion, see Jenkins (2010, 35–37).

50 *VC* 1st preface: Et nec ob aliqua scoticae uilis uidelicet lingae aut humana ono-
    mata aut gentium diuersas uilescunt linguas, utilium et non sine diuina opitula-
    tione gestarum dispiciant rerum pronuntiationem.

51 *VC* 2nd preface: In nouissimis', ait, 'saeculi temporibus filius nasciturus est
    cuius nomen Columba per omnes insularum ociani prouincias deuulgabitur
    notum, nouissimaque orbis tempora clare inlustrabit.

52 *VC* ii.39. For a detailed analysis of this episode, see Ritari (2015, 391–400).

53 For righteous people being taken to heaven, see *VC* iii.6–7, 9–14; see also i.1,
    i.31, ii.25; for wicked men being taken to hell, see *VC* i.1, i.35, i.39, ii.22–23,
    ii.25.

54 On the destinies of souls in *VC* and Adomnán's vision of the judgment, see
    Ritari (2009, 152–67).

55 On Columba's posthumous miracles, see *VC* ii.44–46.

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CHAPTER 12

The *Liber Pontificalis* and the Transformation of Rome from Pagan to Christian City in the Early Middle Ages

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Abstract

This chapter offers a new perspective on the familiar topic of the transformation of Rome from pagan to Christian city in the Early Middle Ages. With the papal history known as the *Liber pontificalis* as its main focus, it considers the peculiarities of this 6th-century text's representation of Rome during the period of the pagan emperors before the beginning of the 4th century, as well as in the aftermath of the conversion of the emperor Constantine during the pontificates of Pope Silvester I and his immediate successors. The chapter argues that the text's portrait of early Christian Rome is essentially an early 6th-century one and can be interpreted as an attempt to convince readers of the dominance of the pope and the steady triumph of orthodox Christianity. Yet excellent recent work on late antique Rome has replaced the old view of a smooth and rapid transition from a pagan to a Chris-

tian city at the beginning of the 4th century. The *Liber pontificalis* was once assumed to support this neat picture, but careful reading exposes a small, impoverished, vulnerable and diverse community in Rome. At the same time, the text makes claims about the popes' unwavering leadership. The *Liber pontificalis*, in short, not only contains important information about the process of Rome's becoming a Christian city but shapes the perception that the bishops of Rome contributed substantially to the city's development as a holy and Christian city.

Keywords: city of Rome, transformation from pagan to Christian, papal history, *Liber pontificalis*, bishops of Rome, martyrs, Christian communities

Introduction

This chapter on 'being pagan, being Christian' in Rome in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages centres on an obviously well-worked topic on which there is a great abundance of wonderful new work.[1] There are nevertheless still things to be said and work to be done, particularly as far as the *Liber Pontificalis* is concerned. I shall explain more about the text below but should like first of all to offer some background.

I was lucky enough to be part of an HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) project funded by the ESF (European Science Foundation), 'Cultural Memory and the Resources of the Past', between 2010 and 2013 with colleagues, 'postdocs' and PhD students in Leeds, Vienna, Utrecht and Cambridge. Together we uncovered many examples of eclectic uses of the resources of the past in the Early Middle Ages which helped to shape identities in the post-Roman successor states of Western Europe. In the book we published as one outcome of this project, we argued that particular texts compiled in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages not only reflected social and cultural identities but also could be understood as part of an effort to shape the time and context in which those texts were written by means of restructuring the past (Gantner, McKitterick and Meeder 2015). They were thus an essential component of the formation of cultural memory in early medieval Europe; this evocation of the work of Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann was quite deliberate (J. Assmann 1999; A. Assmann 1999). My own work focused during this project, and still focuses, on a variety of late antique and early medieval texts offering

narratives of Roman history and representations of the city of Rome. A dominant theme for me, therefore, is the relationship between these very particular narratives on the one hand and, on the other, the realities of the period between the 4th and 10th centuries suggested by the range of material and other textual evidence, some of it only newly available, that we are beginning to understand in new ways. This is particularly pertinent when considering the transformation of Rome from pagan to Christian city in the Early Middle Ages and how this might be reflected in the extant sources. Discussions by many of those contributing to this volume, as well as many studies in the major European languages,[2] have all contributed interpretations of new excavations, burial practices, the development of martyr cults, liturgy and ritual, the variety of pagan and Christian experience and communities, processes of conversion and Christianisation, the diversity of social organisation, and the very gradual nature of the encroachment of Christian buildings within the Aurelian walls of the city of Rome as well as on the principal roads out of the city.[3]

All these have very satisfactorily and convincingly disrupted old but improbable notions of a neat displacement of homogenised pagans by united Christians in both physical and institutional terms with the conversion of Constantine at the beginning of the 4th century (Behrwald and Witschel 2012; Heid 2020). Much excellent work in recent years, nevertheless, has concentrated on the period from the 3rd to the 5th century,[4] and the extension of the discussion into the early medieval period in this volume is both welcome and necessary.

A distinctive aspect of many texts in the Early Middle Ages, moreover, is their dynamic relationship with Late Antiquity. This is particularly the case with texts about Rome, where the presentation and reception of versions of the past, written in the Early Middle Ages but with reference to Late Antiquity, have much to tell us about the formation of identities or, at least, about how particular individuals may have endeavoured to shape collective identities. The original *Liber Pontificalis* and its continuations are a fascinating instance of such an attempt to frame a new identity for Christians within a narrative of the transformation of Rome from pagan to Christian city. In this chapter, therefore, I want to consider in particular the peculiarities of the representations in the *Liber Pontificalis* of Rome in the time of the pagan emperors, and the transformations attributed to Silvester and his immediate successors after the conversion of Constantine to Chris-

tianity. In doing so, the oddities of its production and transmission, as well as those of its text, are pertinent, but for reasons of space I address these elsewhere (McKitterick 2016, 2019, 165–88, 2020c).

The *Liber Pontificalis* or 'Book of Popes' is a distinctively structured narrative history of Rome as a series of formulaic biographies of the popes from St Peter, the first bishop of Rome, to the end of the 9th century, that is, Lives 1–108 and 112 (no lives are extant for John VIII, Marinus and Hadrian III). They are numbered in sequence in all the earliest manuscripts and thus create a new chronology of Roman time as well as a particular understanding of the history of the bishops of Rome (*Liber Pontificalis* I; hereafter *LP* I).

Composed within the papal administration, the *Liber Pontificalis* was compiled in several stages. It is with the first of these, usually dated c. 530, and thought to be based on earlier and scrappier information, with which I shall be concerned in this chapter. When first produced, the *Liber Pontificalis* constituted a papal recasting of imperial serial biography, with all the ideological implications such an historiographical choice implies. That is, its closest parallels are not Old Testament kings, martyr passions or even saints' lives but the imperial biographical narratives of classical and late antique authors such as Suetonius, (pseudo-)Aurelius Victor and the person(s) responsible for the *Historia Augusta* (McKitterick 2011). The *Liber Pontificalis* is ostensibly a repository of factual information, but it actually offers both very particular representations of the popes and very far from disinterested narrative strategies in the deployment of information (Deliyannis 2014; McKitterick 2009; Noble 1985). The *Liber Pontificalis*, disseminated very efficiently in early medieval Europe, consequently played a major role in reorienting perceptions of Rome and the Roman past in the Early Middle Ages (McKitterick 2013, 2020a).

Each life contains standard details at the beginning about the *natio* and father of the bishop concerned, his length of time in office and information about his election. The lives then contain a variable amount of information about the religious and political life of the city as well as the bishop's contributions to the church buildings of Rome. The final formulaic information provides the number of ordinations of deacons, priests and bishops each bishop performed, the circumstances of his death and the length of the vacancy before the next bishop took office.

Two further aspects of these manuscripts need to be registered straightaway. First, only a few, of whatever date, go much beyond Life 94 of the mid-8th-century Pope Gregory III (731–741) and very few beyond Life 97 of Pope Hadrian I (772–795). Second, with the exception of one full text and two fragments, all from northern Italy and dating from the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries, all the earliest manuscripts date from the late 8th and ninth century and are of Frankish origin.[5]

A crucial factor is that the representation of the transformation of Rome from pagan to Christian city is essentially a creation of the early decades of the 6th century, when Italy was still under Ostrogothic rule. When the earliest portion of the text containing the biographies of the first 59 popes from Peter to Agapitus was composed, however, Italy was suffering the consequences of the advances of the armies of Justinian, led by Belisarius. The Christians of Rome had recently experienced the schism with Byzantium known as the Acacian schism, quite apart from the tensions usually assumed between Catholic and Arian in Italy itself as a consequence of Ostrogothic rule.[6]

The *Liber Pontificalis*'s Presentation of the Pre-Constantinian Era

The *Liber Pontificalis* opens with letter purporting to be from Jerome to Pope Damasus asking him for a history of his church, and Damasus' reply sending him 'what I have been able to find out about its history' ('Tamen quod gestum est quod potuimus repperire nostrae sedis stadium'). This preface is in all the earliest complete manuscripts and was designed to credit Damasus with the initial compilation, at least, of the *Liber Pontificalis*.[7] Jerome's own Latin translation and extension of Eusebius' *Chronicon* appears to have been a source for some of the information about Rome in the sections up to the middle of the 4th century, as was Jerome's *De viris illustribus*. The Liberian catalogue in the calendar of 354 has long been recognised as a source for the brief notes on many of the earliest popes, but the letter prefaces provide a further association of ideas for the text. Jerome had asked for an

> orderly account of the history enacted in [the] see from the reign of the Apostle Peter down to [his] own time, so that in humility I may learn which of the bishops of your see deserved the crown of martyrdom and

which of them is reckoned to have transgressed against the canons of the apostles. (*LP* I, p. 117; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 1)

Consequently the text could be seen as a continuation of the Acts of the Apostles, with a particular focus on Peter and his successors. The first life reinforces this not only by bringing Peter from Antioch, but also by stating that he was responsible for the content of Mark's Gospel as well as confirming the content of all four Gospels. In addition, Peter's debate with Simon Magus, another protagonist from the Acts of the Apostles, is described as both before the emperor Nero and before the people ('Hic cum Simone mago multas disputations habuit tam ante Neronem imperatrem quanque ante populum'). This note also continues the reference to Simon in Acts. The allegation is that Simon was undermining Peter's work, but it is otherwise impossibly uninformative, saying merely that Simon was struck down by God after a long period of disputation ('Et dum diutius altercarent, Simon divino nutu interemptus est') (cf. Perkins 2012). I explore the questions raised by this report elsewhere (McKitterick 2020c, 79–81), but of relevance here is the representation of discussion and disputes between the Christians and pagans in Rome precipitated by Christian efforts at conversion, and that these involved imperial authorities and people, if not the emperor himself.

This first life of Peter contrives to offer many of the facets of Christian identity subsequently developed further in the rest of the text: Peter's teaching, the sharing of the stories of the Gospels, the placing of these texts as both central to the Christian faith and confirmed by the *princeps apostolorum*, the dramatic affirmation of faith in the face of imperial persecution by Peter because he was martyred, his disputation and therefore rejection of the erroneous views of Simon Magus as an indication of the maintenance of an accurate and orthodox Christian faith, and lastly Peter's provision for his succession. Further, the life of Peter and the subsequent lives in themselves offer a common history for Rome and help to construct a collective identity for the Christians of Rome

The most obvious messages of the lives before the conversion of Constantine are the championing of the Christian faith and Roman Christians' resistance to state power – that is, what Burrus and Lehmann describe as 'a public stance of political resistance to empire' (Burrus and Lehmann 2012, 7). This is indicated by the bald catalogue

of those martyred. Of the 33 popes before Silvester, 24 were recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis* as martyrs – Peter, Linus, Cletus, Clement, Evaristus, Alexander, Xystus, Telesphorus, Anicetus, Victor, Callistus, Urban, Pontian, Anteros, Fabian, Cornelius, Lucius, Stephen I, Xystus II, Felix I, Eutychian, Gaius, Marcellinus, Marcellus (Lives 1–4, 6–9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31). The phrasing of the *Liber Pontificalis* elides the question of agency, for it simply mentions that particular bishops were crowned with martyrdom (*martyrio coronatur*) after the note of their incumbency during the reign or time in office of particular emperors or consuls. Very occasionally, others die along with the bishop: Peter with Paul (Life 1, c. 64, 67 AD); Alexander (Life 7, c. 110 AD) with the priest Eventius and the deacon Theodulus; Anteros (Life 20, 235–36) with the priest Maximinus; Fabian (Life 21, 236–50), after whose death the priests Moyses and Maximus and the deacon Nicostratos were imprisoned (*LP* I, 118, 127, 147, 148). The narrative of Urban's death (Life 18, 222–30) is one of the more explicit: '[Urban] was a distinguished confessor. By the teaching he passed on he converted many to baptism. He led many to the palm of martyrdom, and through his encouragement many were crowned with martyrdom.'[8] Later manuscripts, such as *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Vat. lat. 3764, of the 11th century, appear to have inserted extra names of martyrs, perhaps extracted from later *Passiones*. In the life of Stephen I (Life 24, 254–57) for example, the addition states that Stephen was in prison with nine priests, two bishops (Honorius and Castus) and three deacons (Xyxtus, Dionysius and Gaius). In prison at the Arcus Stillans he held a synod, and he placed all the church vessels and the money chest in the control of his archdeacon Xystus, who succeeded him as Xystus II.[9] In Life 22 of Cornelius (251–253) a dispute between the bishop and the pagan emperor Decius is recorded, with Cornelius' famous retort to Decius' accusation: 'I have received letters about the Lord's crown not against the state but rather with spiritual advice for redeeming souls.'[10] These letters were from Cyprian, though the *Liber Pontificalis* does not say so. Further, Bishop Marcellus (Life 31, 305/306–306/307) was 'caught and held because he made arrangements for the church, and arrested by Maxentius to deny he was a bishop and be brought low by sacrificing to demons. He kept despising and spurning the pronouncements of Maxentius and was condemned to the Catabulum.'[11] The life goes on to report that 'in the ninth month his entire clergy came and rescued him at night'.[12] Xystus II (Life 25,

257–58) was martyred in the time of Valerian and Decius when there was a very great persecution. He was beheaded along with six others: the deacons Felicissimus, Agapitus, Januarius, Magnus, Vincent and Stephen. After Xystus' passion, his archdeacon Lawrence suffered the same fate along with Claudius the subdeacon, Severus the priest, Crescentius the reader and Romanus the doorkeeper. Gaius (Life 29, 282–295) was martyred with his brother Gabinius the priest 'on account of Gabinius' daughter Susana'.[13] The most extreme case of persecution in the *Liber Pontificalis* is recorded in Life 30, of Marcellinus (295–303), bishop in the time of Diocletian and Maximian, 'when there was so great a persecution that within 30 days 17,000 persons of both sexes were crowned with martyrdom as Christians in various provinces'. Marcellinus was taken to sacrifice to offer incense, which he did, but when subsequently overcome with repentance he was beheaded. It was also after the death of Marcellinus that the bishopric was said to be vacant for '7 years 6 months and 25 days while Diocletian was persecuting Christians'.[14]

There is an interesting precision about the bishops' places of burial, given the date of compilation, and I have suggested elsewhere the way in which the *Liber Pontificalis* became a source of reference about these holy burial places for pilgrims (McKitterick 2006, 46–51). This may even have been one of the intentions of the compilers. Clement (Life 4, c. 95) for example, was buried in Greece but his body was brought back to Rome. Xystus II (Life 25, c. 120), along with many of his predecessors and successors (Fabian, Lucius, Stephen I, Dionysius, Felix I, Eutychian, Gaius, Eusebius, Militades, Julius), was buried in the cemetery credited to Callistus (de Blaauw 2016; Borgolte 1989; Picard 1960), and it was in what is now known as the crypt of the popes that Pope Damasus installed one of his celebrated verse epitaphs cut on a great slab of stone in the distinctive capitals of Filocalus (Cardin 2008, 16–18; Morison 1972, 94–95; Trout 2015). Further burials recorded are the six deacons executed at the same time as Xystus II (Life 25, 257–58) in the cemetery of Praetextatus and Lawrence in the cemetery of Cyriaces on the Ager Veranus in the crypt with many other martyrs (*LP* I, 155), and the Life of Eutychian (Life 28, 274–82) claims that he buried 342 martyrs in various places with his own hands (*LP* I, 159). Zephyrinus (Life 16, 198/199–217) was buried in his own cemetery, near the cemetery of Callistus (*LP* I, 139). The burial of bishops in named cemeteries, such as that of Urban I (Life 18, 222–30) in the

cemetery of Praetextatus, may indicate that landowners had begun to join the Christian congregation (*LP* I, 143). Something of the horror of the days of persecution, even if not the reality, is conveyed by the description in the life of Marcellinus of the dead lying in the street for 25 days 'at Diocletian's command as an example to the Christians', until priests and deacons gathered the bodies at night with hymns and buried them on the Via Salaria in the cemetery of Priscilla.[15]

Only occasionally does the text yield a hint of an accommodation of the process of the acceptance of new recruits by Christians. Pius (Life 11, c. 145), for example, 'decreed that a heretic coming from the heresy of the Jews should be received and baptized'.[16] Victor (Life 15, c. 195) is said to have 'decreed that in case of necessity anyone coming from paganism might be baptized wherever he happened to be, whether in a river, or in the sea or in springs, provided only that his confession of faith as a Christian be delivered clearly'.[17] Marcellus (Life 31, 305/06–306/07) makes a reference to the establishment of the *tituli* in Rome 'for the baptism and repentance of many converts from paganism',[18] and Miltiades (Life 33, 310–14) decreed 'that none of the faithful should on any account fast on Sunday or Thursday because the pagans kept these days as a holy fast'.[19] That Christians with variant beliefs were also to be found in Rome is clear from the reference in the life of Eusebius (Life 32, c. 308) that he 'discovered heretics in Rome and reconciled them by the laying on of hands'.[20] Eusebius' successor Miltiades is said to have discovered Manicheans (possibly the same group as Eusebius' *heretici*) in the city, and this group is referred to in subsequent 5th-century lives as well (Gelasius, Life 51, 492–96; Hormisdas, Life 54, 514–23) (*LP* I, 255 and 270).

The mixed nature of communities in Rome in terms of origin is undoubted, but the *Liber Pontificalis* suggests that the population of Rome was both far more diverse and very much more accustomed to coexistence than is usually imagined. Even if no more pagans in Rome are mentioned in our sources by c. 530, the memory of them was present in many respects, and many of the daily rhythms of life in Rome, as well as the topography, were instances of continuities probably taken completely for granted (see Humphries 2007; Marazzi 2000). In the 6th century, as indeed in the 4th and 5th, there are indications that groups from Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Greece, Dalmatia and northern Africa were settling in Rome, quite apart from the conglomerate of peoples generally referred to as 'Goths'. There were also visits by pil-

grims and exiles, some of whom never left and who died in Rome, and the increasing attraction of Rome to people from Sicily, Spain, Sardinia and elsewhere in the Italian peninsula as a basis for a clerical career. If one looks only at the origins claimed for the first 59 popes in the *Liber Pontificalis*, 29 are given origins in the various regions of Rome, but of the rest, 11 come from elsewhere in Italy (Campania, Albano, Tuscany, Tiburtina, Samnium), 2 from Sardinia and 17 from outside Italy (the Holy Land, Syria, Spain, Dalmatia, Africa, Greece). Of the ten described as Greek, two seem to have had Jewish fathers. The *Liber Pontificalis* took the international origins of its clergy in Rome completely as a matter of course: one of the messages the text conveys is that they had become Roman and were entirely eligible to become bishops. Nor should one forget the community of Jews in Rome, as Leonard Rutgers has established in past work and his current excavation project.[21] It is perhaps pertinent too to remember the famous complications of conversion in relations with Jews and gentiles mentioned in Paul's letter to the Galatians, and that Peter's first work in Rome may have been within the Jewish community in the city.

The representation of religious communities in the *Liber Pontificalis* is rather less obvious. Emperors or consuls form part of the chronological framework for each new bishop's reign, at least up to the time of Liberius (Life 37, 352–66), and by implication it is the pagan emperors or their officials who are responsible for so many of the early bishops' deaths, or, as the text has it, being 'crowned with martyrdom'. All the lives before the baptism of the emperor Constantine recorded in Life 34 of Pope Silvester present the community of Christians in the city as a small and vulnerable group, sometimes tolerated and sometimes persecuted. The text is carefully constructed to promote the status of the 'monarch bishop' among the many Christian groups in Rome and gives only the merest hint that there might have been divisions and divided loyalties. Thus, Hippolytus is mentioned simply as a priest who happened to be sent into exile by the imperial authorities at the same time and to the same place as Bishop Pontian (Life 19, 230–35),with no hint of the alternative leadership approach to the Christian life that Hippolytus had offered (Brent 1995; see also Curran 2000; Dunn 2016). Similarly, there is a very understated allusion to the challenge Novatian offered to the leadership of the bishop of Rome in the time of bishops Fabian (Life 21, 236–50) and Cornelius (Life 22, 251–53) (*LP* I, 148, 150–01; see also Gülzow 1975; Papandrea 2008). In both instances

what are essentially rivalries are embedded in stories of the pope's martyrdom, with an added distraction in the life of Cornelius provided by the complicated story of the translation of the bodies of saints Peter and Paul from the Via Appia to new resting places on the sites of their respective executions (see McKitterick 2013, 95–118).

Later accounts of disputed elections, such as the challenge to Damasus by Ursinus and his supporters, to Boniface II by Eulalius and to Symmachus by Laurentius, have all too often been seen in exclusively political terms as 'Roman factions' (Blair-Dixon 2007; Wirbelauer 1993, 417–27). The political dimension is of course important; such factions may have included enthusiastic partisans and family members, but they also might have been the outcome of disagreements over a spectrum of interpretations of Christian life, organisation and liturgical practice as well as doctrine. The presence of Arians in Italy from the beginning of the 4th century (and not just among the 'Goths'!), the problems created by the Donatists, the 5th-century references to Manichaeans in Rome, the occasional references to unspecified 'heretics' culminating in the detailed sequence of adopted positions now lumped together as the 'Acacian schism', and the recurrent differences of opinion between those adhering strictly to the Chalcedonian definition of the Trinity and those who chose not to do so, all added to the rich stew of opinion and argument in Rome.

When it mentions any of this, the *Liber Pontificalis* does so as part of a bishop's triumph over error. The text presents the early Christian history of Rome as if it solely concerned the bishop and as if there were complete clarity about the definition of orthodoxy. The earlier and insistent catalogue of bishops killed by pagan emperors because they were steadfast in their Christian faith acts as the essential underpinning of their role.

For the most part these very early lives record the bishops making rulings 'for the whole church' ('et constitutum de ecclesia fecit'; Pius, Life 11, c. 145)[22] and organising the institutional structure of the Christian community in Rome with the division of the regions supervised by deacons (Fabian, Life 21, 236–50). But compare the careers of Peter (Life 1, c. 64 – c. 67) and Dionysius (Life 26, 260–67), the creation of the *tituli* (Evaristus, Life 6, c. 100) and Marcellus (Life 31, 3053/306–306/307), and the *cursus honorum* or succession of ecclesiastical grades for the clergy (Gaius, Life 29, 282–95; Hyginus, Life 10, c. 140). The text also constructs a chronology for various liturgical innovations

about the rituals and rhythms of the Christian year, such as the insertion of the Gloria and Sanctus in the Mass, attributed to Xystus I (Life 7, c. 120); a Mass on Christmas Eve, credited to Telesphorus (Life 9, c. 130); the public ordination of clerics in the presence of all the faithful, decreed by Zephyrinus (Life 16, 198/199–217); and Victor's decisions concerning Easter being celebrated on a Sunday and the length of the season of Lent (Life 15, c. 195; for fuller details see McKitterick 2017b). Some specifically refer to the people of Rome. Alexander (Life 7, c. 110), for example, is said to have decreed the blessing of the salt for sprinkling in the dwellings of the people.[23]

The impression is created of a small, beleaguered and rather impoverished community, with a bishop and a loyal group around him maintaining some kind of foothold and gradually imposing an institutional structure in a mostly hostile environment. The entourage executed with Xystus II (Life 25, 257–58), in particular, looks like the personnel of just one small establishment (*LP* I, 155). On a number of occasions the bishop, on going to meet his fate, explicitly entrusts one of his priests or deacons with taking over his responsibilities in the style of Peter designating his successors. Thus Lucius (Life 23, 253–54) appoints Stephen the archdeacon and Gaius (Life 29, 283–96) designates Marcellinus. In a more oblique allusion, Stephen I (Life 24, 254–57) hands over the sacred vessels or care of the money chest, and the person receiving this, Xystus II, subsequently becomes his successor. The formulaic reiteration of the ordinations carried out by each bishop, however creative the numbers may be, acts as a symbol of successful and continuous recruitment not merely to the ranks of the faithful but to those serving the Church and people.

The creation of an institutional structure and liturgy orchestrated exclusively by the bishop in Rome, but for the whole Church, was designed to affirm the antiquity of the Church in Rome and the apostolic underpinning of all its arrangements, administration, structure, liturgical ritual and clerical office even before the conversion of Constantine and the legal recognition of Christianity within the Roman empire. As already stated above, the text is manifestly concerned to promote the status of the 'monarch bishop' among the many Christian groups in Rome and gives no indication of any of the tensions within the Christian communities of Rome discussed by Allen Brent (1995). The papal history offers a retrospective history of the early Christian Church of Rome as if it solely concerned the bishop.

The reference to the construction of churches, so dominant a feature of Life 34 of Silvester and in so many of the 5th- and 6th-century papal biographies thereafter (de Blaauw 1994; Verhoeven, Bosman and van Asperen 2016), and their provision for the gatherings of the faithful which were a public display of belonging to particular communities, are all major themes of this early portion of the text.

The Transformation of Roman Topography according to the *Liber Pontificalis*

From Life 34 onwards, the *Liber Pontificalis* includes descriptions of the endowment, building and decoration of church buildings, and the donation of gold, silver and bronze liturgical vessels, lights, screens and silk hangings, in Rome. Many of the details were no doubt derived from the papal account books and estates' registers in the office known as the *vestiarium*. This is all too well known to need repeating here, but Krautheimer's maps give an indication of the scale (Krautheimer 1937–1977, 1980; see also Dey 2021).

Before 500, there were 27 churches within the walls of Rome and seven major basilicas outside the walls, including St Peter's and San Paolo fuori le Mura. Before Constantine's conversion, two popes are credited with building basilicas in Rome. Pope Callistus (Life 17, 217–22) built 'the basilica across the Tiber' and Felix I (Life 27, 268–73) built a basilica on the Via Aurelia, though this information is repeated for Felix II (Life 38, 355–65). One of Peter's earliest successors, Anacletus, is credited with the construction of a 'memorial' to Peter (*LP* I, 141, 158, 211 and 125). Quite apart from Pope Silvester's church and those Constantine is alleged to have erected during Silvester's pontificate, in 336 Pope Mark (Life 35, 336) built two basilicas, one on Via Ardeatina and the other in Rome close to the *pallacinae* (*LP* I, 202). Pope Julius (Life 36, 337–52) built two basilicas – one in Rome close to the Forum, the other across the Tiber which became S. Maria in Trastevere – and three cemeteries (*LP* I, 205). Pope Liberius (Life 37, 352–66) is said to have built the basilica which bears his name close to the market of Livia (i.e. Santa Maria Maggiore) but it was later restored/augmented or was a totally different building built by Pope Sixtus III (Life 46, 432–40): according to the life of the latter, he built the basilica of St Mary 'which the ancients called that of Liberius close to the market of Livia' (*LP* I, 208 and 232). Subsequent popes were no less active: Damasus

(Life 39, 366–84) built two basilicas, one to St Laurence (and a *titulus*) close to the Theatre and the other on the Via Ardeatina, where he was buried (*LP* I, 212). Anastasius (Life 41, 399–402) built a basilica called Crescentina in the second region of Rome on the Via Mamurtini (*LP* I, 218). Boniface I (Life 44, 418–22) 'built an oratory in the cemetery of Felicity', Celestine (Life 422–32) 'dedicated the basilica of Julius in which he presented [many gifts] after the Gothic conflagration'[24] and Sixtus III (Life 46, 432–40) 'built a basilica to St Laurence with the agreement of the Emperor Valentinian'.[25] Leo I (Life 47, 440–61) built a basilica to the bishop and martyr St Cornelius near the cemetery of Callistus on the Via Appia (*LP* I, 239). Hilarus (Life 48, 461–68) built three oratories in the Constantinian basilica as well as two mon-asteries, two baths and two libraries (*LP* I, 242), and Simplicius (Life 49, 468–83) dedicated the basilica of St Stephen on the Caelian hill in Rome. The same pope built the basilicas of St Andrew the Apostle close to the basilica of St Mary, St Stephen close to the basilica of St Laurence and St Bibiana close to the Licinian palace.[26]

Between Simplicius in the later 5th century and Theodore in the middle of the 7th century, many more popes are credited in the *Liber Pontificalis* with endowing and embellishing churches both within and in outlying districts of Rome. The *Liber Pontificalis* rarely mentions churches built or paid for by ordinary citizens or clergy of Rome. A notable exception is Santa Sabina, for the Life of Sixtus III (Life 46, 432–40) records that in his time the bishop Peter built in Rome the basilica of St Sabina, where he also built a font.[27]

That some of these churches date from well after Constantine's reign, and what they represent in terms of new buildings to accom-modate a burgeoning cult of saints and an ever increasing Christian population, are not my concerns here. Nor is this the place to consider the questions these buildings raise about architectural convention and precedent, about artistic styles of decoration and portrayal, or about their specific liturgical functions. What is important here is the way the text orchestrates its references to the buildings, and the way the bishop emerges as the primary patron of church-building in Rome.[28] Certainly there are occasional references to the support of wealthy patrons, such as the widow Vestina for the building of a basilica dedi-cated to the saints Gervase and Protasius (*LP* I, 220), the handmaid Demetrias for the building of St Stephen's basilica (*LP* I, 238), and the *matronae* Priscilla and Lucina, who each gave land for cemeteries. The

latter also made her own house into a *titulus* (*LP* I, 150–01; see also Cooper 1999; Hillner 2007; Kurdock 2007). Independent foundations by the wealthy, such as the priest Peter's foundation of Santa Sabina mentioned above, are rarely mentioned. Above all, however, the *Liber Pontificalis* describes many places which acted as the venues where so many Christians gathered. These churches belonged to their communities, were associated with particular saints who were part of the history of the city and were where the institutionalised liturgical rituals of belonging took place. These churches created a new topography onto which Christian identity could be mapped. The stories behind the saints memorialised by these new churches, moreover, are preserved in the earliest pre-4th-century biographies in the *Liber Pontificalis*. The *Liber Pontificalis* deploys these descriptions as a dramatic narrative strategy not only to insist on the transformation of the topography of Rome as a result of the now Christian emperor's munificence and patronage, but also to highlight the bishops' role as major benefactors thereafter.

The lavish imperial endowments listed in Life 34 of Silvester appear to emphasise the substantial imperial patronage the bishops of Rome now enjoyed, in great contrast to the sorry catalogue of imperial anger and persecution in the preceding lives. Montinaro's recent suggestion that the donations are more likely to reflect the property of the Roman Church in the 6th and 7th centuries, 'only a part of which may have been acquired through imperial generosity' (Montinaro 2015), can be extended still further. The papal claims embodied in the list of revenues and estates are also designed to enhance papal status and authority. Whatever the truth of the figures, the Christian bishops now replaced the pagan emperors in Rome, assisted materially by the recently converted emperors themselves.

So, too, was the provision made by bishops before Silvester for the administration, the organisation of the clergy and the liturgy continued by Silvester and his successors. From Life 34 onwards, in contrast to the defensive mode against persecution maintained by the bishops of Rome until the conversion of Constantine, the text now presents the bishops as on the offensive against heretics of many kinds, such as Eutychians, Nestorians and Arians, and many councils are convened. Frequent statements, announced with the formulaic sentence 'Hic fecit constitutum de omnem ecclesiam', are issued concerning orthodox doctrine just as they had been for administrative matters. Silvester's life

sets the pattern for the subsequent biographies. Not only is he given the credit for convening the synod of Nicaea but he is also allocated a synod in Rome at which many provisions for clerical organisation and behaviour are made.[29]

This first portion of *Liber Pontificalis*, therefore, compiled in the 6th century, sets out the framework for a Christian identity, by implication in the face of challenge from, or at least the existence of, alternatives. All the lives before the first reference to the 'Constantinian basilica' or Lateran provide a summary portrait of a city where Christians lived while their religion was that of a minority sect, sometimes tolerated and sometimes persecuted. The text created a Christian identity associated with Rome, but in the constant reiteration that the bishop was providing decrees for the whole Church, it is also inclusive. It invites other Christians to associate themselves with Roman Christianity and to think of themselves as belonging to a virtual Rome.

One simple but significant manifestation of the success of this is the inclusion of so many Roman saints in the calendars of churches far from Rome. By 781, for example, the calendar in Godescalc's Evangelistary included a number of the Roman bishops and saints announced as martyrs or whose special shrines are mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis*, such as, in calendar year order, Felix, Pope Marcellus, Prisca, Sebastian, Agnes, Vincent, Agatha, Valentine, Pancras, Pope Urban, Pope Gregory, Pope Leo, Vitalis, Marc and Marcellinus, John and Paul, Peter and Paul, Felix and Simplicianus, Pope Sixtus, Lawrence, Hypollitus, Agapitus, Cosmas and Damian, Cecilia, Crysogonus, and Pope Silvester (see Crivello, Denoël and Orth 2011; McKitterick 2017a).

Conclusion

The narrative in the *Liber Pontificalis* of the early history of Rome provides an indication of the process of the transformation of the city, as well as a view of the culmination of that process, from the specific perspective of the episcopal administration. The narrative consolidated and authorised the institutional leadership of the bishop of Rome. In itself, the text was an instrument for the propagation of a notion of institutional orthodoxy, for it codified doctrine as well as liturgy and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It set out a means of public (rather than private) articulations of faith in the liturgical rituals to be enacted in purpose-built buildings of great beauty, filled with light, most of which

were provided by the bishop. It expresses a corporate identity. The contents as well as the significant omissions of the *Liber Pontificalis* suggest that it can be conceived of as offering a means of forging a common bond, centred on the bishop at a time of extreme religious and social mixing. It offered the Christians of Rome a foundation for a sense of collective identity and elevated the apostles Peter and Paul as symbols of unity, concord and supremacy. It comprises a series of claims, back-projections, creative reconstructions and justifications after the event for the cohesion of the community of Roman Christians around their bishop and the clergy of Rome. Their distinctive rituals, so crucial a part of their identity, were enacted inside, and in processions between, sumptuous basilicas that were also presented as the work of the bishop. The basilicas altered the city landscape, but the processions between them during the performance of the stational liturgy developed Christianised spaces in the city as well.

An analogy might be made between the *Liber Pontificalis* and the formulation of the history of the Coptic patriarchs of Alexandria in the 7th century, insofar as this is clear from the 11th-century Arabic version of the text. The *History of the Patriarchs* is thought to have been compiled first of all in the context of the Arab incursions into Egypt for the benefit of the vulnerable Christian community, to aid them in forging communal bonds.[30] Similarly, what is essentially the history of a community within the jurisdiction of the bishop of Alexandria is achieved by focusing on the leader, or at least the person whom the authors wished to be seen as the leader. In the case of both the *Liber pontificialis* and the *History of the Patriarchs*, that leadership in its turn was given a long pedigree in the text, not just by claiming a direct line of apostolic succession from St Peter and St Mark respectively, but as the ultimate default in leadership of the many Christian religious communities of Rome. The history of the early Christian community in Rome, in short, is presented as a steady organisational transformation as well as a topographical one. Yet the *Liber Pontificalis* also offers, in however opaque a manner, an important indication of the very diverse community, the vulnerability of the Christians within the pre-Constantinian city of Rome, and, above all, the multi-layered identity of Rome in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.

Notes

1 Since the paper that became this chapter was presented in Helsinki on 3–4 November 2016, a great deal more has been published in a particularly intense period of interest in early medieval Rome. Parts of this chapter were published by Cambridge University Press as *Rome and the Invention of the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages* (McKitterick 2020c), where particularly the comments on the text known as the *Liber pontificalis* are developed fully. I have added here, moreover, a select handful of pertinent work published since 2017 at the appropriate points.

2 To mention the merest sample, Behrwald and Witschel (2012); Bonamente, Lenski and Lizzi Testa (2012); Burrus (2012); Burrus and Lehmann (2021); Cameron (2011); Lizzi Testa (2013); Salzman and Saghy (2016); Wienand (2015).

3 See the important recent monograph by Salzman (2021).

4 Only a sample of the more recent work can be given here: Bosman, Haynes and Liverani (2020); Grig and Kelly (2012); Harris (1999); Liverani (1998); McEvoy (2010, 2013); Norton (2007); Pelliccioni (1973); Pietri (1976); Rebillard (1994, 283); Rüpke (2008); Sessa (2012); Wirbelauer (1993).

5 In addition to McKitterick (2020c, 171–223), see also McKitterick (2020b).

6 For the historical context, see Arnold, Bjornlie and Sessa (2016).

7 Jerome's Latin translation and continuation of Eusebius' *Chronicon* as a resource for the authors of the *Liber pontificalis* is considered in McKitterick (2015).

8 *LP* I, 143 (the dating in the time of Diocletian does not correspond to either the list of consuls or that of emperors): Hic sua traditione multos convertit ad baptismum et credulitatem, etiam et Valerianum, nobillisimum virum, sponsum sanctae ceciliae; quos etiam usque ad martyrii palmam perduxit et per eius monita multi martyrio coronati sunt; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, p. 7.

9 *LP* I, 154. Compare *Liber Pontificalis*, MGH Gesta Pontificum Romanorum 1,1, 33.

10 *LP* I, 150–01; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 9: Ego de corona Domini litteras accepi, non contra rempublicam, sed magis animas redimendas.

11 *LP* I, 164; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 12–13: Hic coartatus et tentus eo quod ecclesiam ordinaret et comprehnsus a Maxentio ut negaret se esse episcopum et sacrificiis humiliari daemoniorum. Quo semper contemnes, deridens dicta et praecpta Maxenti, damnatus est in catabulum.

12 *LP* I, 164: mense autem nono nocu venerunt clerus eius omnis et eruerunt eum noctu de catabulo.

13 *LP* I, 161; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 11–12: propter filiam Gavini presbiteri.

14 *LP* I, 162; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 12: intra XXX diebus XVII milia hominum promiscui sexus per diversas provincias martyrio coronentur Christiani … Eodem die cessavit episcopatum ann. VII n. VI d.xxv persequente Diocletiano <Christianos>.

15 *LP* I, 162; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 12: Et post hoc factum iacuerunt corpora sancta in platea ad exemplum christianorum dies XXV ex iussu Diocletiani.

16 *LP* I, 132; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 5: Hic constituit hereticum venientem ex Iudaeorum heresae suscipi et baptizari.

17 *LP* I, 137; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 6: Et constituit ut necessitate facient, ut ubi inventus fuisset, sive in flumine, sive in mari, sive in fontibus, tantum christiano confessione credulitatis clarificata quicumque hominum ex gentile veniens ut baptizaretur.

18 *LP* I, 164: propter baptismum et paentitentiam multorum qui convertebantur ex paganis.

19 *LP* I, 168; transl., Davis, *Pontiffs*, 13: Hic constituit nulla ratione die dominico aut quinta feria ieiunium quis de fidelibus agere, quia eos dies pagani quasi sacrum ieiunium celebrabant.

20 *LP* I, 167; transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 13: Hic hereticos invenit in urbe Roma quos per manus impositionis reconciliavit.

21 Rutgers (1995, 2000, 2009). Rutgers directed two international projects, one entitled *Reconfiguring Diaspora: The Transformation of the Jewish Diaspora in Late Antiquity* and another excavation project focusing on the origins of Christianity in Rome.

22 'Hic fecit constituta de omni ecclesia' or a variant thereof is a recurrent phrase in many lives: 11 Pius, 16 Zephyrinus, 34 Silvester, 39 Damasus, 41 Anastasius, 42 Innocent, 45 Celestine, 47 Leo, 48 Hilarus, 50 Felix III, 51 Gelasius I (*LP* I, 132, 139, 171, 213, 218, 220, 230, 239, 252, 255).

23 *LP* I, 127: Hic constituit aquam sparsionis cum sale benedici in habitaculis hominum.

24 *LP* I, 227, transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 33: hic fecit oratorium in cymeterio sanctae Felicitatis; and 230, transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 33: hic dedicavit basilicam Iuli in qua optulit post ignem Geticum.

25 *LP* I, 234, transl. Davis, *Pontiffs*, 35: Fecit autem basilicam sancto Laurenio, quod Valentinianus Augustus concessit.

26 *LP* I, 249. On all this papal building summarised above, see in particular Geertman (2004).

27 *LP* I, 235, though the magnificent inscription in Santa Sabina itself recording Peter's endowment says that Peter was a priest and that the endowment was made in the time of Pope Celestine. For a transcription and description of the inscription, see Webb (2001, 173).

28 In a study that became available to me after I had first delivered the paper on which this chapter is based, a similar argument about a papal monopoly of church building is mounted, on the basis primarily of the inscription evidence, by Behrwald (2016).

29 *LP* I, 171: Hic fecit constitutum de omne ecclesia. Etiam huius temporibus factum est concilium cum eius praeceptum in Nicea Bithiniae.

30 *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*. I am grateful to Dr Christian Sahner for conversation about this text.

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Vanishing Identity

The Impossible Definition of Pagans and Paganism in the West from the 4th to the 6th Century

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Abstract

To understand Antiquity, we must avoid starting from our own categories. We therefore reject the contemporary notion of collective identity in favour of a sociological analysis of ancient texts and the authoritative relationships between emic and etic discourses on the definition of religious groups. Taking into account the plurality of Christian discourses, both sociological (those of believers, clerics, monks, the emperor or the king) and thematic (in the theological domain, that of personal morality, collective ethics, relationship to the world) allows us to conceive that between 300 and 600, it was possible to define oneself as Christian ('bad Christian' in the eyes of religious and political authorities) and to venerate certain traditional superhuman entities

linked to natural forces yet considered by the same authorities as the demons of paganism. This Christian polylatrism can be explained by the difficulty bishops had in controlling certain sectors of society, particularly in the countryside, but also by the impossibility for late antique Christianity to transform its theological claim to truth about salvation in the afterlife into a convincing model for explaining the world here below. Only the cult of holy (wo)men and relics, and the Christianisation of certain sacred places or the acceptance of certain ancient practices in order to neutralise them, were to fill the gaps in the Christian meaning of the world over time.

Keywords: late antique Christianity, late antique paganism, Christianness, identities, ancient world meaning

For a whole generation, historians of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages have worked extensively on the notions of ethnicity (Adshead 2000, 331–36; Gazeau, Bauduin and Modéran 2008; Pohl and Haydemann 2013) and identity (Drinkwater and Elton 1992; Mathisen and Shanzer 2011; Miles 1999; Wood 2013), mainly in the religious field (see Dunn and Mayer 2015; Frakes and Digeser 2006; Gemeinhardt and Leemans 2012; Iricinschi and Zellentin 2008; Rebillard and Rüpke 2015; Sandwell 2007; Schremer 2010; Smith 2016). One can be surprised by this strange contemporary epidemic of identity. Scholars have of course always asserted that these notions should be understood as constructed or negotiated. Nevertheless, considering the persisting debates on the matter of the definitions of and the relations between pagans, Christians and Jews, we may judge that the use of the terms 'collective identities' or 'group identities' raises conceptual issues that are not sufficiently analysed by historians.

The first issue relates to terminology: historians generally admit that Christians, pagans and Jews did not form closed, distinct groups. They rightly refuse all essentialist discourses that perturb modern minds and are by-products of nationalisms. They insist on the representations that define rhetorical groups. But what is somewhat understated is the fact that these rhetorical groups were defined either through self-definitions of an emic type, or through external definitions of an etic type. This explains why not all of the rhetorical groups share the same status, because they could correspond to extremely diverse social realities. For example, from an orthodox Christian perspective (and by 'orthodoxy' I mean the particular conception defended by a Chris-

tian power at a particular time), the unity of heretics, which was not accepted by them, or that of pagans, which was not conceived by them, did not correspond to that of the Jews, who asserted their unity. Talking about 'identities' in these different cases is problematic because the same term refers to different kinds of mental and social realities.

The second issue is that seeing as one identity is constructed against one or several others, the choice in oppositions necessarily leads to taking sides: 'being pagan, being Christian' is an erroneous symmetrical formula because it is originally Christian. 'Being Jew, being goy' would be a very different approach, and an equally erroneous one. This is not to say that any approach would be unavailing: the tripartition between the adorers of many gods/idols, Jews and Christians was sometimes shared by everyone.

The third issue relates to the link between discourse and power. Identities are produced performatively as narratives. But to say is not always to do, and there is a big difference between speaking and acting. Only the imperial power could create legal identities and subject people to them, as in the case of heretics (after 326; *Theodosian Code* 16.5.1) or of pagans (after 368–370; *Theodosian Code* 16.2.18). Those who analyse representations and forget political power or sociological importance are mistaken.

The final issue is crucial. We should indeed remember that there is no Greek, Latin, Hebrew or Syriac term for what we call 'collective identity'. The Latin term *identitas* belongs to the language of philosophy, and translates a precise, Aristotelian Greek term that corresponds to the logical identity as presented in the formula 'Socrates is Socrates'. This term was used by late antique Christians during Trinitarian debates so as to be able to affirm that the Father was the Father, the Son was the Son, and the Holy Spirit was the Holy Spirit – in other words, that every divine person was indeed a distinct person notwithstanding the commonly shared divine essence. This is the usage we find in Marius Victorinus' writings (*Adversus Arium*, c. 360) and after him (Boethius, translation of the *Analytica priora*, c. 510; Rusticus, *Contra Acephalos*, c. 553–64). But this late antique Christian usage is strictly philosophical and theological. Any other use of the term 'identity' for Late Antiquity is a misapplication, an anachronism and, ultimately, an error in historical method.

Thus, the debate about 'being pagan, being Christian' is only a deviation from a far broader issue. Because if we refuse the existence of

religious, collective identities in Antiquity and the use of such an illusory term, how then shall we understand ancient religious dimensions or reformulate the points in question in an acceptable way when we are thinking about something like social membership?

The first solution is lexical. We should study the ancient terms defining the groups – the Latin terms *gens*, *natio*, *genus* and *nomen*, for example (see Mathisen 2015, 277–86) – and see how they were used to refer to Christians or pagans – for example, *tertium genus*, *vocabulum christianum*, *gentilitas*, *pagani* and *christianitas*. Another approach would be to analyse the way in which collective names were formed: they are commonly used in tribal or civic definitions (the Zagrenses, the Hipponienses) and are evidenced on an ethnic or geographic level (the Mauri, the Italians). Their relevance is being discussed on a provincial, administrative level during the Roman empire, or on an ecclesiastical level during Late Antiquity (see Briand-Ponsart and Modéran 2011). These viewpoints, using the ancient categories, would permit us to avoid anachronisms.

A second solution consists in favouring acts, not words, because acting is a greater commitment than talking and limits the deconstruction of discourse to the advantage of context. It is not the same thing to assert oneself as Christian before a Roman governor's tribunal in c. 200 as it is to do so, like Firmicus Maternus did, before a Christian emperor in c. 350. But to define Christianness in terms of actions supposes that there is a relative continuity to these actions. As such, this model is mostly relevant for Christians committed in Church life who demonstrate their individual Christianness through actions, such as the clerks, the monks or the activist laity (the last group was recently studied by Ariane Bodin; Bodin 2014).

A third solution is to suggest a new hermeneutical model. This was recently achieved by Éric Rebillard, who uses modern, sociological works to try to understand Late Antiquity (Rebillard 2012). He keeps the term 'identity' but restricts it to individual identity, which is acceptable in view of the ancient vocabulary. However, he contends that such individual identity was multiple, and that the individual activated multiple, specific identities intermittently, depending on the circumstances. Finally, he considers that groups only exist in a temporary, constructed way. I am not convinced by this theory for many reasons. I am going here to limit myself to two of these reasons.

First of all, certain appearances were more important and essential than others and limited individual choice in the matter of religion. Conscience is largely social, and it was often affiliation to a particular group defined by constraining, real, legal bonds (the family, the clientele, the city) and the religious, social or political constraint that they could exert which led, or did not lead, to what is called the activation of one's identity. The methodological individualism adopted here favours subjectivity and neglects the reality of the social balance of power.

In addition, according to Rebillard, a Christian chose not to activate his Christian identity, relying on the circumstances – refusing, for example, to go the games or to become a martyr. But this supposes that there is a univocal Christianness shared both by clerics and the laity, while it is in fact clerical in all studied examples. Yet this is precisely what needs to be evidenced and not merely supposed. Otherwise, one uses the ancient texts to illustrate a modern *a priori* (here sociological) thesis. And that is not the right method, even for heuristic purposes.

In the light of such issues related to the use of the notion of identity, it seems wiser to me to follow the distinction brought forward by Amin Maalouf (1998) in his book *In the Name of Identity*.[1] According to him, identity can only be individual and unique (Socrates is Socrates and not someone else) and the psychological and rhetorical plurality relates to social bonds, which are linked to collective affiliations. The particular sum of all collective affiliations defines a unique, individual identity (which is the result of the existence of a biological body, a pluralist social status and self-consciousness). This distinction permits us to avoid the philosophical questions related to the notions of collective identities or pluralist, individual identities, which erroneously mix the Aristotelian categories of substance and relation.

I will therefore suggest a hermeneutical model based on three aspects: personal identity, collective affiliations and assertive identification with the group. Everyone has tens or hundreds of diverse, social affiliations which, when particularly combined, make them what they are and not someone else. Each of these bonds is related to a group, more or less constructed and real, the ultimate group being humankind. But below this last group, there is generally a preferred bond which we now misleadingly call 'collective identity'. Nowadays, these 'collective identities' are mainly religious or national affiliations, as well as bonds related to class, race or gender. During Antiquity, they were tribal (the Arverni), civic (the Romans) or ethnic (the Afri or the

Judeans, because the definition of Jews was ethnic, not religious), as well as philosophical (the Platonists) or religious (the Christians, who created the category of religion in the modern sense and applied it to the Judeans and to the others, qualified by the word 'pagans') (Jürgasch 2016, 115–38).

Of course, people were not defined by their principal affiliation in every moment of their life, and that is why the analysis of Late Antiquity as a confrontation between pagans and Christians is reductive and often erroneous. But this affiliation was the one that was used at essential moments, when these moments were vital in defining the self. This can be found in a civic context, in a formula such as *Romanus sum*, linked to *ciuis* or *homo*, from Cicero to Aulus Gellius and Augustine.[2] It can be found of course in a Christian context with the sentence *christianus sum*, which is evidenced from Scillitan martyrs and Tertullian to Victor of Vita.[3] And this Christian self-definition is also present in the numerous funerary inscriptions, where the religious dimension allowed one to define oneself retrospectively.

It should be remarked that in the Roman empire, unlike in nations nowadays, a personal identity could be composite, which is not the same as pluralist. Thus, every Roman citizen had a dualist definition of their Roman identity based on the Ciceronian combination of their local *origo* (the little fatherland) and their common *ciuitas* (the great homeland). Then, individually, they could insist on some of their other affiliations, like Apuleius of Madauros, a Roman citizen whose *origo* was Madauros but who accepted also defining himself, or being defined, from an ethnic perspective as half-Gaetulian, half-Numidian.[4] In the same way, Paul of Tarsus, a Roman citizen whose *origo* was Tarsus, equally defined himself as a Judean, a Pharisee, a Christian (but in Luke, *Acts of Apostles*) and probably culturally Hellenic in Athens (also in Luke, *Acts of Apostles*). According to the circumstances and the contexts of use, one could use such-and-such a group affiliation which was related to a specific social status. But this certainly did not mean that such bonds shared an equal value, or that a legal, personal composite identity could be assimilated to a psychological, pluralist consciousness of the self.

The next point I should mention is the identification of the group, which raises issues of rhetoric, because of the emic/etic discourses and because of the existence of authoritative speeches. A self-definition is generally positive, and people did not define themselves as rebels

or heretics. In the case of ancient religious identifications, one must reflect not only on the categories of pagans and Christians but also on those of Jews, or indeed of Christian deviants (and not only from a Christian perspective, because Celsus was aware of the diversity of Christian groups in c. 180, as was Emperor Aurelius in 272 in Antioch). We can distinguish:

1. To consider oneself Christian, and to be recognised as such: emic–etic agreement (parallel examples: a Rabbinic Jew recognised as such by a rabbi; or a worshipper of the gods recognised as such by a governor, as Pliny did in Bithynia);

To be recognised as Christian by the group's internal authority	A Christian (Arnobius) by a bishop A bishop (Athanasius) by a Nicean council A martyr (Cyprianus) by their community
To be recognised as Christian by the group's internal authority but not by part of the group	The laity or the clerks by a monk like Salvian of Marseille Faustinus by the Christians of Hippo (Augustine, *Sermo Morin* 1) The bishops who became post-mortem 'Nestorian' convicts during the Three-Chapter Controversy
To be recognised as Christian by an external authority	A Christian (martyr) by a governor An 'orthodox' Christian by an 'orthodox' emperor after 312–24

2. To consider oneself Christian and not to be recognised as such: emic–etic disagreement (parallel example: a Jew recognised as a *minim* by a rabbi);

Not to be recognised as Christian by an internal authority	'Heretics' (the Manichaeans, Gnostics or Ebionites defined themselves as Christians) by a bishop or a council, or by an 'orthodox' emperor (cases of Donatists and Eunomians)
	Some Jews converted to Christianity who were considered false Christians and were restored to Judaism in the 4th century (CTh 16.8.23 in 416)
	Some Christians in the East in the 6th century who were considered crypto-pagans
	Some Christians of Jewish descent in 7th-century Spain

	Some Christians considered Christians, but with some Jewish behaviours
	Some Christians considered Christians, but with some pagan behaviours

3. Not to consider oneself "someone" but to be defined as such: this is then a matter of accusation, testifying to an emic–etic disagreement; judicial constraint (torture) can bring about confession, allowing consistency between self-definition and external recognition;

To be recognised as "someone" by an external authority	A Christian accused of being 'heretic' or 'Jewish' or 'pagan' in front of a religious Christian authority
	A person accused of being a 'magician' or an 'astrologer/mathematician' before the political authority: the sophist Sopater, executed in Constantinople in 325; the bishop Priscillian, executed in Trier in 383

4. Not to consider oneself Christian and not to be defined as such; during Late Antiquity, this emic–etic agreement led to the recognition of a different and often inferior legal status: that of Jew, pagan or heretic.

Finally, it should be remembered that there were at least four Christian discourses – that of the believers, that of the emperor, that of the clerics (mostly bishops) and that of the monks – which were often very different. For example, in c. 400, in the case of the games, most of the laity judged that they could attend them, whereas clerics and monks condemned them violently for moral reasons, because of the cruelty or the immorality that were displayed, or for religious reasons if they considered that the games were tributes paid to demons. Should it then be supposed that the clerics' discourse defined Christian identity and that the laity did not activate this identity when attending the games? Of course not. Christian emperor Honorius explained in 399 that considering that the games were no longer associated with pagan sacrifices and *superstitiones*, they were the people's lawful pleasure.[5] And this remained true throughout the 5th and 6th centuries. The emperor's religious argument takes up Constantine's argument regard-

ing the imperial cult and is Christianly irreproachable. It is, then, not possible to suppose that the clerics had a 'hierarchical' arrangement of membership which emphasised Christianness, when the majority of Christians would only have a 'lateral' arrangement of membership, activating their Christianness only on some occasions of interaction, as Rebillard argues. In fact, as far as the games are concerned, after the end of the pagan rituals in 391–92, there was not a single Christian identity but rather two Christian positions diverging on what was Christian and what was not. There was no reason to judge, on this non-dogmatic problem, that the clerical argument was more Christian than that of the emperor. And this was indeed the case on numerous topics (for example, the diverse discourses about the archaic or spherical form of the cosmos, or about astrology).

What it was to be Christian in Late Antiquity may thus be defined according to four criteria:

1. A theological criterion: to believe in Jesus as Saviour and to believe in the existence of eternal life after death, because faith was the core definition of Christianity;
2. A sociological criterion: to display one's adherence to the Christian community comprising the baptised and the catechumens, as Marius Victorinus did (Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.2.3–6);
3. An ecclesiological criterion: to recognise the bishop's authority in his domain, the definition of which varied from one believer to the next – there was no unanimous interpretation of the Bible;
4. A criterion of personal commitment, this last criterion being very different depending on the person's status (the emperor, the laity, the activist laity, clerics more or less engaged in asceticism, monks).

The conclusion is: there is not a clear and distinctive Christian identity, but rather there are many Christian discourses, more or less strong or weak from a social or political perspective. And the goal of the historian is to link rhetoric, ancient mentalities, and ancient social or political realities.

Now that the methodology has been clarified, we may proceed to the analysis of some late antique texts accusing Christians of displaying pagan behaviours.[6] This is the last line of case 2 of emic–etic disagreement. There should be a distinction between several cases, because it is not the same to present someone as a Christian resorting to pagan practices, which makes him a bad Christian; or as a crypto-pagan,

who is a false Christian; or as an apostate, who is a former Christian. Furthermore, the chronology should be taken into account because the same situation may be presented differently depending on the epoch. Between the 4th and the 6th century in particular, the clerics' religious demands gained power on account of the progress of ascetic ideas and because of the decline in classical, cultural tradition. Finally, the hardening of repressive legislation modified the impact of those accusations or descriptions. Consequently, in the East, after 550, in the repressive context set by Justinian, the accusation of crypto-paganism became fatal, which made it a formidable political weapon for the set-tling of scores between Christians, as had been the case with heresy in the century before and with magic two centuries before that (Chuvin [1990] 2009).

For more than a century, debates around the Christianisation of populations have been overshadowed by the use of modern mean-ings for terms such as *religion*, *superstition* or *magic*. In the Latin texts which present Christians accomplishing rites denounced as pagan by the clerics, three groups should be distinguished:[7]

1. The first relates to traditional social practices which made sense in the Roman ensemble of the *religio-superstitio*. Some of them were then included in the Christian cult and were therefore accepted, after discussion, by the Church (incubation, images, ex-voto, songs). Others were rejected as 'pagan' for theological reasons (sacrifices, funerary meals) or for customary reasons (dancing, drink). This may be found in the 4th century in Italy (Ambrose of Milan forbade eating, drinking or dancing near tombs, but Pauli-nus of Nola accepted a peasant feast near Felix's shrine) and Africa (Augustine of Hippo, who followed Ambrose), and in the 6th cen-tury in Gaul[8] and Hispania. When these practices were reoriented towards a Christian finality, it is erroneous to deduce that they were crypto-pagan.[9] And in the case of prohibited yet persisting prac-tices, the social, not religious pagan, dimension is generally essen-tial. It is wrong to think that when Christians were feasting on the tombs of saints or during the great Christian feasts, they did not activate their Christianness; it is quite contrarily because they were Christian that they marked the occasions by drinking, singing and dancing. In fact, they activated their own Christianness.

2. The second group of acts relates to Christians who consulted augurs, magicians, seers, spell casters, enchanters and haruspices.[10] The bishops constantly condemned these practices, but to no avail. Their argument according to which everything came from God and that it was diabolical to try and read the future, or that humans[11] and animals[12] should be cured only by praying to God (Augustine's and Caesarius' solution), failed to convince. The only acceptable Christian solution came to be the belief in the miraculous potential of saints' relics.

3. The third group gathers cult acts of worship of idols or natural realities (trees, sources) proffered by Christians who distinguished God's cult in expectation of eternal life from the cult of powers for terrestrial purposes. These texts, which are evidenced in the 5th and 6th centuries in Augustine of Hippo (bishop 395–430), Caesarius of Arles (bishop 502–42) and Childebert's *Praeceptum* (king 511–58), are the most interesting to reflect on in relation to 'being pagan, being Christian', because they refer not to clerical interpretations but to rituals which are used by Christians who knew that the rituals were not Christian but were useful to Christians. What should be highlighted in Gaul is mainly the cult of trees with *vota* and the cult of fountains where people went to pray, but the texts also mention sanctuaries, altars and idols, as well as sacrifices and banquets taking place there.

In these texts, the wrongdoers define themselves as Christians, and are known as such (Caesarius' 'Brothers'), even under the designation of bad Christians or imperfect Christians given by the ecclesiastical authorities or a Christian king.[13] They are not considered pagans (there were still pagans in Asia Minor in Justinianic times or in Corsica at the end of the 6th century), or crypto-pagans, or apostates. This harmony between their self-definition and the external definitions given by ecclesiastical or political authorities leaves no room to doubt the fact that some Christians displayed non-Christian ritual behaviours, whether in Africa in Augustinian times or in Gaul in the era of Caesarius of Arles and Childebert. In this instance, this is nothing like a clerical fantasy. The question is to know what such behaviour meant.

To think that in Hippo around 400 or in Gaul c. 550, these Christians did not activate their Christianness when they worshipped idols is dubious. When they did so, they did not define themselves as pagans

and they well knew that they were Christian. Nor should we think about the unconscious survival of paganism or the lack of explanation by clerics. The simplest solution is that they had a different definition of Christianity. The people who worshipped idols were not pagan, seeing as they defined themselves and were recognised as Christians. They were, however, polylatrics, and this was not opposed to the fact of declaring themselves Christian. It may indeed be possible to conceive of a polylatric and hierarchical kind of Christianity, with the Christian God as supreme creator of the world and ruler hereafter, a *deus summus* dominating other superhuman beings, the powers (*potestates*) mentioned in the Latin Bible. Around 300, a lettered man like Arnobius could defend such an idea. And around 400, Christians from Hippo thought that the rituals dedicated to beings that were closely related to humans were far more efficient than prayers offered to a far-off, celestial God. They distinguished very well what had to be rendered to God or Christ and what to the world. It was not orthodox from Augustine's point of view, but it could be defined as Christian.[14]

Most of the pagan rites related to the Roman *religio-superstitio* were forbidden at the end of the 4th century. Some survived and new ones appeared, because the private *superstitio* was more adaptable to Christianity than the public *religio* and because the Church did not keep a firm hold of the whole population, or indeed of the whole territory. That said, the rites, and the beliefs which founded them, had not only a religious aspect but also a most important hermeneutical dimension: they were essential to give meaning to all actions in life. The clerics wanted to impose a new religious truth, but people called for a global signification to the world, and Christianity was incapable of providing it at this time. In fact, there was a hermeneutical rift between 400 and 600, because at that time Christianity did not assume the world's totality. From Augustine to Gregory the Great, it left vacant a large number of social, mental and geographical spaces (Markus 1990, 1997). In order to fill them with signification, there were only two Christian strategies.

The first was that of the monks and ascetic clerics, such as Augustine or Caesarius of Arles, who asserted that God was accountable for everything, including health when one was sick. To consult a physician or a healer equated (for Caesarius) to a lack of trust in God and was similar to idolatry. And yet, such reasoning was not convincing, though every Christian knew that 'what augurs, magicians, and seers

announce is often true'[15] and that 'without the enchanters, many would suffer mortal danger from a snake bite or any other disease'.[16] Historians should not limit themselves to noticing the coexistence of various rhetorical discourses. They must understand the persuasive capacity these discourses bore at a particular time, which is variable. In times when science did not exist, when nothing could be demonstrated with certainty, the only means to found socially shared truths were the traditions (the social habits based on concrete realities) or the authority of public force. But in the 5th and 6th centuries, the social traditions were not Christian everywhere, and public force had other urgencies to resolve.

Yet, it was well known that inferior powers were efficient in the field of prosperity and health, even for bad reasons. Neither the prayers nor the rogations could replace them efficiently without social control, which the Church was incapable of exerting outside the towns. Only the cult of relics and saints was then able to give a broader Christian signification to the world and to try and assume all of people's preoccupations. But it took centuries. Thus, the vacant mental spaces that could be judged diabolical by some (clerics, monks or activist Christians) or neutral by others (some laypeople or clerics) because they related to knowledge finally became Christian. But before that, some, like Arnobius, believed that the inferior powers and the creation depended on God, and other Christians that worshipping them was equally Christian. Different conceptions of Christianity founded diverse Christiannesses. Of course, clerics and monks can disagree, but these 'mistakes' were not truly schism or heresy. 'Bad Christians' obeyed most of the time, they accepted the need to give money to the clerics or monks, and that was the most important thing.

In conclusion, historians should build from documents complex models that allow us to account for all the discourses. The dichotomy 'being pagan, being Christian' was too theological in Late Antiquity, and is too theoretical today. And in both cases, ancient reality was more complex than words.

During Late Antiquity, against the official model of God's transcendent omnipotence, most Christians preferred an immanent, hierarchical model. Some of them resorted to a Christian polylatrism that could include idols or veneration of natural forces. They were Christians in their own way, and they accepted the bishop's authority in many fields. Clerics asked them for complete religious obedience, but

they could not convincingly explain the world. Other Christians, their number ever increasing as time went by, preferred to have recourse to Christian intermediaries, to the saints' relics or to holy (wo)men. These were pious Christians who wanted a world filled with divine meaning without resorting to practices that they deemed diabolical, and the ecclesiastical authorities accompanied this movement. Others, some *literati*, tried to mix human knowledge and divine piety. And others, more ascetic, like Caesarius, trusted only in God to solve their problems.

But relics or clerics could not be found everywhere during the 5th and 6th centuries. And it was not obvious that the Great Biblical God, the God of the Creation and of the afterlife, really cared about the growth of wheat and the illness of cows. Between 400 and 600, the mental world of Late Antiquity remained extremely hazy. Being a polylatric Christian was presumably not a problem for many people, even though it was problematic for the defenders of the exclusive, biblical signification – bishops, monks or the activist laity. But, insensibly, the struggle against the few subsisting idols, and the input of a new meaning of the *saeculum* through the cult of saints, alongside the old veneration of some natural, sometimes Christianised, powers, created a compromise which satisfied both the believers in their daily life and the clerics. Circa 600, 'Being Christian' was eventually a matter of faith, beliefs and community life, as well as a matter of power and money, with the necessity of obeying the clerics and catering for them, at least for a better afterlife.

Notes

1 The original French title is better: *Les identités meurtrières*.
2 Ciuis romanus sum: Cicero, *In Verrem* 2.5.147; 162; 168; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.4.102; 11.1.40; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 10.3.12; Augustinus, *Enarratio in Psalmum* 120, 10. Sum, inquit, homo romanus: Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1, Praefatio.
3 *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum* 10; Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 2 and 49; *De corona* 1; *Acta sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 4.17; Lucifer Calaritanus, *De regibus apostaticis* 9; Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae prouinciae* 3.49.
4 *Apologia* 24: De patria mea uero, quod eam sitam Numidiae et Gaetuliae in ipso confinio meis scriptis ostendistis, quibus memet professus sum, cum Lolliano Auito c. u. praesente publice dissererem, Seminumidam et Semigaetulum, non uideo quid mihi sit in ea re pudendum, haud minus quam Cyro maiori, quod genere mixto fuit Semimedus ac Semipersa.

5 *Theodosian Code* 16.3.17: Ut profanos ritus iam salubri lege submouimus, ita festos conuentus ciuium et communem omnium laetitiam non patimur submoueri. Unde absque ullo sacrificio atque ulla superstitiones damnabili exhiberi populo uoluptates secundum ueterem consuetudinem, iniri etiam festa conuiuia, si quando exigunt publica uota, dercernimus.

6 For Jewish behaviours, see Soler (2010, 281–91).

7 A fourth group could bring together the examples of rejection of authentic Christian rituals as pagan, such as the cult of relics by Faustus the Manichaean or the Catholic Vigilentius.

8 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 13.4: Verba turpia et luxuriosa nolite ex ore proferre … ne forte detrahendo, male loquendo, et in sanctis festiuitatibus choros ducendo, cantica luxuriosa et turpia proferendo … Isti enim infelices et miseri, qui ballationes et saltationes antes ante ipsas basilicas sanctorum exercere nec metuunt nec erubescunt; and in Childebert's *Praeceptum* (edition: A. Boretius, MGH Cap., t. I, Hanover, 1883, pp. 2‑3): Ad nos quaeremonia processit, multa sacrilegia in populo fieri, unde Deus ledatur et populos per peccatum declinet ad mortem: noctes pervigiles cum ebrietate, scurrilitate vel cantecis, etiam in ipsis sacris diebus pascha, natale Domini et reliquis festibitatibus vel adveniente die domineco bansatrices (dansatrices) per villas ambulare.

9 As MacMullen (1996) often did.

10 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 54.1; 3; 5: auguria, caragi, divini, sortileges, praecantatores, haruspices.

11 Augustine of Hippo, *Tractatus in Iohannis evangelium* 7.7: Non quando nobis dolet caput, curramus ad praecantatores, ad sortilegos et remedia uanitatis.

12 Augustine of Hippo, *Tractatus in Iohannis evangelium* 34.3: Qui saluum facit te, ipse saluum facit equum tuum, ipse ouem tuam, ad minima omnino ueniamus, ipse gallinam tuam.

13 Or as semi-Christians or half-Christians by the moderns; cf. Guignebert (1923, 65–102).

14 Augustine of Hippo, *Enarratio in Psalmum* 88.2.14: Nemo dicat: ad idola quidem uado, arreptitios et sortilegos consulo, sed tamen dei ecclesiam non relinquo; catholicus sum.

15 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 54.3: Sed forte dicit aliquid: Quid facimus quod auguria ipsa et caragi vel divini frequenter nobis vera annunciant?

16 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 54.3: Sed iterum dicis: Interim aliquotiens, si praecantatores non fuerint, aut de morsu serpentis aut de alia qualibet infirmitate prope usque ad mortem multi periclitantur.

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